

Transfiguration Brotherhood which continues to support many clergy and members of the laity.

Burgess examines certain aspects of today's Russian Orthodox Church, its educational work, social work and parish life, and makes the perceptive observation that in these areas the church 'offers Russians a "free space" for civil society' (p. 22). However, his observations are based on his experience of the Church in only a limited number of places, and are focused particularly on Moscow and St Petersburg with a foray up north to the Solovetsky Monastery and to Kineshma on the Volga in the Ivanovo oblast. He has not experienced the Russian Orthodox Church in Siberia, which is being overtaken in some areas by the growth of the Protestant charismatic movement, let alone the Church in the Far East of Russia. In the many new dioceses carved out of what are now termed Metropolias, examples of the teaching expertise, enlivened parish life and numerous social work projects which Burgess witnessed are often still in their infancy. In Magadan, in Russia's Far East on the Sea of Okhotsk, where a vast cathedral has been built on the foundations of a Palace of Soviets, many different departments have been created within the diocesan administration, but there are not enough clergy to fill these posts, so that the bishop's press secretary doubles up as head of the Information Department and head of the Culture Department. In this distant part of the Russian Federation an enormous Pentecostal church with a large congregation dominates the skyline, while a lively Roman Catholic parish runs numerous social work projects. Russian national identity and much of Russia's culture, as Burgess argues, may indeed be Orthodox, but at the same time it should not be forgotten that the Russian Federation is also multi-denominational and multi-ethnic with areas which are predominantly Buddhist or Muslim.

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The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa. A Church of strangers. By Ilana Van Wyk. (The International African Library.) Pp. xxii + 282 incl. 10 figs. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. £65. 978 1 107 05724 1
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In recent decades a new wave of Pentecostal Churches that operate almost as multi-national corporations appears to be on the rise in Africa, and to dominate the public domain with their claims to health and wealth as signs of divine blessings. This is the case of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), which originated in Brazil and arrived in South Africa in the 1990s. In a context characterised by the undelivered promises of the post-apartheid era, its popularity grew rapidly in the early 2000s.

This book constitutes an ethnographic study of the UCKG in Durban, South Africa. Drawing from small-scale participant observation between 2004 and 2005, Ilana van Wyk gives an account of the lives of UCKG members and their motivations for joining and committing to this Church. In Durban, its 'brash' pastors rapidly became known for their 'extraordinary emphasis on an efficacious, materially oriented faith, a faith that delivered "all answers"' (p. 23). Its success did not emerge in a vacuum. Viewed from a long term historical perspective, this

Church fits within a larger trend of Christian movements and revivals in South Africa that emphasise the use of 'magical means to achieve material benefits' (p. 29). However, it also appears to be different from other Christian Churches, including Pentecostal. This Church does not hold Bible study groups or provide social services to its members. Perhaps its most striking characteristic is its 'unsocial' character. The author describes it as lacking 'intimate social ties' (p. 7), where distrust prevails among its members, who share 'a desperate commitment to attain their own blessings' (p. 23). The main reason why UCKG members joined the Church, van Wyk argues, was 'to restore the physical and spiritual balance that they believed necessary to ensure a flow of blessings from the invisible' (p. 29). Its appeal resided in its capacity to provide concrete answers to people's problems, and a restoration that relied on 'rituals that *worked*' (p. 29). Through the use of 'technologies' such as exorcisms, chains of prayers and sacrificial giving, congregants engaged pragmatically in a battle against the spiritual forces that they considered were afflicting their lives. However, people's commitment was not determined by the actual attainment of material things, health or happiness, but rather by the 'the ontological balance that their attainment marked' (p. 30). This micro-level view challenges assumptions of macro socio-economic interpretations that explain UCKG members' commitment as driven by economic precarity or 'false consciousness' (p. 28). It can also be only applicable to the rest of South Africa insofar as people might share 'certain beliefs about witchcraft, the permeability of human bodies and the work of invisible spirits' (p. 28).

Seven chapters present some of the central features of this Church and weave through the stories of some of its members in their daily struggles, and engagement with its teachings. After the introduction, van Wyk presents the demonology of the Church and its technologies of exorcism. A highly structured classification of demons operates as the theological framework that facilitates the expansion of the Church in a context where witchcraft, and the actions of others, can affect a person's well-being. The following chapter provides an overview of the historical origins of UCKG and its expansion in South Africa. It outlines the characteristics of its pastors, who are highly mobile and avoid developing long-term roots in single congregations. The third chapter explores the role of 'church assistants', who are in their majority women. Assistants provide a stable structure to church congregations despite the highly mobile pastors and members. This stability, however, is achieved at the expense of their subjection to a highly patriarchal structure of authority. Chapter iv focuses on local notions of human bodies as permeable entities, with substances that 'leak' through them and make them vulnerable to the attacks of others. This view of the body enabled the demonological theology and rituals of UCKG to find a fertile ground. Chapter v explores the use and performative role of language in gossip and ritual practices. Language, in this context, is conceived as having the capacity to bring things into existence and to 'anchor' the invisible into the visible. Chapter vi addresses tithing and sacrificial giving in UCKG, one of its most controversial features. For outsiders, tithing might appear as an extortion or commercialisation of faith, but for members of the Church, money and sacrificial giving constitute the vehicles by which they establish a transactional relationship with God. Money is infused and entangled with the giver's essence, intentions and the words spoken over it. However, this form of giving also brings about tensions in

people's relationships with their families and encourages a sociality of suspicion among congregants. The final chapter explores these tensions. Paradoxically, the unsociability of the Church is a by-product of its own technologies that aim to tackle the kinds of problems in social relationships that they intensify and reproduce.

One cannot help but gather a pessimistic view of this Church. No matter how much a person invests herself and her resources, her blessings and spiritual deliverance are continuously deferred. Thus, there is a certain contradiction in the argument that the Church appeal resides in its rituals that 'work'. Perhaps, as the end of the book suggests, it is more pertinent to understand people's participation as their last resource, in a world where defeat is inevitable (p. 241). Some features of this Church inspire strong reactions in the external observer, including the researcher. Van Wyk provides a candid reflection on the ethical problems raised when the researcher dislikes and feels personally challenged by the subject studied. Nevertheless, he offers an intimate and empathetic view on the ways in which members see and engage with the world. Through their ritual practices, UCKG members positioned themselves within a 'warrior ethic'; they fought a battle against Satan to 'reinstat God's blessings in their lives and the lives of their families. Although this Church might have some features that set it apart from other Pentecostal Churches in sub-Saharan Africa, these differences are of degree rather than kind. Many Pentecostal Churches also present a pragmatic approach to ritual, use spoken language to bring things into existence, money offerings are entangled with people's intentions, and members distrust each other. All in all, this study provides valuable historical evidence on the variety of Pentecostal Churches and religious dynamism in Africa, and the variety of expressions that characterise Christianity in many parts of the global South in the current neoliberal era.

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