Terms such as “modernity”, “religion” and “secularity” can no longer be used without mental quotation marks to indicate their ethnocentrivity, their status as constructions of a very particular western (and colonial) cultural history (Asad 2003; Fitzgerald 2007). Nevertheless, I shall use these terms, subject to the caveat just indicated, because the problem I want to address is how contemporary Pentecostals achieve a modern identity that differs in significant respects from the modernity of that familiar, and dominant, western cultural construction. Is Pentecostal modernity part of what S.N. Eisenstadt identifies as the Jacobin element of modernity, or a distinct variety in the range of what he has taught us to call “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 1999, 2000)? Pentecostals do not pose quite the same kind of problem for western secular modernity as Muslims, for example, because, though they look at first sight like alien cultural matter in the secular West, they are younger offspring of the Christian family and so incorporate a good part of the repertoire that underlies what Charles Taylor calls “the modern moral system” and the “modern identity”. In a series of books from Sources of the Self (1989) to A Secular Age (2007) Taylor has constructed what I interpret as a set of implicitly Weberian ideal types of the core elements of western, or, as he prefers, European and North Atlantic, cultural modernity (Taylor 1989, 2007). Taylor has been attacked for western ethnocentricity (Masuzawa 2008), but he has never suggested that the processes he anatomises are universal, or the end point of an evolutionary procession that relegates non-western traditions to backwardness or faces them with a need to catch up. There is, of course, a sense that this western construct of secular modernity is peculiarly privileged and powerful because the civilisation that produced it has been geo-politically and economically
dominant for the last three or so centuries, though the current rise of non-western powers such as China and India suggests that dominance may be waning, in spite of the set-backs they may expect from the current economic crisis. Taylor very explicitly argues that the “modern moral system”, the “modern identity” and the purely secular perspective are the historical product of Christian theistic sources secularised in the European Enlightenment and further mutated in Romanticism and varieties of Modernist vision after Darwin. The western paradigm of modernity that emerged from these transmutations was globalised, first through European colonialism, and later through American economic, military and cultural dominance. But what Taylor calls the “occluded” sources of the putatively universal values enshrined in international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court—individual human rights, the imperative of human happiness and avoidance of suffering—rest on secularised Christian bedrock. The focus of my chapter is therefore limited to the disjunctions between this specific historical construct of secular modernity and the distinctive modernity of Pentecostal moral imperatives and the Pentecostal modern self.

As an offshoot of the holiness movement within Protestantism, Pentecostalism stresses the gifts of the Spirit even above the sanctity of the biblical text (Anderson 2004; cf. Engelke 2007 on an African church that has abandoned the Bible altogether). The distinctive beginning of the movement is usually traced to the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, though some scholars of Pentecostal history claim it was the simultaneous product of many parts of the Protestant mission field (Bergunder 2008). American Pentecostalism was a mixture of poor white and poor black religiosity from the outset (Corten 1999, Stephens 2008), and it finds a ready response in cultures with a tradition of belief in spirits and spirit possession, particularly among marginalised ethnic and cultural minorities. Hence, the movement was quickly indigenised in every part of the globe as it fanned out not only from Los Angeles but from Wales, Sweden, India and many other places to Latin America, Africa, Asia, China and the Far East (Anderson 2004; Dempster, Klaus and Petersen 1999). The latest wave of Pentecostal growth began in Latin America in the 1960s, with peaks in Africa and Asia following in the 1980s and 1990s, reaching virtually every part of the developing world today (Martin 2006). It has only the most modest foothold in Western Europe despite its established position in the United States,