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Pentecostalism, economics, capitalism: putting *the Protestant Ethic* to work

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, academic interest in the nexus between Pentecostalism, economics, and capitalism has grown significantly. Notably, the vast majority of publications that have addressed this interface are to some degree conceptually framed by Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In this article I consider what *The Protestant Ethic* might contribute to our understanding of the relationship between Pentecostalism and capitalism. First, I assess a particularly noteworthy attempt to draw Pentecostalism into Weber's genealogical account which draws a series of parallels between Pentecostalism and ascetic Protestantism. Second, I discuss the merits of an approach that is not primarily genealogical but remains indebted to the concepts that Weber introduces, elaborating a new affinity between Pentecostalism and capitalism in its present iteration. With this article, I seek to comprehensively extend the scope and sharpen the conceptual underpinnings of future analysis and empirical work in this area.

KEYWORDS

Pentecostalism; Prosperity Gospel; economics; capitalism; Max Weber; Protestant Ethic; global development

In his pioneering study on the rise of Evangelical Protestantism in Latin America, David Martin (1990, 205–206) recommended that more scholarly attention be directed at the relationship between Pentecostal Christianity and economic culture. Martin's expectations must surely have been met: recent years have seen a significant growth of academic interest in this interface. This has in part been occasioned by the now well-documented global explosion of Pentecostalism, most notably in the Global South. Another contributing factor has been the recent swell of interest in the role of religion in development.

In the same chapter of the aforementioned volume, Martin also observed that commentators on Evangelical Protestantism have derived a loose 'supposition' about its relationship to economic success from Max Weber's essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Martin advised that future work attend more closely to this text. His expectations are less likely to have been met in this instance: while the majority of publications that have addressed the interface of Pentecostalism, economics, and capitalism are to some degree conceptually framed by Weber's essay, very few of them engage with the text in any great depth. In many cases, the author simply makes a passing reference to Weber in the space of a sentence or two without much elaboration; in others, the author may not even

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mention Weber or *The Protestant Ethic* explicitly by name, but the intellectual debt is manifestly there.

It is also notable that the body of literature that engages in a more sustained way with Weber is somewhat diffuse in its distribution. There are, I suggest, two reasons for this. First, Weber is a decisively interdisciplinary thinker, and *The Protestant Ethic* is a wide-ranging text that lends itself to use in many different fields of study. Second, *The Protestant Ethic* is a work of astonishing ambition. In outlining the transition to capitalist modernity, Weber actually touches on a series of subjects that have each in the century since his death generated an impressive body of scholarship in their own right: from the question of the economic consequences of religious modes of subjectivation at different scales, and of shifting forms of legitimate authority from the early modern era to the present day, to the history of secularisation, and so on.

In this article I ask what *The Protestant Ethic* might contribute to our understanding of the contemporary relationship between Pentecostalism, economics, and capitalism. In doing so I engage with a handful of analyses that offer more sustained engagements with Weber with regard to this interface. I begin with thorough summary of the key arguments advanced in *The Protestant Ethic*. I then provide a detailed assessment one noteworthy attempt to draw contemporary Pentecostalism into Weber's genealogical account of the rise of capitalist modernity, and specifically by drawing parallels between twenty first-century Pentecostalism and seventeenth-century ascetic Protestantism. Finally, I consider the merits of an approach that sits rather more lightly to this genealogy but that is no less indebted to the concepts that Weber introduces.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Over a century after its original publication in 1904 and 1905 (a revised edition was published in 1920), Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* continues to wield considerable influence and to provoke lively debate. However, commentators often impart a familiarity with this work that owes more to an accumulated body of secondary literature than it does to the text itself. Here I have in mind the 'Protestant work ethic' that has entered idiomatic use, understood crudely as a religious injunction to hard toil. I also have in mind those tidy scholarly constructions of a 'Protestant Ethic thesis' in which it is argued that the Protestant Reformation was the necessary and solitary causal agent responsible for the emergence of modern capitalism. Weber (2001, 49) himself is at pains to correct this misreading:

> [I] have no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism […] could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as an economic system is a creation of the Reformation.

On the contrary, Weber (2001, 49) is very conscious of 'the tremendous confusion of interdependent influences between the material basis, the forms of social and political organisation, and the ideas current in the time of the Reformation' that have contributed to 'the qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion of [the spirit of capitalism] over the world.' Rather, the stated focus of Weber's (2001, 49) investigation is the question of 'whether and at what points certain correlations [*Wahlverwandtschaften*] between forms of religious belief and practical ethics can be worked out.' This indicates a far

more nuanced (though no less ambitious) account of the transition to capitalist modernity than Weber is often given credit for.

I want to dwell a little on the term *Wahlverwandtschaft*. Though interpreted by Talcott Parsons as 'correlation' in the English edition that I am using, it is today more often translated as 'elective affinity'. Weber borrowed the term from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his 1809 novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Goethe had himself appropriated the term from the field of chemistry, using it as a metaphor for certain dynamics of social interaction. In chemistry, an 'elective' or 'chemical affinity' denotes a relationship between two different chemical substances which, because of their characteristic properties, are highly inclined to unite to form a chemical compound (an entirely new substance), and not only this but to do so in preference to a third substance. In a textured analysis of Weber's use of the term, McKinnon (2010) suggests that the chemical metaphor may lend further clarity to Weber's argument in ways that he himself did not fully realise. Specifically, it allows Weber to sidestep the thorny matter of causality concerning the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism that has so exercised his commentators, instead framing the relationship as one of *coherence* or *sympathy* rather than that of determination.[1]

Weber (2001, 19) describes the modern 'capitalistic economy' of his day as an 'immense cosmos' which 'presents itself […] as an unalterable order of things.' It is principally characterised by the imposition of impersonal and rational 'rules of action' that are directed at the systematic pursuit of efficiency and maximum profit (Weber 2001, 19). One of the chief conclusions of Weber's essay is that modern capitalism was formed by an elective affinity between the (external and institutional) *form of capitalism* on the one hand, and the (internal and ethical) *spirit of capitalism* on the other. The overwhelming focus of *The Protestant Ethic* is on the spirit of capitalism rather than its form. For the sake of clarity, it must be stressed that ascetic Protestantism or 'the spirit of Christian asceticism' is *not* synonymous with the spirit of capitalism, as is often taken to be the case, but is rather its 'religious root' (Weber 2001, 120). As Weber (2001, 122–123) himself makes clear in a key summary statement, 'one of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism,' namely that of 'rational conduct on the basis of the idea of calling,' was 'born […] from the spirit of Christian asceticism.'[2]

To appreciate precisely what is meant by 'rational conduct' and 'the idea of calling', it is important to first address the seventeenth-century theological context where Weber (2001, 55) locates the 'various different dogmatic roots of ascetic morality.' Of principal interest to Weber is the legacy of the Calvinist tradition within Protestant asceticism. More specifically, he is interested in how the 'Father in heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding,' gave way to the *Deus absconditus* (hidden God); 'a transcendent being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual' (Weber 2001, 60, 176n12). Here there is a deliberate allusion to the Calvinist doctrine of election or predestination. According

[1]There are interesting parallels here with recent debates about the relationship between Pentecostalism and capitalism which have also centred on causality (see Marshall 2009; Comaroff 2012). Here too, I suggest, Weber's notion of 'elective affinity' provides a way of accounting for new conglomerations and forms of 'interplay' between Pentecostalism and political-economic forms while steering clear of functionalist, reductionist, or essentialising modes of analysis.

[2]As the conditional 'one of' implies, there are other components to the spirit of modern capitalism than the ethic of ascetic rationalism that emerged from ascetic Protestantism, though Weber undoubtedly regards it as the principal element.

to this doctrine, humans are predestined by God to inherit either eternal life or eternal damnation regardless of their own volition. Characteristically, Weber (2001, 55) does not embark upon a merely conceptual discussion about 'what was officially taught in the ethical compendia of the time,' such as providing an exhaustive account of the doctrine of election. He is instead concerned with the 'unforeseen and even unwished-for' consequences of Reformed theology, specifically with respect to 'psychological sanctions' that direct 'practical conduct' (Weber 2001, 48, 55). For the Calvinist, in marked contrast to practitioners of pre-Reformation forms of Christianity, the *certitudo salutis* (assurance of salvation) 'could not be guaranteed by any magical sacraments, by relief in the confession, nor by individual good works' (Weber 2001, 100). This state of affairs had an 'extraordinarily powerful' psychological effect on 'ordinary' believers in that the question of the status of ones own election 'forced all other interests into the background' (2001, 80, 65). In order to be 'granted release' from these religious doubts, the believer was effectively duty-bound to consider herself among the elect (Weber 2001, 71). This was because 'lack of self-confidence [was perceived to be] the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace' (Weber 2001, 66–67). The 'most suitable means' of attaining that self-confidence (and by extension certainty of grace) was deemed to be 'intense worldly activity'. In Weber's (2001, 101) evocative words, Christian asceticism 'strode into the market-place of life[,] slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate [the] daily routine of life.'[3]

The 'worldly activity' that was prescribed was not just any sort of activity, but a 'specific type of conduct unmistakably different from the way of life of the natural man' and which permitted the individual to 'methodically […] supervise his own state of grace' (Weber 2001, 67, 100). In this respect, the Reformation had inaugurated 'a new form of control' which was highly effective: it had substituted 'the Church's control over everyday life' with an internal form of *self*-discipline which entailed the 'regulation of the whole of conduct' and which penetrated 'to all departments of private and public life' (Weber 2001, 4). The 'specific type of conduct' to which Weber alludes is, in short, *ascetic rationalism*. As a distinctive form of activity, ascetic rationalism derived from a 'sharp condemnation of idolatry of the flesh and of all dependence on personal relations to other men' in preference of 'the service of God's ends,' enjoining the individual to operate as a 'tool of the divine will' for the sake of God's greater glory (*in majorem Dei gloriam*) (Weber 2001, 181n30, 68).

The resultant 'inner isolation of the individual' under Calvinism, divorced as she was from all personal relationships, forced the notion of 'Christian brotherly love' to take a highly 'peculiar form', namely that of 'specialized labour in a calling which serves the mundane life of the community' (Weber 2001, 64). Here again we encounter this concept of 'calling'. Weber's observation is that Martin Luther's notion of divine 'calling' or 'vocation' (*Beruf*) was taken by seventeenth-century Calvinists to refer to an all-embracing commitment to work in the worldly occupation or profession to which every single individual believer is appointed by God. Put simply, 'brotherly love' became redefined under Calvinism as specialised 'labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness', or *just doing one's job* to the best of one's ability (Weber 2001, 64).

[3]Here Weber narrates the post-Reformation transition from *mysticism*, constituting a form 'fleeing from the world' and into inward contemplation, towards *asceticism*, entailing a specific form of conduct *within* the world, but 'for the sake of the world beyond' (Weber 2001, 100–101).

As should be clear by this point, Weber (2001, 100) does not intend 'asceticism' to mean mortification in any conventional sense, but rather the 'rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's will.' This task of rationalising the world, understood as the systematic instrumentalisation of all individual conduct in the pursuit of a given end, is undertaken 'within this world, but for the sake of the world beyond' (Weber 2001, 100).[4] In addition to a dedication to the 'impersonal' task of ensuring the fulfilment and success of one's worldly vocation, asceticism also entails a propensity for 'rigorous calculation' and routinisation, the total rejection of the 'impulsive enjoyment of life' and possessions, the restriction of excessive consumption, and the promotion of 'rational and utilitarian uses of wealth' (Weber 2001, 37, 112, 115). In sum, the greatest influence of ascetic Protestantism on modern culture was not 'the mere encouragement of capital accumulation,' but rather that it consistently 'favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life' as a 'unified system' (Weber 2001, 117, 71). This influence was particularly noteworthy in the case of English Puritanism, 'derived from Calvinism,' which stood 'at the cradle of modern economic man' (Weber 2001, 102, 117).

It was in the eighteenth century that these 'religious roots died out' (Weber 2001, 119). 'The the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God' had given way to a full-fledged rationalism of 'sober economic virtue' and 'utilitarian worldliness' (Weber 2001, 119). The confidence of Puritans in their capacity to withstand the 'temptations of wealth' helped material goods to gain 'an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men' (Weber 2001, 117–118, 124). Crucially, this did not entail the straightforward disappearance of the 'specific type of conduct' that had been developed in seventeenth-century ascetic Protestantism as a means of securing proof of election, but rather its endurance as the principal element in a spirit of capitalism. There was an elective affinity between this profoundly 'non-ethical' ethic and the impersonal form of capitalism that was ascendant. From this point onwards, prescriptions to rational conduct would be directed away from 'the world beyond' and towards another impersonal authority, namely the 'fateful force' of capitalism (Weber 2001, xxxi). In other words, they were now 'ends in themselves' in an autonomous and secular world characterised by 'pure utilitarianism' (Weber 2001, 125).[5] It is in this regard that Weber (2001, 122–124) makes his famous observation that those of his era now inhabit the wholly impersonal 'steel casing' of modern capitalism, with the spirit of religious asceticism necessary for its emergence having 'escaped', and the individual enjoined to 'rational conduct on the basis of the idea of calling' without any grounding in 'the highest spiritual and cultural values.'[6]

A New Protestant Ethic

Before his death in 2017, Peter Berger had established himself as the foremost proponent of a 'neo-Weberian' reading of Pentecostal Christianity. He did so by building on the pioneering research of fellow associates at Boston University's Institute on Culture, Religion,

[4]Indeed on this definition, ascetic rationalism can even be said to acquire a certain 'irrationality' in that it can function at the expense of the individual's wants and needs. For instance, Weber (2001, 32) observes that there is a certain 'irrationality' to existing 'for the sake of [one's] business, instead of the reverse' from the perspective of 'personal happiness'.

[5]To use Weber's terminology, the 'substantively rational' or 'value rational' conduct of Protestant asceticism was replaced by the 'instrumentally' or 'formally rational' conduct of capitalist modernity.

[6]Most commentators now deem 'steel casing' or 'steel housing' to be more preferable translations of *stahlhartes Gehäuse* than Talcott Parsons' 'iron cage'.

and World Affairs (CURA) such as Bernice Martin (1995; 2010) and David Martin (1990; 2002) in Latin America. Here I refer to Berger's short but widely-cited essay, 'Max Weber is Alive and Well and Living in Guatemala' (2010). In the essay, Berger (2010, 4) describes the 'attitudes and behaviour' of Pentecostals in Latin America as bearing 'a striking resemblance to their Anglo-Saxon predecessors.' In other words, he identifies a remarkable consonance between Latin American Pentecostals and Weber's Puritans as a result of their sharing a 'this-worldly ascetic' orientation:

> [Pentecostalism in Latin America] promotes personal discipline and honesty, proscribes alcohol and extra-marital sex, dismantles the *compadre* system (which is based on Catholic practice and, with its *fiestas* and other extravagant expenditures, discourages saving), and teaches ordinary people to create and run their own grassroots institutions. Pentecostalism, moreover, fosters a culture that is radically opposed to classical *machismo* […], women take on leadership roles within the family, 'domesticating' their husbands […] and paying attention to the education of their children. (Berger 2010, 4)[7]

Accordingly, Berger (2010, 7) observes that contemporary Pentecostalism has an 'exceptionally high affinity' with modern capitalism, going so far as to describe it as a 'carrier of modern capitalist culture' in direct reference to Weber.[8] In contexts where the 'macro-economy' has created the right conditions (i.e., when the form of capitalism has been present), then it has been possible to observe a 'positive correlation' between Pentecostalism in Latin America and 'social mobility' (Berger 2010, 5). This has stimulated the growth of a 'Protestant middle class' (Berger 2010, 5).

Beyond Latin America, Berger also contributed to the work of the Centre for Development and Enterprise South Africa (CDE) which has conducted an expansive investigation into the social and economic impact of Pentecostalism in South Africa (see Bernstein and Rule 2010; CDE 2012). The empirical data collected by the team 'broadly confirm[s] Berger's depiction of the Calvinist social character' as a form of 'worldly asceticism', entailing a 'disciplined attitude to work' and 'other spheres of life' as well as a 'deferral of instant consumption', all of which leads to 'capital accumulation' and 'social mobility' (CDE 2012, 77). It is concluded that contemporary Pentecostalism has 'positive consequences for modern economic development very similar to those of the "Protestant ethic" in the context of early capitalism in Europe and North America' (Bernstein and Rule 2010, 101).[9]

I begin my analysis with the work of Berger and the CDE research team for two reasons: first, because it enjoys an impressive profile, and second, because I think that it is flawed in several respects. As a means of shedding further critical light on the merits and limitations of this type of neo-Weberian analysis, I want to consider a series of issues that this comparison between ascetic Protestantism and contemporary Pentecostalism raises. In doing so, I repeatedly bring the work of Berger and the CDE team into conversation with the work of Marshall (2009) on Pentecostalism in Nigeria, whose many allusions to *The Protestant Ethic* suggests that she too finds Weber to be a useful interlocutor.

[7]This is not the only setting where researchers have observed these parallels: David Maxwell (1998, 352–353) makes similar observations in the context of Zimbabwe.
[8]Talcott Parsons translates *Träger* as 'representative' rather than 'carrier'.
[9]Several criticisms have been levelled at CDE by Gifford and Nogueira-Godsey (2011) both with respect to methodology and analysis.

Types of Pentecostalism

As is well known, Weber (2001, 56) employs the 'artificial simplicity' of the 'ideal type' as a heuristic device in *The Protestant Ethic*, mapping out several 'types' of ascetic Protestantism. The type that takes centre stage in the essay is seventeenth-century Calvinism, and in the final chapter there is a more narrow focus on English Puritanism which was 'derived from Calvinism' (Weber 2001, 102). The parallels that Berger and the CDE team make are between a more general category of 'this-worldly asceticism' on the one hand (which is vaguely approximate to Weber's seventeenth-century ascetic Protestants), and a general category of contemporary Pentecostalism on the other.

Contemporary Pentecostalism is heterogeneous in character, not least because it is today a truly global phenomenon, entangled in manifold ways with local traditions and contexts. Accordingly, the term 'Pentecostalism' itself is arguably best seen as denoting what Anderson (2010, 17) calls a 'broad family resemblance'. While most Pentecostal churches resist easy classification, Marshall (2009, 85) in her work in Nigeria invokes the image of a 'spectrum': different churches can be placed on a scale extending between two poles denoting Holiness Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism.[10] Holiness Pentecostalism is characterised by an emphasis on the need to secure other-worldly salvation and the importance of personal ethical conduct as an external sign of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In stark contrast, neo-Pentecostalism is characterised by an emphasis on this-worldly salvation and the importance of 'spiritual gifts', as well as an embrace of Prosperity theologies of health and wealth.[11] On this measure, organisations such as Assemblies of God (AG) and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM) can be placed closer to the classical or Holiness pole, whereas the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) and Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners Chapel) fall closer to the 'neo-Pentecostal' pole. Speaking to the Nigerian context, Marshall (2009, 85) observes that 'the great majority' of Pentecostal churches actually 'situate themselves in a sort of middle ground,' one good example of this being the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG).

This binary is roughly approximate to another that Weber makes in *The Protestant Ethic* in relation to varieties of ascetic Protestantism. In an important passage of the essay, Weber (2001, 68) outlines two ways that 'the religious believer can make himself sure of his state of grace' in the absence of 'magical sacraments': either by conceiving oneself as 'the tool of the divine will,' as in asceticism, or by conceiving oneself as 'the vessel of the Holy Spirit,' as in what Weber calls 'mysticism'. Of the various 'types' of ascetic Protestantism that Weber (2001, 68, 73) delineates, there are some that remain more inclined towards 'mysticism and emotionalism' and therefore attach a greater salvific importance to emotive expression, while others more inclined towards 'ascetic action' and 'rational conduct' and observe a 'cool reserve'. Returning to Marshall's image of a spectrum then, it can be said that Holiness-oriented Pentecostalism places a higher value on cultivating piety and therefore is stronger in its ascetic rationalism, while neo-Pentecostalism places a greater emphasis on the workings of the Holy Spirit

[10]Elsewhere, in a brief defence of his position, Berger (2013, 252–253) has himself invoked a similar distinction between 'neo-Puritan' and 'quasi-Melanesian' forms of Pentecostalism respectively, the latter being a nod to the so-called Melanesian 'cargo cults' of the turn of the twentieth century.

[11]For recent discussions of theologies of Prosperity, see Bowler (2013), Coleman (2016), Wariboko (2012), and Yong (2012).

and 'the enjoyment of salvation in this world' by feeling 'reconciliation and community with God now' (Weber 2001, 82, 88; see Marshall 2009, 177).

Though Berger and the CDE team speak of 'contemporary Pentecostalism' in a general sense, it is quite clear that the parallels that they make are intended to speak to those forms of Pentecostalism which exhibit a Holiness tendency. Indeed, Berger (2010, 5) himself acknowledges that 'groups that promote a so-called "wealth gospel"' can be seen to 'deviate from the Weberian concept.' Whether or not Berger and the CDE team are correct that strong parallels between English Puritanism and Holiness-oriented Pentecostalism can be sustained (and that those with Prosperity-oriented churches cannot), I want to propose that both Berger and the CDE team seriously underestimate the global influence of neo-Pentecostalism and Prosperity theologies. For example, Berger (2010, 5) classifies Prosperity-oriented churches as mere 'strands' that do not detract from 'the overall picture' in Latin America which allegedly 'fits neatly with Weber's description of the Protestant ethic and its effects.' To illustrate my argument, consider the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2006) survey which revealed that four in five Guatemalan Pentecostals (82%) (who appear in the title of Berger's aforementioned essay) agree that God will 'grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith.'[12] While the CDE reports demonstrate a greater awareness of the diversity that exists across Pentecostal denominations in South Africa and within the Prosperity movement, they show almost no interest in the specific socio-economic impact of neo-Pentecostal churches of a Prosperity emphasis (CDE 2012, 72).

It would seem then that Berger and the CDE team not only underestimate the distribution of Prosperity-oriented churches and the prevalence of these theological differences, but that they also fail to engage properly with them. This is disappointing: a comparative study of more Holiness-oriented and more Prosperity-oriented churches in each of these settings would have surely proven immensely valuable. In the following sections, it will become clear that the growing influence of this neo-Pentecostal tendency within contemporary Pentecostalism fundamentally complicates any attempt to draw neat parallels with ascetic Protestantism.

Spiritual warfare

Perhaps the most obvious difference between ascetic Protestantism and neo-Pentecostalism concerns their orientation to the world. In stark contrast to the inner-worldly asceticism of Weber's Calvinistic Puritans, neo-Pentecostals do not regard the world as inherently compromising, but rather as a site of redemptive struggle (Meyer 2007, 16). As has been widely-observed of Pentecostals in diverse global contexts, there is a tendency to contend with 'traditional' cultural and religious forms through the performative staging of confrontations or 'ruptures' in a fashion that can serve to preserve rather than diminish their ontological plausibility (Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004). Along these lines, Born Again Christians are enlisted to participate in a zero-sum battle with demonic powers through fervent prayer and evangelism under the rubric of 'spiritual warfare' (Kirby 2017). In other words, the world is reconfigured as a battleground where the 'ethical work of the

[12]On the influence of neo-Pentecostalism in Guatemala City, see Kevin Lewis O'Neill's monograph, *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala* (2009).

self on the self' jostles for space with the influence of external, supernatural forces (Marshall 2009, 176). Accordingly, these churches promote an ontology that is characterised by an intense moral and spiritual ambivalence. The deep-rooted instability of Pentecostal modes of perception, representation, and religious authority only exacerbates this condition (Marshall 2009, 13; 189-190).

The upshot of this is as follows: where for more Holiness-oriented churches (as with Calvinistic Puritans) there is a greater emphasis on the 'inner' dangers of the idolatry of the flesh pertaining to ethical conduct, for neo-Pentecostals the work of self-fashioning is eclipsed by a greater concern about various afflictions and 'spiritual blockages' that impede social mobility, and that may even entail mortal peril if they are not checked by protective practices of spiritual discernment and deliverance (Meyer 2007, 14). Writing about the context of Kenya, Deacon and Lynch (2013, 127) describe how neo-Pentecostalism's strong sense of the agency of the spiritual world in the material realm can actually heighten a sense of 'spiritual insecurity by complicating the range of factors that need to be addressed and adding another layer of ritualised response.' Marshall (2009, 173; 177) proposes that these dynamics actually undermine the 'revolutionary' potential of Born-Again modes of self-fashioning. In other words, the power of Pentecostalism to shape practical conduct through particular techniques of self-fashioning is weaker than that of ascetic Protestantism because it vies with a concern for securing spiritual protection. Indeed, this dynamic is further exacerbated because of the overall importance that Pentecostals attribute to sensation as a mode through which the presence of the Holy Spirit is confirmed (Marshall 2009, 128f; Meyer 2010, 754). Understood in Weber's terms, the psychological pressure of proving one's state of grace is 'diverted' from 'a rational struggle for perfection' to one's 'present emotional state' (Weber 2001, 87, 92). This underscores the point that Pentecostalism does not possess the same capacity to shape practical conduct as the form of Calvinistic Puritanism in which Weber is interested.

Prosperity Gospel

There is another reason that neo-Pentecostalism marks a very 'un-Puritan' orientation to the world: not only are believers committed to witnessing its transformation with the aid of the Holy Spirit, but also to securing *as ends in themselves* worldly success, material wealth, and good health. While reaching eternal life remains important for these churches, there are many heavenly gifts that can be enjoyed *in this life* as not only a sign but a foretaste of that which is to be come. As with most Methodists and many of the Baptist sects, Pentecostal churches of all stripes do not subscribe to the doctrine of election which is central to the argument advanced in *The Protestant Ethic*. Even though Pentecostals are not bound to seek 'release' from religious doubts about the *certitudo salutis*, the 'self-confidence' through 'intense worldly activity' that Calvinists were expected to exhibit as 'proof of election' is mirrored in the 'personal agency' that is fostered by neo-Pentecostalism (CDE 2012, 73). However, this self-confidence is decidedly not exhibited primarily through commitment to one's (professional) calling and the accumulation of capital. Where for Weber's Puritans the 'attainment of [wealth] as a fruit of labour in a calling was a sign of God's blessing' on those who have achieved a higher state of perfection, and was undertaken for the sake of the world to come, the explicit 'pursuit of wealth as an end in itself' was looked upon as 'highly reprehensible' (Weber 2001, 116). Likewise,

while worldly Protestant asceticism had the momentous effect of 'freeing the acquisition of goods from the inhibitions of traditionalist ethics' by legalising the 'impulse of acquisition' as 'directly willed by God', the 'irrational' use of wealth as in the case of 'outward forms of luxury' was still condemned as 'idolatry of the flesh' (Weber 2001, 115).

In marked contrast, many neo-Pentecostals assert their 'right to enjoy prosperity, including expensive consumer items, elegant clothes, a nice house and a flashy car' (Meyer 2007, 17). Far less religious significance is attached to the importance of the accumulation and re-investment of hard-earned profit. Instead, 'inner-worldly asceticism has been replaced with the concern for pragmatics of material gain and the immediacy of desire,' with frivolous consumption and the pursuit and *enjoyment* of wealth and material consumer goods *for their own sake* having been granted explicit religious legitimation as indicators of divine favour (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 315).

It is now clear why commentators like Berger understand certain forms of neo-Pentecostalism that place less of an emphasis on hard work and the total 'rationalisation' of self-conduct to positively *obstruct* development practice, namely because the processes by which believers can achieve success and wealth do not conform to utilitarian economic rationalities but are 'enchanted' and complicated (see Gifford 1990; 2004; Marshall 2009, 177; Gifford and Nogueira-Godsey 2011, 21). For example, Marshall (2009, 173) observes that in some Nigerian neo-Pentecostal churches the performance of miracles allows for 'the instantaneous production of value' in a manner that reflects the complex and mystified nature of the production of wealth in neoliberal economies, where hard work is increasingly divorced from the promise of personal economic rewards (Barker 2007, 421f). In the most extreme cases, Marshall (2009, 190) suggests, 'the work of the self [is reduced] to the simple ritual act of conversion and the giving of money for "God's work".'

Pentecostal sociability

The argument presented in *The Protestant Ethic* is undoubtedly an 'individualistic' one in the sense that Weber takes as his point of departure the (internal and ethical) 'spirit of capitalism' fostered within ascetic Protestants. Nevertheless, Weber is still preoccupied with the (external and institutional) 'form of capitalism', and particularly the distinctive social groups to which ascetic rationalism gave rise.[13] In connection with this I want to consider another point of comparison between Pentecostalism and ascetic Protestantism.

It was seen above that ascetic Protestantism advocated an 'exclusive trust' in the *Deus absconditus* (hidden God) and warned 'against any trust in the aid of friendship of men,' leading to the 'inner isolation of the individual' (Weber 2001, 62). Paradoxically, however,

[13]While there are many glimpses of this theme throughout *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber explicitly states that he wishes to explore at a later date 'how Protestant Asceticism was in turn influenced […] by the totality of social conditions' (Weber 2001, 125). By 'social conditions' here, Weber has in mind everything that is 'located between politically organized, or acknowledged powers, such as the state, and the town council (*Gemeinde*), and official churches, on the one hand, and the organically grown community (*Gemeinschaft*) of the family, on the other' (Weber 2002b, 200). Though Weber never produced a truly comprehensive treatment of this theme (which is partly why it is so often overlooked), it is the subject of an essay written in 1906, around the time of the original edition of *The Protestant Ethic*, entitled '"Churches" and "Sects" in North America' (2002a). (A later reworking of this essay, entitled 'The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism' [1946] was published in 1920, but was first drafted in 1907.) A useful outline of Weber's more mature thought concerning the Protestant sects appears in a speech entitled Voluntary Associational Life [*Vereinswesen*] (2002b) which he delivered to the German Sociological Society in 1910. By this stage, Weber's interest in associational life was increasingly socio-political as opposed to socio-economic.

this individual assurance could only be secured *through social means*. In the absence of 'sacramental magic', it was 'only by proving oneself in life, and particularly through labour in a calling,' that the ascetic Protestant could be assured of her 'regeneration and justification' (Weber 2002a, 208–209). This led to the genesis of a peculiar kind of congregation, disconnected from 'political powers and their doings', whose 'social cohesion' was 'exclusively founded' on proof of election (Weber 2001, 97; 2002a, 213–214). Weber called these communities 'sects' (characterised as exclusive and voluntary social groups), which he famously distinguished from 'churches' (characterised as inclusive and obligatory social groups). Put simply, where people are simply indiscriminately born into churches, sects are composed of people who '*qualify* for membership on purely religious grounds' (Weber 2002a, 210).

To join a sect, an individual would first need to make an active choice to seek membership, and then be subjected to 'thorough scrutiny' concerning their 'moral and business conduct' (i.e., their commitment to 'specialized labour in a calling') to demonstrate their 'religious qualifications' before being granted admission (Weber 2002a, 207–208). For this reason, membership of a church community would come to guarantee 'the good standing of the individual, not only socially, but also, and especially, in terms of business,' as well as her 'creditworthiness' (Weber 2002b, 205–206). As a means of protecting the 'purity' of their membership, many sects exercised a form of 'Church discipline' that entailed 'ruthlessly rigorous *control* over the conduct of their members, paying particular attention to their *business* probity' (Weber 2002a, 208). Accordingly, the limited size of sects as social groups was critical to exerting 'Church discipline', specifically because it would ensure that members 'know each other personally,' thus enabling them to 'keep a check on how they are "proving" themselves' (Weber 2002a, 209). Here it is clear how the social form of ascetic Protestantism would also bear back on the 'inner workings' of a person and 'public values' which take centre stage in *The Protestant Ethic* itself, reinforcing the specific type of practical conduct that Weber elaborates in the essay (Weber 2002b, 202, 207).

Despite 'the general decline in the influence of religious factors' from the eighteenth century that Weber narrates in *The Protestant Ethic* (which he noted was less evident in the United States), he suggests that the sect is actually the 'archetype of every association' of a voluntary character, including clubs and societies; he even credits the sect as solely responsible for giving 'American democracy its characteristic flexibility of structure and its individualistic character' (Weber 2002a, 206, 212; 2002b, 201). As with religious sects, these associations are disconnected from political groups, they are oriented to worldly activity (e.g., social causes), and they also exert a great deal of 'disciplinary' control over the 'practical conduct' of members whose 'cohesion' is founded on shared interests.

Returning to contemporary Pentecostalism, it is interesting to note that several parallels exist with ascetic Protestantism here with regards to patterns of sociality. Like ascetic Protestants, Pentecostals advocate 'exclusive trust' in God and a distrust of social ties which leads to their 'inner isolation' (Weber 2001, 62). This condition is amplified by the aforementioned 'uncertainty' that characterises neo-Pentecostal ontologies, as identified by Marshall. In this regard, there is a certain paradox to neo-Pentecostalism: while salvation is expressed through 'the satisfaction of worldly desires' such as wealth, social mobility, and health, it is 'these very desires' that the 'devil uses to lure souls from the straight

and narrow path' (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001, 10). As a result, individuals are not only encouraged to be suspicious of the wealth of other people, but also of the possibility that other individuals (potentially operating under the influence of a spiritual 'principality') can be blamed for 'blocking' the wealth or affluence of the faithful (Meyer 2007, 18). Marshall (2009, 189f; 194ff) observes that this has had far-reaching consequences for 'old forms of sociability and solidarity.' In the context of Nigeria, '"blessings", financial or otherwise, are deliberately and explicitly detached from a redistributive economy based on kinship and ethnicity,' and financial and social obligations relating to extended kinship networks are dismantled in favour of the individual and the nuclear family (see too Meyer 1998; Barker 2007; Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008). If 'brotherly love' was redefined under Calvinism as *just doing one's job* to the best of one's ability, under neo-Pentecostalism it has been redefined as 'discerning, convicting, and overcoming the evil the neighbor may be harboring' (Weber 2001, 64; Marshall 2009, 195). The effect of this only serves to reinforce a modern 'spirit of distrust and suspicion' (Marshall 2009, 234).[14]

On this basis, a case could be made that the 'inner isolation' fostered by Pentecostalism is even more radical than that of ascetic Calvinistic Puritanism since congregation members themselves routinely become targeted by the suspicion of fellow worshippers. To be clear, this in no way weakens the parallels between these two social forms: Weber (2002a, 213) considered the Protestant sects to be not emotionally warm 'communities' [*Gemeinschaften*] but impersonal 'societies' [*Gesellschaften*]. Likewise, for all their sensational appeal, the remarkable proliferation of Pentecostal churches worldwide is not so much grounded in emotional 'warmth' as it is a shared commitment to a 'Pentecostal program' in order to advance individual goals (Marshall 2009, 13). As with ascetic Protestants, Pentecostals can be assured of their justification through what Weber (2002a, 208) calls 'proving oneself in life' [*Bewährung*]. In the case of neo-Pentecostalism, this entails staging a particular 'style of life' characterised by ecstatic worship, moral rectitude, and material abundance (Marshall 2009, 13). In addition to wielding a degree of control over who can be recognised as a member, Pentecostal congregations also extend a great deal of 'disciplinary' control over the conduct of believers as a means of protecting the 'purity' of their membership, not least through smaller social gatherings such as Bible study groups.[15]

The limits of the Protestant Ethic

As my close reading of Weber in this section has demonstrated, the parallels that Berger and the CDE draw between ascetic Protestantism and contemporary Pentecostalism are weaker than they might first seem, particularly with regard to the growing number of

[14]Whether we need to be as pessimistic as Marshall in her work in Nigeria about the capacity of Pentecostal churches to successfully generate new, stable forms of sociability remains to be seen, with many arguing to the contrary (see Barker 2007; Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008; de Boeck and Plissart 2004; Haynes 2012; Robbins 2009). Along these lines, there is an interesting conversation yet to be had with respect to Marcel Mauss's notion of 'the gift' and Prosperity practices which, as Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins (2008, 1150) show, could be evidence of how Pentecostal churches actually *resist* capitalist modes of exchange (see too Coleman 2004; 2006; de Boeck and Plissart 2004: 198; Marshall 2009, 192).

[15]Because Weber only alludes to the social support provided by the Protestant sects, I do not here discuss how Pentecostal churches may serve as sites for the development of skills, the exchange of resources, and the delivery of social services, and so on. On this see the collections edited by Attanasi and Yong (2012) and Freeman (2012), as well as chapters by Freeman (2015), Freston (2015), and Sharpe (2013).

congregations that exhibit a neo-Pentecostal tendency. While the social form of these churches does resemble the Protestant sects in which Weber is interested, and which are able to further embed practical conduct by establishing sharp social boundaries and strict regulation of conduct, it remains the case that Pentecostalism does not shape practical conduct in the way that Weber understands ascetic Protestantism to have done. This is because the believer is not only occupied with regulating their practical conduct in order to assure their justification, but also cultivating particular types of emotive expression, securing spiritual protection, and pursuing material goods. Even further, the type of practical conduct to which Pentecostals subscribe is less economically rational, best exemplified by the pursuit of material goods as ends in themselves, and through means that do not confirm to 'sober economic virtue' or 'utilitarian worldliness' but that are fundamentally 'enchanted' (Weber 2001, 119).

Putting aside these comparisons to make a more general point, it is striking that in professing to stick close to Weber as an interlocutor, Berger and the CDE like many commentators actually end up zooming in on one very specific aspect of *The Protestant Ethic*, namely Weber's (2001, xxxvii) account of ascetic Protestantism having 'unforeseen' role in facilitating the rise of 'sober bourgeois capitalism'. As has been seen, they do so primarily in order to explore the potential of Pentecostal churches to further 'modern economic development'. None of this is in itself problematic. My concern is rather with how Berger and the CDE team offer a somewhat superficial account of the text. The establishment of a bourgeois constituency and the impulse to accumulate capital are themes that, while vital, are in fact only supporting elements of Weber's overarching argument, which I take to be about the particularity of Western capitalist modernity and its historical development. Furthermore, Berger's almost celebratory treatment of capitalism as an economic system jars considerably with the ambivalent tone that marks Weber's genealogical account. Most problematic of all is the way in which Weber and the 'Protestant ethic' are repeatedly invoked in support of an ahistorical and normative model for economic development in Southern contexts. For example, Berger (2010, 7) proposes that 'something like the Protestant ethic is a necessary though not sufficient causal factor if a population is to move successfully from poverty to a reasonably decent standard of living.' Yet as Paul Freston (2015, 147) observes, Weber 'wrote about a specific historical juncture,' a 'specific group of Protestants,' and 'a specific social location.' A scholar as rigorously committed to empiricism and historicity as Weber 'did not imagine that a constant repeat of that process would be necessary to maintain capitalism where it was established or to establish it where it is not' (Freston 2015, 147). Instead of looking back to the types of ascetic Protestatism that facilitated the rise of modern capitalism, should we not be looking to the inheritors of the legacy of ascetic Protestantism, the 'specialists without spirit', and beyond? I propose that the distinctive Pentecostal ethic that has been elaborated here should be understood in relation to the present era of global capitalism in which it is flourishing. It is precisely this matter that I take up in the next section.

A New Spirit of Capitalism

The global political-economic landscape has undergone dramatic changes in the century that has passed since the publication of *The Protestant Ethic*. The rapid expansion of Pentecostalism is taking place in a world that is no longer dominated by the capitalism of

Weber's day. Modern, industrial capitalism was characterised by the systematic pursuit of efficiency and the accumulation of capital through the rationalisation and refinement of 'the technical means of production, transportation, communication, finance, and management' (Antonio and Bonanno 2012, 3). Today we are living in an age of global *neoliberal* capitalism which, while manifesting itself differently and unevenly in various local settings, is a process typically distinguished by such phenomena as the transnationalisation of production, the 'expanding scale and abstraction [and acceleration] of transactions across the globe, the tension between the mobility of capital and the fixities of the nation state, the erosion of many of the institutional forms of liberal democratic society,' a culture of consumerism, and so on (Antonio and Bonanno 2012, 6; Comaroff 2012, 62). These processes have been particularly in evidence in Southern contexts as a result of decades of economic restructuring (Barker 2007, 408).

Perhaps the question we should be asking then is *why* Pentecostalism is flourishing as part of this 'reconfigured social landscape,' as well as how, in Jean Comaroff's (2012, 51) words, this enables us to 'speak back' with 'latter-day insight, to classic accounts of religion and modernity' such as *The Protestant Ethic*, rather than lining up with them. As Comaroff (2012, 43) observes, we should expect Pentecostal movements to 'have a great deal to teach us about the current social epoch' insofar as their great success has come at a time when 'so many other, characteristically modern institutions and sensibilities have faltered.' One thinks here of how religious groups worldwide have increasingly taken the place of trade unions and labour parties as vehicles for citizens to secure socio-economic wellbeing (Torpey 2010).[16]

Secularisation

The most obvious way in which we are well-positioned to 'speak back' to Weber concerns the matter of 'the elimination of magic from the world' (*Entzauberung*), sometimes translated as 'disenchantment'. Ample criticism has, in recent decades, been directed at Weber for his contribution to the theories of secularisation that proliferated in the twentieth century. For instance, in view of the astonishing worldwide growth of Pentecostalism, Jean Comaroff (2012, 61) appears to have Weber in mind when she tells of how the 'enduring, even intensifying salience of the sacred […] defies the telos of disenchantment, presumed by the great evolutionary theorists of modernity.' Indeed, it is along such lines that Weber (2001, 61) speaks of ascetic Protestantism as the 'logical conclusion' of 'that great historical process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world.' There is too the famous image of the now autonomous 'steel casing' with which he closes *The Protestant Ethic* from which 'the spirit of religious asceticism […] has escaped' (Weber 2001, 124).

I note, however, that Weber himself does not make heavy use of 'secularisation', a concept that was at that point nascent in form. *The Protestant Ethic* itself contains only a handful of references to the term; as was seen above, it is 'rationalisation' that is the

[16]For all their capacity to enable Born Again subjects to move from 'victim to victor' (Martin 2011, 70) and to provide 'a greater sense of hope, agency, and control' (Deacon and Lynch 2013, 127), it is notable that neo-Pentecostal churches tend to offer very little in the way of a *structural* critique of socio-economic realities (Van Dijk 2012, 97), easily falling back on individualised (and sometimes spiritualised) accounts of development and prosperity, and rather encouraging congregants to be beneficiaries of the present economic order (Sharpe 2013, 174f; Clifton 2014, 274; Marshall 2009, 91; O'Neill 2009; see too chapters by Andrew Chesnut, Douglas Hicks, and Eloy H. Nolivos in Attanasi and Yong 2012).

great theme of that text. In this respect, as Peter Ghosh (2014, 274–275) observes, Weber's is 'unlike any conventional portrayal of secularization' because he emphasises *continuity* rather than discontinuity between religious and secular 'phases'. 'Continuity' here refers to two things: 'continuous processes of rationalization that have been operating throughout history' on the one hand, and on the other, ascetic Protestantism as the determining 'moment' that bridges the transition to 'secular' modernity (Ghosh 2014, 274–275). By no means did Weber (2001, 124) regard these evolutionary-historical processes to be universal, as many commentators have suggested, nor does he appear to have perceived them as irreversible:

> No one knows who will live in this [steel casing] in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance.

Of course, all this is not to detract from the fact that were he alive today, Weber would no doubt have been surprised by the astonishing global resurgence of religion in public life, and not least that of Pentecostalism.

A new elective affinity

Beyond merely 'persisting', Jean Comaroff (2012, 50) is interested in how Pentecostal movements are actually 'integral to a reorganisation of core components of capitalist modernity as a social formation.' This is to explicitly go beyond the likes of David Martin (2011, 79) who is content with a scaled-back perspective on the relationship between Pentecostalism and capitalism, narrowing his focus to that of more local, small-scale transformations of economic subjectivities. For Jean Comaroff (2012, 43) among others, contemporary Pentecostalism 'is no less integrally connected to the spirit of capitalism than was its Weberian precursor, albeit to capitalism in its late-modern, post-industrial phase.' In its theology and characteristic modes of worship, Pentecostalism is arguably positioned at the very forefront of neoliberalising processes that are remaking the 'rationalist telos of modernisation and development' (Comaroff 2012, 56). This is an account of the relationship between Pentecostalism and capitalism of comparable ambition to that elaborated by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic*.

First, in putting 'market forces to the purpose of promoting Christian value,' Prosperity-oriented churches can be seen to share the same twin goals as the neoliberal state, namely 'enhancing profitability and promoting entrepreneurial citizens' as 'the end and measure of good governance' (Comaroff 2012, 55; see too Lauterbach 2016). For example, Rijk Van Dijk (2012, 96) shows how Ghanaian Pentecostal churches endeavour to transform Born Again subjects into 'proactive and goal-oriented [agents]' who are 'time-conscious', financially savvy, and 'prepared to cut away from any social obligations [such as extended family ties] that stand in the way of meeting his or her goal.' The particular behaviours that these churches inculcate are of great use in the 'flexible and volatile labour conditions of the post-Fordist economy' where flexibility and specialisation are rewarded, and job insecurity and unemployment is commonplace (Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008, 1149; Freeman 2012, 18; see too Barker 2007, 427). In pursuit of this aim, Pentecostal movements dismantle the longstanding divisions between 'sacred' and 'secular' domains, between 'moral, economic and political institutions, the better to

embrace them all under a single, fundamental principle of productivity' (Comaroff 2012, 55). As Ruth Marshall (2009, 182) articulates it in a Weberian flourish, Born-Again identity is best understood not in terms of 'institutional affiliation' but rather 'in terms of "vocation," through the application of Born-Again principles to every aspect of life.' Under neo-Pentecostalism then, the renewed appeal of an 'enchanted' ontology is (seemingly paradoxically) accompanied by a further intensification of the process of rationalisation that Weber identified, entailing the systematic instrumentalisation of all individual conduct and social relationships in order to maximise efficiency and utility. This echoes the 'economization' of non-economic domains that Wendy Brown (2015, 31–32) proposes is a 'distinctive signature' of neoliberalism as a 'governing rationality'. Under this rubric, subjects are reduced to human capital, the 'value' of which they are expected to constantly supervise and enhance through 'practices of entrepreneurialism' and 'self-investment' (Brown 2015, 22).[17] There are striking parallels here with Weber's line about the 'specific type of conduct' by which Calvinistic Puritans would 'methodically supervise' their state of grace, and indeed with Weber's proto-Foucauldian observation about the 'internal form of *self*-discipline' in 'all departments of private and public life' that the Reformation inaugurated (see Rose 2007). It is also worth reflecting here on Weber's argument concerning the relationship between Protestant sects and voluntary associations. More specifically, the question arises of whether Pentecostal congregations might resemble other modes of social formation characteristic of the present era. Lanz and Oosterbaan (2016, 497) answer in the affirmative, speaking of Pentecostalism as an 'entrepreneurial religion' whose 'congregations constitute a paradigmatic neoliberal form of organization': a 'radically free-market organizational structure' which maximises the 'entrepreneurial self-government' and security of their adherents.

Second, beyond merely acknowledging and endorsing this-worldly desires, Pentecostal churches operate through a new 'economy of affect'; the promise of an unmediated encounter with God (Comaroff 2012, 59). This development correlates with new forms of subject-formation under neoliberalism through the vehicle of 'affect in the idiom of mass-marketed consumer desire' (Comaroff 2012, 59). The appeal of this 'culture of affective realism' is that it addresses the advance of ethical relativism; a matter that considerably exercised Weber. Rather than capitalism developing 'a secular autonomy, free of the need for Godly reenforcement' as Weber had imagined, there is in fact 'a more intrinsic, enduring connection between capitalism and various strains of Protestantism […] than [Weber] recognised' (Comaroff 2012, 61). This 'intrinsic relation of born-again faith to the neoliberal turn' relates not only to a reconfigured 'institutional landscape' then, but also 'the ontology of how the world works, how history is made, how human agents act' (Comaroff 2012, 56).

This is the sort of argument that I propose warrants the title 'neo-Weberian'. While Comaroff does not adopt the same genealogical method as Weber, what she shares with him is a concern for the socio-cultural *embeddedness* of economic action, convincingly positing an elective affinity between contemporary Pentecostalism and the latest phase

[17]Peter Ghosh (2014, 305) presents an intriguing hypothesis which is relevant to this matter, namely that Weber (2001, xxxiv) identifies an 'extra-rational' or 'charismatic' component to capitalism which he associates with the figure of 'the capitalistic adventurer' or entrepreneur. It strikes me that Weber did not foresee that the return of this enterprising figure under neoliberal capitalism at the end of the twentieth century, having attained 'freedom' from the 'steel casing' of wage labour, actually served to further the ends of rationalisation and specialisation.

of neoliberal capitalism; there is a coherence or sympathy between these ethics and forms. As Isabelle Barker (2007, 427) phrases it in a complementary article, Pentecostalism successfully embeds neoliberal economic restructuring into social life' by fostering 'norms and behaviours that harmonize well with the demands of neoliberal economies.'

Conclusion

In this article I have explored how *The Protestant Ethic* contributes to efforts to understand the contemporary relationship between Pentecostalism and capitalism. I began by considering the merits and limitations of drawing parallels between contemporary Pentecostalism and the types of ascetic Protestantism discussed in *The Protestant Ethic*. Arguably the best-known attempt to identify clear lines of comparison between these two religious formations is that elaborated by Peter Berger. My principal concern with Berger's analysis is that the 'type' of Pentecostalism that he invokes does not adequately represent the growing influence of neo-Pentecostalism and Prosperity theologies across different global settings, and as such his analysis speaks somewhat narrowly to Holiness-oriented Pentecostal churches. This has significant implications for any attempt to hypothesise a 'new Protestant ethic': while there remain parallels between the social forms to which seventeenth-century ascetic Protestantism and twenty first-century Pentecostalism give rise, the work of Ruth Marshall and others suggests that Pentecostalism does not shape practical conduct in the same manner as ascetic Protestantism. Under the influence of neo-Pentecostalism, the explicit pursuit of material goods through 'enchanted' means as ends in themselves, as well as a weakened commitment to 'sober economic virtue', actually undermines the mechanisms of capital accumulation that Weber associated with ascetic Protestantism. Furthermore, the 'unified system' of 'rational bourgeois economic life' which ascetic Protestantism fostered appears to be compromised by Pentecostalism: believers are encouraged to cultivate specific kinds of emotional state, to secure spiritual protection, and to display their material wellbeing; all demands that weaken the singular focus on regulation of behaviour that Weber identified within ascetic Protestantism. More fundamentally, I have voiced concerns about the ahistorical, universalising, and even normative fashion in which Berger speaks about 'modern capitalism', economic development, and indeed the argument that Weber advances in *The Protestant Ethic*.

I went on to propose that there is indeed what Berger (2010, 7) terms an 'exceptionally high affinity' between Pentecostalism and global neoliberal capitalism, but that their entangled relationship is quite distinct from (though no less intimate than) that articulated by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic* in relation to ascetic Protestantism and modern capitalism. As Jean Comaroff and Isabelle Barker demonstrate, contemporary Pentecostalism is an exemplary vehicle for the embedding of neoliberal economic processes into diverse social worlds, and specifically by cultivating modes of practical conduct that assist people in negotiating everyday realities shaped by neoliberal logics. More specifically, Pentecostalism seeks to install an even more radical programme of self-regulation than that of ascetic Protestantism; one that increasingly undermines entrenched binaries between sacred and secular domains. As seen above, this Pentecostal mode of self-regulation does not conform to Weber's rather more narrow concern with the cultivation a very specific kind of ascetic-rational conduct; but then again, why should we expect it to? Weber did not consider the processes of 'rationalisation' and 'disenchantment' that he

described in Europe and North America over a century ago to be permanent or universal. I have shown how contemporary Pentecostalism encourages adherents to become entrepreneurial citizens in ways that are highly consonant with neoliberal rationalities: they are expected to take responsibility for their material security and social mobility amidst escalating economic precarity. While Weber proposed that 'mysticism and emotionalism' did not share the same affinity with the rational logics of the modern capitalism of his day as 'ascetic action', Jean Comaroff demonstrates that things are very different under a neoliberal economic order. More specifically, the Pentecostal concern for fostering specific emotional states as a sign of the presence and inclination of the Holy Spirit actually resonates with the elevated importance attributed to affect under neoliberal capitalism, particularly with regard to subject-formation.

The privileged relationship that Pentecostalism shares with neoliberal logics of moral economy and affect is in no small part why it enjoys such widespread appeal and cultural plausibility in global settings, and specifically those increasingly exposed to neoliberal processes. With reference to *The Protestant Ethic*, this discussion has shown that contemporary Pentecostalism, as a novel 'historical individual', is profoundly revelatory of the latest iteration of capitalist modernity. Tracking the continuities and discontinuities with Weber's great essay as I have done here further illuminates the particularities of these formations and their mutual entanglement, and therefore remains a worthwhile exercise.

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