

point that entering adulthood is about getting to know bounded entities, rather than moving from one state to another to remain there. Premawardhana makes a useful distinction here between what religious conversion or rituals are meant to produce (categories and stability) and that which is experienced and lived by people. The point is – and this is a critique of theories of hybridity and syncretism – that boundaries and bounded entities exist, but that it is possible to move between them. This leads Premawardhana to invoke the idea of polyontological mobility, by which he wants to show that plurality is part of the Makhuwa way of seeing the world, but also that a mobile people ‘bring a facility of transgression’ that allows people not to blend but to move from one religious setting to another (p. 100). The book further discusses female religiosity and the observation that women are more likely to convert than men are. Premawardhana argues that female conversion is not so much about male domination as it is about ‘particular feminine, which is to say Makhuwa, capacities: to make moves, to cross borders and, thereby, to be with’ (p. 137). In conclusion, the author makes the important point – and by this he de-radicalizes Pentecostalism – that many Pentecostal principles and experiences are similar to what were there already.

The book ends with speculation on the future of Pentecostalism. The author sees a potential destabilizing factor in the deep tension between trends of bureaucratization and the empowerment of rebirth and healing in lived Pentecostalism. The question is whether that tension is so clear-cut and whether the perspective of polyontological mobility would also allow us to see movements between the religious and the political spheres, not as overlaps but as spheres one can move into and out of. Determining criteria of inclusion and exclusion can reflect bureaucratization, but this might at the same time be a flexible process. Determining who is evil is not necessarily only about fixing identities; it is also an ongoing process of interpretation.

This book deserves a wide readership, not only by those studying Pentecostalism, but also by scholars engaged in broader debates of social change, religious conversion and mobility. The author invites us into his work, his eloquently written ethnographic observations, his methodological reflections, and his mature debates with some of the more influential anthropologists and philosophers of recent times. Most importantly, the author shows a humble and deeply empathetic approach to the people he works with and to his craft. This is a book that benefits from careful and slow reading.

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Ebenezer Obadare, *Pentecostal Republic: religion and the struggle for state power in Nigeria*. African Arguments. London: Zed Books (hb £70–978 1 8699 238 3; pb £16.99–978 1 78699 237 6). 2018, 214 pp.

Nigeria is widely seen as one of the global hotspots of contemporary Pentecostal Christianity; indeed, its largest city, Lagos, is frequently referred to as the Pentecostal capital of the African continent, if not of the world. Several studies have foregrounded the deeply political nature of this vibrant and energetic form of Christianity, and its manifestation as a highly public form of religion in contemporary Africa. Yet few studies have done this in a way as astute and accessible as Ebenezer Obadare in *Pentecostal Republic*. The book offers an incisive analysis of

and critical commentary on the profound impact that popular Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity have on the political landscape in Nigeria. While it is widely acknowledged that religion and politics in Africa are closely interconnected spheres, Obadare's book provides a fascinating if not unsettling insight into what this truism actually means for political practice and the public sphere in a country where the religious terrain has been dramatically reshaped in recent times.

Focusing on the past two decades, the book takes as its starting point Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, and advances the thesis that this coincided with the triumph of Christianity over its historical rival religion, Islam. Obadare explains this triumph with reference to the spectacular growth of Pentecostalism in the preceding years. He captures these two complementary theses succinctly in the somewhat homogenizing notion of 'Pentecostal republic' in order to acknowledge 'the profound impact of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal forces on politics and the social imaginary in the Nigerian Fourth Republic' (p. 1). Offering a historical-sociological account, Obadare chronologically discusses successive administrations, in particular of the first openly Pentecostal president, Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), and of Goodluck Jonathan (2010–15). Although both these administrations were succeeded by a Muslim presidency, Obadare argues that Pentecostalism, regardless of the religious affiliation of the president, remained a major political factor, as it has effectively 'enchanted' Nigerian democracy through a 'socio-political demonology' (p. 19).

The account offered in this book is based on a wide range of primary sources, such as popular writings, media reports, press statements, published interviews and personal correspondence. Scholars with a more ethnographic methodological inclination may wonder to what extent these sources give an insight into Pentecostalism as a lived religion shaping political subjectivity at a grass-roots level. Yet Obadare's focus is on the emergence of a new 'theocratic class' of born-again Christian leaders and their influence in the reshaping of political culture (p. 34).

In spite of the monolithic notion of the Pentecostal republic in the title, the analysis in this book is more nuanced, as it acknowledges that other religious movements – in particular Islamic reform – demonstrate similar fervour; that the triumph of Pentecostalism is by no means irreversible; and that the precise political effect of Pentecostalism on politics is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, discussing Nigeria as a 'test case' for the impact of religious revival on democratic practice and political culture in Africa, Obadare distances himself from the rather positive appraisals of the socio-economic and political effects of Pentecostalism that can be found in some of the literature. He offers a more sceptical, if not pessimistic, assessment, arguing that Pentecostalism 'has a tremendous potential to be a reactionary force with a demobilising effect on civil society' (p. 30).

Let me conclude with some questions in order to open up the debate about Obadare's analysis and argument. First, several studies have demonstrated that, theologically, Pentecostalism is far from unified and stable – it represents a belief system that is highly adaptable to changing circumstances; institutionally, Pentecostalism is highly fragmented, with many different denominations and pastors competing for public visibility and political power; spiritual authority in Pentecostalism can never be taken for granted but is unstable and in flux, precisely because it depends on individual charisma rather than institutional structures. How does this inherent instability affect the potential of Pentecostalism to operate as a political religion?

Second, Christianity in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa is highly diverse. Despite the growth of Pentecostalism, Protestant and Catholic churches remain a vital part of African Christianity. Even when taking into account the Pentecostalization of the mainline churches, we have to acknowledge that, in their institutional structures, theological character and political orientation, they differ from Pentecostal churches. What is the role of the mainline churches in the Pentecostal republic? What is their relationship to Pentecostal churches? And how do they navigate the increased Pentecostalization of Nigeria's public sphere? How can we assess the socio-political significance of Christianity in all its diversity in contemporary African societies?

Third, this book mainly presents Pentecostalism as a force in opposition to Islam in the contestation of religion and political power in Nigeria. Yet what happens when the interests of both these religious groups coincide? President Jonathan's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (2013) is a case in point. The act was fervently endorsed by both Pentecostal and Islamic religious leaders, who, for one moment at least, shared the same political agenda. Was this merely an isolated incident, or does this case reflect the possibility of a broader overlap between Pentecostal and Muslim agendas of moral, social and political reform?

As these questions illustrate, Obadare's book generates debate and makes a substantial contribution to scholarship on Pentecostalism and politics in Nigeria. It is a key text for anyone with an academic or professional interest in contemporary religion, democracy and politics in Nigeria, Africa, and worldwide.

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