The rise of Pentecostal power

Exploring the politics of Pentecostal growth in Nigeria and Guatemala

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1 Introduction

“In the 1980s it was almost like a taboo to say you prayed in tongues. People didn’t understand it”, a Nigerian Pentecostal pastor told me during one of our meetings. He was reflecting on the period after he was “saved, and got born-again” in 1976. His father, an Anglican, did not accept his son’s new faith. As a young engineering student God spoke to the pastor-to-be in a vision: “God told me to go and raise people of power, people who will not be second-class citizens”, he said. In 1989 he answered the call, and started pastoring his own church. With no money, they held their first meetings under a bridge, just by the roadside, where the vehicles flew overhead, he tells me. Now, we are sitting in his pleasant office adjacent to his church, located on a major plot in a good area of Abuja, the Nigerian capital. It has been difficult to secure an appointment with him as he has a hectic schedule; preaching, travelling, attending to the many managerial tasks involved in running a big church, meetings with church members and other sectors of society. He continued his reflection: “But now, now it is almost like the in-thing! We are now making influence; we are making impact all over the world!”

His experience is not exclusively Nigerian. Pentecostalism is now the second-largest Christian segment in the world after Catholicism, with its numerical heartland firmly located, and growing, in the global south (Freston 2001; Jenkins 2006). It is one of the biggest religious movements today in countries as diverse as South Korea, the Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria, Chile, Brazil, and Guatemala. In the course of just a few decades Pentecostals have moved from the periphery to the centre in several African and Latin American countries. These “religious fanatics”, as many outside the movement saw them, have, despite continued scepticism from many people, indeed become mainstream. They have gone from shunning society to actively embracing it. This process has led to many changes, both within the movement as well as to the larger society. These changes are the focus of this thesis.

Given the many similarities in how Pentecostalism has evolved, across the continents over recent decades, the lack of comparative case-study research on Pentecostalism and politics is striking. The diverse Pentecostal movement in countries such as Nigeria and Guatemala is among the most dynamic and successful movements in their countries. However, the few edited volumes that exist on Pentecostalism and politics globally focus not so much on this success, but rather on its failures or potential for success in supporting other political processes such as democratisation (Freston 2008; Lumsdaine 2009; Ranger 2008).
This project approaches Pentecostalism by examining Pentecostal practices and strategies for making the church a relevant actor in society. By examining two dissimilar countries – the African giant Nigeria and the smaller Central American country Guatemala – that both have experienced strong Pentecostal growth, this project asks an explorative and open question: what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big? Focusing on two countries where Pentecostalism is already big (in numbers) will also facilitate a move away from discussing the potential consequences of Pentecostal growth: Pentecostals are already having an impact on society and have to a large extent been successful in advancing their faith beyond the church. The political role of Pentecostalism in the global south has largely escaped the research agenda, in notable contrast to similar projects that evolved in the same period such as political Islamism. The focus has been on Pentecostalism as “emotional” and “spiritual”, rather than material, and as “a coping mechanism” or a second-order mechanism. Ruth Marshall (2009) has poignantly argued that it has been studied as a way of negotiating and making sense of changes in the contemporary world, be it poverty, urbanisation or modernisation. As this study will demonstrate, Pentecostals are actively pursuing a public and a political agenda that goes well beyond the congregation, laying claim to politics, education, welfare, entertainment and sport, business, and the media. Contrary to what secularisation theorists argued, the processes of democratisation, increased freedom of association, globalisation, and modernisation have increased rather than diminished the role of public religion (Toft et al. 2011). José Casanova has called this process the de-privatisation of religion, a process whereby religion refuses to remain in the private realm and instead makes claims on the public (Casanova 1994). This project explores how the Pentecostal movement relates to society and the religious other as it has moved from periphery to centre. Have Pentecostals lost the original revivalist fire and adapted to majority society?

Understanding how religions go public offers not only perspectives on how religion is changing, but also how society is changing. The lens of “religion” is but one way of examining contemporary societies, but given its changing and expanding role, it is, I argue, one of the most revealing.
1.1 Research puzzles, and some preliminary findings

The prominence Pentecostalism is experiencing in countries such as Guatemala and Nigeria is historically new. What happens when Pentecostalism becomes big? To examine this immense question, four main puzzles and research questions guide the inquiries in this thesis. These questions arise out of my empirical work, framed in the light of the theoretical contributions of José Casanova (1994) and others. As explored below, two main descriptive research questions have guided the research:

- What are the functions and the roles of Pentecostal umbrella organisations in Guatemala and Nigeria?
- How are Pentecostals engaging in society?

These two questions are interlinked and form the basis for the empirical chapters (4-7). The first question emphasises internal relations, and how Pentecostal diversity is negotiated and brings forward a discussion of Pentecostal (dis)unity. The second question focuses on external relations, especially how Pentecostals engage in society with a particular focus on the economic sector, in politics and in the public sphere, as well as in relation to other religious actors.

Then, based on discussions of these questions, and by comparing and contrasting the two cases, I proceed to sketch out different Pentecostal strategies for making their brand of faith relevant in society.

- How does Pentecostal inclusion in society affect both Pentecostalism and society?
- How does a focus on Pentecostal practices in Nigeria and Guatemala enhance our understanding of the role of public religion?

The puzzles, and some preliminary answers

First, on one side, Pentecostalism is a very loosely-defined movement characterized by competition and great diversity. The flexibility in this lay-driven movement, the possibility of opening a church with no bureaucratic hindrances such as the need for established doctrines; theological training for pastors, or approval from an external religious authority has facilitated its growth enormously. However, this flexibility has also become a problem for the movement
as authority and practice is increasingly questioned, both from within and outside the movement.

On the other hand, despite its diversity and competition, there is a strong sense of unity and common cause in this movement. Increasingly, as Pentecostalism has grown in Nigeria and Guatemala, various Pentecostal umbrella representations have increased their roles in society and within the movement, adding to the idea that there actually is one movement, however unstructured it may be. This process is aided by external factors, as the state, other religions, and civil society need a Pentecostal interlocutor supporting and moulding the idea of, as I will argue, an imagined Pentecostal community. The Nigerian pastor said above that “we are now impacting the whole world”. This unspecified “we” may project both a local and global imagined Pentecostal community. These issues of diversity and unity will be explored by looking at umbrella organisations in the two countries to answer the question “What are the functions and the roles of Pentecostal umbrella organisations in Nigeria and Guatemala?”

Second, Pentecostalism, particularly in its neo-Pentecostal version, has a revolutionary message and aims to transform society, to create a new Nigeria, a new Guatemala, to “create people of power, who will not be second-class citizens”. But this agenda has not translated into a coherent Pentecostal political ideology, at least not as we think of ideology in conventional terms; the Pentecostal vote is for instance not uniform, and no Pentecostal political parties have enjoyed success in Nigeria and Guatemala. This study will argue that by entering different sectors of society, be it education, welfare, media, business or politics, this diverse movement is making its presence strongly felt. In fact, by examining Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Guatemala, I discovered that Pentecostals engage so actively in society, especially the media and the extended public sphere, the business sector, and political sector, that these practices have become an integral part of what Pentecostalism now is. In general, studies on Pentecostalism and politics have had a fairly limited definition of the “political”, concentrating on conventional political behaviours such as forming political parties, voting patterns, or confronting politicians. While Pentecostalism in both countries have left their formerly apolitical stands and explicitly joined political parties or run for office, these overt political acts are only one side of their societal engagement beyond the church. This thesis argues that by seeing the source of power in society as multi-institutional, not just referring to the formal governance of the state, we will obtain a better understanding of how religions go
public. By examining Pentecostal practices and presence in these various sectors in the two countries, this project thus asks: “How are Pentecostals engaging in society?”

As a revivalist movement preaching that the old ways are bad and the only way to salvation is through their mode of faith, the Pentecostal movement has been characterised by a sectarian view of society, marked by hostility towards “the world” and especially to other religions. This hostility has been reciprocated, as the established religions have viewed these newcomers with great suspicion. But the dynamics with the “world” have changed as Pentecostalism has grown; Pentecostals have in the course of just three decades made a remarkable journey from periphery to centre stage in the two countries. While Pentecostals have indeed left some of their former sectarian characteristics and become entangled in “world affairs”, a central argument of this thesis is that what is more striking is how the “world” has become entangled in Pentecostal affairs. Guided by empirical work and framed by theoretical questions set out by Casanova (1994) this thesis examines the relationships between society and religion and asks: “How does Pentecostal inclusion in society affect Pentecostalism, and society?”

Third, without a Mecca or a Rome, without a home territory, Pentecostalism has been called the first “truly global religion”, simultaneously global and local (Casanova 2008:115). Compared to other Christian churches in Africa and Latin America, Pentecostal churches managed to quickly nationalise both in terms of a contextual relevant theology, funding structures, and national religious authority figures. The other side of Pentecostalism is its strong, globally-recognisable features. A German, Nigerian, Guatemalan, or South Korean born-again might very well be reading the same books, listening to the same songs, watching the same movies, and commenting on the same Facebook page. This project is the first to undertake an in-depth comparison between two countries situated in different continents in the Pentecostal worldly context. It reveals that there are remarkable similarities across the continents as to how this religion goes public. As a “child of its time”, a modern religion, the Pentecostal way of doing religion in the 21st century is carved out in an intimate interplay with current social, economic, and political conditions. Liberalisation, democratisation, increased freedom of association, new media technology, and weak welfare states have opened up considerable space for non-state actors in Africa and Latin America. The growth of Pentecostalism has run parallel to this process, entering spheres formerly controlled by
other elites, leading to the question: “How does a focus on Pentecostal practices in Guatemala and Nigeria enhance the scholarly study of contemporary public religion?”

In sum, these questions facilitate a discussion of what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big. These questions reflect an explorative approach aimed at examining religion in a societal context as well as a comparative, historical research agenda.

**Previous research: A preliminary discussion**

The extensive growth of Pentecostalism was first “discovered” in the academic corridors of the West through the influential works of Stoll (1990) and Martin (1990), who documented Protestant growth across Latin America. Martin’s first line indicates the newness of the topic when he writes about the Pentecostal movement in 1990: “a quite extraordinary and little-known development” (Martin 1990:1). Growth coincided with democratisation processes and the liberalisation and privatisation of the state. This background has been decisive in framing the work on Pentecostalism and societal impact the years since.

If there has been one theme that has united research on Pentecostalism and politics across the continents, it is the question of how Pentecostalism relates to democracy (Freston 2001; Freston 2008; Rangers 2008). While some see global Pentecostalism as a way of bringing about a democratic culture, envisioning a “cultural revolution” that will gradually bring about a Protestant western-style society (Martin 1990), most observers are much more cautious. Several studies have indeed ended with the “conclusion” that Pentecostalism *may* be good for democracy, or *may not*, but that it is finally difficult to determine (Freston 2008; Rangers 2008; Steigenga 2001). The focus has been on Protestantism’s ability to foster democratic culture, an economic ethos, or a dissenting political voice (Anderson 2009). Following some of the misleading grand theories of the 1990s that explained Pentecostalism as an extension of the U.S. religious right and thus an uniformly conservative force (Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose 1996), most scholars call for careful country-to-country analyses that respect the complexities of each situation. There is however no doubt that global Pentecostalism has many similarities (Martin 2006; Poewe 1994) and that some of its growth can be attributed to similar phenomena of democratisation, liberalisation, globalisation, and new media technology (Toft et al. 2011), beyond the attributes of Pentecostalism itself, such as the strong missionary seal,
flexibility, and relevance to people from all walks of life. These issues will be explored more fully in the theoretical chapter (3).

1.2 Research Design
Theory and method serve as tools to frame this project and will be discussed more in-depth later, but for now I will outline the overall research design of this project. The main question of this thesis is what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big. Obviously there are many answers to such a broad question, so to enable a reliable analysis, I have made many choices during this process that I will seek to make clear through a thorough discussion of the thesis design.

First, this study is a comparative, qualitative case-based study. The comparative research approach addresses several debates. By examining the same phenomenon (Pentecostalism) in two dissimilar cases (Nigeria and Guatemala), this project aims to uncover both similarities and differences in how Pentecostalism goes public with the aim of contributing to the scholarly debate on religion and politics in general, and Pentecostalism in particular. The comparative interest arose through the observation that Pentecostalism appears remarkably similar in widely-different contexts in its agenda to transform society and as expressed in society. Yet the limited cross-continental research that exists tends to stress the differences among the various countries, with calls for case-by-case analysis. This caution is particularly born out of misguided, grand theories of Pentecostal politics being either “good” or “bad” for the emerging democracies in the global south. Instead, this project proposes to move the debate “beyond democracy”, and beyond ideological left and right characteristics, with the aim of examining Pentecostalism more as a first-order project than its potential contributions to other projects\(^1\). While the democracies in Nigeria and Guatemala can to a large extent be called a disappointment, Pentecostalism has been a success. Success is obviously difficult to measure, and both many Pentecostals and observers would likely object to the term given the very broad though largely-unspecified agenda of transforming society as a whole for the better. For Pentecostals who thought the revival would bring about dramatic improvements to society, Pentecostalism has been a disappointment, as the empirical chapters make clear. In describing them as successful I do not of course suggest that all their aims are fulfilled, but in

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\(^1\) To suggest that Pentecostalism is a first-order project does not at all mean to suggest that Pentecostalism is not a hybrid category, constituted and negotiated by its historical, political, cultural, and economic contexts. The analytical categories of religion have long been scrutinized and their hybridity has been thoroughly acknowledged.
both Nigeria and Guatemala the broad Pentecostal movement has been a success when judged by measurements such as number of adherents, robust institutions, presence in the public sphere, economic strength, and profound influence on other religions.²

This project is ambitious in trying to answer the very broad question of what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big in two very different national contexts. The interest is in the politics of Pentecostalism, in a broad sense: what is the Pentecostal agenda for impacting society, and what are the means to achieve this? First, a preliminary discussion on “the political” is necessary to clarify the project’s research design.

The political

The first inspiration for this project was an innovative comparative project by Paul Freston (2001)³. He did a brief overview of 27 different countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa with the aim of investigating Pentecostalism and its involvement in politics (Freston 2001). While joining most scholars of religion and politics in not defining “politics” in his books, it runs through the various chapters that it is understood as conventional political methods in civil society such as electoral behaviour, voicing public criticism, launching political parties, and running in elections. This view on politics soon became too limiting, as I studied the field. During my first field trip to Nigeria, I spent a lot of time reading newspapers and I remember in particular the first time I found news about Pentecostals in every single section of the paper: in news; in business; in sports; in “highlife” (the celebrity section); in the “religious” section, and also through paid advertisements.

This media representation reflects a multi-faceted Pentecostal strategy of impacting different sections of society. While Pentecostals surely are engaged in explicit politics, the movement is deeply present in other institutions of society, such as the media, education, and business. Telling a single story of conventional political methods is a misrepresentation of how Pentecostals seek impact in society. It was also a difficult perspective for a comparative project, because the conventional “political” is so contextually bound, intimately linked to local history and systems of governance. Troubled with the category of “politics”, I found

² For making this argument about success, I am indebted to the work of Davis and Robinson, who make similar success claims in their research (2012) on four different religious movements: The Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt), Shas (Israel), Communion e Liberazione (Italy), and the Salvation Army (U.S.).

³ There are, to my knowledge, only two case-based cross-comparative works by a single author so far, namely Freston (2001) who examine 27 countries, and an article by Adeboye (2006) which compares Nigeria and Brazil.
assistance in José Casanova’s focus on public religions, and how religions relate differently to the various spheres in history (Casanova 1994). This focus on how religion goes public opened up an explorative approach that made, in my view, a comparison more interesting.

Inspired by the findings in the field, and the work by Ruth Marshall on Nigerian Pentecostalism (2009) in particular, I started to appreciate a broader view of Pentecostal politics, one that takes serious the difficulty in separating the religious from the political in the Pentecostal faith. She writes:

Born-again political rationalities, and the terms in which power, redemption, sovereignty, and other political themes are staged in practices and professions of faith, stubbornly resist the distinction between the sacred and the secular we have come to take for granted in Western society [...] (Marshall 2009:3).

She argues that Pentecostals do politics by engaging in spiritual warfare against demons of corruption or by occupying the public space with posters carrying bible verses, and shows in her work how “the language of faith is truly performative” and constitutes both an act of faith and an action in the world (Marshall 2009:4). Similar arguments about the inadequacies of the concepts we employ have been made by Kevin O’Neill; in his work on a neo-Pentecostal church in Guatemala City, he argues:

Christian citizens do a great deal, but they do things that ultimately frustrate Western, ostensibly secular, and deeply liberal expectations of what it means to participate as a citizen of an emerging democracy” (O’Neill 2010: xvi)

A shift from the political to the public facilitates a wider appreciation of how Pentecostals relate to the world, and by their changing relations, how they impact the world. Without attempting to suggest that the viewpoints of this study are an exhaustive examination of how Pentecostals go public, it is the aim of this project to shift the emphasis from explicit, conventional political methods towards a more multifaceted view of politics.

The multiple-case study

The case selection is empirically driven. I chose two countries that, at the outset, share very little except for notable Pentecostal growth. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009: 18). Applying case study methods thus gives focus to both phenomenon and context. Further, the
cases are instrumental in the sense that it is the cross-cutting phenomenon of Pentecostalism that is the main interest (Stake 2005:445). This does not mean that the two cases will not be scrutinized within their specific contexts, because they must and they will. A crucial aspect of this project is precisely that detailed knowledge of two dissimilar, but related cases brings to the fore new insights into Pentecostalism. The multiple case-study approach is simultaneously particular and general, moving back and forth between the two contexts.

I did not know at the outset if the two cases would manifest many common characteristics; they were chosen out of the idea that given the one common denominator, the experience of large Pentecostal growth, could offer a new and interesting perspective on Pentecostalism. At the beginning of the project I was familiar with Guatemala, but Nigeria was a new country for me. While bringing some expectations from the knowledge I had of the Guatemalan case, the Nigerian example was from the beginning so different that it took a long time before I managed to move beyond the particularities of each case. The theoretical move from politics to publics, and the framework found in sect-church theory, was decisive in enabling me to see Nigeria and Guatemala as comparable cases.

Rather than deliberately seeking either similarities or differences between the cases, I have intuitively done both. However, given that the little comparative case-based research on the Pentecostal movement that exists tends to emphasising the differences, a focus on similarities is both timely and constructive. The research conducted in this thesis found notable similarities in how Pentecostalism has developed and approached society in these two very different countries. Pentecostal strategies for transforming societies, as in the cases of Guatemala and Nigeria, are remarkably similar, and despite very different contexts this strategies have yielded several parallel results. These similarities are not discussed in a systemized manner in previous studies on Pentecostalism and politics. While there is considerable focus on global Pentecostal features, (Coleman 2000; Martin 2002; Meyer 2010), these works do not do case studies.

The data

The data has been collected through “thick” descriptions, through field studies such as interviews, observations, and collection of primary data. In addition the understanding of “the field” has been extended by the use of internet, making material such as newspaper articles,
Facebook updates from Pentecostal pastors and chat rooms available for me even in Oslo, at my office. Observations have been carried out in a wide range of Pentecostal churches, though mostly in urban centres, by attending public sermons and events. The formal semi-structured interviews focused on the leadership and organisational levels of pastors or trusted members of churches and officials in the umbrella organisations. The interviews have been important “navigators” in the field, giving the project new empirical material as well as invaluable perspectives on my research questions. However, interviews alone could not provide sufficient answers and a triangulation of different methods and sources was necessary (Stake 2005:453-454). The decision to tell large stories about very complex contemporary phenomena has made this study dependent on existing research. I draw extensively on the work of specialists on the two cases to complement and test my own data collection.

The focus of analysis

The next challenge was to determine how best to perform the analysis. The diversity within the broad Pentecostal movement, which Anderson suggests calling “Pentecostalism/s” given its many forms and directions (2010: 13), poses several methodological challenges: who are the authoritative Pentecostal actors, what constitutes Pentecostal practices, and does it make sense to talk only of one movement? In both Guatemala and Nigeria, Pentecostal umbrella organisations have gained momentum as institutions representing this extensive movement. I have chosen to examine these organisations not because they necessarily are the most important Pentecostal institutions, but because in their desire to be so, they display several revealing characteristics of the movement as an institution for the movement as well as representation in society. They embody the tension that exists in growth, between hanging onto the small sect-style focus of a Christian organisation which sets itself against the world, and achieving enough unity to influence the world and perhaps even become “worldly”. In choosing these institutions as the starting point, I also examine the prominent churches and pastors who are closely affiliated with these movements. However I have also interviewed, and collected material on, people outside these institutions, as becomes clearer from the methodological chapter (2).
1.2.1 What is Pentecostalism?
For good reasons, any study examining Pentecostalism demands a serious discussion about the validity of the very concept. In a sense, defining Pentecostalism ties into the general problems of defining religion: do we focus on beliefs, on practices and experiences, on institutions, on matters in time and space? Should we focus on similarities or on differences in this diverse movement? The definitions changes as we variously employ historical, theological, or social scientific approaches. On “the street”, definitions vary too; here there is a stronger focus on social location (rich, poor, urban, rural) or practices such as type of clothing, the roles of women in church (do they cover their hair? are they allowed to preach?); if speaking in tongues happens sporadically or is organised; if people “fall under the spirit”; if dancing is allowed, etc. With the immense Pentecostal varieties globally, and rapid changes in the movement, any definitions also needs to stay abreast of these developments.

The dramatic experiences of the U.S. Azusa Street Revival in 1906, where the Holy Spirit is believed to have fell upon the congregation on a specific date, has long been reckoned as the birth of the Pentecostal movement. But the validity of this event as the canonical starting point is coming under question. This change is partly a result of the increasing focus on non-western forms of Pentecostalism, where non-US Pentecostal movements claim the origin from elsewhere. But it also reflects a change within the movement itself, which is shifting away from “the miracle” or the “suddenly from heaven” experience towards a view that favours a more gradual development (Anderson 2010: 22). There is now a growing assessment that the Pentecostal movement has multiple origins, in addition to multiple practices and beliefs (Anderson 2010; Kalu 2008).

In a cross-continental study like this thesis, definitions become particularly salient, as the research on Nigeria and Guatemala, as well as the Pentecostals themselves, all uses different concepts. In Latin America, most Pentecostals call themselves evangélicos, but to complicate matters, not all “evangelicals” are Pentecostals. The term “evangelicals” is used to encompass all Protestants, but since the vast majority of Protestants are Pentecostals, many researchers opt for also using the term when describing Pentecostalism exclusively. In Guatemala most Pentecostals will call themselves evangélico or cristiano, while in Nigeria Pentecostal, but mostly born-again, is used. As a revival or reform movement, Pentecostals portray

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4 For good accounts on different approaches to defining Pentecostalism, see for instance Anderson (2010), Bergunder (2010), and Kalu (2008).
themselves as alternatives to the old ways: the other Christian denominations have lost the original calling to which Pentecostals say they respond. Thus they are characterised first by what they are not: in Guatemala most references are made in relation to the Catholic Church, as the phrase “Cristiano, no Católico” testifies to (Brennemann 2010). In Nigeria, where the religious scene is more pluralistic, Pentecostals will often refer to being “born-again” in relation to “the rest” who are not. While a minority of Muslims have also converted, the majority of Nigerians were already Christians prior to becoming born again, a process often described as going from being a “nominal Christian” to having a “living” faith. Nominal Christians are, for the Pentecostal, a mere “bench warmer”, someone who has no “living faith”, but who goes to church out of habit or culture.

There are very few criteria to determine who is a Pentecostal, but there are several characteristics: in general, Pentecostals have a focus on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the practices of these gifts, and an emphasis on experience over doctrine (Anderson 2010; 2004:13). God is seen as interfering actively in life on earth, both for individuals and for communities, as are various demons. Pentecostals have an “enchanted” worldview in which the spiritual world is a reality to which human lives must relate (Casanova 2010). As Birgit Meyer describes the Pentecostal vision of “the world”:

[...]in order to “see” what goes on behind the surface of appearance, extraordinary vision power – the spirit of discernment – is required. Hence the emphasis on pastors, prophets, and believers who have the power to “see”. As this spiritual war affects every aspect of existence, it may well be found to operate in a person’s body, but also in public spaces, institutions or even whole countries (Meyer 2010:117).

The Pentecostal faith requires individual commitment, obtained through conversion and ideally a committed life to church, and Pentecostals are ideally highly practicing individuals. While the membership is predominantly women, the leadership is heavily male with some exceptions (Freston 2008:15). Pentecostalism is characterised by how it successfully draws on its transnational roots while above all remaining locally relevant; it is a global religion, yet always deeply local (Marshall 1998; Meyer 2010). Pentecostalism everywhere emphasises making a break with past, and emphasis the possibility for new beginnings. It makes extensive use of mass media and employs new methods for spreading the faith, Pentecostals have flexible and adaptable institutions, and enjoys exceptional growth and success (Robbins 2004).
Given the prominence of the charismatic movement within the mainline denominations, especially the Catholic Church but also other churches, the traditional characteristics of Pentecostal faith such as speaking in tongues, focus on experience over dogma, and belief in miracles and a spiritual world is increasingly cross-denominational. Many call this process the *pentecostalisation* of faith (Gooren 2010; Thorsen 2012). The Charismatic movement within the Catholic Church for instance, is also increasingly similar to Pentecostal churches in the way they organise: it is lay-led, activities are frequent, they are more willing to pay for their churches through tithing, and they meet in buildings outside the church. Given these many similarities, some researchers of Pentecostalism and politics thus suggest looking more at belief and social location, rather than institutional belonging, in order to determine political views and actions (Schäfer 2011; Steigenga 2001). The pentecostalisation of religion, clearly evident in Nigeria and Guatemala, and the effect on public Pentecostalism will be treated later.\(^5\)

Throughout this thesis, I operate with the two major typologies of Pentecostalism, classical Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism. The distinction between the two was greater 20 years ago and it can now often be difficult to tell them apart. Neo-Pentecostalism has been particularly characterised by its prosperity theology and an active engagement with the “world”, while the opposite has been more characteristic for the classical Pentecostals, who leaned on a variation of holiness theology and separation from the “world”. However, there has been considerable convergence between the two towards a middle position, although meaningful differences remain.

I have chosen to use the term Pentecostalism, which embodies both classical and neo-Pentecostalists. I thus focus on institutional belonging rather than cross-denominational features such as faith or religious experiences. There are two main reasons for that decision, both connected with self-identification. First, the empirical point of departure of this thesis lies in the two countries’ Pentecostal umbrella organisations that expend considerable effort on the unity of the Pentecostal movement. These groups have become important national symbols for the Pentecostal movement at large and its member churches. In Guatemala, the

\(^5\) The term “renewalist”, most prominently used by the US-based Pew Forum, is an umbrella term used to describe both the charismatic movement (outside Pentecostalism), and Pentecostalism (Pew Forum 2006). “Charismatic Christianity” is another umbrella term, used to mean charismatics across denominations, including Pentecostalism, (Ojo 2006; Poewe 1994), which incorporates what others have called “pneumacentric religion” (Chesnut 2003).
Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, (AEG, in its Spanish acronym) incorporates mainline churches such as Baptists, but the great majority are classical Pentecostals, but also neo-Pentecostals. The AEG can thus also be said to reflect the composition of Protestants in the country, where classical Pentecostal churches, such as the Assemblies of God and Church of God are the largest. In Nigeria I focus on the churches belonging to (or who could potentially be members) one of the two umbrella organisations Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN).

Secondly, despite the increasing convergence of beliefs and practice between for instance Catholic charismatics and Pentecostals in Guatemala, there remain clear institutional antagonisms and strategies to keep them distanced. In practice, I thus take an emic perspective on this diverse movement, defining who is inside and outside the movement based on how these national representatives do it. As argued below, thinking of the Pentecostal movement as an *imagined community*, with great diversity but also with key defining characteristics that set it apart from other communities in society is a useful entry into thinking about the movement.

### 1.3 Structure of this thesis

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first three chapters describe the research design of the thesis and the reasons and strategies behind that design, thus providing a framework for the rest of the thesis. Chapter Two discusses methodology and accounts for the choices done in this study. The data collected for this project is varied, and most of it is collected through fieldwork in Nigeria and Guatemala. Interviews, field observations and written material constitute, along with the comparative aspect, the backbone of this project. Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework, and starts by examining the literature on Pentecostalism and politics. Here I suggest moving the debate beyond democratisation-theories and presents José Casanova’s framework for how religion goes public as a starting point for the discussion.

Chapters 4 through 7 then discuss the two cases, Nigeria and Guatemala. They are treated separately, starting with Nigeria. Some comparative reflections arise as the case of Guatemala is treated in depth, but the two cases do not fully come together before the discussion in the
last chapter, Chapter 8. This chapter merges the two cases with the aim of discussing the main findings of this thesis, framed in the light of the theoretical framework.
2 Researching religion and politics: Methodological reflections

This project is a qualitative study situated in the scholarly study of religion, but draws on several disciplines to help solve both analytical and methodological challenges. Two main research strategies were needed to address the research puzzles of this study. First, the qualitative case study approach is well-suited for addressing the questions outlined earlier, and made fieldwork a necessary tool for data collection. Second, the comparative approach is important both for the country-specific analysis as well as for the theoretical interest of this study. This chapter details the methodological choices guiding this present study. But first, in order to contextualise this project in its academic tradition, a word on the discipline of religious studies is necessary. Then I proceed to discuss the data for this thesis, both how they were collected and how they are analysed, including a reflection on research ethics.

2.1 A note on the discipline: Religious studies

While I have had a focus on religion throughout my studies, the proper name of the discipline has been up for discussion many times. As an undergraduate student at the University of Bergen (Norway) I studied “Religionsvitenskap” (translated into English as “Comparative Religion”). I moved to Oslo to do my Masters at the University of Oslo, in what was called “Religionshistorie” (“history of religion”). In between Bergen and Oslo I spent a semester at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and attended a cross-disciplinary course of “religion and politics” at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I have worked with religion in a multi-disciplinary research context (Peace Research Institute, Oslo) and am currently doing my Ph.D. at the Norwegian School of Theology. In this fragmented process I have had to reflect on my identity as a scholar of religion and on the discipline to which I belong.

In many ways my path is a reflection of an increasingly diverse research field, as well as a discipline that finds itself in a “chronic state of imprecision” (Røislien 2010: 16). The glue of our discipline is, I would argue, the endless discussions of what religion is and does, which can be tiring but are always important. Its increasing multi-disciplinarily is a strength but also carries the danger of fragmentation. Religious studies in Europe developed in a negating relationship with theology, its nearest kin and thus in a sense also in a sense its sternest enemy. But given my research interest I have been less concerned with theology as my “significant other” and more concerned with the social science disciplines and how the scholarly study of religion relates to, differ from, and contributes to, those sciences.
Interest in religion has risen considerably outside of religious studies, as many political scientists and sociologists have re-discovered “religion” as a central component in understanding and examining societies (Gorski 2004; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Philpott 2009). The subject of religion is no longer a theme studied by the very few interested. This scholarly development has been an advantage for studies of religion and politics, and throughout this thesis project, I have drawn on this work from anthropology, sociology, and political science for both methodological and theoretical perspectives. But what perspective can the discipline of religion itself offer to the diverse field of religion and politics? I would argue that main strength of the discipline of religion is the “perpetuum mobile” of our discussions: “what is this religion, really?” Religion figures high on the international and nationals agenda and also in everyday lives. The study of religion can contribute to problematizing simplistic views that “religion” is something distinct, as opposed to for instance politics, or that religion is primarily about the sacred, not the material. Most academic studies now challenge these dichotomies in different ways.\(^6\) But religious studies can also contribute by making religion, however defined, a “first-order project” in the study, as opposed to the state, or processes such as democratisation or modernisation, which are often the core study objects in other disciplines. Not because religion is more important, but because religion is one important perspective, among many. As will become clear throughout this project I argue that keeping a keen eye on what religion is and does will also offers new insights on other spheres of society such as the economy, political practice and the state. Religion in Nigeria and Guatemala has multiple roles in society, and much like the economic sphere, offers a varied and important perspective on changes in the two countries.

Talal Asad has made an important critique of Clifford Geertz’s definition of religion (which was dominant when I studied in the 1990s), saying it puts too much emphasis on Protestant forms of doing religion, making Protestantism the implicit model of religion per se (Asad 1993; Lincoln 2003).\(^7\) He warns of definitions that emphasise one aspect, such as faith, over practice, as this creates hierarchies of what constitutes “proper” religion. There is power, and

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\(^6\) For a good review and discussion on the current use of the concept of religion within the social sciences, see the taxonomy of five major approaches discussed and categorised by Woodhead (2011): religion variously as culture, identity, relationship, practice, and power.

\(^7\) Here I would add the qualifiers “contemporary” and “mainline” Protestantism, e.g. the Lutheran church, Presbyterian, Methodist etc. Pentecostalism as practiced in Guatemala and Nigeria offers a different perspective on “Protestantism” than these academic works discuss.
politics, in defining religion. In Nigeria and Guatemala, traditional religions have lost terrain as monotheistic religions have swept the terrain. The competition for authenticity within a single tradition is fierce, and here the arguments over what constitutes religion are frequent. In both countries, non-Pentecostal Christian critics may argue that Pentecostalism (particularly its neo-Pentecostal version) is not really about religion, but rather about business, about making money. Alternatively, they may note that the pastors who lack formal religious training, as many Pentecostals do, are not really pastors, and thus do not constitute proper religious authority. Or the other way: some Pentecostals in Nigeria will argue that the problem with the militant Islamist group Boko Haram is first and foremost a religious problem, and criticise those who use political, economic, and social arguments in explaining both the cause for the militant upspring and possible remedies for combatting the insurgency. In Guatemala and Nigeria prominent Pentecostal leaders have explained the nation's economic and social problems as a manifestation of a spiritual war, which needs to be combatted by the same tool of waging spiritual warfare.

In approaching Pentecostalism as a field of study I have benefitted from how Bruce Lincoln has worked on operationalizing the analysis of religion. He proposes including a minimum of four domains – discourse, practice, community, and institution – in the analysis:

- **A discourse** whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status...
- **A set of practices** whose goal is to produce a proper world and/or proper human subjects, as defined by a religious discourse to which these practices are connected...
- **A community** whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices...
- **An institution** that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value…

I find the four domains helpful in structuring the empirical research in this project, though I emphasise the fluidity and negotiations among religious communities more than Lincoln does. Members themselves in a religious community such as a Pentecostal church also shape religious discourses, practices, communities, and institutions, and are not merely shaped by them. Throughout this dissertation I move between these four sub-fields. Each of the domains

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8 Lincoln (2003: 5-7). I am inspired by Røislien (2010) and her work on religion in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) for the discussion on the concept of religion.
relate actively to each other, so that discourse is part of practice, practice depends on institutions, etc., and all form part of what can be called a “religion” (Lincoln 2006:7).

2.1.1 The discipline of religion and fieldwork
The last two decades have seen a noticeable increase in fieldwork-based research within religious studies. The academic shifts from textual studies to lived religion necessitated a different methodology, both as a means of obtaining new data and to assess and validate our research questions (Frydenlund 2011; Natvig 2006). What characterises the discipline of religion’s way of doing fieldwork is a combined focus on interviews, observation, and texts and a focus on our shared unit of analysis, “religion”, however defined. In addition, there is in the discipline of religion a strong sensitivity for history, even in the studies of contemporary religion, as “all religious phenomena, religious movements, and religions belong in an historical context, and a synchronic study is incomplete without the historical perspective” (Natvig 2006:214, author’s translation). Theoretical and methodological perspectives are intimately interwoven. Our changing conceptions of what religion is and does are reflected in our changed methodology. A recent focus is to study religion “out of context”, to see how religious ideas and practices are performed outside the church, in schools, in public administration, and in court rooms that necessitates a different research focus and also methodology (Bender et al. 2013). The methodology in this project takes Lincoln’s analytical model of religion seriously, as well as these calls for taking religion “out of context”, beyond the walls of the church and beyond the hard covers of the books, and aims to follow religion in society.

2.2 The Data: sampling and collection
This thesis explores the role of religion in society and asks the very broad question of what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big, implying an interest in both what happens to the movement and to society. The interest is in Pentecostalism as public religion and how this diverse movement relates to and affects society. It is thus an ambitious project that casts a broad net. I have in this project relied on a variety of sources such as interviews, observation, media, the internet, sermons, official documents, and existing research. I have searched for data that offers different perspectives on the research questions posed earlier, and account for the different sources and discuss my application of these sources below. While qualitative research has gained more ground in many disciplines the last two to three decades, there are no agreed-upon standards of how qualitative works should be measured (Haugen 2013a). The
most important tool we have is to account for how, and why, data is collected, analysed, and presented.

**Interviews: Sampling methods**

Qualitative research normally relies on a few informants instead of the representative sample sought after in a quantitative study. Aiming for a representative sample of Pentecostal actors in Nigeria and Guatemala would have necessitated a broad-scale quantitative survey method, and even then would have been an almost impossible task.\(^9\) Given the myriad of Pentecostal activities, I chose to start my inquiries through two umbrella organisations in those countries. There are three main reasons for this. First, in their work in uniting Pentecostalism internally and representing Pentecostalism externally, they likely display important tendencies regarding conflict and cooperation in both spheres. Secondly, choosing similar institutions made the comparative aspect easier to structure for the author. Finally, since little research has been done on these increasingly important institutions, studying them is a worthwhile task in itself.

Having noted that, it is not these institutions per se that are my abiding interest, but rather the larger story they tell about the Pentecostal community and larger society. I have interviewed several people outside these institutions. As I was making my way through the field, these organisations became a sort of map, a way to contextualise the informant, or a church, depending on the informant’s relation to these organisations. “Everyone” knows the *Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala* and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and has an opinion on these organisations. It proved to be a good way of initiating a deeper reflection on the larger Pentecostal movement.

The interviews were conducted in the course of four field trips in 2011, 2012, and 2013. I spent five weeks in Guatemala (March–April 2012), and three shorter trips to Nigeria (two weeks in March 2011; two weeks in September 2012; one week in March 2013). The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I had prearranged topics that I wanted to discuss, but individualised for each new informant making it suitable for his or her role. I conducted 29 interviews and several informal talks with people in the congregations and with specialists in the field. 13 of the key interviews have been transcribed. In addition, I have transcribed speeches as well as an inauguration ceremony, presented in the Guatemala

\(^9\) The PEW Forum uses grand-scale surveys for their studies on global Pentecostalism. See for instance the 10-country report, which has been helpful for this project (Pew 2006).
chapter. While most of the interviewees are religious leaders, serving in administrative or “religious” functions, this project is not about the leaders themselves, but rather they function to navigate the field of Pentecostalism in their countries. The majority are men and Pentecostal, but I have also interviewed religious leaders in other Christian congregations, such as Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. As I entered the field qualitatively and comparatively, the interviews became crucial for navigating the field, situating my research questions, and understanding some of the complexities within the movement. However, I rely heavily on additional field sources as well as existing research in order to make the arguments throughout this thesis.

**Internet sources: Extending the research field**

Pentecostals are highly innovative in using various media technologies, which facilitates the gathering of information and diversifies sources for the researcher. The internet may be a research field in itself, where new forms of religious production can be investigated. Perhaps most importantly, the internet is itself a method, a virtual gatekeeper, for acquiring, assessing, and validating material (Røislien 2010:117)\(^\text{10}\). Facebook has been particularly valuable, both as a toolbox for research and as an object, in both the pre-fieldwork and post-fieldwork periods. It goes without saying that internet is also a site where important data is contained, much like the library, and has become integral to the research process. As a researcher living in Norway with limited possibilities of accessing the physical field, the computer offers lively and interactive research grounds for research. By monitoring newspapers, Twitter, following online discussions, streaming sermons from large and small cities in Guatemala and Nigeria, and receiving daily status updates on my personal Facebook page from the many pastors with whom I am connected on Facebook, I am constantly interacting with this new understanding of “the field”. Even when I am not working, checking my Facebook account, there in between messages of what my friend had for dinner and a childhood photograph of a distant relative, there is almost always a status update from a Guatemalan or Nigerian church/pastor. I have also monitored the public Facebook profiles of several politicians, newspapers, and organisations on a regular basis. Sometimes it feels as since I entered this field I have never really left it.

\(^{10}\) For more, see Røislien (2010), who explores the topic of Facebook as a “Hub-Keeper” in field research; a term employed to refer to three primary methodological functions: a) in identification and recruitment of interviewees; b) as a hub containing data; and c) as a gateway for validation of data.
By studying the public profiles of nearly 50 of the most popular Pentecostal pastors in Guatemala and Nigeria, I have been able to access the field in those countries. I have learned who are the most popular online, discovered contact networks through browsing their sites, and became familiar with their preferred rhetorical choices and topics through receiving daily status updates on Facebook and Twitter. Congregation home pages can certainly be very valuable; online services can be seen, books can be ordered, sermons can be read, and the often wide variety of church activities is exposed for the researcher to see. Still, Facebook offers a more interactive approach that is more frequently updated, with links to revealing events, and is a site where Pentecostals actively engage with their pastors through commenting on status updates or other posts. The sites also offer possibilities to contact the church as well as information on where and how to visit them. As such, Facebook and the internet at large, was instrumental in preparing my field research, both keeping me in the field and serving as a regular source of validation. Capturing the public sphere, in which the internet is one arena, is a key concern for Pentecostals in Nigeria and Guatemala. However, not all Pentecostal churches are equally active on-line: Those churches that have been most successful in building up online services are most likely to be mega-churches, elite churches, and tend to display more neo-Pentecostal characteristics than the more classical elements.

Observation

One of the things that strike most visitors to Nigeria and Guatemala is the sheer volume of religion in the public sphere. Music, churches, billboards, and missionaries fill the streets, and the newspapers and TV stations frequently cover religious events. Simply being in Guatemala and Nigeria, driving in the streets, reading glossy magazines, and talking about religion with the taxi driver are natural, and important, parts of field research. Writing about her fieldwork experience in Nigeria, Rosalind Hackett argues that the data she collected in “everyday practices” such as shopping, gossiping, and reading the news turned out to be as important as visiting institutionalised forms of religion, if not more so (Hackett 2001a: 104). During my field trips, I visited approximately 40 churches and observed Sunday sermons, miracle crusades, or Tuesday prayer evenings, and more. Visiting the churches is crucial to contextualising a church within a society. Given the great independence and variety within the Pentecostal movement, the church buildings, the décor, the songs, the churchgoers, and the style vary enormously and are compelling indicators of social, political, and economic orientation. Newcomers are often invited to step forward at the end of a service, and are
guided to a separate room for a discussion, an opportunity I often accepted to learn about the 
church, present myself and my research interest.

**Collection of primary sources**

A large volume of material, including official documents, sermons, media debates, books, and 
various internet resources, was collected. Most churches of a certain size have shops with a 
selection of books, taped sermons, and religious decorations. I have spent several hours in 
these shops buying books, taped sermons, merchandise, and taking note of what kinds of 
items are sold. Given the comparative aspect of this project, it was also important to compare 
the type of literature sold at similar shops in the two countries; the similarities in titles and 
authors were striking, and merits further examination in a future study. Most pastors in the 
eo-Pentecostal oriented churches, but also often in bigger classical Pentecostal churches, 
write books themselves. In Guatemala I visited the SETECA (*Seminario Teológico Centroamerico*) and searched the library for both primary sources and research materials not 
available through Norwegian libraries. Each day during my field trips I read several 
newspapers to get a glimpse of how religion, and Pentecostalism in particular, was covered. In 
addition, I have followed Guatemalan and Nigerian news closely the last 4 years, read books 
and attended conferences, striving to remain current on both the news and research fronts.

**2.2.1 Doing the interviews: Issues of access, trust and ethics**

Entering the research field, I naturally bring with me a complete set of assumptions, and I am 
also met with a set of assumptions, positive and negative, all of which influence the interview 
setting (Frydenlund 2011). There are several of my identities that influence how my 
informants view me. I am an outsider in many ways: I do not belong to a Pentecostal church 
(but I grew up in one and have thus also “insider” knowledge); I am an academic; a foreigner, 
and a Norwegian white woman.\(^\text{11}\) Pentecostals in Nigeria in particular, but also in Guatemala,

\(^{11}\) Simply being a woman, travelling on my own and pursuing an academic career, can be understood as 
displaying strongly feminist values. During an interview in a classical Pentecostal church in Nigeria, I asked the 
pastor if I could interview female leaders in the congregation. I received an appointment for the next day in 
where I was to meet two women appointed by the pastor. The two were married to prominent pastors in the 
congregation. Prior to the interview, I was asked by a senior male pastor to present all my questions in writing 
for his approval. We thus had a separate meeting before jointly meeting with the two women. He explained to 
me that he wanted to ensure my questions would not challenge the church’s view of gender roles in church. He 
stayed for the duration of the interview, actively responding to my questions for the women. In Nigeria, my 
Norwegian identity was not discussed (apart for the regular praise for Norwegian stock fish, hugely popular in 
Nigeria), but in Guatemala the prominent role of Norway in the country’s peace process was brought up on a 
couple of occasions, displaying clear negative perceptions of Norway’s alleged closeness to the guerrilla, and a 
perceived socialist agenda.
are constantly under criticism in the media, and in general from people outside the movement. It was evident that several of my informants feared negative coverage. I was received with caution by several of my informants, though at other times was greeted with more respect than I thought I deserved. Being a foreigner (and a guest) I was often placed at the front during church services, adding to the church’s international character. However, these issues of identity changed with each interview setting, dependent on the informant and his or her rank and role. Explaining the project, asking for consent, and giving the interviewee the option of anonymity proved good ways to start the interview process, not merely because consent is required to ensure ethical standards but also as a way of setting the terms for the conversation. Some of the informants had never been interviewed by a researcher before, while others were very media-savvy. I had a tape recorder, and given consent, I would put it on the table between us as a clear symbol of the character of the meeting.

On one occasion, I asked a Nigerian pastor who was visibly uncomfortable when we first met whether he was sure he wanted to do the interview. He replied that he did, but admitted he had been in doubt. However, he said, he had prayed about it and the Holy Spirit had given him the green light, so he was ready to answer all my questions. While the interviews were mostly on my terms, I set the agenda for the types of questions to be discussed, “God” was never far away: I have been prayed for, I have been given honorary seats during sermons, and I have been asked to “share a word” from the pulpit.

I was not just a “stranger” though. I would often tell my informants about my own upbringing in the 1970s and 1980s in a charismatic Pentecostal house fellowship in a small town in northern Europe, Norway. This church was characterised by many of the same features of the revival in Nigeria and Guatemala, but unlike in these two countries, the movement in Norway has not experienced the same growth. I found references to the same books, pastors and music in Nigeria and Guatemala that I remembered vividly from my own upbringing. This short reflection on what has happened since in my country was a deliberate attempt to foster a similar reflection on their part.

While I set the agenda for the meetings, this does not necessarily mean I always obtained either what I expected or what I asked for. An interview is a relational situation, and I would carefully test what types of questions were possible in each case (Kvale 1996). Matters that pertained to specific emic issues, in which the interviewee was asked about teaching or
doctrine for instance, were happily answered. Questions regarding finances or explicit politics sometimes received reluctant answers. There were also differences between the interviews in Guatemala and Nigeria. The Nigerians I spoke with were, compared to the Guatemalans, much more direct in talking about the task of church in society and also direct in their criticism of other churches and institutions. My Guatemalan informants, on the other hand, were much more careful. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in depth the reasons why might have been the case, but a “culture of silencing” is widely acknowledged by research on Guatemala, here the 36-year-old civil war and a brutal policing regime has made speaking one’s mind freely dangerous (Nelson 2009).

The interviews were conducted in offices or in public spaces such as cafes. I conducted the interviews in Guatemala in Spanish, while the interviews in Nigeria were in English. All but two of the interviewees were men. All have senior positions either in a church or a church-related organisation. Having interviews with more women may well have strengthened the project, and displayed better the diversity of Pentecostal engagement, and is a priority for future research. Having interviews with lay people or people working specifically in Pentecostal media, welfare, education, and business would have also have added value.

2.2.1.1 Gaining access to the field: Mapping the Pentecostal terrain
Gaining access to conduct the interviews was challenging. I am very grateful for all those who overcame their scepticism and made time in hectic schedules to meet with me, without having control of how I would analyse the data. The process of obtaining access was part of mapping the terrain. Pentecostal pastors of the mega-churches are superstars and people line up to meet with them. I, as the researcher, was only one of many in that line. Particularly in Nigeria, I saw first-hand the crowds filling up the hallways, patiently waiting for an appointment. I’ve seen people coming with very sick relatives hoping for a prayer, some advice, financial support, or even a miracle. As these congregations have grown into large businesses that resemble corporations, their pastors have to respond to all sorts of managerial demands. Telling non-Pentecostals (taxi drivers, hotel staff, shop owners, friends, etc.) my stories from meeting with prominent pastors would always stir reactions, whether good or bad, as these pastors prominence makes indifference an unlikely reaction among everyday people.
Upon entering the field, I depended on prior research, media, and the internet to act as “gatekeepers” in order to identify a set of relevant actors who could aid my research. I lived for two years in Guatemala (between 1992 and 1995), first as a 17-year-old exchange student year with a Guatemalan family in the Western highlands city of Huehuetenango, near the Mexican border. This family, which I still consider my extended family, attended a Pentecostal neighbourhood church, the Church of God (Iglesia de Dios E.C.), and therefore so did I. Social life was lived out in the church, and in that period this classical Pentecostal church was a major reference and activity point in my Guatemalan life. However, I had no contact with, and little experience of, neo-Pentecostal churches or the Guatemala City Pentecostal elite, a group I also needed to reach for this project. I spent my first weeks in Guatemala refreshing my Spanish, visiting churches to attend sermons, miracle crusades, bible reading sessions, praise nights, etc., going to Pentecostal bookshops and the library at the Protestant seminary (SETECA), and seeing specialists in the field. Gaining access to the churches as such was simple, as their activities are well-publicized and open to all. Over time, I received some positive replies from the phone calls and e-mails I had sent out, but far from all of my requests were answered. My inquiries went out to people who were either in or closely tied to the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) or parts of other Pentecostal or Christian alliances.

Nigeria was a completely new experience for me. My first travel to the country was truly explorative, visiting the largest city Lagos and the capital Abuja. I had no planned meetings, and awaited reply to dozens of e-mails. I visited dominant churches in the Pentecostal landscape, from those linked to the urban elite to small neighbourhood churches and the mega-churches. During my first visit, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) had no functional web sites and simply determining where the main offices were located was a difficult task. I was fortunate to receive help from a British-Nigerian academic with good connections in Abuja, which gave me a good informant who led to several more contacts. As in Guatemala, the security situation in Nigeria is difficult. Recent attacks from the militant group Boko Haram in the Abuja-area increased security arrangements around churches during my two last visits; normally all major churches employs private security personnel checking all church visitors (unrelated to the Boko Haram threat), but due to the recent attacks, federal police and military were involved in securing several of the major churches in the city. However, Boko Haram is only one aspect of the
security situation. Travelling in Nigeria is inevitably a challenging if fascinating experience
and high levels of crime and relative impunity make commuting difficult and put restrictions
as to how freely researchers can move around on their own. But this is a situation Nigerians,
and Guatemalans, relate to daily and thus forms part of the empirical context to which a study
such as mine must relate.

The insider-outsider discussion: Methodological agnosticism, and the emic and the etic.

Having belonged to a born-again church in my youth, it was with a great deal of curiosity but
also some nervousness that I entered the research field for this project. I had been outside this
community both professionally and personally for a long time, and I feared I would react
negatively to “returning” to a world view that I knew so well, but this time as an academic.
After a few stumbling encounters, however, I soon was filled with the intellectual curiosity I
had hoped for. The Pentecostal way of conducting religion is at times both intensely familiar
and very distant for me personally. Because of my background, the “Holy Spirit” is in many
ways less abstract then the workings of the stock market and far easier for me to explain then,
say, how it is possible to send people to the moon or how the internet works. The general
Pentecostal worldview and practice is coherent and logical to me, albeit not necessarily
personally convincing. While this familiarity may add an additional perspective, it is by no
means a prerequisite for examining religion (some may even argue it is a disadvantage). For
her study on African migrants in China, Heidi Østbø Haugen joined a Pentecostal church in
the city of Guangzhou. She writes about her experience of being accepted into the
congregation as a researcher, but at the same time being expected to participate as an ordinary
churchgoer, she writes: “The dramaturgy of the services and ways of partaking were
remarkably easy to understand despite my lack of prior experience with Pentecostal churches”
(Haugen 2013a:6).

The “insider/outsider problem” is central to academic research (Carling et al. 2013;
McCutcheon 1999). It carries with it methodological questions such as the extent to which a
researcher can understand others, and theoretical and analytical implications like whether to
employ etic or emic perspectives. It might also be an ethical and political question, depending
on the context, relating to questions of power and asymmetry in the research setting (Carling
et al. 2013). But the insider/outsider position is not as rigid as we often think, as becomes
particularly clear in a field study, and several, like Clifford Geertz, have called for loose
categories that can encompass a position “in between” (McCutcheon 1999:21). While
insider/outsider issues are relevant to many disciplines, the study of religion has its own set of questions. Discussions have long revolved around questions of defining the sacred and how we relate to religious truth claims.

The sociologist Peter Berger coined the term “methodological atheism” to explain the approach in which one does not take the religious explanations as true: e.g., when a believer states “God blessed me with a job”, the researcher would not accept God as the causal explanation for someone being offered a position (Cox 2003). Since then, many scholars have opted for Ninian Smart’s “methodological agnosticism”, which McCutcheon summaries as follows: “Not knowing how the universe is organized – not knowing if it is organised at all – the scholar of religion seeks not to establish a position in response to this question but to describe, analyse, and compare position taken by others” (McCutcheon 1999: 216-217). However, some scholars have criticised this outlook as “somewhat irrelevant” (Cox 2003:9). There is and has been a strong imperative within the study of religion to strive for a value-free and neutral position, but post-colonial and post-modern critique has long criticised this position and demonstrated that “the academic study of religion has always been situated, that it has never been neutral or ‘value-free’” (Cox 2003:4). Acknowledging my own situatedness, I agree with Cox in finding methodological agnosticism at least somewhat irrelevant. The object of our study is religion as social and cultural expressions, and truth claims can be examined within that context.

Working on religion in conflict areas, such as Nigeria, I am often faced with the question as to if a conflict is religious, or not. Many political scientists, politicians, and religious actors often normatively answer that question in the negative, and assert that religion is being “misused”, as if religion is “something else”, something pure and peaceful. Following 9/11 social scientists were eager to explain Muslim fundamentalism in other ways than through religion; by seeing it through the lenses of imperialism, or poverty or elite politics (Gorski 2004: 189). These aspects may all be valid and important, but “religion in itself”, whatever we define it to be, institutions, actors, beliefs etc., must also be part of the explanation. To always see religion at as an expression of something else we are, as Gorski argues, in danger of committing a “political error as well as an intellectual one” (Gorski 2004:189). First, religion is not just about the “sacred”, or “peace”, but rather what we try to discern by examining discourse, institutions, actors, practices, and communities that are all very much in and of this world. Secondly, religion may have positive or negative impulses or effects, and it is not a
variable that acts on its own, independently from other relational realities such as the economic, historical, social, or political spheres. The critical engagement with the very concept of religion, the hybridity, is an important contribution to the academic community that scholars of religion are particularly well placed to discuss.

2.3 On comparative research
A comparative and contrasting approach is integral to academic thinking. Indeed, the idea that there exists an observable category we can call “religion” itself rests on a comparative approach. Max Müller, the founder of religious studies, wrote in 1873: “People ask, What is gained by comparison? – Why, all higher knowledge is acquired by comparison, and rests on comparison.”(Stausberg 2006:30). There are multiple methods and theories that encompass comparative approaches. Classical disciplines such as phenomenology and structuralism have undergone severe criticism for not taking into account historical, economic, social, and other contexts, and for thus making over-broad generalisations based on shallow categories; as a result, they have lost their former dominance in the discipline (Stausberg 2006). This strong criticism might have had consequences also for the study of society and religion, a vibrant and growing field within the scholarly discipline of religion. The focus shifted to the particular, rather than the universal. While we compare continuously in our discipline, both implicitly and explicitly, there is as of today no established comparative sub-discipline within religious studies, as one finds in political science, psychology or physiology (Stausberg 2006:45). This is true despite the fact that comparative-historical analysis within sociology of religion was fundamental to founders such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. In North American sociology of religion, for instance, the vast majority of work is non-comparative (Altınordu 2013:67).

How the comparison is done
Ateş Altınordu has identified three main methods of conducting comparative-historical research on religion and politics by examining their research design (Altınordu 2009). The first is a theory-driven approach, found mainly within political science, with brief portrayals of individual cases aimed at advancing general theories. They provide a useful global perspective, but might well fall short due to superficial descriptions of specific cases. However, several of these efforts have been fruitful for this study, helping to frame my research (such as Shas 2004). Second, according to Altınordu, there is the strategy of
juxtaposing a large number of individual cases, a method often found in multi-author anthologies on Pentecostalism. Compared to the first type, this method is much more empirically driven. Here the authors try to find a general pattern or perhaps respond to a general theory such the extent to which Pentecostalism supports democratisation (see for instance Freston 2008; Ranger 2008). These works help focus a cross-disciplinary, empirical, case-driven analysis onto the same questions, but since many of these works are anthologies it becomes difficult to develop a common framework. Most of the authors in these works only know one case particularly well, which makes a thorough comparison difficult.

The third and final categorisation made by Altnordu is the type that compares a small number of cases from the perspective of a defined research puzzle. Altnordu has done substantive work on religious political parties, comparing German political Catholicism in the late 19th/early 20th century and Turkish political Islam in post-1970 Turkey (Altnordu 2009; Altnordu 2013). He belongs to a relatively small but growing group of researchers that conduct in-depth cross-religious and cross-regional comparisons (Casanova 1994; Davis and Robinson 2012; Herbert 2003; Tepe 2008). My own research falls into this category. While not focused on cross-religion research, the research design I use is similar. Rather than “comparing” a case with a theory, or with ideal types, as much research does, I have strived to keep an explorative approach to the field, guided by a set of research puzzles. Since this is the first in-depth comparison between the two continents, I had little help from previous cross-regional research to structure inquiries. However, the country-specific research on Guatemala and Nigeria, and the larger comparative works, have both been key in developing this research process, which is discussed below.

My interest at the outset was the phenomenon of Pentecostal politics. Most research on Pentecostalism warns of grand general theories on a uniform political Pentecostalism. I agree that we need to move beyond crude left- and right-wing analyses in examining the movement (there are examples of Pentecostals being active across most of the political spectrum), but the remarkable commonalities in this diverse global movement deserve more attention. I decided to investigate two countries that appeared to have little in common but that had both experienced strong Pentecostal growth. It was the cross-cutting phenomenon of Pentecostal politics that was the main focus, with Nigeria and Guatemala functioning as “instrumental cases” (Stake 1995). Inspired by ambitious comparative works like Freston’s (2001; 2008) and Ranger’s (2008), my focus on the political was, as already discussed, first located at the
level of political institutions and explicit political views and methods. Moving back and forth between the literature and the field, and most importantly, going back and forth between Nigeria and Guatemala, my understanding of the “political” has changed continually. As a student in religious studies I am well aware of the difficulties in defining “religion”, but the category of “politics” proved to be equally difficult over the course of this thesis. The research focus has been Pentecostalism and how actors and institutions practice this religion in a broad sense. Inspired by an increasing research focus on the public instead of the political, or rather in addition to the political, has enabled a broader view of the public engagement of Pentecostalism (Englund 2011). Researching an extremely complex social reality is challenging, and in a way it is like entering a dark room with a flashlight that can only highlight a very few items at one time, rendering it impossible to ever see the whole.

The project of continuously contrasting and comparing two very different national contexts has been decisive in framing the country-specific chapters. Examining Israeli and Turkish religious political parties, Sultan Tepe finds that examining two very different set of religions (Judaism and Islam) in two different national settings is advantageous both for better understanding the specific cases and for identifying general mechanism in religious politics. She writes “[...] it is precisely the commonalities of religious parties based in different religions that help us to better understand their uniqueness. “ (2008: 344). For the comparison, I have drawn on comparative works that do not include Pentecostalism among their case, such as Casanova (1994)\(^\text{12}\), Altıngör (2013), and Davis and Robinson (2012), which have been major resources for contextualising and conceptualising this project. I hope that this approach will make this study accessible to those who are not especially familiar with Pentecostalism. As already argued, Pentecostalism figures seldom in works outside specific Pentecostal studies, which I think limits both our understanding of Pentecostalism and the role of religion in contemporary societies.

Contrary to most of the above studies, who focus on hierarchical institutions such as religious-political parties or membership-based movements, the Pentecostal movement is notoriously diverse. This diversity has led several academics to disregard almost completely the movement’s political potential and role in society; Shah, for example, writes that “evangelicals’ lack of institutional unity and strength prevents them from working effectively

\(^{12}\) Casanova does include evangelical Protestantism in the US in his 1994-study, but treats it as an “exceptional” case, and neglects to include the rise of Pentecostalism in other parts of the world.
together even towards relatively modest political goals, let alone as ambitious a program as
the creation of evangelical states” (2004:126).” While I agree that the creation of Pentecostal
states is unlikely, in terms of changing the legal foundation of a state, overlooking the varied
ways Pentecostals exhibit and enforce their religion in society simply because of its diffuse
nature is a mistake.

With the analytical tools provided by Casanova (1994) and others, I have used the diverse
sources of this project to investigate how Pentecostals act in different spheres of society. My
main sources for this examination are the data collected from Pentecostal actors and
institutions themselves, supported by a series of non-Pentecostal sources ranging from
interviews, written sources, and research, that are employed as a means of checking,
validating, and broadening the overall view. The comparative focus on two countries with
little shared history also necessitated an outlook beyond very specific cultural and political
contexts. The two main chapters of this thesis, the case studies, certainly do place
Pentecostalism firmly in a national context, but attempt to mediate between the particular and
the comparative in doing so. The Nigeria chapter is longer than the Guatemalan chapter,
because several of the topics that are similar between the two countries are treated more fully
in the Nigeria chapter. For instance, while the “public sphere” is treated in both chapters, and
is obviously important in both countries, introducing the theories informing the public sphere
discussion in both chapters are not necessary.

Why Nigeria and Guatemala were chosen as cases, and questions of generalisability

Given the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America, I wanted one African and
one Latin American country, and I wanted to learn what happens to the Pentecostal movement
when it grows to a major size. Nigeria and Guatemala were chosen because they have large
Pentecostal movements.

Both Nigeria and Guatemala are at times treated as “unique” cases in the academic literature,
Nigeria because of its large population of 170 million, divided almost equally between
Christians and Muslims and with considerable Christian-Muslim tension. Guatemala is known
for its infamous born-again presidents, particularly Efraín Ríos Montt who merged his new-
won faith with the nation and the counterinsurgency. Then, and now, public Pentecostalism in
Guatemala, most prominently in its neo-Pentecostal form, is known for being a conservative
political force (Bjune 2012).
There are more similarities: Both cases are located in the global south and the countries are characterised by poverty, corruption, and instability. Both countries have fairly recently consolidated formal democracy, a system of governance that is under heavy criticism from large sections of society due to its inefficacy. However, the contrasts between the two countries are vast, and it is very probable that findings from this project have relevance for other cases too where Pentecostalism has grown big.

2.3.1 The broad research agenda: Issues of validity and reliability
The broad research agenda in this project makes, I argue throughout this thesis, important contributions to the scholarly study of Pentecostalism. The open, explorative approach has provided unexpected and interesting results that a narrower or single-case study could not have found. However, there are risks involved in such an approach that can compromise the quality of the research, such as ensuring that the material used for the thesis is appropriately representative, that the comparison between two superficially dissimilar cases has validity and that each is treated on its own merit, that research quality standards are maintained throughout the process, and that increasing the reliability of the thesis remains a constant priority. These topics are addressed in different sections of the thesis, but I focus below on the data and the analysis.

The material was collected through field work (interviews, observation, collection of material etc.), internet and media search, and through a review of existing research. The triangulation of the material soon proved crucial to improve the reliability of the analysis; various news items, official documents, interviews, promising research, and conversations with area experts were consulted with the aim of testing the analysis. For instance, newspaper sources vary in journalistic quality and need to be used with care, and triangulation of sources is crucial. However, the wide variety in sources also reflects the evolving research process: at the beginning of the project I was more concerned with what people said that with what they did, but this focus changed. I very soon realised that the interviews would provide me with insufficient material to account for the wide variety of Pentecostal practices, such as running media outlets, claiming the city for Jesus by organising marches, inviting politicians for joint appearances at events, etc.

While the interviews were at times challenging to obtain, there was never a problem of lack of material during the development of this thesis. Rather, the problem has been how to sort the
material. Given the strong public profile of Pentecostals there is an abundance of material found in the streets of Guatemala City, in churches, on the internet, in the secular press, and through conversations with individuals and the study of institutions such as schools or health facilities. Much of this material is intended for evangelisation purposes. Basic reliable statistical information (membership, number of churches, schools, charity organisations etc.) has been more difficult to obtain, as has other hard data such as financial records and historical accounts of churches and umbrella organisations.

Crucial questions have been how to categorise, structure, and interpret the material. A basic principle in the process of constant comparison is poring over the data again and again, so as to emerge with themes that capture and clarify it (Thomas 2011:171). I transcribed interviews, polished field notes, watched online videos, kept myself updated on Nigerian and Guatemalan news, etc., while working and re-working the themes. The material has been in constant negotiations with both the theoretical framework employed and the implied comparison, e.g. the other country under study. I have discussed the case-study and other issues of analysis above, and now discuss some of the themes included in the thesis, and some that have been largely omitted. The material was gathered and analysed with a view to answering the question “What happens when Pentecostalism becomes big?”, structured by the more specific research questions outlined earlier.

I have chosen to keep a main focus on four topics: the public sphere, the economic and the political sectors, as well as how Pentecostals relate with other religious traditions. These spheres, or sectors, are hybrid categories and obviously not easily distinguishable. But by naming them I assign them importance over other areas. These themes emerged from the material, both written and observable: Pentecostalism is indeed “everywhere” in Nigeria and Guatemala (the public sphere); they are closely associated with business, the media and they are active in politics. In addition, examining the relationship with other religious traditions proved a particularly helpful avenue for understanding both changes within the movement and its impact on society.

These themes must be up for debate, not so much for what I have included but rather what I have excluded. For example, three important perspectives in Nigeria and Guatemala, gender, class, and ethnicity, are not treated systematically in this thesis. Having had for instance a specific focus on how Pentecostal women organise and practice their religion would, I
imagine, would have provided a different perspective and more structured attention to institutions such as the family. The Pentecostal movement has a strong focus on gender roles and the family as the fundamental unit of society. The family is not just a private affair, but impacts how Pentecostalism goes public and the political subjects it engages in on the national level.

While men dominate as leaders and public spokesmen, women are central in Pentecostalism through a variety of practices, such as working in administrative tasks in the congregation, organising empowerment courses, working with welfare needs, or participating in public marches through the streets proclaiming Jesus as Lord of the city or nation. These examples are just some of the activities that are at the core of what Pentecostalism does. Having had an explicit gender focus, or a combined class and ethnicity concentration, could have put the stress on other institutions in society that might have illuminated the role of Pentecostalism further. Focusing on class, ethnicity, and gender would have also raised important questions as to how Pentecostalism relates to and affects class division and ethnic relations, two important issues in both countries.

Some topics have received less attention due to difficulty in gathering data or a lack of existing secondary research. The field of Pentecostal education, for instance, has received relatively little academic attention and should certainly be a topic for future research, and is only superficially treated in this thesis.

A method employed to improve quality is to stay close to the empirical material. Throughout the empirical section (Chapters 4 to 7), I use a narrative analysis that remains close to the data, using quotes and excerpts from primary sources. The aim is to allow the reader to follow the source and thus easier engage critically with the analysis. Asking a general question, with a comparative approach – asking what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big – has great advantages. However, it can never tell the full story, instead bringing to the surface important tendencies overlooked in narrower studies and pointing to fruitful new research areas.

2.4 Ethical considerations
Ethical considerations are not restricted to the fieldwork process and the interview setting, but relate to all stages of the research process (Kvale 1996). Ethics relates not only to traditional
topics such as gaining informed consent and protecting confidentiality but also questions related to the reliability of the data, the validity of the analysis, and the categories employed.

A primary concern has been the informants in this project, those individuals who have trusted me with their time, knowledge, and perspectives. Conducting interviews on the topics of religion and politics is considered sensitive and requires approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). I have followed the NSD requirements for gathering information and acquiring consent from the informants, including ensuring informants are well informed about the nature of the project and the reasons for contacting them. However, Anne Ryen (2007) points out how something as formalistic as “informed consent” is a difficult ethical exercise, particularly when one interviews people who are not used to this particular setting and where issues of cultural differences play a role. While stressing the need for ethical reflections she also rightly argues that “[...] ethics is itself a field socially constituted and situated” (Ryen 2007:233). Particularly in fields were research ethics is contested, the responsibility of the researcher becomes even greater (NESH 2006:5). In the field, and at home by the computer, I have often found that while I have fulfilled the formal requirements, many decisions still needed my judgement to be finalised. The topics we have discussed during our meetings are sensitive. Guatemalans were, compared to Nigerians, much more careful in their descriptions, avoiding being overtly political and directly critical of institutions and individuals. Nigerians, on the other hand, were much more direct, to the extent that for instance issues of corrupt leaders or leaders under evil spirits were named and shamed. While during the first draft of this thesis I kept a majority of the names of the interviewees public, I decided in the end to anonymize the majority, despite having received consent to use full names in several cases. This was not an easy decision. On one side, several of the informants are public figures who may explicitly wish to make their opinions heard. For research accountability keeping open sources is of great value. On the other hand, however, it is my responsibility to “prevent harm and suffering”. Many of my informants may have thought that since I am a foreign researcher that they were speaking to a different audience than their fellow citizens. However, in a digitalised age, academic work is available online virtually anywhere, certainly including Guatemala and Nigeria. I am not at all “far away” and need to take into consideration these realities.

Another crucial ethical consideration has to do with the research itself. This relates to how the research is conducted: does it strive for truth, honesty, impartiality, and does the researcher
acknowledge the projects fallibility? Research ethics also requires a reflection as to why the research should be conducted (NESH 2006: 8); ideally, research impacts society, in small or big ways, and the author needs to reflect on any possible impact. Aspects related to these two questions, the how and the why, are treated throughout this thesis.
3 Theoretical perspectives
Recent decades have seen a surge in literature from the social sciences investigating the public role of religion. In the post-9/11 period research on religion, particularly outside the religious studies disciplines, has increasingly been framed in security terms, in religion’s ability to promote peace or stir conflict (Seiple, Hoover, and Otis 2013; Sisk et al. 2011). Popular books such as God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2009) testify to a focus shared by many social scientists, economists, sociologists, theologians, and historians of religion, not to mention policymakers: Religion is “back” and powerful, impacting societies in new ways.

This literature is important to broaden the debate within religious studies. In particular two recent books, God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics (Toft, Philpott, and Shah) from political science and Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements & Social Welfare (Davis and Robinson) from sociology, have been influential in structuring my thinking on the Pentecostal movement. The two books, published in 2011 and 2012, are important for this present project because they confirm patterns and findings that were present in my material, patterns I became increasingly aware of during this project but that I was unable to describe in the same clear-cut fashion that these works do. In these books, as is usually the case in comparative works on religion’s public role today, Pentecostalism in the so-called global south is only to a limited degree treated as a case in itself, but the two books reflect on religion’s place in contemporary society in a manner that mirrors the public role of Pentecostalism in Guatemala and Nigeria.

The first book (Toft, Philpott, and Shah, 2011) examines some of the societal conditions that have enabled a central role for public religions. The authors argue that the processes of democratisation, globalisation, and modernisation of communication and technology have increased the public role of religion. Following Shah, Toft, and Philpott (2011), it is exactly these characteristics of modern society that aided this renaissance and which has popularised, diversified, and intensified religious expressions. As individuals gain freedom to associate in the context of democratisation in much of the global south, many have opted for a wide variety of religious associational life (Shah, Toft, and Philpott 2011). By focusing on increased freedom of association and a greater emphasis on individual freedom, the authors draw attention to the importance of the agency of the religious actor in contemporary
societies, while also delineating the conditions that make it favourable for individuals to express their religious convictions.

The second book puts less emphasis on the conditions for this resurgence, and more focus on the movements themselves and what types of strategies they employ to make their faiths relevant in society. In Claiming Society for God (2012) the authors execute a comparative study of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Shas in Israel, the Catholic Orthodox Comunione e Liberazione in Italy, and the evangelical Protestant Salvation Army in the USA. Davis and Robinson use these different case studies to show that orthodox religious movements employ several common strategies to advance their cause. They eloquently draw attention to the empirical fact that most religious movements today are not violent, but use a multi-institutional approach to transform gradually their societies. Using social movement theory as their framework for analysis, the authors examine how orthodox religious movements, when compared to other social movements, have been particularly successful in building broad grassroots networks, social service agencies, and other bodies pursuing their aims in society.

Several other authors have argued in somewhat similar fashion, but the comparative and contemporary nature of these two works gives their arguments a particular strength. Bringing the case of Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America to the discussion of the public role of religion will highlight some of the issues addressed by these two books. I discuss below some important contributions to the study of Pentecostalism that have been instrumental in framing the present study.

Outline of the chapter

This chapter deals with the theoretical inquiries of the thesis. I begin by sketching a research overview, presenting the main questions that are discussed in relation to the political role of Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America. Pentecostalism developed in the context of democratisation in these two continents and much of the debate on Pentecostalism and politics have evolved around to what extent the movement is good or bad for democracy. This thesis engages with this approach, but proposes to reframe the question of political engagement beyond the democratisation frame towards a more explorative approach on Pentecostal public and political practices.
To aid an examination of the movement in the two countries, I turn to the theoretical building blocks for this study, which are found in sociologist José Casanova’s discussion of public religions. He claims there are different ways of being a “public religion” in our modern world, with the main difference lying in how religions relate to the state and an increasingly specialised, differentiated sphere. His 1994 book has been a point of reference within sociology of religion for the last two decades, particularly in discussion on religion’s public role in western societies. This chapter will discuss his analytical and theoretical perspectives with a view to take this perspective further. However, to aid the structuring of my material I have found additional tools for thinking in both classical sociological sect-church theory and the much more recent inclusion-moderation thesis, which both frame the material with profound questions that are instructive for this comparative project. Before discussing these tools, I present a brief research review to situate the present study.

### 3.1 Pentecostalism under the research radar

For several decades, the growth of Pentecostalism remained largely unexplored by most researchers. Compared to the movement’s global relevance, the literature on Pentecostalism has been relatively meagre. The reasons for this neglect have to do with academic and ideological biases as well as scepticism from mainstream churches: in short, few outsiders were impressed by the movement (Finke and Stark 1992; Jenkins 2002; Martin 2011; Poewe 1994). Pentecostalism was regarded as anti-intellectual, anti-progressive, a “haven for the masses” (Lalive D’Epinay 1969), and a diverse reform movement giving the masses some comfort but without the ability to change society. The movement has been regarded as merely cultural or social without the political clout found in the much more explicitly political religious movements such as Islamism, liberation theology, and the American religious right. Even today, Latin American and African Pentecostalism seldom figure in comparative works on religion’s public and political roles. When the west discovered the global spread of Pentecostalism in the global south rarely figures as a case in cross-religious comparison on politics (such as Brekke 2012; Casanova 1994; Davis and Robinson 2011; Keppel 1994; Turner 2013). This neglect has a variety of sources. Of particular importance is maybe the long-held notion that Pentecostalism was first a cultural revolution, and only implicitly political (Martin 1990), and that given the great diversity in political orientations in countries such as Nigeria, Guatemala, and South Korea, Pentecostal politics had more to do with political opportunity structures than the religion itself and thus generalisations were impossible and only case studies could do justice to the variety of the movement. When Pentecostalism has served as a case in such examinations, it has been through the few instances that have been considered somehow explicitly political, notably the case of...
Pentecostalism, Latin America was first on the radar screen, thanks to several influential works published in English (Martin 1990; Stoll 1990). Here the Pentecostal boom coincided with the Cold War, leading to strong ideological biases and academics being accused of holding neo-conservative or Marxist agendas (Martin 2011a). The cold war legacy is strongest in Central America, particularly in Guatemala, where Pentecostalism was seen as a political weapon against communism by the movement’s protagonists and antagonists alike. Based on this case and several other situations where Pentecostalism was closely tied to autocratic regimes, Pentecostalism was seen by some as an antidote to Muslim “fundamentalism” (Martin 2011a). In the liberal academy, Pentecostalism was a far cry from the much more popular, in western institutions, liberation theology that had been inspirational for social activists and the church alike with its focus on social justice and a theology for the poor.

Over the last two decades the question of Pentecostalism’s contribution to democratisation processes on the two continents has been a dominant research focus in questions related to Pentecostalism and politics (Freston 2001, 2008; Gifford 1995; Ranger 2008). Because Pentecostal growth happened in the context of democratisation in Africa and Latin America, it is in some sense a product of democracy, but whether Pentecostalism also is a potential force for democracy is much more debated (Freston 2008: 17). For the sake of bringing to light different manners of discussing Pentecostalism and politics I will do injustice to a variety of complex positions by sketching out two main positions found in the academic literature: 1) Pentecostals as a conservative haven for the masses, reinforcing the status quo, and 2) Pentecostals as progressive agents for economic prosperity and democracy, challenging the status quo. Most research situates itself somewhere between these two poles. It is important to stress that the great variety in interpretations are not just consequences of ideological postures, but empirically based: Pentecostalism’s public role is varied in space, from country to country, and in time, from decade to decade.

- The movement is “a haven for the masses”, it is apolitical, too diverse and too individualistic to become/or be a political force.

One of the most influential works on Latin American Pentecostalism is the early work of Lalive D’Epinay on Pentecostals in Chile (1969). He emphasises Pentecostalism as a retreat
from the world, a reform movement for the poor and a revolt against middle-class and mainstream religious institutions that deny them the humanity they seek and receive in the new reform movement (1969). The combination of authoritarian structures (the dominant role of the pastor) and disempowered members makes it unlikely that the movement can transform society, politically or economically, he argues. Instead, he continues, Pentecostalism breeds passivity and submission to authorities (D’Epinay 1969; Martin 2011b). In the 1990s, Jean-Pierre Bastian follows D’Epinay’s arguments to a large extent but also sees the members as much more proactive in creating cultural resistance to contemporary social and economic models. However, internal authoritarian structures prevent the Pentecostal movement from developing into a social and political reform movement in a society that they already “shun” (Smith 1998:6).

Related to the above argument is a large body that emphasises the anti-democratic, pro-authoritarian elements of the movement. Being apolitical, as D’Epinay argues, in an authoritarian context has also meant supporting the status quo (Stewart-Gambino and Cleary 1997: 234). There is certainly ample evidence that Pentecostals have been actively promoting authoritarian, anti-democratic regimes, as in Chile, Argentine, Guatemala, Zambia, and Kenya. This stands in contrast to mainline churches in Africa, which were instrumental in challenging autocratic regimes while Pentecostals in general supported them (Gifford 1995). This phenomenon has been explained by their minority position and consequent need to be on terms with the rulers (Freston 2008) or, more structurally, by internal non-democratic structures with strong pastors that hinder a democratic societal engagement (D’Epinay 1969). This pessimistic position was shared by a focus in the 1990s on the U.S. religious right’s influence in spreading “the American gospel”, with a focus on its conservative, neo-liberal, anti-communist stances (Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose 1996; the Chicago Fundamentalist Project 1987-1995; Jean Pierre Bastian 1998). The North American presence was strong in some places, with funding, materials, or bible school opportunities, such as Central America, but much less so in other places such as Nigeria, though there were notable links to bible

\[14\] For more comprehensive overviews over the research focus in Latin America see Cleary (1997); Smith (1998); Freston (2008); Martin (2011a) [2011b]. For Africa see Rangers (2008); Kalu (2008); Gifford (1995).

\[15\] In the same breath Gifford writes that the Pentecostals may have greater potential to transform society then do mainline churches, given their potential to transform culture by creating new types of voluntary associations of empowered young people (Gifford 1995:5). He has with his later books (1997; 2004; 2009) made available more data from Ghana, Kenya and elsewhere accounting for an ambiguous political role of the neo-Pentecostals.
colleges in the US and to specific global Pentecostal leaders. As neo-Pentecostal movements have nationalised, and become financially independent, the American emphasis has been replaced with a focus on the strong local agency found in the movement globally, and how local Pentecostalism engages with global Pentecostalism (Marshall 1998; Martin 2011a).

Support for a pessimistic view on Pentecostalism’s pro-democracy potential is more often argued for on the basis of their institutions than on ideology. As with D’Epinay (1969), the focus is on the undemocratic role of the pastor. Less discussed, but equally or more important is the need for each church to secure its finances. Compared to its religious competitors, the Anglicans, the Catholics or the older Protestant denominations, Pentecostal pastors are they themselves responsible for the income needed to run a church. This might lead to political pragmatism, which of course is also found in mainstream churches for other reasons (see Haynes 2004) as Pentecostals need to be on side with political authority in order to ensure their work is not misconstrued (Freston 2008). Linked to this argument are those who emphasise the schismatic nature of Pentecostalism as an obstacle; internal fighting and competition has led several scholars to argue that the movement could not unleash its political potential, whatever that may be (Cleary 1997:17).

- the movement is an economic and democratic force, contributing to a strong civil society

In the same period D’Epinay published his work on the Pentecostal “haven for the masses” (1969), Emilio Willems argued for the very different view that Pentecostals did not shun the world, and their virtues of discipline, honesty, and sobriety gave them economic advantages that enabled the poor to improve their standards of living (Smith 1998). Willems focused on the egalitarianism found within the church and its criticism of the Catholic order and the state, and writes “Pentecostalism thus turns out to be a symbolic subversion of the traditional social order” (1967: 249). This position has prominently been taken up by David Martin (1990; 16

16 Although I agree that the Pentecostal movement globally cannot be explained as a pawn of a US “master plan”, one must be careful to not neglect the importance of the global flow of ideas (and materials) in country-level analysis. While the US continues to be an important centre for global Pentecostalism, there are others centres too. Nigerian televangelists such as T. B. Joshua, popular American authors such as Joyce Meyer; crusaders such as the German Reinhard Bonnke, the Argentinian preacher Luis Palau, and the very influential South Korean Yonggi Cho all have a successful international outreach. Already by the 1960s and 1970s, the Pentecostal revival was truly international. Taped sermons, books, pamphlets, and preachers circulated a specific transnational route, with revivals occurring at more or less the same time in different parts of the world are all a testimony to this flow of ideas and experiences. See for instance Coleman (2000) for more on some of these networks, with a specific case study on the Swedish Life of Word-church.
and Peter Berger has placed the Pentecostal movement in light of the Weberian understanding of the Protestant ethic. Telling is the title of Berger’s article “Max Weber is alive and well, and living in Guatemala: The protestant ethic of today” (2010). Martin has described the growth of Pentecostalism as a cultural revolution, with radical consequences for its adherents. He argues that Pentecostals carve out independent social places, sometimes in opposition to the world, where they can create “a different kind of sub-society” (Martin 1990:41). Much of his argument rest on what he sees as Pentecostalism’s ability to change individuals by improving their ethics; people become honest, hard-working, and family oriented (Martin 1999; 2002). Instead of spending time in the street with all its temptations, they divide their time between work or school, home, and church. Martin is most optimistic in terms of Pentecostals’ ability to improve their economy, and more uncertain as to the political possibilities.

Many, including Martin, foresee that Pentecostalism’s greatest political impact will be implicit, by breaking religious monopolies and fostering pluralism: “the large-scale growth of voluntary religious associations based on participation and competition is only one rung on the ladder to the eventual establishment of a viable democracy and civil society” (Martin 1990:41). Here Alexis de Tocqueville and his thoughts on the interconnectedness between democracy, civil society, and religion is a frequent source. In this argument, Pentecostal congregations become schools of democracy by creatively forging a place for them in civil society. Ideas about civil society have gained a firm foothold in democratisation studies on Pentecostalism, but discussions are often hampered by multiple interpretations of the concepts of civil society and the public sphere (Steigenga 2001:146). As Steigenga rightly points out, if we think having a diverse civil society in itself is good for democracy, then undoubtedly Pentecostalism contributes towards a growth in associational participation. But more demanding definitions that take into account other elements of civil society and political

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17 Of the two it is David Martin that has worked specifically on Pentecostalism while his colleague Peter L. Berger relies heavily on Martin’s work.

18 Coming from France to the US, in 1831, Tocqueville was impressed by the strong religious culture he found. In a period when most observers predicted that modern society would secularise, he saw great potential in the vital and pluralistic religious associational life he found in America. Religious organisations were “schools” where citizens would learn associational life, he argued, a skill that would strengthen democratic participation and thus the democratic state in itself. In comparison with the hierarchical political church of his home continent, the American churches were implicitly political, he argued. Furthermore, he found no contradiction between “the spirit of freedom” and the “spirit of religion” as he had seen it in France. Rather, the two marched comfortably together. He writes: “Religion in America take no direct part in the government of society, but it must regarded as the first of their political institutions” (Casanova 2010: 1058).
opportunity structures may come to different conclusions. The case studies from Guatemala and Nigeria show the difficulty in assuming a clear correlation between Protestantism and democracy.

The comparative research gap

Research on Pentecostalism is increasingly multifaceted, but generally the research on Latin America is little informed about the research on Africa and vice versa. On both continents, there has been an overall, slow move away from deprivation theories, e.g. explanations of Pentecostalism as a way for suffering people to cope with other problems, towards a focus on meaning, emotions, and expressions (Hunt 2002). The coping perspective, however, is still strong: Pentecostalism as a way of coping with a failed state, coping with modernity, coping with urbanisation, machismo, and poverty. Ruth Marshall has criticised several of these approaches, she argues that by so doing Pentecostalism is reduced to modes of interpretation and understanding of something else, and thus does not sufficiently engage with the movement, or the religious actor on its own merits (Marshall 2009).

Compared to research on Africa, Latin American research has been more directly focused on explicit politics, framed in the ideological divide of the Cold War and in the light of the break of the Catholic monopoly (Chesnut 2003; Steigenga and Cleary 2007; Stoll 1990). Still, on both continents the issues of the Protestant ethic and economic prosperity (Comaroff 2012; Freeman 2012; Martin 1990; Sherman 1997) and Pentecostalism’s potential contribution in democratisation processes (Freston 2008; Ranger 2008) have been discussed.

In the literature on Africa, the changing nature of the state is of prime concern of several studies on Pentecostalism. Amidst corruption, poverty and violence, the declining moral and political authority of the African neoliberal state has facilitated the growth of alternative models of social-political order, with Pentecostalism being one such alternative (Marshall 2009; Smith 2012). In her book on Nigerian Pentecostalism, Marshall argues that “…what Pentecostalism expresses is not simply a set of interests, as western theorists understand associations in civil society as doing, but a complete and exclusive vision for both the individual and the society.” (2009). While she does not enter into empirical comparison with Pentecostalism elsewhere, she gives attention to the many similarities in the Pentecostal movement: “Indeed, in its programmatic form, internal rationalities, and general theological
and specific doctrinal content, the Pentecostal project of conversion is remarkably uniform across the globe” (2009: 4). Aside from a few multi-author volumes, there is to my knowledge only one article that has carried out a comparison of Pentecostalism in two national contexts across the continents. Olufunke Adeboye compares “the contemporary challenges” facing the Pentecostal movement in Brazil and Nigeria (Adeboye 2006). As it in involves two regional powers, the comparison is particularly interesting. Adeboye writes that “despite the differences in the socio-political contexts and historical background of the two countries, it is remarkable that similar processes are discernible in the transformation of the Pentecostal movement and the reaction it has engendered in the larger society” (2006:136). While Pentecostalism has been studied as a global phenomenon by many scholars, that work cannot answer questions of how Pentecostalism goes public in particular national contexts.

There are a few anthologies on Pentecostalism and politics comparing case studies across continents: Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose 1996; Corten and Fratani 2001; Freston 2008; Lumsdaine 2009; Ranger 2008. The most comprehensive of these are the three on Asia, Africa and Latin America, all of which attempt to address the same question of what happens when “a revivalist religion based on biblical orthodoxy participates in the volatile politics of the third world” and to explore the connection between evangelical Christianity and democracy. In addition, a PEW Forum report performed a substantive global qualitative study addressing Pentecostals and politics (PEW 2006). Paul Freston (2001) represents the most comprehensive comparative work on Pentecostalism and politics to date. He compared 27 countries in Asia, the Americas, and Africa, but given the large number of cases the comparison is relatively superficial, focusing on explicit Pentecostal politics such as Pentecostal presidents, elections, and political parties. His call for more empirical research and more cross-regional comparison was instrumental in the creation of this project. Freston cautions about constructing grand narratives, as he finds great diversity in political responses and consequences (Freston 2001). He points to some commonalities in this diverse movement: they emphasise non-economic issues such as morals and values, a tendency to acquire characteristics of the locally dominant religion in its traditional public role (becoming partially “Islamicised” or “Catholicised”), they are inexperienced in the public sphere, there is no global doctrinal basis which obliges unity, being outsiders they need to be on side with the

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powers that be, etc. He finds there is a tendency to opportunism and even corruption and that they may challenge some hierarchies in society (Freston 2001: 290). In short, there is great variety in the scholarly outlook. Pentecostalism may be good for democracy, as many argue, or it may not, but there is no clear conclusion (Freston 2008; Ranger 2008). As discussed below, this thesis argues that there are indeed remarkable similarities in how Pentecostalism goes public in the two case studies presented, Guatemala and Nigeria, and these similarities become clearer once the questions are reframed.

3.2 Public Religion
“Who still believes in the myth of secularisation”? is the question posed rhetorically in Spanish sociologist José Casanova’s influential book *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Casanova 1994:11). In the 1960s, “everybody” believed religion would suffer dramatically with the rise of modern, complex societies, while now “everybody” believes religion is prospering from the same conditions, he argues. The unexpected development is not that religion still is important in people’s lives, he continues, but the vitality of the traditional religions and their abilities to transform their public roles in the contemporary world. At the time of original publication, Casanova made an important contribution to the field of research by making it clear that religion demands a place in the public sphere, and that religion will continue to make claims in the public, also in a western presumably secular context. A public religion is, according to Casanova “..a religion which has, assumes or tries to assume a public character, function or role” (Casanova 2009:1). To come to term with what public religion is in the modern world, Casanova takes us through five cases studies (Poland, Spain, Brazil, and two examples from the US) in which he builds an argument for a global process which he calls “de-privatization of religion”, or the refusal of religions to confine religion to the private sphere by making claims in the public.

Secularisation: Disregard almost everything
The secularisation theory is still the framework that much research on religion operates within despite the clear death of its main thesis: the declining relevance of religion in society (Asad 2003). Casanova makes a distinction between secularisation as a concept and as a theory. The concept is the “mythical account of a universal process of secularisation” (Casanova 1994:17) which relies on the faulty evolutionary understanding of history whereby religion, understood
as superstition and irrationality, is replaced by reason and science. The concept has proven false and must be rejected, he argues convincingly. When it comes to the theory, however, Casanova proposes to retain it, provided the theory is thoroughly revised. He argues that there are three elements in the theory as it has been understood: 1) the differentiation thesis, i.e. that religion relates differently to, and in, the public domain throughout history. Increasing institutional differentiation, in fields such as the economy and science, arising from the creation of the liberal modern state has resulted in separation of religion and politics; 2) the decline of the social relevance of religion, and 3) the privatisation thesis, that religion withdraws from the public sphere and confines itself to the private sphere and that this is a precondition of modern democratic politics. He argues that it is only the first, the differentiation thesis that maintains any empirical validity today and thus should be retained.

This is the theory of societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and freeing of the secular spheres – primarily the state, the economy, and science – from the religious sphere, and the associated differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly-found religious sphere. In other words, the independence works both ways, as religion itself has also become more autonomous. The secularisation thesis is therefore not a theory of decline, according to Casanova, but one of diversification and alternation. Without the thesis we would be analytically impoverished, he insists, in a response to criticism from Talal Asad, who asserts that the theory has little to offer us (Casanova 2006:15). Casanova’s story of differentiation is a story of tension, negotiation, and conflict “between religious and worldly regimes” (Casanova 2006:19). Differentiation does therefore not mean a loss of political or public significance.

A societal differentiation is the process where various spheres of society get specialized, where each sub-system develops its own language and logic (Casanova 1994). Those public religions that accept the differentiation of society will be those who have the best conditions for thriving in a modern society. Although truly modern religions, as argued for by Casanova, accept this differentiation religion will still intersect with the so-called secular spheres by making demands on law, education, the economy, etc. It is precisely here that we find Casanova’s de-privatisation thesis: religion does not confine to its assigned ‘private sphere’ but makes claims in other spheres as well. He argues that religious actors and traditions refuse to accept the marginal or privatized role often provided by a secular world, and instead of
privatisation, we are witnessing a “de-privatization” of religion. Religious actors and institutions are participating in:

[….the very struggles to define and the set the modern boundaries between the private and public spheres, between system and life-world, between legality and morality, between individuals and societies, between family, civil society, and state, between nations, states, civilizations, and the world system (Casanova 1994:6).

Religions who do not enter this negotiation are eventually marginalised: “the more religions resist the process of modern differentiation, that is, secularisation in the first sense, the more they will suffer religious decline, that is, secularisation in the second sense” (Casanova 1994: 214). He uses US fundamentalism, exemplified by the Moral Majority and Jerry Falwell, to illustrate this point, which is also the one with the closest resemblance, among the five case studies, to the Pentecostal movements in Nigeria and Guatemala. He argues that the “true” fundamentalists in this movement will not compromise, and their fundamental beliefs will not survive public scrutiny, and that they will most “likely abandon the public sphere and return to their isolated hamlets” (Casanova 1994:166).

In different words and from a different perspective, Casanova resembles variations of the “moderation-inclusion” theories (Schwedler 2011), which argue that radical groups will moderate when entering the public sphere or democratic politics.20 This discussion has been particularly dominant in studies on Islam the last decade. Where Protestantism and democracy often has a “positive ring” in academic research, quite the opposite has been true in the study of Islam (Tusalem 2009). Research on Islam and democracy has entailed abstract debates about if Islam is even compatible at all with democracy (Driessen 2012; Hellestveit 2003; Stepan 2001). However, the focus has changed, and currently there is much more empirical research on political practice within Muslim movements. One trend is to investigate what happens to Muslim, orthodox, religio-political groups and individuals when they are included in pluralist political processes (Schwedler 2011:348). This focus is also valuable for an examination of the Pentecostal movement. What does inclusion in society and political processes do to the Pentecostal movement, and to society?

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20 For an excellent overview of this debate, see Schwedler (2011). She argues that the main points of disagreement in the current debates lies both in the type of process that is actually being explained and whether the mechanisms leading to moderation are behavioural or ideological in nature (2011: 348).
Varieties of Public Religions

For Casanova, the term “public religion” refers to a process by which religions leave their private sphere and enter the different publics within society (Casanova 1994). Following Casanova, there are three “ideal types” of doing or being public religion. Casanova follows the political scientist Alfred Stepan in conceptualizing the modern democratic polity in three differentiated spheres: the state, political society, and civil society (Casanova 1994:61). He argues that these three spheres correspond with a distinction of three different ideal types of public religion. Giving examples of religion operating at the state level he points to established state churches such as the Spanish Catholic church. Turning to political society, he argues for a more diverse set of actions that religious organisations use to somehow resist disestablishment or the differentiation of secular spheres. It could be political parties such as Christian Democratic parties, US Protestant movements resisting secular humanism, or religious groups mobilizing in defence of religious freedom. However, while religion may be involved in political society and at the state level, it is the third level, civil society, that Casanova suggests viewing as the sphere where religion is most compatible with modern societies; for Casanova, this is both empirically correct as well as normatively sound.

Religion in Civil Society

According to Casanova, in civil society we find those religious groups who intervene most successfully in “the undifferentiated public sphere” (Casanova 1994: 218-219). He follows Habermas in defining civil society as a space in between the state and the private realm, a place that religions enter to make normative claims of how society should be, where governments are held accountable and where public debate amongst a set of different actors are held. In categorising civil society he is also close to how the international development sector has operationalized the concept, regarding a vibrant civil society as a precondition for democratisation process, a place from where citizens hold elites in society accountable. One of his examples to illustrate this type of action is the American Catholic priests who in the 1970s and 1980s issued a series of public statements on as diverse topics as abortion, the economy, and international relations. They did so, he argues, not primarily to influence political decisions, but to moralise American public debate by bringing the Catholic ethical perspective to issues and thus contributing to a general public debate. The bishops were, according to Casanova, successful in this endeavour and proved the ability of a traditional religion to raise a classically-liberal, universalistic discourse in the public. Most of his
empirical cases relate to the transformation of the Catholic Church from a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution, where “churches cease being or aspiring to be state compulsory institutions and become free religious institutions of civil society” (Casanova 1994: 220). While the idea of public religion in civil society is useful in loosening rigid dichotomies of the private versus the public, his definition is too narrow and too normative, as he excludes several modes of “going public”. He focuses on the specific form of the established church, specific practice of explicit political behaviours such as issuing statements, organising rallies, initiating public dialogues, etc., and adherence to the specific values of compromise and the common good. However, as this thesis makes clear, limiting public religion in this fashion errs in making one of the most dynamic Christian movement in the contemporary world both invisible and insignificant.

Pentecostals, I soon discovered when embarking on this thesis, engage actively in their differentiated society, prominently the media, the business sector, welfare provision, and the political sectors, to the extent that engaging with these institutions can be argued to be an integral part of what Pentecostalism is. Pentecostals are prominent in all the three public spheres of the modern democratic polity discussed by Casanova: state, political society, and civil society. As discussed below, Pentecostalism raises questions about the impossibility of separating the private from the public, the religious from the political, the media from the church, and the economic from the spiritual. But even though it may seem that religion is now everywhere, and academia has long deconstructed, rearranged, and questioned our notions of the religious and the political and the private and the public, the problem is not solved if the hybridity remains (Englund 2011:2). One way of untangling the complex web of interaction between the secular and the religious is through an empirical examination of Pentecostal practice in differentiated, pluralistic societies. Casanova’s differentiation thesis provides some tools to help with that challenge.

In research on Pentecostalism and politics, the notion of civil society has gained an important position, and research is focused on how churches play into the creation of such a sphere (Levine 2008:214; Ranger 2008:8). David Martin and several others working within the democratisation paradigm, would follow Casanova’s typology that Pentecostalism will remain most likely an influential commentator, in the style of an NGO, in a pluralistic society (Martin 1999). Civil society is also a concept that is widely used in both Guatemala and Nigeria, a concept to which public actors relate. The concept of civil society was mainstreamed in Latin
America and Africa in the context of democratisation processes in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the 1990ies, “civil society” has been an established concept of international development policy and liberal peace-building, and regarded as a precondition for developing strong democracies (Kjellmann and Harpviken 2010; Spurk 2010; Tvedt 2006). There is however an increasing amount of research questioning a causal link between democracy and civil society (Parkeh 2004).

Civil society has come to mean different things and need to be used with care. Civil society can at the same time be a policy tool, a normative concept, and an analytical concept. Originally an academic ideal-type, it is now an everyday term amongst political actors, journalists, and a large segment of society. In its most basic form, it is a concept that tries to explain collective action by non-state actors in society. The concept refers to a broad network of associations, organisations and religious actors. It is linked to state formation and for many seen as a precondition for democratic transitions, but definitions and discussions on civil society spring out of specific historical and political contexts. According to international agencies that engage as donors in this sector, civil society is linked to protection of citizens, monitoring for accountability, advocacy and public communication, socialization, building community, and intermediation and facilitation between citizens and the state, and service delivery (Spurk 2010: 24). These types of tasks are addressed by the growth of the NGOs that developed at the same time as the second stage of Pentecostal growth in countries such as Nigeria and Guatemala. A narrow understanding of civil society has often led the international development agencies focus on the secular, NGO- style of organisations, rather than religious, or traditional forms of associations, such as in the case of Afghanistan (Borchgrevink 2007). The concept of civil society is debated, both as an analytical and a political concept.

Responding to the work of Casanova, David Herbert (2003) suggests making a distinction between empirical and normative understandings of civil society. In order to free the category of some of its normative and political connotations, a critical theory of civil society is needed, one which distinguishes between the various approaches (Herbert 2003: 63). Often civil society is conceived as comprised of voluntary organisations, and thus some theories exclude

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21 Ideas about democracy and civil society have their roots in western philosophy in the 18th and 19th centuries. The early philosophical debates originated in the west in the context of state formation (Locke and Hobbes), class struggles (Marx), and democratisation (Gramsci and Habermas).
kinship- or religious organisations. Defining Pentecostalism in civil society will require a different understanding of civil society than the one on which Casanova has relied; less normative, more empirically based.

There is a general tendency to think of civil society as something good, representing the people, often in opposition to a less-cherished state (Keane 1998:25). However, contrary to what the name suggests, and the way Casanova and many others use it, civil society can also be “uncivil”, or have different agendas: In conflict areas, civil society organisations are often found to be partakers in one side of the conflict, not necessarily striving for a common good or adhering to democratic liberal ideals (Kjellmann and Harpviken 2010:40; Marchetti and Tocci 2009). Most importantly, though, is that Casanova contributes to the widely-held presumptions that that there is only one way of acting in civil society, as exemplified with his case of the Catholic Church in the US. The problem with such a narrow view of civil society is that it causes research to neglect social movements, especially religious actors who do not act as the theory suggests they should, not voicing criticism against the state, not joining broad-based movements, and not explicitly holding the government accountable for lack of services and rights. One of the reasons why Pentecostalism grew largely unnoticed, to researchers, for many years in Latin America and Africa was precisely because its adherents did not act as established theories expected them to act; the torch was directed towards a different corner of the room. In academic research, they were to a large extent left in the dark, made invisible, even insignificant, as discussed above, rendering Pentecostalism private, spiritual, and seemingly without the power to impact society outside church buildings. However, academic research does not operate in a vacuum. Academic concepts of civil society are also strongly mirrored in how international actors such as the UN and development agencies, who have been important actors in post-war Guatemala in particular but also in Nigeria, have approached civil society, reinforcing a specific understanding of civil society and its correlation to democratisation. Here civil society has been defined as an NGO-style organisation characterized by a common good agenda which is expressed through critical engagement with the state, monitoring for state accountability, advocacy methods such as press statements, organising demonstrations and, awareness programs, etc. (Spark 2010:24; Marchetti and Tocci 2009).
3.2.1 Addressing the shortcomings: The Political and the Religious

José Casanova has himself recognised limitations to his analytical categories and his work several times (Casanova 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2012). In particular, he acknowledges three main limitations to his original outlook:

(i) its Western-Christian centrism; (ii) the attempt, to restrict, at least normatively, modern public religions to the public sphere of civil society; and (iii) the empirical framing of the study as church-state-nation-civil society relations from a comparative national experience, neglecting the global dimensions (Casanova 2012: 26).

He goes so far as to say that he was blinded by his “catholic hermeneutic perspective”, envisioning that similar processes that happened with the Catholic Church in the 1960s would also occur elsewhere – essentially, a shift from a state-oriented to a civil-society oriented church, with a strong liberal public discourse protesting authoritarian regimes and supporting democratisation processes (Casanova 2012:29). Casanova’s criticism of his own work is necessary. Religion has indeed proven to be much more than a conscientious actor, a moral authority in civil society. Religious fundamentalists, who do not seek compromise, have found ways of being in the public realm, despite Casanova’s prediction in his early work that “they will most likely abandon the public sphere” (Casanova 1994:116). The confusion between normative and empirical perspectives throughout Casanova’s work has little value outside the academy, and particularly outside Europe: normative discussions on what role religion should have in the modern world are better replaced with empirical inquires about its actual roles. This thesis will engage with the shortcomings Casanova himself has identified.

While Casanova acknowledge limitations in his perspective, he does not offer any helpful alternative apart from a rather lofty suggestion to move beyond the state to account more fully for global and transnational communities that affect public religion (Casanova 2012). I propose not leaving the state behind but instead entering into a more thorough discussion of what the state is and where power is located, with the aim of scrutinizing the core concepts of his work, “religion” and the “public”. A fruitful starting point is to wither the importance of the state in other to better the analysis.

Wither the state

When I first started this project, it was with an interest in religion and politics. I assumed my focus would be on how Pentecostals interacted with, and in, political society through looking
at Pentecostal political parties, Pentecostal politicians etc. However, as I started delving into the material, both research and my own observations on how Pentecostals in Nigeria and Guatemala relate to the world, I realised that my understanding of politics was limiting, as I was overtly focused on Pentecostal interaction with the state. Casanova’s emphasis on the “public” is a broader and more analytically open category, and thus more useful in examining contemporary Pentecostalism. However, while a focus on public opens up some doors, the main problem with Casanova’s view is that it is still state-centred, in which the spheres he assigns to public religion, both political society and civil society, are defined in relation to the state. I began drawing maps in my office placing the Pentecostals in Guatemala and Nigeria at the centre and then trying to see how the world looked from their perspective. It did not take long before the role I had assigned to the state – primarily political parties and government, but also actions in organised civil society – had to be reduced in favour of other institutions such as the media, the family, and the business sector.

Working from the perspective of social movement theory, Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Mary Bernstein have convincingly shown how their discipline has had the state as the principal source of power in society, making movements that do not primarily target the state with explicit political demands insignificant for their inquiries. By defining politics narrowly as activities occurring in reference to formal governance or the nation-state, this literature made much social movement activity appear secondary and non-political. Politics thus becomes limited to institutionalised activities such as voting or lobbying or informal activities such as rallies and marches. They show how “governments are viewed as the only rule-makers of significance, and actors are defined in terms of their relationship to the state” (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008:75). This view has rendered a whole set of movements to be regarded as cultural or identity-focused and as secondary to the more explicit state-focused movements when it comes to their ability to effect change in society.

Armstrong and Bernstein propose an alternative model where power is seen to be located not only in state, but in multiple institutions. They do not aim to define what institutions are most important, but suggest leaving that question open for empirical research as the institutions that matter will have different types and degrees of power in different contexts. Institutions of importance can be as different as the capitalist market, education, the state, media, the nuclear family, or religion. This approach understands power as located both in and between a variety of institutions, including the state, and social movements will often target not just one
institution but several. A multi-institutional approach thus “views power as dispersed in a variety of institutions operating to distinct logics” (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008:92). Thus a movement may target their strategies towards changing not only culture and identities but also policy.

**Expand religion**

Central to most sociological theorising are the distinctions between the religious and the secular, the public and the private, and the religious and the political (Casanova 1994). The limitations of these analytical binaries, and our main category of religion, have been critically highlighted by several researchers working on cases outside Europe (Asad 2003; Marshall 2009; O’Neill 2010). Acknowledging the limitations of these binaries is essential to discussing the public role of Pentecostalism. A turn in sociological research is to look *beyond the congregation* in order to better understand the role of religion in society (Bender et al. 2013), and ask how religious ideas and practices are shaped and performed in the workplace, in the courtroom, in the legislature, in the media, in the schools, jails and hospitals, and in the streets. The questions of how and where religion is practiced and produced necessitate a research focus on “a broader range of social institutions that identify and organise religion in any social or national context” (Bender et al. 2013: 11). My focus is how Pentecostalism is performed, rather than why. Inspired by the work of Marshall (2009), I attempt to engage critically with the categories of both the political and the religious, in an attempt to approach Pentecostalism in a less reductionist way. Pentecostal practice and discourse resist the analytical distinctions between the private and the public, between sacred and secular, and between religious and political. The Pentecostal way of doing religion shows that words and things have agency (Marshall 2009). Pentecostals themselves argue they *do* politics by engaging in acts most secular observers would not deem political, or “rational”, such as engaging in spiritual warfare against demons of corruption, occupying the public space such as marked places with posters carrying bible verses, and developing business projects. By investigating ways of doing Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Guatemala, it is this project’s aim to investigate empirically Pentecostalism as a public force in those countries, through a comparative perspective on methods, strategies, and internal organisations of a diverse movement.
It is not only the received categories that are insufficient, but also the questions of what is political and what is religious and what is public and what is private for Pentecostals. We will see that they relate actively to the different spheres or institutions of society and have a continuous discussion as to what constitutes good religious practices.

3.2.2 Church-sect Typology

What happens to Pentecostalism when it becomes big? In focusing the main empirical question of this thesis, I have used some of the insights we have from church-sect theory to guide the enquiries. This brings back the classical typologies of Weber and Troeltsch, who both placed strong emphasis on the forms of Christian institutions and worldviews. While the church-sect theory has received substantial criticism over the years, and by no means provides a simple blueprint for how to explain changes within the Pentecostal movement, the theory does raise some questions that help frame the analysis.

For Troeltsch the church is characterised by an inclusive model for membership; it is a natural community into which one is born. The institution itself is sacred, and requires a body of specialists to manage the benefits of salvation. While a conservative force vis-à-vis the social order of which the church itself is an integral, its universal character inclines the church to seek compromise with society in order to extend its hold (Hervieu-Léger 2001:170). The sect is diametrically opposite to the church: membership is exclusive and voluntary and based on personal conversion or commitment, with strong demands on personal conduct and with direct fellowship among members. The sect is characterised by simplicity in organisation. The sect is outside the established order, either indifferent or explicitly hostile to it. It does not compromise with the world, and seeks rather to build parallel institutions of the faithful if needed. Whereas one is born into a church, the sect requires stronger personal commitment (McGuire 2002:150). Diametrically opposed, the sect and the church as religious institutions

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22 For a valuable discussion of the evolution and discussion around multiple variations of church-sect theories, see Cristiano et al. (2002) for a specific look at the US context, or McGuire (2006) for a more general presentation.

23 Troeltch also added a third type of association, “mysticism”, as a means of explaining individual spirituality; mysticism privileges individual exchange in intimate networks, but without rigid doctrine or rigid institutions, be they church-like or sect-like in orientation. For Troeltch, this type represents the increasingly individualised modern religion.
symbolise two different relationships – negotiation and secession – with the world, which leads to different relations to the social, economic, political, and cultural environments.

The sect, as described by Troeltsch, with its focus on personal choice and strong commitment only works for the first generation that has the enthusiasm needed for a strong religious community. For him the church-sect typology represent a continuum, a way of explaining change. In order to make the model applicable to wider range of institutions, several categories have been added in the literature. For instance, Richard Niebuhr added a third category, the denomination. The denomination makes a compromise with the world by accommodating, unlike the sect, but has no intention or ability to become a dominant church for the masses, unlike the church. These three fluid categories relate to the key theme of sociological research: the relationship between religious groups and the social environment, and the degrees of tension in this relationship.

If we follow Troeltsch, the Pentecostal movement started out as a sect, in opposition to the existing church. It started primarily as a revival, but with elements of schism and charismatic leaders too, which are the three elements that Bryan Wilson has identified as the push factors for sect creation (D’Epinay 1969: 212). They were characterised by great enthusiasm, strong community, a membership that followed conversion, and held a hostile view of the religious other and of the secular world as a whole. Even though both sects and churches claim to possess ultimate truth, sects might be more aggressive in addressing their uniqueness as defined of what they are not, i.e. the wider society and its dominant religious institutions. They may choose withdrawal, attack, or attempting to convert the unbeliever (McGuire 2006: 156). Sectarian movements also place themselves in opposition to the dominant social institutions, either by avoiding them and not joining trade unions, universities, sports clubs and refraining from drinking, dancing, and the like or by building parallel institutions such as religious schools and religious media, thus enabling firmer control over the worldview of a

24 “Denominations”, on the other hand, are closely linked to pluralism and marked by voluntarism; they are “religious collectivises that exist in a positive relationship with society and accept the legitimacy claims of other religious collectivises have a denominational stance” (McGuire 2006: 157). Denominationalism is usually exemplified by its expression in the US as the model for religious pluralism throughout the world (Cristiano et al. 2002: 101).

25 D’Epinay asks in his influential 1969 book if “Pentecostalism is in a state of evolution” (D’Epinay 1969: 212), to which the answer is affirmative, based on: 1) Pentecostals will evangelise and thus need to relate to the world and also contain the world within their fold; 2) they will not resist the temptation to get involved in politics.
sect’s adherents. Those who choose to withdraw from society, rather than actively convert and transform society, are less vulnerable to accommodation to society, according to the theory.

The issue at stake here is not to characterise the diverse Pentecostal movement as any one of the church, denomination, or sect type, but to use the categories as paradigms to shed light on the dynamism between Pentecostalism and the social environment. The variety within the Pentecostal movement suggests that we can easily find all three categorisations present, and also continuous internal struggles between people who want to see the movement move in conflicting directions. In order to concretise the inquiries this project looks at the national representation of Pentecostalism in the two countries, primarily through umbrella organisations but also other prominent institutions and actors. Pentecostalism has certainly embraced sectors of society by engaging in politics, business, entertainment, and culture. The questions asked throughout this thesis are: Where is the tension between the Pentecostal movement and society, and how have the lines of tension changed? How does the movement draw boundaries of inclusion and exclusion? What is the relationship to the religious other in Nigeria and Guatemala? How do Pentecostal movements negotiate internal tension between charisma and routinisation? These questions will aid the discussion of Pentecostalism as public religion in the two countries, moving beyond questions of compatibility with democracy.

The basic thinking of an evolutionary model undergirds much academic research on religion on the margins, whether these are framed as sects, strict religions, radicals, fundamentalists, or religious orthodox. Working in a US context, Finke and Stark (2006) argue:

The sect-church process concerns the fact that new religious bodies nearly always begin as sects and that, if they are successful in attracting a substantial following, they will, over time, almost inevitably be gradually transformed into churches. Successful religious movements nearly always shift their emphasis towards this world and away from the next, moving from high tension with the environment toward increasingly lower levels of tension (2006:45).

The outsider is believed to have the two options of either accommodating oneself to the majority society or retreat. José Casanova argued for instance that those fundamentalists that are not willing to compromise will “most likely abandon the public sphere and return to their isolated hamlets” (Casanova 1996:166). In political science this thinking can be seen in the inclusion-moderation theories that ask whether radical groups will moderate when entering the public sphere or democratic politics (Schwedler 2011). Radical religious parties that enter
national politics for instance, will need to adjust their strategies if not always their ideologies in trying to accommodate and court a much wider constituency than the relatively few committed members. A major point of discussion in this literature rests on the differentiation between behavioural and ideological moderation; radical groups might change their institutions and strategies for pragmatic reasons, but they are still wolves in sheep’s clothing that will enforce a radical ideology once given the opportunity (Buehler 2012). By focusing on institutions and worldviews, the inclusion-moderation thesis and the sect-church theory are both good tools to think with in framing the analysis of how Pentecostalism goes public.

As is examined in the following chapters, the Pentecostal movement does not represent a linear, evolutionary sect-church model. The examples from Nigeria and Guatemala also show that Pentecostalism challenges notions put forward by Casanova (1994) that religion will confine itself to certain spheres of society: it goes public not just in the state or in civil society but in a wide variety of spheres. Furthermore, Pentecostalism is asked to be public; it does not have to beg, making it able to set the agenda for the type of engagement it wants. As strong societal actors on many levels, Pentecostals have within the course of three to four decades gone from periphery to centre stage. Their success has enabled them to retain several sectarian elements, as it is not only or at least no longer a question of how to accommodate a majority society; Pentecostals in fact alter the terms of the wider society.
4 Contextualising Pentecostal growth in Nigeria

Nigeria is a young nation, a stumbling giant with approximately 170 million people. The country is the seventh largest oil producer in the world, it has the world’s third biggest movie industry known as Nollywood, ranked after Hollywood and Bollywood and it is by far the most populous country of Africa, with the second-largest country, Ethiopia, only half the size of Nigeria (Campbell 2010). Nigeria is an important regional player, and also an international actor, in politics, culture, and the economy. Its economy is thriving amidst chaos. Nigeria is notoriously known for its problem with corruption, which penetrates everyday life as well as national politics. Pervasive impunity makes corrupt leaders continue to seemingly unashamedly stealing from state resources (Smith 2008). Most Nigerians are poor, in sharp contrast to a few very rich who have benefitted from the country’s rich natural resources. Since 1999 the country has held democratic elections, but electoral irregularities have seriously questioned the influence of voters on the outcome of elections, leading to characterisations such as “defective” or “hybrid” democracy (Harnischfeger 2007:24). Observers have long focused on the fragility of the nation, as the titles of some of the most popular books on Nigeria indicate: *This House has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis* (Maier 2002), *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Conception and Popular Discontent* (Smith 2008), and *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Campbell 2010). While religion has always been important in Nigeria, it is increasingly also argued to be a cause of the nation’s fragility.

Pentecostalism is big in Nigeria. Once an inward-looking, marginal phenomenon, Pentecostalism now occupies a prominent place in several sectors of economic, political and cultural Nigeria. Before getting into the discussion of how Pentecostalism engages in, society it is necessary to take a look at the context in which Pentecostalism flourishes. The following chapter has three main parts and serves to contextualize the public role of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. First we look at the level of the state and the increased role of religion in public affairs. We see that Pentecostalism both benefits from and contributes to this religious turn. We then turn to the religious sector; Pentecostals actively relate to the religious other, who which consists of three main blocs: a) traditional religions, b) Islam, and c) Christianity. These three groups all shape the internal dynamics and external expression of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Thirdly, we look at the national ecumenical umbrella organisation, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The CAN is an important national platform for Christian public engagement, a platform that prominent Pentecostal pastors have come to
dominate. The formal organisation of Pentecostalism is an important entry for the analysis, but we turn we turn first to the state.

4.1 Political context
Nigeria gained independence in 1960, and ever since the issue of nation-building has been a primary concern. The country has a presidential system with a complex local governance program: six geo-political zones, 36 federal states, and 774 local government authorities. This federalist structure is seen as essential, despite its many flaws, as a mechanism for ensuring the relative autonomy of the different groups in society, as well as distribution of power, resources, and representation among the various states in Nigeria. Nigeria re-instituted democracy in 1999, which put an end to almost 33 years of military rule. This democracy is less dependent on citizens’ votes and opinions and more on coercion and bribery, as Falola and Heaton argues, “since government does not maintain its powers through popularity but through coercion and the control of resources” (2008:184). Competition for control over the federal government and its revenues, delineates much political life (Falola 1998:56). Since the late 1970s the oil economy has been the main income for the state, and represents today 80 per cent of the state’s income. Nigeria is the 7th largest oil producer in the world (Paden 2008:12). The state thus controls considerable revenues without having to do much to earn it; oil is largely rented out to third parties. Nigeria is also often referred to as having a neopatrimonial system of governance, where the leaders use wealth to secure loyalty, so that having access to the people who control these resources becomes vital. This system relates to what is referred to as the big man rule in Nigeria, an informal kinship-based relationship between patron and client which predates the state, but has found new contemporary expressions. The combination of pre-colonial norms and weak institutions in the new state has allowed for individuals to maintain power by providing for their clients through an informal system (McCauley 2013). While there are laws and administration in place, the state is captured by these patronage networks. For Nigerians, “the state and corruption is synonymous” (Smith 2008:14). Access to state services, education, employment, and migration depends on having connection with people, not by approaching formal channels such as the bureaucracy (Amundsen 2012; Ihejirika 2011). As the state in many African countries has been crippled by the impact of structural adjustment, religious organisations

26 The six-geo political zones are not referred to in the constitution, but function in practice: northwest, north-central, northeast, southeast, southwest, and south-south (Paden 2008:19).
have been ready to take over many of the state’s functions (Comaroff 2012; Marshall 2009; Meyer 2010:115). Massive corruption, social decay, widespread graduate unemployment, and rising poverty turned many in Nigeria too religion in order to “negotiate the massive social, political and economic transformations going on in the country” (Ukah 2011b: 191).

Matthew Hassan Kukah, a Nigerian Catholic bishop and academic, has referred to Nigeria as “a catholic marriage”, in the sense that “it may not be happy, but it doesn’t break up”(Africa Confidential August 2010). In Nigeria, there is acute awareness of this fragility. There is national political strategy from the different parties to promote national dialogue and a “Nigeria is one” discourse, or a “People of the book”- model, aimed at uniting regional and religious cleavages (Alubo 2004:135; Paden 2008). Conflicts over ethnicity and regionalism were apparent from the first days of the independence; ethnic minorities complained about domination by majority groups and regional groups complained about discrimination at federal levels, etc.27 While ethnicity and regionalism remain very important in Nigeria, religious identities have increasingly also entered national politics over the last 20 to 30 years and accentuated a division along religious lines, and a north-south division28. A majority of Muslims live in the north, with the majority of Christians in the south which has led to calls by some for a division along those lines. But this image of a North-South division is blurred by mixed religious populations in the Middle Belt, as well as in the South East (Paden 2008:10). There is however mutual distrust between the North and the South: The South has far better socioeconomic conditions than the north. The South has the oil reserves, the commercial capital of Lagos, and better access to health and education services then in the North. Historically, the military and the political elite have been from the north but this has changed since democracy was re-installed in 1999.

Given the almost equal distribution of Christian and Muslims in the country, Nigeria is increasingly used as an example of “the frontline between Modern Africa’s main religions: Christianity and Islam” (Freston 2001:181). For political leaders, and for Muslims and Christians protagonists in the public, the focus is on the two majority religions. This view

27 The country is home to from 250 to 400 ethnolinguistic groups, depending on how one counts dialects and subgroups. However, three of the groups account for 68 per cent of the national population; the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbos in the southeast (Paden 2008: 7). English is the official national language.

28 The North-South division has longer historical roots. During British rule the two regions were de facto administered as separate colonies, but as one legal entity (Paden 2008 21-23).
leaves indigenous religions ignored on the altar of the more clearly defined monotheistic majority religions (Kukah 2005; Paden 2008).

**Religion and the state**

The constitution of Nigeria, part 2, section 10 reads: “The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion”. This “state neutrality” has however not erased discussions of religion, and the state (at either the federal or state level) is at times a battleground for representatives of the two major religions. During the drafting of the constitution for the Second Republic in 1977, the first heated national debate on religion arose as the public discussion of the constitution centred almost exclusively on a religious issue, the creation of a federal Sharia court of appeal (Marshall 2009:223). The influential anthropologist Talal Asad has rightly challenged those who view secularism as a neutral condition, void of meaning, history, and power (Asad 2003). In Nigeria, this is vividly exemplified as the issue of secularity has divided Christians and Muslims since independence and continues to be up for constant debate (Falola 1998:75). For Christians, as exemplified by the umbrella organisation the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the principle of state neutrality is evoked to prevent Muslim dominance. As we shall see below, the CAN constantly monitors the state to ensure that Muslims are not favoured over Christians.

Religion occupies a very visible role in Nigeria. The religious language adopted by politicians is striking, as are the frequent meetings and functions where religious and political leaders come together. The state has several formal relations with the two major religions, subsidising religious pilgrimage for both Christian and Muslims, the building of the national mosque and the national church in Abuja, and religious festivals. The state appoints the Sultan of Sokoto and other officials (Kukah 2005; Ukah 2008:7). Since the introduction of democracy in 1999, nine states in the North have adopted Sharia, while three more have a partial implementation, pushing the issue of religion and state even higher on the national agenda (Harnischfeger 2007).

Following the democratic elections in 1999, there has been an elite compromise within the dominant political party (the People’s Democratic Party or PDP) that the presidency of the
nation should rotate between a Christian and a Muslim.\footnote{There have only been three presidents since 1999. From 1999-2007 the Christian Olusegun Obasanjo had two terms, followed by the Muslim Umaru Musa Yar’adu in 2007 who died during office in 2010. The vice-president, Christian Goodluck Jonathan, took over the presidency and amid protests from Muslims voices, ran as the main contender for the PDP in the 2011- election and won.} Political parties that stand for elections have the two religions represented on the presidential and the vice-presidential ballot with the aim of preventing candidates from playing the geographical or religious cards. There are also several other political mechanisms in place such as the ban on religious or ethnic political parties. These concerns also arose out of pragmatic concern: Politicians in Nigeria needs cross-regional, and cross-religious, support in order to succeed (Paden 2008:21).

Having had a brief look at the state and the increasingly important role religion in its functioning, we now turn to the religious sector. Pentecostalism actively relates to the religious other in Nigeria and the religious context helps understand Pentecostalism’s internal dynamics and its relationship with other religions.

### 4.2 Contextualising Pentecostalism in the religious field

Religions are thriving in contemporary Nigeria. Revival movements within Christianity and Islam are making a definite mark on Nigerian society, while traditional religious practices have also regained a prominent place in the public sphere. Along with a population boom, there has been considerable change in the religious demographic in Nigeria. In 1960, the year the state was born, the population of Nigeria was approximately 45 million. 50 years later it has quadrupled to 170 million (\textit{CIA Factbook} 2014). There has been a dramatic change in religious adherence: The census from 1953 showed that Muslims were 45.3 \%, Christians 21.4 \%, while 33.3 \% belonged to “other religions”. Today, the figures are closer to 50-50 between Islam and Christianity. The change is indebted to mass conversion, particularly since independence. But it also shows how the very idea that there is \textit{one} primary religious allegiance, introduced by Christian missionaries, has been widely adopted. One can therefore also argue that the category of religion has been adopted in Nigeria, which favours the monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity (Marshall 2009: 57). However, the various practices and worldviews in traditional religions are today often found amongst the adherents of the two dominant religions.

Numbers concerning religious affiliations are notoriously difficult to find, let alone trust. The last time the Nigerian national census data asked questions about religion was in 1963. The
issue is highly political and the authorities have refrained from asking questions about religious affiliation (Pew Forum 2006:85). All numbers are disputed in Nigeria, but there seems to be some consensus that there is a more or less even Christian-Muslim split today, if for no other reason than to try to keep the peace.

The numbers are important. During my interviews for this project I would often hear from my Christian informants that the Christian community is by far bigger than the Muslim community, representing 60 or 70 per cent of the population. However, both Muslim and Christian groups seem convinced that they are in the majority. Ahead of the national census in 2006, both Muslims and Christian organisations protested the decision not to include questions of religious identity in it. Both sides were confident they would benefit from a census (Paden 2008:20). Figures in an influential U.S. report from 2009 suggested that “approximately 50 per cent” of Nigeria’s population is Muslim. The findings reached Nigeria, and the head of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Ayo Oritsejafor, confronted the findings in media and asked rhetorically how a US-based research institute could know something that no Nigerians knew (Vanguard 20.10.09).

4.2.1 Invoking the spirits: Traditional religion

One common explanation for the success of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, and in Africa more broadly, is that Pentecostalism has managed to incorporate traditional religious belief into its worldview (Burgess 2008:35; Ihejirika 2012: 176; Meyer 1998). Even though Pentecostals deem traditional religious belief as unchristian and even demonic, Pentecostals clearly acknowledge that the world known in traditional religious belief systems exists, and that these non-Christian powers are powerful, but that “Jesus is stronger”. Central to African religious ideas is a preoccupation with power and evil, evil as “a metaphysical entity that is often experienced as real, concrete, and almost tangible. It may take the form of evil spirits, but it can also be manifested through human being in the form of witchcraft” (ter Harr 2009:29). The Pentecostal Christians preach that they now have the power to control and master the

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30 There is also great sensitivity in relation to ethnicity and the power balance between the 36 federal states in Nigeria, and census results are often interpreted politically. Figures are important in questions related to the redistribution of resources and power.

31 According to US government figures Muslims are 50%, Christians 40% and indigenous belief at 10%. (CIA Factbook; Paden 2008:7).

32 This focus on evil is also predominant in other parts of the global Pentecostal movement; see Hackett’s article on the rise of satanic discourses in Nigeria, “Discourses of Demonization in Africa and Beyond” (2003).
non-Christian evils (Burgess 2008). By recognising these powers, Pentecostals, to a much larger degree than other Christian churches, have managed to present a reliable system whereby evil powers can be controlled. 33

The practice of traditional religions predates the influx of Christianity and Islam, and co-exists with them in contemporary Nigeria. The gods of the clans or the families throughout Nigeria were believed to be intimately linked with political power. The political order was articulated via rituals and sacralisation of public symbols (Mbachi 2006:77). There has been a dramatic decline in people who say they belong to traditional religions, as “people only recognise themselves as having ‘a religion’ when they adopt Islam or Christianity, religions which not only define themselves as such, but construct ‘paganism’ as their opposition” (Marshall 2009:57, citing Peel). This does not mean Muslim and Christians do not make use of, or relate to, the pool of resources and realities of different traditional religious practices. In Nigeria, witchcraft, juju, secret cults, spiritual advisors, and ancestors are part of many Nigerians’ lives, be they poor or rich.

Traditional religions are local religions, with particular Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa features, but there are several elements that span geographical boundaries (Adogame 2010:480). These beliefs and practices have changed during recent decades; some have declined, but many have been strengthened (Adogame 2005). Reference to evils, demons, and secret cults are very much present in the public sphere, and this is a new trend. Throughout the 1990s, there was “a growing public obsession with evil occult powers” (Marshall 2009:9), which has occurred parallel to the growth of Pentecostalism, and as argued by many: most likely influenced by the specific spiritual teaching in Pentecostalism, but also local ideas of spiritual agency (Hackett 2003).

The possession of political power or economic wealth is often associated with the occult (Smith 2007:592). Political leaders are believed to turn to spiritual advisors or secret cults in order to communicate with the spiritual world, a world that has potential to change the physical, material world (ter Haar 2009). For Pentecostals, who believe there are competing spiritual forces in this world, this has been used as justification for Christians to stay out of

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33 For a view on how the historic churches relates to traditional religion see for instance Gifford, who writes that by recognising the spiritual forces in society “Pentecostal Christianity is answering needs left entirely unaddressed by mainline Christianity” (Gifford 1998:329).
politics. A senior official of the Apostolic Church, a classical Pentecostal church, explains why his church is not active in national politics:

If anyone wants to be effective in Nigerian politics they are expected to join secret cults. They are expected to go back to the shrine instead of the pulpit. We don’t encourage our members to do that because they will throw them back to idol worshipping. That’s why we decided not to. Instead we will be praying for them. They know that we are praying of them effectively and honestly. 34

References to competing spiritual powers are frequent. Discussing Muslim-Christian relations with a young Baptist leader in Abuja, I asked him if President Goodluck Jonathan, being a Christian, had changed the situation for Christians. The young man was very concerned with what he saw as Muslim dominance in federal affairs. “No”, he said: “The Christian president is marginalised because they [the Muslims] use charms on him. They evoke spirits on him. So they make him powerless. They are the ones controlling him.” 35

While Pentecostalism strongly relates to the traditional religious practices and worldview, the presence of Islam in the country also plays a major role, perhaps particularly in aiding the formation of a Pentecostal national project.

4.2.2 Islam in Nigeria: Competing projects and trails
Revival within Christianity, as exemplified with the Pentecostal movement in the 1970s and beyond, was mirrored by revivalism in Islam. After decades of economic decline, colonial rule and a struggling democracy that lacked legitimacy, there is renewed focus on religious values amongst Muslims and Christians (Harnischberger 2008:28). Ruth Marshall writes specifically about the Pentecostal movement and Islam:

The simultaneous rise of the Born-Again movement and radical Islamic reformism should not be seen as coincidental. While initially concerned with the revitalization or restoration of their respective religious traditions, and largely inspired by the intensification of transnational relations, both movements arise from the same social class, are products of post-colonial educational institutions, and seek to create moral and political renewal and order from the chaos of the oil-boom years through religious revival. Their competing projects were bound to clash, and constant provocation from both sides has meant the bid for converts and for political representation has taken increasingly violent forms. In a country whose population is roughly divided between Christians and Muslims, both the Born-Again and Islamic reformist activities has gravely exacerbated the already existing North-South divide” (Marshall 2009:219).

34 Interview Lagos, September 5, 2012.
Islam arrived sometime between the 8th and 11th centuries and was long more of an elite project that did not “conquer the hearts” of the population. In the fifteenth century, the Hausa kingdoms of Northern Nigeria followed the kings of Ghana, Mali and Kanem-Bornu, who had converted already in the eleventh century. However, it was not until the early nineteenth century that the call for jihad by Usman dan Fodio began to initiate mass conversion in Northern Nigeria. dan Fodio combined “social criticism with religious rigor”, and together with the sword, managed to gather support for his anti-corruption, anti-establishment, and pro-Islam message (Harnischfeger 2008:43). This also triggered the establishment of the first Nigerian caliphate, the Sokoto Caliphate (Falola 1998:25; Harnischfeger 2008:42). The Sultan of Sokoto is still today regarded a religious leader, but his political authority was removed during the British colonial rule. The current Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar II, is a prominent public figure in Nigeria today and is regarded as the spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims.

With the Sokoto Caliphate, Sharia was established in 1809. When the British colonisers arrived later in that century, they approved the legal and administrative system in place as long as the emirs and the sultan pledged loyalty to the British throne. The caliphate thus continued through the British practice of indirect rule. Islam has consolidated its northern stronghold even further since independence. Since the introduction of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, Sharia has been declared main body of civil and criminal law in 12 of the northern states of Nigeria. The majority of Nigerian Muslims are Sunni Muslims. The Hausa and the Fulani ethnic groups are Muslims and the majority lives in the northern part of Nigeria. The Yoruba are both Christian and Muslims, while the Igbo are predominantly Christians.

Following Paden (2008), current Muslim identities and organisations can be described by five broad categories: Sufi brotherhoods and the Izala, student and youth organisations, women’s organisations, anti-establishment networks, and national umbrella organisations. The Izala movement was a reaction against Sufism, which they considered to be an “innovation” to

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36 The Sultan of Sokoto is the Muslim head of Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC) and formally meets with the government and the Christian community as the representative of the Muslim community. The current sultan is a well-known figure in international milieus working on inter-faith issues. He has had a close working relationship with the former head of CAN, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Onaiyekan, a cooperation which led to a nomination for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize.

37 The full name of the Izala movement is Jama’atul Izalatul Bid’ah Wa’ikhamatul Sunnah, which means “society against innovation and in favour of Sunna”.

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Islam and too closely related to the Nigerian elite (Falola 1998: 240). Parallel to the boom of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the Izalas experienced enormous popularity amongst Muslims in the late 1970s and quickly became a mass movement. As in Pentecostalism, the Izala proponents called for renewal and restoration of their own faith and sought a solution in religion to the nation’s huge problems. The Izala were popular with messages of revivalism (“return to Islam”), anti-Sufism, and opposition to the establishment (Ibrahim 1999, Marshall 2009:219). The death of the movement’s undisputed leader, Abubakar Gumi, in 1992, decentralised the Izalas. Today a broad, popular, and divided reformist Islamist movement exists in Nigeria.

Then, student movements have been vital in the reformation of both the Christian and Muslim religions, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Together with women’s groups, they testify to the great variety and focus of Muslim associations. Of more direct relevance for relations with the Christian community are the national umbrella organisations. The Jama’tu nasril Islam (JNI) was set up in 1961 with the aim of uniting Muslims in Nigeria, and, together with the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) can be considered counterparts to the CAN. Whereas the CAN’s relation to the JNI has been more openly antagonistic, the NSCIA has been closer to the government and thus meets with the CAN on a more frequent basis in support of the state’s Nigeria is one policy (Westerlund 2009).

Finally, we have what Paden terms anti-establishment movements that include militant Islamists groups such as the Boko Haram. Boko Haram turned violent with the death of its leader in 2009, and has since become a major threat to both civilians and the Nigerian state, particularly in the north-eastern part of the country. There is as of 2014 still very little knowledge of its members, structures, or aims of this group, which is most likely not one formal group, but more like a loosely-connected network. Boko Haram targets anything that they regard as “unislamic”, including government buildings, police stations, media institutions, UN-offices, mosques, and churches. Regardless of its limited size and support, it has a major impact in Nigeria. There are different ways of analysing Boko Haram. One explanation is to see it in light of the north-south divide in Nigeria, emphasising the social and economic marginalisation of a large section of the northern states. Other explanations focus on the group being a tool for the northern elites against the central government, which they

38 For a fuller description see Paden (2008:30-32).
argue shows little interest in the north, or a revenge factor, which sees the militarisation of Boko Haram as a result of the violent and unlawful behaviour of the Nigerian security forces (Marchal 2012).

**Increasing Muslim-Christian tension**

Religious tension has increased following the return to democracy in Nigeria (Imo 2008; Harnischfeger 2007). Religion as a source of tension is frequently debated in academic, political, and public spheres in Nigeria. The increased tensions have led to occasional calls for separation of the country in two parts, northern and southern, or fear of increased violence and even civil war. 39

The violent Boko Haram network has brought international attention to religious conflict in Nigeria. However, Christian-Muslim tension long predates Boko Haram, and has been one out of several conflict lines in Nigeria since independence. Tension has been violent: the first major brutal confrontation between Christian and Muslims occurred in 1986, in Kaduna State (Falola 1998:179), and since then there have been several incidents, particularly in the Middle Belt area. Most of the clashes have been over land resources between Muslim nomads and Christian farmers in the Middle Belt or federal resources, also in the Middle Belt. The situation is volatile. When the Danish cartoon crisis broke out in 2005, and all eyes were on the riots in the Middle East, the most deadly clashes over the cartoon crisis actually happened in Muslim-majority northern Nigeria, where churches were burnt, Christian businesses attacked, and several were killed (BBC 2006).

Christian-Muslim tension, however, involves much more than physical violence. Political battles, hate literature, and verbal violence is part of the picture. Having access to political power in Nigeria translates directly into economic advantage for adherents, and thus the expansion of influence and power is crucial (Ukah 2011: 189). The battles are fought at both large and small scales. According to Kukah and Falola (1996), for Muslims the conflict is

39 For an overview over different academic approaches to the role of religion and Nigerian unity, see Falola (1998), and Kalu (2008). Kalu distinguishes between five dominant discourses on religion in Nigerian scholarship: 1) the conflict model, where religion is seen as dysfunctional in the state and the cause of instability; 2) the instrumentalist-manipulation model, where class is at the centre and the elites manipulate religion for their own ends; 3) the rainbow model, where pluralism is seen as both feasible and desirable; 4) as a story of competing fundamentalisms; and 5) within the framework of competition for federal and state resources (Kalu 2008: 233-242). For perspectives on Muslim-Christian conflicts see for instance Akanji 2011; Falola 1998; Kukah and Falola 1996; Ibrahim 1999; Westerlund 2009. For a brief account on how religion was used for political ends in the first decades of the independent state, see Adogame (2005).
about: 1) unfounded Christian jealously of Muslims; 2) Christian intolerance and aggressive forms of evangelisation; 3) Secularism, which they claim is not neutral, but a continuation of a Christian, western mode of governance; and 4) the insistence on Muslims’ right to implement Sharia, arguing it is a Muslim-originated legal systems, and the national system is by default Christian because of its colonial legacy. Several Muslim argue that Christianity, due to the colonial legacy, still controls most of all symbols of the state, as this quote in the Muslim magazine *Radiance* illustrates:

> Even the Sunday remains the national weekend, the Christian New Year is the national New Year, the Christian doctrine of the separation of Church and state is the national philosophy, the Christian calendar is the official calendar, and Euro-Christian Law remains supreme. But Islam’s Friday, New Year, calendar, and…philosophy are thrown away in the name of ‘complete equality’ between religions, while its Law even in completely Muslim areas remain subservient to…colonial law (Enweren 1998:142).

Many Christians, on the other side, argue that the sources of the conflict is due to government favouritism for Islam, as illustrated by the inclusion of Nigeria in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (1986) or the freeze of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973 and the decision to allow Sharia implementation in twelve of the northern states. Christians talk of fear that Muslims will Islamise the entire country if given the opportunity. Most of the military regimes were led by Muslims, and the military class is dominated by Muslims. For Christians, ensuring that the state does not favour Islam is a primary concern. One example is pilgrimage. Since the 1950s, the Nigerian federal state has subsidised the Muslim hajj to Mecca. Christians have protested this arrangement with two arguments, first that it was a violation of the secularity of the state, and secondly, that it was discriminatory towards Christians, who had no similar, sponsored religious activity (Falola 1998). In 1985 the Christian Pilgrimage Board was established, and with time this institution has expanded. Anyone who has done pilgrimage to Jerusalem can use the honorary title “JP”, Jerusalem Pilgrim (as a mirror-practice of Muslims who put “el Hajj” to their name after pilgrimage). According to government sources about 30,000 performed pilgrimage to Israel in 2012. In October 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan was the first sitting Nigerian president to perform pilgrimage, a trip he took with eight governors and several prominent Nigerians, including the head of the CAN.

The dominant channelling of Christian interests vis-à-vis the state has been through the CAN. The organisation is controversial in Nigerian society, as some blame CAN for fostering religious violence based on their discourse on Islam (Falola 1998: 285). For the first time in
its history, the CAN is now headed by a Pentecostal, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, a clear indicator of Pentecostalism’s growing importance at the expense of the mainline churches. The CAN is a major vehicle for Christian, and explicitly Pentecostal public engagement and is treated in the following section.

4.2.3 Christianity in Nigeria
Numbers on religious affiliation are notoriously difficult to find and most researchers working on religion in Nigeria refrain from making estimates. For a very rough overview, however, the Christian population was estimated in 2010 approximately as follows: 20 million Nigerians are Roman Catholic, while 60 million are Protestant, including the Anglican Church, mainline churches, and Pentecostal churches (Pew Forum 2010).

Despite some initial attempts in the fifteenth century, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that prolonged and intensive European missionary efforts began to bear fruit (Falola 1998:32). By the end of the colonial period, Christianity was the largest religion in the east, had considerable influence in central and western Nigeria, but failed in the North despite several pockets of inroads in the South, particularly amongst the non-Hausa and non-Fulani groups (Falola 1998:33). The missionaries had a complex relationship with the colonial project, but their conversion efforts were ultimately linked to the material and symbolic power that the colonial project represented (Marshall 2009:58). The history of Christianity, as with the history of Islam in Nigeria, is thus a story where religion has been intimately linked to power and politics.

The first serious missionary effort was by the Wesleyan Methodists, who today proudly present themselves as the first Christian church in Nigeria, established in 1842. Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church has been the largest in terms of members, followed by the Anglicans, known locally as the Church of Nigeria. There were several revivals in the Christian churches at the beginning of the 20th century, with the most important being the Aladura movement. It initiated a deeper Africanisation of Christianity in authority figures, beliefs, and practices. Aladura means “praying people” in the Yoruba language, and they broke away from the Protestant missions and began a great expansion between the World Wars. As the name implies, the focus was on prayer and “to provide healing, to rid Christians of idolatry, and to wage war against witches” (Ojo 2006:8). By the 1950s, the Aladura church
was at the centre of Yoruba society and continues to be a vigorous movement in Nigeria (Anderson 2004; Ojo 2006).

Mainline African churches have been active participants in democratisation movements across the continent (Gifford 1995). During the democratic struggles in the 1980 and 1990s, leaders of the mainstream churches were vocal in their criticism of corruption and military dictatorship. This was a time when human right abuses were rampant, and the only tolerated associational activities were at times limited to religious groups and associations (Falola 1998: 224, Kukah 1995). Among prominent leaders were the Catholics Anthony O. Okogie and Matthew Hassan Kukah and the Anglican Bolanle Gbonigi (Adeboye 2006:149).

Organising Christianity: Christian Association of Nigeria

The mainline churches in Nigeria have viewed the Pentecostal newcomers with suspicion. Pentecostal revivalism has emphasised the need to break with established Christianity and that the only way to be a true Christian is through being born again. This is a direct attack on the mainline churches, which quickly started losing members to this evangelising movement. Christians in Nigeria have since the mid-1970s been organised in the CAN. With Pentecostal growth, came an internal wish to organise this diverse movement on a national level and Pentecostals sought representation in the CAN. Despite opposition from several of the established churches the Pentecostals were allowed into the CAN as a separate body in 1991 and quickly came to be its most vocal bloc. Pentecostal congregations are organised into the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and the Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN), representing the newer and older Pentecostal movements, respectively. The PFN, which consist largely of neo-Pentecostals, has in a short time become the CAN’s most vocal membership group. Since 2010, the head of the CAN has been the former head of PFN, a neo-Pentecostal preacher from Warri in the country’s south, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafar. He is the first Pentecostal to lead the CAN, and thus a symbol of their prominence.

The CAN is well organised, has broad participation, and is treated as the representative body of Christians in Nigeria by the state. Few other countries, or international bodies, have managed to gather Catholics, Anglicans, and Pentecostals in such a committed manner. The first national ecumenical project between Catholics and Protestants was in 1971, a project whose objective was to ensure that “religious and moral values” were integrated into national education (Enweren 1995: 76). For

40 The first national ecumenical project between Catholics and Protestants was in 1971, a project whose objective was to ensure that “religious and moral values” were integrated into national education (Enweren 1995: 76). For
CAN headquarters offices are in the capital, Abuja, symbolically placed in a tall tower next to the national ecumenical church. The national church is placed opposite the national mosque in the heart of the city. The two buildings are impressive sights due to size and architecture, and are two of the central landmarks of the city.\(^{41}\) The importance of religion in the state is thus firmly symbolised through these buildings.

CAN branches are active on state and local government levels throughout the country. There is a youth wing (YOWICAN) and a woman’s wing (WOWICAN) in each of the local and federal branches. The National Assembly is the highest policymaking organ of the association, and is comprised of representatives of the various branches. The organisation is made up of five major blocs, representing the Christian denominations in Nigeria:

1. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN)
2. The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN)\(^{42}\)
3. Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN)
4. Organisation of African Initiated Churches (OAIC)\(^{43}\)
5. TEKAN and ECWA Fellowship\(^{44}\)

\(^{41}\) Abuja is a planned capital city, built mainly in the 1980s and declared the capital in 1991. It was intentionally moved from the former capital Lagos, situated in the south, to this area in the middle of the country, in order to build a neutral place that could stimulate national unity. The national policy in promoting religious tolerance and a “People of the book”-model is exemplified in the building of the mosque and the church in the heart of Abuja (Paden 2008: 21-23).

\(^{42}\) This was the first Christian umbrella organisation in Nigeria, founded in 1929. It was comprised of the Anglican Church; Presbyterians; Baptists; Methodists; and more. See their website for more information [http://christiancouncilng.org/about-us.php](http://christiancouncilng.org/about-us.php) (accessed June 9, 2014).

\(^{43}\) The term African Initiated Churches (AIC) refers to churches founded by Africans, not foreign missionaries. These new churches often split from an existing missionary church, carrying with them characteristics from that particular church. There was often a political, theological, or cultural reason for the secession. The most prominent churches in the OAIC are the Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) and the Cherubim and Seraphim. They tend to be more pietistic than others and some of the churches are so called white-garment churches, due to their custom of dressing in white.

\(^{44}\) Missionary missions: Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) (Former Sudan Interior Missions) which had roots in northern Nigeria and TEKAN (The fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria, Tarayar Ekklesiyooyin Kristi a Nigeria), denominations based in Northern Nigeria such as COCIN, HKAN NKST, Christian Assemblies, LCCN, etc.
The CAN figures prominently in Nigerian public life and its role has been controversial, as it has been the main voice of Christian political engagement (Burgess 2008:272; Enweren 1995; Falola 1998). More than an ecumenical body in the traditional sense, it is a political body ensuring that Christians’ rights and interests are protected on federal and state levels. This has led to criticism of oppressive military regimes in the past, but most importantly it has been a voice defending Christian rights and interests vis-à-vis the Muslim community and the state.\(^45\)

The CAN was founded in the mid-1970s, but it was not until the latter part of the 1980s that the organisation revitalised itself. Two specific incidences in 1986 are often argued to be catalysts of Christian unity, the inclusion of Nigeria in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the first major outbreak of inter-religious violence in Kafachan.\(^46\)

The importance of religion in all its shades in Nigeria has undoubtedly aided the formation and the role of a strong Christian organisation in the country.

Islam has unified Christians in many ways. In the CAN there has long been, and still is, a deep-seated perception that the government discriminates against Christians and gives preferential treatment to Islam.\(^47\)

45 Christians often speak of the need for unity in two particular aspects: 1) to bridge the denominational differences among Christians; and 2) to bridge regional differences, by promoting cooperation with Christians living in the North and the South. The differences of being a Christian minority living in the North, or in the violent parts of the Middle Belt compared to being a Christian in the predominantly Christian South is often accentuated.

46 Falola (1998); Ibrahim (1999); Kukah (1996:266). Mbacarin (2006) goes into details on varying perceptions on how, why, and when CAN was formed. Northern Christians argue that CAN grew out of their activities and due to the inter-religious problems in their region. Several argue that CAN grew as a revitalisation of the Northern Association of Christians (NCA). In the south, however, the focus is on a foundational meeting in Lagos and the initiatives by the Catholic Church in facilitating the process. This different interpretations of how CAN emerged testify to a larger schism between Christians in the north and the south of the country, the most obvious challenge being that northern Christians, who are a minority in the north while Christians in the south are a religious majority, feel their brethren in the south do not understand the problems they face as a minority.

47 Much of this discourse of discrimination was stronger under military rule, but it has continued despite Nigeria’s Christian presidents since 1999 (there has only been one Muslim President in this period, Yar’adua 2007-2010).
granting visas to foreign missionaries, on evangelisation in the media, and in granting permission to build churches in the north (Enweren 1995: 137).

In foreign policy, Nigeria’s relation to Israel has been a key, divisive issue. In general, Christians have an affinity for Israel, while Muslims hold a prime relationship to the Arab world. When Nigeria broke off diplomatic ties with Israel in 1973, following a decision by the Organisation of African Unity in protest of Israel’s occupation of the Sinai, Christians protested the decision. Breaking diplomatic ties with Israel was seen as both damaging their religious and economic interests (Enweren 1995:139). The relationship with the military government has often been confrontational. The worst of these military leaders, as perceived by the CAN, was General Babangida (1985-1993), whom a CAN communiqué characterises in this manner:

> Since the Babangida administration came to power it has unashamedly and in utter contempt for national unity manifested its naked discriminatory religious posture through overt and covert acts of patronage and preference for Islamic religion. (Adogame 2005:133)

However, the military governments also favoured a strong role for religious organisations such as the CAN. Freedoms of speech and association were severely restricted by successive military regimes. Civilian associations were banned, and human right activists, journalists, and political opponents were targeted by an oppressive state. Religious organisations, however, such as the CAN, were tolerated and it thus “assumed the role of an unofficial and increasingly powerful opposition to the government” (Enweren 1995:138). The public role and freedom of association given to the organisation by the military governments gave it space in Nigerian political and public culture that it has kept, and built upon, ever since.48

When the neo-Pentecostals entered the CAN, it was no longer as an inward-looking holiness movement, but a movement with a strong religious-political agenda. The Pentecostals’ main focus was the demons believed to be working in the public and the need to put Christians in important positions in order for the righteous to reign and rejoice. Pentecostals emphasised the inseparable spiritual dimensions of the economic and political spheres. The Pentecostal entrance into the CAN radicalised the body further (Adogame 2005; Falola 1998).

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48 The arrest of several CAN officials from the north by the Babangida regime in 1990, allegedly for supporting a coup d’etat by a Christian military general, was an exception. See Adogame (2005) for more on CAN during military rule.
4.3 Growth of Pentecostalism

In the course of 30 to 40 years, Pentecostalism has gone from being a marginal phenomenon to occupying centre stage in Nigeria today. While at first a religion for the poor and disenfranchised, Pentecostals are now found in all sectors of society. Hard numbers are impossible to track, but due to the *pentecostalisation* of mainline churches and Pentecostalism’s dominance in media, economy, and politics Pentecostalism’s abiding and broad presence in Nigeria is obvious to all (Burgess 2008; Marshall 2009; Ojo 2006). This is particularly so in urban and southern areas where Pentecostalism is the dominant expression of Nigerian Christianity (Burgess 2008: 294). So dominant is the Pentecostal presence throughout sub-Saharan Africa, that the prominent scholar Paul Gifford argues that Christianity is best understood in two broad categories; mainline churches and Pentecostal churches (2008).

Nigerian Pentecostalism is also a global phenomenon, and a major export item. Nigerian evangelists travel the world with miracle and healing crusades, missionaries go to other African countries, to Europe, China, Russia, and the US, where they establish churches and spread their teaching. In Ukraine and the UK, the two biggest Pentecostal churches were founded and remain led by Nigerians. The many Nigerian Christian TV shows and famous televangelists reach far beyond Nigeria. When Nigerian migrants arrive in a new country, be it China or the UK, the Nigerian Pentecostal church might be the first place a newly-arrived immigrant goes to. There she can get advice, support, and find a network of people in a

49 However, there have been some attempts: according to the Pew Forum report from 2007 *Spirit and Power*, Pentecostals outnumber charismatics in Nigeria and Kenya. In every other country surveyed charismatics are more numerous, where charismatic includes Christians who either 1) speak in tongues; 2) describe themselves as charismatic Christians; or 3) describe themselves as Pentecostal Christians without belonging to a Pentecostal church. According to this survey Pentecostals constitute 18 per cent of the population in Nigeria, and when combined with the charismatic, the renewalist, which is the category that Pew uses, would be 26 per cent of the population, or about half the Christian population. See Kalu (2008) for the many obstacles to arriving at reliable numbers.

50 In both countries there have been several controversies regarding financing, with a particular focus on the pastor and his accumulation of wealth, see The Guardian (2009) for a case from the United Kingdom. Gifford (2009) writes about Nigerian influence in Kenya. Nigerian and Korean churches are the most noticeable foreign Pentecostal dominations in Kenya. The Koreans in Kenya are conservative Presbyterians and Methodists, as well as neopentecostal such as David Yonggi Cho (Gifford 2009: 120), while the Nigerian presence is linked to prosperity teaching (Winners Chapel, RCCG, Christ Embassy, and Deeper Life are the most prominent).
similar situation, a task the church can perform much more effectively than any embassy.\footnote{The area of migration and religion has received a great deal of attention the last years. See the anthologies by Adogame and Spickard (2010) and Adogame and Shankar (2013) for a rich variety of topics covered. See also Heidi Østbø Haugen’s (2012) discussion on the Nigerian church in the context of migration to China.} This transnational character of the church, its being at once unmistakably Nigerian and profoundly global, is one of its defining characteristics (Marshall 1998).

Pentecostalism is also characterised by its diversity, autonomy, and its fragmented and competitive nature. The combination of a strong missionary mandate and institutional flexibility are one of the reasons explaining the growth of this movement. The flexibility found in many Pentecostal churches in that one can open a church without a proper location – no church building is required – and become a pastor based solely on calling, without formal theological training, allows for rapid multiplication.\footnote{There is increased focus on theological training; in the classical Pentecostal churches it has been long been present, but it is also found in the newer independent churches. Many of the Nigerian neo-Pentecostal pastors have secular professions, but not from theological seminars. They “graduate” by establishing their own church. “They insist they have been equipped by the divine call, which they had in a dream, vision, prophecy or through some inner illumination” (Adeboye 2006:147)} Areas that has not been considered adequately suited for worship purposes in the past, such as cinemas, sports stadiums, hotels, garages, and living rooms have been used by Pentecostals, enabling a quick response to the needs of people where they are (Adeboye 2012:143). They are, too a much larger degree than the mainline churches, independent actors in both economic and spiritual terms.

Though the fragmented nature of this movement is a defining characteristic, so are its commonalities. Writing in 1991, Marshall discusses the early stage of neo-Pentecostal growth in Nigeria:

> Despite the significant differences there is a lot believers find to agree on, and one of the striking aspects of this rapidly growing movement is the powerful sense of community which has been created in the space of a decade. The mass of believers see themselves as part of a unique, international movement whose identity and unity is aggressively promoted to those who are outside (Marshall 1991:23).

Now, twenty years later, this sense of unity has been challenged as Pentecostalism has moved into the centre of national political, cultural, economic, and religious life, where competition over resources and influence is fierce. Before turning to the main part of this discussion – Pentecostalism’s methods and strategies for influence in society – we take a brief look at the history of this movement.
Two major revivals: One very diverse movement

The frequently-used terms of Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism refer to two different revivals in Nigeria in the 20th century, the first starting in the 1930s and the second in the 1970s. These two revivals have led to two broad categories within the Pentecostal movement that differ in relation to origin but often also in terms of institutional structures, doctrines, practices, and other sociological aspects. During the interviews my informants would use various categories such as “old” and “new” or “classical” and “modern”, thus regularly implying there are two ways of being Pentecostals. This division is also reflected in the national Christian umbrella organisations, where two organisations represent Pentecostalism: several of the churches from the first period are today organised under the CPFN, while the PFN organises churches from the later period. Together these two organisations form the Pentecostal bloc in the CAN.

Categorising Pentecostalism is a never-ending exercise, as this diverse movement is constantly changing, blurring old lines and creating new ones. One could argue that it is better to speak of plural Pentecostalisms to accentuate a movement that “is so internally polarized and sometimes mutually exclusive and unaccommodating that it makes sense to use the plural […]” (Ukah 2009: 96). I give an account of the two revivals in what follows, with an emphasis on the second revival. The second revival is the one dominating Nigerian Pentecostalism today and which took a decisive turn to societal engagement, far beyond what the classical Pentecostals had done. The first phase would be what in daily speech we can call “old”, “classical”, and “orthodox”, while the latter phase would encompass the “new”, “modern”, and “neo-Pentecostalism”.53 However, it is important to keep in mind that these churches change quickly and that the lines are shifting and blurring.

The first revival: Aladura meets foreign missionary Churches

The question of the emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is contested, with some emphasising local agency, and others foreign missionaries.54 The sociologist Azonseh Ukah

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53 See Ojo (2006: 11) for a worthwhile discussion of terminology and also why he uses the term ‘charismatic movement’ in describing the “new” wave, and Burgess (2008) or Ukah (2005) on why they prefer ‘neo-Pentecostalism’. Ukah (2009) includes the charismatic revival within the mainline and mission churches as a strand of Pentecostalism. Kalu (2008) uses ‘modern’ to describe the movement that emerged in the 70ies.

54 Some argue the movement was essentially local, while others claim foreign missionaries introduced the teaching in Nigeria. For a thorough discussion on the origins of African Pentecostalism, see Ihejirika (2012), Ukah (2009), Kalu (2008), Ojo (2006), and Anderson (2004). Much literature in Europe and the US claims the
argues that the Aladura movement (“the prayer people”) were the first Pentecostals, even though they did not carry that name. Their revival carried several of the traits of Pentecostal religiosity such as spontaneous prayer, second baptism, prophecy, possession by the Spirit, faith healing, and glossolalia among others (Ukah 2009: 96). The first revival can thus be traced back to the 1920ies. In the decades to follow the Nigerian Aladura churches met, and merged, with missionary Western Pentecostal denominations such as first The Faith Tabernacle (from the USA), the Assemblies of God (USA), the Apostolic Church (UK), and later with the Apostolic Faith and the Foursquare Gospel Church. The characteristics of the Aladura movement were very similar to the Pentecostal churches, or in Adeboye’s words, “what the Apostolic Church connection did, was to reinforce the tenets and inclinations of the Aladura and to give it a more Pentecostal twist” (Adeboye 2006:142). Several of these churches flourish today and report continued growth (Interviews; Marshall 2009:68). Within this first revival we find both completely indigenous churches as well as those that keep ties to mother churches abroad.

In general, these churches from the first phase are, compared to the newer churches, pietistic, anti-materialistic, and explicitly apolitical. They are more conservative when it comes to dress, lifestyles, and gender relations. Often, as in the Apostolic Church of Nigeria, women are not allowed to have administrative, political or leadership positions in the church. There is gender segregation in church services, so that during mixed services women and men sit separately. The regular night vigils do not allow mixing of gender; women have their prayer meeting first, followed by the men. 55 There is, though, as in the neo-Pentecostal churches, a heavy emphasis on gender-sensitive teaching and activities. Female health matters such as menopause have been treated extensively, widows merit particular attention and care, and women are taught economic empowerment. These churches have a strong social mission

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Azusa street revival in 1906 to be the first Pentecostal experience, a happening that spread throughout the globe, acquire local distinctive characters wherever it went. Kalu, however, stresses the need to investigate this claim empirically: “undoubtedly, the Azusa street is very important, but it is a North-American event, and a certain movement that first called itself Pentecostal, and whose genealogy may be traced to a host of religious antecedents such as the holiness movement. But other regions experienced the move of the Spirit independently; therefore, there is need to reconstruct the historiography of the movement worldwide, and to interrogate the extant literature” (Kalu 2008:13).

55 Interview with leaders in Apostolic Church, Lagos, September 6, 2012. The Apostolic Church has the biggest indoor church auditorium in Lagos, with seating for 100,000; it was finished in 2011. According to a senior leader in the church the annual convention in Lagos drew 263,000 in 2011, while in 2012 it drew 382,000, as a testimony to its growth (interview September 5, 2012).
linked to education, health, and empowerment. Compared to the new Pentecostals they have made less inroads among Nigerian elites.

**The second revival: The Holy Spirit spreads like fire**

When the second revival started, in the late 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria was at a turning point in its history: the effects of the oil boom created new economic opportunities but also deepened corruption, violence, and insecurity. The country was recovering from the brutal Biafra War 1967-1970 (Marshall 2009: 95-97). This context of change, opportunity, and insecurity is very much also reflected in the religious sphere at the time, as reform movements developed in both Christian and Muslim communities (Ibrahim 1999; Marshall 2009; Ojo 2006). Nigeria was under a military dictatorship for most of the period between 1966 till 1999, periods marked by gross mismanagement of public funds and the decay of state educational and health structures. The oil boom facilitated urbanisation, as young people came looking for new opportunities in the wake of the sudden influx of money. Several researchers stress the need to understand Pentecostalism’s growth within the context of economic depression and turmoil, particularly from the late 1970s and beyond (Ukah 2009). Marshall stresses that in order to grasp Pentecostal revival and growth it is crucial to understand not just the political or physical context of failure, but also a context where a plethora of sectors were in turmoil:

> The context of uncertainty, which goes beyond purely material problems of poverty and physical insecurity, is especially palpable in postcolonial Nigeria, where the institutions, modes of thought, and disciplines instituted by colonialism have failed to provide the means for either understanding or mastering the ordeal of the present, opening up lines of flight that have led to a generalised “crisis of governmentality” of increasingly acute proportions (Marshall 2009: 8).

The turmoil was also witnessed in older social organisations: older institutions of trust and kinship, often ethnically-based, were being challenged by a neo-liberal increasingly prebendalist state. What had always been known was replaced with uncertainty, and, as Marshall (2009) argues, the public sphere became a morally empty space with established social values under increasing pressure. Protracted government failures combined with harsh economic times and increasing corruption contributed to changing social mores and a reassessment of values, favouring conditions for religious awakenings (McCauley 2012).
It is in this context that the nascent neo-Pentecostal movement began gaining ground. This is a context to which Pentecostalism responds effectively, in creative and new manners. The social, economic, and political context explains why conditions are favourable for religious revival, but to understand why Pentecostalism in particular blossomed under these conditions, one must also turn to the movement itself and see how it actively embraces the possibilities that were presenting themselves.

**Interdenominational Campus Christianity: Laying foundations for the 1990s**

The universities from the 1960s through the 1980s saw several student mobilisations for radical political and religious ideas, both Muslim and Christians (Ibrahim 1999). In the Pentecostal movement, it was the interdenominational campus fellowships, such as the Scripture Union (SU) and the Christian Student’s Social Movement (CSSM), that were dominant in this endeavour (Ojo 2006). In this context, it was the young, urban, upwardly-mobile women and men who joined. The social composition of the new converts came to put a deep mark on how this new wave of Pentecostalism developed.

This second revival was not as different from the classical Pentecostal movement when it came to doctrine and theology (Adeboye 2006). The focus was on baptism in the Holy Spirit, holiness, anti-materialism, evangelisation, biblical inerrancy, and strict moral codes, such as bans on smoking and drinking and a requirement for decency in dress (Marshall 2009: 71; Ojo 2006). It was as such a classical spiritual revitalisation, or in the words of Ruth Marshall a “holiness revival”. The revivalists were intolerant of mainline churches for accommodating “church goers”, “nominal Christians” (meaning, in their view, people with no real faith), and hostile towards Aladura churches for allowing too much African traditional religion (Adeboye 2006: 143). They argued that they had what was the true, authentic

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56 The consequences of the Biafra War (1967-1970) and the Pentecostal awakening are examined by Burgess (2008). He show how the early stage of what he terms “the Pentecostal revolution” was characterised by providing necessary social welfare in the context of war, but that this social engagement was lost after the war, and only slowly reappearing now (Burgess 2008: 298).

57 For several authors, the early 1970s is the start of the charismatic movement and they do not stress the connection to the classical Pentecostal church as much (see for instance Ojo 2008). Neo-Pentecostal churches will often stress their 1970s origin as a token of the Holy Spirit revival at that time and to show their independence from the earlier Aladura inspirations.

58 “There is a clear difference between African scholars and their Western counterparts as regards the origin of this form of Christianity” argues Ihejirika (2012: 174). Taking about the new Pentecostal movement, which started in the 1970s, Ihejirika refers to how scholars like Gifford and Meyer link its emergence with global forces, while Nigerian scholars, like Ogbu Kalu (2008), stress the internal mechanisms.
Christianity. In order to become born again, it was necessary to break with the past, which also meant a break with social norms: it was a trans-ethnic and egalitarian network of vitalised youth who started calling each other “brothers” and “sisters”. For many of the participants the born-again community was as a “new family” (Marshall 2009: 113). The circulating cassettes, books, and visiting televangelists from the US, South Korea, and other places confirmed that they were part of a global revival. A strong proselytising zeal among this vitalised student or youth movement carried with it a strong focus on conversion (Ojo 2009). Bible groups, house fellowships, and places of worship were created informally and without central planning. Several of the biggest neo-Pentecostal churches today started as prayer groups in the 1970s, gradually expanding in scope and organisation. The Deeper Life Christian Ministry, today one of the main Pentecostal institutions in Nigeria, grew out of a Bible study group meeting in 1973. The group met every Monday in the sitting room of the current pastor, William F. Kumuyi. Two years later loudspeakers were put out of the windows of the flat for the 500 or so who gathered in the courtyard, but it was not until 1982 that the Church was formally inaugurated. By 2013, it was reckoned as one the biggest churches in sub-Saharan Africa. Several of the most influential church leaders in Nigeria became born again in this period. The late Archbishop Benson Idahosa of the Church of God mission is often referred to as the father of Nigerian Pentecostalism, and several of the current first generation (neo-) Pentecostal leaders of today have a direct relationship to him. The current head of the CAN, Ayo Oritsejafor, was initially a member of Idahosa’s church before he left to build his own church.

The break with the past also meant breaking with the “world”; Nigerian society was regarded a dirty place and the focus was on building communities of like-minded adherents. For Nigerian Pentecostals this change happened relatively quickly, which could be explained by both its size and composition in terms of the upwardly-mobile people that joined the

59 Matthews A Ojo (2006) gives a good account of persons involved in that period. Prominent Pentecostal leaders such as T.L. Osborn and Yonggi Cho were involved in Nigeria, as they also were in Guatemala. There are not many direct links between Guatemala and Nigeria, but when there are they show up in terms of individuals like these, either through visits or through circulation of books, DVDs, and music.

60 See their webpage http://dclm.org/ for more; but also Ojo (2006:148-159) Marshall (2009: 70-73). The Church of Kumuyi has, compared to the other mega-churches, remained closer to the holiness doctrine of the 1970s, and continues to focus on strict moral codes, clothing and evangelisation.

61 Given the nature of the Pentecostal movement religious titles are not protected and leaders are free to use a variety of titles such as prophets, apostles, pastors, bishops, and general overseers. However, within a specific denomination, standards have been established.
movement. However, when they did their reorientation towards the world, they did it on their own terms, entering the public to fight the demons and the occult.

Pentecostals in Nigeria often cite 1977 to explain the turning point in Nigeria’s history and the role of the churches. This was the year Nigeria hosted the Second World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC). The festival was intended to be a way for Africans to reconnect with their cultural heritage through a variety of cultural expressions in a celebration of global African culture. The FESTAC was a reference point of pride for the government but for Pentecostals, however, this festival was a state’s embrace of traditional religions and had to be stopped (Hackett 2003:63; Ojo 2006:74, Ukah 2008:119).62 Joseph Thompson, Nigerian-born US pastor and a self-described “spiritual warrior”, reflects on the FESTAC:

Unwittingly, as we were celebrating the reuniting of our cultural and artistic heritage, we were also laying out a welcome mat for all the ominous spiritual forces embedded in the various African cultures. The celebration of an animistic heritage and consequently of idols, along with their accompanying demons, carries with it grave consequences.[…] The manifest fruit of this curse became evident in post-FESTAC 77. Inflation hit all-time high, and people literally began to scrounge for food in trash cans. The self-fulfilling prophecy was being manifest before our very eyes. Unemployment, increasing widespread corruption, bribery and violence became the order of the day. People began to turn overtly to witchdoctors and fortune-tellers for answers to their problems […]. It began to look like our beloved country was on the very brink of destruction and anarchy.

While it seemed like the demonic forces had taken over, another force was at work: the Spirit of God. He was calling His Church to rise up and pray, to become active in society and to see His presence transform it (Thomson 2006: 27-28).

FESTAC 1977 thus becomes a reference point to understand what caused the problems in the country. It was a spiritual crisis that best should be fought by spiritual means, Pentecostals argued, giving the Pentecostals themselves a key role in the redemption of the nation. Thus, even though Islam has been important in framing and influencing Pentecostal public engagement, it would be erroneous to see Islam as the only reason for Pentecostal public and political engagement.

**Mega churches, prosperity and continued growth**

The late 1980s and particularly the 1990s witnessed tremendous Pentecostal growth and the focus was on building institutions that could accommodate the many who were born again.

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62 By “Pentecostal historiography” I mean that there is a specific Pentecostal narrative and understanding of history. In Nigeria the FESTAC turning point forms part of the mainstream Pentecostal narrative of history. See for instance the article “Festac-77 responsible for Nigeria’s woes” (Vanguard 2013b).
Interdenominationalism was already a thing of the past and institutions started formalising; building physical churches, buying equipment, paying and educating pastors, publishing books, building media infrastructures, and developing a brand, distinguishing one from the others. Several new churches appeared that are dominant today: Mountain of Fire and Miracles (1989), Christ Embassy (1991), and Daystar Christian Centre (1995), to name just a few of the most prominent. Ironically, institutionalisation has not always led to democratisation of power in this charismatic movement. The pastor’s role has not been institutionalised, and is constituted by the divine rather than the earthly order. The churches have hierarchical structures with the pastor as the ultimate decision-maker, often surrounded by a set of male advisers. The pastor is usually a charismatic, educated, and married man, often supported by their wives as ‘second-in-command’, with specific spiritual gifts such as healing, preaching, or prophesying abilities. The pastors have an education in a secular subject, and not in theology, equipping them with new types of skills in relation to other religious leaders.63 They lead self-sufficient churches that, in accordance with prosperity teaching, need to prosper, to expand, and renew themselves.

In contrast to the theology of the 1970s, prosperity teaching quickly became one of the most dominant doctrines in this movement, greatly inspired by the teaching of US evangelists with whom the leader level nurtured close contact.64 Prosperity teaching found fertile ground in Nigeria, was easily contextualised, and quickly spread. This doctrine was reflected in beautiful buildings, an appreciation of aesthetics, in fashionable clothing, the use of advanced media in worship, and in the conduct of services. Educational centres were built, offering both secular and religious topics.

However, older Pentecostal churches also accommodated these changes. A prime example is what is likely the largest and fastest growing church in Nigeria, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The RCCG has branches all over Nigeria and in over 80 other countries. The RCCG was established already in 1952, as an Aladura church, but when the

63 Many of the most successful pastors have educational background from hard science, such as Adeboye of the RCCG who is a mathematician and MFM overseer Odukoya who studied microbiology, but there are also medical doctors (Pastor Paul Enenche, Duanamis) and architects (Pastor Adefarasin, House on the Rock).

64 There are numerous links between the global Pentecostal movement and the Nigerian churches. In the 1980s much of the inspiration came from the US, but also other places such as South Korea. Benson Idahosa was for instance a graduate of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, OK. Pastor Adeboye (RCCG) and Pastor Kuyumi were inspired by the South Korean Pastor Yonggi Cho (Amata 2001: 59; Ukah 2008).
current pastor, Enoch Adeboye, took over the church in 1981 he gradually transformed it into what it is today. It has moved from a focus on holiness to prosperity, from anti-worldly positions to this-worldly engagement, from separating genders in church life to uniting them, from pietism to consumerism, such as embracing fashionable clothing, and from Yoruba as the language of service to English, in order to reach more people. Adeboye was strategically building an institution that would be relevant to a large membership. The church built bridges to the various strands within its own organisation, enabling an accommodation of both the old and the new. Through its institutional divisions, the RCCG accommodates classical-oriented churches (known as classical parishes), the neo-Pentecostal-oriented churches (model parishes) and those that find themselves in the middle, or unity parishes (Ukah 2008).

The success of pastor Adeboye of the RCCG is a living testimony to a theology that preaches that God makes everything possible: RCCG has grown immensely in numbers, in wealth, and in social and political influence since the 1980s. Adeboye appeared on the American magazine Newsweek’s 2008 list of the world’s 50 most powerful people. He joined the Roman Catholic Pope as the only two religious leaders on the list (Newsweek 2008). While Adeboye is one of the biggest and most successful pastors, his success is an indication of a much larger Pentecostal movement.

**Conclusion**

Religion has increasingly become a multifaceted source of power in Nigeria: it is a source for enforcing identity, organising communities, legitimising politics and worldviews, and stirring up conflict. Following the end of military governments and the return to democracy in 1999, the public role of religion has only increased in the country. The state has weakened its control over the public through deregulation of the media, corruption, and the failure of the state to address citizen’s needs. These developments opened up room for new public actors, especially the emerging Pentecostal movement, which grew in antagonism to existing faiths and proclaiming with great success a new way of doing religion. The Pentecostal revival from 1970s onward attracted the urban educated middle-class who had the means, skills, and ambitions to capture the new possibilities.

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65 The book *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power* (2008) by Asonzeh Ukah accounts authoritatively for the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria by giving a thorough historical and sociological account of one of the most dominant churches, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), and its role in Nigerian society.
5 What happens when Pentecostalism becomes big in Nigeria?

Pentecostalism in Nigeria has to a large extent occupied the “public sphere” (Marshall 2009), made its presence strong in the “public space” (Adeboye 2012), and engaged in several “public roles” such as in education, health, charity, employment, politics, and culture (Marshall 2009; Ukah 2008, 2011). Pentecostalism has in other words gone public in several ways and carved out a way of doing religion that responds to both the limitations and the possibilities of Nigerian society. The dichotomies of the religious and the secular are constantly blurred in both the Pentecostal doctrine as well as how the church operates in society. But just 30 years ago these boundaries were clearly drawn by the Pentecostal actors, themselves who had strict ideas about what constitutes Christians domains. Gradually, but rapidly, the Pentecostal map has been redrawn, with boundary after boundary disappearing.

By claiming new areas, or spheres, in society and entering the entertainment industry, business sectors such as finance or banking, higher education, or by creating football teams linked to churches, Pentecostals practice a holistic and totalising view of society. Pentecostals have a conscious strategy, as Marshall has argued, of “winning Nigeria for Jesus” (Marshall 2009). We will see in the following chapters that the methods Pentecostals use to claim society are state-of-the-art in terms of business strategies and media technologies. The dominant brand of Pentecostalism in Nigeria today developed in a symbiotic relationship with neo-liberal economic policies, globalisation, and democratisation, and operates by the logic of the market. The crippling of the state has been paralleled by a process of equipping the most expansive religious reform movement in Nigeria, the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals had the networks, the methods, the enthusiasm, and the vision to act when the possibilities presented themselves.

In attempting to discuss, specify, and qualify these various public roles, I examine Pentecostalism in Nigeria through five different lenses, each attempting to answer the question of what happens when Pentecostalism become big. These five perspectives correspond with the research puzzles outlined in the introduction. The first chapter deals with the diversity within the movement and examines the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) in its attempt to unify the movement. The PFN’s struggle to be a relevant actor, both within
and outside the movement, reveals several characteristics of the Pentecostal movement today. The following three chapters examine three different manners by which the Pentecostal movement is manifested as a public actor: by building financially successful institutions; by dominating the public sphere; and through engaging actively in the explicitly political sector. Finally, the Pentecostals’ troubled relationship with other religions is discussed.

5.1 Striving towards unity: Controlling the uncontrollable

The Pentecostal movement is characterised by its diversity, its independent and fragmented organisational nature. It has no Mecca, no Rome, and no common written doctrinal basis. However, despite the variations in the Pentecostal movement it is also striking how there is a sense of community, of being one movement, based first and foremost on the experience of being born again. While no longer consigned to the margins of Nigerian society, the Pentecostals still project themselves as a distinct group with a mission, “an exceptional force for regeneration and redemption” at both the individual and collective levels (Marshall 2009: 84). This counterculture identity, the sense “us” against “the rest” seems to outweigh the many important doctrinal, institutional, and material differences among churches. As a way of conceptualising this diverse movement, it is useful to think of Pentecostalism as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983, 2006). Its flexible borders and limits are constantly negotiated. However, despite the fluidity, this imagined community is recognisable by both its members and by those outside the community. Speaking at the PFN Biennial meeting in 1993, RCCG Pastor E.A. Adeboye and then-leader of PFN enthusiastically spoke of the potentials of the Pentecostal movement’s potential:

In Nigeria we can become a fantastic force for good. What kind of a force? A fantastic force for good for this nation.....Brethren, God expects us to reach a situation whereby we will decree that there will be no rain in Nigeria. And until we call for it again there will be no rain in Nigeria. The Almighty God wants us in a situation where we will say, alright, because the government could not do what it was asked to do, henceforth we ask the supernatural power of God to paralyse the electricity and power generators, they will not work because the current will not flow.... It is written in Proverbs 29:2 “when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice”[...] So, how are we ever going to put the righteous in authority? It is by winning the masses to Jesus Christ. Nobody can bribe him to vote for the wrong man... We can become the force of change not by loving politicians, but by winning souls. [...] I want the PFN to become an invading army. I don’t want it to become a social club. I want to see the PFN by the grace of God that when the devil hears ‘P’ he will begin to shake.” (Marshall 2009:201)
In a movement that claims to be guided by the Holy Spirit, not doctrine, church fathers or hierarchies, questions of authority have become a central concern. The growth of Pentecostalism in Nigerian society has contributed to a growing occupation with religious identity in Nigeria, by which religion is seen by many as both the solution to individual as well as societal problems. While the diverse Pentecostal movement influentially put forward their faith in society in a bottom-up approach through a myriad of everyday practices, as is discussed in greater detail in the chapters below, there is also an attempt to unite Pentecostal participation through national umbrella organisations. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria is a testimony to a Pentecostal movement that increasingly involves itself in institutionalised political and civil society.

5.1.1 The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN)
In 2010 the head of PFN, Ayo Oritsejafor, was elected leader of the CAN in an election against the sitting Roman Catholic Archbishop of Nigeria. This is the first time that a Pentecostal has occupied the lead seat of this influential group. The election of Oritsejafor, a flamboyant Pentecostal preacher who owns his own private jet, over the Roman Catholic Archbishop, was yet another victory for the newcomer in Nigerian Christianity. It is a reflection of a numerically strong Pentecostal community with a clear outlook on the CAN’s most important agenda: to protect and promote Christian interests vis-à-vis the state.

The PFN is a Pentecostal umbrella organisation, comprising, together with the Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN), one out of five bodies in the CAN. The PFN has for several years been the most vocal bloc in the CAN, particularly on issues related to Islam (Adogame 2005:132). We now examine the history, structure, and leadership of the PFN to enable a discussion of how the movement relates to its own diversity in its bid to be a public voice in Nigeria.

Today the PFN figures prominently in Nigeria. It is recognised as the representative body of Pentecostals in Nigeria, and speaks on behalf of Pentecostals in relations with the

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66 Despite its prominence, there are hardly any studies that focus specifically and systematically on the history, structure, and organisation of the PFN. One noteworthy exception is the book The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, the Purpose and the Power by O.B.E Josiah Amata (2002). The book is written by a devout Pentecostal, and with a definite insider perspective, but supplies revealing data and perspectives. Adogame (2005) looks at the PFN and CAN in an article from 2005, in which he characterises the PFN as a political watchdog of Christians and “the most visible corporate megaphones of Christians in Nigeria”. Most working on Pentecostalism in Nigeria includes the PFN, but do treat it not systematically.
government, among other actors. The PFN’s status is greatly helped by the government, which needs a Pentecostal interlocutor, as they have with the other churches. With the current size, though no one knows the exact numbers, of the Pentecostal movement, any national dialogue excluding the Pentecostal bloc would not be deemed representative. The increased role of religion in national politics has thus aided the formation of a strong Pentecostal umbrella organisation.

**Joining the party uninvited: The initial years**

The turmoil in Nigerian politics and economy in the 1970s and 1980s was, as we have already seen, also accompanied by religious turmoil. Religious institutions formerly privileged by the colonial regime found themselves as merely one of several players (Hackett 2001b). The established churches did not welcome the Pentecostal revival, and many remain critical today. Derogatorily, they are called “mushroom churches”, because they pop up everywhere, and Pentecostals are accused of “cheapening” Christianity because of their firm financial focus. Their pastors have little credibility in churches where theological training and clerical hierarchy are valued and practiced.

The Catholics tried to prevent the formation of a Pentecostal bloc within the CAN\(^\text{67}\), as did the classical Pentecostals, who were already represented by the Apostolic Church.\(^\text{68}\) Prior to the formation of the PFN, Pentecostals did not have a separate bloc in the CAN. There were instances of Pentecostals trying to take the CAN to court in order to be included (Enwere 1995:102). From its perspective, the CAN argued that Pentecostals did not fit its membership criteria as the interdenominational structure did not meet the requirement to have “recognizable church structures and a system of worship” and for not being “Christologically centred” (Mbachirin 2006:203). Many also feared the aggressive proselytising methods, both because of the possibility of losing members and for possible negative consequences in Muslim areas. The Roman Catholic Archbishop Okogie made an appeal for government assistance in 1985 to halt the rapid spread of Pentecostalism: “if the number of churches is not

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\(^{67}\) Up until 1991, when the current five blocs of CAN was established, CAN had been constituted by three blocs: the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, the Christian Council of Nigeria, and what was termed “Other churches” in which the Apostolic Church was prominent alongside other classical Pentecostal churches.

\(^{68}\) Interview, senior official in the Apostolic Church September 5, 2012.
curbed immediately, Nigeria would be in a bad state. Everybody is afraid of a religious war, and once it breaks out, it can never be stopped” (cited in Enweren 1995:162)

But the Pentecostals had a lot of confidence, a fast-growing constituency, and end-time urgency for the born-again Christians to engage in society. Despite resistance, the new generation of Christians were to prove efficient, independent, and willing to break the rules.

In a unilateral move, the PFN was established in 1986 by a group of Pentecostal pastors, following the Greater Lagos crusade organised by Reverend Uma Ukpai (Ukpong 2008:156). This founding of PFN led the older Pentecostal churches to quickly form another Pentecostal block, the CPFN (Interview, Lagos September 5, 2012). The Pentecostal bloc in the CAN today is represented by a combination CPFN-PFN bloc. The classical Pentecostals in the CPFN have an explicitly apolitical stance and the public face of Pentecostalism soon became the PFN. The PFN was formally admitted into the CAN as a separate bloc in 1991.

The same year, during the first bi-annual meeting of the PFN, Reverend Dr. Boyejo, general overseer of the Foursquare Gospel Church and president of the PFN, addressed the audience about the hostility they faced:

The Pentecostal people have come of age, shedding childish behaviours and practices. Instead of the cold attitude, hostile stance and downright persecution of the powers that be, even including instigation from some leaders at the opposite camp in the past, Pentecostals have now been accepted, appreciated, or at least tolerated by or brethren and leaders from other frontline denominations (Marshall 2009:86)

Here, Rev. Dr. Boyejo makes reference to the “coming of age” of the movement, and how it has been “persecuted”, but they are now harvesting the seeds and are “appreciated, or at least tolerated”. Now 20 years later, scepticism and admiration go hand in hand as the Pentecostal movement has risen to prominence in many sectors of society. Pentecostal pastors are among the biggest celebrities in Nigeria. The celebrity pastors, and their families, figure daily in the press who covers everything from scandals like quarrels, weddings, adultery and marital problems, corruption, personal wealth to miracles, crusades, participation in public events, and calls for divine intervention to solve the nation’s problems. Scandals and success are intimately linked in the public image of Pentecostals in Nigeria. While enthusiasm was strong during the first PFN meeting in 1991, the “coming of age” process and the quest for respectability remains a main concern for the PFN today.

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The PFN articulates its aims and purposes as follows:

Among others, the Fellowship’s purpose include

(i) To unite all Pentecostal churches, bodies and believers for the purpose of Fellowship, encouragement and inspiration.

(ii) To form a common platform of solidarity against the common foe in the time of persecution, opposition and religious intolerance on account of the Pentecostal faith and to offer relief and support to affected persons.

(iii) To undertake joint programmes and execute projects for the furtherance of the Full Gospel in such areas as literature distribution, Bible College and Christian education, Evangelisation etc.

(iv) To provide representation for the Pentecostal movement to Governments, Ecumenical bodies and serve as a defender to the faith for Pentecostal believers.

(v) To set up standards of faith and doctrines along with the code of Ethics to guide and identify true Pentecostal believers.70

Among the five points, the PFN has been most effective at acting as national spokespeople “against the common foe”. This foe can come in many shapes, but the PFN has been particularly vocal in matters that have to do with Islam. They have certainly not been able to “unite all Pentecostal churches”, but are working on the local level, focusing on recruiting more member churches to comply with “standards of faith and doctrine”. To open a church there is no need for a constitution or written code of conduct, and many do not register with the state and thus operate illegally. The churches, as with other religious institutions in Nigeria, do not pay tax. Many Pentecostal churches thus form part of the large informal economy in Nigeria that operates outside state control. But this flexibility and informality, which has greatly facilitated its growth, has also become a disadvantage as Pentecostalism has expanded. The issue of Pentecostal unity was raised during an interview with a senior official in the national PFN:

The Pentecostal movement has become a laughing stock, especially among the orthodox churches, the Anglican and the Catholic, who have their order, who go to school and are trained before they come into ministry. Then the Pentecostal can just wake up and say “God spoke to me”. And they do a lot of things out of order. Nobody speaks to them. Nobody instructs them (Interview, Abuja, April 4, 2013)

70 Cited from the leaflet “What is Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria?” Not dated, received at the PFN office in Abuja.
The PFN aims to formalise Pentecostal churches by making them member churches. Far from all Pentecostal churches have registered with the PFN. As with all numbers in Nigeria, these numbers too are difficult to find.\(^1\) To become a member in the PFN, a church must present the PFN with the church’s constitution and written material on doctrine and articles of faith.\(^2\) If the PFN finds that the doctrine is in line with Pentecostal belief, then membership is granted. There is no membership fee, but member churches are expected to contribute financially towards common projects such as crusades, prayer rallies, and conferences.

Given the growth of the movement, it is also in the interest of the state that the Pentecostal movement is more formalised and organised. The state and other non-Pentecostal actors need a Pentecostal interlocutor, a representative for this increasingly important movement. The PFN has had its role strengthened through taking on administrative functions. In the federal state of Abuja there is a system in place whereby PFN is given the mandate to act as a “gatekeeper”, as the following example demonstrates:

In order for a Pentecostal church to be legally registered in Nigeria, it has to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). In Abuja, prior to registration with the CAC, a church first needs to present a letter of recommendation from the PFN. In order to obtain such a letter, the church must register with the PFN as a member and thus go through the regular membership criteria on correct doctrine and ethics. Furthermore, in the case of Abuja, if land is purchased for the building of a Pentecostal church, one must ideally bring a recommendation from the PFN. To receive these recommendations, the PFN demands the church become a member of the PFN\(^3\). Thus, the PFN is enforcing its control in cooperation with federal authorities. The Nigerian state tries to stay away from religious matters, fearing possible conflicts in the religiously pluralistic state. According to Ukah, around 40 per cent of the Pentecostal churches have registered with the state. There are no known cases of

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\(^{1}\) In the FCT Abuja chapter of the PFN, approximately 2,000 churches are registered. However there are no numbers of the total amount of churches in Abuja (Interview Abuja, April 3, 2013). Registration of churches is a priority for PFN. The Lagos state chapter’s priority for the year 2013 was to build up an electronic church register database.

\(^{2}\) Interview Abuja, regional representative in the PFN, April 3, 2013. Many churches do not have these written documents and thus the mere task of registering may be a process of mainstreaming.

\(^{3}\) The procedure explained here relates to the case of Abuja. There are different legal requirements in the various federal states. But even though legislation like this is in place, it does not mean that it is always respected, a point the PFN representative lamented.
authorities shutting down non-registered religious institutions; the group itself will register when it needs purchasing documents or wants to conduct marriages (Ukah 2007:631)

Organisational structures: Building a Pentecostal national infrastructure

The robust ecumenical cooperation in Nigeria, as exemplified by the CAN, has influenced the organisational structures of the much more diverse body of Pentecostals. In building an institution, the PFN has copied much of the structures in place at the other elements of the CAN. The office in the capital represents the national PFN and relates first and foremost to national questions, such as Christian-Muslim relations, contact with the federal state, etc. There are also branches spread around the country with tasks related to the specific area in which they operate. The local branches are less involved in what is usually termed the national problem, which for Pentecostals this is most prominently Islam, and focus more on ensuring smooth cooperation between Pentecostals in their area as well as ensuring cooperation with local authorities on relevant matters.

PFN has adopted the six geo-political zones as level of governance; each of the six zones has a leader who is also deputy vice president in the PFN. The PFN is further organised on state and local level. The national president of the PFN has an office in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, in the offices of the CAN.

The General Assembly is the highest authority in the PFN where member churches send representatives. The National Executive Committee (NEC) meets on a more regular basis to discuss operationalization of the PFN. The organisation meets for biennial conferences, where also PFN leadership is elected (Interviews; Eyoboka 2013). The 2013 biennial meeting was heavily covered in national media with a particular focus on who would succeed the well-known sitting PFN president, Ayo Oritsejafor. There is no direct election to the post, as new leaders are appointed by the National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC includes founding fathers and other elders “of proven integrity” (Amata 2002: 92), and is the place where all important officers are appointed. Several of the founding fathers of the PFN are on the PFN NAC. Thus, decision-making is a closed process between men who have known each other for many years, or in the Pentecostal author Amata’s words: “The NAC awards this offices

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74Among the most prominent PFN presidents are RCCG pastor Enoch Adeboye; TREM pastor Mike Okonwoko, the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, and the current head of the CAN, Ayo Oritsejafor.
based strictly on merit and under the holding of the Holy Spirit” (Amata 2002: 93). The same system is in place at the federal level: the president of PFN Abuja is for instance appointed “by the will of God”, meaning there is no election but discussion and prayer among men in closed rooms.75

The nuclear family has a crucial role in both Pentecostal theology and also in the running of local churches. Many pastors co-manage their churches with their wives, although with clear distinctions in authority and tasks. Being a pastor’s wife is the easiest way for a woman to attain a high leadership position in the church. This is also reflected in the organisation of the PFN. There is a, less visible and less active, women’s wing of the PFN, which is led by the wife of the sitting president of the PFN. When the PFN changes its leader, then the wife of the new PFN president is constituted as president of the women’s wing, reinforcing undemocratic models of governance and projecting the nuclear family onto the national stage.

5.1.2 Who speaks for the Holy Ghost?
There are several inherent paradoxes in the Pentecostal movement: on one side it democratises religion by making the powers of the Holy Spirit available for all, while on the other side the hierarchies of the pastoral authority are undemocratic and unassailable. The question of who constitutes spiritual power and who speaks on behalf of this spirit-led movement is an eternal topic of debate in the Pentecostal movement. As the movement has grown in Nigeria in both size and publicity, the legitimacy of religious authority has been under constant pressure. As opposed to the Catholic Church or other mainline churches, the Pentecostal movement lacks a centralised religious hierarchy. The PFN aims to be an authority in this matter, to unite the Pentecostal movement by being a corrective to doctrine and practice. However, while the PFN has indeed occupied a central role in the public, as representatives of a broad movement, authority over the churches rests with the pastors.

Conflict resolution methods within the PFN reflect the fuzziness of Pentecostal authority in which the resolution of any discussion rests on a “divine authority”, not democratic principles. The PFN mirrors the autocratic structures in the churches that are run on principles of divine authority, an authority that in practice ultimately rest with the pastor. Discussing the issue of how to maximise the efforts of the PFN in society at a conference in 1993, the PFN leader was clear that God indeed is no democrat and that for the PFN and the churches to be

75 Interview, regional representative, Abuja, April 3, 2013
effective, the authority of the pastor and men of God had to be respected (Marshall 2009: 202). 20 years later, these decision-making structures have not changed. However, as we saw in the last chapter, there is an increased focus on doctrinal and ethical guidelines, particularly at the local level. The current head of the CAN and former head of the PFN, Ayo Oritsejafor, reflects on the PFN, the Pentecostal movement, and religious authority:

We are almost an uncontrollable group of people and the way it is, is because we have had an experience which is called the Holy Spirit experience; which is good. The problem that has come out of that is that when people cough, they say its the Holy Spirit. They talk nonsense, they say its the Holy Spirit. How to challenge a man who says he’s motivated by the Holy Spirit? This is what we have done to the Pentecostal Movement and it very painful (Vanguard November 11, 2012)

Oritsejafor, and many other Pentecostals, now openly speak about the problems within the movement. There have been several processes of attempting to control the uncontrollable in the different churches, or what we could call “routinisation of charisma:” to follow Weber’s theory of authority. This can be observed in an increased focus on theological training, the bureaucratisation of church functions, and a regularisation of the formerly more spontaneous sermons and church activities. The leadership, however, has resisted routinisation. The men in the PFN leadership are the primary promoters of charismatic leadership in Nigeria, and base their authority on their unique spiritual connections as God’s men on earth. By acknowledging each other’s powers, they also reinforce their own.

But how can one know that a man truly is inspired by the Holy Spirit? On one side Pentecostalism teaches prosperity and success, and measures success based on results: “you will know them by their fruits”. But, success is also the weapon the devil uses to “lure souls from the straight and narrow path” (Marshall 2009:189).

The general rule, at bottom, is that if it works, then it comes from God. Success, in terms of many members, public events, political connections, and wealth, is in prosperity theology a sign that God is rewarding the human being. The best sign of apostasy is thus that a church is

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76 An important part of Weber’s theory of routinisation relates to the impermanent nature of charismatic authority; that in order for an institution to survive a charismatic leader’s death, the institution has to routinise power. In his study of RCCG, Ukah shows how charisma indeed can be transferred and reshaped even with the death of the founder. Ukah talks of the successful transfer of charismatic pastoral authority from the founder to the current pastor as a process of recharismatisation (Ukah 2008, p. 83). The question of what happens when the leaders from the revivals in the 1970s and 1980s die is still an open question. Many of the bigger churches were built as family firms, where the wife and the children have prominent positions in the church and where succession is believed to be in the family. When the “father” of Nigerian Pentecostalism, Benson Idahosa, died in 1998, leadership was passed on to his wife Margaret.
in decline, as a senior PFN member reported: “You know the hand of God is mighty where such exists [apostasy], churches die. They die.” The hand of God is thus working not very differently from the market principles of economics. All the senior pastors in the PFN are, by Pentecostal standards, successful. The founders of PFN were the pioneers of the neo-Pentecostal revival in Nigeria and are today among the most vocal and successful Pentecostal preachers in Nigeria. Their engagement in the PFN, and consequently with the government, has given them a certain Pentecostal mainstream legitimacy in the public; they are part of what has been called Nigeria’s “theocratic class” (Obadare 2006). They are all men, pastors, upper-class, and mainly from the South or South-east of Nigeria, and share a belief that the road to national prosperity is through obedience to the Pentecostal understanding of God, a God who is actively present in all affairs in Nigeria and who has given the born again unlimited tools for advancing God’s kingdom on earth.

**Representing Christianity: Ayo Oritsejafor**

A Pentecostal that possesses all the marks of being rewarded by God, if measured by enjoying success in the world, is Ayo Oritsejafor. He symbolises the transformation of Christianity in Nigeria, as he is the first Pentecostal to lead the influential ecumenical CAN. Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor was elected president of the CAN in 2010 and re-elected in April 2013. With a Pentecostal president of the CAN, Pentecostalism has become the face of Christianity in Nigeria. This also means moving into new territory for the Pentecostal movement, where cooperation with other religious actors is necessary. As the head of the CAN, Oritsejafor is also automatically the co-chairman of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), together with Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto. As the head of the CAN he also needs to negotiate between the various blocs representing Christianity within the CAN. He gained support for his candidacy also outside Pentecostal circles largely through his open antagonism towards Islam. The previous head of the CAN was the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal Onaiyekan, who is strongly committed to interfaith dialogue. The election of Oritsejafor can thus be seen both as a symbol of the strength of the Pentecostal movement and as support within the CAN for a different relationship with Islam, or what the CAN terms “the

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77 Interview, September 8, 2012 Lagos, regional representative, PFN.

78 CAN leader Oritsejafor was combined head of PFN/CAN in the period 2010-2013.
national problems”. It is also a confirmation that the deep-seated scepticism from the other Christian denominations has declined drastically in the course of just two decades.

5.1.3 The new big-man rule?
Pentecostal pastors are no longer just spiritual heads; several of them lead multimillion-dollar businesses, enlarging and changing their position in church and society. CAN president Ayo Oritsejafor is a representative example of the new functions and roles of religious authorities within the Pentecostal movement. Oritsejafor is a public figure and as with many of his co-pastors of his stature, he is well-known from the media and figures in the glossy magazines as much as in the political sections of daily newspapers. He is frequently accused of being too close to the ruling party, the People’s Democratic Party, and rumours are that the PDP President Goodluck Jonathan was involved in buying him a private jet.\(^{79}\) He is described as a “political kingmaker” due to his close relationship to political elites (Ihejirika 2012). His flamboyant style of dress is witness to his wealth and independence. Together with his wife he owns a major media enterprise, runs primary and secondary schools and a bible school, and is involved in microfinance, charity, and business development.

Like most first-generation Pentecostals, he has a conversion story with a clear rupture: he participated in a crusade in 1972 organised by the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa,\(^{80}\) and in his own words “for the first time, something touched me. That was when I gave my life to Christ, and my life changed 360 degrees” (Vanguard 2012a). The next day he bought a Bible and started preaching, and on the third day people started converting (Vanguard 2012a). It did not take long before “God gave him faith” to raise the first dead person to life and since then he has participated in numerous miracles (Oritsejafor 2006: 95).

He first pastored a branch of Benson Idahosa’s Church of God Mission, and experienced tremendous growth. But he left the mother church to start his own independent church, the Word of Life Bible Church, with its main offices in Warri, Southern Nigeria. He has been

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\(^{79}\) No powerful person escapes accusations of corruption in Nigeria and Oritsejafor has publically refuted the allegations several times. The jet controversy that arose after Oritsejafor received his jet is frequently alluded to in Nigeria’s national media. Corruption penetrates Nigerian society, and the church is no exception. The excellent book by Jordan Daniel Smith (2007) *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* is recommended for grasping how deeply and widely corruption affects daily life in Nigeria.

\(^{80}\) Idahosa is generally acknowledged as the father of neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria and had a wide international network. With the support of the US prosperity and faith teacher Gordon Lindsay, his multibillion-dollar “miracle centre” was finished in 1975 (Marshall 2009:178)
successful in televangelism: in 1980 he started a television show, the *Hour of Deliverance.* Together with his wife he is also the founder and owner of the Christian African Broadcasting Network, ABN, which broadcasts from London.

The issues of prosperity theology and spiritual warfare dominate Pentecostal theology, especially in its newer form, and Oritsejafor has written several books on the topics. Although he is now best known for staunch suspicion Islam, his books reveal the continual and open battle that Pentecostals have with traditional religious practice. He contributed a chapter to a popular book edited in the US called *Out of Africa: How the Spiritual Explosion Among Nigerians is Impacting the World.* The book is aimed at inspiring the global Pentecostal community as, the book claims on it back cover, a “model for worldwide revival is alive and thriving in Nigeria!” In his chapter “Dealing with the Demonic”, he gives a detailed outline of the various demonic forces at work in Nigeria, how they work, and how they can be combated. He opens the chapter by stating:

> Throughout my many years of ministry, I have observed and experienced a tremendously important truth: The spiritual world controls the physical world, either for good or evil (see 2. Cor 10:3-4; Eph 6:12). God, through his church activated by the Holy Spirit, seeks to steer human events towards values of His kingdom. At the same time, multitudes of evil ruling spirits seek to thwart the progress of God’s work as well as hinder the well-being of nations. Nigeria serves as a constant battle of good versus evil (Oritsejafor 2004:78).

Thus, he exemplifies the Pentecostal understanding of a world where there is always an underlying cause, a battle of spiritual forces, a battle Pentecostals are in the vanguard of both revealing and fighting. In his writing he gives many examples of how these spiritual forces are at play and how the church has been able to control the situation through a combination of spiritual and material resources:

> A crisis that engulfed the city of Warri, where our church is located, illustrates the spiritual sources of war in Nigeria. In 1995-96 we suffered a fratricidal war, resulting in the tragic loss of lives and property. Observers proposed different reasons for the war and wanton destruction. Many suggested that it was the result of the government’s neglect of the region and the high incidence of unemployment that ensued. Others insisted it emerged from deep-seated prejudices and political manipulation. Behind all of these manifestations, though, were the ruling forces of darkness, the gods of this world, and specifically bloodthirsty demons and alters. […]

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81 The book is edited by the famed spiritual warfare evangelist Peter C. Wagner, together with a Nigerian-born pastor based in the US; Joseph Thomson. It features chapters from several of the best-known pastors in Nigeria such as Mike Okonkwo (TREM), Paul Adefarasin (House of the Rock), David Oyedepo (Winners Chapel/Living Faith Church Worldwide), and Enoch A. Adeboye (RCCG).
During this period, the local church I pastor, Word of Life Bible Church, made frantic efforts to bring peace to the war-torn area through a series of prayer meetings designed specifically to counter the effects of these ugly demonic spirits and through several meetings with the leaders involved in the conflict. We established multiple prayer altars in the church, and later we continued to lead initiatives for peace meetings to promote unity among the feuding tribes and ethnic groups. In addition, the church financially assisted businesses that were ravaged through this tribal war. Many rental homes were provided for the displaced; food; clothing, medical aid and so on were given to those in need. (Oritsejafor 2004: 90-91) 

The demonic spirits, according to Oritsejafor, may have physical shapes, thrive in particular geographical sites, or can manifest themselves in humans in different types of witchcraft spirits, most often women (Oritsejafor 2004). Oritsejafor directly engages in a spiritual war with these forces by burning alters, identifying spirits in humans, and casting out demons. He echoes the voices of many Pentecostals when he argues the church has a vital role in this battle for good in Nigeria. Both because their churches are living testimony that God works and is stronger than the demonic forces – their enviable financial status, the many miracles witnessed, and the members’ general prosperity all testify to that, he argues – but also because the born-again are gaining ground:

No doubt, demonic ruling powers are real, but the power of God is much more so. This means that in our generation we will be witness to the transforming power of the spirit of God. With the winds of revival blowing stronger every day, the Church of Jesus Christ is continually gaining ground from the enemy of our souls: we are becoming more and more dominant. Glory to God (Oritsejafor 2004: 99).

The domination Oritsejafor talks about comes in different shapes. McCauley argues that the Pentecostal pastors have become alternatives to so-called “big-man rule”. The big-man rule is a term used to refer to the relationship between patron and client in a patrimonial system. For contemporary scholarship on Africa, and Nigeria in particular, the changing nature of these informal relationships constitutes a central avenue for understanding society (McCauley 2012). The big-man analogy’s fit with Pentecostal pastors has been alluded to by others as well and testifies to the enlarged role of the Pentecostal pastor (Gifford 2008; Kalu 2008; Marshall 2009). McCauley has systematically attempted to investigate this big-man analogy empirically through a study in Ghana, but his findings also resonate in the Nigerian situation. He argues that the context of urbanisation, the state’s inability to deliver welfare, a change in

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82 Warri is the biggest town in the oil-rich and conflict-ridden Niger Delta region. Oritsejafor talks about a conflict in “1995-96”, but he might be referring to the so-called “Warri-crisis” in 1997, which was the first major outbreak of violence in recent times between the major ethnic groups in the town. The crisis in 1997 was just the first of a series of violent clashes that continued for many years. See Human Right Watch (2003).
social values following the global economic crisis, and expanding state control over customary activities, which affected traditional big-men rule as they no longer controlled the resources they once did, are all factors that contributed to the breakdown of traditional systems and opened up room for the Pentecostal pastors, to the extent that they mirror big-men rule. By advocating a complete break with the past, Pentecostal pastors offer a new beginning, a new social network, and reward mechanisms (McCauley 2012). A patron-client relationship is dependent on an actual exchange, that the client receives something in exchange for the loyalty that enables pastors to maintain authority. The Pentecostal big-man rule is fragile in the sense that the patron market is very competitive. When a client, a church member, does not receive the rewards she expects she can go “church-hopping” (McCauley 2012: 13). It is within this highly competitive environment the PFN is navigating.

The Gatekeepers of correct doctrine: From the Devil or from God?

Since the 1990s, there has been an increased public engagement with discourses of the occult and demonism in Nigeria, as in many other African countries (Hackett 2003; ter Harr 2009). The Pentecostal movement participates in and fuels this public conversation on the occult, both from the pulpit and in the media. This discourse is used on the religious other, as we have seen in the example of spiritual warfare from Oritsejafor, but the discourse might also be focused on fellow Pentecostals. It is not uncommon to hear charges of false prophets and rumours of alliances with demons or submission to local powers in Nigeria. A pastor might claim a neighbouring pastor is a false prophet in order to advance his own cause. The power to define what is good religion and bad religion might have serious consequences such as membership growth, participation with state actors, and access to media and education (Hackett 2003: 62).

The PFN works actively on these types of charges at the local and national levels. According to PFN sources, the local level is the crucial one. PFN’s local networks have respected elders who are called in to mediate or counsel and to evaluate doctrines and practices.83 This process is exemplified in the PFN’s handling of one of Nigeria’s most popular and controversial Pentecostal preachers, the Prophet T.B. Joshua, pastor of the Synagogue Church of All

83 Interview, PFN representative Lagos, September 8, 2012
T.B. Joshua is famous for his healing ministry. He cures AIDS, cancer, and expels all kind of demons, all live on various media channels such as www.emmanuel.tv. He is well-known in Africa and also travels widely to the US and Europe to preach and perform miracles. His Nigeria-based church has become a sort of pilgrimage site for followers from all over the world who believe in his special powers. Among the visitors are important African political figures, such as the late Zambian president Frederick Chiluba, the born-again President who declared Zambia “a Christian nation” in 1991, President Joyce Banda of Malawi, and South African Winnie Mandela, who has described him and his church as “Africa’s most important religious family”.84 His success has not gone on unnoticed, and he might be the Nigerian pastor surrounded by the most public rumours, ranging from drug possession to fake miracles, as well as criticism from Pentecostals about cultic and demonic practices (Hackett 2001). Where T.B. Joshua is criticised for fraud and for staging miracles, the PFN does not question the miracles observed, but they question the miracles’ sources and thus accuse him of cultism. On several occasions the PFN has reiterated its position against him and also publically attacked those who fraternise with him. When Pentecostal Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of the Christ Embassy visited T.B. Joshua, he was publically denounced by the PFN for “fraternizing” with him. The PFN president, in 2002, said to The Week newspaper:

Because of PFN’s uncompromising stand on this belief [against cultism], many organisations whose semblance fall within these confusion have not been accorded membership registration. […] It is very necessary that we reiterate this position that the Synagogue falls within this category and that though T.B. Joshua has desperately tried to enrol through the national office, it has always been without success (Gaya 2002: 25)

While it is difficult to sanction a non-member, such as T.B. Joshua, the PFN as an influential body has other means at its disposal: in 2004 the PFN supported and encouraged the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) initiative to ban “unverified miracles” from TV and radio. The national secretary of the PFN said in an interview that it was not miracles per se that were prohibited, but that the NBC was right in “regulating the broadcast of miracles on television which I support because many people [broadcasting miracles] on TV are not preaching [the] gospel…they are advertising themselves and bringing reproach to the name of the Lord” (Ukah 2011: 52). The two biggest Pentecostal TV healers are precisely T.B. Joshua and Chris Oyakhilome, and the law was seen to target these two in particular. Oyakhilome went to court

84 The quote is from an interview at the church TV-channel, Emmanuel TV. Mandela’s interview can be found on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZXZFFslT08 (last accessed 20 June, 2014).
to contest the decision, while T.B. Joshua simply ignored the edict (Hackett 2012: 174). The PFN’s active involvement in the NBC initiative was, according to Ukah: “an attempt by a religious cartel (the PFN, supported by the CAN) to regulate the media space through the NBC” (2011: 54). This case shows how the informal power of the PFN is strong due to their close cooperation with state actors. As a body, the PFN would rather the state not interfere in religious affairs, but this case shows how their stance might be more pragmatic than principled.

The Slapping Incident: PFN protecting its own fold

The PFN however, is much more careful when there are public controversies in its own fold. One of the richest and most powerful pastors in Nigeria is David Oyedepo from Living Faith Chapel, also known as Winner’s Chapel. With his estimated “£93 million fortune, a fleet of private jets and a Rolls-Royce Phantom” (Daily Mail 2012) and branches worldwide, he fits the stereotype of the flamboyant “name-it-and-claim-it” minister.

A much discussed 2012 slapping incident in Oyedepo’s church forced the PFN to act, if reluctantly. During a televised meeting Oyedepo invited people to come to the front to be delivered from evils. One of the young women who stepped forward bent before him, and responded to a question from him that she is “not a witch”, but a “witch for Jesus”. An angered and shocked Oyedepo said there was no such thing as a witch for Jesus, slapped her hard in the face and told her “You are not set for deliverance and you are free to go to hell!” The clip is on YouTube, and soon became widely seen and discussed in Nigerian media.

85 The two pastors named are widely popular and also controversial in several other African countries. T.B. Joshua is not allowed to enter Cameroon because of allegedly staging false miracles, while in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Ghana he has been close with the Presidents of the country. The Malawian President Joyce Banda spent a three-day private visit at T.B. Joshua’s church at Christmas 2013. The controversy with T.B. Joshua continues. He is still widely popular, and attracts thousands to his daily services, but his reputation has been damaged by the combined criticism from the media, the NBC, and the PFN. In the US, prominent Pentecostals like Ted Haggard and C. Peter Wagner have reiterated that T.B. Joshua’s powers are not from God (Marshall 2009: 185). Oyakhilome’s miracle programs were banned in South Africa in 2011 (Hackett 2012).

86 “Deliverance” is a major concept in Nigerian Pentecostalism; several ministries specialises in delivering people from what is holding them back. It is a concept that can include many things, not just demons.

87 The “slapping incident’ can be seen here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=–XfvOUUYf-8. The issue of witchcraft is discussed in the Nigerian public and in the Pentecostal movement in particular. As discussed earlier, Pentecostals actively relate to what they deem the dark forces in society which are for them very real. “Born-again witches”, i.e. former witches who have become born-again and confess to have been witches, are a frequent feature in Pentecostal movies, magazines, and narratives (Ukah and Echtler 2009).
Because of Oyedepo’s prominence, the press coverage and social media discussions were intense after the slapping incident; many asked if it was acceptable for pastors to humiliate and physically punish members of their churches. The PFN was asked for its opinion by several media outlets, but Oyedepo is part of the community of Pentecostal elders who made up Archbishop Idahosa’s network; Oyedepo was also one of the founders of PFN. Most in the PFN network, like Oritsejafor, decided to not comment on the issue. One did though, leading to headlines such as “CAN, PFN Back Oyedepo's Slapping of Teenage Girl During Church Service” (All Africa 2011):

[…..]PFN Vice Chairman, Lagos State Chapter, Rev. Seni Asiwaju, said that a Bishop is a father and a shepherd to the flock, and officiates under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

'It is the circumstances that matter. Too many issues can lead to such action. In a process to liberate, a demon can decide to go wild, and the minister must do something to chase it away,' Asiwaju said, while reacting to Oyedepo's slapping of the teenage girl before the congregation.

He advised people not to make a mountain out of the incident, saying that even Jesus Christ used a whip to drive people away from the temple.

The two cases about Oyedepo and T.B. Joshua are good examples of the difficulties for the PFN in exercising authority over a movement that is “uncontrollable”, as CAN president Oritsejafor has put it. Criticising a well-respected, powerful pastor like Bishop Oyedepo, who is from its own fold, is effectively not possible. Similarly, the numerous allegations of financial abuse and excessive personal wealth in the major churches are not criticised by the PFN. The PFN is best known for a conservative, protective role when it comes to its own and with close ties to the ruling elites. The PFN has managed to keep T.B. Joshua out of “the good company” in Nigeria, making it impossible for Nigerian politicians to fraternize with him and aiding the process of obstructing his media operations, but T.B. Joshua’s popularity in other countries, and in other sectors of Nigerian society, has nevertheless continued.

Summary

The diverse Pentecostal movement has, despite its lack of common structures and central, authority managed to represent itself as one movement in the national public sphere through the creation of a Pentecostal umbrella organisation, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). The mainline churches feared the newcomers, but it is indicative of Pentecostal prominence in society that the PFN now occupies the leadership position in the national
representative body of Christians in Nigeria, the CAN. The PFN arose as a result of both internal and external reasons. Internally, the scramble for control and religious authority, and the vision to impact society through Pentecostal representation on national level have given rise to a Pentecostal superstructure. The growing numbers of Pentecostals made them, despite their diversity, a significant power base in society and external actors such as the state have welcomed and encouraged a formal Pentecostal interlocutor.

However, despite the prominence of the PFN, its role in the Pentecostal community is contested and its ability to be a corrective to right doctrine, enforce religious authority, counteract scandals, and unify the movement is severely restricted. They have been more successful in acquiring a dominant role in formal representations on the state and federal levels. The prominent role of CAN’s leader, Ayo Oritsejafor, and his close relationship with political authorities, gives legitimacy and representation to a new type of Christian leadership, one that rests its authority on a divine mandate and his material success in building a wealthy multi-institutional church and nurturing close relationship with political elites. Oritsejafor’s enchanted worldview, in which spiritual forces are constantly at play and need to be combatted, is an indication of the centrality of what Marshall has called “a growing public obsession with the evil occult powers” (Marshall 2009:9). This worldview makes compromises with the Muslim community difficult and it gives the Christians a key role in society, given their self-proclaimed ability to fight the underlying causes of the problems Nigeria is facing.
5.2 Building economically sustainable institutions

Prior to Labour Day 2013 CAN President Ayo Oritsejafor had a visit in his church from Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the oldest and most influential trade union in Nigeria. The Vanguard newspaper reported:

Chairman of state NLC, Mr. Akporegha Williams, spoke during a church service at World of Life Bible Church, Warri, as part of activities marking this year’s May Day celebration.

Williams said the church should particularly invest in agriculture and textile mills, which he said were high employment generating areas to provide jobs for the teeming unemployed Nigerians. Williams praised the President of Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Bishop Ayo Oritsejafor for his efforts at uniting Christians and non-Christians alike for peace to reign in the country. He said: “While we commend the church’s effort in investing in the educational sector, we call on the church to go beyond the educational sector and invest in agriculture and textile mills, because of their capacities to generate high number of jobs.”

The CAN President lauded the leaders of the state NLC for seeking the face of God and prayed God to continue to give them direction. (The Vanguard, April 30, 2013).

In the midst of a challenging economy, the Pentecostal mega-churches stand out as examples of economic success.\(^\text{88}\) Much more than the converse, people comes to ask the churches for help. The example from the trade union’s visit to the World of Life Bible Church stands as an illustration of several phenomena. First, it is evidence of the church’s public reputation as an able business entrepreneur. Asking the church to invest in the struggling Nigerian textile industry is not off target to a prominent leader. Secondly, it is also a testimony to the failure of the state to address the basic vital needs of its citizens, and in the role of religious institutions in providing for public needs. Thirdly, it is a sign of the changing roles in Nigerian civil society, which we discuss later. In the words of Pentecostal pastor and politician Tunde Bakare:

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\(^{88}\) It is not only Pentecostal churches that have experienced economic success in Nigeria. In April 2014 the country was estimated to have Africa’s largest economy, based on a recalculation of the GDP. Several observers predict Nigeria will become one of the next global giants; the economist who in 2001 coined the “BRIC countries” (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as potential economic giants, has now identified new countries to emerge, the MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey). See for instance the article \emph{The MINT countries: Next economic giants?} (BBC 2014). However, the economic prosperity experienced by many new private entrepreneurs has not helped the country as a whole: poverty and extreme inequality continues to be on the rise, and is a defining character of the country.
We are about to see the imagined new wine skins, that will take the gospel to all the mountains of culture that influence society. You are going to see a church in action in education, in music, in dance, in entertainment, in health care delivery, health departments, in economy and in politics. Because Christ is Lord over all. Not just the church. Over all things. (Interview, September 9, 2012).

This view on “taking the gospel to all mountain of culture that influences society” has resonance with Pentecostal thinking in other countries, as the chapter on Guatemala also shows. This thinking represents a dramatic evolution from the initial other-worldly orientation of the early Pentecostal movement into an outlook where the church should actively participate in society. The analytical line between the sacred and the secular is constantly blurred and outright rejected by Pentecostals, because “Christ is lord over all”, as Bakare says.

In this chapter we examine the interwoven and multifaceted relationship between the Pentecostal church and the economy. When discussing the public and political role of Pentecostalism, the movement’s diverse role with the economic market plays a crucial role. Compared to other historic churches, Pentecostal churches have been largely self-financed from the beginning, which has demanded a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Running a Pentecostal church can be hard work and the pastor must see that the finances are in place. In Nigeria, prosperity teaching, a doctrine that teaches that financial success is an indicator of faithfulness to God, has a firm foothold. We examine the relationship between the Pentecostal movement and the economy explicitly in this chapter from three different perspectives: 1) the prosperity doctrine, which provides the basis for the economic model upon which the churches are built; 2) some examples of how the church is involved in business; and 3) a look at a new trend with the increasing focus on non-profit and charity work.

5.2.1 Prosperity teaching: “Give and you shall receive”

The Pentecostal movement in Nigeria is best known, and most criticised, for its approach to wealth and business. As the prelate in the Methodist Church said talking when about the Pentecostal movement: “I must mention what I hate there, it is commercialisation of religion. It is very bad. It is very bad. Like the orthodox churches we believe in service to the people. Not self-service” (Interview, September 4, 2012, Lagos) His view echoes much criticism from people outside the movement, but it is also an accurate depiction of how Pentecostal churches work: business is an integral part of Pentecostal institutions, and the Pentecostal emphasis is not on charity or community service, the traditional domain of religious institutions, but on prosperity. Pentecostal churches are by their nature, as opposed to older
main line churches, independent in terms of spiritual authority and financially. The churches from the second wave, in particular, do not receive funding from sister institutions abroad and their continued growth depends entirely on the individual church’s capacity to generate funds. As institutions of and for Nigerians, the Pentecostal churches both reinforce and contribute to the Nigerian neo-liberal economy.

The primary income source is tithing, a central practice of Pentecostal prosperity doctrine. Churches may engage in different businesses, but their main foundation of income has been tithing and different types of offerings. Tithing refers to giving ten per cent of one’s income and profit on business transactions to the church. In addition, there are other types of thanksgiving offerings, Sunday offerings, bible study offerings, birthday offerings; there are no real limits (Ukah 2011: 199). To put it simply, no service in a Pentecostal church is complete without an offering.

Most Pentecostal churches are financially autonomous; they need to earn money just as other entities in the free market do. The prosperity teaching on blessing extends to institutions too: churches that are not growing or expanding are not blessed. In a competitive market, this is a demanding precept, as Ukah elaborates:

This feature is increasingly transforming Pentecostal groups into competing religious firms who aggressively utilize marketing and business strategies in securing a clientele for their goods and services (Ukah 2005: 270).

The cooperative element is very explicit. The Redeemed Christian Church of God has a more ambitious plan than many corporations, as we can tell from their vision statement:

[...]we will plant churches within five minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries and within five minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed countries.89

A theology of exchange is very explicit in prosperity teaching, in which the basic thinking is that if you give, you shall receive. Giving money is an essential act of faith, as characteristic of the Nigerian Pentecostal faith as believing in miracles or the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This structure resembles a tax-paying system, and the ratepayers expect to get something in return (Freeman 2012: 15). Having wealthy members becomes important as the tithes and donations become higher. If possible, care is taken to attract the rich and empower the poor so that the system is sustainable. In a country like Nigeria where the church, not the state, provides many

social services, paying “taxes” to the system that works rather to the system that does not work is logical. The Pentecostal churchgoer expects value in return for her time and money spent at the church and will move to another one if she is not satisfied. The disloyal Pentecostal churchgoer is a characteristic of the Pentecostal movement today, particularly in the larger churches ones, and pastors need to cater to a demanding public.

The prosperity doctrine

I asked God to raise 71 Billionaires. If you happen to be one of them, please let me know as soon as possible because He will turn you a billionaire because we have work to do.

(Pastor Adeboye, RCCG, Facebook update 1 March 2013)

The Facebook status posted by Pastor Adeboye of the RCCG message is just one of out of several messages he posts each day. To this particular update, over 120,000 people responded within a few days, saying “amen!”, “let me be the first billionaire”, “I claim it in Jesus name”, etc. Fundamental to the Pentecostal worldview, and in its engagement with the economic sectors, is the prosperity doctrine (Adogame 2010; Marshall 2009; Ukah 2008). Whereas Weber’s Calvinists struggled with fear that they were not predestined to be amongst the chosen ones, the prosperity doctrine makes salvation very much of this world, and evidence is found here and now that God will bless his children both spiritually and materially. Salvation is, in other words, not only in the afterlife, but very much in the now. It is the prosperity theology, in many versions, that dominates Pentecostalism in Nigeria, particularly its public expression. The so-called jet-pastors, the exclusive club of pastors who own their private jets, all figure prominently in the press, as living proof that prosperity theology works.

The prosperity gospel can be traced from the US faith movement, but quickly adopted a specifically Nigerian context.90 There are important doctrinal and organisational differences in this broad movement. In 1980s Nigeria there was a much sharper conflict between the old and new Pentecostals churches, where the older institutions advocated strict anti-materialism

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90 Prosperity teaching, in different shapes, entered the movement in the mid-1980s and a decade later it was already dominant. Greatly influenced by North American preachers such as Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, and Oral Roberts but also the German Reinhard Bonnke and the South Korean Paul Yonggi Cho, Nigerian pastors soon made the theology distinctively and locally relevant (Marshall 2009: Ojo 2006: 206). Nigerian Pentecostalism travels the world through migration, missionaries, TV shows, and church “planting”, and it is often the prosperity type that is exported.
while the newer ones showed an excessive devotion to materialism, whereas now most seem to gravitate out of the extremes to find each other in the middle ground (Marshall 2009: 85). The prosperity teaching incorporates a strong belief in miracles. Essentially, it holds that Jesus died for our sins so that we could enjoy “abundance in life”: sickness, failed relationships, or poverty is not what Jesus has promised the righteous. Worldly goods are as important as non-worldly goods; salvation is here and now. In a society racked by poverty, the message of prosperity is enticing. The Pentecostal focus is on the individual, not how structural factors may influence an economy. The remedy to a person’s problems is to be born again and start a new life. In his book entitled “You Can’t Afford to be Poor: Jesus Died to Make you RICH” pastor Tunde Bakare writes about how poverty is a curse, mentally and materially:

If you are not born-again, that curse cannot be removed at all. The first thing to do, is to give your life to Jesus. He is the only way out of poverty. Jesus has written: “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). Born-again Christians who cannot afford a decent living, or the necessities of life, probably have a curse operating in their lives. [...] When a Christian lives the right life, all the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-14 will be applicable to his life. Blessings are meant for those who are living right (Bakare 1998: 10).

This message is a radical change from what most mainline churches have long preached. It carries a message to both rich and poor: wealth and success is a sign of godliness, and it can be attained by anyone who follows the right path. In a society where some pastors are incredibly rich, and sudden and “miraculous” wealth due to the oil economy and corruption is common in other public spheres, the prosperity gospel confirms and can also legitimises even the grossest inequalities. It is a theology that preaches that miracles such as sudden, inexplicable wealth are not only possible to attain, but can also be a blessing. While Pentecostals leaders, as exemplified in the PFN, criticise corruption, their critique is not always compelling given the secrecy of their finances as well as this specific theology. Given Nigeria’s problems with corruption and informal big-men structures, this theology resonates with how wealth is distributed in a country where people with the right associations can become millionaires seemingly overnight (Marshall 2009).

The Pentecostals have a strong focus on the empowerment of the self. Personal transformation is a key theme: one must stop seeing oneself as a victim and start thinking of one self as winner (Freeman 2012:12). By making a radical break with the past, a born-again has all the possibilities in the world. Large parts of the prosperity churches currently preach that there is a destiny for your life, God has a plan, you must just discover it and claim it. Book titles such
as *There’s a King in Me: Unleashing the Giant Within* (Ekwueme 2013) and *1st Things First: How to Live a Life of Priorities* [Popoola 2011] and the TV and radio programmes led by Pastor Eneche such as *Destiny Encounter Broadcast* are indicative of contemporary Christian thinking. The resemblance to western self-help literature is often striking. The churches offer very practical advice and courses and have a strong self-empowerment focus. In a competitive environment it might be easier to attract people with an encouraging message, rather than talk about sin, repentance, or end-time struggles. Through Facebook, books, courses, TV programmes, meetings, and conventions, a message of possibilities is conveyed. The following Facebook messages of three prominent pastors are representative:

Trouble is often opportunity in disguise 22 May 2012/ The fight is fixed in your favour. God is in control. 23 January 2013/God always gives you a greater harvest than you expect. 15 June 2013 (Pastor Paul Adefarasin, House on the Rock).

You are not made for defeat but for feat. You are original, unique and special. You are not ordinary but extraordinary (26. 04.2013 Nike Adeyemi, co-pastor with her husband, Daystar). 91

Excellence makes it easy for God to bless U. Pls be excellent in all U do and at any given time. Note this: if U are outstanding at what U do, no satanic or human resistance can keep U down; U must eventually rise to the top. See the life of Daniel, Joseph and David. These people excelled despite their hostile or disadvantaged backgrounds. U too can move from where U are now to any place U want to be on the frequency of excellence. See U at the top....there is space there. (23.05.2013 Pastor Paul Enenche, Dunamis International Gospel Centre)

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91 Nike Adeyemi is a prominent, young female pastor, who co-pastors the Daystar Christian Centre together with her husband. She is director of “The Real Woman Foundation” whose slogan is “…healing and empowering women and children, building nations”. There is in general a strong focus on gender in the teaching and activities of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Like Nike Adeyemi, there are many prominent female leaders in Nigerian Pentecostal churches, the overwhelming majority of them co-pastoring with their husbands. Women are numerically dominant in Nigerian Pentecostalism: The sociologist Ukah suggests that as much as 65-70 per cent of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) members are women (2008: 165). He is however dubious about the view that Pentecostalism enhances the role of women in Nigeria, as they continue to serve under a male hierarchy. Their leadership positions in the RCCG are more likely to be related to service, rather than positions “of power, prestige, money and privilege” (Ukah 2008: 165).

We have seen several prominent female leaders in Nigerian Pentecostal churches that have provided some academic discussion; see Adeboye (2005) *Breaking through Gender Barriers: Religion and Female Leadership in Nigeria*, Fatokun (2006) *Women and Leadership in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches*, Boadi (2005) *Engaging Patriarchy: Pentecostal Gender Ideologies and Practices in Nigeria*. For a broader geographical view, see Kalu’s (2008) chapter on “Gendered Charisma: Charisma and Women in African Pentecostalism” (147-165). Nigerian women operate in a patriarchal and androcentric society, but there are a multitude of subcultures were gender roles are played out differently. See Boadi (2005) for an account of some of these variations in Christian churches in Nigeria.
The Pentecostal churches have the tools to guide the individual, from education, social networks, marriage counselling, healing, inspirational books, and seminars. The pastors portray themselves as authorities on a wide variety of subjects. Both representative and telling is how the popular pastor Sam Adeyemi chooses to present himself in the back cover of his book *Nigeria of My Dream* (2010):

Sam Adeyemi, insightful teacher, motivational speaker and author of several books on successful living, is the President of Success Power International. He hosts the radio and television program ‘Success Power’ which is broadcast in Nigeria and many other nations.

He also pastors the Daystar Christian Centre, Lagos, Nigeria, a church with the vision of raising role models of excellence.

He has the God given mandate to teach scriptural success principles through radio, television, seminars and publications. He is much sought after as a speaker in churches, seminars and conference internationally.

Pentecostal pastors are often highly educated in subjects such as business, law, engineering, medicine, or mathematics, and have a cooperative view of church planting and church growth. They use their secular competence and network to shape the teaching and the organisations of their churches. Azonzeh Ukah has shown how religiously unconventional business principles have entered the Redeemed Church of God (RCCG) (Ukah 2008, 2009, 2011). The RCCG has for instance a special interdenominational elite group, the Christ the Redeemer’s Friends Universal (CRFU), whose main responsibility is to proselytise the elites in society. Through them the aim is to “mobilise money, trained personnel, technical skills and publicity through the corridors of social, political and economic power in the country” (Ukah 2011: 197). The RCCG may promote individuals who have attracted large revenues to the church by giving them positions as elders, a clear message that religious roles in the church can be filled with persons not known only for their religious ethics or zeal, but that providing money and expertise is an integral part of Pentecostalism. The close ties to the business community are publically known and uncommonly blunt by western European standards: since the mid-1990s the RCCG has entered into cooperate sponsorship of religious events. Companies such as Nestle, Coca-Cola, and Nigerian Brewery Plc can market their goods on church grounds for a fee. Travel companies, banks, and insurances companies tailor their product towards the needs of the church and its members (Ukah 2011). According to Ukah this is a win-win situation. The church receives financial support and strengthens its corporate network, while the firms
get a popular media celebrity, the pastor, to endorse their products and hopefully make his followers loyal consumers.

**Taxation**

Religious institutions in Nigeria are registered as charity organisations and are thus tax-exempt. As some Pentecostal churches have become multimillion-dollar complexes that operate several income-generating avenues, the question of fiscal accountability is a growing public concern. Most Nigerian-founded Pentecostal churches are family estates, where the pastor and his wife control the finances. The Nigerian state seldom interferes in regulation of religious groups, which has enabled a large sector of independent Pentecostal churches develop their own practices in running what very much resemble business ventures (Ukah 2012). Very few churches make their accounts known to their members or to the public (Ukah 2011: 189).

Occasionally there are regulation attempts by the state. The Lagos government has proposed that religious institutions should pay tax, claiming that many were involved in outright business ventures. The religious items sold at church compounds or Christian bookstores are manifold: books, tapes, holy water, clothing with Christian messages, etc. The PFN objected strongly to any taxing policies that are directed towards the core activities of the church. From their perspective, all the activities they are involved in is for the furtherance of the gospel. The national secretary of the PFN, Wale Adefarasin, spoke on the issue during a 2009 press conference:

“...We are not engaging in business. The tapes, CDs, and other materials are simply messages meant to develop our people,” he said. Adefarasin disclosed that PFN has informed its lawyers on the current development, adding that “our lawyers are working on it. We will make our position known later” (The Pmnews July 5, 2009).

The autonomy of the Pentecostal church may be further challenged as Pentecostals become increasingly involved in non-Pentecostal structures.

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92 To my knowledge, there is not much academic work on this issue of taxation in Nigeria, a topic that deserves considerably more attention. Ukah (2007) has done work on finances and the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and writes about how unwilling the churches are to release financial records or comment on finances. In the same study, he discusses Cameroon which unlike Nigeria has introduced accounting standards for churches (Ukah 2007: 644). A fruitful and most likely comparable case is Uganda. Writing about taxation and Pentecostal churches in Uganda, Biobele R. Briggs, elaborates on how non-Pentecostal businessmen feared the inequality that arouse from the economic advantage the Pentecostal churches had (2008).
5.2.2 «Church Social Responsibility» (CSR): Between social work and business

However, long before the Pentecostal revival, religion was an integral part of the Nigerian economic system. Christian institutions, whether Catholic, Anglican, or Methodist, were the main providers of elementary and secondary education during colonial rule. Muslim and Christian religious institutions may today own clinics, schools, universities, or be major land- and property owners (Adogame 2010: 491). Religious institutions have strong public roles to fill in Nigeria. They are regarded as non-profit organisations and charities, whose *raison d'etre* is to promote the common good (Ukah 2007: 622). Pentecostals have entered into the market in which the mainline churches have traditionally been involved, such as health and education. But whereas older religious institutions have a special impetus in providing for the poor, by offering services at low cost, most (neo)Pentecostal educational and health services are expensive and function as competitors to similar secular private institutions. Characteristically, they conquer new arenas and do not shy away from innovation for proselytising by saving souls and building institutions and thus building the kingdom of God. Prophet T.B. Joshua sells “anointed water”, the RCCG has its own bank and insurance company, and the Apostolic Church LAWNA has a private gas station and a water plant on the church compound. The RCCG, and several other churches, liaise with private businesses who sponsors religious events (Ukah 2008).

The overt business character of Pentecostal churches, and their new way of approaching development has been a sources of criticism from many outside the Pentecostal movement. Only very recently has attention been given to Pentecostalism as an agent in development (Freeman 2012; Okyerefo 2011).93 Pentecostalism grew in parallel to the increase in religious and secular NGOs in Africa (Obadare 2007). These NGOs arose as a result of the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, which led to privatisation of public services and the influx of non-state actors to provide social services. Mainline churches have played a large role in this development as local implementers of United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG), democratisation programmes, and welfare programmes, to the extent that some talk of an “NGO’isation” of main line churches (Freeman 2012). Pentecostal churches have to

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93 The anthology *Pentecostalism and Development* (Freeman 2012) looks at the role of churches in Africa and offer many revealing perspectives. The study argues that Pentecostal development practices, similar in goals to the NGOs but dissimilar in implementation strategies, has had more success in bringing about social and economic change then the secular NGOs.
a large extent been outside this specific development discourse and practice. The lack of engagement with the NGO sector does not mean that Pentecostalism has not contributed to development, but as Freeman and her colleagues have shown, there are different paths to development. Where NGOs wage “war against poverty” and address structural problems, Pentecostals “wage war against the demons”, and focus on *individual* transformation and empowerment (Freeman 2012: 2).

Richard Burgess (2008) argues that social care was really the seed of the movement, as the early revival was deeply involved in relief operations during the Biafra War. This practice was abandoned early on, to focus instead on winning souls and building institutions. Now there is an increased focus on “a practical theology of compassion” (Burgess 2008: 288), as well as new types of institutions addressing the social needs of those who cannot afford to pay for church welfare services. Outreach to the poor is evident in for instance visiting prisons, the creation of social welfare departments for the poor, health institutions, etc. (Burgess 2008: 280). The mega-churches like RCCG have extensive social programmes that include awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS, education, and health. However, most of the education and health programmes in Nigerian Pentecostalism are profit-driven activities, and Pentecostal institutions often charge more than non-church owned facilities (Ukah 2007: 642).

The role of religious organisations in providing relief during humanitarian emergencies is eloquently described in the study by Nkwachkwu Orji (2011). Here, the author investigates the case of Jos, a city situated in the Middle Belt of Nigeria and a place of recurrent sectarian violence since early 2000. The author shows how the state increasingly relies on faith-based organisations to provide assistance during crisis, a partnership that has proven very effective.

In this situation, Pentecostals play a major role, both through the PFN and through several independent Pentecostal congregations that have separate operations. This is another example of how the state strengthens the role of the PFN by channelling funds and treating the PFN like the hierarchal churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church. During emergencies, state funds are channelled to the CAN and its Muslim counterparts such as the Jama’atu Nasr al-Islam (JNI), who redistribute funds to their member blocs, including the PFN. Orji describes a close working relationship between the CAN and the state agencies in overall authority (Orji
The PFN has, alongside other religious organisations in Jos, established committees specifically to organise work during emergencies. In this effort, they are dependent on the involvement of the membership churches.

Orji argues that there are several reasons why religious organisations are effective in Jos. First, they have a robust local operational structure which makes them practically effective, but Orji also points to the pool of enthusiastic volunteers religious organisations can draw upon for plentiful and inexpensive labour and the fact that they are able to provide urgent financial support if needed. Their networks are strong and the willingness to give robust, so they will always be able to raise money in urgent cases; for instance, the RCCG was quick to collect and donate funds following the disastrous Haiti earthquake in 2010. In addition, Jos being an area of sectarian conflict, people trust the religious organisations that they are already close to.

Despite these advantages, there are considerable difficulties as well, precisely because of the religious character. It is difficult to reach out to the other faith communities, the level of distrust is high, and there is a tendency to have an inward-looking eye in times of emergency; the focus is first and foremost on one’s own flock (Orji 2011: 486). These factors may exacerbate the existing animosity.

A weak Nigerian state creates room for religious organisations to develop their skills and broaden their impact and relevance. By channelling funds through organisations like PFN the state also gives strength to the PFN, and thus strength to the idea that there is one representative body of Pentecostals in Nigeria, much like they deal with hierarchical churches like the Catholic or the Anglican. The process of mainstreaming and controlling Pentecostalism is thus very much also a process instigated from the outside, the state, the public and other religious institutions, as we have also seen from examples above.

94 There are not many studies that specifically look into the role of faith-based organisations (FBO’s) as development agents, despite the nationwide presence of these institutions. But Odumosu, Olaniyi, and Alonge (2009) do an initial mapping of Muslim and Christian FBOs in their working paper “Mapping the Activities of Faith-based Organizations in Development in Nigeria”, which was part of the Religion and Development project at the University of Birmingham.

95 Orji identifies two approaches in selecting aid recipients; one that is faith-centred (geared towards its own members) or a more universalistic approach. Most FBOs in Jos are in the first category, including the PFN, while the second is exemplified by the Catholic Church’s Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC). The JDPC initiated a project in 2005 to promote interfaith cooperation through the Emergency Preparedness and Response team (ERPT) (Orji 2011: 487-488)
As Pentecostalism has grown big and has built stable institutions, there is an increasing focus on addressing issues that mainline churches have traditionally confronted, such as for instance HIV-awareness programmes (Ukah 2008) or traditional charity programmes. This can be understood as a natural extension of being a relevant church in community but it should also be examined as a way for Pentecostal pastors to counteract fierce criticism in the media. The Pentecostal head of the CAN, Ayo Oritsejafor, constantly has to deal with accusations from the press and from leaders of other religious institutions, about his personal wealth, the prosperity gospel, and the limited social service provided to the poor. For Pentecostals to assert their legitimacy and respectability in Nigerian society, they need to respond to this criticism. It can thus be seen as a parallel to the demand for secular business incorporating a corporate social responsibility model (CSR): a demand from society but also from within, and if done well beneficial for the overall company.

**Summary**

Pentecostal actors are important not just as spiritual leaders, but also for their ability to build and manage successful multi-institutional churches that are financially strong and independent. This is knowledge and competence that is also valued in other sectors of society. Several of the successful pastors in Nigeria have degrees in secular subjects such as engineering, communication, or architecture, not theology, adding to their competence and legitimacy. The Pentecostal churches have managed to make a model that works in Nigeria. Although not without difficulties, pursuing a career as a pastor has indeed become a promising option for earning a living, and building networks through participation in a Pentecostal church can be an effective way of securing or expanding career possibilities.

The extreme wealth of the prominent pastors is frequently portrayed in the media and clearly visible in the public space through their impressive churches, their private jets, and associations with the business community; it is a source of both admiration and scepticism. Their success makes them living proof of a prosperity theology that works and serves an example of validity of their teaching. Economic prosperity is central to Pentecostal teaching. The economic model is based on a theology of exchange, teaching that if you give, you shall

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96 I am indebted to my colleague Camilla Houeland for her suggestion to use the term “Church Social Responsibility”.

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receive. This model is particularly salient in Nigeria, where an informal system dominates over formal procedures that lack effectiveness. Pentecostals churches are not just passive examples of success; they are also energetic economic actors. As landowners, event managers, and owners of universities and Pentecostal merchandise-outlets, they are an integrated part of the larger economic sector in Nigeria.
5.3 Dominating the Public Sphere

To everyone following me on twitter, Facebook & all other social media GOD will send help to you and your family across the world today.

(12 May 2013, Pastor E.A. Adeboye Facebook message)

As a Facebook follower of Pastor E. A. Adeboye of the RCCG and a dozen other pastors from Nigeria and Guatemala, I receive daily updates on their whereabouts, their planned activities, motivational thoughts, and much more. Just as tithing and offering are elementary forms of Pentecostal practice, so is the use of various media in conveying its message. Nigerian Pentecostals have been at the forefront in using the various media in spreading their message, not only nationally but also globally (see Hackett 1998, 2012; Ihejirika 2012, Marshall-Fratani 1998; Obadare 2006, Ojo 2005; Ukah 2003, 2011). The dialectic relationship between the Pentecostal movement and the media serves multitude of purposes, some deliberate and others unintended. While immensely important for the movement itself, the Pentecostal use of the media has also greatly affected society and public discourse. The mass media represents a new and powerful arena where power is negotiated within and among religious movements, and between religious movements and other entities in the state (Ihejirika 2012: 181).

The public sphere has undergone dramatic changes in Nigeria over the last 20 years. Democratisation and the ensuing deregulation of the media in Nigeria, as in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, facilitated the Pentecostal entrance into national media (Hackett 2012; Meyer 2011). During military rule in Nigeria, the state had more control over the public sphere and was able to control the broadcast media, but its control dwindled in the early 1990s. When the public sphere opened up in the form of media deregulation, skilful Pentecostals were first in line to make use of these new possibilities, making several point to Pentecostalism, even globally, as the public religion par excellence. Compared to other religious institutions, they were far better equipped and situated to take this new role. The public sphere is not just a space for debate or contestation, but also stages for doing religion, a place where miracles happen and were religious identities are on display (Meyer 2011:155). It is a space where reality and morality are constituted. The importance of the public sphere in actualising and negotiating politics, business, and religion cannot be underestimated. These different domains are interwoven: the ideas and actions that take place in one sphere feed into other spheres (Englund 2011: 2).
Miracles make for good television. For the commercial broadcast industry, Pentecostal programming has become a very important financial income source: religious advertising is the second-highest revenue source for media organisations in Nigeria, behind only the combination of tobacco and alcohol. Religious advertisements and sponsored programmes provide over 40 per cent of the revenue for both state and private media concerns (Ukah 2011b: 50). In Nigeria religious broadcasting is nearly synonymous with Pentecostalism. The visibility and popularity that pastors have gained from being in the media has aided their entry onto other stages in Nigerian society, such as politics and business. Mass media has been the stepping stone needed to move Pentecostals from the fringes to the centre of the socio-religious sphere, where they have ever-greater ability to influence public opinion (Ihejirika 2012).

By developing private TV and radio shows, pastors such as Ayo Oritsejafor, Tunde Bakare, T.B. Joshua, and A.E. Adeboye have made themselves relevant in the public sphere. Prophesies from Pentecostal pastors are reported and discussed in secular media. A pastor may warn about an upcoming crisis, or urge people to turn to God in order to prevent air crashes, floods, violence, or fraudulent elections, to give just a few examples. While it is the Pentecostal discourse that dominates the public sphere (Ihejirika 2012: 182), the public sphere has seen an increase in “God language” from other religions and from secular authorities, such as politicians and artists, who employ a religious language for better effect (Ayantayo 2009). This development feeds into a general trend in Africa: more than other possible identities, such as ethnicity, it is frequently “religious publics that emerge to challenge the legitimacy of the nation-state” (Hackett 2012: 165). While Pentecostalism dominates in the commercial press, other religions are also present, but make their claim on society in different manners. One apparent reason for why other religions do not simply copy Pentecostal public methods is of course inability due to lack of funds, but another important reason is a question of outlook and goals. Traditional religion, mainline churches, or Muslim

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97 Corruption has also penetrated the press, and those with money can buy publicity for their events to be covered. Many journalists do not receive proper salaries and conduct reporting by honorarium, or the informal way, which is to collect “brown envelopes” so that the “news source” pays the reporter. Neo-Pentecostal churches with a lot of money and a willingness to pay, can be frequently covered in national media. See Saharareporters (2013b) for the story of an independent journalist who was detained and harassed at the Mountain of Fire and Miracles HQ premises for allegedly refusing to do “brown envelope journalism”.

98 See for instance Ihejirika (2008) for an examination of the Catholic Church’s growing use of the media in their social welfare work.
organisations may have reasons for not portraying themselves in opposition to or in a similar fashion as the Pentecostals, as Meyer (2012) has shown in several examples from Ghana.

As Pentecostalism grows in Nigeria, so does the movement’s expansion into new spheres of society, including entertainment, arts and sports. The Pentecostal movement both teaches and practices that “no instrument is too profane to act as a vehicle of salvation” (Comaroff 2012: 44). Just as Pentecostals with ease sacralise public space, such as using discos or cinemas for religious purposes, they can enter so-called secular spheres and render them “Pentecostal”.

The significant film industry in Nigeria, known as Nollywood, is an area that is drawing more interest from Pentecostals. The genre of drama is still there, but Pentecostal motives, themes, and language dominate the movies. The Pentecostal dichotomies, such as the dramatic difference in life before salvation and after, good and evil, the born-agains and the rest, all make for good drama (Ukah 2012). The major Pentecostal churches are also making inroads in sports; for instance, the larger churches have football teams aiming to join the professional divisions. As national public figures they are also asked by the media and other sectors in society, to participate in other ways, as this article from one of the major Nigerian newspapers demonstrates:

Worried by the dwindling fortunes in the sports sub-sector of the nation’s economy, Nigeria’s most influential religious leader and the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, RCCG, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye has perfected plans to pray for God’s intervention in the area.

Speaking in an interview in his church office, the Special Assistant to the General Overseer on Administration/Personnel, Pastor Funsho Odesola told our reporter that Pastor Adeboye, in continuation of his prayers for different sectors of the nation’s economy has set aside Sunday, February 5, for prayers to reverse the dwindling fortunes in our sports sector.

“What Daddy G.O has been praying for some sets of people for sometimes now but this time around he intends to pray for all sports people in response to a request by the sports director,” Pastor Odesola said, adding that the RCCG helmsman could not resist the call to pray for the sector.

According to him, Pastor Adeboye was once an active boxer who also had a stint at other sporting activities including volleyball is not happy that Nigeria which used to occupy a pride of place in the global sporting activities is no longer reckoned with and has therefore agreed to take advantage of the beginning of the year like this, to pray and prophesy into the sports sector (Vanguard January 29, 2012).

There are numerous similar cases appearing in the press. The widespread Pentecostal presence in the media facilitates the construction of an imagined Pentecostal community and
constitutes them as a powerful public aspiration. Regardless of the actual numbers of Pentecostals, their message far extends beyond the congregation through the use of media. These types of articles are a strong testimony to the public role Pentecostal leaders have as national leaders, a role that reaches far beyond what would normally be classified as “religious”. The article also demonstrates the Pentecostal strategy of reaching into the different sectors of society, in this case the sports sector. Through practices such as prayer, by creating publicity, and by entering the sports sector financially, Pentecostals employ several methods to make themselves relevant. The multi-institutional approach can clearly be seen in the printed media: in a regular newspaper, Pentecostal pastors or institutions may figure in the news sections, in the business section, with paid advertisements, in entertainment and gossip sections, in the actual religion sections, in sports, and in the political sections.

5.3.1 Varieties of media use
The use of media has a multitude of purposes; it spreads the gospel, it makes the activities of a specific church known through paid advertisements, and it is income-generating for many churches. Crucially, it provides daily evidence in the form of miracles and testimonies from real people about the power of Jesus’s name. Their message is constant: it happened to me, despite my failures and resistance; therefore, it can also happen to you.

Long before the internet, in the 1960s and 1970s, the books, pamphlets, and cassettes of the Korean David Yonggi Cho and the North Americans T.L. Osborn and Gordon Lindsay circulated throughout Nigeria, as they did much of the world. This mediated message continues to be at the heart of the Pentecostal religion, and is an effective way of moving between the local and the global resources available within Pentecostalism (Marshall 2009: 128). The pioneering ways Pentecostals make use of the media can to a large extent replace the physical church: they offer chat rooms for Christian singles, online counselling, online healing, services are posted online, etc. Books, billboards, radio, Christian entertainment videos, infotainment, satellite channels, 24 hour online healing services, live broadcasting of services – the Pentecostal message is everywhere. The movies, the literature, the daily motivational SMS-messages that one can subscribe to all help create the sense of a

99 Because this element is so explicit in Pentecostalism, one may be misled into characterising the use of media as something completely new, but media is intrinsic to religion. Religion has long been considered as “a practice of mediation” (Meyer 2008: 710)
Pentecostal community, either in general or related to a specific church, as well as extending the church’s far outside any specific house of worship.

An advertisement from March 7, 2013 is indicative of contemporary Pentecostalism’s innovative and extensive media use; posted on Pastor Adeboye’s Facebook page for the “Open Heavens Daily Devotional”, a “practical daily guide for a Christian life”, it reads:

Open Heavens Daily Devotional for 2013 written by Pastor E.A. Adeboye is now available on iPad, iPhone, Android, Blackberry, Amazon Kindle, and Nokia App Store. To download visit your Device App Store or go to www.iopenheavens.com.

The professionalism displayed in the church websites and other information channels does not take a back seat to secular sites such as corporate sites. Pastor Adeboye has over 2 million followers (September 2014) on his Facebook page; his status is updated several times every day. Here he (or an employee) posts prayers, prophecies, motivational words, bible verses, and information about upcoming RCCG events. Some examples indicative of the theology preached at RCCG:

- Every demon sent to you will be sent back to sender today in JESUS name. (May 21, 2013)
- Given certain conditions you don't have to be ever sick again. Exodus 15:26 (May 21, 2013)
- Your status update is a prayer request to GOD asking for help or for something but your Profile pix is a half-naked lady and you wonder why your prayers are not answered, dont just talk JESUS, let everything you do show and rep JESUS. (March 7, 2013)

A sermon given at a specific location, to a specific audience, will be multiplied by services on TV, the internet, on radio and through the sales of CDs and DVDs (Marshall 1998). We can say that the messages are de-located, or that the church is de-territorialised, in the sense that the preacher does not speak to a specific ethnic or denominational group. The public extends far beyond the community of church goers.

The public sphere in Nigeria is in all senses multifaceted. Pluralism within the borders of the Nigerian state, and within the public sphere, is not just a Habermasian space for rational discursive debate, but much more a zone characterised by domination and conflict. As Marshall writes, when Pentecostalism entered the public in the 1990s, it was not as a discursive partner but rather an attempt to “colonize the national public sphere and reconceptualise the structure and normative basis of the nation” and their method and strategy to do so was through “the production and dissemination of a multitude of discourses via the media”, discourses that targeted the general public (Marshall 1998: 298). The totalising
project of Pentecostalism, or the tendency to attempt to “constitute and/or dominate” the public (Obadare 2007: 146) makes debate with non-Pentecostals difficult, as we see when we examine the relationship to the religious other at the end of this chapter. This God-language occupies a large space in the public sphere and is also employed by non-state actors. Obadare (2006) argues there is a pentecostalisation of governance and the public sphere that is so dominant that to talk about a Christian secular stance is not convincing. He argues that the CAN, based on the influence of the Pentecostal bloc, has gone from “a basic insistence on the secularity of the Nigerian state to an affirmation of the imperative to Christianize it” (Obadare 2006: 668)

The public sphere is an exclusionary space, articulated by power. It is a space where gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and finances all count a great deal, in the ability both to speak and to be heard (Asad 2003: 182). The potent financial capacity and ability and will to use this power in the media, cannot be underestimated when examining the role of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. By entering the media, Pentecostals participate actively in “moralising the public” (Marshall 2009) and in the contest for defining Nigeria itself. The nation-state has no monopoly as a conveyer of identities, does not define how power relations are negotiated, and has only limited capacity to control religions (Hackett 2012: 165; Meyer and Moore 2006). As we have seen above, there are few restrictions in Nigeria on religious institutions. However, the state has attempted to put limitations to religious broadcasting, and in particular Pentecostal broadcasting. We have already discussed the ban on “unverified miracles”. With the general deregulation of media in 1992, Nigeria prohibited the licencing of religious media, probably tied to a fear that it would incite religious conflict in Nigeria (Ukah 2011: 45). Despite state sanctions, satellite and cable television systems provide ample platform for the Pentecostal churches. Furthermore, both state and private owned channels sell airtime to Pentecostal preachers who constitute a major income source for the channels (Ihjeirika 2012: 181). The state is thus not able to control or regulate religion effectively, even when there is legislation in place. This is particularly difficult with a community that has no hierarchy and is a strong as the Pentecostal movement: Pentecostals can easily work their way around obstacles, given their economic power and mode of organisation. (Marshall 1998: 307)

100 Rosalind Hackett argues that the new media reality in many African countries replicates, if not intensifies old and new forms of religious conflict. The rapid deregulation, coupled with the rise of Pentecostalism, has not led to a “happy and equitable marketplace,” she argues (Hackett 2012: 164).
5.3.2 Problems in the public space: Noise pollution and parking chaos

Autonomy is a major characteristic of the Pentecostal movement. When it was small and sect-like in relation to the world, this autonomy was easier to protect. Local authorities have to a large extent not intervened to curb growth, but as Pentecostalism grows, its interaction with the authorities increases. Lagos is Nigeria’s biggest city with it’s approximately 15-20 million inhabitants and Pentecostal churches are everywhere in the city. With posters, loud speakers, music, bookshops, busses, missionaries, mid-week meetings, night vigils, miracle crusades, the Holy Ghost Congress, and advertisements for all of this and more, Pentecostals claim the city as theirs. Individual born-agains take the missionary imperative seriously and play music, give testimonies, or read bible phrases to passing pedestrians. In her travel book from Nigeria, Looking for Transwonderland, the British-Nigerian author Noo Saro-Wiwa writes with an unquestionable sense of resignation about a preacher who boarded a minibus she was on, calling everyone to prayer:

By the time the bus pulled out of the motor park and rattled along the expressway, we had received a full service of hymn, prayers and a sermon steaming with ideological fervour. The preacher railed against abortion, painting a scenario of an aborted foetus confronting its mother in heaven on Judgement Day. ‘You killed me’, he intoned in a mock-baby voice. ‘Wetin I do?’. I learnt from this point onwards that there was no need to attend church in Nigeria – the church always found me no matter where I hid” (Saro-Wiwa 2012: 21-22).

The characteristic and at times aggressive staging of public spaces has been treated by Adeboye (2012), Marshall (2009), and others. Adeboye (2012) exemplifies this eloquently by discussing how Pentecostal churches moved into cinemas, bars, hotels, and shopping malls in the 1990s for their regular services. For specific occasions like miracle crusades and conventions, even larger spaces are needed, such as sports stadiums, beaches, or parks. One nuisance can for instance be traffic and parking problems related to popular churches in residential areas. When RCCG pastor E.A. Adeboye announced in August 2013 that the church would build a 3-km-long church auditorium on their main campus in Lagos, it caused a public uproar due to fear of increased traffic problems and criticism about the use of money (SaharaReporters 2013a). Another problem related to the expansive Pentecostal growth is the noise pollution caused largely by the use of loudspeakers during services. A Pentecostal church might have several mid-week services, then several services each Sunday, and night vigils, not to mention special occasions. Loudspeakers often face the street in order to reach
maximum effect. For neighbours, passers-by, or competing institutions, the noise can create problems. Writing about the 1990s, Adeboye elaborates:

This was a great nuisance in the affected neighbourhoods. Litigations were rare because of the huge costs involved, but aggrieved residents instead took their cases to the newspapers editors or called in the police to mediate, often with limited success. This nuisance was widely discussed on the pages of national dailies, with the educated elite calling on state and federal authorities to intervene and sanction the offending churches (Adeboye 2012: 163).

Some private citizens do actually go to court, as this newspaper article about a resident of Ikeja, an area of Lagos, indicates:

An Ikeja High Court, Lagos, has urged the Redeemed Christian Church of God to maintain “zero noise pollution” while conducting religious programmes. A 79 year-old neighbour, Mrs Esther Ogunsalu, whose residence shares a common fence with the church located on 4, Songule Street, Abule Onigbagbo Estate, off Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, Ikeja, Lagos, had dragged the church before the court for disturbing her peace. Ogunsalu […] said the noise emanating from the church prevents her from sleeping, adding that it also “triggers her hypertensive heart disease” (The Punch 2013b).

This is a problem that has also been addressed by the academic community in Nigeria, as this article by Adesanya (2011) illustrates:

The environmental effect of proliferation of churches continued to be a major concern to all and particularly those in the mainstream environmental protection. So disturbing has it become that analysts begin to think of the need for a legal framework to tackle the menace. […] Churches are noted to be springing up at an alarming and unprecedented rate in all available spaces, shops, warehouses, hotels, to mention but a few (Adesanya 2011: 177).

Adesanya looks specifically at the RCCG and discusses problems such as noise pollution, traffic jams during meeting hours at Redemption Camp, the International HQ of the RCCG, and the possible collapse of substandard, abandoned buildings being used by RCCG. He then discusses consequences for the health of those affected (suffocation, stress-induced ailments like hypertension, diabetes, hearing loss, etc.), and ends with recommendations for both church and government on how to deal with these concerns (Adesanya 2011; see also Ukah 2008: 315).

The Lagos state government has become increasingly more involved as Pentecostals claim the city. However, the lack of a strong legal system and the fact that many of the smaller, independent Pentecostal churches operate in the broad informal sectors of Nigeria combine to
make regulation difficult. Pentecostals object to government interference, claiming their constitutional and international rights to religious freedom (Hackett 2001b).

Government interference has been vigorous in some African countries. In Cameroon the President ordered the closure of 50 to 100 Pentecostal churches, several of them Nigerian in origin, due to claims of “criminal practices” linked to financial irregularities in August 2013. The PFN in Nigeria, together with their partners in Cameroon, opposed this move by the Cameroonian President (The Punch 2013a). Conflicts between religious freedom and state regulation are likely to increase (Hackett 2001b), but so far the Nigerian state has only interfered in the Pentecostal movement to a limited degree. In policies regarding the Pentecostal movement generally rather than specific churches, the PFN is the most important governmental interlocutor. For the PFN, these cases of government interference draw the Pentecostal movement closer together. A senior official in PFN Lagos said:

..the Fashola government [governor of Lagos] made attempts to attacking the church, not directly, but some policies came that may hinder the growth of the church. Like that time that they came up to say that there are too many churches, at nearly every street there is 3-4-5 churches. That we should find ourselves to a particular location. We said no. [...] You don’t ask churches to go into the outskirts. [...] So, these challenges brings us together. Taxation. Posters and billboards” (Interview, Lagos, September 8, 2012)

As a prominent public actor, the Pentecostal movement comes under constant scrutiny. A large number of churches are not registered and add to the enormous informal sector in the Nigerian society. As the Pentecostal movement has grown and the interactions with other sectors of society has widened and deepened, the questions of how to control and manage this diverse movement are becoming more and more pressing.

Summary

Pentecostalism is “everywhere” in Nigeria, in the public sphere where ideas are discussed and in the physical public space through its churches, billboards, and the adherent’s public display of religious emotions and beliefs. This presence is the result of the indirect and direct Pentecostal strategy of “winning Nigeria for Jesus”. By entering the media, entertainment, and

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101 One exception is the ban on miracles on national TV, discussed above.

102 This “everywhere” is particularly evident in the south, not in areas where there are majority Muslim population.
other public spaces, the Pentecostal message has expanded far beyond the church. As the primary religious protagonist in the public sphere, the Pentecostal narrative and the Pentecostal way of doing religion have gained dominance. Pentecostal participants actively engage in setting the agenda for how to interpret national events in an attempt to “reconceptualise the structure and normative basis of the nation” (Marshall 1998: 298). When Pentecostals enter the undifferentiated public sphere, it is not through compromise and dialogue, as some theories of the public sphere suggest, but by way of domination. Pentecostals develop their own media outlets, put up posters and billboards, and turn their loudspeakers towards the streets.
5.4 Entering politics the Pentecostal way

While explicitly apolitical in its early years, the Pentecostal movement is now closely associated with politics and the nation-state. In this chapter, I discuss some characteristics of Pentecostal political engagement in contemporary Nigeria. This study argues that Pentecostal politics goes far beyond engagement with the institutionalised political sphere and conventional civil society politics. Its main strength as a political community does not lie in conventional political practice, such as the formation of parties, pressure groups, or voting patterns.

Already by 1993, Pastor Adeboye, General Overseer of the RCCG and later PFN President, addressed the delegates during the biennial meeting of the PFN with a quote that explains the strategy for making their faith relevant in society:

Brethren, may I tell you that the strategy we are going to use to win Nigeria has to be the strategy of an invading army. When an army wants to take over a nation, they have certain characteristics, they don’t make noise, like so many of us are doing. Look at those who are really doing substantial work in Nigeria today. They have started building churches, house fellowships are spreading, they are winning people all over the place...people who are working while others are sleeping and they take essential things, they just don’t go and kidnap the president. They take over the media, the radio, the television stations, they convince the rich people, businessmen, they get the students, they get backings, because when they take over it is the market women and the students they will tell “come and demonstrate if you are in support”. If you want to take over Nigeria you better win the students, win the marked women, the media, the broadcasters, the rich, the poor and the press. Glory be to God, I am sure they are here today. By the time they leave, they will be born-again (Marshall 2009: 202).

Today, 20 years later, this strategy for the Pentecostal takeover of Nigeria has yielded impressive results. The rich businessman, the market woman struggling selling vegetables by the roadside amidst urban chaos in Lagos, and the journalist covering the miracle crusade – they have all become born again in the course of the last three decades. The poor, the rich, and the media have all been captured. The Pentecostals did not need to “go and kidnap the president” by force (coup d’etats have occurred regularly in Nigerian history), but they did in fact manage to “win” the presidency through the strategies Adeboye that lay out. As Obadare argues:

The fact of the matter is that in contemporary Nigeria, no politician with serious political ambitions can afford to ignore Pastor Adeboye. A visit to the Redeemed Camp is, in effect, the beginning of political wisdom for political wannabe (Obadare 2010).
The democratic elections in 1999 even brought a born-again to power. Olusegun Obasanjo became born again during his imprisonment on charges of planning to overthrow the sitting Abacha government, led by a Muslim. For many Pentecostals, Obasanjo gained an almost messianic status, symbolising not just the return of democracy but also the seizing of government by a true Christian (Obadare 2006). The PFN endorsed his candidacy and openly supported his campaign. Following Obasanjo’s electoral victory, the PFN and the CAN organised a “thanksgiving and dedication” service in his honour (Adogame 2005; Ukah 2008). Obasanjo invited pastors to perform exorcisms to cleanse Aso Rock, the Nigerian Presidential complex, before entering it. He built a chapel there and asked pastor Adeboye to inaugurate it. Ever since, Pentecostal pastors have had a prominent role in Nigerian political life.

This chapter examines the multifaceted manner in which Pentecostalism engages with the institutionalised political sphere, by looking at: a) interaction with politicians; b) political theology; c) political methods; and d) an example of an atypical Pentecostal politician. I argue that Pentecostals have made their presence known in the political sphere primarily through non-explicit political methods.

From apolitical to political

We have seen that the second revival that started in the late 1960s and 1970s in Nigeria dramatically changed the Pentecostal orientation towards the world in the course of less than two decades, from shunning the world to embracing the world. In the 1970s and well into the following decade, the majority of the Pentecostal movement argued that Christians should focus on evangelisation and shun the political world with its many temptations and ills. The holiness doctrine dominated, with its followers characterised by anti-materialism and religious fervour. Their task was to lead other people to see the true Jesus and, consequently, change their lives radically. The nation-state was irrelevant to this project; the only way to salvation was through the experience of being born again.

In the 1980s, the prayers, messages of healing, and spiritual warfare gradually became focused on the nation. Public prayers attracted huge crowds and were geared towards the nation. In the mid-1990s, the political engagement became more direct. Religious revelations

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103 This is also the year that Sharia was introduced in several of the northern states, adding to the heated public discussion on the role of religion in the state.
and prophecies about the state of the nation became a public concern. These were presented by prominent pastors who were given a public platform, via the media, to such an extent that these prophesises were influential in shaping the course of political actions (Ojo 2006: 183). We have already discussed the FESTAC event as a reference point for Pentecostals’ political engagement: the evil spirits unleashed in the public by the state during this festival necessitated the specifically Pentecostal reply of prayer and public presence.

5.4.1 Political theology: The righteous shall reign
The prosperity teaching has a strong individual focus in that it gives the individual tools to claim what is rightfully hers. It is taught that a life in abundance is already promised the faithful. This view can also be turned towards the collective, the nation, as has been done in Nigeria. The basic message is that God wants Nigeria to prosper, and since Pentecostals are the true children of God, they have a special responsibility to make this happen. The focus on demons and evil, prominent in the early revival, found in the 1990s its political and global form in the teaching of spiritual warfare. Satan and his helpers are constantly at work, and the born-again is the one who possess the Godly power to fight them. It was preached that the born-agains have not only the spiritual power but also the personal qualities of honesty, ethical probity, and increasingly the skills of expertise in education, business management, etc. to fight the society’s ills. The earthly redemption of Nigeria is vital, but so is the preparation for the second coming of Christ. This exclusive self-perception on Pentecostals exhibiting special powers and insight has led to the adoption of various forms of dominion theology, the idea that born-again Christians are destined to rule the nations of the earth.

One prominent example is the House on the Rock church, which caters to the upper class. Several of the members are connected to the political and financial elite. In April 2013 the congregation inaugurated their new church in Lagos, the impressive and luxurious Rock Cathedral. The headliners for the inauguration ceremony were impressive, most prominently Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, two North American singers and the famed preacher Tudor Bismark form Zimbabwe. Having former PM Blair and President Jonathan on the poster firmly positioned the church where it wanted to be: as a prominent national and global actor.

Pastor Paul Adefarasin of the House on the Rock is an architect by training and a key member of the PFN advisory board. In his book *Change Your World. The Call for a Performing Generation*, he writes about the role of the church:

> In our legislative assemblies, the ungodly have formed policies that govern nations. These laws ultimately affect the people who thought that the four walls of a church building would grant them immunity. The time has come for the godly to come out of hiding and deploy the wisdom and power of God to the different sectors of society to provoke change.

> *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* Ps 125:3 (KJV)

> Before the church can contemplate being a beacon of light to the World, she must first understand the authority she has been vested with, and walk in it. Exercising earthly dominion requires a firm grasp of the principles of spiritual authority (Adefarasin 2006:162)

Again we see this awareness of entering “different sectors” of society. Being born again, being the righteous, gives the believer tools that the non-believer does not have, as only the true Christian can count on “a firm grasp of the principles of spiritual authority”. The biblical verse from Eph. 6:12 is prominent in Nigerian Pentecostalism: “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”. House on the Rock has branches in several of the major cities in Nigeria, as well as in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, and South Africa. The branch in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, is pastored by Pastor Goodheart Obi Ekwueme, current head of the PFN Abuja. For him, “we are born-again, to reign again!”, as he writes in his book *There’s a King in Me: Unleashing the Giant Within* (2013), which elaborates further on why the “Children of God” have a specific role to play:

> As Children of God we need to begin to take rulership and dominion seriously. Our God and Father is the King of all kings and he has not birth anything less! You are made to rule. There is dominion mandate over your life. There is a throne for you. God did not create you to be dominated and oppressed by another man. (Goodheart: 2013: 1)

Talking to a PFN Lagos official, he confirmed Goodheart’s written sentiments, in less dramatic words but much the same meaning:

> The church belongs to society. You are within society. Where you prosper, and you have affluence, then you look for power. And the essence of looking for power is to want to change the society. So the churches are growing in wealth, the Pentecostal movement. So what is the next thing? The society is decaying, and we are the righteous ones. The scripture says righteousness exalts the nation. Ok, if you now have the resources, why don’t you go in there and change the society for the larger people too? So, that is what is going on (Interview, September 8, 2012).
Thus, first came affluence, then the wish to exercise power. We see clearly how entrance into different sectors feed into and off of each other. While many classical Pentecostals still regard politics to be dirty, the neo-Pentecostals have in the course of just a few decades changed that mentality completely and clearly paved the way for others to follow. Given the theology outlined above, there is a strong imperative to go out and actively change society, and to do it not by building enclaves of the faithful. Instead, Christians need to “come out of the hiding and deploy the wisdom and power of God to the different sectors of society to provoke change”, as Pastor Adejare Adefarasin wrote. What this agenda for change entails has a very different appearance and direction then comparable projects and institutions in civil society.

The Pentecostal movement as we know it from the US Christian right has been very explicit in their national politics and left no one in doubt as to their goals. The anti-communism of the Cold War era, the defence of the traditional family, opposition to abortion and homosexuality, a preference for less state and more society, and the increased role of Christian education in schools are all positions that clearly placed them on the right end of the American political spectrum. Due to the influence of the US evangelical right on Pentecostal growth in Latin America and Africa, the political engagement in the global south is often viewed as an extension of US policies, as exemplified in the influential book Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism (1996).

In Nigeria, obviously, the context is different. The division between the right and the left, exemplified in the Republicans and the Democrats, has no parallel in the Nigerian political party system. A majority of the population agrees on the values of the traditional family. We must thus move beyond a crude political discourse of right and left. With the serious deficiencies of the formal state, the concerns become very different. When the PFN came out in support of Olusegun Obasanjo during two – and nearly three, as it did not object to an unconstitutional third term – elections, it had less to do with his political program and more to do with his simply being a born-again. First and foremost, that meant he was not a Muslim; secondly, he was a born-again with the two important implications that the PFN would have easier access to him, that he was believed to have the necessary moral and spiritual qualities to combat corruption and the other ills of society.105

105 The eight-year presidency of Obasanjo did not yield the results that the Pentecostal community hoped for. Corruption and human rights abuses continued, and there was a large increase in insecurity and poverty levels. However, there is little public criticism of or reflection on what went wrong during his Presidency among the
Even though several observers point to the lack of a structured Pentecostal political theology, apart from the call for “transformation”, there is a political theology implicit in Pentecostals’ discourse and behaviour (Burgess 2008: 281). The main articulator of political issues for the very diverse Pentecostal movement is the PFN, and their primary political issue in the national political sphere is Islam. Having an enemy has united the Pentecostal movement and Christians in general.

Since the election of president Obasanjo there has been a clear strategy, from the PFN and its powerful allies, to avoid criticising the government. Alongside all other public actors including political elites, the PFN criticises corruption itself and laments the state’s inability to protect its citizens from violence and crime, mostly from Boko Haram, the militant Muslim foe. However, the Pentecostal moral voice on corruption is weakened as the wealthy churches themselves do not disclose anything about their finances and several Pentecostal pastors have been involved in financial scandals.

If we compare the Pentecostal political rhetoric with the “liberal” or secular NGOs that developed in the same period there are striking dissimilarities (Freeman 2012). Pentecostal discourse is centred more around prosperity than democracy, and on religious freedom rather than other human rights, while the opposite is true for the liberal discourse. The Pentecostal focus is on the individual: the individual has, through the born-again experience, gained the necessary tools to change her life. The destiny is in her hands, not dependent on other factors. The liberal NGO discourse has a much stronger focus on structural problems and the material conditions that reinforce them. In general, Pentecostals are not concerned about history, apart from the return to the first church, and do not focus on external processes such as colonialism, capitalism, and structural adjustment measures as explanations for the current ills of the nation. They rather turn to the local and to the individual for explanations. Marshall writes “it is individual sin and the personal rejection of Christ that opens up the space in which the failure of the nation is manifested” (Marshall 2009: 91). Being born again means breaking with the past, or breaking with the current order, and creating a new subjectivity so that

Pentecostal fold. Given the diversity within the movement, there is, so far, no natural place where such a dialogue would occur. Also, typical for the Pentecostal movement is the general disinterest in history and the focus on the present and the future. However, having had the experience of a born-again head of state (as in Guatemala), at least some of the utopian expectations for what a born-again can do have been tempered.

The terms “liberal”, and “secular” here are used to denote the type of development NGOs that became dominant in the 1990s in particular (see chap 3., and Freeman 2012).
through conversions the nation will change. Where liberal civil society focuses its criticism on the state and other superstructures, Pentecostals focus on the individual.

The Pentecostal movement and traditional liberal civil society have normally had very little contact, except for a few prominent recent exemptions, explored below. The Pentecostal movement can no longer be ignored, and has even become an attractive partner for liberal civil society. In the words of the profiled commentator Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim: “In contemporary Nigeria, the bulk of ‘really existing’ civil society is religious society, not NGOs” (Ibrahim 2013). The PFN has not been a party to rallies or demonstrations organised by liberal civil society; rather it has discouraged them and has instead organised national prayers, national fasting and the like, either alone or in conjunction with the CAN.107 Where other civil society parties have rallied around specific cases such as higher wages directed against policy-makers, the PFN has not raised explicit issues in the public, except for general calls for peace, stability, and order.

Sam Adeyemi, pastor at the Daystar Christian Centre, is a prominent speaker whose preaching also resonates among non-Pentecostals. Adeyemi talks about the individual responsibility in highly practical terms, and illustrates the points above:

Anyone you blame for your situation is the one you have given power to control your destiny. People make the government too powerful in this country. They do not realize that the most powerful form of government is self-government. When God gives you a revelation of who you are, that is where change begins. You stop seeing yourself as a poor and helpless person and you begin to see yourself as a powerful person. That is when transformation happens […] Some people want to go to London or to New York from the developing parts of the world to change their reality, but Dr. Benson Idahosa once said: “A lizard in Nigeria will not become a crocodile in America”. In other words, a change in location will not automatically change your nature. You can create your own world in your heart, and then live out that reality. It happened to me.

I was a young unemployed graduate. I was broke and desperately wanted my life to change. Then, one night, I was in deep mediation over a story in the Bible. It was about how God swore that Abraham would be blessed [Genesis 22: 16-18]. My heart burned as I asked for the same oath to be pronounced over my life. I made a commitment to obey God like Abraham did. And I received this powerful message in my heart that nothing I would ever need to fulfil my assignment in life that God would not give me. That moment, I became a new person. The limits were taken off my mind. Nothing

107 During the democracy struggles in the 90ies, the mainline churches, together with other civil society actors, were at the forefront protesting corruption, human rights abuses and military dictatorship. The Pentecostals did not join these forces, but focused rather on building institutions and waging spiritual warfare and intercessory prayers against a less defined “evil powers”. This made other part of civil society to view the Pentecostal movement with suspicion, as well as accusing them of complicity with military dictators (Adeboye 2006: 149) See also Burgess (2008:270) on why Pentecostals were not engaged.
could stop me since God’s resources were now available for me. My excuses for progress died. I began to tell people that I can never be poor again. My self-image changed. And that literally changed my life. Yours can change to. (Adeyemi 2010: 7-8).

The exemplary force of this testimony is symptomatic of the Pentecostal narrative: I was broke, in distress, then something radical happened, and everything changed. In two other books, *The Second Revolution* (2006) and *Nigeria of My Dream* (2010), Pastor Adeyemi writes about the need for a change in the “poverty and slavery mind-set” for the nation to develop: “eventually, the slave gets used to not providing for his personal needs. When his needs are not met, it is someone else’s fault” (Adeyemi 2006: 23). The Pentecostal reiterates constantly the narrative of going from being nobody to being somebody; self-esteem is the first step on the path to prosperity. While Adeyemi engages with the colonial past in an unusual manner, he does so not by focusing on structures, but on a mentality that was created in an earlier period and that still reigns among some people. The political leadership reflects the people of Nigeria; there is a cultural problem of misuse of power:

It is time for change. It must begin in our individual lives. It must begin with our character. Without values, we cannot have value. As an individual, commit to be honest, kind, diligent, courteous and law abiding. Choose to resist evil. Then cooperate with others to build the greatest country in the world (Adeyemi 2010: 36).

Nigeria needs a “cultural revolution”, shedding old practices and exchanging it for new values of prosperity and excellence, he argues in his books. “The citizens of God”, the new Nigerians, they “are truly free people”. Despite poverty they have become rich, both mentally and materially. This message has several radical points and cuts to the very core of how Nigerian society is organised. Pentecostals calls for rearrangement of the family, to focus less on extended family and ethnic loyalties. Adeyemi writes against the practice of inviting the whole town to a wedding or a funeral leaving the person responsible in depth: “[...]in our part of the world, in the bid not to offend others we stay in relationships that frustrate our objectives. There is no way one can make real progress without change of association” (Adeyemi 2010: 54).108 The focus is thus and as always on how the individual can make progress.

It is the African and the Nigerian culture of idolatry and what he sees as misuse of authority and lack of excellence in managing resources and time: “the average African has little value

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108 It is worth reiterating the research on big-men networks by McCauley (2012), which suggests that leaving ethnic networks for church networks might be just replacing one big-man system with another big-man system.
for time and does not try to control it. We do not see the connection between time and money” (Adeyemi 2010: 50). While the early days of the second revival focused more exclusively on the spiritual dimension that would somehow magically turn everything upside down, there is now much more focus on the practical skills that a Pentecostal develops. Here, the centrality of finances, as a way of creating employment for the individual and prosperity for society is constantly underscored in the Pentecostal movement. She has God on her team; she is success-driven, modern, family-oriented, materialistic, and educated:

The order is changing. There are truly free people right now who have been set free from the limitations imposed on their thinking by the environment. They grew up in Africa but they are not Africans in their thinking. They are citizens of the kingdom of God and ambassadors of God on planet earth.

They grew up in an environment of poverty but they have been delivered from the spirit of poverty, and much more than that, they are free from poverty mentality. Instead of poverty consciousness they have prosperity consciousness (Adeyemi 2006: 62-63).

The Pentecostal church has made it in Nigeria. When the major pastors project Pentecostalism into the public sphere, it is this message that is reiterated. They have the biggest churches, the best technical equipment, the best speakers, etc. The churches are living proof of what they teach, they are “free from the poverty mentality” in both its material and spiritual aspects. What the pastors have done for the church, they argue, they can also do for society. In this lies an imperative for engagement, and both church and born-again are key to the redemption of the country. This is illustrated in the growing number of Pentecostal pastors involved in electoral politics.

Pentecostal pastors: Unable to collect the Pentecostal vote

In Latin America and North America there has been a strong emphasis on the Pentecostal vote, by which Pentecostal political power has been seen in terms of their potential for voting en bloc (Steigenga 2001). This study argues that Pentecostal political engagement is far more than casting a vote. It is also more than clerics seizing political power, though direct participation in classical political practices is an important part of the larger Pentecostal engagement with society.

In Nigeria, there are two Pentecostal pastors who have attempted to run for presidential office, illustrating clearly the Pentecostal re-orientation also towards the political sphere (Ihjerika 2012). The First was Pastor Chris Okotie, a former pop star with a law degree turned pastor and televangelist, who stood for office in 2003 and 2007. He had an explicitly Pentecostal
theocratic programme for his campaign, believing that he has a divine mandate to rule, that the presidential system comes from the bible and that the bible provides the guidelines for how to run the country in order to “save Nigeria” (Ihejirika 2012: 186) He achieved very meagre results both times.

In 2011, the outspoken Pastor Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly in Lagos, was asked by the Muslim General Muhammad Buhari to run as a vice president with his party, Congress for Progressive Change. Bakare has distinguished himself with his strident criticism of sitting governments as well as towards the people in and around the PFN. While doing far better than Okotie, Bakare did not manage to gather the necessary votes in the Christian states, and President Jonathan and the dominant party, People’s Democratic Party (PDP) won the elections; the PDP has controlled the presidency since democracy was resumed in 1999.

There are discussions within the Pentecostal community whether a pastor should engage himself so explicitly in politics, as Pastor Bakare and Pastor Okotie did. There is however little disagreement that Pentecostals should be politically engaged, even though several of the older Pentecostal churches resist it. The PFN is for instance offering training on political awareness. Speaking on the topic of Pentecostal politicians, a senior official of the PFN Lagos State said in an interview:

We are going to have more of it. Oh yes! Because it is the right way. If the righteous keep quiet, the evil will try. We are going to have more of it (Interview Lagos, September 8, 2012).

As we have seen in other countries, being a Pentecostal politician does not mean that automatically receiving the Pentecostal vote. In Guatemala, Pentecostal politicians quickly realised that in terms of electability, the Pentecostal community was more imagined than real. But while Pentecostal pastors have been unsuccessful in winning the necessary votes, this does not mean that Pentecostals have been excluded from the corridors of power. Since 1999, Pentecostal pastors have assumed a strong presence in national politics to the extent that they have been termed the kingmakers of political power (Ihejirika 2012).

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109 It is customary to run a Christian and a Muslim for the top two positions in Nigerian political parties. There was however a lot of discussion around the Buhari-Bakare team, as Buhari is known among Christians for being a very conservative Muslim, and Bakare is a devout Pentecostal.
5.4.2 Cooperation, not opposition

Rather than confrontation with political authorities, Pentecostals are taught to respect and pray for leadership. The bible verses Acts 23: 5 – don’t speak evil of the ruler of your people – and Romans 13 are often used as sources:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Ahead of the presidential elections in 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan visited an immensely popular annual event at the Redemption Camp, the site of the HQ of the RCCG. During the sermon, Pastor Enoch Adeboye asked the President to step forward to the podium to receive prayers. The President did so, and knelted in front of Pastor Adeboye in the presence of hundreds of thousands of visitors, TV cameras, and photographers. The picture of the kneeling President has been used as a symbol of the submission politicians undertake vis-à-vis Pentecostal pastors. For Nigerian sociologist Ebenezer Obadare, the kneeling “marks an epochal moment in the process of the pentecostalization of our national life” (Obadare 2010).

President Jonathan is himself an Anglican but has along with many other non-Pentecostals had high- and low-profile meetings with Pastor Adeboye. This is a new development. It was not until the late 1990s that a close public relationship between Pentecostal pastors and political and economic elites became common (Ojo 2006; Ukah 2008). There are many reasons for this turn. During the early revival, Pentecostals were few in number and without the necessary economic or cultural means to enter the national stage; the focus was thus on the movement itself (Burgess 2008: 267). The re-orientation towards the national elites came only once the Pentecostal movement had gained the necessary influence. Since the mid-1990s, access to the elites has not been a problem. Gilles Kepel (1994) argues that the political turn in North American Pentecostalism came during the 1970s with the inclusion of young educated Pentecostals in a movement that had previously been dominated by the poorer, less empowered classes. In Nigeria, as in the US, the new pastors entered the ministry with secular degrees in fields such as engineering, mathematics, and business management. These were people who built cultural and economic power themselves and thus had means and opportunity to also address national challenges.
As far as who benefits from these close relationships, in the short run it seems that both parties, pastors and politicians, find it a win-win situation. For the Pentecostal pastors the visits from prominent politicians give affirmation of their prominence in Nigeria, not only socially but also politically (Aihiokhai 2010). When President Jonathan visited the Redemption Camp of the RCCG again in a high-profile visit in 2012 he asked for the congregations’ continued prayers, as it is the “prayers that kept this country going” and said further:

As a nation, we are passing through our own challenges and, I repeat, there is nothing that is above the power of God. That I am here today, speaking to this congregation as the President of Nigeria, is a good example of what God can do, because, without divine providence, I wouldn’t have been here as the president of this country (Vanguard 2012e).  

Nigerian Pentecostals regard prayers as effective weapons in the hands of the born-again. By his presence and by his words, the President is clearly reaffirming the role of prayer. In blunt words he also undermines the power of any politician, subjecting it to otherworldly powers. With his discourse, presence, and actions in the RCCG, he resembles a Pentecostal, which is greatly appreciated by the congregation.

Sociologist Walter C. Ihejirika uses the term “political kingmakers” in reference to Pastor Adeboye of the RCCG and Ayo Oritsejafor, president of the CAN. He argues that these two have a special role in political Nigeria and that they attempt to portray themselves as “being custodians of political power”, and that an ambitious politician needs to have their blessings (Ihejirika 2012: 188). Pentecostal pastors have sided with dubious political powers globally in the last decades, and in Nigeria as well, in order to achieve maximum possibilities for their church (Freston 2001: 294; Ukah 2011). In Nigeria the close and informal relationship with elites is deemed to be essential to having influence (Amundsen 2012). Widespread corruption makes bureaucratic channels nearly worthless. For Pentecostals the freedom to evangelise and the ability to purchase land in order to build churches and air time on state TV and radio are concerns that depend on state regulations and policies. But Pentecostals have proven that even when the state erects barriers in these areas, they have ways to circumvent the law. Their strong financial status, private media, tax-exemptions, private educational sector, and

100 According to Ukah (2008), Obasanjo’s close relationship with some of the national Pentecostal leadership was a win-win relationship. It gave all parties legitimacy.

111 To see the prayer see this clip on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsBmugKjFkY. Last accessed June 9, 2014.
localised institutions make it difficult for the state to control Pentecostal activities (Marshall 1998: 307). When politicians align with Pentecostal pastors the politicians elevate their own positions both inside and outside the church and their own private autonomous sphere, by also giving them power in the national, collective sphere. At least in the short term, this relationship seems to be advantageous for the Pentecostals. While on one side Pentecostalism is revolutionary in its egalitarian position on spiritual power, its implicit critique of political power (“we need a new Nigeria”), and its alternative model for a religio-political order, the converse is that in dealings with the state, Pentecostals seem to adopt the language and imagery of the state (Marshall 1998: 306). Like many national Pentecostal movements globally, they seek freedom from the state to pursue their agendas, while aligning themselves with the powers that be. The question of whether Pentecostalism contributes to a strengthening or weakening of the state is a paradox encountered in other religious movements many places, and has rightfully led to questions of religious movement creating “parallel societies” or building “states in the state” (Davis and Robinson 2011). What is in it for the politicians? Is the endorsement of the Pentecostals in Nigeria a Trojan horse that will backfire? Does the kneeling of President Jonathan symbolise the submission of political leadership to the Pentecostal kingmakers, as Obadare argues?

The questions are legitimate. Political leaders come and go, and often have a short-term vision for their political projects. Given the political structure of Nigeria, with all of its flaws, it is widely believed that once politicians have risen to power they must spend their time paying back and pleasing those who helped them arrive there in an echo of the “big-man” structures of old. Their legitimacy is radically questioned by the Nigerian public. Aligning themselves with religious leaders aids the process of moralising their office and also enlarges their constituencies. The increased religiosity in the public is a result of religious actors being more active, but also of politicians engaging actively with religious practice and discourse. General Yakubu Gowon, a former military dictator from 1966 to 1975, including the Biafra War period, is an illustrative case. Following a coup he was exiled in 1975, but later returned to partake in another failed military coup. He is thus a long-standing actor on the military and political stage in Nigeria. Gowon is now retired, and he is also a born-again. He frequently cooperates with the PFN. In 1996 he established the organisation Nigeria Prays and has since developed an organisation that is committed to prayer. Speaking about the organisation’s
inception, Gowon talks of meetings with people in the Nigerian diaspora who were concerned about the political and economic problems back home. He said:

> They came to me and we held a series of meetings in London on how to tackle the nation’s problems considering that even the government could not find the solution. We agreed that since we, as human beings, could not find the solution, there is somebody in heaven that can solve our problems if only we can go to him in prayer (The Vanguard, April 30, 2012).

This rhetoric, of God being the only solution, is often used by politicians. Despite scandals, Pentecostal pastors will stay in their posts for life, or at least intend to, and have built up their public images gradually. In practice, the pastor does a better job fulfilling the roles that would have been assigned to community or political leaders in a higher-functioning state (Ojo 2006: 81). This discourse, which Ayantayo (2009) calls a political “God language”, is a type of language that it many instances replaces secular political language. He gives examples as to how religion is used as a tool in implementing government policy: Lagos State used pictures of Christian and Muslim leaders in billboards to urge citizens to pay tax: “You are obeying God’s word when you PAY YOUR TAX”. These billboards were on display across the megacity of Lagos (Ayantayo 2009: 102). The increased use of “God language must be seen in relation to the chronic malfunctioning of the Nigerian state and the legitimacy crises among the political leadership. It is also a testimony to the abiding presence of the Pentecostal message in the public sphere and the dominance it has achieved in national discussions. As the anthropologist Comaroff argues; Revelations, no matter how hotly disputed, have become the “legitimate basis for truth, action and interpretations of events-in-time” in a context where many choose to suspend free choice in favour of divine authority (Comaroff 2012: 46). In so doing, and by succeeding in getting non-Pentecostals to participate in the Pentecostal way of doing and saying things, the Pentecostal worldview is gaining more and more ground. This is a worldview that challenges arguably the most basic principle of the liberal state, the division between the secular and the political (Comaroff 2012; Asad 2003).

**Prayer can move mountains (how to act politically)**

Pentecostals employ a variety of political methods that are alien to most non-Pentecostals. This has caused confusion among observers as to how to interpret this diverse movement’s political consequences and ambitions. Does it mean anything when thousands gather to pray for peace? Is it all prayer and no action? What are the consequences of waging war against the
demons, instead of war against earthly politicians and oppressing structures? Inspired by the works of Marshall (2009) on Nigeria and O’Neill (2010) on Guatemala, I stress that believers do things with words and actions that are not conventionally thought as of “political”. Prayers, worship, sermons, fasting, and casting out demons are ways of constituting communities, creating enemies, distributing power, and developing skills. Since a great majority of Pentecostals are frequent churchgoers and are particularly active in church networks, the socialisation of any given Pentecostal adherent is likely particularly strong. This is an argument that, among others, Freeman (2012) makes, finding that Pentecostalism has been particularly effective in instigating change in the individual.

One can argue that Pentecostals have an ambiguous view of the state. Not engaging critically with the state is also a manner of pointing out its irrelevance, as a way of saying that they do not hold it responsible. But giving it blunt uncritical support, as is often done, is also a way of giving the state and its principal actors legitimacy. For the people around the PFN and mainstream Pentecostalism, engaging politically in conventional civil society activities such as directly confronting state policies through demonstrations, op-eds, or by organising critical seminars is out of the question. In an interview with CNN on February 15 2011, Pastor Adeboye from the RCCG was asked about whether Christians should not protest government to achieve better life. He answered:

Prayers can move mountains. Protesting outside government house – how much has it achieved? You go there – you carry placards, if you’re fortunate – you will return home alive, if you are not fortunate – some overzealous police officer might accidentally discharge some bullets. And you protest day after day after day and after some time you get tired.

However, the reluctance to explicitly confront the state does not mean that Pentecostals think that Nigeria is in good condition. Rather they have a revolutionary message with calls for a new Nigeria, a country that, as they see it, needs complete redemption. They seek this redemption through a set of interlinked activities, by claiming spheres such as the economy, education, and the media, but also by more conventional religious practices such as prayers. These prayers are performed within the walls of the church as well as projected onto the public at large. Calls for divine intervention and the need for fervent prayer appear frequently in the media, both as news articles as well as paid advertisements. The PFN regularly invites its members to join in national prayers. However, the non-Pentecostal sectors also are increasingly engaging in public prayer: the Nigeria Aviation Agency gathered early 2014 to
seek “divine intervention in the sector as the year begins. They prayed and thanked God for the past year and sought God’s guidance and protections in the new year, saying that safety is of the Lord”, an event that was covered in TV and printed media.¹¹²

During these highly publicized events, a public microphone is given to Pentecostal pastors with their description of what the problems are in Nigeria and how to overcome them. The prayers form part of creating reality by focusing on specific areas, and by neglecting others. The national prayers are general, with calls for peace and development in Nigeria, and occasionally more specific prayers such as fighting corruption and prayers for safe elections. Peace prayers have for the last five years been directed almost exclusively towards Boko Haram or Muslim-Christian clashes in the Middle Belt or north. The following news excerpt is indicative:

The new Chairperson of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) (Women’s Wing), Pastor (Mrs.) Theodora Abiola Omobude, has called on female ministers in the country to intensify prayers for security and progress of the country.

Mrs. Omobude made the call during her inauguration as the chairperson of the fellowship over the weekend at the headquarters of New Covenant Gospel Church in Benin City, Edo State.

According to her “our nation, Nigeria is presently passing through some difficulties especially in the area of security. The Christian women should not just sit and watch such ugly situation but rise up and offer prayers to God for His divine intervention.

“This is the time we should rise up to the challenge posed to the security and progress of our dear country and I believe that God will hear and answer us because the prayer of the saints availeth much” she added (The Nation 2013).

The National Mirror article “CAN/PFN Pray Against Enemies of Nigeria” is another example:

For the second time in three months, members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), in collaboration with the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), drawn from the various church denominations in Lagos and its environs, joined force in prayer against the country’s common enemy.

According to Pastor Adebarasin in an exclusive interview, at the prayer session, “the last national prayer day was successful and we believe that it has had an impact on the nation. But we can-not stop praying. The Bible says we should continue to pray. So we keep on praying. God knows how best to answer prayer. He may choose to answer

¹¹² Seeking “divine intervention” has become a kind of ecumenical and inter-religious lingua franca as other Christian and Muslim institutions join in calls for divine intervention in order to save the nation.
straight-away or give sometime. What we know is that God answers prayer and will surely answer our prayer” (The National Mirror 2012).

Nigeria Prays, led by General Yakubu Gowon, former head of state, and the PFN, represented by the national secretary of the PFN, Wale Adefarasin, participated in a major Lagos Prayer Rally in 2009. Pastor Adefarasin talked in very general terms of the darkness Nigeria finds itself in, but he was also very direct in naming some of the problems, as we see from this excerpt from his talk in _The Vanguard’s_ article about the event:

> All over the country there are ritual spots and all forms of ritual practices. The problem of Nigeria is linked to these ritual practices. Until we repent and do away with idolatry and ritual killings we may still find ourselves enmeshed in economic doldrums.

> We cannot say that the killing of human beings and burying of live cows for ritual purposes don’t have effect on us as a nation. They do have and I want to employ Nigerians especially Christians to make it a duty to continue to pray for this nation. (Vanguard 2009b)

Leaving aside for now the focus on rituals as the cause of economic problems in Nigeria, the quote reiterates a common Pentecostal theme: Christians have an important role in building the new Nigeria. During the 1900s the focus of prayer as a political tool has become much more explicit and structured. Courses are given in how to make intercessory prayers and how to engage in spiritual warfare (Burgess 2008: 287). Part of the national orientation of the Pentecostal movement is also to sensitize and build a Pentecostal Nigerian citizen. In the RCCG, there is now an article of faith saying “All Christians are to obey the law of the country, obey the government and [secular] authority” (Ukah 2008: 200). Given the Pentecostal mandate and even destiny to redeem the nation, and address the invisible enemies of the nation-state, the individual is saved not just for her own sake, but for the sake of the nation and the world. The message is constantly reiterated; the born-again can do something for Nigeria through fasting, prayers, and exorcism. Every born-again has a responsibility and the means to combat Nigeria’s ills. In a sense, both power and responsibility for a new Nigeria has moved from the state and structural factors into a religious realm where the Christian plays the leading role.

However, as we have seen, it is deemed insufficient to stay purely in the “religious realm”, and good Pentecostals should also master and participate in other, more material, spheres of society. As Pentecostalism grows, so does the diversity within the movement. The PFN and
the established churches linked to them in general do not confront authorities, but there are examples of different Pentecostal approaches to society.

The odd one out: Emerging Pentecostal alternatives

Perhaps the most dramatic political contribution comes from one of the Pentecostals who places himself in stark opposition to the PFN. Tunde Bakare started his pastoral career as one of the first to pastor a model parish in the RCCG, Pastor Adeboye’s church. However, he quickly left the church to pastor his own, which led to a public conflict with Pastor Adeboye. Pastor Bakare was born into a Muslim family, converted in 1974, and founded Latter Rain Assembly in 1989. From his webpage it reads that he calls himself “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” and his church is “an end-time apostolic community and governing territorial church”. Like several of his colleagues he frequently gives prophecies about political affairs that are conveyed and discussed in the media. Just weeks after Obasanjo was sworn into office as President in 1999, he spoke against the big majority of Pentecostals who saw great promise in the born-again President through a prophecy that was widely circulated in the country:

In a vision I eavesdropped on the conversation going on in heaven. I saw Jesus on the throne called the seat of Governor and the subject they were discussing was Nigeria. This was what came out of the lips of the Lord. “Rejoice not oh land, or your joy is temporary. For I am bringing your judges and your rulers, your priests and your prophets to my threshing floor. I will judge Saul and his comrades and after I have finished, I will restore to you a permanent joy. Obasanjo is not your messiah. He is King Agag and the prophetic axe will fall upon his head before May 29.” And I asked Lord, how are you going to judge Saul and what has he done? God said: “I sent him on an assignment to overtake, to recover, and to demolish but he didn’t. He spared the fat calves, he spared the big sheep and he brought Agag back to Jerusalem. I will judge Saul and his comrades and after I have finished my purging, then your joy will be permanent.”

The prophetic language in the quote above has a very explicit political overtone, and due to wide media circulation in 1999 the message was also hotly debate in the secular press. Politicians and other pastors engaged in prayers to annul Bakare’s prophecy (Ojo 2006: 184). Since then, Bakare has developed his political language and modes of engagement more in line with established political associations. In the 2011 elections, he ran together with General Muhammad Bahari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), which placed second

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113 “Tunde Bakare: Here is a record of PTBs prophecies over the past couple of years”: [http://nm.onlinenigeria.com/templates/?a=1216](http://nm.onlinenigeria.com/templates/?a=1216) (last accessed June 9, 2014).
behind the People’s Democratic Party. General Buhari had the image of a very conservative Muslim, and it was believed that choosing Bakare was strategic in terms of softening that image, as well as to draw on the Christian vote. However, none of the celebrity Pentecostal pastors publically supported his bid and neither did the PFN. Bakare did not manage to gather the necessary Christian votes for Buhari (Ihejirika 2012: 188). However, it has not been in his capacity as an electoral politician that Bakare has managed to stir the masses, but rather in the form of a civil society actor organising mass rallies in opposition to government. The critical voice of Bakare has so far been an unusual Pentecostal position. While the PFN is very visible in the political sphere, they have opted much more for cooperation than for opposition to the government. Pastor Bakare founded the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) in 2010, a platform that managed to gather a highly eclectic crowd of regular civil society activists and Pentecostal leaders. Nobel laureate Professor Wole Soyinka and musicians Femi and Seun Kuti are amongst the most internationally prominent Nigerians who joined the protests. On January 2, 2012, the SNG mobilised people into the streets to protest the government’s removal of a fuel subsidy. The protests grew rapidly as people poured into the streets of Lagos and other cities. The protests occurred at the same time as several Boko Haram attacks in the north, and some feared that the combination of the mass rally and Islamist threats could topple the Goodluck Jonathan government (New York Times 2012). Among many of the activists there was hope that this would be Nigeria’s “Arab Spring”; the trade unions called for a general strike. When the trade unions called off the strike after an agreement with the government on January 16, the protests eventually faded but had left everyone surprised as to the power of mass mobilisation. Together with other civil society actors and the trade unions, the SNG was instrumental in organising the rallies and for the first time there was a clear Pentecostal component in both the organising committees, the spokespeople, and the masses rallying in the streets (Interview, January 15, 2013). The SNG, with Bakare as their leader and through their networks and financial resources, was instrumental in mobilising an unprecedented number of demonstrators in the streets of Lagos. These demonstrations are a clear testimony that there is divergence in the Pentecostal movement’s political potential, in which a more

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114 From their web site: “Founded in January 2010, the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) is a non-profit political society organization committed to creating a political environment that guarantees only the best, brightest, fittest and most competent Nigerians are democratically elected into public office, bound by a credible Constitution that promotes and protects the rights of every Nigerian” [http://savenigeriagroup.com](http://savenigeriagroup.com)

115 There were also protests in Abuja, Kanu, Kaduna and other cities, as well as solidarity protests in the diaspora in London, Brussels, and New York.
progressive Pentecostalism is evident, with a stronger focus on structural demands and governmental critique.

Still, the attitude of Pastor Adeboye, who saw no gain in demonstrations and the general non-confrontational line is more representative. I spoke to a young pastor about the rallies and he confirmed what I heard in many places:

We advise our youth, as religious leaders, the Bible say we should obey all constituted authority and pray for them. Our duty is to advice our leaders and also encourage them. We don’t go out and join these radical youth in the street. Christian youth are different. We are unique people (Interview, Abuja, August 30, 2012).

Another representative of a different type of political engagement than the one the central actors in PFN promote is Pastor Tony Rapu. He is, like Bakare, another “fall-out” of the RCCG, and has sought a public dialogue on finding a middle way between the old holiness movement and contemporary prosperity churches. He makes a call for a return to the early interdenominational spirit of the 1970s (Marshall 2009: 240). In his blog, he addresses the issue of Pentecostal participation in rallies:

For many activists, the protests represented a step up from passive, complacent grumbling to active citizenship. By taking to the streets, they demonstrated a willingness to take responsibility for the affairs of the Nation. Among Christians, there was much debate about what the Christian position on the protests should be. Some advocated a prayerful abstinence from demonstrations. It was more effective, they contended, to take everything to the Lord in prayer, to intercede for the nation and its leadership. Others argued for a more activist engagement citing the aphorism that heaven helps those who help themselves.

But intercession should be understood as much more than praying; it is a position we take with God on behalf of others – be they our families, communities, cities and the Nation. It is a place of spiritual and physical responsibility for others. In this position of standing in the behalf of someone else, we can certainly pray – which is called intercessory prayer – but that is not all we can do. Often though, the posture of intercession demands a more direct engagement of the issues, in the physical realm. In this regard, the protesters were engaged in a form of intercessory activity, declaring and demonstrating a resolve to take responsibility for the land, and prophetically reclaim it for God and posterity. Obviously, not everyone who demonstrated did so with this consciousness; however their participation in the protests actually fulfilled the spiritual principle of intercession in a physical way. For the time being, this particular phase of street protests may be over. We must pick up the principle of ‘adaptive skills’ for the next step, which is finding alternatives or additional means to achieve our objectives. This may require town hall meetings, deliberations, and the need to continually engage those in power on an intellectual platform (Rapu 2012).

The contrasting voices of Tunde Bakare and Tony Rapu remind us of the diverse and changing character of the Pentecostal movement. Rapu, in his blog, describes well that the
tension lies in determining what type of political engagement is the “Christian way.” The intercessory prayer and the spiritual warfare so widely practiced and taught in Nigeria have the potential of transforming its engagement with the physical realm and into more conventional political methods, as Rapu calls for. Religious language and practices are powerful tools in the Pentecostal movement, but the rapid growth, the rapid changes, and the great diversity calls attention to these tools’ inherent fluidity: their meanings are constantly negotiated.

Summary

Pentecostals have left their former apolitical stance and now embrace politics through a variety of means. Pentecostals are encouraged to vote during elections and to participate in party politics. However, attempts to draw the Pentecostal vote by having pastors on the ticket have so far not yielded the hoped-for results. The arena where Pentecostals have gained most prominence in national political life is through association and cooperation with political elites. This has enabled a platform and a public microphone for raising the Pentecostal interpretation of the nation’s problems and the Pentecostal prescription for solving them. In general, Pentecostals teaches its adherents not to criticise the secular government, but instead to offer prayers and support, and develop one’s individual skills to become a successful citizen. There is thus strong agency in being a Pentecostal. There are competing views within the Pentecostal movement as to how Pentecostals should engage with politics. In 2012 a prominent Pentecostal pastor was influential in organising the biggest mass protests Nigeria has seen in its brief democratic history. The protests were directed at the government and criticised a rise in fuel prices. This indicates a change from the non-confrontational line that had dominated Pentecostal political participation.

The infusion of Pentecostal language and actors in national politics is increasing the influence of religion in political life. Obadare argues that, in light of the crisis of the Nigerian state, the only matter Nigerians of all religions may agree on is that power indeed “lies outside the state, and certainly beyond its capacity” (2007:147). In a pluralistic religious nation, this development is also a source of tension, which is explored in the next chapter.
5.5 The Born-Again and the rest: Struggling with religious pluralism

Some other churches will compromise, but a Pentecostal, a thorough Pentecostal, will stand and say no, this is what it should be! (Interview, PFN September 8, 2012)

The Pentecostal rise to prominence in Nigerian society has raised numerous conflicts, particular with other religious traditions. There is heightened conflict with Islam (Falola 1998; Ibrahim 1999; Marshall 2009; Ojo 2006) and the demonization of traditional religions and the often uneasy competition with other Christian traditions such as the Catholic Church continues. As a new revivalist faith, Pentecostalism preaches that the old religions are wrong and that Pentecostalism is right. The prominent scholar of African Pentecostalism Ogbu Kalu has argued that a major aspect of Pentecostal political theology is the lack of a theology of dialogue (Kalu 2008: 226). For Pentecostals in Nigeria you are either born-again or you are not, and it is only true Christians that make heaven. The true Christians have a particular responsibility to advance the kingdom of God throughout Nigeria. In a highly spiritual worldview there is no neutral ground; what is not of God is from the Devil. The primary strategy is to break the stronghold of evil lies in evangelisation and by converting one soul after the other (Ukah 2009). The strong missionary zeal in Pentecostalism has led to numerous conflicts, and several have regarded this movement as hostile as they bluntly target members of other religions. The scepticism has definitely gone both ways; the established religions have long viewed Pentecostals with deep suspicion.

As a minority, inward-looking revival movement Pentecostals had the luxury of not engaging directly with “non-believers”. However, as Pentecostalism has grown in engagement with the world it has had to relate directly to the religious other. Pentecostals have far more successfully cooperated with secular institutions in society, like the political and economic sectors, than with other religious groups. If we follow the sect-church typology of Ernst Troeltsch and argue that the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria has gone from sect to church, the theory presupposes that antagonism to the religious other will moderate. While there in Nigeria has been considerable movement towards a less hostile relationship and more cooperation, conflict and tension is still the dominant characteristic. More surprisingly, and importantly, is the way that this one-time sect has impacted the way that the established faiths perform religion. Much more than the other way around, established Christian denominations have moved towards a Pentecostal way of practicing religion, leading to what several scholars have called a “pentecostalisation of religion” (Burgess 2008). The Pentecostal resistance to compromise and cooperation or lack of a “theology of dialogue” (Kalu 2008) has not
prevented them from entering other spheres of society. Instead of seeking compromise, they have done it the Pentecostal way.

5.5.1 Heightened conflict with Muslims
As Ayo Oritsejafor was running for the CAN presidency in 2010 he won against the sitting president, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal John Onaiyekan. For those who favour a more confrontational stand against Islam, the election of Oritsejafor was good news. Together with the Sultan of Sokoto, Mohammad Sa’ad Abubakar, Cardinal Onaiyekan has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for work on the Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC) and for interreligious dialogue in general. For many Christians and Pentecostals in particular, this close relationship with the Sultan has not been positive. A PFN representative told me in an interview: “You see, an average Roman Catholic leader does not see the difference between Christianity and Islam[...] Whereas the Pentecostals see a lot of differences” (interview, PFN, September 8, 2012). Highlighting religious differences by verbal confrontation and non-cooperation are trademarks of the PFN in their relation with Islam.

The Pentecostal rhetoric around Islam is built on a perception that there is a hidden agenda for an Islamic takeover of Africa and ultimately the world (Kalu 2008: 245). For many Pentecostals, as propagated in the PFN, the very real problem of the militant Islamist group Boko Haram should not be reduced to economic or political grievances, as they argue that some insist on doing, but treated as a religious problem.

In his capacity as CAN president, Ayo Oritsejafor is also the co-chairman, together with the Sultan, of the Nigeria Interreligious Council. Several regularly-scheduled NIREC meetings have not been held, and competitive statements have been made in the media. Since Pastor Oritsejafor replaced Cardinal Onayeikan, inter-religious dialogue has been clearly restrained. For Oritsejafor as for many others, the focus since his inauguration has been the militancy of Boko Haram. The government has so far failed in its military tactics aimed at destroying the group. The issue of amnesty has been raised, based on the experience of Nigeria granting amnesty to the militants in the oil-rich Niger Delta region in 2009. The Sultan of Sokoto and the Archbishop of Nigeria have both been open to discussing amnesty as a way out of the
the current crisis. The PFN and CAN have vehemently rejected any such proposal. Oritsejafor addressed the press in 2011:

No nation survives a religious war. I pray that Nigeria will not get to that point. Boko Haram is not just a group that came up because of economic reasons, but is purely a religious group with religious ideology. How do you now give amnesty to them? Are you going to tell them to give up their religious beliefs? The only way I think you can do this - I don’t rule out dialogue, but I think dialogue should begin within the North itself, among the Muslim leaders. We are not hearing their voices (The Vanguard 2011).

Pentecostals project themselves as the defenders of Christians in the nation. They uncover the true Islam and are not intimidated by calls for dialogue. The CAN and the PFN, are the interlocutors on these themes with both the government and Muslim organisations. In the recent past, Nigeria’s problems were more often seen as ethnic rivalries. With the discursive division of a country divided in two, a Christian and a Muslim Nigeria, these religious institutions are gaining more importance as spokespeople as Nigeria. The CAN and PFN are also aiding this increasingly important division with aggressive verbal attacks on Islam on behalf of Christians.

**Internationalising religious conflict**

In the capacity as CAN President, Pastor Oritsejafor was invited to speak to the US Congress on the problems in Nigeria on July 10, 2012. For Oritsejafor the message was clear; the US needed to designate the Boko Haram an international terrorist organisation and thus recognise that the Nigerian problem is part of a larger global problem. He continued:

We too, want to have freedom, freedom of religion, freedom to worship as we choose without fear, we want to have justice, based in equality and not driven by discriminatory religious practices. Let me remind you that this is not about economics but about an ideology that has a history of sponsoring genocide across the globe. As Boko Haram increasingly turns towards genocide through the systematic targeting of Christians and Christian institutions in pursuit of its goals, history will not forget the actions or inactions of your great nation (Oritsejafor 2012).

When speaking to a Nigerian audience, Oritsejafor has termed the problem with Boko Haram as a religious problem, while for the US audience he used the term “ideology”, making his argument more in line with the prevailing international discourse of a dangerous Muslim ideology and threats to religious freedom. Globalising the problem of Boko Haram adds to the Pentecostal idea of a Muslim strategy of takeover not only in Nigeria, but also globally as Kalu has discussed (2008).
During this meeting, Oritsejafor learnt from some U.S. lawmakers that Nigerian Christians were very quiet on the issue of religious violence in Nigeria (Sahara Report September 14, 2012). He quickly rose to the occasion, underling his effectiveness as the pastor of a successful mega-church pastor, and within a couple of months, on the symbolic day of September 11, 2012, the CAN opened a branch in New York. The CANAN (Christian Association of American-Nigerians) plans to open branches “across the US in leading cities until the entire America is covered” (www.cananusa.org). CANAN’s main focus has so far been communicating messages about the atrocities of Boko Haram.

5.5.2 Trouble in the house of God: The Catholic withdrawal from the CAN

The rise of a Pentecostal as the head of Christian Association of Nigeria has contributed to Pentecostalism’s public prominence. As discussed above, Pastor Oritsejafor ran against the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal Onayeikan, and the two symbolise two different Christian outlooks. The Cardinal has a prominent position in an ancient global hierarchical church, living in celibacy in a relatively humble residence in Abuja. He studied theology in Rome in the period following Vatican II and the global student protests and has a strong commitment to social justice. Pastor Oritsejafor, on the other hand, is a self-made man, known for his flamboyant style of dress and as the founder and the pastor of a successful mega-church in Warri. When he received a private jet as a gift from his church in autumn 2012, he entered the exclusive and much-discussed club of the jet-pastor. The two leaders also exemplify very different strategies on relations to the Muslim community.

As discussed earlier, the CAN is perceived as a political body defending Christian interests against the state and the Muslim community (Adogame 2005; Falola 1998). Thus, Christian unity has a strong political connotation in Nigeria. In an unprecedented move, the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSR, one of five blocks in the CAN) withdrew from CAN meetings on the national level as a protest against the leadership of Pastor Oritsejafor. An official communique from the CSR accused Oritsejafor of the “total neglect of Ecumenism”, of not prioritising interfaith work, and claimed that the “CAN is being dragged into partisan politics, thereby compromising its ability to play its true role as conscience of the nation and the voice of the voiceless”.

The prominent Catholic cleric and scholar Matthew Kukah’s statement is

116 The Catholics remain involved in the CAN on the local level but are not participating in national meetings. The original letter can be accessed online here: http://premiumtimesng.com/news/116774-why-we-pulled-out-of-can-catholic-bishops.html (last accessed June 9, 2014). The letter is dated September 24 2012, but the public withdrawal was not announced until January 2013.
representative of a commonly-held view among several non-Pentecostal public commentators who are sceptical about the close relationship that the CAN has to state power:

[...] CAN has become more visible in relation to national prayer sessions, pilgrimages, alliances with the state power and so on. Unless we distance ourselves we cannot speak the truth. We cannot hear the wails of the poor and the weak. We should not be seen as playing the praying wing of the party in power.

The stories of corrupt men and women being given recognition by their churches or mosques as gallant sons and daughters and the embarrassing stories of pastos displaying conspicuous wealth as we hear from the purchases of private jets and so on clearly diminish our moral voice (The Nation 2012).

While several prominent non-Pentecostal actors are outspoken in their criticism, as Pentecostalism has grown over time, this is far the only position. Many of Pentecostalism’s former critics have come to not merely tolerate the newcomers, but have incorporated Pentecostal ways of practicing religion in their own fold, to the extent that the category of Pentecostalism is further watered down.

5.5.3 Pentecostalisation of Religion in Nigeria

Religious competition has been found to lead to increased religious vitality, as the research by Finke and Stark on the US has indicated (1992). While 20 years ago, it would have been plausible to predict that mainline Christian churches would continue declining due to the Pentecostal revival, that prediction is less credible today. One of the main reasons is that the traditional churches have been so massively influenced by Pentecostalism that they are themselves experiencing a revival. Speaking in tongues, prosperity teaching, and the focus on healing and miracles are no longer distinctive trademarks of Pentecostalism but can be found in most Christian denominations in Nigeria (Burgess 2008).

The changes in the mainline churches can be far-reaching, affecting the physical church building, style of dress, what types of activities are conducted and in what manner, how theology is preached, how people relate to each other and society, etc. In the words of a prominent Baptist pastor in Abuja:

Every church in Nigeria has been influenced by the Pentecostal. Every church! Particularly the mainline churches because of what the charismatic groups have been doing, this revival of prayers, beliefs in miracles, you know. A new dimension to ministry, talking prosperity. The churches in the past used old-fashioned auditoriums and seats. Pastors hardly had good cars, they used old-fashioned cars, everything was old-fashioned. But the Pentecostals have a different approach. They believe in prosperity, God has prospered for all. And they have approached the ministry
differently, more respect for their leaders, more facilities provided for them to be able to do work of the ministry.

Every church now thinks we need to organise prayer programs, there should be fasting, we should ‘wait under the lord’- we should pray about it. Because when we are not doing that, the people went to the Pentecostal churches… So when the mainline [churches] saw that many people were leaving the churches they had to ask themselves: why are they leaving?...we look old-fashioned, it should be redesigned, it should look beautiful, we should bring more flower, there should be coffee….so: the Pentecostals were doing this and before you know it the mainline churches also were influenced [...] None of our mainline churches are the same again! All have been influenced! All! All!

(Interview, Baptist pastor, September 2, 2012, Abuja).

This particular pastor saw it as a positive thing. But often these developments are framed in a much more critical manner. During an interview with a former head of the CAN, from the Methodist Church, I asked him if Pentecostalism had changed Christianity in Nigeria, and he replied reluctantly:

They have. If you want to be objective, they have. But not without a fault. They have changed it so much, commercialised it. I must mention what I hate there, it is commercialisation of religion. It is very bad. It is very bad. Like the orthodox churches we believe in service to the people. Not self-service (Interview, Lagos, September 4, 2012).

The newfound Pentecostal persistence in entering politics has also affected other Christian denominations. According to the Baptist pastor quoted above the Pentecostals have also changed the mainline churches towards a more active political stance:

…but the Pentecostal view now came with a different theology and they even felt that the children of God are the ones to take charge of the world of God! Because the world belongs to God, and God is our father. Why should we leave it to Satan or those who perpetrate evil? We should go and use our holiness, our morality, our ethics, our commitment in working in the government to stop corruption. So, Pentecostals were actually in the forefront in pushing the church into getting more involved in politics. And they truly have succeeded.

They have commitment on national issues. They have a yearning for the church to grow. They think a lot about reducing Islamic influence; injecting Christian influence. But part of it is also that they have the passion for living well. […]…a Pentecostal group think we shall live, we should have it abundantly, as Christ has promised (Interview, Abuja September 2, 2012).

Thus, more than the sect, accommodating society, there is a clear pattern of society, here illustrated by the mainline churches, becoming entangled in Pentecostal affairs. The success
of Pentecostals, and the movement’s focus on capturing different sectors of society, has made others imitate the Pentecostal way of doing religion.

**Muslim Pentecostalism**

Pentecostals have been most successful in converting members from the old churches, even though some inroads into Muslim communities have been made (Enweren 1995). But in the buzzing megacity of Lagos, where Muslims and Christians live side by side, Muslims also feel the attractiveness of Pentecostalism. Practices such as night vigils, very popular with the young and initially practiced by Pentecostals, are now imitated by both Christian and Muslim communities.

Originally a prayer group, Nasrul-Lahil-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) has been termed a Muslim Pentecostal group due to its many similarities with the Pentecostal churches. They attract young, urban, upwardly-mobile Muslims, particularly in the south-west of the country and see themselves as responding to the success of Pentecostalism (*New York Times* 2003). Long prayer meetings, focus on healing, socio-political engagement, economic empowerment, missionary activities, lay-led services, focus on Islamic banking and business, etc., are characteristics of this growing movement. They are finding Islamic solutions to the problems of contemporary urban living (Adetona 2012), much as Pentecostalism does. NASFAT has branches all over Nigeria, as well as in the UK, Ireland, and US.

NASFAT is also participating in the Pentecostal effort to dominate the public space along the Lagos-Ibadan highway, just outside Lagos. If there is a highway to heaven, this must be it: here we find the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, the Deeper Life ministries, and others, who have all built major religious complexes. RCCG’s Redemption City claims a capacity to host over one million worshippers, and there are universities, secondary schools, hospitals, banks, post offices, radio and TV stations, restaurants, etc. Due to its own growth, the NASFAT also needed more space. It purchased land along the Lagos-Ibadan highway, close to the other religious cities’ and has just initiated the building of a five billion naira mosque and Islamic centre. The complex is projected as a “*dar-us-salam* - abode of peace, a model city for the Muslims” (Adetona 2012: 106) and a

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117 I visited the location in March 2012.
“citadel of learning and research”.\textsuperscript{118} There is great emphasis on the architectural and aesthetic details of the centre, ensuring the mosque can be an Islamic centre that will encourage the growth and practice of Islam. According to its webpage, the complex will indeed be multi-functional; they list some of the facilities they wish to incorporate:

* A functional big mosque together with its courtyard and adjoining prayer area to accommodate up to 80,000 worshippers.
* A small prayer hall to cater for daily use by worshippers who work around the area.
* Islamic Educational section containing a Library and Classrooms for the young and the adults.
* Conference auditorium.
* Residential apartment to house resident Imam and visitors.
* Health Centre.
* Borehole and water treatment.
* Generators.
* Landscaping.
* Security House.\textsuperscript{119}

NASFAT, a growing movement, is a revealing example of developments within the Muslim society that have arisen partly as a reaction to the success of Pentecostalism. But more characteristic of a Muslim response to Pentecostalism has been increased antagonism and competition for public and political representation and control (Obadare 2007). As Pentecostals left their church compound and conquered secular space, the other religious traditions have had to follow suit in order not to lose out.

\textbf{Summary}

The Pentecostal rise to prominence in Nigeria has created several conflicts, most importantly increased tension with Muslim communities. This is evident in strained formal relations among the institutional representations of the religious communities, as well as increased antagonism in the public sphere. However, conflict has also been explicit with mainline churches, as exemplified by the unprecedented partial withdrawal of the Roman Catholic Church from the Christian Association of Nigeria.

However, in terms of relations with other Christian communities, what is most striking is the pentecostalisation of Christianity in Nigeria. The sect, rather than accommodating majority society, has in fact made majority society accommodate them. The characteristic competition over state and federal resources in Nigeria has continued in the relationship between Christian and Muslims national or representative organs. This public competition has become harsher as

\textsuperscript{118} Their webpage: \url{www.nasfat.org} (last accessed on June 9, 2014).

\textsuperscript{119} \url{http://nasfat.org/index.php/projects/the-national-mosque-project} (last accessed on June 9, 2014).
Pentecostals have been the ones dominating the public and political life since the return of democracy in 1999 (Obadare 2007). They have entered this space on their own terms, and many of their more established competitors are now following suit.

Attention now turns to another continent, to Latin America, where many countries have experienced tremendous Pentecostal growth in the same period as it occurred in Nigeria and other African countries. Despite the obvious differences between Guatemala and Nigeria, there are remarkable similarities in what has happened as Pentecostalism has grown big.
Contextualising Pentecostal growth in Guatemala

This Central American country neighbours Mexico to the north, Belize to the east and El Salvador and Honduras to the south. It is the most populous Central American country with 14 million inhabitants. A brutal civil war which lasted 36 years ended in 1996. Post-war Guatemala is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, and also one of the most dangerous countries due to its high levels of crime. According to 2006 figures over half of the population live in poverty, with 15.5 per cent living in extreme poverty (UNDP 2009). However, the country is also known for its beauty: it is the country of “everlasting spring” with an enviable nature and climate and an extraordinary cultural heritage. The Mayan cultural diversity attracts the attention and fascination of the many tourists visiting the country. There are 23 different ethnicities in Guatemala, 21 of them Mayan, each with its own language.

The famed Catholic Easter celebrations in Antigua, with its processions and colourful street decorations, attract international attention through tourism and media publicity every year, but the Catholics no longer have a monopoly on international attention in religious affairs. Guatemala is also home to the town of Almolonga, a Ki’che Maya town, situated in the highlands outside Quetzaltenango, the second biggest town in Guatemala. Almolonga has become famous in the international Pentecostal movement as it has, in the language of the born-again, broken “Satan’s stronghold” through prayer and fasting and has been rewarded with blessings from God (Garrard-Burnett 2009: 210). The story goes that Satan’s stronghold had been evident in all the misery one could formerly see in the town: poverty, broken families, crime, and immorality. The war against Satan was against dark powers such as the popular folk saint San Simón, also known as Maximón, and various Mayan spirits. In the 1970s and 1980s an energetic Pentecostal revival occurred in the town, and the people of Almolonga joined worshipping armies and fought a war against these evils by means of prayers, fasting, and exorcism.

The town has become some a sort of international pilgrimage site, though off the radar of non-Pentecostal media, as foreign Pentecostals come here to witness the prosperity in the city. Almolonga gained international fame as it featured in the widely distributed Transformations: A Documentary, focusing on Pentecostal growth and societal influence in a few selected towns globally. In the words of one U.S. visitor:
The Transformations I video describes Almolonga as a city of 19,000 people that has been completely transformed through prayer over the last 15-20 years. Once known for idolatry, drunkenness, poverty, and abuse, this city is now known for prosperity and blessings at the hand of God. Where there were once more than 30 bars, there are now more than 30 churches. The four jails (which were once not enough to hold all the prisoners) are now closed because there is no need for them. The police carry no guns; they carry only whistles to direct traffic […]. But most amazing is the healing of the land. Almolonga is now known as the “Valley of Miracles” and the people now ship vegetables of amazing size and quality all around the world.

Almolonga is the complete fulfillment of 2 Chronicles 7:14-15: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from the heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.120

According to reports, 70 to 90 per cent of the population in Almolonga belongs to a Pentecostal church. Harold Caballeros, a well-known Neo-Pentecostal ex-pastor and presidential-candidate, announced his presidential candidacy in this city, portraying it as a model city, a Pentecostal solution for the nation. He says this about the city to a Christian broadcasting agency:

The mentality and the way of thinking has changed so drastically! Changed from a culture of death, changed from a culture of alcoholism, idolatry and witchcraft, to a culture today where they think only about expanding the kingdom of God – prosperity, blessing and healing (Quoted in Kevin O’Neill 2010:186).

The case of Almolonga, and how it is talked about, illustrates several characteristics of Pentecostalism in Guatemala. Pastor Caballeros situates Pentecostalism in the religious field in Guatemala, between idolatry and witchcraft, as the better religion which brings prosperity. For Guatemalan Pentecostals idolatry equals Catholicism and witchcraft equals Maya spirituality. For Caballeros, and the American pilgrim above, the story of the town serves as a Guatemalan Pentecostal utopia: God can make great things if one makes a complete rupture with old ways and follows the new teaching. It is a black and white story, from immoral to moral, from disorder to order, from poor to rich, and from possession by bad spirits to good spirits.121 The case of Almolonga also indicates the transnational links and symbolic universe of the Pentecostal movement, particularly in its neo-Pentecostal version. Almolonga carries a

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120 The account of the author who explains she went to Almolonga on a “backwards missions trip”, i.e. “to receive, be blessed, and ask for their prayers […]” can be found here http://www.justcarol.com/uploads/ReflectionsonTriptoAlmolongawebarticle.pdf (last accessed June 9, 2014).

121 The case of Almolonga has attracted scholarly interest as well. See Garrard-Burnett (2009), Gramajo and Alfaro, (2012), and Mazariesgos (2013) for more on Almolonga. While scholars agree that Almolonga has experienced prosperity in a number of areas, they disagree with the image of “utopia” as well as with several of the Pentecostal explanations for the transformation.
message to Pentecostals globally, although it also relates directly to the particularities of Guatemala. For people like Harold Caballeros, and the producers of the *Transformations* video, the city is used as a shining example of *how things could be*, if Jesus were the Mayor, so to speak.

For most Guatemalans, though, Almolonga has little importance as they are busy making a living in a poverty ridden country characterised by different sets of insecurities to life, health and economy. Despite the large numbers of Pentecostals in Guatemala, the society has not seen the transformation many Pentecostals hoped for, and the case of Almolonga’s prosperity is an exception.

The following two chapters explore what has happened in Guatemala as Pentecostalism has grown big. The first part (Chapter 6) contextualises the Pentecostal movement by looking at some characteristics of the political, economic, and religious context in Guatemala. A historical account of the growth of Pentecostalism in Guatemala will be given at the end, with a particular examination of Pentecostal responses to the civil war, with the aim of equipping the analysis in Chapter 7. The second part (Chapter 7) addresses more directly the main question of this thesis, namely what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big.

### 6.1 Political context

The period with most explosive Pentecostal growth (1976-1986) followed in the wake of a devastating earthquake, in the midst of the most brutal years of the civil war and just as Guatemala was about to reinstall democracy. Despite the end of the long civil war in 1996, a comprehensive peace process and return to democracy (1986), Guatemala is still reckoned to be one of weakest democracies on the continent (UNDP 2009), characterised by low level of trust in public offices and political institutions and a low valuation of democracy in general (2011, Latinobarómetro). Below, I contextualise the Pentecostal movement in Guatemala by looking at some key events and characteristics of Guatemalan society; the recent history of civil war, the continued violence, democratisation and the ensuing liberalisation, and the opening of the public sphere. I will also situate Pentecostalism in the religious context, with a particular focus on relations to the Roman Catholic Church, but also Mayan religion. With growing numbers and prominence, Pentecostalism is increasingly involved in a wide variety of sectors of a Guatemalan society occupied with addressing different socioeconomic
challenges. By so doing, Pentecostals are not just filling a gap left by a crippled state, but are engaging in defining what this gap is.

Guatemala is nominally a democracy, but the economic and the military elites have traditionally been the movers and shakers of Guatemalan society. Military dictatorships from 1963 to 1985 and the 36-year armed conflict created an exceptionally powerful role for the military in Guatemalan society. Their role has diminished since the end of the war, but the economic elites remain the same and unusually strong (Jones 2011; Sanchez 2009). Compared to other Latin American countries, the Guatemalan political party system is very weak, characterised by clientelist politics dominated by the economic elites. Guatemala has a multiparty system which is characterised by great instability in terms of institutions; most political parties exist only for a very limited period and each new election sees a set of newly formed coalitions. In addition there is a high level of floor-crossing, which refers to the process of congress members’ changing party within their mandates: during the 2008-2011 period, 70 out of 158 or 44 per cent of the members of Congress changed parties at least once (Bjune 2012: 111). The weak role of the state and the fragile political party system in Guatemalan society is argued to be of great advantage to the handful of elites, who have little interest in changing the status quo, as any change may diminish their power (ICG Report 2010: 2; Jones 2011). The well-organised and very influential economic elites of Guatemala have managed to keep the tax level there much lower than in other Latin American countries, despite heavy international pressure for tax reform during the peace process. Thus the state has limited capital to pursue much needed public reforms and the government fails to provide basic services to address the severe problems of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, and unemployment in the country (Sanchez 2009).

The political sector is not held high in esteem by most Guatemalans. There is a low level of trust in politicians, democratic institutions, and state offices. According to a survey from 2010, Guatemalans trust political parties the least, while the second least trustworthy institution is the Congress (Bjune 2012: 112). There is a general discontent with the basic pillars of democracy. The influential public opinion poll, the Latinobarometro, revealed that in 2011 only 36 per cent of Guatemalans polled agreed with the statement that “democracy is preferable to any other type of government”. This was three per cent more than in 2001, but
down ten per cent from the previous year, 2010 (*The Economist* 2011). However, when it comes to religious institutions, Guatemala is a continental leader in terms of deepest trust in Christian institutions. This is also confirmed in a 2010 study done in Guatemala, which showed the Catholic church (66.4) and the Protestant churches (65.3) as the most trusted institutions, followed by the media (59.7), the army (55.9), with Congress (36.6) and political parties (29.1) lagging far behind (Blas and Brolo 2011: 1). These numbers obviously tell many stories, but for now it is worth nothing the high level of trust in the churches, both Catholic and Pentecostal.

6.1.1 Crime and impunity

Despite the end of the war, violence still dominates in Guatemala. The newspapers carry stories every day about the previous day’s killings with detailed descriptions and pictures. The country is described as “a paradise for criminals” and “one of the world’s most dangerous countries”: in 2002, there were 28 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, and six years later, there were 48 murders per 100,000 (ICG 2010). Less than four per cent of the murders result in conviction of the perpetrator, a grim indication of the level of impunity in Guatemala (Amnesty 2013). A 2008 survey found that 58 per cent of victims of crimes do not even report them to the police, as they do not think it will be worth the worth or they fear that there will be reprisals (ICG 2010: 10).

The violence in post-war Guatemala has changed; its sources are much less clear and the role of the state much more blurred. Today violence is related to the illegal drug trade, criminal networks, and youth gangs. Violence has been “neoliberalized” and placed in the hands of “private entities such as private security forces, urban gangs, and rural mobs” (Benson et al.

122 Guatemala has the least trust in democracy of all the Latin American nations. The average in Latin America is 58 per cent. The three countries on the lower end are Guatemala (36), Mexico (40), and Honduras (43); all three are severely, and increasingly, affected by serious crime and violence. The polls can be accessed at http://www.latinobarometro.org (last accessed June 9, 2014).

123 Latinobarómetro (2011: 50) Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia and then Guatemala rank highest on that list. Of all the institutions covered in the poll, the church has always been the most trustworthy in terms of the continental average, but that there has been a systematic decrease in trust in the church on the continent over the last decade.

124 There are conflicting data on the level of murders in Guatemala; some report decreases and others increase in the number of killings. According to the UN, in 2009 Guatemala saw 46.3 murders per 100,000 people. In 2010 the rate fell to 41.4, and in 2011 it dropped again, to 38.5. In 2012, it declined for a third consecutive year, to 34.2. (The Economist, 2013). But another report suggests a rise in numbers: http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/explaining-the-jump-in-guatemala-murder-rate (last accessed June 9, 2014).
The topic of violence and crime figures prominently in national public discourse and has completely dominated recent elections in post-war Guatemala. According to Benson et al. (2008: 50) it is not however a completely random and chaotic situation in which illegal elements like youth gangs have “conquered” the state, a discourse favoured by many politicians. By not addressing state policies, and state complicity, a vital component of the picture is missing. The current President of Guatemala (2014), the former general Otto Perez Molina, won the 2011 election by promising a mano duro or iron-fist approach to crime.

Politically-motivated violence, which silenced many during the armed conflict, continues to occur, although to a much lesser extent. But the poderes paralelos, clandestine groups that originated in military intelligence structures, are still active in Guatemala (Kurtenback 2010; Sider et al. 2002: 7-11). Being engaged in local and national politics can be dangerous. Catholic Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedra was assassinated in 1998 after releasing a report on the victims of the civil war. In the 2003 elections, there were 29 politically-motivated killings during the elections, while the 2007 elections saw over 50 killings, mostly of local candidates (Benson et al. 2008: 39).

Widespread corruption in the police, the military, the bureaucracy, and amongst the political elite defines contemporary Guatemala. Indicative is the establishment of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in 2007. The CICIG works under the umbrella of the UN but operates under Guatemalan law with the aim of investigating organized crime in cases where state structures are implicated. The impunity in Guatemala has provided ample space for drugs to be transported and traded through the country on its way from South to North America. Drug-related and other crimes have made an indelible mark on Guatemalan society. As in Nigeria, many ordinary citizens live in fear of sequestrations, extortions, assaults, and robberies and must take precautions on a daily basis. In other words, the state does not have a monopoly on violence and fails to provide basic security to many of its citizens.

6.1.2 The Peace Process: ambitious goals, meagre results
The signing of comprehensive peace accords in December 1996 marked both the end of a 36-year armed conflict in Guatemala and the arrival of a new set of actors to the negotiating table. The war was largely fought between the state and a leftist guerrilla movement and was at times extremely brutal; approximately 200,000 were killed and roughly one million were
internally displaced or fled the country altogether. The last ten years of the conflict was of low intensive and it was clear that the guerrillas did not pose a military threat to the state. An endless armed rebellion, however, was not desirable for any of the parties; the government and the economic elite needed to rebuild its poor international standing and the guerrillas had exhausted their options, so all parties had incentives to negotiate (Azpuru et al. 2007; Stanley and Holiday 2002).

The accords for a “Firm and Lasting Peace” were signed by the Guatemalan government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), but had in the negotiating period involved actors from a variety of sectors intended to represent society at large: women, indigenous Mayan groups, peasants (campesinos), refugees, and the internally displaced, academics, etc. The religious community was very active throughout the process, most prominently the Catholic Church but also a few progressive Protestant organisations and international religious agencies such as the Lutheran World Federation. The Pentecostal community, represented by its most important umbrella organisation, the Evangelical Alliance, was a reluctant participant in the process – a conservative force in a progressive civil society consortium (Calder 2001).

Following the war, the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) was mandated to investigate culpability during the civil war. The commission found that the military was responsible for 93 per cent of the total human rights violations. It also stated that the Mayans represented 83 per cent of the victims, and indicted the army for genocide against the Mayan population. The report generated fierce reactions when it was published in 1999 (Stanley and Holiday 2002). Even today, there is no agreement in Guatemala as to what the war really was about and who was culpable. Nevertheless, the report has had considerable impact, as for instance demonstrated by a series of court cases in Guatemala against military personnel.125

The negotiations had high ambitions; the problems that had long characterised Guatemala, such as poverty, discrimination, and political and economic corruption, were supposed to be addressed in a highly comprehensive set of peace accords negotiated over many years. These

125 For a thorough anthropological account of Guatemalans and how they deal with the civil war see the work by Diane Nelson (2009). During the most repressive years of 1982 to 1984 (Ríos Montt was president from 1982 to 1983), the government managed to keep violence low in the urban areas while conducting brutal campaigns in rural areas, away from the media and national attention. The government showed two faces to its people: rewarding those who accepted military control while attacking anybody they regarded as “subversives” (Garrard-Burnett 2010; Nelson 2009: 23).
lofty goals were not achieved, as these problems have not significantly improved since the signing of the peace accords in 1996 (Azpuru et al. 2007; Nelson 2009; Pasara 2001; Stanley and Holiday 2002). There are many reasons for this failure, including a lack of will and capacity among the political establishment, but one explanation is that the accords failed to become a national concern in Guatemala. In an attempt to ensure public endorsement and civic participation in the peace process, various constitutional amendments were put to a referendum in 1999. A positive outcome was necessary to advance an already slow implementation process. The electoral turnout was a deeply disappointing 18 per cent, and 55 per cent those who did appear voted against the constitutional reforms that would have paved the way for some of the peace accords to be implemented (Jonas 2000; Salvesen 2001). The implementation of the accords is now on what appears to be a permanent hold and no longer shapes national debates.

6.1.3 Opening of the Political Space and the Public Sphere
As described above, the peace process brought a set of new stakeholders to the political table and into the public sphere. Organized civil participation on the national level, with the exception of the representatives of the financial elite, has traditionally been very weak in Guatemala. The Guatemalan elite has equated a certain type of social mobilization and activism with communism or other attempts to challenge the status quo and has thus as a threat to the state. Organised civil society actors were primary targets of military violence during the war, and silence has thus become a tactic for survival (Garrard-Burnett 2009: xiii).

International actors, especially the US, UN, and Norway, played key roles in establishing the framework of the peace process (Spence 2004). An important aspect of the liberal peace-building agenda was the heavy emphasis placed on the involvement of civil society, in the sense of the people, in both enforcing democracy and ensuring ownership of the peace accords. Thus, international actors focused on contributing to civil society participation through both funding and political pressure (Spence 2004). These initiatives opened up the process to Mayans, whose involvement in national institutions had been minimal ahead of the negotiations, women, peasants, and victims of the war, such as refugees, the internally displaced, and widows (Azpuru et al. 2007; Spence 2004).

The peace process, coupled with economic liberalisation, globalisation and new media technology established a new set of actors in the Guatemalan public. If one include religious
organisations in Guatemalan civil society, and not only labour unions, NGOs, and interest groups, as often is done in Western academia, the composition of Guatemalan civil society expands and changes dramatically. During the war, Pentecostal congregations were one of the few voluntary associational places that were tolerated by the military and the state, in sharp contrast to the Catholic Church, which was viewed with suspicion. Compared with other institutions that were less favoured by the state, the Pentecostal movement grew relatively unhindered and gradually built an expanded public church.

6.2 Religious context
Religions are thriving in contemporary Guatemala. There is a charismatic revival in the Catholic Church, a strong Pentecostal movement, and with the opening of political space there is also revitalisation of a more public Mayan movement. A majority of Guatemalans are still believed to be Catholic, even though there are reports suggesting Protestants now outnumber Catholics. However, Protestants, of whom the majority are Pentecostals, are most likely to be in the range of 30 to 40 per cent of the population.

The Guatemalan constitution provides for religious freedom and there are no major reports of religious freedom not being respected\(^\text{126}\). There is no state religion. The state however recognises, by the constitution, the formal existence of the Catholic Church. All other religious denominations must register with the Ministry of Government if they wish to transact business, such as renting or buying property, entering into contracts, or enjoy tax-exempt status.

6.2.1 20\(^\text{th}\) Century Catholicism: Decline and revival
The Catholic Church in Guatemala today is a vibrant institution with a renewed interest from Guatemalans. Theological seminaries are graduating all-time high numbers of Guatemalan clergy. The numbers of seminarians was 54 in 1956, while 40 years later the number was at 343. In the 1960s, 81 per cent of all clergy were foreign, whereas today almost all are Guatemalan. Guatemalans also replaced foreign religious nuns, and their numbers have increased as well, from 1,018 in 1972 to 2,641 in 2007. Despite deadly persecution of

\(^\text{126}\) The US government has started delivering annual reports on religious freedom. The report on Guatemala from 2012 shows no major problems, but access to historical Mayan cites for Mayan spiritual groups is a contentious area. See the report here: http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208694.pdf (last accessed June 9, 2014).
Catholic catechists during the civil war, the numbers have risen sharply the last decade (Cleary 2011: 257).

But the Catholic Church in Guatemala has not been this vibrant for long. In order to understand Pentecostal growth, a weak, disempowered Roman Catholic Church must be taken into account (Chesnut 2003; Cleary 2011; Rose and Schultze 1993; Smith 1998). The Catholic Church has long had a complex relationship with the Guatemalan state. As an ally of the old colonial establishment, the Roman Catholic Church suffered from anti-clerical policies when Guatemala gained independence and entered a politically liberal stage in the mid-19th century. In the 1880s, President Justo Rufino Barrios initiated several reforms aimed at diminishing the power of the church. He abolished Catholicism as the state religion and, through the passing of several laws, strived to strip the Catholic church of all but spiritual power. This included expropriation of property, secularisation of rituals, and limitations on the total numbers of clergy (Garrard-Burnett 1998; Ochoa 1998). Combined with new social and economic structures in the early twentieth century, from private farming to wage labour that fluctuated from estate to estate, the Catholic Church found itself with poorly-educated priests covering only small areas, largely in urban centres (Martin 2002: 86). The few priests that were present in the country were foreigners, often far removed from the life of its parishes. This development had opened up possibilities for Mayan semi-autonomy in several places, only loosely affiliated with a central Catholic authority (Cleary 2011: 245; Steigenga 2001: 65).

The anti-clerical policies introduced by Barrios were not altered significantly until the changes in the 1955 and 1965 constitutions that allowed for greater religious freedom, as for instance in the area of importing of foreign clergy. This relaxation of state control proved essential in bringing about a renewed social and political role for the Catholic Church. This allowed the Church to gradually build up a reaction against the challenges it was now infiltrated with and surrounded by. One challenge came from within the church: the lack of control, interest, and enthusiasm was evident in this “fading religious institution” of the mid-twentieth century (Cleary 2011). With the relaxation of laws against Catholic clergy, the importation of much-needed priests, nuns, and missionaries assisted a revival of the sleeping giant. When the foreign missionaries arrived, they engaged in renewed evangelisation to win back the lost indigenous population and to counteract Protestant missions. The primary
strategy was to get local people involved in the Church by training catechists that were to become indigenous evangelisers. The catechists were responsible for Catholic worship, evangelisation to non-Christians, and for social aspects such as caring for the sick (Cleary 2011: 246). This process coincided with the trends of Vatican II (1962-1965) that swept across Latin America, calling for a more proactive and relevant Church in facing the political and economic challenges confronting its people. With Vatican II, a shift from integration, where local culture was expected to adapt to a standardised western Catholic model, to a policy of cultural diversity also occurred. This allowed for greater involvement of lay Guatemalan indigenous catechists (Cleary 2011: 246). Foreign catholic clergy brought liberation theology first to Guatemala, and it found fertile ground in the highlands and along the southern coast (Cleary 1992; Garrard-Burnett 2010: 114-118).

In the 1970s there were various thriving lay renewal movements within the Catholic Church, such as Catholic Action, which was Mayan-dominated, rural, and socially engaged, or the Cursillos de Christianidad (the Cursillo movement), which concentrated on urban Guatemalans, especially among those of European ancestry, and focused on spiritual awakening. These two movements have, however, declined the last decades, and ceded influence to unquestionably the most important lay movement in the Catholic church in Guatemala, and Latin America, today, the charismatic revival (Cleary 2011: 244).

Charismatic Revival in the Catholic Church

The charismatic growth within the Catholic Church has been under-reported and under-researched. It is by far the largest and most vibrant Catholic lay movement in Latin America (Cleary 2011: 268). In Guatemala Catholic charismatics may represent as much as 35 per cent of all Catholics (Thorsen 2012). This figure is much higher than in neighbouring countries like Nicaragua, El Salvador, or Honduras (Cleary 2011: 203).

The Charismatic Catholic Renewal (CCR) started in the US in the late 1960ies and spread rapidly throughout the world. The Catholic clergy in Guatemala initially met this trend with suspicion, fearing it is too Protestant, alien to the Catholic faith, and may be a first step

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127 There is much inconsistency in numbers on this movement. The US based PEW Forum argues that around 60 per cent of all Catholics in Guatemala are charismatic (Pew Forum 2006: 80). I base my numbers on the recent work by Thorsen, who has an excellent discussion on the different numbers and the difficulties in categorizing charismatics (Thorsen 2012: 61-64).
towards leaving the Catholic Church for a Pentecostal church, but have over time come to have supporters, whether pragmatic or enthusiastic, in high places.

Guatemala was the first country in Latin America where the bishops officially approved the movement. In 1986 Guatemalan bishops issued “Guidelines for Charismatic Renewal” in which the works of the Holy Spirit were acknowledged (Cleary 2011: 241). Chesnut (2003) argues that the Catholic Church saw early the potential dangers in the similarities and thus actively promoted the centrality of one symbol, the Virgin Mary, which they hoped would effectively create the necessary boundaries. There are indeed a great number of similarities between the two movements in religious belief and practices, but also in popularity and the structure of the institutions.128

6.2.2 Maya culture and religion

Mayan religion, often referred to as folk Catholicism or traditional religion, has co-existed with the dominant Catholic religious ideology in Guatemala. Several Mayan villages have had extensive religious brotherhood (cofradias) systems operating more or less with the blessings of the church (Garrard-Burnett 2009). Guatemala has a majority indigenous population; 50 to 60 per cent of all Guatemalans are Mayans. Despite their numerical prominence, the Mayan population has been excluded from social and political power. Approximately 80 per cent of the victims, either killed or “disappeared”, during the war were Mayan. The Mayan population have been subject to systematic racism, which has left them with the lowest social indicators in the hemisphere (Garrard-Burnett 2004: 125). Despite harsh government repression, since the mid-1970s the Mayan population has organised politically and culturally in several unprecedented ways (Calder 2004).

The peace negotiations opened up space for a more public Mayan voice. Mayan religious practices were given a protected status in the 1996 peace accords from 1996, in the Acuerdo sobre identidad y derecho de los pueblos, by which Mayan religious practices are considered a specific cultural right. One example of this is the emergence of the Movimiento Maya, which originated in the mid-80ies. By the development of a political, intellectually-based discourse, they seek redress for discrimination and oppression by both society at large and the Catholic Church in particular. Part of this movement is also an effort to revitalise inculturation theology, to develop ways of affirming Mayan spirituality, practices, and beliefs within the

128 The Pentecostal relationship with Catholic institutions is covered in Chapter 7.
Christian denominations (Calder 2004; Garrard-Burnett 2004). However, there is a disconnect between the urban intellectual movement and the people, and the movement has not been able to generate a grassroots movement like the ones seen in Bolivia or Ecuador (O’Neill 2010: 19). Inculturation theology, still limited, has made far greater inroads with the Catholic Church and the mainstream Protestant denominations than with Pentecostal churches (Garrard-Burnett 2004).

Whereas Christianity is labelled a religion, Mayan religious life is more often described as a set of spiritualities, of rituals and practices (costumbres and cofradias or brotherhoods). One Mayan intellectual describes the Mayan movement as a “process of decolonisation” (Garrard-Burnett 2004: 130).

**Pentecostal relationship with Mayan culture**

A defining characteristic of Pentecostalism, across continents, is the war against its own roots (Casanova 2010: 437). While Pentecostalism is popular among the Mayan population, Pentecostalism’s relationship to Mayan spirituality is one of attack, not accommodation. It is not a relationship of denial, which has maybe been the most common reaction by the mainline churches. Rather, Pentecostals believe in the powers of the Mayan spiritual world, but consider them to be an enemy force and that the Pentecostal has the tools that can win the war.

An example is the neo-Pentecostal former foreign minister, Harold Caballeros, who in 1990 launched a national campaign, “Jesus is the Lord of Guatemala” (Jesus es Señor de Guatemala), to free the country from “a curse inflicted” by ancient Mayan religious practices. Caballeros argue that this curse, and thus Mayan spirituality, is partly responsible for the economic and political problems in Guatemala (Caballeros 1999, 2007). Pentecostals continue the “civilising” project of earlier missionaries in regard to the indigenous population.

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129. The *Popol Vuh* is the most complete cosmological account found in Mayan culture to explain the origins of the Mayan people. For an account of Mayan religiosity and culture, and an elaboration of the role of the cofradias see for instance Delgado (1998: 74-79). Where costumbres is used as a way of describing Mayan-Catholic practices, Folk Catholicism or syncretic practices, cofradias is more of a secular-religious institution of local governance.

130. In his book *De Victoria en Victoria- Como Lograr un Efecto en los Cielos Visible en la Tierra* (1999; 2007) Caballeros explains in detail the vision he received from God that explained this Mayan curse to him.
The most important element is conversion, after which there is a strong focus on combatting illiteracy, promoting Spanish instead of indigenous languages, and getting rid of rituals, practices, and objects believed to be demonised or pagan (Consejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala 2011: 37-38; Sanchíz Ochoa 1998). However, the Pentecostal relationship to Mayan culture is complex. The frontal attack on Mayan key cultural practice does not necessarily lead to a ladinoisation, or erasure, of Mayan culture. In Almolonga, the Pentecostal “utopia” referred to earlier and a Ki’ché Maya town, the Mayan population engaged in spiritual warfare against Mayan-Catholic syncretic practices but has also managed to preserve language, traje (traditional dress used on most days), and Mayan pride. Garrard-Burnett writes: “...within the confines of religious practice of Spiritual Warfare, one also finds a belief system that valourizes local culture and identity even as it quite literally demonises it” (Garrard-Burnett 2009: 221).

As in Nigeria, where there are many overlapping beliefs between traditional religion and Pentecostalism, one find many similarities between Pentecostal and Mayan religious views. This similarity is one reason why Pentecostalism has been so successful in Guatemala, as the Pentecostal worldview is “remarkably compatible with Mayan worldview” (Wilson 1998: 145; see also Cleary 1992: 11; Garrard-Burnett 1998: 118) The idea of the end of the world, prominent in Pentecostal doctrine, finds its twin in the Mayan 2012 prophecy and the coming of a new age. Where official Catholicism does not interpret sickness or misfortunes in terms of punishment from God or demonic possession, both Pentecostal and Mayan beliefs see a much closer connection between the soul and the body (Sanchíz Ochoa 1998: 69). Spiritual reality is intimately linked with material reality. Thus Pentecostalism and Mayan belief both confirm the active working of the spiritual in daily life.

**Independent Christian denominations**

It is not just within the Catholic Church or Pentecostalism that there is religious revivalism. Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses also have considerable followings in Guatemala. The first Mormon missionaries came to the country in 1947 and have had a major missionary effort in Guatemala City. In 1995, there were 148,000 baptized Mormons in the country (1.4 per cent of the total population), out of which perhaps half were active members (Gooren 1999: 19).
6.3 Pentecostalism

“Los evangélicos” are a diverse group in Guatemala. In Guatemala, “evangelical” has been used to mean all Protestants in Guatemala. But given the predominance of Pentecostals within the Protestant group, “evangelical” is now colloquially understood to be first Pentecostal. I trace below the growth and spread of Pentecostalism in Guatemala, enabling a discussion of what happens when it becomes big in the next chapter. Specific attention will be given to how Pentecostalism got entangled in the civil war, in the ensuing peace process, and in national politics through prominent Pentecostal actors.

Just a few years after the great revival started in the mid-1970s, new converts reached the highest seats of the nation, closely linking the formerly apolitical movement with national politics. If we follow Casanova’s distinctions of three polities, Guatemalan Pentecostals had first a role in political society before they became active, publically, in institutional civil society.

Before exploring this phenomenon, which is different from the Nigerian experience, a few characteristics of the Pentecostal community must be outlined. Researchers normally divide the Protestant churches in Guatemala into three categories: 1) historic Protestant churches such as Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Lutherans; 2) the traditional or classical Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God and Church of God; and 3) the Neo-Pentecostal churches such as La Fraternidad, el Shaddai, and Casa de Dios. The classical distinction into three categories has to do with date of establishment and theological emphasis, but the distinctions are not always clear, as Pentecostal practices and beliefs are becoming both more uniform across divisions and more diverse within denominations. Theological training and social work were characteristic for the classical Pentecostal churches, but are now also increasingly important for the neo-Pentecostals (Ortiz 2007).

A more neglected way of categorising in academic circles, but much more common in the everyday Guatemalan understanding, is a distinction that has to do with material aspects and economic and social profiles. The distinction is drawn between mega-churches and smaller churches, with the former often neo-Pentecostal and the latter classical Pentecostal. Socio-economic distinctions such as poor or rich and urban or rural or issues that have to do with women’s participation and modes of worship are other distinguishing traits. Most cities and

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villages in Guatemala have several Pentecostal churches to choose among: there is never just one Pentecostal church in a Guatemalan village or city. If there is one, there are many, allowing the churches to specialise and customise their approach with a particular style and a certain type of membership.

In numbers, classical Pentecostal churches by far outnumber neo-Pentecostal churches (Ortiz 2007). The two biggest Pentecostal churches in terms of nation-wide members are believed to be the Assemblies of God (Asamblea de Dios) and Church of God (Iglesia de Dios), churches that are present throughout the country. The neo-Pentecostal churches occupy disproportionately large role in Guatemalan public life. It is the independent mega-churches in the urban centre that dominate the media, publishing houses, and social media. These are people with the necessary background, networks, and resources to participate in a political system that remains out of reach for the majority of the population (Steigenga 2001). Neo-Pentecostalism has always been an urban phenomenon in Guatemala. The churches attract mainly middle- and upper-class ladino professionals, but with the broadening of the movement, poorer people and indigenous people are joining these churches (O’Neill 2010: 10; Ortiz 2007).

6.3.1 Pentecostal growth in Guatemala

Three overlapping phases can be discerned in the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala. The first period was the period initiated by the liberal policies of president Barrios in 1882, discussed earlier, which sought to diminish Catholic power not only by different reforms but also by inviting Protestants to the country (Chesnut 2003). Protestantism was also expected to bring new economic opportunities as Guatemala looked to the US and Western Europe for Protestant trade and allies. However, it was a difficult field for missionaries: the Protestant churches and foreign missionaries were active and present in Guatemala for a long time, without being able to convert people in meaningful numbers (Garrard-Burnett 1998). By 1937, only an estimated 2 per cent of the population was Protestant. 20 years later, in 1960, it was still only 3 per cent (Stoll 1990:184). Mainline protestant denominations like the Presbyterians, the first to formally establish a mission in Guatemala, Mennonites, Lutherans and Methodists and the evangelical Central American Mission (CAM) all sent missionaries in this period. They established an infrastructure, built churches and to a lesser degree schools and clinics, and focused on evangelisation. In the early 1930s, the first Pentecostal churches arrived from the US and settled in Guatemala, gradually starting to work, particularly among
the poor. The next two phases of growth were much more dramatic than the first, but neither of them benefited the mainline Protestant churches to the same extent they did the “newcomers”, the Pentecostal denominations. Following extensive missionary campaigns in the 1960s, the fruits of evangelisation fell on the classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the US-based Church of God, Assemblies of God, and the Guatemalan-founded Prince of Peace (Gooren 2001; Sanchíz Ochoa 1998: 50; Wilson 1998: 142).

The revivals in the 1960s attracted the poor, who built close-knit neighbourhood churches. Compared to the Roman Catholic Church or the mainline protestant denominations, this Pentecostal movement represented a “democratisation of religion”: a lay-led movement comprising the poor, women alongside men, and strong in both rural and urban areas. It also symbolised a new commitment to church, as Pentecostals were willing to pay for the church themselves, through tithing and other offerings. Even in the larger hierarchical institutions such as the Church of God, the local congregation is almost entirely independent. With strict codes for behaviour and frequent church attendance requirements and a radically new teaching, these churches built new communities as an alternative to the world. This view meant both a spiritual and a material concern for the members.

The third phase, the big “explosion” in conversion, came between 1976 and 1986, a period that witnessed massive societal crisis and change, along with religious turmoil (Gooren 2001). Growth was particularly evident in the Pentecostal movement, both the classical denominations and the new: it is this period that sees the introduction of neo-Pentecostal churches that were to make a deep mark on Guatemalan political life only a few years later. What set the new Pentecostal churches apart from the classical Pentecostal churches was first and foremost a class issue: the urban middle and upper-middle classes became attracted to neo-Pentecostalism (Cleary 1992: 12). With the necessary means, networks, and ambitions central neo-Pentecostals started to widen the understanding of what fell within the domain of the church. Notably, in the first phase, this was believed to be the political sphere with the adaptation of a variety of dominion theology. This was a radical shift from how the classical Pentecostals interpreted the role of the church; they preached a strong separation of the state

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132 There are some contradictions in the academic literature on this issue. Gooren (2001) argues that growth began much earlier and points to classical denominations like the Assemblies of God and Prince of Peace that were already experiencing solid growth by the mid-1930s. Cleary (1992) disagrees that there was an “explosion” of converts, and emphasises the gradual work of missionaries.
and church, between politics and religion, and in word and deed sought independence from factors outside the church.

As is demonstrated later, there was mutual suspicion between the majority society and the growing number of Pentecostal churches. A strong sense of being part of a counterculture is nurtured in the Pentecostal movement in the predominantly Catholic Guatemala, and the belief that the Pentecostals are the sole heirs of the true faith accentuated the sectarian character.

**A relevant actor in times of multiple crises**

In order to understand Pentecostal growth in Guatemala, a number of factors need to be considered. Factors relating to the appeal of the Pentecostal faith in terms of its doctrine and practice must be viewed in conjunction with changing political, economic, and social contexts. Most research argues that the context of crisis, personal as well as national, was conducive for Pentecostal growth and one of several important reasons explaining its appeal (Cantón Delgado 1998; Garrard-Burnett 2009; Gooren 1999; Rose and Schultz 1993; Sanchís Ochoa 1998). While the context of crisis is an insufficient explanation for Pentecostal growth, it may be a hint as to why that growth was so exceptionally strong in Guatemala at that particular time. The answer is not in the simple existence of the crisis in itself, but because Pentecostalism has been and remains a relevant actor in these periods: it is a church that *works*. It is an institution built from below that effectively addresses the needs of its members, of whom a large majority are marginalised. While there have been several links to foreign missions, the majority of Pentecostal churches are built by local initiative. From the late 1960s onward, Guatemala witnessed an institutionalisation of political violence, increased militarisation, increased poverty, and changing economic conditions (Garrard-Burnett 1998; Gooren 1999). A devastating earthquake in 1976 and the effects of the 36-year civil war,

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133 The issue of crisis is also very much a topic in Andrew Chesnut’s work from Brazil, though from the perspective of the individual. He finds that “more than any other factor the promise of divine healing offered at Pentecostal and Charismatic churches leads Latin Americans to convert to the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal denominations. A plurality of my informants in Brazil had converted at a time of a serious health crisis of their own or that of a family member” (Chesnut 2012: 217). Research from Guatemala also shows that men often state the need to stay away from alcoholism and other vices as an important reason for their conversion (Chesnut 2003: 47), or because the born-again has felt strong emotional experiences (Brenneman 2012). Most people come in contact with a church through a friend of family member. The reasons why people convert are extremely complex and also highly contextual, both in space and in time. There are a few books on the topic of conversion that elaborate further on the theme; see for instance Gooren (2010) but also Steigenga and Cleary, eds. (2007). In general, the question of why people convert has received considerably more attention in the academic literature on Guatemala and Latin America than in the work on Nigeria and Africa.
which was particularly brutal from the late 1970s through the early 1980s, are the two incidents that are often highlighted as catalysts for Pentecostal growth.

The earthquake that shook Guatemala

The devastating 1976 earthquake killed 23,000 people and left 76,000 people wounded. Over a million people were left without homes. Guatemala had the attention of the world, which led to an influx of both US Pentecostal churches and several liberal NGOs, both secular and religious.

For the Pentecostals, the earthquake came to have ramifications beyond the tragedy itself. This is when the denomination’s boom really manifested itself. Critics say it became a exchanged ‘lámina por ámina’ (the soul in exchange for a tin roofing) as the Pentecostals were very efficient at offering material that was needed during the crisis (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 121). An important reason explaining the immediate Pentecostal success following the earthquake lies in what Pentecostalism offers and how it does goes about offering it. It allows for flexibility: a church can open anywhere, in someone’s house or a garage, outdoors or in a shop or a school (Wilson 1998: 147). No priests are required, no supervision or bureaucracy hinders devotion. Being a church of and among the poor, Pentecostalism knows what is needed. Pentecostal churches have a variety of activities that facilitated the inclusion of lay people in the organisation. By the 1970s, Protestant churches and missions already had a presence and infrastructure, both local and international, that could manage the explosive growth and coordinate sorely-needed relief efforts (Gooren 1999: 11).

The earthquake showed how divided the Catholic Church was: for the socially active Catholic clergy linked to liberation theology the earthquake was a “sign from God to create a tierra nueva, literally a new land, based on radical, but also very biblical, Christian foundations of economic and social justice” (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 123). The earthquake facilitated the mobilisation of the Catholic left. On the other side, the conservative Archbishop interpreted the event as God’s punishment for popular uprisings in the form of strikes and demonstrations (Garrard-Burnett 2010).

6.3.2 The Pentecostals and the civil war

More than other countries south in Latin America, Guatemala was deeply affected by the international cold war. The strong anti-communist religious message from the U.S. was dominant in Central America, exacerbated by the presence of televangelists and visiting
preachers, the funding of neo-Pentecostal churches, and the internal turmoil in Guatemala. The Guatemalan war formally ended in 1996, and several of the dominant Pentecostal pastors in today’s Guatemala were already pastors during the war. The main actors during the war are still dominant in post-war Guatemala. In 2013 the ex-president Ríos Montt was tried for genocide in a national court in Guatemala, and the current president Otto Perez Molina was a military officer during the height of the war. The Guatemalan struggle for how to understand and talk about the war is still continuing (Nelson 2009). The following section thus turns briefly to that page in history by looking at Ríos Montt and the Catholic-Pentecostal divide. The Pentecostal-Catholic divide during the war, and the infamous role of Ríos Montt in the war has strongly contributed to the image of Guatemalan Pentecostals as both quietist and thus supporting the status quo or conservative and even reactionary (Brouwer et al. 1996; Cleary 1992; Manuel Delgado 1998; Sanchíz-Ochoa 1998).

A born-again soldier

Efraín Ríos Montt is the first non-Catholic President in Latin America. More than anything, it was the rule of the born-again Ríos Montt in 1982 that brought international attention to the growing Pentecostal constituency in Guatemala. He was at the time a trusted elder in the neo-Pentecostal el Verbo church in Guatemala City. He was denounced as a “religious zealot” by the US government at the time: “he believes he came to reign by the will of God – he believes he has a divine right and mission to change Guatemalan society” (Garrard-Burnett 2009: 152). The US religious right, however, embraced him for precisely the same reasons. He was regarded as a Christian soldier and became personal friends with people like famed US televangelist Pat Robertson.

He was president in the most brutal period of the civil war, from 1982-1983 (16 months in total). Although infamous internationally for his gross human right violations, in Guatemala he remains a very controversial figure, both admired and feared. In May 2013 ex-dictator

134 The first elected non-Catholic president in Latin America was the Guatemalan Serrano Elias in 1990. Ríos Montt took presidency by force following a military coup in 1982.

135 In the book “Efraín Ríos Montt, Siervo o Dictador- la Verdadera Historia del Controversial Presidente de Guatemala” by Anfuso and Schezpanski (1984), Pat Robertson writes (in the foreword) about the 18-month presidency of Ríos Montt: “Rapidly we gathered thousands of thousands in the United States who prayed [for him], asking God to give him personal security and his blessing over the new government. Step by step, the miracle started appearing. The democratic processes started to take form”. He continues by saying that corruption started to disappear alongside the disappearance of people’s fear of the death squads. Robertson wrote these words in 1983. He blames “leftist media” for distorting the image of Ríos Montt.
Efraín Ríos Montt was sentenced to 80 years on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in a Guatemalan court. However, just a few days later, the sentence was withdrawn, apparently due to procedural mistakes.  

Given the prominence of Efraín Ríos Montt and his Pentecostal faith, I discuss below some of his legacies, in order to give a proper background for the Guatemalan case. Ríos Montt was a result of the Pentecostal revolution (he converted in 1977), but he also assisted it through his politics. As president, he gave legitimacy and prestige to the faith. Pentecostals, often referred to as sect-members or fanatics by the media, gained prominence in the nation’s corridors of power. He served as an example of the definitive break of the Catholic power stranglehold. Regardless of his politics, he linked Pentecostal faith with politics in an intimate way. In fact, he linked religion itself, whether Catholic or Protestant, to politics in an unprecedented way for Guatemala. In the words of historian Virginia Garrard-Burnett, he symbolised a “resacralization of the profane” in which religious discourse was central in government. She writes “….he slashed through a century of state secularism to proclaim a holy crusade, not only against godless communism but also against superstition, backwardness, and the secular sins inherent in unbridled modern development” (Garrard-Burnett 1996: 105).

His predecessor had left the country in dismal condition, and Ríos Montt set about to “restore a moral core to the counterinsurgency” and to restore law and order (Garrard-Burnett 2010.). He used explicitly Pentecostal language in formulating a nationalism tailored to his agenda. Throughout much of his presidency, he delivered national Sunday sermons; moralizing the counterinsurgency and demonizing the rebellion and communism and their adherents. Guatemala was to be a light amongst the nations, developing a form of religious nationalism has been taken up by several other neo-Pentecostals. He also actively recruited Pentecostals to positions of trust for the military regime: a disproportionate number of Pentecostals held

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136 The case is to resume again in 2015. Amnesty International called the ruling a “devastating blow for the victims of the serious human rights violations committed during the conflict” (BBC 2013).

137 Some researchers warn against placing too much emphasis on the presidencies of Ríos Montt and Serrano Elias in explaining Pentecostal politics in Guatemala. I agree that they are only two chapters of a larger book; Pentecostal politics is indeed much more than institutional politics. But I disagree that their “Pentecostal credentials” should be discarded as Wilson (1998) and Freston (2001) argue, because they were new converts, lacked Pentecostal training, and were not thoroughly socialised in the Pentecostal tradition. Exactly these characteristics, being new to the faith, have been an important aspect of much Pentecostal political activity.
positions in the civil patrols or as other types of liaisons between the community and the military in the area (Virginia-Garrard 2009: 140).\footnote{The civil patrols (PAC- Patrulla de Autodefensa Civil) were an effective method for instilling both fear and government control in Guatemala during the war. Those involved in the PAC have been seen as both victims and victimisers during the wars. Men were recruited from local communities, often with a strong element of coercion – refusal or reluctance to join could be read as sympathy with the guerrilla and was brutally punished. Several of the men in the PAC were responsible for gross human rights violations during the war.}

He kept strong institutional ties to Pentecostal agencies and individuals, foreign and local. The army provided free access to Protestant agencies into the highlands, but denied it to Catholic relief agencies (Garrard-Burnett 2010). Pentecostals offered significant support to the regime, which was also buttressed internationally, particularly in the US as exemplified by well-known televangelists Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart.

**Political theology**

The prominent Pentecostal theology in Guatemala at the time was not a call for action, in contrast to the more radical Catholic liberation theology. The biblical verse Romans 13, interpreted as “submit yourself to the authority in power” was widely used and provided the basis for much Pentecostal support for Ríos Montt (Cleary 1992; Garrard-Burnett 2010). The guerilleros feared the Pentecostals not just because of their links to government but also because of their beliefs. The revolutionary agenda of the leftist guerrilla movement was thoroughly challenged by a comprehensive Pentecostal worldview that over time, gained a favoured moral position in highland Guatemala, the site of much of the fighting. The dominant theologies at the time “made them much more likely to passively support, or actively promote the government’s anti-communist ideology” (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 140).

Overnight, with a coup that placed Efrain Ríos Montt as head of state, the Pentecostals found themselves at the heart of the political landscape in Guatemala. Political power came suddenly and early in this diverse movement’s history. Before that, partisan politics were for the most part shunned by the vast majority of Pentecostals. The political theology of the Guatemalan Pentecostal elite evolved in the context of power through coup-d’etat, civil war, and the early stages of democratisation (Ortiz 2004: 83). It is in this context that a biblical-ideological discourse, or religious ideology, finds fertile ground: it preaches that Guatemala is a chosen nation, and that Ríos Montt was chosen to lead by the will of God. Furthermore, the theology has a script for action whereby Christians must fulfil their responsibility and lead the
country to salvation, through prayers, through evangelisation, and through filling posts of national importance (Canton Delgado 1998; Sanchiz Ochoa 1998). Pilar Sanchiz Ochoa discusses the paradox of how a Pentecostal theology that had kept Pentecostals away from politics, because politics was “dirty”, managed to renovate itself in a neo-Pentecostal manner to effectively legitimise the current order by actively supporting it. It was a religious ideology that supported the current social order and justified the need for Christians to rule.

**A Holy War?**

It has been argued that if there had been potential for conflict between Pentecostals and Catholics in Latin America, Guatemala would have been the country where it broke out. The Catholic participation in the uprising was strong and the repression of the Catholic Church was intense during the armed conflict. As Wilson puts it: “The military reign of terror that followed in the Quiche region and the disappearance and assassination of scores of Catholic laypersons and priests made the conflict appear essentially as a war of religion” (Wilson 1998: 141). By the end of the war, religious (mostly Catholic) leaders were nearly the single largest sector of murder victims, second only to campesino-leaders (Garrard-Burnett 2009:126).

However, researchers warn of such a simplistic explanation. For one, the Catholic Church was not monolithic in its support for the “resistencia”; the long-standing conservative elements were still strong during the civil war. Secondly, there is reason to argue as Garrard-Burnett convincingly does, that the political agenda of Rios Montt was stronger than his religious agenda (see also Wilson 1998: 150). For a brief period, he managed to merge a religious vision with a secular anti-communist ideology, but this was a fragile balancing act.

According to Garrard-Burnett (2010) Rios Montt equated Catholic institutions with subversion. But where his predecessor, President Lucas, explicitly targeted religious people, Rios Montt “killed everyone” he suspected of siding with the opposition, Catholics included. Garrard-Burnett argues that more than a religious war, in terms of Pentecostals fighting Catholics, it was a war of ideological struggle. It was a competition, in the midst of the Cold

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139 Pentecostals were targeted as well, though in much lower numbers then Catholics. The historic churches, such as the Presbyterian, were far more active in the uprising then the newer Pentecostal churches, and were thus subjected to government reprisal (Stoll 1993).
War, between two comprehensive worldviews, anti-communism vs. a radical future, offering alternatives to a morally bankrupt state. The Pentecostal-Catholic division in Guatemala became directly caught in the divisions of the cold war.\textsuperscript{140} However, disregarding the religious component in forming ideologies would be a mistake.

The Cold War is long over, and post-war Guatemala has changed dramatically from the years of Ríos Montt. But the period has left a lasting legacy in contemporary Guatemala. Despite very low trust in and support for current political institutions among Guatemalans, this dissatisfaction has not led to any broad-based, popular mobilization demanding change. While extremely complex, the lack of popular mobilization either against or in support of the establishment in Guatemala today could partially be explained by looking at how Pentecostal actors, theology and political practice has served to legitimize established structure, an argument Bjune (2012) has put forward.

\textbf{Summary}

Protestantism was welcomed into Guatemala late 19\textsuperscript{th} century as part of a liberal policy, a top-down invitation to counteract established power structures and open up trade and cooperation with the Protestant world. However, it was not until the lay-led movement of Pentecostals emerged that Protestantism spread widely and deeply throughout the country. They portrayed themselves as having the true faith in competition with the Catholic sector and Mayan religiosity. The exceptional growth of Pentecostalism in Guatemala has greatly influenced the Catholic Church, as exemplified in the growth of pentecostalised Catholicism in the form of the charismatic movement (Thorsen 2012).

As in Nigeria, Pentecostalism in Guatemala grew in clear opposition to the established religions in the area, both traditional religions as well the established religious institutions. The growth of Pentecostalism has triggered fears of “religious wars” in both countries, in Guatemala this had relevance during the civil war, and in Nigeria this continues to be a concern in relation to the Muslim half of the country. In both countries there was a radical reorientation in the Pentecostal movement with the advent of neo-Pentecostalism. With the

\textsuperscript{140} Marco Cajas Tulio wrote in 1987 a piece entitled “Habrá Guerra Religosa?” [Will there be a religious war?] in which he writes: “What is really happening? Well, nothing less than in the midst of the internal conflict in Guatemala, and the violent spiral it unfortunately has put itself in, the ‘religious card’ has proved an effective tool in the hands of the powers of the right, and of the left, in their search for their own good” (Cajas 1987: 6. Author’s translation)
advent of neo-Pentecostalism in the late 1970s, the new faith entered the middle and upper-middle classes with ambitions and means to strongly impact society beyond the congregation.

These churches attracted the educated urban elites and preached a theology of dominion and engagement. The middle- and upper classes of the two countries had the means, and ambitions, to take the church onto other arenas, such as politics. Compared to Nigeria, the classical Pentecostal denominations are stronger, but in both countries the boundaries between the older and the newer Pentecostal churches are getting blurred. The cases of Guatemala and Nigeria also share many characteristics linked to the inability of the state to provide security and basic needs for its citizens. Widespread corruption and impunity make citizens look for alternative forms of protection and organisations.
7 What happens when Pentecostalism becomes big in Guatemala?

In August 2013, Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina made a declaration that quickly caught the attention of the news media:

“Today we declare Jesus Christ as Lord of Guatemala! And in his name we declare that each of our generations will be generations that can live in a better country!”

The statement was given during a well-attended and televised event, and it received huge applause. Modelled after the United States’ (US) national prayer breakfast and with US congressmen participating, this was the first time leaders from a wide sector of Guatemalan society gathered to pray for the nation in such a manner. There were representatives from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the state and from different political parties. There were also representatives from the business and academic communities, media, culture, and sports sectors and also from the religious community, prominently Pentecostals. They were invited due to their roles as “leaders” in Guatemala to work for unity and to pray for the problems of the country, such as to end violence, strengthen the judiciary, combat poverty, and improve education (Christian Post 2013). President Perez Molina spoke about his faith and how God gives him strength to perform his duties. The president is a Catholic and a former military general, but on several occasions he has publically mentioned his personal relationship with Jesus; he has also participated in several high-profile Pentecostal events. Characteristic of Guatemala in 2014 is precisely how Pentecostalism, its actors, institutions, discourse and practices, has occupied a natural place in public life. The before so easily distinguishable “Pentecostal” has now become part of mainstream Guatemala.

Pentecostalism in Guatemala far extends beyond the church building. This is evidenced in the physical public space, through a myriad of small and large churches (even mega churches, such as the “City of God”) that lie just at the outskirts of Guatemala City, billboards, sounds, signs (stickers on car bumpers, buses, and houses), and shops with creative names indicating the owner’s faith in Jesus: “Tienda Jesus es poderoso!” (Jesus is powerful!). Pentecostal prayer “rallies” and public events are often held in city centres around the

141 “Hoy nombramos a Jesucristo como señor de Guatemala y declaramos en su nombre que cada una de nuestras generaciones serán generaciones que puedan vivir en un país próspera” Parts of President Molina’s speech can be seen on this news clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KCeRm6bQcA
country. They have a strong presence in the media as owners of radio and TV stations; Pentecostal events are also often reported and discussed in the secular media. Members of the Pentecostal church fulfil several public roles, particularly in education, welfare, politics, the security sector, and the media. Pentecostal actors have become popular amongst other sectors of society; more than the other way around Pentecostals are sought for by politicians, businessmen, the security sectors and the media.

Pentecostals have built a broad, massive grass roots network in Guatemala. This network encompasses the rich as well as the poor, both men and women, the educated and the illiterate, the Maya and the Ladino, and the urban as well as the rural. By gradually engaging more and more in and with society, Pentecostalism has clearly moved “out of the box,” outside the walls of the congregation, with a clear aim to bring Pentecostalism to a variety of public fronts.

However, if “Jesus is the answer for the world today,” then what are the questions? Through their different practices in the areas in which they engage and the methods they use, Pentecostals carve out these questions. In their public roles, Pentecostals do not merely “fill gaps” that the weakened state has left, but they also engage in defining what the gaps are. By employing a set of different strategies, some explicitly political, others not, Pentecostalism has been successful in bringing its faith to the centre of various spheres in Guatemalan society.

**How many Pentecostals are there?**

After a period of slow expansion, Pentecostalism continues to grow in Guatemala. Guatemala is believed to be the country with the highest Protestant proportion in Latin America, somewhere between 30-40 per cent, of whom 80-90 per cent is Pentecostal.\(^{142}\) When David

\(^{142}\)The Evangelical Alliance operates with approximately 40 per cent, as does Bjune (2012); Holland (2012) and a US State Department report from 2005 (Steigenga and Cleary 2007:11). Steigenga (2007) argues for 20-30 per cent. In the global PEW forum report (2006), it was found that 34 per cent said they were Protestants (and that 8 in 10 Protestants were Pentecostals). However, the same report found that “renewalists” (Catholic Charismatics and Pentecostals) represent 60 per cent of the population. This is the highest number of the 10 countries surveyed. A Guatemalan government “demographic and health survey” from 1995 showed that 25.9 per cent were Protestant; three years later (1998), this number had risen to 29.4 per cent, thus contradicting claims that there was a decline in growth in the late 1990s (Gooren 2001). For a discussion on why statistics regarding religious affiliation in Latin America are so difficult to obtain, see Steigenga and Cleary (2007) and also Gooren (2001; 2010).

A report from 2009 claiming that Protestants have outnumbered Catholics gained much publicity, largely because of the sender. It was written by a Catholic charity group, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) (Catholic Church Agency 2009).
Stoll published his influential book in 1990, the title said it all: Is Latin America Turning Protestant?. Had the same growth rate continued in Guatemala as it did in the seventies, Guatemala would be fully Pentecostal by now (Stoll 1990: 9). Growth slowed, particularly in the late 1990s, but recent figures suggest there is currently continued growth; according to the CID-Gallup polling organisation, there were 29.8 per cent Protestants in 2001, while their latest poll from 2012 show a marked increase to 38.2 per cent (Holland 2012). Pentecostal churches also report growth. The biggest Pentecostal church in Guatemala, the Assemblies of God, reported a growth rate of 3.5 per cent in 2011 (2010 figures were 338,708 members and 2607 churches). The Church of God is also experiencing similar continuing growth (Samson 2010).

There is a need to be wary about these numbers. First, government statistics are poor, and interest groups have reasons to inflate/deflate numbers. Then there is also the problem of categorisation, with varying ways of defining Pentecostals. Academics, religious institutions, and governments use different methods and categories in their inquiries. Thirdly, religious change happens quickly in Latin America, and statistics cannot keep up with these changes. While Pentecostals stress the radical change in the born-again experience, in reality conversion is not always a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and a person’s religious identity might fluctuate over the span of a lifetime. Religious conversion is happening between and within religious denominations (Cleary 2004; Steigenga and Cleary 2007:12). The same reasons that explain growth can be used to explain decline; the strict moral codes and demanding lifestyles that were attractive in the beginning in a “conversion career” may be the reasons one leaves again. Some argue that second and third generations do not follow their parents’ devout religious life and that the figures are too high (Gooren 2001; 2010; Cleary 2011: 260).

It seems competition has been good for religion in Guatemala, as there is also revitalisation in the broader religions present in the country. In a Pew Forum Global Attitudes project from 2002, 80 per cent of Guatemalans said religion was very important for them, ranking it high globally. Given the Charismatic movement within the Catholic Church and the great diversity within the Pentecostal churches, there are reasons to question whether religious beliefs and experiences should be more important in our analysis then institutional belonging.

\[143\] Interview with senior official in the church, Guatemala City, March 2012
The term “Charismatic Christianity” might be used to encompass all Christians who emphasise spiritual experiences and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Karla Poewe 1994); the term “renewalists” also tries to encompass the same tendencies (Pew Forum 2006). A scholar of Guatemalan religion and politics, Timothy J. Steigenga found in his study on political attitudes and behaviour that religious experiences are much more likely to predict a person’s political world view than an institutional affiliation (Steigenga 2001).

Regardless of the actual numbers, Pentecostalism is strongly heard and seen in Guatemala. However, they have never had one formal movement with one structure but instead have started out independently with the sometimes unintended consequences of being seen as and, to some extent, acting as one diverse movement. With growth, their representation in the public sphere has changed. The sheer numbers of individuals and institutions that are Pentecostal have given this diverse body an important role in the public in Guatemala. Paradoxically, while growth also leads to diversification, the unity of the movement has been strengthened in the public.

**Structure of this chapter**

Pentecostalism is already big in Guatemala. There are many areas that could be explored to examine what has happened to the movement itself as well as to society, but five topics will be investigated here; divided into five corresponding chapters. By first examining the organisation within Pentecostalism, through umbrella organisations and particularly the Evangelical Alliance (AEG), important characteristics of a changing public Pentecostal role will come to the fore. It is not that the AEG is the most important Pentecostal actor in Guatemala, rather the independent churches and their members are, however, as representatives of a very diverse movement, they embody both the breadth and depths of the movement. Second, as Pentecostalism has grown larger, Pentecostal strategies for impacting society have diversified. Far from a sectarian retreat from the world, Pentecostals in Guatemala have entered society in many ways. Pentecostals in Guatemala have a broad agenda for influencing society and this chapter aim to examine this general approach. The third chapter will look specifically at the changing Pentecostal relations to the political sector. In Guatemala, prominent Pentecostals have been politically active since the early 1980s. The Pentecostal engagement with the political sphere has diversified since then, which is a theme that will be examined in this chapter. Chapter 4 will look at how Pentecostals engage in the
public sphere, both through the practice of “occupying spaces,” material and immaterial space, and as actors in the pluralistic public sphere, in the media, and in civil society. Lastly, the Chapter 5 will scrutinize the Pentecostal relationship toward the religious “other.” While there has been some increased cooperation, at least with the Catholic Church, Pentecostals are still sceptical of other religions. However, a defining characteristic in Guatemala’s religious landscape today is how the Pentecostal way of conducting religion is influencing non-Pentecostals.

7.1 Increasing roles for umbrella organisations
While Pentecostalism is notoriously diverse and in a constant internal relationship of competition with itself, there is in Guatemala a strong discourse of one community, one movement. The idea of one community, la iglesia evangélica, as many speak of, is advocated by central Pentecostal actors, by Pentecostal discourse, by politicians, by the Catholic Church, and by the media. While distinctively different institutionally from the Catholic Church, the Pentecostal movement is to a large extent treated as a monolithic counterpart to the Roman Catholic Church. The sheer numbers of Pentecostals are significant. As Pentecostals have grown, the Roman Catholic Church can no longer claim to represent the Guatemalan people, and any national dialogue needs to also include Pentecostal interlocutors. The diversity of the Pentecostal church, the lack of strong common institutions, and the ahistoricity of the movement pave the way for a certain moulding into existing structures. But while “Catholisation” could be said to occur on some levels (particularly in formal national structures), Pentecostals have carved out an independent Pentecostal way of conducting religion in society. Much research on Pentecostalism argues that their political strength is constrained due to the diversity within the movement, in institutions and political views, and due to the lack of structures (Freston 2012; Wilson 1998). Everett Wilson argues: “Although popular Pentecostalism has become a religious alternative for many socially marginal Guatemalans, the movement is still too small, inexperienced, and divided to display much political importance or independence” (1998: 154). However, given the case of Guatemala, it is also possible to say that the opposite is true; the fragmented nature of the movement and the lack of a special political coherent ideology have facilitated a process whereby Pentecostals have managed to bring their faith to the centre of a wide variety of sectors in society, including political society. It is unlikely that Pentecostals in Guatemala will organise as (or
for) one political party, or as a broad membership-based community, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Instead, the Pentecostal community manifests itself in the public and in the political in a number of other ways, as we shall see in the coming sections. One manner is through extensive social welfare programs in education, health, and rehabilitation; another is through representation in the political sphere, the business sector, the media, and the physical public sphere. The combined practices of this diverse movement constitute a powerful Pentecostal public: a community that for analytical reasons can be called an imagined Pentecostal community.

In Guatemala, the Pentecostal community is easily recognisable both by those within and outside of the movement. Despite its diversity, from the outside the Pentecostal movement is often regarded as both organised and united. When one steps inside, of course, everything becomes more complicated. For instance, as will be discussed later, Guatemalan politicians have misinterpreted the Pentecostal imagined community by actively campaigning to win “the Pentecostal vote,” while in reality there is no uniform Pentecostal vote. Another example is the idea that Pentecostals have higher moral standards than other communities, which has given them a clear advantage in the Guatemalan public, as Bjune elaborates: “[…] ‘the Evangelical’ as a concept clearly includes associations to ‘high morals and ethics,’ referring first and foremost to family values, honesty and abstention from ‘vices’ such as drugs and alcohol” (Bjune 2012: 120). This image of the ethical and moral Pentecostal has been sustained despite many public cases of Pentecostals with dubious moral standards and in spite of the worry many Pentecostals have about the low level of ethics and morals “nowadays.”

Benedict Anderson coined the term “imagined political communities” to explain the notion of accounting for a community that is socially constructed amongst people who have never met each other but still perceive themselves as part of the same group (Anderson 1991). He places great significance on the means of modern communication—media, technology, entertainment, books, and education—as central conditions for the existence of the nation and the development of nationalism. Anderson gives specific prominence to the

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144 The issue of declining morals and values in the Pentecostal movement (and the society at large) was a recurrent theme raised by the majority of Pentecostals I interviewed.

145 I will not do justice to Anderson’s discussion of how a nation develops but used the concept loosely as a way of approaching Pentecostalism.
media as a key player in creating this imagined community. Just as a nation develops with the help of powerful cultural symbols, such as national anthems, newspapers, arts and language, the Pentecostal community also has several shared symbols. The most prominent among them is probably the born-again experience: the personal conversion. However, there are several more shared symbols, such as knowledge of the same music and the same literature, a belief in healing and miracles, and a shared language in talking about faith. They are also united in what they are not; they are not Catholics. This imagined community has a strong Guatemalan identity and focus but can fluctuate with ease beyond the limits of the nation and draw on other sources (O’Neill 2009).

On the national political level, the prominence of Pentecostals is witnessed in an increased role of Pentecostal umbrella organisations, independent mega-church pastors who have turned into celebrities, and politicians who actively promote their distinctive Pentecostal identity or sympathy. As Pentecostalism has grown in Guatemala, the umbrella organisations and the celebrity pastors have strengthened their role in the public. Apart from a recent study on the Evangelical Alliance (Bjune 2012), there has been limited academic focus on umbrella organisations in Guatemala. A research gap on umbrella organisations has been identified by several; this gap needs to be filled as it brings light to both the limits and the possibilities of Pentecostal politics in the national sphere (Freston 2001: 282; Steigenga 2001: 152). As Pentecostalism has grown, these organisations have assumed a strong public role. I will in the following section study the changing role of public Pentecostalism by examining how the umbrella organisations reflect on Pentecostal practice, community, and influence in Guatemala.

7.1.1 Speaking for «six million people»: The Evangelical Alliance (AEG)

Protestantism in Guatemala has various representative organs, of which the Evangelical Alliance (Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala, AEG) is by far the biggest. When they speak, in formal communiques or official settings, they claim to do so because they have a membership of over six million Guatemalans, no insignificant number considering the total population is around 14 million. The opening of an AEG communiqué reads as follows: “As the ultimate representative entity for the Evangelical church in Guatemala since 1937, and with a membership of over 6 million Guatemalans […] (AEG communiqué, April 2013). The AEG is the representative organ of Protestants in Guatemala; it is recognised as such by the government and other public figures in civil and political society. These actors, from the
media, politicians, and civil society actors, have, together with the many membership
churches, moulded the role of the AEG. As the Pentecostal movement has grown to become
an established, though diverse, body in Guatemalan society, so has the AEG’s prominence
grown.

The AEG has a membership of 18,000 protestant denominations, of approximately
25,000 denominations in the country (Bjune 2012). There are three types of members in the
AEG: the various denominations (who may be the Church of God, Iglesia de Dios, which is
registered as one church but has many thousand churches scattered throughout the country);
mega-churches and independent churches (termed neo-Pentecostals); and Protestant
institutions, such as schools, theological seminars, medical centres, and pastoral umbrella
organisations146 The grand majority of member institutions are Pentecostals.

The Evangelical Alliance (first established under the name the Evangelical Synod),
was founded in 1935 as a small protestant interest group, and it has undergone substantial
changes in line internal and external developments.147 Ironically, the AEG was formed partly
because mainline Protestant denominations feared the recent arrivals of Pentecostal churches,
such as the Assemblies of God and Church of God. These new churches had immediate
success, and they converted mainline Protestants rather than Catholics. However, the
establishment of the AEG was a short-lived defence against the new Pentecostal churches, as
Pentecostals outnumbered the mainline churches within a short period and took control over
the AEG. The bitter schism from the late 1930s between mainline denominations such as the
Presbyterians and the Central American Mission (CAM) and the Pentecostals has never been
repaired and continues to divide Guatemalan Protestantism (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 40). The
mainline denominations had since the beginning of the century been involved in education,
and the first major public project of the AEG was to coordinate a literacy campaign (in the
1940s and 1950s). This focus would change in the early 1960s when a new type of
Pentecostal organisation arrived in Guatemala and came to also dominate the AEG: the

146 Interview with senior AEG official, Guatemala City, March 27, 2012.

147 The name Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala (AEG) was adopted in 1951. In 1960 the government recognised
the AEG as the legal representative of the evangelical community in Guatemala (Zapata 1982: 110). According
to Zapata, the AEG organised a national missionary campaign in 1962, and it was attended by the President of
the Republic, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, which was the first time a President of Guatemala had participated in a
Protestant meeting (Zapata 1982: 112). This public endorsement from the President gave the campaign and the
Protestant community legitimacy, which enabled a much more public role for the missionary campaigns and
gave the Protestants the necessary confidence to publically pursue their missionary campaigns (Holland 2007).

However, throughout this period, the AEG had been relatively marginal in Guatemalan public life. It has been weakened by internal schism, lack of interest of the member churches, and also public scepticism towards the Pentecostal movement. When the devastating earthquake happened in 1976, the AEG formed an emergency relief committee within a few days, but it fell apart due to internal disagreements; most denominations abandoned the committee to run their own programmes (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 121). This event illustrates the lack of unity in the AEG at that time. However, by 2013, their public role had changed considerably. They have gone from a marginal public position in society to being a confident participant in the national dialogue. The AEG’s leadership is frequently consulted by politicians and the media on issues relating to society in general concerning issues including crime, violence, corruption, business management, child care, and education. Thus, their voice is heard on a wide range of topics that go beyond what we normally would think of as pertaining to the church. This is a reflection of the size of the movement and its multi-institutional organisations as well as the theological turn from shunning “secular” society towards the idea that Christians should engage actively in many various spheres of society.

Organisation

The General Assembly is the highest authority of the AEG that gathers representatives from the member bodies annually. Here leadership is elected by vote, including the president as well as the board of directors. The main work of the AEG is done through 13 working commissions, each led by an elected person from the board. Among others, they have commissions on media, youth, women, social development, political and civil affairs, public affairs, legal affairs, prayer, and theology. These commissions have both an internal and an external role; they offer training, material, and support to their members, and they engage with the state and other public sectors when relevant.

148 March 27, 2012, interview with senior AEG official.

149 March 27, 2012, interview with senior AEG official.
Unlike the Pentecostal Fellowship in Nigeria, the AEG is dominated by the classical Pentecostals. In this way, it mirrors the overall Pentecostal community in Guatemala, which is still influenced by the older Pentecostal traditions despite a very public neo-Pentecostal community. Also unlike Nigeria, issues regarding correct doctrine and who constitutes the right theology or religious authority were an important concern in most of my conversations with pastors, but they are not topics that the AEG confronts in public.\textsuperscript{150} This gives an inaccurate impression of a united Pentecostal movement, as the voice of Pentecostals (through the AEG and other Pentecostal organs) is seldom contested by other Pentecostals in public.

Perhaps the largest schism in Guatemalan Pentecostalism exists between the neo-Pentecostal mega-churches and the classical denominations- but there are also meeting points. The independent mega-churches often participate in interdenominational prayer rallies, congresses, and the like, but for the rest of the time they work independently with their own projects, as do other churches (Ortiz 2007: 95). One problem between Pentecostal churches has to do with “church shopping.” Neo-Pentecostal mega-churches are known for attracting converts from the classical denominations.

The AEG stresses its non-partisanship but at the same time openly offers advice and consultations on political matters. It calls this strategy “occupying spaces” and strives to develop expertise and make itself seem relevant to topics such as relief coordination, crime reduction, moralisation of the police, and more (Bjune 2012). There are clear limitations as to what the AEG can offer an explicit political opinion on due to the diversity of its member churches as well as the lack of clearly defined Pentecostal political projects. This issue has become more apparent as the AEG’s publicity and relevance has increased. In the past, the AEG has endorsed specific political candidates during elections and also Pentecostal candidates on a conservative ticket; this is no longer done. However, the AEG has been a prominent voice on other political issues such as the integrity of the family, legislation on

\textsuperscript{150}A rare occasion erupted due to the presidential ambitions of ex-pastor Harold Caballeros. Article 186 of the Guatemalan Constitution prohibits religious leaders from assuming the presidency. Caballeros thus resigned as minister of El Shaddai church, and his wife Cecilia became and remains the pastor. Caballeros’ registrations as a candidate for the Vision con Valores (VIVA) and Encuentro con Guatemala (EG)-coalition were denied at the national registry (Registro de Ciudadanos), as they did not believe it was possible to renounce being a pastor; it was considered a calling for life. “Once a pastor, always a pastor?” The question was widely discussed in Pentecostal circles, and the AEG was invited to advise the legal committee regarding whether it was possible to resign as a pastor. AEG President Jorge Morales said it was possible even though he would not have done it, while other representatives said it was not possible to resign from being a pastor, as it is a calling and not a profession. The discussions were widely covered in the media, see for instance Siglo 21(2011).
abortion, gay marriage, support for Israel, and the death penalty. In these affairs the organisation operates much like other civil society actors, through conventional methods such as gathering signatures against/for legislations, organising rallies, presenting positions in congressional debates, and engaging in public debate through participation in the media. Less conventional methods, as will be discussed in subsequent sections, are the various methods that make the Pentecostal faith relevant in society by offering moral and religious support to wide sectors of society as a way of infusing Pentecostalism into the society. The AEG and other Pentecostal actors are now in a position where they are sought after; instead of the other way around, non-Pentecostal actors (from the business community, media, public, or political offices) approach the AEG asking for its participation. The AEG is often invited to give lectures, training, and sermons to a wide sector in society, ranging from delivering lectures on morals and values to military and police personnel to advising the mining industry (Bjune 2012: 118-119).

7.1.2 More Pentecostal actors: The Apostolic Council of Guatemala and others

Neo-Pentecostals have a prominent place in public Guatemala. While many of the neo-Pentecostal churches are part of the AEG, some prominent neo-Pentecostal pastors also have their own organisation, the Apostolic Council of Guatemala (Consejo Apostólico de Guatemala). The majority of the major neo-Pentecostal churches in Guatemala are aligned to “the new apostolic movement,” which originated in the US (Ortiz 2007: 103). While most neo-Pentecostal churches in Guatemala are independent financially and spiritually, the various international “Apostolic network” testifies to the close international ties between the mega-church pastors. In Guatemala there are around 30 apostles, of which half have prominence in Guatemalan society (Smith 2009: 3). These prominent apostles are all men who are heads of successful urban neo-Pentecostal churches, and they reach the public through televangelism and other media strategies.152

The word “apostolos” is a Greek word meaning “someone who has been sent,” and within the Christian church the word has come to mean many different things. The “apostles” in the Apostolic Council of Guatemala represent a type of Pentecostal leadership prominent in

151 The AEG no longer has a position on the death penalty as there are conflicting views among its member bodies (March 27, 2012, interview with senior AEG official).

neo-Pentecostal circles, who are pastors believed to have a special mandate (from God) and the ability to build the kingdom of God on earth.\textsuperscript{153} This trend represents an increased autocratic type of leadership in which the authority is beyond democratic or formal types of leadership, constituted on “religious grounds,” through their proven success in church building and by the mutual acceptance of this title from the group of “wise men.” As an indication of the autocratic structures of the mega-churches, it is the pastors who form parts of the Apostolic Council, not the church. Several of the most famous pastors are also “apostles”; Cash Luna from Casa de Dios, Harold Caballeros from El Shaddai, Jose Muños from the Principe de Paz, and Jorge Morales from La Fraternidad de Guatemala. As in neo-Pentecostal churches, globally there is in this specific apostolic tradition a strong emphasis on ministering as a couple, where the wife and the husband have distinct roles. The wives of the apostles form a women’s wing of the Apostolic Council (Consejo Apostólico).\textsuperscript{154} The Council has on several occasions worked in tandem with the Evangelical Alliance. They have for instance organised prayer rallies and arranged meetings with presidential candidates to discuss topics of concern for the Pentecostal church. In these public settings, the group functions as the representative of the mega-church pastors.

Then there is also another, more broadly based, association of pastors, the Asociación de Ministros Evangélicos de Guatemala (AMEG), which for several decades has been working as a representative organ for pastors in Guatemala. It is known for both theological and political conservatism. Given the often explicitly conservative political role of the AEG in the Guatemalan public, it is telling that there is very limited public Pentecostal opposition to the role the AEG is playing. The AMEG, the Apostolic Council, and the AEG often organise common events and thus present themselves in the public as working for the same cause. The three are all understood to be conservative, both theologically and politically.

\textsuperscript{153}According to Robin Garcia, current President of the Apostolic Council of Guatemala, the biblical mandate for an apostolic ministry is found primarily in 1. Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. An apostle’s main tasks are 1) to open new areas for the Kingdom of God, 2) to be an example to society and church (edifice al pueblo y a las Iglesias), and 3) to establish doctrines for the church and ministries. See his webpage for more information: http://www.apostolrobingarcia.com/p/temas-apostolicos.html.

\textsuperscript{154}They have not had much publicity except for a campaign in 2009 called “One Minute for Guatemala” (Un minuto por Guatemala), which was a call for a minute’s prayer for Guatemala every day, as well as a general focus on the development of the nation. See Pastor Sonia Luna’s (wife of Cash Luna) webpage for a description of the project: http://www.cashluna.org/mujereresexcepcional.cfm?get=blog&id=1791
7.1.3 Two actors on the left: The mainline Protestants

The legacy of the Civil War is still relevant in Guatemala. The Catholic Church together with mainline Protestant denominations were actively involved in the peace process. There are two Protestant organisations, the Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala (CIEDEG) and the Christian Ecumenical Council of Guatemala (with very few Pentecostal members, mostly mainline Protestant denominations), that have a very different public role then the organisations presented so far, firmly placed on the left side of Guatemalan politics. Despite having few member churches (compared to the AEG), the CIEDEG is a well-known organisation because of its strong involvement in organised civil society and as a prominent actor in the peace process. The CIEDEG was established in 1987 as a way of counteracting the conservative stand of the AEG to represent an alternative protestant voice in civil society dialogue. Comprised of mainly traditional Protestant churches, the Mennonites and Presbyterians, the CIEDEG has a particular focus on indigenous rights and women’s rights and works practically with agriculture and nutrition projects. The Concejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala is a new group, headed by the former CIEDEG-secretary general, Presbyterian Reverend and ex-presidential candidate Vitalino Similox Salazar. The two organisations are reckoned to be on the left of the Guatemalan political landscape. The two are also ecumenical organisations, emphasising cooperation with the Catholic Church. The Evangelical Alliance (AEG) is explicitly non-ecumenical.

One bridging actor: *El Centro Esdras*

Up until very recently, there have been few cross-denominational meeting places where Pentecostals could gather to discuss themes of a more general character. The Centro Esdras represents a new willingness to engage critically with Pentecostal political and social theology through training, courses, and conferences. Dr Israel Ortiz, co-director of the centre along with Lily Ortiz, has a PhD in religious studies, where he investigated the neo-Pentecostal Churches in Guatemala and their social role (Ortiz 2007). The centre aims to develop inter-

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155 Representative of the NGO sector in Guatemala, these two organisations are a result of a schism; the former head of CIEDEG left the organisation due to disagreements and started a new organisation.

156 Interview CIEDEG-representative, Guatemala City, 26 March, 2012. See also the publication of Consejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala (2011; 2008) for more on CIEDEG, and the ecumenical initiatives in particular.
denominational networks in order to promote thinking relating to the social responsibility of the church. The centre has organised annual conferences since its inception and has brought together academics (local and foreign), clergy, laypersons, and mega-church pastors for discussion on the social and political role of the church. While few and small, initiatives like the Centro Esdras symbolise a growing critical engagement with the role of Pentecostalism in Guatemala and also illustrate a willingness from broad sectors of Pentecostalism to engage in that dialogue.

**Summing up**

Despite diversity, the Pentecostal community has a relatively strong united identity in the public. As the representative of “6 million Guatemalans,” the AEG contributes towards moulding the idea of a Pentecostal imagined community with common characteristics, interests, and goals. Questions of religious authority and malpractice are seldom raised in the public. The process of uniting Pentecostals on the national level, through the AEG, is a result of both external and internal efforts. The government, other state actors, and the business community have sought Pentecostal advice and legitimacy and have invited Pentecostal actors in. The AEG has willingly taken on a role as the custodians of the Pentecostal movement in the country, fostering an image of a community that is concerned with morals and ethics as well as with skills that can benefit society at large.

In both Nigeria and Guatemala, Pentecostal umbrella organisations have risen to prominence despite the great diversity, independence, and mutual competition within the movement. The Alianza Evangelica de Guatemala and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) present themselves as representatives of the Pentecostal movement. The state, and other actors, has needed a Pentecostal interlocutor as the movement has grown larger and has aided the formation of these strong bodies by actively inviting them in. The AEG and PFN also reflect some characteristics of the difference between the Pentecostal movements in the two countries; the neo-Pentecostal movement is stronger in Nigeria and also dominates the PFN. In Guatemala, classical Pentecostal denominations are stronger, which again is reflected in the AEG. This is also evident in decision-making structures; the AEG has a democratic structure, where leadership is elected by vote, while in the PFN the decision-making processes
resembles neo-Pentecostal churches where leadership is “divinely mandated”, through a consultation of elders.

7.2 Influencing spheres of society
As previously argued, the Evangelical Alliance works to “occupy spaces” in society. The approach to enter “spaces,” which include institutions such as the media, the military, and the political spheres, is key to understanding the Pentecostal engagement with society in Guatemala. Prominent pastors such as Harold Caballeros, Cash Luna, and Jorge Lopez, and Pentecostal institutions, such as the AEG and the Apostolic Council, form important public actors in the formation of the imagined Pentecostal community and all contribute to this strategy. They have all contributed to expanding religion by claiming formerly secular areas to be within the domain of religion.

During an international conference in the El Shaddai church in 2002, Pastor Harold Caballeros spoke to the audience with rigour and determination:

“When the church changes the circumstances of the nation, [then] we will be agents of transformation!

Of course, some areas are easier than others. A classroom with 20 children is easy [to transform]. But we also need brave men out there in the congress of the republic, in the political parties, in the newspapers, in the magazines and TV channels!

Brethren, this conference is not entertainment. It is a call to the weapons! To war! To go against the enemy!

To go back to integrity, to go back to honesty, to go back to the truth! Jesus is the truth! You shall know the truth. And the truth shall set you free! (Caballeros 29 October 2002). 157

At this point of the speech, the audience was on “fire”; clapping its hands, shouting hallelujahs, speaking in tongues, and raising its arms in that very specific Pentecostal manner. For Pastor Caballeros and the other people in that room, these were not “just words”; his church has engaged actively in education and media since its inception (by establishing its own educational centres and TV and radio channels), and Caballeros began his own political party and ran for presidency in 2007 and 2011. The “weapons” they have at their disposal are diverse and lie in how the church works: through prayers, education (Caballeros is the founder and dean of a private university), charity, teaching values and ethics, and engaging actively in society. Harold Caballeros is a key representative for the urban, neo-Pentecostal, wealthy,

157A live excerpt from the speech is available on the church’s web page: http://iglesiaelshaddai.org/nuestra-historia/
Ladino, and political-minded pastors that Guatemala is characterised by. He is well-connected internationally with like-minded pastors.¹¹⁸ More than most pastors in Guatemala, he has developed an explicit theology and practice of how born-again Christians should engage in society. This has led to a specific born-again active Christian citizenship, as Kevin O’Neill has eloquently shown in his study of Caballeros’ church, leading him to conclude that “some of Guatemala’s most active citizens, for better or for worse, are neo-Pentecostals” (O’Neill 2010: xv).

While religious organisations in Guatemala have long been involved in society, particularly through welfare services as well as in different political roles, the neo-Pentecostal involvement represents something new. There are clear differences between classical Pentecostal churches and neo-Pentecostal churches, and there has been considerable movement towards a “middle-ground” that erases the most explicit forms of dominion theology on one side and strict separation between church and society on the other side. Churches like El Shaddai have fewer followers today than they did in the 1990s, but the concept of a politically active Pentecostal church has entered more mainstream Pentecostal associations.

The seven sectors that needs to be conquered

The National Prayer Breakfast at which the President declared “Jesus is Lord of Guatemala!” was organised by the Guatemala Próspera, which aims to train leaders, change values, and make an impact on the media, business, charity, education, and government (http://www.guatemalaprospera.org/v2/). Guatemala Próspera works closely with a North American, John Maxwell, a Pentecostal pastor and leadership mentor, who has worked extensively in Guatemala. His organisation focuses on the “seven streams of influence”: business, government, education, media, entertainment, church, and family. Two influential US evangelists, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth with a Mission, have been credited with coining the term after God supposedly gave them the same message simultaneously, the message was specific: “The culture is shaped by seven mind-molders or mountains in society. If we can influence each of these areas for

¹¹⁸He is friends with many of the most influential pastors of his generation: Argentinian Pastor Carlos Anonacondia, Pastor Yonggi Cho in South Korea, his “mentor and friend,” the “father” of Nigerian Pentecostalism Benson Idahosa, who visited his church in 1996. He has worked with Peter C. Wagner and is recognised as an “apostle” within the New Apostolic Reformation; he is also a prominent author in neo-Pentecostal circles (Caballeros 2001; 2003; Holvast 2009).
Christ, we will win the culture of our nation” (Hillman 2007). 159 These seven sectors are also prominent in the thinking within the New Apostolic Movement, a movement that nurtures many links to Guatemalan pastors. This division of society into seven spheres, sectors, or mountains, and the idea that Christians should enter these spheres and master or influence them, are also found in the most influential Pentecostal churches. The currently most popular pastor in Guatemala, Pastor Carlos “Cash” Luna of the Casa de Dios, also speaks of the seven sectors. In a sermon entitled “Praying for the Nations” given in Guatemala in 2009, he says:

When you pray for a nation, when you pray for a city, there are seven basic areas for which one needs to pray. Note them down, write them down at home, and then you have a list you should pray for. The first of them is the family. [...] We have to pray for the family. The family is the fundamental unit in a society. If the family is torn apart, then society will be torn apart, too. We need to pray for united families, for families to reconcile, for there to be peace in families, and for there to be good education in the family (Carlos “Cash” Luna 2009).

Then he goes on to list the church, teachers and education, entertainment, the media, the economic sector, and the government. These areas correspond with Pentecostal teaching elsewhere, as well with Cunninghams’s work. The role of the family is a central concern for most Pentecostal churches, and the teaching and activities found at Casa de Dios strongly confirms this commitment. The role of the nuclear family, and the different roles prescribed to the man, woman and children within the family, is a recurrent theme in the teaching. There are special groups focused on married couples, and the differences of the role of the genders within the family are highlighted. The other sectors Cash Luna mentions are all integrated in the multi-institutional church he pastors; the Casa de Dios has its own theatre, sporting arenas, TV channels, educational centres and kindergartens. The prosperity teaching of the church encourages churchgoers to get involved in the economy, politics, and education. He shared the following comments about the economic sectors:

_Senores_, we need to pray for the economy of a country. Christians have never given much importance to the economy, but if places, a country, have no misery or poverty, for sure there will be less criminals and less people attacking and robbing in the streets. We have to pray for the businessmen, that they can experience growth without anyone being jealous of them, so they can create jobs.

Do you follow me? Because sometimes it is not understood what is needed to construct a temple.

_Senores_, the economy is dependent on jobs. And our country needs businessmen constantly. But do we pray for these people? Do we pray for those in charge of the economy so that God can help

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159See Cunningham (1998) for more on these “seven spheres of influence.” In this manner of thinking, the mountains are controlled by satanic forces and need to be conquered by Christians.
the economy of a country to make correct deals with other countries in order for us to export what we need to in order for jobs to be created?

No, no! As we are geared towards the spiritual, and not the material, we forget that the economy is important.

Hello!? Everyone wants better jobs, everyone wants better salaries, everyone wants increases, but who prays for it to be there? We all need to pray for the economy (Carlos “Cash” Luna 2009).160

Prayers are an important tool in drawing up a worldview, and for Cash Luna these prayers are also reflective of how the church should work in society. The prayers are “mind-moulders” and draft a map of what the world looks like and how to change it. Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth with a Mission (YWAM)161, writes about these seven spheres and how they can be conquered first through prayer and then through action:

After we have prayed for a specific category—be it a government, a school system, an area of media, or whatever—God may choose to use us in the very area for which we have been praying. He may call us to penetrate that influential place for Him, placing us, like Daniel and Joseph, in a place of authority. In whatever area of influence God has given us, whether it’s our family or a Presidential palace, we are to live out His will in our lives” (Cunningham 1988: 135-136).

Most Guatemalans would agree that Guatemala needs a serious change. How this change should occur is, however, more disputed. Guatemalan Pentecostalism is constantly moulding a response through its actors, discourse, practices, and institutions. In many ways, Pentecostalism works. It works in a double sense of the word; they do things, and they do them well, as evidenced by their big numbers, strong public visibility, social projects, and financial strength. To illustrate the Pentecostal projection of its role in society, we will stay with the case of Pastor Cash Luna. In 2013 the Ciudad de Dios, “City of God,” was consecrated amidst great publicity in Guatemala. In the following section I will go through the major stages of the consecration to show how Pentecostal actors project themselves as relevant and competent actors to problems facing Guatemala today.

7.2.1 The consecration of the Ciudad de Dios: Church as a model for society
The “talk of the town” currently is Pastor Carlos “Cash” Luna. He is good looking and charismatic; together with his wife, Sonia, he runs a dynamic mega-church in Guatemala City.

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160The sermon was purchased on a DVD during a visit to the Casa de Dios in 2012. All sermons given at the church can be obtained at the shop belonging to the church. Some of them can also be purchased online: www.http://www.cashluna.org/. Original language is Spanish, all translations by author.

161The YWAM was founded in 1960 in the US by Cunningham. Currently, it has a presence in over 180 countries with a focus on mission and “disciple training”: www.ywam.org
He has over 4 million followers on Facebook (September 2014), which is impressive for a Guatemalan. The Guatemala magazine *Contrapoder* named him the country’s second most influential person in 2013 (*Contrapoder* 2013). One of the central mottos of the church is *Por una vida mejor* (for a better life), and Pastor Cash Luna teaches prosperity in all areas of life. His main audience is the urban, young, mostly Ladino middle and upper classes of the country. He split from a mega-church competitor *La Fraternidad* in 1994 and started preaching in a high-class hotel before moving on. After five years of work, in April 2013, he inaugurated an impressive new church with a seating capacity of 11,000, a parking capacity for 3300 cars (“the biggest parking lot in Central America”), theatre scenes, sporting venues, green parks, kindergartens, specific buildings for the teaching of the children (*Iglekids*), and much more.\(^{162}\) The church is situated just outside Guatemala City, in a terrain dubbed *Ciudad de Dios*, or City of God, by the highway that leads to El Salvador. During the inauguration ceremony, a proud pastor told the public that they managed to construct the church without “a single *centavo*” from the bank, as the members of the church had donated both the time and the money. This message is reiterated on the church’s web page:

>This temple was designed and built by Guatemalans with voluntary contributions from Guatemalans who have understood that by working together and putting aside our differences, it is possible to achieve the seemingly impossible. We hope this place will inspire others to believe that it is possible to do things well. We believe that our new home will be a testimony to nations and generations in this country that we love the Lord, we trust His Word and obey His commands. He wants us to give him our hearts and fight for the dreams he has sown in each. The Lord wants Guatemala to be an example to the world!\(^{163}\)

The construction of *Ciudad de Dios* was presented as an event and a point of hope in Guatemala’s recent history. In a promotional video, they project the building of the temple as a counterbalance to the economic crisis in 2008; just as the construction business was slowing down, the building of Ciudad de Dios gave direct employment to more than 1000 families, used 8000 tons of iron, utilized cables equalling 600 km, and offers a seating capacity six times bigger than the national theatre.\(^{164}\)

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162 Visit [http://consagracion.casadedios.org/](http://consagracion.casadedios.org/) to see more. The inauguration can be watched on the video posted by Casa de Dios on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HTUCLs0yZ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HTUCLs0yZ4) All translations from the inauguration is done by the author.

163 [http://casadedios.org/consagracion/acerca](http://casadedios.org/consagracion/acerca) (authors translation from Spanish) (last accessed 15 September 2014)

164 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3eN_gaXfow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3eN_gaXfow) ¿Porqué Ciudad de Dios es una proeza para los Latinos y para la iglesia Cristiana? (last accessed 15 September 2014)
The inauguration, with its “strong message of faith and nationalism,” as one newspaper reported (Prensa Libre 2013), was widely covered in the national media and also broadcast on TV in Guatemala as well as globally through the Spanish-speaking Christian satellite TV channel Enlace, which also had live broadcasts on the internet (www.enlace.org). The ceremony reflected the ambitions of Cash Luna who staged the church at the heart of Guatemalan political and cultural society and also as an actor in a global church. The event’s guests included the president and the vice president of Guatemala, the mayor of Guatemala City, diplomats, and 3000 invited foreign guests, artists, and sportsmen. Several of the central participants at the ceremony had no links with the church but are famous in Guatemala for their achievements in sports and culture.

The ceremony host was Adolfo Méndez Zepada, a well-known distinguished radio host personality known for his non-church related programs. He introduced some of Guatemala’s finest marimba players (the marimba is the national instrument) who were later accompanied by the municipality of Guatemala City’s own children’s choir. They jointly performed the popular hymn “Dios esta aqui,” God is here. Thus, tradition (marimba), local government (the choir), and popular culture (Zepada) opened the session. Then Zepada announced the entrance of a marching file of 21 cadets form the military academy in Guatemala. Without music, and as an “emotional act” from the “pride of Guatemala”, in the words of Zepada, they marched into the church to make an honour fence for a procession for the Guatemalan flag to enter. Thus the security forces of the nation were included. The flag was carried by the national hero Eric Barrondo, a race walker who made history in 2012 when he won Guatemala’s first and so far only Olympic medal. He formed the first file together with Andrea Aldana, an athlete, and with representatives from the Apostolic Council of Guatemala (Consejo Apostólico de Guatemala) and from the Evangelical Alliance. Following them again was a varied group of dignitaries, including a film director and the winning candidate of 2013 Miss Guatemala.

When the flag arrived at the podium, another very popular Guatemalan entered the stage: Carlos Peña, who won the 2007 Latin America Idol-competition, concluded this first nationalistic section by singing the national anthem. With representation from the municipality, the military, the government, and entertainment and sports figures, the inauguration was a mixture of the traditional and the modern, the local and global, and a
constant blurring of the secular and the religious. A powerful show of the ambitions of the church: the seven mountain of society all within the domain of the church.

**It happened to me, it can happen to you**

The extensive use of testimonies is one reason that explains the spread of Pentecostalism globally. The message is reiterated constantly, and in many forms: religion can change lives. The testimonies play a crucial function in evangelisation and have a focus on practical, lived religion.

During the inauguration of Casa de Dios, ample time was given to testimonies from people who all had been in a crisis and had found Jesus (and the Casa de Dios), which dramatically changed their lives. First Antonio was presented who talked about how he used to be poor and illiterate. Through his involvement in the church, he learnt a life in Christ and through wanting to read the Bible, learnt how to read and write. He said he obeyed God and started evangelising, and God blessed him greatly by moving his life forward; he has been able to open a small business, and his life has changed for the better.

Then, the entrepreneur Bruno told how Jesus saved him from destroying his life with drugs and alcohol and how his marriage was saved. We also met a couple who could not have children, but who tells us that God provided them with a miracle, and now they have three. Then lastly we listened to Fran, a Guatemalan theatre instructor who told the story of how he became a drug addict, lost his mind but got a new life after accepting Jesus. He is now working in the theatre division of the Casa de Dios and has toured Guatemala in support of a play and a movie (“Trip”) about his life.

Drugs, broken families, poverty and illiteracy are all crucial and recognised problems in Guatemalan society. The Casa de Dios has the answers, as we learnt from the testimonies during the inauguration: how to restore families and broken marriages, how to find a good husband, combat drugs, fight illiteracy, and restore the economy (supporting entrepreneurs and hardworking people). The individual problems faced by so many Guatemalans every day were also portrayed as the problems of the nation. The individual thus has the chance to change the nation by changing herself as well as a neighbour, spouse, and/or a colleague.
A global imagined Pentecostal community

The idea of Pentecostalism as both distinctively national and global is actively nurtured in the neo-Pentecostal church. For the inauguration ceremony, there was a constant flow between the local and international cultural expressions. An international group of A-list Christian worshippers performed “Worthy of the Lamb,” a popular song from the Australian Hillsong Church. First it was sung in Spanish by a Guatemalan, then in English by North Americans, and finally in German, South Korean, and Brazilian Portuguese by popular singers from those countries. At the last chorus, all the performers joined in on the Spanish version of the song. Together with the 3000 invited foreign guests, the global Pentecostal community had a strong presence in this inauguration. Pastor Cash Luna is a well-known televangelist who travels to large stadiums in Latin America and North America with his “Nights of Glory” (Noches de Gloria), which has miracles and healings at its centre. The strong international presence is a way for the church to further establish itself as a central actor in the international Pentecostal community. It also continues the tradition of several Pentecostal actors in Guatemala who have positioned the nation as a “light amongst nations.” Guatemalan religious nationalism has been a characteristic of neo-Pentecostal engagement, which was particularly evident in former President Rios Montt’s religious message for the nation (Garrad-Burnett 2010). Writing about another mega-church in Guatemala City, El Shaddai, Kevin Lewis O’Neill explained how the church members regard themselves as first and foremost Guatemalan (not of the world) but also as people with a mission for the world, “an errand for global Christianity” (O’Neill 2010: 209). In the biography of Pastor Cash Luna, it says: “The Ministry produces the most rated Christian TV programme in Latin America, which is transmitted internationally each day. In addition, it also has one of the most visited Christian

165Hillsong Church is an Australian mega-church, with branches in other countries, which is very popular globally because of its strong focus on music. It has its own record label, Hillsong Music Australia. The countries represented at the ceremony were not accidental. Brazil is one of the most vibrant Pentecostal countries in the world and is also a regional power broker in Latin America. Through the ministry of Paul Yonggi Cho, Guatemala has nurtured a close relationship with South Korea. South Korea is also frequently put forward as an exemplary country due to their speedy recovery, a recovery that in the global Pentecostal environment often is linked to the growth of Pentecostalism. As O’Neill has pointed out, the narrative of a “global Pentecostalism” may give the impression that Pentecostalism is “spreading the world over, like butter on warm toast - evenly and with ease” (O’Neill 2010: 174). In reality, the spread of (neo-) Pentecostalism is uneven, more transnational than global, and is a story as much about disconnections as connections.
web pages in the world.”\textsuperscript{166} Whether these statements are true or not, Pastor Cash Luna is also popular outside Guatemala and has ambitions to increase his international ministry.

The neo-Pentecostal churches are often comprised of the wealthier urban class of the Guatemalan population and therefore have more possibilities to participate actively in this transnational circulation. Without having developed themselves as important media figures (which is costly), pastors like Caballeros (El Shaddai), Cash Luna, or Jorge Lopez would not have made the international contacts that they maintain. To a varying degree, “transnational routes” have afforded them an international (mostly Spanish-speaking) audience through their websites, books, TV channels, etc. Global Pentecostal travelling celebrities, such as Paul Yonggi Cho (South Korea), T. L. Osborn, Joel Osteen, Cindy Jacobs, Peter C. Wagner (all US), Ulf Ekman (Sweden), and Benson Idahosa (Nigeria) have all been to Guatemala to visit neo-Pentecostal churches. A global Christian community does not diminish the value of the nation of Guatemala. Instead, the opposite happens, as O’Neill discusses: “Neo-Pentecostals globally have as their main focus the nation; it is \textit{countries} that must be saved” (O’Neill 2010: 175).

\textbf{A church with vision and skills}

Casa de Dios strives for “excellence” in everything it does, as the neo-Pentecostal teaching often goes: “We must give the best we have to Jesus.” This is evidenced in how they arrange their meetings, as well as the architectural ambitions of the new Ciudad de Dios. Their Sunday meetings are much organised, with excellent singers and dynamic, structured, and at the same time, emotional preaching. The new Casa de Dios building boasts the only auditorium in Central America with high-definition audio and video systems. In the many highly professional video presentations of the Ciudad de Dios, the construction process and the architecture are shown in detail. Everything has meaning; biblical verses give support for choices they have made. Art has an important role in the building as the furnishings and decorations all have biblical motives: scriptures or paintings. Similar Christian “cities” have been constructed in other places, such as in Nigeria, and they figure prominently in the

\textsuperscript{166}See their web page \url{www.cashluna.org} for Pastor Luna’s biography: \url{http://www.cashluna.org/index.cfm/page/conocenos/show/208/Pastor-Cash-Luna}
landscape of bustling towns like Lagos and Guatemala City. Amidst the dangers of the streets, crime, violence and temptations, the City of God seek to portray a different order.

Fran Lepe, the theatre director who gave his testimony during the inauguration, is currently the head of Casa Teatro, administered by Casa de Dios, with the aim to “be an artistic Guatemalan movement which impacts the society, nationally and internationally, through art, fostering and promoting values vital for a full life.”167 The play “Trip,” which is about Fran Lepe’s own life, has been shown in public schools in Guatemala. Fran Lepe told the story of when he approached the team of pastors with an idea of a theatre play related to machismo. He was used to presenting small budgets due to his work in other sectors, he said, and when the team of pastors saw the figures, they said: “Will this be enough?! We want something big, because this is for God!” His ambitions grew, too, he says. He told an enthusiastic audience, “We will go forward with new projects, a telenovela [soap opera], more theatre plays, more movies, more shows, and more things to give glory to God and to give cultural alimentation to this nation.” With the funding available, he has been able to hire well-known actors and to travel the country. The strong financial capacity of churches like Casa de Dios makes them a viable competitor to secular actors. This is a competition Cash Luna is eager to enter. Casa de Dios focus on being “the biggest, the best, and the highest” in competition with secular alternatives. The church has the largest parking lot in Central America, the best audio and video system in Central America, and more seating capacity than the national theatre. The message they want to portray is clear; Casa de Dios has a vision for excellence and the ability to see the vision materialised. They make it work.

The most applause was given during the more-than-10-minute long speech of the President of Guatemala, Otto Perez Molina. Molina is himself a Catholic and a military man who won the election in 2011 by promising to provide security to the nation. His words that evening were, however, tailor-made for Cash Luna and a Pentecostal audience:

To all of you present, I’d like to say to you that this evening we are inaugurating a great project of infrastructure: a great work that makes all of us Guatemalans proud. But much more than this, more than a work of infrastructure, we are witnessing an act… of faith! [applause] Because this work would not have been possible without faith. It would not have been possible if we did not have God and Jesus Christ in our hearts!” [applause]

President Perez Molina continued:

167 Excerpt taken from the Casa Teatro Facebook-webpage: https://www.facebook.com/pages/CasaTeatro/
This young man [Cash Luna] has shown us today, from the testimony that we heard, what Antonio [the illiterate man who had given testimony earlier] said; what we need to do is to obey God. There is no doubt that Pastor Luna has followed, listened to, and obeyed God! [Loud applause]

This is the result of years of faith, belief, vocation, deliverance, and commitment to carry the word of God. And today, in Guatemala, we are enjoying one of the biggest churches in the world! [Thunderous applause]

The president said that Cash Luna, his wife Sonia, the team of pastors, and the entire church were an inspiring example for his government. He ended his talk with the following words:

We can build a good Guatemala, a better Guatemala, if we obey God, if we have Christ in our hearts, and if we have the faith that we can change. Thank you all for giving us this example. May God bless you! Thank you.

The president confirmed the idea that the same principles needed to construct a Church are also needed to build a nation. These comments add further legitimacy to the pastor, and by association they also give validation to the President who offered a message the audience wanted to hear; faith is needed to change Guatemala. In building a Ciudad de Dios where “things work,” a monumental building in Guatemala City, Pastor Cash Luna has shown how things could be if people like him were in charge of the nation.

7.2.2 Influencing society through social welfare: As security experts
Religious institutions have long been important social services providers in Guatemala, particularly in fields such as education and health. The combination of continued privatisation of social services and very low tax revenue in Guatemala makes the issue of private welfare increasingly important. The practices of charity and social welfare also define the church, what it is, and what its functions are. As Pentecostalism has grown in Guatemala, the focus has shifted from a strict conversion focus to building a much broader, more complex institution in education, health, business, violence reduction, and more. The Pentecostal project of moralising and injecting values into Guatemalan society is manifested in the type of welfare and charity projects they engage in. There are responses from “below” and also from “above”: The response from “above” can be characterised by how actors such as the AEG are consulted on issues related to national security as well as invited to train military and police personnel in ethics and values; from “below,” Pentecostals work actively at the local level, such as engaging with urban gangs.

The high level of insecurity in Guatemala is of concern to all Guatemalans. The topic of how to handle this crisis has been the primary theme in the last few elections. Guatemala
City is one of the most dangerous cities in the world, with extremely high rates of crime and violence. This trend has led to several initiatives where individuals and collectives have investigated ways to protect themselves. Those who can afford it hire private security firms and live in guarded residential areas. Other neighbourhoods organise (informal) community policing, with regular night vigils that in some cases might mean taking the law into their own hands through lynching or extra-judicial killings (O’Neill 2010: 22). Less than 4 per cent of all homicides result in the conviction of the perpetrator (Amnesty 2013). The extreme levels of crime and impunity have led to several active “self-governance” initiatives, such as lynching. Less dramatic but of course very common is the strategy to shelter one’s family from the dangers in the street. In the bigger cities, the “streets” are to a large extent perceived to be the domain of gangs, criminals, and others operating the illegal sectors of Guatemala. Girls and women are specifically prone to violence, and restrictions on movement for them become particularly severe. New kinds of restrictions on movement oppress Guatemalan families and change the way people conduct their lives.

This is the one topic that has brought the most Pentecostals out in the streets for “protests” or “peace marches.” While there is disagreement in Guatemala as to who the enemy is, there is a consensus that Guatemala is in a kind of war and is in need of “peace.” Taking to the streets is also a way of claiming a dangerous area “for Jesus.” Neo-Pentecostal churches have been at the vanguard, staging public events with prayers, fasting, and spiritual warfare against national problems. But Pentecostals also do things that are more recognisable to the secular eye; in Guatemala City, local traditional Pentecostal congregations, or “barrio evangelicals,” are actively involved in addressing youth gangs (Brenneman 2012). So-called “gang-ministries” have been active in Guatemala since 1990s. In his study, Robert Brenneman found that by far the most common explanation for gang members who have managed to return to “civilian life” is through the born-again experience. Converting to a Pentecostal faith not only offers a way out but a variety of other benefits, such as “helping them to find work, reorder their priorities, and rebuild networks of trust after the gang” (Brenneman 2012: 16). Upon comparing Catholic groups engaged in “gang ministry” with Pentecostal agencies, Brenneman reported several differences both in their explanations for youth violence in Guatemala, funding and institutions, as well as their strategies for

168These neighbourhood churches are characterised by “theological conservatism, strong communal bonds, emphasis on healing and cathartic ecstasy, and strict piety” (Brenneman 2011: 58).
combatting the problem. Pentecostals focus on gangs primarily as a *spiritual* problem, one that first and foremost requires spiritual intervention (through conversion) and then secondly, social work.¹⁶⁹ Catholics refrain from bringing religion into the explanation and view gang violence as social, economic, and political in nature. In contrast, Pentecostals favour individual sin, loss of morals, and the disintegration of families rather than structural explanations. Where Pentecostals focus on “rescuing” gang members, Catholics tend to concentrate on *preventing* gang entrance by promoting education, job creation, and social justice, both directly in the poor urban neighbourhoods affected by gangs and on a national level, targeting the government and advocating for these policies.

The Evangelical Alliance (AEG) has become a prominent public authority on violence, a topic they have embarked upon in several different ways. The public image of the Pentecostals as moral and ethical and the message of the transforming power of conversion are both important. However, several academics, and NGOs in Guatemala, contradict the image portrayed by politicians and the media of a situation of chaos where youth gangs (*maras*) and criminal networks operate randomly, terrorising the country. They argue that there has been an overemphasis on the *maras*, to the extent that the involvement of government, state institutions, and national elites are obscured (McNeish and Rivera 2009; Benson et al. 2008). The Pentecostal explanation of violence, where the focus is on the individual and a loss of morals, is close to government’s position. This position puts responsibility for violence outside government control and enables close cooperation between the two sectors on the issue of security. The AEG has become an attractive partner for the government in teaching and moralising the security sectors in the country; the police and the military academy are frequently trained by people from the AEG and other Pentecostal institutions (Bjune 2012). As with how gang crime is approached, Pentecostals also focus on the individual and the loss of moral and values in approaching the solider, policeman or bureaucrat. As the problems of the individual, and the nation, are portrayed in terms as loss of morals and values, Pentecostals portray themselves as being the solution to these problems.

¹⁶⁹ Far from all Pentecostal churches focus on social work. Critics from both within and outside the movement point to several cases of «naive» Pentecostal engagement with gangs (Brenneman 2012).
An eye for an eye: Support for law and order

The Evangelical Alliance (AEG) has publically supported re-activating the death penalty in Guatemala. The discussion of re-activating the dormant death penalty has been front-page news for the last few years. The Catholic Church has expressed its strong opposition together with several liberal NGOs and centre-left political parties. However, public opinion has been in favour of the death penalty.\(^{170}\) In 2008, the AEG was invited along with representatives from the University of San Carlos, civil society, and the diplomatic community to discuss the topic.\(^{171}\) The AEG representative, Guillermo Méndez, argued in favour of the death penalty on the basis that the Old Testament contains ample examples of the practice of authorities exercising this right. It was not a matter of revenge (\textit{venganza}), he said, but a matter of restitution. It is a proportional answer to a serious crime; it is an eye for an eye.

Since 2006, the AEG has been part of an unusual alliance given its collaborative character. Together with the Archbishop of the Catholic Church, the Human Rights Ombudsman and San Carlos University, the state university, these four entities have formed part of what is called the G-4 (\textit{Grupo Garante del Acuerdo Nacional para el Avance de la Seguridad y la Justicia}). The group was established to offer advice on the formulation of a national plan aimed at reducing violence and impunity. The G-4 was then tasked to oversee the implementation of the Agreement. However, the group members withdrew as “guarantors” in 2010 as they expressed great disappointment regarding the lack of fulfilment on the part of the government. The G4 has, however, continued to meet to discuss topics of national concern, such as malnutrition and poverty.

Summary

As in Nigeria, Guatemalan Pentecostals have gradually become prominent actors in various sectors of society. Guatemalan Pentecostals are involved in the media, the economy, in politics and in providing welfare. This practice is an integral way of doing Pentecostalism:

170 These numbers are from 2004, when a majority (67.1 per cent) said they were in favour, while 29.1 per cent were against.

171 The event was hosted by the University of San Carlos on 4 September 2008. It was video recorded and can be accessed at the following link: http://sitios.ingenieria.usac.edu.gt/videoteca/videos/foro_pena_muerte/foro_pena.html (last accessed 18 July 2013). During an interview with an official from the AEG in 2012, he said that currently there is some divergence in opinion within the organisation.
expanding religion to all areas of life, as God is not limited to one or two areas, as the teaching goes, but has dominion over all. By example, Pentecostals have shown they have what it takes to master areas that have formerly been thought of as secular: building theatres and parking lots, addressing crime, and moralising the police. They portray themselves as having the spiritual and material skills to address the challenges facing Guatemala and are increasingly recognised by non-Pentecostals for their engagement in a variety of sectors.
7.3 Politics: Influence through cooperation

Pentecostals in Guatemala have long broken down the barrier between religion and politics. The newly converted neo-Pentecostal elite of Guatemala City, with its important networks and financial strength, first effectively cleared the wall of separation. The seizing of power by a trusted elder in the church, El Verbo (General Ríos Montt), intimately linked political power with religion and also cleared the social stigma of Pentecostals taking on roles in national life. Both Ríos Montt and later Serrano Elias were active and central persons in their churches prior to their national posts. These churches taught that Christians had a biblical mandate to rule and used the Bible to legitimize the political order (Manuel-Delgado 1998; Sanchíz Ochoa 1998; Garrard-Burnett 2010). Now, decades later, the Pentecostal approach to politics has changed and diversified. The political sector is only one of several sectors Pentecostals aim to influence. The neo-Pentecostal urban churches have been the drivers in the process of getting Pentecostals involved in politics, and the classical Pentecostals have followed suit. The following discussion intends to show some major changes in the Pentecostal movement’s relationship to the political sphere. The aim is also to explain how political practices are carried out as well as to point to some limitations of a specific Pentecostal political voice. Through various political practices, the Pentecostal community has been successful in bringing its faith to the centre of Guatemalan political life.

The neo-Pentecostals: From spiritual to material

I discussed the topic of Pentecostal presidents in an interview with a former campaign manager of ex-president Serrano Elias. He shook his head in disbelief over what he termed “a theology of the head” (teología de la cabeza), which he explains like this: once the head is “saved” through the possession of a true man of God, the rest of the body (the nation) will follow. Himself a Pentecostal, he believed this theology in the 1980ies “I believed it! I believed it was like that! For real! We sincerely believed it!” (interview Guatemala City, 29 March 2012). Our interview moved on to the topic of religious nationalism in Guatemala, and he said he had changed his mind on this topic, too: “God has plans for nations, but now, more than ever, I am convinced that God doesn’t save nations but saves persons. […] So, it was a mistake in the eighties to think that Guatemala was a light upon the nations.”

This type of reflection is rare amongst Pentecostals in Guatemala, at least publically. The reflection above points to a crucial change also found in the affluent neo-Pentecostal churches in Guatemala that propagated a rather aggressive form of dominion theology in the
1980s and 1990s, which held that the born again alone held the key to national redemption. The real war, it was (and still is in some places) preached, happened in the spiritual realm. Therefore, the Christian who masters the spiritual world should enter the war with weapons at hand: prayers and spiritual warfare. Caballeros and his El Shaddai church are still important in Guatemala, but a specific focus on spiritual warfare is less prominent. While engaging in the spiritual world through intercessory prayers, spiritual warfare, and the like is still considered important, there is now a greater emphasis on the “war” also being in the material world; conquering the material world necessitates “secular skills.” There has been a shift from an emphasis on the spiritual to an emphasis on the material; building schools, media networks and welfare institutions as a way of doing mission. This is not to say that the neo-Pentecostal movement has not had a material side; prosperity theology was, and still is, important in the neo-Pentecostal movement. However, there is a stronger focus on providing the church members with more than spiritual tools; they need to be capable of self-empowerment through managing skills in the “secular world.” The teaching and popularity of Cash Luna’s “for a better life” is one indication of this development.

The born-again movement has become embedded in history. While there is little public reflection on what the legacy of Pentecostal presidents has been, there is often discussion on the “failed” strategy that thought by winning souls, the nation would gradually change for the better. This idea has been dominant in the Pentecostal movement. Now, with the great numbers of Pentecostals and the low state of affairs in Guatemala, many are asking questions about what needs to be done differently. For a theology that preaches that what is needed to improve society is for the individual to change through “accepting Jesus as personal saviour and Christ,” the empirical facts in Guatemala are a theological puzzle; there are many born agans but no changes for the better. Six prominent neo-Pentecostal leaders were invited by the magazine La Verdad precisely to answer this question: Pastor Cash Luna, Apóstol Norman Parish, Pastor Mori de González, Apóstol Romeo Guerra, Pastor Cecilia de

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172 Running a mega-church means operating in a very competitive context. Church attendance can be a measurement of trends in the movement. As I was visiting the El Shaddai church in 2012 on two separate occasions (one miracle crusade and one regular Sunday sermon), attendance was very low; maybe two tenths of the seats were filled. Explanations for the drop of attendance are numerous. Maybe it has to do with a woman being pastora, or that Caballeros has entered politics so explicitly, or that their method of presenting church is no longer that popular. Clifton Holland (2011) has done a useful mapping of mega churches in Guatemala City that includes size, attendance, and personal observations. See the report “Research on the Evangelical Mega-Church Phenomenon in Central America: Facts and Fiction (2011). It can be accessed on the http://www.prolades.com webpage.
Caballeros, and Apóstol Sergio Enríquez. Cecilia de Caballeros said what was needed was Christians in politics; Norman Parish focused on the often repeated explanation that the Christian values had not sufficiently penetrated the society, there is not enough fear of God, and the churches have focused too much on growth and numbers at the expense of profound change. Other explanations were that the disintegration of the family leads to a disintegration of society; that if Guatemala had not been Christian, the situation would have been even worse; or, as Cash Luna says, in order to be a good doctor, it is not enough to be a good Christian; one must learn the skills of excellence in all areas of society (La Verdad, 2009). In general, all agreed that, contrary to what most believed 20 to 40 years ago, revival in itself is not enough. Something more profound is needed.

Symptomatically for the Pentecostal movement in Guatemala, none of the pastors interviewed blamed the government for the current crisis in the country. The message that is given is that Christians have the power, the means, and the responsibility to change the situation in their country; they must focus on helping the poor, providing education, injecting Christian values into society, teaching the true gospel, and assuming leadership in different areas.

**The classical Pentecostals: From apolitical to political**

While neo-Pentecostalism in the late 1970s and 1980s appealed mostly to the urban elite, the dominant form of Pentecostalism, the classical strand, had its major impact in the middle and lower classes amongst people with less possibility to engage in national politics. While still important, the lines between neo-Pentecostals and the classical Pentecostals have been blurred during the last decades. This is illustrated in the area of politics as most of the classical Pentecostal movements now believe they also have a role in politics. But the largest Pentecostal church in Guatemala, the Assembly of God, with more than 2600 churches spread around the country, still has a clause in their rules saying that their members should not take political offices. Reflecting on the topic with a senior official in the church, I was informed that in practice, this concept does not work anymore:

*We don’t get involved in politics [...] We don’t really know how it [the regulation] started. But it is part of our rules. It’s always been like that. It is difficult to change, but there are churches [within the Assemblies of God in Guatemala] who allow it. Last year we had a mayor in a church. Personally, I don’t have a problem with this, because I think we should be involved [in
politics]. Someone told me: “What should we do if all of Guatemala belonged to the Assembly of God? Should we wait for an unbeliever to come and govern us?” (Interview 28 March 2012, Guatemala City)

The view on politics is one of the reasons why the Assemblies of God are not members of the Evangelical Alliance (AEG). However, as the quote illustrates there are changes in this perspective even in a church that has been very strict on keeping itself separated from politics. Today, there are few churches with restrictions on their members’ desire to join political parties. In her study, political scientist Bjune found that “…a majority of Evangelical leaders now seem to embrace the perspective coinciding with that of the Evangelical Alliance, that ‘everything is political,’ and that evangelicals should seek to occupy all possible spaces in order to shape the country according to their faith-based values” (Bjune 2012: 120). Over the last decade or so, the AEG has openly entered political sectors to offer, in its words, “spiritual guiding and moral support to Guatemala’s political leadership.” The AEG has not had to enforce itself into these sectors, as its members have been invited by the political, economic, governmental, and educational sectors (Bjune 2012: 117-118).

7.3.1 Cooperation, not confrontation

The doors are open for Pentecostals who want access to the state and also private actors. The consecration of the Church of God and the national prayer breakfast are but a few examples of many where Pentecostals and politicians stand side by side. The close alliance between Pentecostals and the national elites has led to several questions regarding the Pentecostal movement’s willingness or ability to be a critical voice in civil society (Bjune 2012; Samson 2008). When famous foreign Pentecostal preachers visit Guatemala, they are treated as state guests; a visit with the President has almost become obligatory, and as “men of God” they are given access to different sectors to strengthen values and morals. When famous Argentinean preacher Luis Palau held a 10-day evangelisation crusade in Guatemala in 2008, he was surprised by the level of government cooperation:

I have had the joy of ministering in Guatemala for more than 40 years. But what distinguished this campaign from any other was the level of impact—the depth of penetration—to all levels of society. Never have we seen such access to government leaders, business professionals, and military personnel. It’s a testament to the power of the Gospel (The Christian Telegraph 2008).

The strategy of avoiding confrontation with the state has yielded considerable success for the Pentecostal movement. By pursuing seemingly non-political strategies, such as providing prayers and speaking of morals and values, they have become a dominant political
force in Guatemala today. No president or political party can avoid fraternising with this movement’s central actors: the AEG and prominent Pentecostal leaders.

The creation of an imagined Pentecostal community is moulded by a variety of means; most prominent here is the institutionalisation of a Protestant Te Deum Cristiano Evangélico (Bjune 2012). Together with a high-profile, prominent Pentecostal pastor in Guatemala, Jorge Lopez of the La Fraternidad Christiana, the AEG has co-hosted Te Deum ceremonies for the last three presidents in Guatemala. The Te Deum is portrayed as a way for Christians to fulfil the obligation in 1. Timothy 2, 1-4, which talks about the need to pray for the authorities, and it is also an “occasion of thanksgiving,” thanking the government for their work and for granting Guatemalans religious freedom.173 In addressing the congregation, radio and TV listeners, and the newly elected president, Otto Perez Molina, Pastor Lopez said:

The challenge is huge, the responsibility enormous, but you, Mr. President, you are not alone, you can count on each and every one of us [6 million evangelicals]; we are ready to support you with our prayers, our opinions, and everything that we have at our disposal. In our homes and congregations, we will wait for you with open arms to give you our friendship, spiritual advice, and all the love that God has put in our hearts; may God bless us.174

The Te Deum ceremony is originally a Catholic tradition, being held on Independence Day, 15 September. There are thus now two Te Deum ceremonies in Guatemala, one Protestant and one Catholic, portraying a powerful image of two equally important movements (held on 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} January). Given the Pentecostal anti-ecumenical stance, a joint sermon would have been impossible. By hosting their own ceremony, they portray a powerful image of their importance in this traditionally Catholic country. Through their participation in these events, politicians again confirm the importance of the Pentecostal community and nourish the idea of one Pentecostal community.

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173 None of my interviewees addressed the problems of religious freedom. When I asked about possible discrimination, I got negative replies. This is contrary to many other Latin American and African countries, where Pentecostals engage strongly in support for religious freedom and in addressing the dominant religion’s possible legal or political advantages. However, in his study from the 1990s, Steigenga found that it was also a concern for Pentecostals in Guatemala (Steigenga 2001).
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174 The speech given by Pastor Lopez can be found on their church webpage: \url{http://frater.org/recursos/2012/01/18/tercer-te-deum-cristiano-evangelico/} (last accessed 15 January 2013)
\end{flushright}
Explicit politics: Political candidates

While Pentecostals engage with the political sphere in many rather unconventional political ways, such as offering prayers and educating military personnel on values, Guatemalan Pentecostals also participate in partisan politics at the national and local levels (Samson 2008; Bjune 2012).

Pentecostal participation in political parties has long been increasing in Guatemala (Samson 2008). Since 1985, Congress has had a considerable presence of non-Catholics. No other Latin American country, except for the highly secular Uruguay, has as many non-Catholic congress-people as Guatemala (Rodriguez 2011:3). Roughly 30 per cent of the deputies are currently Protestant.\(^{175}\) In the 2011 elections, three of the presidential candidates were born-again Christians: Harold Caballeros, Manuel Baldizón, a multimillionaire, lawyer, and hotel owner turned politician, and lastly Patricia de Arzú (Bjune 2012: 115). Baldizón lost against the sitting president Rios Montt in the second round.\(^{176}\) While Caballeros, as a well-known preacher, tried to downplay his Pentecostal credentials in order to also attract a larger vote, Baldizón and Arzú, both laypersons, made frequent reference to their personal faith. The stigma of being a “religious fanatic,” as Rios Montt was referred to, no longer seems to be of importance. Being Pentecostal in the public has become mainstream, and so has making personal faith, in the pentecostalised version, an important part of public speech.

Symptomatic of the diverse Pentecostal movement with its lack of common structures is also a diffuse responsibility. Despite the failures of Rios Montt and Serrano Elias to deliver in their presidencies, there has been minimal public Pentecostal reflection on what went wrong. While both Serrano Elias and Rios Montt were active members in their churches and used elders in the church as formal advisors, they still ran as independent candidates.

This behaviour is also reflective of a general Pentecostal reluctance to engage with history. While the Catholic Church has been a prominent actor in addressing the atrocities of

\(^{175}\)A recent study by Alcántara and Rivas (2013) has statistics showing that only 50.5 of the deputies in congress are Catholic. In the 1985 elections, there were 11 deputies: 22 in 1990 and at least 18 in 1994 (Freston 2001:279). There were 113 seats in the congress until 2003, when it was raised to 158. The 1990 elections saw three evangelical presidential candidates, all neo-Pentecostals, two from Verbo-church, and one from El Shaddai (Ortiz 2004), and so did the 2011 elections. Pentecostal participation in partisan politics is high.

\(^{176}\)Manuel Baldizón was frequently dubbed a “populist” by the Guatemalan media, which was not so surprising as one of his campaign promises was to take Guatemala’s football team to the World Cup (highly unlikely given their performance). The most important topics of the elections in 2011 were how to handle violence, crime, and impunity in Guatemala. Baldizón is pro-death penalty to the extent that executions should be televised.
the Guatemalan Civil War and the period of Rios Montt in particular, the diverse Pentecostal movement hardly engages with this recent period in Guatemala. In 1990, representatives from the AEG said it was not their duty to examine historical, social, and economic causes of the Civil War, as David Stoll elaborates: “Instead, they said, evangelical churches were accomplishing a silent form of social work which was transforming Guatemala from the ground up” (Stoll 1993: 31).

Jorge Serrano Elias (the second Pentecostal president in Guatemala) is, however, widely believed to have “brought shame” on evangelicals when he attempted a failed self-coup (autogolpe) in 1993. He fled to Panama, where he still resides, and Guatemala has unsuccessfully tried to have him extradited on charges of corruption. Corruption charges, the failed self-coup, and some compromising pictures of him in a topless bar in the US have given him a bleak testimony amongst Guatemalans. When I asked during my interviews, Pentecostals were quick to criticize Serrano Elias on his moral deficits. Rios Montt, on the other hand, is either not talked about or is remembered for his strong moral character and unselfishness. He was not corrupt; he feared God, and he was not involved in any “moral” controversies. Serrano Elias failed on the core issues taught by the Pentecostal movement: morals, values, and family.

Even though the born-again movement has become embedded in history, the diversity of the movement allows for great flexibility as responsibility is diluted. However, the movement’s more “eschatological” side, the message of something brand new and revolutionary, becomes less credible as history takes its toll.

7.3.2 The limits of the Pentecostal community as an electoral base
When discussing Pentecostalism and politics, one recurring theme is the extent to which Pentecostals vote differently, just because they are Pentecostals. The question often being if a conservative theology also leads to voting for conservative political parties. Given the sheer numbers, are the Pentecostals disciplined enough to swing national elections? (Steigenga

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177 See Canton Delagdo 1998: 242-243 for a similar interpretation of how evangelicals view Rios Montt and Serrano Elias. She finds that during her interviews (a few years after Serrano Elias’ fall), people would return to the example of Rios Montt as a way of contrasting the disgraced Serrano Elias. Samson (2008: 91) also confirms this observation. There are of course a variety of opinions among Pentecostals in Guatemala, but there seems to be a clear tendency in this direction. Many Catholics also identified with the political project of Rios Montt (Smith and Grenfell 1999).
This idea has been of interest for researchers and maybe even more for politicians as they try to understand the electorate and secure votes.

Guatemala reinstated democracy in 1985 and opened up the general elections. Jorge Serrano Elias (who went on to win the election in 1991) gambled on acquiring the votes of the Protestants and the urban business community but managed only a disappointing third place. Contrary to what the party had hoped for, “brother” did not vote for “brother.” In a reflection note from 1986, Serrano Elias’ campaign manager Marco Tulio Cajas wrote about one of their mistakes during the election: “The ‘evangelical vote’ did not exist apart from in the minds of those of us who organised the campaign” (Cajas 1986: 44). In his recommendations for future elections, he cautioned about playing the “evangelical” card again. When Serrano Elias changed his tactics for the next elections in 1991, he was very successful in also securing the Catholic vote, winning the election, and thus being the first elected Pentecostal head of state in Latin America. Since then, Pentecostal presidential candidates, there have been many, have been careful not to portray their parties as “evangelicals,” but all have had to draw upon religious discourse that is attractive to both major religions (Smith and Campos 2012: 208). Thus, in a country where there is little cooperation between Catholic and Protestant clergy and institutions, national politics stands out as an arena were an ecumenical religious language is developed and used.

But while “the evangelical vote” does not exist as a uniform vote, ignoring the Pentecostal constituency is increasingly difficult. Judging by the “God language” employed by politicians and their willingness to participate in Pentecostal events ahead of the elections, the Pentecostal community is an important electorate. In the electoral campaigns, political parties have held public meetings organised by the AEG and the Apostolic Council, and they have also met with individual pastors such as Cash Luna and Jorge H. Lopez. Political parties have sought out Pentecostal candidates in the leadership with the hope of attracting and pleasing the Pentecostal constituency (Smith and Grenfell 1999).

A major study in the mid-1990s was carried out to address precisely these questions about Pentecostals and political views. Political scientist Timothy J. Steigenga used surveys to investigate the extent to which Protestants differed from Catholics in Guatemala (and Costa Rica). His major finding was that it was not affiliation (evangelicals vs. Catholic) that was important in shaping political attitudes but rather religious belief and experiences (Steigenga 2001).
2001). He found in Guatemala a strong “Pentecostalisation” of Catholic beliefs (through the Charismatic movement) and that Pentecostal/charismatic practices, such as speaking in tongues, had a strong correlation with a higher level of political quiescence and a stronger focus on supporting authorities. He also reported that neo-Pentecostals were more to the right on the political spectrum than others.

7.3.3 Israel: A case of the limits of Pentecostal influence
As with many Pentecostals around the world, Guatemalan Pentecostals have their eyes fixed on Israel. The 10-country study conducted by the Pew Forum in 2006 asked two questions about Pentecostals and their views on foreign policy issues, namely 1) the US-led war on terror and 2) the Israel-Palestinian conflict. While Guatemalan Pentecostals did not hold strong views on the war on terror, there was clear support for Israel (Pew Report 2006: 71). The support for Israel cuts across the neo-Pentecostal/classical Pentecostal divide in Guatemala. This support rests on a specific reading of the Bible as well as a long, close relationship with Israel and Guatemala, particularly the support vote in 1948. Marta Pilon de Pacheco, a Guatemalan neo-Pentecostal author, writes:

After they had suffered for so long and endured tragedies such as the Holocaust ordered by Hitler, wherein more than 6 million Jews were killed, Israel was born on 14 May 1948 by a vote of the United Nations. Why am I telling you this? Because it was Guatemala’s vote that made possible the rebirth of the blessed nation of Israel. We know with certainty that Guatemala’s political vote in favour of God’s Land and people was God’s spiritual vote in favour of Guatemala’s land and people (O’Neill 2010: 8).

In Pentecostal historiography it was precisely this vote in 1948 that made God bless Guatemala particularly and kick-started the conversion to Pentecostalism. The vote is treated as a defining moment in Guatemala, in which Guatemala gradually left behind its past of idolatry (Catholic practices) and witchcraft and heresy (Mayan practices) and gradually turned towards God (Delgado 1998: 261).

Support of Israel was strong throughout the ministry of Harold Caballeros, ex-foreign minister of the Republic (January 2012-January 2013) and former pastor of El Shaddai. Upon visiting his church in Guatemala City, one of the first things one will see upon entrance is a large Israeli flag. During the United Nations’ resolution in November 2012 where an

178 The 10 countries that were part of the survey were all countries that are known for having a strong Pentecostal community (except for India): Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, the United States, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, the Philippines, and South Korea (Pew Forum 2006).
overwhelming majority supported UN recognition of the state of Palestine (138 in favour to 9 against), Guatemala was one of the 41 countries that abstained from voting.\footnote{29 November 2012, UN General Assembly communique GA/11317: \url{http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11317.doc.htm}} When Caballeros stepped down as foreign minister in January 2013, it took a couple of months before the new FM announced that Guatemala had followed other Latin American countries with its recognition of Palestine on 10 April.\footnote{Starting in December 2010, almost all Latin American countries have recognised Palestine with the exception of Panama, Columbia, and Mexico (June 2013). The Guatemalan FM said in a communique that Guatemala “now joined the majority of Latin American countries.” It is also noteworthy that the Vatican has been engaged actively in favour of Palestine’s recognition.} Given Caballeros’ strong commitment to Israel, it is highly unlikely that he would have supported the decision.

This move angered the Pentecostal community, and the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) publicised a communique, organised demonstrations, and held a press conference condemning the government decision. The critique of the government was unusually strong. They argued that the issue of Israel has very important biblical, historical, and political connotations:

“As the ultimate representative entity for the Evangelical church in Guatemala since 1937, and with a membership of over 6 million Guatemalans, in regard to the recognition of a Palestinian state…

We manifest:

- That we care for the Palestinian and Israeli people and we recognise their desires and rights, which must be discussed exclusively between the two, in search of a common peace.
- That the topic of Israel has very important biblical, historical, and political connotations.
- That the majority of the Guatemalan people believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and urge us to pray for peace in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6-9).
- That Guatemala is and has been a friend of Israel since its foundation, and Israel in return has shown solidarity and been a great collaborator with our nation.
- That we regret that our governmental authorities make decisions without considering the full picture, exposing the whole nation to new judgements from God Almighty.

We exhort:

- That our authorities reconsider the recognition and that they refrain from taking positions that do not express the feelings of the majority of the Guatemalans.
- That the position from the UN in 1948 is kept, by which Guatemala has been protected and greatly blessed by God.
That in the search for a firm and lasting peace between the two peoples, if required, Guatemala participates in conciliation and mediation only.

God said to Israel: “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Genesis 12: 3a) (AEG communique, April 2013).

As is clear from the AEG communique, there was great disappointment that the government did not follow this advice. They did not avoid using explicit religious language, and they mixed religious and political arguments with a seemingly great confidence mix, such as saying that Guatemala has been “protected and greatly blessed by God” because of the vote the country gave in 1948. However, despite their prominence, their close links to the government, and the threat that this decision exposes “the whole nation to new judgements from God Almighty,” they did not have the power to get their view through. The case thus shows limitations to what the Pentecostal community can achieve when its interests run contrary to those of the government. Where there is a convergence of views and interests, however, there is a mutual reinforcement of the two sectors.

Summary

A wide variety of Pentecostal actors are involved in politics in Guatemala. Pentecostals have been intimately linked with the institutional political spheres since early 1980s. But the Pentecostal movement is more characterised by cooperation with political authorities than opposition, even though there are cases where they have taken a critical stance against the government, as channelled through the AEG.

In both Nigeria and Guatemala Pentecostal pastors have attempted to run for national political office without success. However, no politicians can neglect the Pentecostal constituency and politicians in both countries eagerly associate themselves with Pentecostal pastors and institutions. But their main strength as a political community does not lie in a uniform vote or their ability to get one specific party to power. Choosing cooperation with political elites has been a good Pentecostal strategy for gaining access to different sectors of society.
7.4 The “being everywhere”

The image of a big Pentecostal movement does not only lie in its numbers but also in how it dominates the public. Pentecostalism is a public religion not just through participation in the public sphere, as an actor in civil society and through the active use of the different media, but also through dominance in the physical public space. While public sphere and public space sometimes are used interchangeably, I follow the work of the historian Adeboye, who suggests keeping them separate to improve our analysis of how religion goes public (Adeboye 2012). There is a popular misconception that Pentecostals are all about the spiritual, while in reality what first catches the eye in Guatemala is Pentecostalism’s materiality; it is everywhere. As discussed earlier, the “public sphere” is a concept with a multitude of meanings. I will in the following sections discuss Pentecostalism as an actor in the public sphere and as a civil society actor in the public sphere, as well as its more material sides. The public space (buildings, rallies, etc.) is intimately linked to the more “imaginary” public sphere, as “It is thus the physical arena in which the activities associated with the public sphere are executed” (Adeboye 2012: 147). Keeping in mind Talal Asad’s (and others’) poignant reminder about the public sphere as a space articulated by power and not a neutral space where citizens of all backgrounds have access, an examination of the Pentecostal appropriation of physical spaces is timely. As newcomers, Pentecostals were first confined to the margins in society, and they did not have access to the public sphere in line with what other religions, such as the Catholic Church, had. This has now changed.

7.4.1 The public sphere: capturing the Streets and the Conversation

Being visible is a main concern for the Pentecostal movement. This is also true for the Catholic Church, which has its churches centrally located, takes processions to the streets, and is a central national actor. However, the Pentecostals, as newcomers, did not first and foremost try to replicate the “Catholic way” but instead carved their own path in the public space. The lack of a centralised Pentecostal structure and its bottom-up approach is evident in the Pentecostal physical chaos; a multitude of churches occupy central urban areas, residential areas, and small villages. The big mega-churches add to the picture as landmarks of economic strength and success. Posters and stickers announcing the “good news” and Pentecostal events are everywhere. The lack of means in the early phase of the Pentecostal revival led to the appropriation of spaces not formerly thought of as religious, such as turning someone’s home
or garage into a church or, with the advent of the more affluent neo-Pentecostals, converting hotels, cinemas, sports stadiums, and secular conference centres into religious spaces. Whereas the Catholic Church has impressive churches located in the hearts of cities around the country, Pentecostals have built mega-churches in new terrain: outside the city centre, along the highways, and in residential areas. By turning spaces formerly thought of as secular into religious ones, there is a process of the sacralisation of space; turning hotels into places for worship or claiming streets and city squares for Jesus is a way of expanding the domain of the church and spreading its message. The spread is facilitated using sound; loud speakers and open doors transmit the songs, the prayers, and the sermons into the streets. For instance, organisations like “Winning My Nation” (*Tomando Mi Nación*), a Pentecostal interdenominational body, organised a three-day event in April 2012 in which they rented airplanes, helicopters, boats, and buses to cover the country with prayers. The three-day event, which was supported by the AEG, ended with a festival in front of the national palace, in the heart of the city (*Siglo 21*, 2012)

By organising rallies in the main squares of cities or walking through neighbourhoods as a method of conducting spiritual warfare Pentecostals aim to “cleanse” areas and convert them into Pentecostal areas. The activity of spiritual warfare is a war in the invisible, the spiritual realm, but at the same time it is also a very physical exercise; when former pastor Harold Caballeros of the El Shaddai church engaged in a national prayer campaign in the early 1990s, he did so by acquiring planes that took “prayer armies” over the Guatemalan territory to strategically cover it with prayers as a way to lift the curse that he argued had been inflicted upon the nation. As O’Neill has shown, the neo-Pentecostal activity of taking “back the streets” is highly creative and unconventional; in 2006 a group of members of the El Shaddai church met for three weeks in a row to pray for seven hours non-stop over a basket of 72 rocks. Then these rocks were placed in strategic areas around Guatemala City in order to break the demonic stronghold that they believed governed the city. This demonic stronghold was manifested through the high levels of crime, corruption, and violence. They believed that when placed in the right places, these stones would “detonate,” in a spiritual sense and remove the demonic stronghold (O’Neill 2010: 107-112). With this example, O’Neill aims to show how a specific type of Christian citizenship is enacted; the congregants of the El Shaddai feel a responsibility to “do something,” as they believe they possess the means to change a country that, in fact, many Guatemalans accept as being almost beyond redemption.
More common activities in the public include the many outdoor meetings and prayer walks as they appear, big and small, in squares throughout the country. The active staging of the public, streets and towns—in their many forms—clearly symbolises a Pentecostal all-encompassing world view; the Holy Spirit can be put to work everywhere. Thus, the multifaceted Pentecostal use of the physical space serves many purposes. It spreads the gospel and thus satisfies the Pentecostal missionary imperative. It is also a mode of staging “turf protection” and a way of empowering the individual Christian to go out and claim a territory (the streets) that many fear given the high levels of crime and violence. But it is also a way of promoting a specific Pentecostal identity and worldview onto non-Pentecostals.

The Pentecostal use of media is in Guatemala, as in many other countries, an integrated Pentecostal practice. The media has changed dramatically in Guatemala during the last few decades. Deregulation policies and new technologies have opened up the arena for new private actors and allowed the media to become globalised. One (of several) reasons explaining the rise of Pentecostalism is that the globalised consumer culture and the consolidation of global media systems facilitated the break of the Catholic church’s cultural power and paved the way for Pentecostalism (Smith and Campos 2012: 202). The Pentecostal media has a simultaneously strong focus on both the already converted as well as the “unreached.”

In Guatemala the radio is the most important mass medium, and it is used widely by Pentecostals. TV, however, carries prestige. The pastors attached to the Apostolic Council are all well-known through their own TV channels; “Being successful as an apostle presupposes access to electronic media” (Smith and Campos 2005: 50). Guatemalan pastors gain their visibility primarily through their own satellite channels. Public media is weak in Guatemala, as most major TV stations, newspapers, and online media are private (Avila and Valdizan 2013). There are ample Pentecostal programmes available on satellite TV, but the majority of these are foreign programmes.

In the 1980s, US televangelists like Jimmy Swaggart and Pat Robertson became household names in Guatemala. Jimmy Swaggart used “satellites and syndicated tapes to become the closest thing to a Protestant pope in Central America” (Rose and Schultze 1993: 435). However, this did not mean that the teaching was alien for Guatemalans. A rare study from 1985 found that 70 per cent of the sampled Christians (of all denominations) found the
teachings of Swaggart more of use in their daily lives than that of their local parish (Smith 2001: 5). The messages of these TV evangelists were widely available, as they had the necessary economic capital to buy air time on the national channels. There was an astounding growth of religious broadcasting in Guatemala in the 1970s and 1980s, and by 1988, the Guatemalan Protestants controlled around 70 per cent of all religious programming on the radio (Rose and Schultze 1998: 434). While the much weaker Catholic programmes attempted rather unsuccessfully to “be far more of a cultural presence through music, information, and to some extent, instruction,” Protestant (mostly Pentecostal) programmes were characterised by live recordings with enthusiastic witnesses of faith that were much more locally and personally relevant, engaging, and encouraging (Rose and Schultze 1993: 434).\footnote{For a historical view on religious broadcasting in Guatemala, see Rose & Schultze 1993. There was a dramatic increase in religious broadcasting from 1960-1990. By 1988, 63 per cent of AM stations and 43 per cent of all FM stations in Guatemala aired religious programmes: 70 per cent of these were controlled by Protestants, while Catholics only had 20 per cent (the rest were produced by Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, spiritualists, naturalists, and other groups). Radio is obviously far cheaper to produce than TV, and it was in radio that Guatemalan preachers first mastered media. With the growth of a neo-Pentecostal national branch embracing the upper class, financing for TV became available. This was during the years of civil war, and there were heavy restrictions on political messages on the radio—thus the current of Catholic liberation theology would not be permissible. Catholic programs in Guatemala therefore focused on cultural programs and avoided politics. Gradually in the 1990s, the Catholic Church “surrendered” to a Pentecostalised way of using media. Even though a large percentage of Guatemalans are poor, radio and TV are accessible for a large segment of the population. Swaggart was always much more popular than Robertson in Central America; Rose and Schultze argue convincingly that the most popular were the ones that were apolitical, morally conservative, and neo-Pentecostal in orientation.}

By creating their own parallel religious media structures, Guatemalan Pentecostals have been building their own church; they have also made a space for themselves in the larger Guatemalan society. Just like in Nigeria, the presence of Pentecostal leaders in their own self-produced media in Guatemala gives them a platform in secular media as well. Prominent Pentecostal leaders have become celebrities; “Everybody” in Guatemala knows who Cash Luna is.\footnote{Research on religion and the changing public sphere is still scarce in Guatemala, compared to a flourishing academic field on Pentecostalism in Africa (instance Meyer and Moors (2006); Ihejirika (2012); Hackett (2012) and Englund (2011)). While still a rarely researched theme, there are some important contributions as to the role of the media and Pentecostalism in Guatemala, see Smith and Campos (2012; 2005); Smith (2009; 2007); Rose and Schultze (1994).} The combined presence in the public space and the public spheres of a diverse imagined Pentecostal community constitutes a powerful actor in Guatemalan society.

### 7.4.2 Civil society: beyond Non-Governmental Organisations

Just as rigid concepts of the public sphere, in the more Habermasian sense, have hampered the study of social and political change, so have rigid ideas of “civil society.” Both concepts have
made much research blind to new movements such as Pentecostalism, making them “irrelevant and inconsequential” as our eyes have been focused on core state institutions (Smilde 2007: 94). While the Catholic Church in Guatemala has since the Civil War assumed a role in the public sphere of civil society, which is more in line with what established theories expect religion to do (exemplified in Casanova, 1994) the role of the Pentecostals in the public has been different. As previously discussed, the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) was a reluctant participant in the institutionalised civil society consortiums during the peace process. When parts of the agreement were put on a national referendum in 1999, the Evangelical Alliance advised its members to vote against it, which was contrary to what other sectors of formalised civil society advised and lobbied for.Judging by the extremely low voter turnout for the referenda, the AEG position reflected the larger sentiment among many Guatemalans of a peace process that never really became a national concern. While the reasons for this are very complex, one important—and often ignores—factor in academic research is that the dominating narrative of the conflict, predominant in an organised civil society, for academic researchers and amongst international actors, as being between a poor disempowered population (the Mayans in particular) against a discriminatory elite, was not adopted by a large segment of the Pentecostal movement. As Garrard-Burnett has shown, “there is today within Guatemala and outside of it a vigorous and evolving historiographical debate about the nature and the meaning of the 36-year struggle” (Garrard-Burnett 2009: vii). The war has ended, but the battle for the story about the war continues to be of relevance in present-day Guatemala.

As Guatemala has changed dramatically the last 20-30 years, so has the public sphere. More than just a discursive space, it is a place that creates power. During the years of civil war and military rule in Guatemala, the public sphere was closely linked to state power. Privatisation and democratisation has opened the space to a set of new actors; among them we find prominently Pentecostal actors who have the skills, the financial means, and a strong missionary seal that are all qualities that contribute towards becoming a dominant actor in the public. Additionally, they have a message that does not seem to be feared (rather encouraged) by the Guatemalan elite; this is likely due to the fact that they have, compared to other “projects” in Guatemala, been allowed to operate freely, even during the years of military repression and strong state control.
Parallel to Pentecostal growth in Africa and Latin America, there has also been a global surge in the NGO sector funded by international agencies. The devastating earthquake in Guatemala in 1976 brought a new set of actors onto the Guatemalan scene: the international development sector. This sector was further strengthened by the peace process. Guatemala was a laboratory for the international liberal peace-building regime in the 1990s (Kurtenback 2010; Nelson 2009). Central to this thinking is that respect for human rights, development and stability are dependent on strong democratic institutions, which in turn are dependent on a critical and lively civil society. Thus, particularly in the immediate post-war period, international donors brought substantial funding to this diverse and divided body of small and large NGOs. The Pentecostal churches, probably the most vibrant social movement in Guatemala over the last three to four decades, have been marginal in this wider organised civil society process (Ortiz 2007; Calder 2001).

Inspired by the approach put forward in a comparative study on NGOs and Pentecostalism in Africa (Freedman 2012), I will attempt a broad comparison between these two sectors as we find them in Guatemala. The aim is to provide new angles to account for Pentecostal political and public engagement. It is also relevant for the understanding of the category “civil society,” as throughout the 1980s and 1990s (and to a large extent, still today) this concept has been closely linked with the NGO sector as a critical and corrective public voice, often in opposition to a less cherished state (Keane 1998: 25; chapter 3 in this thesis). In much of the academic literature on post-conflict Guatemala, Pentecostalism is rarely mentioned or discussed despite this literature’s strong focus on civil society. The Catholic Church has been active during the peace process and also in post-war Guatemala (Calder 2001; Jeffrey 1998), and it has to a large extent assumed the role assigned to public religion.

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183 See Kurtenback (2007), Marchetti, and Tocci (2009) for more on this topic. The inclusion of civil society in the negotiating process was always in an advisory capacity and not in a decision-making one. The gap between “the people” and “the state,” which this policy intended to decrease, is still wide. In the words of an activist from the NGO sector: “I am not sure how it got decided that creating democracy and strengthening institutions would be the job of the NGO, but what it did was create this whole parallel structure to the state, with the ASC [Civil Society Assembly], NGOs, and the ‘friendly countries.’ The state really did not have much to do with the accords, and so now what we know is that peace was never really part of the state’s project” (Nelson 2009: 229).

184 There is more cooperation lately, particularly as the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) has become a more central and established actor in the national arena. This has led the AEG to form the G-4, which is comprised of the Evangelical Alliance, the Human Rights Ombud, the University San Carlos and the Catholic Church.

185 As an example of how politicised the concept of civil society may be, a Civil Society Index report from 2006 explicitly holds “evangelical churches” outside civil society, while the Catholic Church is included in civil society, 2006: 20. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Guatemala_Country_Report.pdf
by Casanova, as a moral voice in the public, participating in the public sphere with other actors and holding the government accountable.

However, the Pentecostals have been and still are largely absent from activities linked to the central topics of the peace process: discrimination of the Mayan population, gross economic and social inequality, gender inequality, state violence during the war, the genocide trial of Efraín Ríos Montt, state-sponsored human rights violations, and more. These topics are a main concern for liberal civil society. The NGO sector has a focus on empowering marginalised groups, such as the indigenous population, women, and small farmers as well as providing assistance to those directly affected by the war, including widows, the internally displaced, and refugees.

The NGO sector frames its work in the language of democracy, an integral view on socio-economic development, and of rights: human rights, indigenous rights, and women’s rights. In the NGO narrative, which correlates with the view of the “international community”, the reasons for Guatemala’s problems lie in the gross inequalities that have been sustained by the state and the informal actors who control the state (such as the financial elite). Thus, since the problems originated in state policies, this is also where the key to solutions are. Salvation also lies with the state. By building strong democratic institutions in Guatemala, a critical constituency will enable better policies that can empower the majority of the population, not just the few elite. International funding is seen as a legitimate way of bypassing discriminatory state practices and empowering the people. By building a stronger future, the NGO’s emphasises the need to also confront the past by addressing the crimes committed during the war. The trial of ex-dictator Efraín Ríos Montt is but one important measure against the near complete impunity of atrocities committed.

Speaking very generally, doing injustice to great varieties in both sectors, at one level, the liberal NGO sector and Pentecostal churches want the same outcome: peace and development in Guatemala. They both provide services that to some degree supplement the state, for instance, in education and in health. They target the poor through housing projects, material assistance, and food. They nurture transnational links and have to varying degrees received international funding, though from different sources. They operate in a competitive environment and are often value-driven and headed by charismatic leaders. Both sectors have a radical vision for the future and seek to empower the people and build better societies. Both
are tax-exempt and have also been subject to public criticism, and praise, in Guatemala. The NGO sector has been accused of being pawns of an international liberal agenda, driven by the quest for funding (Nelson 2007: 209). Newspapers regularly feature stories of financial abuse in the NGO sector, nurturing a sceptical public impression of individuals tapping into a pool of tax-free wealth (Sridhar 2007: 192). Due to infighting and numerous conflicts between NGOs and within NGOs, there is an acknowledged problem of cooperation that is believed to lessen their impact on society. The Pentecostal churches have, on their side, also been accused of being part of an international conspiracy, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, as pawns of US conservative agenda and as collaborators of the neo-conservative state.

The strategies to achieve peace and development are different. In her book, Freeman makes the argument that Pentecostals have been far more successful in achieving change in Africa than the NGO sector based on four explanations: 1) different funding sources: Pentecostals are mainly financed by their members, which fosters both participation and accountability, while NGOs respond to external stakeholders far removed from the problems they address; 2) Pentecostals focus on transforming the individual, while NGOs tend to concentrate on structural changes; 3) Pentecostals foster participation. They are run by the people and for the people, while NGOs struggle to become embedded in local communities; and lastly, 4) the Pentecostals have become better integrated in the local religion and culture, making the development exercise a holistic event, which is in contrast to NGOs, who have largely ignored religion and culture (Freeman 2012: 24-26). All her points are good to think with also for a discussion on Pentecostalism in Guatemala.

**The Pentecostals**

As stressed earlier, when Pentecostals engage in civil society, it is not primarily through conventional methods, such as participating in broad movements with other actors, writing petitions, demonstrating, or taking part in activities aimed at holding the government accountable. While there currently are signs of change, in general the Pentecostal movement has only reluctantly participated in broad-based civil society fora. This trend has been observed in the umbrella organisations (AEG; AMEG or for the *Consejo Apostólico de Guatemala*) as well as for individual churches or pastors.

By making family the fundamental unit of society and by explaining complex social problems in terms of disintegration of the family and a lack of religious values,
Pentecostalism offers a powerful message to the individual; something can be done about the chaos in one’s country. The nation’s problems become individualized. Compared to those that focus on government failures, neo-liberal policies, structural poverty and racism, the Pentecostal message is in many ways easier to act on. In general, and compared to the NGO sector, Pentecostals do not place blame with outside factors, such as neo-liberal polices, multi-national co-operations, or the state for the problems in society.

In his book, *The Transformative Power of Jesus Christ*, Harold Caballeros (2003) explains the need to alter our way of thinking in order to change the problems society faces. In his books, he engages with a series of “secular” western academics, such as Max Weber, Samuel Huntington, Lawrence Harrison, Francis Fukuyama, and David Stoll, in addition to neo-Pentecostal literature. Discussing poverty, both in Guatemala and other places, he elaborates on how he came to understand that poverty is a mental condition; he writes: “Why are we poor? Because we think like poor people” (Caballeros 2003: 101). He refutes theories of poverty that explain the condition and underdevelopment as consequences of colonialism, imperialism, dependency theories (rich countries exploiting poor countries) or geographical explanations (poverty as a result of the tropical climate) and states that it is the *culture* of a country that determines the state of that nation. The message is that it is the culture that needs to change; with a change in culture, society will gradually transform for the better. While in one sense this message places power beyond the state, it may also be a script for a specific type of political action (as mentioned earlier, Caballeros is an active politician). But by focusing on factors that lie beyond the government, Pentecostals have become attractive partners for political and economic elites, as Bjune has argued: “Societal problems are referred to in moral terms, and the solutions to social, economic or crime-related challenges are therefore presented as spiritual and value oriented and very rarely considered as political or structural (…)” (Bjune 2012: 126). By turning the attention from the state and the government and placing it on what the individual can and should do, Pentecostals define the church as a key institution to address the challenges facing society at large.

**The rights discourse**

Whereas the NGO-sector has a strong human rights focus in the work, prominent Pentecostal leaders in Guatemala rarely adopt this language. The two most basic rights relate to the family and to religion. Both of these rights focus less on the responsibility of the state in fulfilling or respecting these rights, and more on keeping the state away from interfering.
As we saw from Cash Luna’s speech, the family is regarded as the “fundamental unit of society” and carries great responsibility beyond the specific family unit: “If the family is torn apart, then society will be torn apart, too” (Luna 2009). The importance of the nuclear family is very well reflected in the teaching and activities of the churches who place great emphasis on fatherhood and motherhood, marriage counselling, couples retreats, and integrated activities for the whole family in the church. The family is a primary concern for many religious conservatives, globally, as exemplified in the growing importance of alliances of conservative religious groups within the UN. Since the early 2000s, these groups have become very vocal, challenging liberal views such as women’s rights, abortion, and gay rights prominently under an umbrella of “pro-family” activism (Butler 2006). While these issues are certainly an integral component, Pentecostals in Guatemala also relate the family to the specific conditions of the country.

In his book on the neo-Pentecostal El Shaddai church, Kevin L. O’Neill eloquently describes how the church places importance on fatherhood as both the cause and the redemption to Guatemala’s problems (O’Neill 2010). A good father is God-fearing, moral, hardworking, and head of the family, which produces good citizens. A bad father, however, is responsible for the disintegration of the family, which again is used to explain the complex problems in Guatemala: “The father, rather than the war or the economy, rather than gangs or corruption, is 100 per cent responsible for his children and for Guatemala” (O’Neill 2010: 120). O’Neill found in his study that there was no focus on structural causes underlying the problems in post-war Guatemala, such as free trade agreements, poverty, the widespread racism in Guatemalan society, or the ramifications of the brutal Civil War, which left 200,000 dead and many more fatherless. The focus on the family and what is portrayed as family values makes its entrance on the national arena, in politics and in the public sphere, in a variety of manners. One is through the prominence of Pentecostal pastors, elders, and individuals in partisan politics and in the media. Another method is via civil society intervention as exemplified by actions from the Evangelical Alliance. Two cases illustrate this point, and they are both framed in opposition to initiatives where the “international community” and human rights discourse are involved. In both cases, the AEG worked as a
partner in civil society together with the Catholic Church and other organisations. Thus, issues of sexual morality in law have led to some Catholic-Pentecostal cooperation in Guatemala.\textsuperscript{186}

First, the AEG works systematically to prevent the activation of a human rights code for children, the Children and Youth Code (\textit{Codigo de la Niñez y la Juventud}), a code that was jointly produced by international organisations such as UNICEF, Guatemalan NGOs, and a government commission in the late 1990s (Samson 2008: 77). The code became very controversial; the AEG, and other actors, argued that it took away a family’s authority over its children and gave it to the state.\textsuperscript{187} This line is consistent with a general scepticism towards international human rights discourse. Contrary to many liberal civil society organisations in Guatemala, the Pentecostal community has not adopted a human rights frame for their engagement.

Second, the AEG formed part of a group that was influential in making President Otto Perez Molina refuse to sign and publically criticise an Organisation of American State (OAS) agreement that they feared would allow same-sex marriages and legalisation of abortion. A communique published 31 May 2013 (a week prior to the OAS meeting, which was hosted in Guatemala) included the following:

[... ] We are informed that in the documents prepared as formalities that will be presented to the OAS General Assembly, there are perverse policies promoted which will destroy the public moral and the family. This is done under the subtle, but every time more aggressive, policy of 1) gender equality, identity and expression, and anti-discrimination of sexual preferences, and 2) sexual and reproductive health and rights. These policies seem to have worthy goals and benefits for society, but what they really seek is, on the one side, the institutionalization of homosexual unions as legally valid through “marriage,” and on the other side, to decriminalise or legalise abortion, so that instead of it being a crime it is considered a “right” that women have over their bodies.\textsuperscript{188}

It is not controversial to be anti-abortion and anti-same-sex unions in Guatemala (all Presidential candidates ahead of the elections in 2011 expressed similar views on the topics).

\textsuperscript{186}In his 1998 book, Brian H. Smith discusses possible scenarios for Catholic-Pentecostal cooperation in the future. One example is an alliance regarding sexual morality, a scenario he fears as he thinks it may complicate democratic processes. This on the basis that he draws illustrates where the conservative sectors in both religions get too much control over a population they are at odds with. Judging from opinion polls conducted in Guatemala (and Nigeria), there seems to be strong support for the policies promoted by the churches.

\textsuperscript{187}For more, see Samson (2008). There was also great suspicion that this would lead to increased bureaucratisation as well as the possible manipulation of this law for political ends.

\textsuperscript{188}Comunicado Urgente 31 May 2013. The communique can be obtained online: http://www.iglesiacatolica.org.gt/20130531.pdf
However, the combined efforts of institutions such as the AEG and the Catholic Church make it difficult to voice dissenting views. Ahead of the elections in 2007, the AEG and the Apostolic Council invited the presidential candidates to an open debate where they asked specific questions related to homosexuality and abortion. The organisers said they wanted to raise topics that were not talked about in the campaign, topics such as “life, morals and integrity.” After hearing the view of each individual candidate, Dario Perez, former head of the AEG, said that “we are four million voters who now better can decide who to give our vote” (*Prensa Libre* 2007).

**Summary**

Occupying the public space and the public sphere is a central concern for Guatemalans as well as for Nigerian Pentecostals. Being visible, audible, and present is a goal in itself. Pentecostal actors have attained celebrity by consolidating their presence in the public through their own TV and radio stations, online services, posters, books, and public appearances. Through this presence the message of individual morality and responsibility is constantly reiterated, echoing what many political elites focus on: a lack of morals, discipline, and honesty. As such, the entrance of Pentecostals in the public sphere has yet to demonstrate that they want something else than the political elites (Smith and Campos 2012: 217), and something else then freedom to operate as they want.
7.5 Pentecostalisation of religion

Given the dominance of the Catholic Church on the continent, the relationship between Pentecostals and Catholics has been the object of scrutiny in several studies, with different perspectives (Chesnut 2003; Smith 1998). Taking a broad view across the continent, Smith presents three different scenarios for Pentecostal-Catholic relations. First, one scenario present in several works is a mutual reinforcing flight from the world: a theological conservative and spiritual focused religion that dampers democratic citizenship (Smith 1998: 85-87). While Smith presents evidence for moral private conservatism, contrasting evidence of a socially and politically engaged Catholic and Pentecostal church makes this scenario less likely. The second scenario is one of conflicting religio-political agendas; this scenario is empirically backed by the experience of Pentecostal support for authoritarian regimes in the 1970s and 1980s and the opposition to these regimes by important parts of the Catholic Church, but this description is no longer helpful. Then thirdly, Smith draws a scenario in which the two movements join forces to achieve social and political goals shared by both. However, he argues, while there are examples of Catholic-Pentecostal cooperation that have influenced public policy on conservative moral agendas, such as against abortion and the rights of homosexuals (Smith 1998: 92-96), he finds it unlikely that the antagonism between the two will disappear.

In contemporary Guatemala, there is evidence that all three scenarios have some relevance, which is a strong indication of the elasticism as well as the internal diversity within the two Christian movements. Smith’s scenarios are helpful to consider, and they will be briefly examined below, but a central feature is missing in his analysis: the incipient Pentecostalisation of the Catholic Church (Thorsen 2012).

7.5.1 Some cooperation exists between Catholics and Pentecostals, but problems still remain

The growth of Pentecostalism in Guatemala has been characterised by both anti-Catholic and anti-traditional (Mayan) religion rhetoric. Like an archetypical sect (if we follow Troeltsch’s categorisation), Pentecostals have been hostile to their surroundings, presenting themselves as the only path to salvation. While cooperation with secular actors and institutions (such as the state, media, and politicians) has increased considerably as the movement has grown, the
Pentecostal relationship with other religions remains hostile in its rhetoric; in practice, there is more, though limited, cooperation.

The scepticism has gone both ways, and mutual animosity between Catholic and Pentecostals has been characteristic in this relationship based on competition (Duffy 2009). The Catholic Church has also been outspoken against the Pentecostal churches, trying to discredit their origins (part of a North American strategy), methods (stealing converts; buying souls with money), and more. This public criticism was much more pronounced in the 1970s and 1980s and also during the height of the Civil War due to close links between parts of the Pentecostal church and the military elites. A statement from Catholics in exile from 1983, in the midst of war-time, was as follows:

The religious sects [e.g. Pentecostal churches] are an arm of the counterinsurgency. The religious sects have arrived to support the Army and Government of Rios Montt in counterinsurgency war, as indispensable as automatic weapons (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 113).

The opposition has been much greater since then due to political concerns. Catholics have had more to fear, as Pentecostals are after their members. Operating in a Catholic environment, Pentecostals needed arguments to persuade people to leave the Catholic faith and developed a strong anti-Catholic rhetoric. Writing about the development of Pentecostalism in Guatemala, Sanchíz Ochoa identified anti-Catholicism as one of three main characteristics of the Pentecostal movement (Sanchíz Ochoa 1998). Many Pentecostals, but far from all, were once Catholic, and they have come to learn that the religion is equated with idolatry and backwardness (Duffy 2009). Catholicism is “the other”; it defines what they are not. The word “ecumenism” has a negative connotation amongst Pentecostals, and the AEG is explicitly non-ecumenical.189 Talking about the co-operation with the Catholic Church in the

\[\text{189}\text{Globally the Pentecostal movement has been known (there are nowadays a much more diversified picture) for its scepticism towards ecumenism, but in Guatemala it also may have an additional flare, as one interviewee explained: “Ecumenismo” sounds like “comunismo,” which adds extra negative connotations. Two noteworthy exceptions amongst the Protestant organisations that promote ecumenical causes are the work by the Protestant CIEDEG and the Consejo Ecuemático de Guatemala. Both are small NGOs that are left-leaning and ecumenical in orientation. These two are composed mainly of the historic protestant churches, the Presbyterian Church in particular, and have little resonance in the wider Pentecostal community. The Consejo Ecuemático de Guatemala has published a book on ecumenism in Historia Contemporánea del Ecumenismo en Guatemala (2008), with contributions from several different Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. The absence of any classical or neo-Pentecostal writer is telling.}

There has been some cooperation in the affluent urban circles in Guatemala through global interdenominational bodies, such as the Full Gospel Business Fellowship International and Aglow (Delgado 1998: 95; Ochoa 1998: 55).
G-4, the group discussed earlier that convenes to discuss matters of national concern, the AEG official says:

To think that the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church could come together was very difficult. Of course, we are not an ecumenical body; our motives for coming together are more social and political than religious. […] We can agree on basic things, issues of general and social interest. And this is what we are doing now. So, in this manner, this [the cooperation in G-4] is an important step.

He continues to talk about the lack of interest from the government’s side to take the advices put forward by the G-4, and then says:

Anyway, we need to emphasise that the Evangelical church doesn’t even need a G-4. We can have a moral, ethical, and spiritual presence, promoting values, using all resources […] to achieve this radical change that the country needs. (Interview AEG official, 27 March 2012)

The G-4 is one among a few recent examples where there is cooperation. As discussed earlier, there was also cooperation on the Children and Youth Code in the mid-1990s and in regards to issues such as abortion and homosexuality. However, the limited cooperation that exists on a national level does not bear resemblance to the local level, where cooperation is even bleaker (Duffy 2009). More characteristic is the last part of the quote above from the AEG official: Pentecostals can do their own thing. They have the confidence, the resources, and the agency to enter into the largely open doors of Guatemalan society.

7.5.2 Pentecostalisation of the Catholic Church

What, then, is the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant? A quantitative study from 2001 investigated how Catholic and Protestants in Central America (Costa Rica and Guatemala) differ and if these differences can be translated into political attitudes and behaviour (Steigenga 2001). Steigenga found that it was not affiliation that determined political views but rather the “strength” of religious beliefs, the intensity of religious experiences, and one’s orthodoxy in views (Steigenga 2001: 142). However, one of the findings that surprised Steigenga the most in this large-scale survey was “the high degree to which Pentecostal religious practices and beliefs have come to influence religion in Central America” (Steigenga 2001: 140). Speaking in tongues and belief in miracles and healing are widespread practices amongst Catholics and non-affiliates as well. This pentecostalisation of religion in Guatemala, which is also occurring in many Latin American countries (and as we have seen, in Africa, too) has slowly but forcefully been noted by recent research in the region (Thorsen 2012; Cleary 2011; Pew Forum 2005; Chesnut 2003).
Taking a broader comparative view, Andrew Chesnut (2003) studied the growth in Pentecostalism, Charismatic Catholicism, and African diaspora religions, with case studies from Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala, and uses the term “pneumacentrism,” or the centrality of the Spirit or spirits, in order to highlight the similarities between the three. He argues that in the new religious landscape of Latin America, it is “liberación” from demonic spirits or exorcism, not liberation from socioeconomic inequalities that is the dominant trend. This process was so strong in the 1980s in many Latin American countries that “such was the consumer demand for pneumatic spirituality, that if religious specialties did not produce it, their churches faced stagnation and even decline” (Chestnut 2003: 78). Suspicion among the episcopacy was evident in Guatemala, but Guatemala formally accepted this movement early on, as Chesnut writes:

Nevertheless, despite reports of groups of Renewal members defecting to Pentecostal churches, most national bishops’ conference in the region have come to view the CCR not as a bridge to the Assemblies of God, for example, but as a barrier to further losses of the Catholic flock (Chesnut 2003: 98-99).

The Catholic Church in Guatemala is undergoing a process of Pentecostalisation, which strongly influences how religion is practiced and lived for the individual as well as for the church as an institution (Thorsen 2012). While 20 years ago it was relatively easy to distinguish a Pentecostal from a Catholic, the differences are now being blurred. A charismatic Catholic service could potentially be difficult to tell apart from a Pentecostal service had it not been for the often central place given to statues of the Virgin Mary in the room.

Particularly important in this process is the charismatic movement discussed at the start of this chapter (Cleary 2011; Thorsen 2012). In terms of religious beliefs and practices for the individuals, the Charismatic movement has a strong focus on classic Pentecostal beliefs and practices, such as a concentration on the personal conversion process, speaking in tongues, healing, spiritual warfare, a return to an “enchanted worldview,” increased interest in evangelisation, and frequent participation in the church. The Catholic charismatics stress personal commitment rather than cultural identity; they self-identify as “true Catholic” or “Christian Catholic” and, like Pentecostals, emphasise the need for “a personal encounter with Jesus” and to make lifestyle changes (Thorsen 2012: 258).

190 The PhD dissertation by Thorsen (2012) is a rare in-depth study of the charismatic Catholicism in Guatemala documenting occurring changes through an empirical investigation of parishes in Guatemala City.
The Charismatic movement also resembles the Pentecostals in their willingness to pay for religion (through tithing), the focus on lay leadership, and for being a movement that spread from below rather than as an initiative from the top. For the first time in its more than 500-year history on the continent, ordinary people are willing to invest in the Catholic Church through tithing and offerings, and the Charismatic movement is at the forefront (Cleary 2011: 262). As with the Pentecostal churches, the Charismatic has developed a network of prayer groups and parish communities to provide the church-goer with a strong communal network. Spreading since the 1970s, the Charismatic movement has been running an almost parallel institution vis-à-vis the mother church, tolerated but not embraced by the clerical authorities. In his recent study of a Catholic parish in Guatemala City, Thoresen finds strong evidence for what he calls “the incipient Pentecostalisation of the Church,” a process he predicts will only become stronger in the years ahead, as the Charismatic movement’s way of conducting religion is becoming more dominant within the mother church, not just in its parallel charismatic structures.

If Steigenga’s research from 2001 holds water and it is the “strength” of religious beliefs, not the institutional belonging, that determines public participation, then this is good news for the Pentecostal way of doing religion, even if it is done outside the Pentecostal movement. The influence of Pentecostalism in Guatemala has left the Catholic Church with fewer members over the decades, but paradoxically, it can also be argued that the Pentecostalisation of the Catholic Church has revitalised a struggling Church. As Thorsen finds in his study, “Charismatics share a wide range of practices with Evangelicals, but in their self-identification they vehemently distance themselves from them” (Thorsen 2012: 258). This distance is further communicated by an emphasized loyalty to the Pope and support of Catholic orthodoxy, which leads Thorsen to characterise the rise of Catholic Charismaticism in Guatemala and Latin America as “a paradoxical strengthening of Catholic confessionalism, driven by a Pentecostalised vision of the Church” (Thorsen 2012: 259).

Thus, the invasion of politically dangerous “religious sects” that Guatemalan Catholics warned about in 1983 (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 113) did not disappear but instead continued its growth and strongly impacted the Catholic Church. Returning to some of the initial questions in this thesis, and the church-sect theory, it is clear that rather than the sect accommodating society and losing its revolutionary fire, the majority of society has moved towards accommodating the sect.
Summary

In both Nigeria and Guatemala, the Pentecostal way of doing religion has had a profound effect on the other religions in the two countries. While the influence goes many ways, what is most striking in Guatemala is how the Pentecostal movement has impacted on the Catholic Church. This is evident in the strong Charismatic movement within the Catholic Church, a movement that resembles the Pentecostal faith in everything from speaking in tongues to a willingness to pay for religion. There is some cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal movement, but more characteristic is the lack of cooperation. The Pentecostals are confident in pursuing their own agenda and way of doing religion.
8 What happens when Pentecostalism becomes big?

The impulse of this project was the lack of comparative case-study research on Pentecostalism and politics across continents. The limited research that exists is framed around questions as to whether the growth of Pentecostalism strengthens or weakens democratisation processes in the global south. Most of these works are in edited volumes. The question of democratisation has had the advantage of showing that the Pentecostal movement is politically diverse indeed, and that there is no global uniform story to be told as to the movement’s democratic potential. Much research warns about simplistic generalisations on the political impact of this movement and instead calls for a specific case analysis that accounts for local factors. The fear of generalisations stems from analyses that have been, on one side, overtly negative, seeing the global growth of Pentecostalism as an extension of US neo-conservative foreign policy, as “religious fundamentalism” with negative consequences for democratic change, or overtly positive, viewing Pentecostal growth as the “protestant ethic” anew, as creating the necessary vitality in civil society to take on the task of democratisation in the global south. Caution is necessary due to the great diversity in the contexts where Pentecostalism is growing and also the dangers in assuming a specific political outcome of any religious movement. However, it would be a mistake not to probe further into comparisons on Pentecostalism and politics. A different angle and more open questions are necessary. This study finds that there are remarkable similarities in how Pentecostalism goes public in two very different countries. In both Guatemala and Nigeria, the Pentecostal movement has been a success and has enabled sacralisation of the public sphere by making faith important far beyond the congregation. A main finding of this thesis is that, while Pentecostals indeed have become entangled in “worldly” affairs, what is more striking is how the world has become entangled in Pentecostal affairs.

In the course of the last 30 or so years, Pentecostals have gone from the periphery to the centre, from “religious fanatics” to “mainstream,” in both Guatemala and Nigeria. The changes have been numerous. In both countries, the partly self-imposed Pentecostal separation of church and society was effectively broken in the 1980s and 1990s particularly with the advent of neo-Pentecostalism. This development coincided with similar political, economic, and social changes in the two countries where autocratic states were losing their grip on the public sphere through emerging democratisation processes, liberalisation, and privatisation, as well as corruption and changing insecurities. This opened space for new
actors with a different set of skills than before. In both countries Pentecostals were ready to assume an enlarged public role, a role that has had considerable impact on the societies. The Pentecostal movement has chosen cooperation, instead of confrontation, with the governments of both countries. This non-confrontational stand has given the Pentecostal movement room to grow unhindered. In the two countries, the Pentecostal movement has also contributed to an increased role of religion in the public. Like other orthodox religious movements (Davis and Robinson 2012), Pentecostals builds massive religiously based grassroots networks in culture, sport, business, education, media, politics, and charity, with the aim of transforming society and bringing their own mode of doing religion to the centre of society. By not confronting the state directly and bypassing it instead through cooperation, Pentecostal movements have been very successful in pursing their diverse agenda.

José Casanova defended the analytical validity of the differentiation thesis as a way of examining comparatively how religion relates to, and in, the public throughout history (see Chapter 3). Casanova predicted in his 1994 book that those religious actors who are unwilling to compromise, the “fundamentalists,” will have no place in the public sphere and will retreat to the enclaves. This has not happened with the Pentecostals. In Guatemala and Nigeria, Pentecostals have entered the differentiated sphere making claims on new areas. Rather than compromising, Pentecostals have successfully defended their rather rigid views and practices by doing it the Pentecostal way: through building alternative institutions, entering established institutions with a Pentecostal message, and cooperating with political authorities. By successfully entering different institutions of society, such as the media, the public space, the political sector, business, and welfare, the Pentecostal movement has indeed become the “in-thing,” as the Nigerian pastor said, quoted at the beginning at this thesis.

Comparative research on Pentecostalism and politics has focused mainly on Pentecostal engagement with the political sector, such as voting patterns, Pentecostal politicians, and participation in political parties, and not paying sufficient attention to the various ways the diverse Pentecostal movement goes public. The present project has been the first to do an in-depth comparative study of an African country and a Latin American country. By concentrating on Pentecostal practices and strategies, it soon became clear that keeping a focus on the state and explicit political strategies was a limiting perspective. The manner in which Pentecostalism goes public challenges conventional conceptions of both the “religious” and the “political” poles. Putting the weight on practices, such as building institutions, rather
than ideas, has proven fruitful for a better understanding of the Pentecostal movement as well as favourable for a comparative perspective. The lack of a Pentecostal coherent social and political theology has led many to question their ability to impact society. This project claims it is possible to flip the coin. By not having an explicit political theology, the Pentecostal movement has accomplished a strong presence in the political sphere as well as in other institutions in society. Gradually they have built strong multi-institutional churches that must be reckoned with for their financial, political, social, and moral strengths. In both countries, Pentecostals claim society is morally and spiritually corrupt and that the Pentecostals possess the keys for society’s redemption. Increasingly, this Pentecostal message of salvation has entered the public sphere with force, making the narrative relevant far beyond the congregation. Generally, this criticism of corruption and decay is not directed towards the state, but rather the individual and the culture in society. By so doing, the state is to an extent freed from responsibility. By not engaging critically with the state, it also renders the state less significant. Pentecostals seek freedom from the state to be able to do their work unhindered. This freedom has been achieved through cooperating with political authorities, and through Pentecostal entrepreneurial work, allowing for great independence.

Pentecostals are not just “filling a gap” left by the crippled state, as some would suggest, but are engaging in the very political task of defining what this gap is and how to close it. By engaging in charity, in business, politics and by providing welfare Pentecostals carve out a Pentecostals message of what needs to done, and how it should be done. By conquering the public sphere, the Pentecostal interpretation of the world has become increasingly important for non-Pentecostals, too.

Pentecostals practice a theology that “Jesus is the answer, for the world today”, as the song goes, by refusing to separate the religious from the secular, the spiritual from the material. The Pentecostal community participate in defining the question of what is wrong in society and how to cure these problems. “Jesus” is the answer to diverse topics related to the economy, to politics, to reduce violence in society, to empower the individual to overcome problems ranging from flat tires, finding a spouse, escaping poverty, and curing life-threatening illnesses. Most (if not all) of these answers can be found in the individual “who

191 As discussed in chapters 7-9 there have lately also been several Pentecostal voices that engage critically with the state, but the general tendency in both Guatemala and Nigeria has been rather Pentecostals lending support to the state. However, a prediction for the future based on current tendencies - as Pentecostals becomes embedded further in society and history- is that there will be more critical engagement with the state, and government.
seeks Jesus,” and in the church. By empowering the individual through a message and a practice that stresses the possibility for salvation here and now, Pentecostals have the agency needed for entering the world.

With an explorative approach and inspiration from the analytical tools found in Jose Casanova’s work (1994), this project has approached “politics” by asking how Pentecostalism goes public in Nigeria and Guatemala. This thesis discussed how Pentecostalism embodies a multitude of strategies to make this faith relevant in society. My entry into the subject was through a question that I hoped would open my research to issues a more theory-testing project would have missed. The analytical lenses of differentiated spheres and modes of public religion have guided the empirical research; in which spheres, and how, does religion go public? By following Pentecostal engagement in society, this project has seen power in society as located in various institutions of society, not just the state.

The sect-church theory has been helpful in considering the internal mechanisms within the movement; how do they relate to the world, and how does Pentecostalism go public? By shifting the focus from the political to the public, a more diverse set of seemingly non-political strategies comes to the fore (Englund 2012; Casanova 1994). Expanding on Casanova’s thesis, the examination of this thesis shows that religion goes public in many spheres, not just in the state and “civil society”, as defined by Casanova. Despite being first at the margins of society, criticised, feared, and also at times a laughingstock, this diverse movement has gravitated towards various centres of society. This has been possible due to a wide range of factors, but one important feature is that it has not been done by compromising, or accommodating, as some theories had predicted. Pentecostals do not need to beg to be public but instead are invited in on their own terms and with their own agenda. As such, religion alters the terms of society and state just as much as the other way around.

The main question of this thesis was what happens when Pentecostalism becomes big, and this question has been explored by the telling of two stories, a Nigerian and a Guatemalan one. Based on the preceding chapters, this chapter will discuss the findings with a view to address the four research puzzles set out at the beginning of this thesis.

First, this diverse movement, the imagined Pentecostal community, will be discussed to highlight general characteristics of the movement today and how it has changed particularly during the last 30-40 years. Research has argued the competitive and diverse nature of this
loosely defined movement makes its political impact limited as competition, fragmentation, and diversity hinders a unified response (Freston 2013; Martin 1991). The results from Nigeria and Guatemala challenge this assumption and make the argument that fluidity can also mean strength.

Second, by discussing Pentecostal strategies for engagement in society in a comparative perspective, this thesis has shown that there are remarkable similarities in Nigeria and Guatemala in how Pentecostalism goes public. Keeping a focus on Pentecostal practices and strategies has enabled an interesting comparison between two very different countries. The Pentecostal movements in Nigeria and Guatemala employ a broad strategy for entering different institutions of society: prominently media, education, business, welfare, and politics. They have been largely successful in pursuing this agenda.

Third, in both countries the movement grew out of a hostile relationship with the religious other. While hostility is still a characteristic of the movement, there has also been limited but increased cooperation. However, what is most striking is how the mainline churches have had to accommodate Pentecostalism. There is a process of pentecostalisation of religion in both Nigeria and Guatemala.

Then lastly, the findings of this thesis will be summarized and framed in the light of the theory of José Casanova, discussing characteristics of public religion today. Limiting modern public religion to the confines of “civil society”, as Casanova to a large extent does, does not reflect the role of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Guatemala. Pentecostalism goes public in many spheres, not just in the state or in civil society, and does not need to compromise in order to stay there. Rather than accommodating majority society, Pentecostals have been able to retain their sometimes rigid views and behaviour in the pluralistic public sphere-altering the terms of society just as much as the other way around.

8.1 Pentecostal Imagined Communities: Strength in fluidity

Much research on Pentecostalism argues that its strength in influencing politics is constrained due to the diversity within the movement, the lack of common institutions and diffuse political interests (Freston 2013; Steigenga 2001; Wilson 1998). This study has shown that the Pentecostal movement has become a major public and political actor in Nigeria and
Guatemala despite not having a political ideology and in spite of the very heterogeneous composition of the movement. In the following section I will go through some of the major changes that have occurred in the movement during the last four decades since Pentecostalism gradually left the enclaves of the faithful to become a central public actor.

Pentecostalism is notoriously diverse, characterised by schism and competition. As Pentecostalism has grown, the diversity has become even more palpable. Yet, there is a strong sense of one community; an imagined community that is recognised as a community by non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals alike. As the movement has grown, the state and other non-Pentecostal actors have encouraged the strengthening of representative organs for the movement. The Evangelical Alliance in Guatemala (AEG) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) engage in the public and in formal fora as spokespersons of this community.

However, it is also a community with fluid borders and changing characteristics. In Nigeria the prosperity theology-oriented churches experience continued growth, embracing all things new and modern, be they technology, fashion, or music. At the same time, classical denominations such as the Apostolic Church in Nigeria also report continued growth, a church which practices strict gender roles, non-interference in politics, and rigid codes of behaviour. While Pentecostalism in Guatemala has been intimately linked with politics for a long time, the Assemblies of God, the biggest Pentecostal church in the country based upon the number of members nationwide, still practices non-interference in politics.

But this diversity cannot hide some very marked changes that have taken place as Pentecostalism has grown bigger in Nigeria and Guatemala. These changes share remarkable similarities in the two countries. The watershed in Pentecostalism in these two countries was the revival in the 1970s that brought something new to the Pentecostal low-style revival, which had been present in the two countries for many decades. This new revival also attracted the elites in society: the emerging class of educated young people in Nigeria who formed networks at university campuses, and the urban middle and upper classes in Guatemala City. They initiated a departure from the more sectarian, quietist Pentecostal past. With prosperity theology Pentecostalism became a religion that firmly shifted the emphasis from other-worldly to this-worldly concerns: from spiritual to material and from apolitical to political. They were able to use the opportunities given by the opening of the public sphere, weaker state control, democratisation, and modern technology. These events provided opportunities
for lay religious entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Guatemala to challenge both old religious hierarchies as well as secular institutions such as the media, education, and the state.

In sociological terms, the early Pentecostal movements in both Nigeria and Guatemala had a strong sectarian character. Typical characteristics of the ideal types of a sect are that they operate with high tension in society and will refuse to compromise. A sect has a simple organisation and is a close-knit community that claims to be the only true faith. Pentecostals were recognised as being distinctly different from non-Pentecostals because they refrained from “worldly” activities, such as drinking, dancing, wearing immodest clothing, being materialistic, and getting involved in politics, as we shall examine shortly. As a revival movement, they identified themselves as the “true faith” in comparison with everyone else and were characterised by great enthusiasm, strong community, and personal commitment. For many in Nigeria and Guatemala, joining a Pentecostal church meant making a radical break with the past even to the extent of cutting ties with close family members. The institutions were simple in that they had little bureaucracy and often charismatic leaders. By bringing the sociological understanding of the Troeltchian church-sect theory into this study, the aim is to use these ideal types as a way of highlighting characteristics of the contemporary Pentecostal movement. The church-sect typology is often used to explain change and to represent a continuum; some argue that new religious movements will almost always start as sects and gradually evolve into church-like institutions characterised by formalisation and a lower tension with society (Finke and Stark 2006). According to this theory, the Pentecostal movement with its strong missionary seal should be particularly prone to lose its sectarian characteristics because the movement cannot resist becoming entangled in worldly affairs, as Casanova writes: “The more religion wants to transform the world in a religious direction, the more religion becomes entangled in “worldly” affairs and is transformed by the world” (Casanova 1994: 49).

While Pentecostals indeed have become caught up in worldly affairs, what is more striking is how the world has become entangled in Pentecostal affairs. This point will be elaborated in the remaining sections by examining the relationship with the religious other and how Pentecostalism relates to society. For now, we will focus on changes within the

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192 In Nigeria and Guatemala (as in many places elsewhere), the Pentecostal movement was accused of being a sect in a theological sense, as in heretical. A sect in a sociological sense does not make any claims on correct doctrine but seeks to describe different religious institutions: both in terms of organisation and worldview (see Chapter 3 in this thesis).
Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals have changed in several ways, embracing modern clothing, engaging in sports, entertainment and politics, but they have retained a markedly Pentecostal way of doing these things. The understanding of the world in spiritual terms, as a battle between good and bad, remains strong. The model that follows builds on the empirical chapters and sect-church theories to indicate some tendencies of the changes in the Pentecostal movement that have been found in both countries during the last four decades.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>Towards</th>
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<tr>
<td>Marginalised groups</td>
<td>All groups in society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Periphery</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hostility towards society</td>
<td>Embracing society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hostility towards other religions</td>
<td>Some cooperation but continued hostility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Spiritual-material</td>
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A simple evolutionary model whereby the sect is transformed to a church is not a good model to explain the development of the Pentecostal movement. In both numbers and influence, the Pentecostal success has enabled them to set the terms and agenda for their engagement in society. They have retained some sectarian characteristics, such as continued hostility towards other religions and a refusal to compromise in the public sphere, but have lessened their hostility to society in general by entering fields such as entertainment and politics. The basic thinking of an evolutionary model undergirds much academic research on religion, whether these are framed as “strict” religions, radicals, fundamentalists, or religious orthodox. Jose Casanova argued that those fundamentalists who are not willing to compromise will “most likely abandon the public sphere and return to their isolated hamlets” (Casanova 1996: 166). In political science, this thinking can be seen in the inclusion-moderation theories that ask whether “radical groups” will moderate when entering the public sphere or democratic politics (Schwedler 2011). Radical religious parties that enter national politics will likely need to adjust their strategies, if not always their ideologies, to try to accommodate and court a much wider constituency then the fewer committed members. This
literature discusses currently prominently Islamic parties, as they have experienced resurgence in many Muslim countries. A major point of discussion in this literature rests on the difference between behavioural and ideological moderation; radical groups might change their institutions and strategies for pragmatic reasons, but they are still “wolves in sheeps’ clothing” that will enforce a radical ideology when given the opportunity (Buehler 2012). In many ways this theory resembles the sect-church theory, which also focuses on institutions and their worldviews. The religious “fanatics,” as many saw them, in Guatemala and Nigeria have indeed become “mainstream” without having to change their ideology in a dramatic way. Their endorsement and close relationship to political leadership in both countries are two indications, and the high numbers of converts are another. Compromise, an expected virtue in a plural society, has not led Pentecostalism to the centres of national life; instead, insistence and contention has brought them to where they are today.\footnote{An article by Frode Løvlie (2014) examines the assumed “religious–secular divide” between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine and finds that both parties have changed their position the last decade: Fatah becoming more religious, while Hamas becoming more secular. He explains this shift in terms of how the two parties need to satisfy the middle ground, a middle ground (the regular Palestinian) that, he argues, is more religious now than in the 1980s. As Pentecostalism has become dominant in Nigeria and Guatemala one could argue that similar processes have happened in the two countries: increasing religiosity among the citizens has profound effect on other institutions of society.}

### 8.2 Pentecostalisation, conflict, and cooperation: Relationships with other religions

A defining characteristic of Pentecostalism across continents is its “warfare with its own roots” (Casanova 2010: 437). In both Nigeria and Guatemala, the attacks on competing religions and local culture have been, and to a large extent continue to be, aggressive and direct. The Pentecostals’ frontal attack on the religious other has yielded them considerable success. The impulse of revivalist movements to challenge and renew the established religions is not something new, nor is it restricted to Christianity. In fact, this process is a central feature of contemporary religious movements, be they Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or Hindu (Brekke 2012).

Despite the very different contexts in the two countries, there are striking similarities as to how Pentecostalism relates to other religions. In Guatemala, anti-Catholic and anti-
traditional discourse has been a defining character of the movement. In Nigeria, attacks on traditional religious practices, “nominal” churchgoers, and Muslims have been crucial in forming the movement. The other religions are seen to be either “dead” and having lost the original “fire” (the mainstream churches) or possessed by a competing evil and demonic force (traditional religions and, to some extent, Islam). This animosity has been reciprocated; in Guatemala, the Catholic Church warned of an “invasion of sects” linked to US cold war politics. In Nigeria, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) went as far as asking the government to curtail the growth of Pentecostal churches as they (mainline churches) feared the growth could lead to religious war (due to Pentecostal aggressive proselytizing in Muslim areas). In both countries the established religions have clearly distanced themselves from the Pentecostal newcomers with their words, but a very different story unfolds upon the examination of practices.

8.2.1 Pentecostalisation of religion
If we follow the church-sect typology, an unexpected development has occurred in the case of Pentecostalism. Rather than the sect conforming to the majority of society, the sect has been successful in transforming the majority society.\(^{194}\) While earlier Pentecostals have been easily distinguishable from other Christian traditions by characteristic practices such as a certain type of worship, speaking in tongues, and a general religious intensity, these attributes no longer hold true. The charismatic revival in other Christian institutions in Nigeria and Guatemala makes it difficult to sometimes know if a person is Pentecostal or not. Indicative are the two non-Pentecostal Presidents, Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria and President Otto Perez Molina in Guatemala, who both speak about faith in a Pentecostalised manner and nurture close relationships to Pentecostal pastors and institutions to the extent that they may

\(^{194}\)This is not to argue that the Pentecostal church is not influenced by others, because obviously it is. We have seen how Pentecostals seek national representation in line with how the established religion operates; in Guatemala, the Pentecostals arrange the Te Deum ceremony, mirroring the Catholic version. In Nigeria and Guatemala, the Pentecostal movement has organised umbrella organisations modelled after other religious representations. Several reports have stressed a certain “fatigue” in the Pentecostal fever, which can be seen in fewer exorcisms, less falling, and a decrease in speaking in tongues as observed in Guatemala (Samson 2010), which could be called a process of “mainstreaming”. In Nigeria, Pentecostal pastors take Catholic and Anglican titles and symbols, such as naming themselves “bishops,” “archbishops,” and wearing similar ceremonial clothing. This can be interpreted as both a manner of gaining recognition for the Pentecostal faith, while at the same time it is also a way delegitimising the authority of the theological institutions in other churches. There are many examples of how Pentecostals are changing their way of maintaining a religion in line with the competitors, but the reverse trend—Pentecostalisation of religion—is strong and needs to be highlighted.
easily be mistaken for Pentecostals. Pentecostal language and practices have been integrated in mainstream culture.

Discussing Latin America in general, Chestnut writes: “Such was the consumer demand for pneumatic spirituality, that if religious specialties did not produce it, their churches faced stagnation and even decline” (Chestnut 2003: 78). He uses the term ‘pneumacentrism’, or the centrality of the Spirit or spirits to speak of the trend. He argues that in the new religious landscape of Latin America it is “liberación” from demonic spirits or exorcism, not liberation from socioeconomic inequalities that dominates. But as this research has shown, it is not only the “spirit-focus” that is attractive. The material side of Pentecostalism, the Pentecostal way of practising religion, is also increasingly copied, as expressed by a Baptist Nigerian Pastor:

Every church in Nigeria has been influenced by the Pentecostal. Every church! Particularly the mainline churches because of what the charismatic groups have been doing, this revival of prayers, beliefs in miracles, you know. A new dimension to ministry, talking prosperity. The churches in the past used old-fashioned auditoriums and seats. Pastors hardly had good cars, they used old-fashioned cars, everything was old-fashioned. But the Pentecostals have a different approach. They believe in prosperity, God has prospered for all. And they have approached the ministry differently, more respect for their leaders, more facilities provided for them to be able do work of the ministry.

Every church now thinks we need to organise prayer programs, there should be fasting, we should ‘wait under the lord’- we should pray about it. Because when we are not doing that, the people went to the Pentecostal churches… So when the mainline [churches] saw that many people were leaving the churches they had to ask themselves: why are they leaving?...we look old-fashioned, it should be redesigned, it should look beautiful, we should bring more flower, there should be coffee….so: the Pentecostals were doing this and before you know it the mainline churches also were influenced [...] None of our mainline churches are the same again! All have been influenced! All! All!

The rapid growth of the Charismatic revival within the Catholic Church in Guatemala has led to a process Thoresen calls the “incipient Pentecostalisation of the Church,” which has consequences for both lived practice and belief as well as for the institutional identity of the Church (Thoresen 2012). The charismatic revival has become so dominant within the Catholic Church that the somewhat reluctant mother church is gradually adopting it through a change in practices, beliefs, and worldview.

The consequences of the Pentecostalisation of religion are seen prominently in an increased dualistic worldview (across denominations), increased religiosity, willingness to pay for religion through tithing, strong lay participation, a focus on prosperity, and an
increased concentration on the individual. What makes this development particularly strong is that this is a process initiated from below; reluctant leadership in mainline churches often needs to accommodate the wishes of their members. The Pentecostal way of conducting religion is currently the “in-thing.”

8.2.2 Cooperation and conflict
The Pentecostalisation of religion could suggest that the very characteristic antagonism between Pentecostals and more established religious traditions would diminish. To some extent this is happening, but the relationship between Pentecostals and other religions in Nigeria and Guatemala is still characterised by competition and animosity. For instance, in Guatemala, the Catholic Charismatics, who are close to Pentecostals in religious practice, vehemently defend their specific Catholic identity and maintains the difference by a renewed loyalty and support to the Pope, Catholic orthodoxy, and devotion to the Virgin Mary (Thoresen 2012).

As the Pentecostal communities have grown in numbers and presence, no serious national dialogue can be held without Pentecostal representatives. The creation of Pentecostal umbrella organisations, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), and the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) has filled a void by forming a representative body for Pentecostals vis-à-vis the state and other actors in society. With confidence, and to a large extent due to a mandate, albeit contested, these bodies speak on behalf of the fragmented Pentecostal movement, also facilitating formal cooperation with other actors. Through these bodies, Pentecostals have become partners in inter-denominational and inter-religious forums. While Pentecostals claim their right to be included in these settings, cooperation has been characterised by tension. The Pentecostal movement as seen in Guatemala and Nigeria suffers from a lack of a “theology of dialogue” (Kalu 2008), and is characterised by scepticism towards interfaith work and ecumenism. This is reflected in the Pentecostal discourse as well in strained institutional cooperation. In Nigeria, the rise of a Pentecostal, Ayo Oritsejafor, as the leader of the Christian umbrella organisation, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), has led to the partial withdrawal of the Roman Catholic Church from the CAN arguing that Oritsejafor neglects the spirit of interfaith work (with Islam) and ecumenism (see chapter 5). In
Guatemala the AEG has opted to stay out of several civil society efforts with non-Pentecostals, pursing their interest mostly on their own.195

In both Guatemala and Nigeria the growth of the Pentecostal movement has led to worries that this development might lead to “religious wars”, principally in the context of Pentecostals exacerbating conflict. In Guatemala the fear of a violent Pentecostal-Catholic conflict was discussed particularly at the most brutal periods of the Guatemalan civil war (Tulio Cajas 1987; Smith 1998; Duffy 2009). With the end of the war, the concerns of a religious (violent) conflict have vanished. In Nigeria the fear of a “religious war” has become part of the national public debate. Conflict has the last decades been increasingly framed also in religious terms, as a conflict between Muslims and Christians. In this process, Pentecostals are at the vanguard accentuating the specific religious (as opposed to economic, ethnic, political or elite manipulation, for instance) explanations of problems in Nigeria. The strong religious interpretation of the world that Pentecostals projects have found many avenues outside the Pentecostal fold given the strong Pentecostal presence in the public sphere.

The strategies for making the Pentecostal faith relevant in society are remarkably similar in Nigeria and Guatemala. However, the presence of Islam in Nigeria and the ongoing scuffle in Nigeria for federal resources and control give the Pentecostal project of dominance a particular edge. Several Muslim organisations and actors call for the implementation of sharia, beyond what is already at place, and for a stronger role of Islam in state affairs. The two competing “theocratic” projects, the Pentecostal and the Muslim, are mutually exclusive. Pentecostals have had limited success in converting Muslims, and they have focused their attention on Christians from mainline churches instead with frontal attacks on traditional religious practices. Pentecostal growth has contributed to conflicts amongst Christians as well as with Muslims.

In sum, in both Nigeria and Guatemala, the Pentecostal movement has profoundly challenged the established religious authority to the extent that the Pentecostal way of conducting a religion has been copied by many. While there are several examples of increased cooperation between Pentecostals and other religions in the two countries, tension and conflict remains a core characteristic. Pentecostals, in general, either do it their way or no way at all.

195 There are in Guatemala examples of the AEG being more open to cooperation with other non-state actors, but this is still limited (see chapter 7).
This has proven to be a good strategy in the building a successful church, but has been a more difficult starting point for a dialogue.

### 8.3 Being everywhere: Claiming society for Jesus

In both Guatemala and Nigeria, there has been a radical break with the former quietist, sect-like orientation towards the world, and Pentecostals have entered business, media, welfare, politics, and even the streets with considerable success. Pentecostalism is “everywhere” in Nigeria and Guatemala, in the public *sphere*, where the Pentecostal message is reiterated, and in the physical public *space* through its churches, billboards, and adherents’ public displays of religious emotions and beliefs. Pentecostals have proven that they master the secular world; they have built successful, financially independent institutions, and they also claim to have the tools to master the spiritual world. They teach that society needs both spiritual and material redemption, and that Pentecostals possess the key for the individual’s as well as for society’s redemption. By diagnosing poverty and illness as religious problems, religion also becomes the remedy. And “religion” is not just beliefs or dogmas, but also religious practices such as Pentecostal schools, health clinics and crime-reducing practices.

The Pentecostal presence is the result of a strategy of “winning Nigeria/Guatemala for Jesus.” As the prime religious antagonists in the public sphere, the Pentecostal narrative and the Pentecostal way of conducting religion has gained dominance. Pentecostal participants actively engage in setting the agenda for how to interpret national events.

#### 8.3.1 Presence: In the public space and the public sphere

First, in Nigeria and Guatemala, Pentecostalism in its physical aspects is “everywhere”. For Pentecostals, physicality matters greatly. To be seen and to be heard is in itself a missionary strategy. The more the merrier: bigger churches, more members, more churches, more TV stations, louder music etc. The street, the school, the town, and the country are “claimed for Jesus” through occupying public spaces.

The physical manifestations of Pentecostalism in the city and rural landscapes are a testimony of the strength of the church; it is a place where religion is being conducted (by those who attend), and it is a vision for what the church wants to be. The impressive “City of God” was built by Pastor Cash Luna’s church, the House of God (*Casa de Dios*), and it is located on the outskirts of Guatemala City. They boast of having Central America’s largest parking lot, a seating capacity of 11,000, and enough funding during construction that no loan
was required because the funding came from the joint efforts of the members in the church. In Nigeria, several Pentecostal “cities” have been built, many of them alongside the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. “The Redemption Camp” of the Redeemed Christian Church of God has within its walls all kinds of facilities found in a city: education centres; medical centres; residential areas; banks; shops; restaurants, and roads with names. According to their own sources, they have the capacity to host one million worshippers in their outdoor auditoriums. The Redemption Camp has no (reported) crime, no traffic chaos, no political chaos, and none of the vices that can be found outside the walls, which is how they portray themselves as a Pentecostal utopia in the midst of the busy, mega-city of Lagos.

The combined presence in the public space and the public spheres of the diverse Pentecostal community amounts to a powerful presence in Guatemalan and Nigerian society. The importance of the public sphere in materialising and negotiating politics, business, and religion should not be underestimated, particularly as the public sphere has opened considerably to new actors in the two countries. Pentecostals have used the new opportunities exceptionally well. The public sphere is, as Talal Asad and others have noted, not a neutral space open to all on an equal basis but a space articulated by power. Pentecostals have the technology, the theology, and the financial means needed to further strengthen their role in the public.

8.3.2 Pentecostalism from “below” and from “above”

We have seen how in Guatemala the government asks Pentecostal institutions for advice regarding how to tackle crime; in Nigeria, the trade unions ask the Pentecostals to also invest in the struggling textile mill sectors. Amidst scandals and suspicion, Pentecostals have managed to position themselves as attractive partners also outside their fold by building strong Pentecostal institutions. In short, the message is reiterated: Pentecostalism works.

The terms Islamism from “above” and from “below,” have been used to describe a difference in strategies for Islamising society: between revolutionary Islamism from above through the establishment of an Islamic state (such as in Iran) and what has been called social Islamisation from below (Bugart 2002). The latter strategy focuses on building grassroots networks in culture, the economy, education, and politics with the aim of Islamising society from below. While the Islamism from “above” project has failed, as prominent researchers like Olivier Roy have argued, Islamism from below, in various shapes, constitutes the most vital social
and political movement in the Muslim world today (Utvik 2011). These dichotomies, both from below and above, can also be applied when discussing Pentecostal strategies. While not explicitly seeking a theocratic state, in Nigeria and Guatemala, there is a strong focus on gaining dominance or “winning society for Jesus,” which includes gaining presence in the state and the government. Both countries experienced a period that was driven by influential neo-Pentecostals that focused on an “above” strategy. The Guatemalan Marco Cajas Tulio has called this the “theology of the head,” referring to the idea that once a born-again would occupy the highest seat of the nation (the “head”), then the rest of the body (the nation) would be saved. The miracles would trickle down. Both Nigeria and Guatemala have tried this “Pentecostal utopia.” In Guatemala, Efraín Ríos Montt, a born-again, took power through a military coup as early as 1982, and then an elected Pentecostal came to power in 1992, Jorge Serrano Elias. In Nigeria, the first democratic election in 1999 brought a born-again to the presidential seat with Olusegun Obasanjo. The almost messianic expectations, in some Pentecostal circles, to what a “true born-again” could achieve as the head of the country were not met. There has been little critical public reflection in the Pentecostal communities on what went wrong during these presidencies, but as Pentecostalism becomes embedded in history the “theology of the head”-thinking has silently been made less important. Instead, the “below” strategy has not lost relevance and continues to yield significant success. By entering the “seven sectors”, as discussed by Guatemalan pastor Cash Luna (chapter 7.2.); the family, the church, the school, entertainment, economy and politics, Pentecostals pursue a broad approach in influencing society. As they have grown in number in Nigeria and Guatemala, Pentecostals have become influential power brokers navigating these different sectors.

8.3.2.1 From apolitical to political
This formerly explicitly apolitical movement is today explicitly political in a number of ways. Pentecostalism was known for keeping a strict separation between church and society, deeming politics “dirty.” In the late 1970s and 1980s the Pentecostal revival in both Guatemala and Nigeria attracted a new type of person to the movement; in the cities, the educated elites started joining the movement, which ushered in a new phase of Pentecostalism in these two countries (Adeboye 2006; O’Neill 2010). The Pentecostal prayers became
increasingly focused on the nation\textsuperscript{196}. Today, the Pentecostal way of acting in the political sphere is multifaceted. Both Guatemala and Nigeria have had Pentecostal presidents, Pentecostal pastors have started political parties and competed for political offices in both countries and Pentecostal pastors teach about the necessity for the Pentecostal in getting involved in society and politics. This involvement has been backed by a theology that preaches that the “righteous shall reign”, where righteous is taught to be the born-again. In both Nigeria and Guatemala, the focus has been on the specific responsibility for the born-again to usher in God’s kingdom given their ability to also fight the “real powers”, the demons and Satan, who cause problems in the material world. While this is still a focus in Pentecostalism today, the attention has shifted from the spiritual towards the material; more prominent today is the call for Pentecostal participation in the political sphere based on the perception that Pentecostals have better morals and higher ethical standards and importantly, they argue, because they have the necessary \textit{skills} to take responsibility; be it as business men or public servants.

No Pentecostal pastor or Pentecostal political party has managed to attract “the Pentecostal vote”, which might very well indicate that in reality such a uniform vote does not exist. However, given the sheer numbers of Pentecostals, no aspiring politician can neglect the Pentecostal community in courting a constituency. Influencing the political sphere has become a key concern for Pentecostals in Nigeria and Guatemala, but it just one of several institutions in society Pentecostals seek influence in.

\textbf{Winning the state through cooperation}

In general, Pentecostals do not contest the state through conventional political manners, such as demonstrations, boycotts, or strikes\textsuperscript{197}. They have not been active in the broader civil society consortiums in the two countries, which are dominated by a human rights discourse and a critical position on the state and the establishment. For many theories of civil society

\textsuperscript{196} When Pentecostals entered the political realm in the 1980s-1990s it was with a different response than that of the mainstream churches. In the 1990s, mainstream churches in Nigeria were involved in struggles for democracy together with human rights activists and pro-democracy forces, but Pentecostals did not join in this movement but rather initiated a “spiritual offensive” aimed at the devil and the underlying demonic forces in society (Adeboye 2006). Given their position outside “liberal” civil society, they were accused of complicity with military powers; the same accusations were brought against Guatemalan Pentecostals (chapter 7).

\textsuperscript{197} The Pentecostal participation in the massive strikes in Nigeria in January 2012 is a very important exception which clearly indicates a change in this position (chapter 5.4)
and political mobilisation, Pentecostalism has been invisible, outside the light of the torch, as Pentecostals have not behaved as theories of civil society expect them to do. Unlike many mainline churches, Pentecostals have not been party to what some have called the “NGOisation” of mainline churches (Freeman 2012). But as Professor Jibrin Ibrahim has noted, “In contemporary Nigeria, the bulk of ‘really existing’ civil society is religious society and not NGOs” (Ibrahim 2013). In this religious society, Pentecostalism is a dominant actor.

Pentecostal umbrella associations and central Pentecostal pastors have aligned themselves closely with the political elite, offering prayers and public endorsement (Nigeria and Guatemala) as well as portraying themselves as experts on values, morals, finances, and security concerns. In Guatemala, the doors to the government and the state institutions seem to be wide open for Pentecostal national and international actors to offer their expertise on wide-ranging topics, from teaching military cadets “values and morals” to providing leadership training for Guatemalan public services. In Nigeria, leading scholars have named this group of the dominating pastors “political kingmakers” (Ihjerika 2012) and “the theocratic class” (Obadare 2006), which refers to a very close alignment with the political powers. These pastors are strategically working to position Pentecostalism at the centre of the state. Given the Muslim half of Nigeria, this process of “Pentecostalisation of governance”, as Obadare has called it, is particularly volatile in the context of Christian-Muslim conflicts regarding the state and its material and symbolic resources (Obadare 2006).

There are many reasons why Pentecostals opt for a non-confrontational role. In both countries, the Pentecostal movement has preached that Christians should support the leaders of their country, with frequent references to Romans 13: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities…” . In addition, a pragmatic position has been favourable for church growth. Pentecostalism’s first amendment is church growth and evangelisation, not building democracies. Aligning themselves with political authorities and building networks of trust and mutual support are methods to ensure that Pentecostal interests are protected. Supporting political powers is also an illustration of a Pentecostal worldview that confirms what social movement theories have argued; power in society is located not only in the state but in various institutions in society, such as the family, the business sector, education, and the media (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008).
8.4 Public Religion revisited
The “return of the religious” has been object of many studies recently. The question is no longer if religion impacts society, but rather how. In 1994 José Casanova made the claim, by now very uncontroversial, that religions refuse to be assigned to the private sphere. By examining public religion in four different countries (Poland, Spain, Brazil and the US), Casanova made the argument that religions successfully have found a place in civil society from where they confidently lay claim on the public. Casanova argued that religions have accepted the modern differentiation of religion and state, and that the deprivatisation of religion is happening without endangering these differentiated structures. He further argued that those religions that do not compromise in the public, those who insist on fundamentalist views, will need to step back and retreat to their religious enclaves (Casanova 1994). Thus, it follows from his argument; modern society demand of its public actors to compromise, to debate and to accept pluralism in order to stay relevant in the public.

By telling the story of Pentecostalism in two very different countries, Nigeria and Guatemala, this present study has shown that Casanova’s thesis needs serious revisiting. Pentecostalism goes beyond conventional activities in civil society, by employing seemingly non-political strategies to bring their religion to the fore. Pentecostals refuse to separate the private from the public and challenges the differentiated society by building their own institutions as well as infusing already existing structures with their mode of doing religion. While both ridiculed, and feared, by many outside the movement, Pentecostals in both countries have managed to overcome this obstacles and indeed becoming the “in-thing”.

This PhD-project emphasis the need to scrutinize civil society definitions, to wither the importance of the state in our analysis and to take religious practice more seriously in order to incorporate the highly dynamic ways of doing religion in contemporary societies.

Pentecostals, in both countries, do not engage in the public by way of compromising, debating or seeking dialogue but rather through pursuing control: they have their own media outlets, they buy airtime on secular media-stations, and they claim the streets and the towns with the microphones facing the neighbourhood, millions of posters dominating the scenery and for instance through organising prayer-rallies in the streets. Through insisting doing

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198 Casanova has acknowledged the limitations to his work several times, but has not, in my opinion, found ways to sufficiently address the shortcomings (see page 58-64 in this thesis).
religion the Pentecostal way in the public, through their success in building strong institutions and attracting members, the Pentecostals are asked to be public by secular media, by politicians and others. They do not need to beg to be present in the public, and can thus set their own agenda. To use the terminology in the sect-church theories, Pentecostals have not needed to make the shift from sect to church in order to be a relevant public actor in Guatemala and Nigeria. Pentecostals have been able to retain some of their sectarian, exclusionist, behaviours and believes despite their entrance into wider society.

The categories of civil society, political society and the state as used by Casanova, and many others, are limiting when discussing Pentecostal politics. Pentecostals go public in all these spheres, and more, with the aim of bringing their religion to the fore. Pentecostals have bypassed the state; both through cooperation, enabling Pentecostals too peruse their own mode of doing religion, and through building alternative institutions. This thesis argues that by employing seemingly non-political strategies, the Pentecostal movement has indeed managed to successfully infiltrate civil society as well as the state: Pentecostal symbols, narratives and institutions are indeed “everywhere”, with a strong foothold in different intuitions of society.

This observation bears strong resemblance to the findings of Davis and Robinson (2012) who investigated four different religious orthodox movements in four countries (the Muslim Brotherhood, Shas, Comunione and Liberazione, and the Salvation Army). These four movements share several common characteristics, such as being broad, having multi-issue agendas and rigid ideologies, and being reluctant to compromise with others (Davis and Robinson 2012). According to social movement theory, these characteristics should have been working against them, hindering their progress. However, they find that the four different religiously orthodox movements thrive and “are among the most effective and successful movements in the world today” (Davis and Robinson 2012: 21). They argue convincingly that these movements have achieved success by setting up massive networks of alternative religious, cultural, and economic institutions, bypassing the state, and capturing civil society. These movements have built “effective social service agencies, medical facilities, schools and businesses that often put the state’s efforts to shame” (Davis and Robinson 2012: 15)

Inspired by the work of Davis and Robinson (2012) and Armstrong and Bernstein (2008), this project sees the government as only one of several forces of power in society and
recognises power in multiple institutions. This view also corresponds with how Pentecostals approach society: through a variety of different institutions linked to the family, business, education, welfare, and the media. By seeing the source of power in society as multi-institutional this helps overcoming some of the shortcomings of José Casanova’s framework, and thus also better explain the role of public religion in contemporary societies.

**Looking ahead: Past the age of the big miracles?**

The story of the Pentecostal movement is in many ways still a story of a “new birth”, the born-again miracle. But the Pentecostal movement has become embedded in history. In Guatemala and Nigeria, Pentecostals are increasingly addressing a crucial Pentecostal “theological puzzle”: when so many have become born-again, why has society not changed for the better? While some of the miracles preached have happened, far from all have materialised. The successes are many, but so are the scandals and disappointments. Pentecostalism is indeed big in Guatemala and Nigeria, but if it will continue to grow is an open question. The historic churches have been revitalised partly through the pentecostalisation of religion, and is regaining lost ground. However, no matter who does it, it remains probable that religious actors also in the future participate in the contest for the state and society. The question is not if religion impacts society, but rather how.
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