

# TRANSNATIONAL AFRICA AND GLOBALIZATION

Edited by  
Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome and Olufemi Vaughan

palgrave  
macmillan  
EMORY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

## CHAPTER 8

# THE CHANGING FACE OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY: REVERSE MISSION IN TRANSNATIONAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

JACOB K. OLUPONA

The twenty-first century has been described as the era of the global South. Christianity has experienced exponential growth in the southern hemisphere. African Christianity, in particular, has made significant strides and put a stamp on global Christianity. This is the result of the phenomenal rise in the number of Christians on the continent and also reflects the Christian churches' unprecedented role in the political and social transformation of Africa since the end of the Cold War. The world has taken notice of African Christianity's role in civil society and re-democratization efforts as well as its role in the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of African Christianity in the contemporary period is the shift I have described as the reverse mission phenomenon—African missionaries venturing to the cosmopolitan centers, especially in Europe and America, to reevangelize the West.

My chapter will examine the transnational dimension of African immigrant and diasporic Christian communities and their impact on American culture. It will examine how African Christian traditions are shaping and, in turn, are shaped by the values of their host countries.

It also will examine the global outreach of African Christianity and its implications for Africa and the world at large, focusing on the creative tension produced in the intersection between African values and American and European secular values. Lastly, my comments will examine the future of African Christianity.

Examining the changes African Christianity has undergone in the past few decades allows us to understand not only how African Christianity engages with Christian groups and movements in the West, especially the United States and Europe, but also how it is leading to the broader transformation of global Christianity. To sketch the influence of African Christianity on the global stage, it is necessary, first, to provide a brief overview of the various expressions of Christianity on the African continent, especially missions, independent African churches, and the new Pentecostal charismatic movements. I will discuss transnationalism as it is exemplified in African Christianity in the phenomenon of reverse mission. Finally, I will touch on the influence and role of African Christianity in the Euro-American context, focusing on the relationship between African Christianity and civil engagement.

#### AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY ON THE CONTINENT: PRELUDE TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The twenty-first century has presented a new face of Christianity, one that differs significantly from the Christianity of earlier centuries that was the subject of many good empirical ethnographical studies. In Africa, the conversions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by a dual relationship and compromise between traditionalism and Christian evangelism. Indeed, the explosion of independent African churches in the pre- and postindustrial period is indicative of this phenomenon. Cultural and religious pluralism and the selective use of tradition were very much in character with African culture and society. At the same time, Christianity and indigenous religious traditions changed each other as they negotiated religious beliefs and practices.

Two primary and formidable religious and social formations—the mission church and independent African Christianity—set the stage for the eventual growth and expansion of evangelical charismatic Pentecostal movements that followed. For its part, mission Christianity began to take root on the continent as early as the fifteenth century, with the encounter between the Portuguese and people along the west-central coast of Africa. It continued into the twentieth century, with Protestant evangelical Christian missions producing Euro-American-type churches that reflected the liturgy, leadership, and structure of the Western Christian

metropolis. It would take the creative and innovative emergence of the African prophetic movements of the twentieth century to fashion new religious contours that would domesticate and transform the mission churches into forms of indigenous Christianity that values and appreciates African traditional religious sensitivities, symbols, and practices.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM

In the last three decades, Africa has witnessed an upsurge of evangelical Christian forms manifested in Pentecostal charismatic fervor. The continent, in all probability, harbors the world's largest number of Pentecostal charismatic movements. How should one define African Pentecostalism and how does one account for its explosive success? Two explanatory models have been offered. First, Simeon Ilesanmi argues that religion has rushed into the vacuum created by failing states<sup>1</sup> and that African Christianity, generally, and Pentecostalism, in particular, have provided an avenue for African agency or, at the very least, the appearance of African agency. It is still too early, however, to attribute gains in African democratization to Pentecostalism. Pentecostals in Africa have radically altered the balance of religious, political, and ritual power in the African social world. This shift is evident in the religious courts of the new Pentecostal leaders: revival camps, and prayer-created holy cities, which even the sacred kings must visit to empower themselves to deal with civil and religious matters in their domain. Second, many have suggested that Pentecostalism has gained prominence because its evangelizing message is responsive to the material and existential needs of the people. Although this is true, a price has been paid for meeting these needs, as Pentecostal movements and leaders often have drawn on sectarian distinctions, encouraging religious xenophobia. As a result, certain Christian values and symbols are used, to the detriment of others, frequently resulting in intolerance, symbolic and actual violence, and human rights violations.

Pentecostalism is a phenomenon inseparable from modernity and should be seen as complementing the increasingly cosmopolitan character of businesses, ideas, and people. Studies of Pentecostalism should not only consider the issues of origin—that is, where and when Pentecostalism began—but also should address the influence of this movement on individuals and the society. Therefore, this study is particularly interested in these transnational dimensions of Pentecostalism and how members of the church community imagine themselves as part of the narrative on globalization. In this sense, Pentecostalism links the local with the global as members of the church community use media and other forms of communication to spread the gospel to other communities around the world.

A transnational study of Pentecostalism will reveal the role of the church in civil society. Charismatic churches not only respond to crisis situations by providing services to the poor and the oppressed, they also have become an avenue for upward mobility. The prosperity gospel propagated by Pentecostal churches is an indication of how membership in such charismatic communities can ensure one's position in the global middle class. The gospel also allows those who formerly were oppressed or colonized to invert power structures in ways that are advantageous to themselves and their communities. This is the role of the reverse missionaries, the African preachers who have established mega-churches in major cities of the West. In maintaining large followings, these Pentecostal leaders are putting a new face and story behind the church in their host countries.

African Pentecostalism is in no way monolithic. Unlike the African independent churches before them, African Pentecostal and charismatic churches entirely reject African cosmology, belief forms, and practices of indigenous African traditions, showing preference for the values and world view of modern Christianity in concert with African postcolonial social experiences. Despite this attempt to distance themselves from indigenous models, many Pentecostal practices surreptitiously reflect traditional forms of African religious spirituality, including speaking in tongues, possession by the Holy Spirit, and an emphasis on the proximate, this world salvation, as evidenced by a focus on materiality, prosperity, and pragmatism. However, the two are quite distinct, particularly with regard to Pentecostalism's almost uncontrollable quest for wealth, spiritual, and secular individualism and the disparaging of traditional customs, values, and moral ethos.

The dark side of African Pentecostalism is exemplified in the story of one evangelist, the so-called Rev. Dr. King, also known as Chukwuemeka Ezeuko, who was sentenced to death on January 11 2007 for having had six female members of his congregation doused in petrol and set aflame in Nigeria. This baptism by fire resulted in the death of one woman, Ann Uzor.<sup>2</sup> This came amid allegations of sexual abuse and harassment of female members. The church, the Christian Praying Assembly, seems to have been a cult, whose members believed King was Jesus. Upon being sentenced to death, King said, it was an honor and, a privilege to die by hanging as a prophet of God, because Jesus Christ also was hanged.<sup>3</sup> In addition to being a murderer, King also showed a lack of a basic knowledge of the Biblical narrative. Justice Kayode Oyewole, the presiding judge, made the following statement upon condemning King to death: "The violence demonstrated by the accused is a throwback to the dark ages and an assault to the gains attained by humanity in the

areas of respect for human dignity, freedom and liberty." One cannot overlook the irony that Ezeuko chose the name Rev. Dr. King after the African-American civil rights leader who modeled his life on the ideas of pacifism and nonviolence.

African Christianity in the twenty-first century remains a diverse and complex phenomenon. The explosive growth of Pentecostalism in the past three decades has irreversibly altered the landscape of African Christianity. Having established the contours of contemporary Christianity in Africa, I now will turn to the phenomenon of transnationalism and the ways in which this phenomenon has shaped Christianity not only in Africa, but also across the globe.

### TRANSNATIONALISM AND AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

The emerging presence, power, and influence of African immigrant religious communities in the United States and Europe are changing the American and European religious landscape. From magnificent cathedrals and evangelical headquarters to modest storefront churches, African Christians are creating distinct identities to perpetuate their cultural values. The impressive and ever-expanding variety of these congregations indicates a growing and formidable trend in the Euro-American religious field. Already we have seen major cities such as Washington, D.C., Atlanta, New York, London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Hamburg begin to undergo a fundamental religious transformation. Unlike those who arrived during the earlier waves of immigration, the new immigrants retain an ability to utilize modern technologies of communication and travel, which are used to expand and strengthen their communities. As a consequence, we see a reformation and adaptation of the Euro-American locale to serve a community that retains a non-Western memory within a Western environment. In effect, we can observe the resiliency, adaptation, and even expansion of the traditions of African Christianity that use a transglobal paradigm that is best captured with the language of transnationalism.

Transnationalism signifies the movement of people, capital, and ideas across spatial and cultural boundaries. Theories of transnationalism and globalization are essential to understanding how the movement of people and ideas across borders shape Christianity in Africa. Former paradigms of assimilation, secularization, and the loss of identity are no longer sufficient to explain the complex web of geographic, cultural, and personal connections that bind people and places. In an age of technological advancement where people often have ready access and movement across global space, immigrants can maintain ties with their homelands



and participate in various global networks of people and institutions. Deterritorialization refers to the ways that people, movements, and political formations, and in this case, religious institutions, transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities.<sup>4</sup> The religious communities formed by African immigrants depend on shifting notions of home. Whether home is conceptualized and imagined as a physical location to return to in life or death, or as a spiritual root that informs the ways faith, commerce, childrearing, and community are practiced, relationships among religious groups around the globe redefine transnationalism. The traditional model of immigration, rooted in a commitment to the centrality of the nation-state, fails to capture this new reality. The old paradigm reflected a flow of people fleeing from wars and economic strife with an eagerness to leave the old ways behind and wholeheartedly embrace the new culture. In the era of transnationalism, however, immigrants prefer a life of transition and are comfortable occupying a space as individuals who journey between home and the new land.

Referring to African immigrant religious institutions and organizations as transnational communities captures the reality of immigrant religious communities, with experiences and practices that transcend national boundaries of the United States and Europe. These ideas, beliefs, and activities also operate beyond the cultural spaces of the African continent, imagined or real. The African continent figures as home and the American space is conceived of as the locale. Looking at home and the host land merely as two entities, however, glosses over the complexity of how these spaces are imagined. For several African immigrant churches, the transnational relationship is not merely bidirectional, but rather involves a web of transnational networks that move through the entire world. The religious communities create new ideological, epistemic, spatial, and temporal configurations that include distant places such as Asia, South America, and Europe, where these communities currently are enjoying phenomenal growth. At the same time that a delocalized, polycentric identity is emerging, many immigrant religious communities retain a strong allegiance to a common source. This phenomenon is exemplified in the Redeemed Christian Church of God. Although the Church is based in Nigeria and holds its annual worldwide convention at the Redemption Camp on the outskirts of Lagos, it also holds an annual convention in America at the RCCG's U.S. headquarters in Texas. The Redemption Camp in Lagos functions as a mini Mecca, imbuing the Texas headquarters with an authority it otherwise would lack.<sup>5</sup>

The emergence of transnational African Christianity in the twenty-first century has left in its wake conflicts, dilemmas, and crises, especially in the Diaspora. African churches constantly must negotiate their

religious identities with two centers of authority: the homeland church (in Africa) that sends out missionaries, and the host countries' secular and religious centers that consider the new immigrants strange Christians. When viewed as strange Christians appearing in white robes, as an Atlanta journalist inquiring about these churches described them during a phone interview, African churches are marginalized. Madan Sarup notes: "If one considers the opposition of self and other, the other is always to some extent within. What is considered marginal and peripheral is actually central, since identity construction has to do not with being but becoming."<sup>6</sup>

We no longer can leave unquestioned the idea of American civil religions that do not take immigrant religions seriously. Those who originally were thought to be outside the mainstream of American religion are now being integrated. Sarup's thesis underscores the need to explore the cultural and social significance of African religious institutions, especially when examined along the two poles of margin and center.

#### AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY AND AMERICAN CULTURE

The spread of African religious practices, especially the African Pentecostal charismatic movements, requires that we understand transnational migration and cultural flows as constituting a new paradigm for investigating questions of identity, nationalism, gender, ethnicity, and race. The cultures in question are highly dynamic and transient, yet still traditional. Sermons affirm the African heritage and tradition, but remind the congregation that they are in America, a country with its own traditions and practices. Thus, the commonplace distinction between traditionalism on the one hand and modernity on the other is not a productive model for analyzing African immigrant religious communities in the United States.

According to simplistic dichotomies, religion is the domain of tradition, standing outside of and in opposition to modernity and enlightenment. Moreover, Africa long has been made to bear the burden of serving as the exemplar of antimodernity. Thus, African customs and practices often are deemed out of sync with Western notions of progress and so are rejected and discarded. Negotiating two identities—that of the homeland and that of the new country—is a more complex phenomenon than it might seem. Two stories illustrate this complexity. The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Sacramento has a congregation that is 70 percent female. In response, the Church has created an enlarged space for women in leadership roles in the Church. RCCG women also are adopting American styles of dress and appearance. In Nigeria, women are

encouraged to cover their heads, but the practice is much less common in the United States. On the other hand, the Nigerian Reverend Sisters of the Daughters of Divine Love continue to wear traditional habits, even though they long have been abandoned by their American counterparts. For the Nigerian Reverend Sisters, wearing the habit in the United States reveals the complex relationship between tradition, modernity, the African homeland, and the adopted home of the United States.

Among African immigrant religious associations in the United States, Christian communities are notable in terms of size, rate of growth, level of social engagement, and distinctiveness within a wider faith tradition. In the Christian communities themselves, there are varied traditions, including Pentecostal and charismatic churches, African independent churches, and specialized African ministries within mainline denominations. Churches and denominations such as Deeper Christian Life Ministry, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Holy Order of Cherubim and Seraphim, The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Celestial Church of Christ, and The Church of the Lord (Aladura), represent distinct and unique expressions of world Christianity that are making significant inroads in America. Leaders of these groups are resolute in terms of their own personal faith and in respect to their vision for community development. Their churches have been instrumental in renewing values of family and community in the lives of immigrants and in providing avenues for civic involvement. Their success in the United States likely will influence public views of immigrant religion, persuading Americans to take more seriously the spiritual and social significance of these communities.

Within immigrant African churches, there are diverse expressions of identity. Pastors' opinions range from those who would rather not be associated with anything African to others who argue for the growth of a culturally based African church in America. In reality, there is a great deal of fluidity, as church leaders and members express the complex identities of their transnational lives. In any one church, ethnic cell groups may coexist with prominent markers of Pan-African identity and symbols of global internationalism. There is a strong desire to maintain traditional values of family and community while embracing American ideals of freedom and individualism.

The religious groups are becoming more involved in social and political issues affecting their wider neighborhoods, towns, and cities, a fact reported by Helen Rose Ebaugh and J. S. Chafetz in "Religion and the New Immigrants," a study done under the Religion, Ethnicity, and New Immigrant Research project in 2000 that dealt directly with the interface of religion and immigration. The researchers focused on 13 immigrant congregations in Houston, Texas, and reported on findings, from structural

adaptation to social services to immigrant adaptations and language, asserting that immigrant communities that practice minority religions in the United States are more successful than majority religions at attracting native-born Americans. They also suggest that religious organizations are providing social services and social activities to their congregations. Activities include food and clothing drives, youth seminars, substance abuse counseling, and material and spiritual outreach to various groups, such as the homeless, migrant laborers, and the incarcerated. In African religious communities, there also is substantial involvement in politics, oriented toward issues both on the African continent and in the United States. Churches are lively centers for debate about African social, economic, and political issues, for promulgating particular views and agendas, and for disseminating written materials. Political expression also is expanding to encompass debates within the United States, including immigration policy, citizenship, race relations, affirmative action, abortion, and gay marriage.

Sermons of religious leaders, while not overtly political, often contain political messages. Most religious leaders describe their desire to keep politics and religion separate, and especially their reluctance to tell other people how to vote. At the same time, some pastors related how, during the recent presidential election, they would lecture on particular topics that deeply concerned them and hoped to sway the membership toward their viewpoint. For example, a pastor related how, before embarking on a marathon prayer session in which prayers were said on issues as diverse as personal success to paying one's outstanding bills, he called for a special prayer session on the passage of the health care bill, saying that it would please God to give President Obama a triumph and put the devil to shame.

The politics of language captures nicely the range of questions and conflicts that immigrant African Christians are wrestling with as they establish themselves in the West. Holding onto their language, culture, and values serves as an anchor, grounding immigrants who face the herculean task of fitting into a strange society. At a meeting of the Anglican Church in Atlanta, an Igbo member of the congregation shouted at the bishops, "This is America!"—meaning that members could exercise their democratic right to conduct services in whatever language they chose, regardless of the bishops' opinion.

In a similar context, my daughter, who years ago attended her aunt's wedding in a Redeemed Christian Church of God service in London, was conversing with her cousin when an usher came to stop her from speaking in Yorùbá. "We do not speak that language in our church here!" My daughter, a lawyer, responded immediately, "How dare you ask me not to speak my language in the church!" Followers of the new evangelical Christianity in Europe and America resist the use of vernacular language

in worship, arguing that it limits the spread of the African Christian gospel to the rest of the world, an issue that set evangelical Pentecostal charismatic churches in opposition to the nationalism of Africans living in Europe and America.

What do we make of the insistence on English language as a medium of expression when most of the devotees prefer to use a native tongue in liturgy? It is a conflict between nationalism and transnationalism. The Igbo, for example, prefer a church where Igbo language is used. This is helpful for their non-English-speaking parents and helps socialize children into Igbo culture and tradition. To the church hierarchy, however, insisting on English emphasizes a global church, a reverse of the nationalism that dictated religious practices in Africa in the 1960s, shortly after the independence of most African nations. Similar conflicts arose when the Vatican Council encouraged Catholic churches to promote the use of local languages in liturgy.

### REVERSE MISSION

African Christians are playing an increasingly active and influential role in American public life. Perhaps the most striking example of the growing willingness of immigrant communities to engage the larger culture, not only in the United States, but in the West more generally, is the emergence of the phenomenon on the reverse mission.

To African Christian evangelists, the United States, Europe, and Asia have become new African mission fields. The call of the grand Biblical commission—"go ye forth and make disciples of all men"—resonates with Africans as they now actively participate in sending missions to the West. In addition to scores of indigenous African churches and evangelical Pentecostal charismatic churches, conventional denominations—Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian—are creating ethnic and national ministries to enable like-minded Africans to continue practicing their faith traditions, to sing the songs of their Lord using their own melodies with drumming and percussion under the aegis of the old missions, without being accused of making too much noise.

It is important to point out that many immigrants, especially African Christians, define and construct *global* identities that reflect their perceived role as missionaries to the West and to the entire world. Pastor Gbega Talabi of Victory Life Bible Church in Sacramento describes this global mission:

"Today, Africans have joined the league of voices bringing the new wave of evangelism in a great prophetic dimension to the Western world. It is

important to examine the causes, the benefits, and the impact on a world that is distressed, riddled with crisis, and looking for urgent answers to global problems."

This ideal of spiritual agency provides purpose to these movements and also a global sense of home that transcends fixed notions of place and identity. Such findings can be viewed as evidence for a new awareness and vitality in immigrant identities<sup>7</sup> as they address and adapt to a world characterized by movement and dislocation.

A striking example of a reverse mission undertaken by an African evangelist to the West is the ministry of the Rev. Sunday Adelaja in Kiev, Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> Adelaja, a Nigerian, initially, and somewhat to his dismay, found himself in Belarus (then part of the Soviet Union) on a scholarship to study journalism. While in Belarus, Adelaja helped to found some underground churches. Deported by the KGB for his religious activities, Adelaja went to the Ukraine at the invitation of Jeff Davis, a traveling evangelist who was doing television ministry and needed someone familiar with the language who could represent his interests. From this beginning in Ukraine as a television evangelist, Adelaja began the process of founding churches. In 1994, the first—Word of Faith Bible Church—was founded from a Bible study group. From this small beginning, Adelaja now is the head of the largest church in the Ukraine, with 20,000 members and 20 services every Sunday in various auditoriums throughout Kiev. There are now hundreds of daughter churches of the Embassy of God, the current name of the church, throughout the Ukraine, the former Soviet Union, Europe, the United States, and even Israel. Adelaja is one of the most powerful public figures in Ukraine, and is credited, among other things, with aiding in the election of the mayor of Kiev. The story of Adelaja is fascinating on many levels. First, there is the irony of Adelaja's ejection from Belarus. Marx's famous description of religion as the opiate of the people is seriously challenged by the story of Adelaja. Communist Russia, found the peasant agency that Adelaja stirred to be threatening. This reveals the tragic circumstances of many people who found their religious lives suppressed under the Soviet system. Most important to our purposes here is the fact that the most dynamic and powerful religious leader in Ukraine is Nigerian. Ukraine's mega-church is African in origin. It is not too much to say that Adelaja's missionary work has permanently altered the religious landscape of Eastern Europe, instilling African religious sensibilities in a region that previously had been a religious vacuum.

A similar instance of the growth of African churches in Europe is represented by the example the Kingsway International Christian Centre

in East London. Founded in 1992 by Matthew Ashimolowo, another Nigerian, the KICC quickly rose to fame as the largest black church in the United Kingdom. The church now boasts a weekly attendance of more than 12,000 people and holds services in a church the size of an arena.<sup>9</sup> Ashimolowo, an extremely charismatic figure, has written ten dozens of books and regularly appears on television and radio. In 2005, Ashimolowo was convicted by the Charity Commission of having embezzled funds from the church, which encourages its members to tithe 10 percent of their income. Ashimolowo was required to pay back more than 200,000 pounds sterling. It was also claimed that he used the charity's credit card to buy a 12,000 pounds timeshare in Florida and he received was a 120,000 pounds birthday party, of which 80,000 pound was spent on a Mercedes.<sup>10</sup> Ashimolowo denied any wrongdoing; whether this is true is perhaps less interesting than the way the story was advertised in the British newspapers: "Flamboyant pastor must repay £200,000" was one headline from the *London Evening Standard*.<sup>11</sup> It reflects the subtle racism prevalent in European and American societies. The Charity Commission seemed relieved to have found some way to bring Ashimolowo down to size. There seems to have been a certain sense that a black minister—and an African, no less—of such unchecked power and popularity was a cause for concern.

There may well be unforeseen consequences of the African reverse mission, such cultural conflicts that arise when the two groups meet each other. African churches have been plunged into the controversies of our contemporary times. Nigerian and African bishops, for instance, opposed the consecration of an openly gay Episcopal bishop, causing the near collapse of the global Anglican Communion. This struggle suggests the new global power of the African Church. *Time* magazine voted the Anglican Primate and Archbishop of Nigeria, Jasper Akinola, one of the world's most powerful individuals.

#### CHRISTIANITIES IN CONVERSATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE

The increasingly global impact and influence of African Christianity is significant. Two recent events exemplify this interaction. First, consider an episode that occurred during the recent presidential election in the United States involving vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin and a visiting African cleric. Palin received the blessing of an African cleric, Bishop Thomas Muthee of Kenya, who some members of the press described as a witch doctor.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, Bishop Muthee prayed for

Sarah Palin to succeed in her bid for the governorship of Alaska and to be protected from witchcraft and other forces of evil.<sup>13</sup> This was a case of a Christian African priest saying an African prayer in an American setting. Interestingly, the elders of Barack Obama's Luo ethnic group in Kenya did the same in imploring their dead ancestors to protect Obama from the perils and dangers of American politics.<sup>14</sup> In the African context, it would be customary for them to pray to their ancestors for Obama to achieve victory in his presidential campaign, and to pray even more now for his continued protection and success as the American leader. The failure of the American press to understand these practices led them to misrepresent them as threatening and ominous.

Secondly, the election of Obama invokes a very different but positive reaction from many Africans in the Diaspora. My reaction to his election drew on my African Christian sensibilities. As I rose after a long night's vigil of watching the results of the presidential election on television, I found myself humming the beloved Yorùbá lyrics made famous by a very popular vocalist in Nigeria:

Welcome a new dawn!

A renewed harmony of beginning has come

The old familiar melody, the drumming and the voices, like the Negro spiritual, came back to me instinctively, as I reveled in the joy of Obama's victory the morning after the election. Rising from the depths of my Yorùbá Christian heritage, the old familiar melodies and lyrics of my youth came back to me, musical traditions rooted deep in the material culture of the Bible, the resource Christians draw upon in music, praise poetry, and prayer, and in incantations for personal, social, political, and economic growth.

#### A PROPOSED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

In view of the myriad problems and conflicts facing Africa today, I would like to see the emergence of an African Christianity as a dominant civil society organizer, a force in democratic government on the continent. While I recognize that in the post-Communist era, the church as a part of civil society has played a major role in the African democratization processes, it still is not clear whether the church has maintained an equally central role in nurturing these democracies. As a central voice of moral reasoning and the conscience of the state amid corruption, national xenophobia, human rights abuses, political violence, and oppression, the



church certainly has not responded strongly enough. It seems to me that African Christianity can ameliorate the pain, suffering, and humiliation caused by injustice.

### CONCLUSION

The role of African Christianity in the contemporary world is a much-discussed topic that, unfortunately, has been misrepresented in the media. In general, news stories focus on the phenomenal growth of these traditions, insinuating that the growth is threatening. Regardless, Africa now occupies a key place in the discourse on global Christianity, as Philip Jenkins and others have pointed out. If there has been, as he says, a paradigm shift in global Christianity, there is no doubt that African Pentecostal and charismatic traditions are in the heart of it. Indeed, African evangelicalism, filled with a spirit of reverse mission, has spread the world over, infusing global Christian tradition with its own brand of religious creativity, ultimately resulting in the reordering of transnational religious and cultural landscapes. The emerging presence, power, and influence of African immigrant communities in the United States and Europe has created a space for critical reflection on the role of Africans in the social and religious transformation of Western metropolises. Unlike earlier waves of immigration, the new immigrants retain an unsurpassed ability to use modern communication and to travel, which serves both to expand and strengthen these communities.

### NOTES

1. The issue of failing states becomes more complex in light of recent statements made by the French president in Côte d'Ivoire. During a speech that could have been copied directly from Mircea Eliade's *The Myth of Eternal Return*, Sarkozy suggested that African backwardness is the result of a circular notion of time, which generated a preoccupation with the mythical past to the detriment of the progressive future. Sarkozy failed to note the gratitude that he and others owe to this backwardness, which has allowed the world to take advantage of African labor and oil reserves.
2. Court sentences Rev. King to death by hanging, <<http://www.gamji.com>>.
3. Ibid.
4. Arjun Appadurai. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996): 192.
5. My first visit with Pastor Adeboye was in 1998; he was leaving from Miami to Jamaica to inaugurate new churches.
6. Sarup 1996: 6.

7. Nigel Rapport. "Coming Home to a Dream: A Study of the Immigrant Discourse of Anglo-Saxons in Israel," in *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, N. Rapport and A. Dawson (eds.), (New York: Berg, 1998): 79.
8. Pastor Sunday Adelaja. It is Easy Ministries. <<http://www.it-is-easy.org/contact/friends/sunday.php>>.
9. Current figures from KICC website, <<http://www.kicc.org.uk>>.
10. "How Ashimolowo Landed in Trouble." OnlineNigeria.com. <<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/links/Ashimolowoadv.asp?blurb=638>>.
11. Ibid, 1.
12. On June 8, 2008, Sarah Palin indicated in a speech at the Wasilla Assembly of God that it was Bishop Thomas Muthee of Kenya's prayer that did the trick. Jessica Fargen, "Sarah Palin witchcraft flap all smoke and no fire." *Boston Herald*, September 26, 2008.
13. Sarah Palin and Thomas Muthee. "The American Candidate and African Witchcraft." *Boston Herald* (September 20, 2000).
14. [www.nation.co.ke/NEWS/1058/487014](http://www.nation.co.ke/NEWS/1058/487014) [www.dailymail.co.uk/new/worldviews/articles-1057181](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/new/worldviews/articles-1057181).

### REFERENCES

- Anderson, Allan. *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).
- . *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2005).
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
- . "The Church in the African State: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Experience in Ghana." *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1998): 51–57.
- Chafetz, Janet Saltzman, and Helen Rose Ebaugh, eds. *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*. (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2000).
- Corten, André, and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds. *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
- . *Pentecostalism in Brazil: Emotion of the Poor and Theological Romanticism*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
- Jenkins, Philip. *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- Kalu, Ogbu. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).



- Marshall, Ruth. *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- Meyer, Birgit. *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe of Ghana*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
- . "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Charismatic-Pentecostal Churches." *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 33 (2004): 447–74.
- Miller, Donald E., and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- Ojo, Matthews A. *The End-time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006).
- Soothill, Jane E. *Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power: Charismatic Christianity*. (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

## CHAPTER 9

# GENDERED MIGRATIONS: AFRICAN IDENTITIES AND GLOBALIZATION

ANTHONIA C. KALU

Independence in Africa brought with it a sense of national liberation and, to a certain extent, a false sense of nationalism that encouraged individual aspirations without the consequent rights. Communal and individual hopefulness, once raised by the expected changes from national self-rule, implied that Africans would be free to determine the terms of the continent's progress resulting from positive human infrastructural advancement. However, it was soon clear that aspects of national consolidations that created postindependence policies were constructed on fragile foundations. This situation made transformation from the drudgeries of precolonial and colonial conditions of misery, poverty, and marginality difficult to achieve. Consequently, for most African women, this meant that education did not always predict personal advancement. The immediate result was the continuing legacies of gender inequity, especially among western-educated postindependence African elites, whose emergence promised new and global frontiers.

Frequently in the new dispensation, a western-type education for African women provided opportunities for marriage to western-educated African men for whom the compulsion to western-based elitism required the exclusion of women in the new nation-building project. During the colonial period, most educational curricula targeted girls for training in Home Economics, and often discouraged them from taking courses in the