following Britain's Abolition Act of 1807. *Freedom in White and Black* makes an important contribution to the historiography of the slave trade by providing a richly detailed study of several key individuals, including British and American slavers, enslaved Africans employed on the coast, and captive Africans who narrowly escaped the middle passage and instead became receptive settlers in Sierra Leone.

What sets this study apart from most is how Christopher is able to portray the experiences of enslaved Africans who worked for foreign slave traders on the African coast. The story begins with Tom Ball and a man named Tamba, both enslaved, whose daily work is to oversee the dozens, or hundreds, of children, women and men who suffered in coastal barracoons while the slave traders awaited a slave ship and a buyer. Tom Ball and Tamba, as well as three other African men, eventually testified against their former owners after the illegal operation was shut down by a British antislavery patrol, providing invaluable insight into an aspect of the slave trade for which sources are extremely scarce.

Another important contribution of this book is its description of the lives of the former slaves and slavers in the decades following the 1813 trial. Christopher shows how the slavers were able to quickly resume relatively prosperous lives, one continuing in the slave trade and the other two 'banished' to Australia, where they lived comfortably. The 233 captives, by contrast, were taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where they became part of the community of so-called liberated Africans and navigated a foreign world in which their rights were restricted by British 'apprenticeships' or forced conscription into the British army.

The book is structured more like historical non-fiction than a scholarly monograph, concentrating on the story and characters rather than a broader historical argument. While Christopher does not explicitly engage with the historiography of West Africa in the era of the slave trade or the historiography of the abolition era in West Africa, she cites relevant works in the endnotes, and the book includes an extensive bibliography. The narrative is compelling and the historical actors are described in enough detail to appeal to both general and scholarly audiences.

Freedom in White and Black will be of tremendous use to students and scholars alike who are interested in the history of Liberia and Sierra Leone, the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, and African history in the early 19th century. It is a pleasure to read in spite of the sometimes gruelling story it tells. And it is a fitting tribute to the courage and endurance of enslaved Africans and their descendants who played crucial roles in the creation of innumerable societies in Africa and the Americas.

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Faith and Charity: Religion and Humanitarian Assistance in West Africa edited by Marie Nathalie Leblanc and Louis Audet Gosselin.
London: Pluto Press, 2016. Pp. 256, $99 (hbk).
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Marie Nathalie Leblanc and Louis Gosselin have put together an up-to-the-minute collection of work on religious humanitarianism which is a product of a particular moment in the early 21st century. As long-time scholars of West Africa, they began the work that led to this volume by noting changes in the religious landscape

of Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire: the people and organisations who had been engaged in promoting faith-based views and interests in the sphere of capital-P politics were shifting their attention away from electoral contestations and partisan politics towards an alternate space of engagement, the world of NGOs and entrepreneurship.

This new arena of engagement, characterised by both the bureaucratic rationality of formal organisations and the organic flowering of spirituality, might be mistaken as just another manifestation of the NGO-isation of politics in Africa. However, Lebanc and Gosselin make the case that charitable work that is animated by faith is not reducible to generalisations about the spread of neoliberal rationality. Their chapters develop the notion that faith-based NGOs are a unique breed of social and humanitarian actor, however much they might superficially resemble their secular counterparts.

(The collection is also notable for what is not included, in this historical moment – although many chapters focus on Islam, none are about terrorism, extremism or the dangers of Islamic zealotry, which is a welcome change from much academic writing. This is a collection about religion beyond radicalism and proselytism, for which I am grateful).

The book has two parts. The first lays the scene by sketching out the broad contours of faith-based NGOs in Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The second (and more interesting) section narrows the focus as chapters concentrate on specific organisations and individuals. Throughout the book, the protean nature of faith is evident, as both Islam and Christianity morph, hybridise and adapt to the political and economic conditions of the two countries, without ever being overdetermined by those conditions.

Although this book is part of an ethnographic series, most of the chapters do not read like ethnographies, in the sense of immersing the reader in the experiential world of these NGOs. For excellent exceptions, see the chapters by Marie Nathalie Leblanc and by Boris Koenig. Leblanc traces the historical evolution of women's associations in Cote d'Ivoire through her encounters with women representing different phases of generations of leadership, while Koenig's evocative chapter on 'Christian citizenship' in an Ivoirian 'rehabilitation' centre that seeks to 'improve' socially marginalised individuals is an example of how to do compassionate yet critical qualitative work.

At times, however, the chapters devolve into overly descriptive birds'-eye views of the social and political landscape, reading like situation reports rather than grappling with big questions. And because three authors – the two editors plus Boris Koenig – are responsible for seven of the 10 chapters, the writing style becomes a bit repetitious. The introduction notes that the book should be read as 'a mix between an edited collection and a monograph' and they might have done better to choose one format or the other. But in general, the editors succeed in using the West African context as a springboard for broader themes and questions in both religious studies and international politics.

Some of these questions are familiar, such as the tensions between global and local (or local and local) discourses that emerge as grassroots NGOs navigate relationships with their donor. The sometimes-uneasy relationship between Islamic NGOs in West Africa and funders in the worldwide *ummah* (especially Kuwait and Qatar) appears in several chapters, as NGO leaders must navigate between the secular and liberal orientations of their national governments and the more

stringent expectations of donors, as well as leadership in their own religious communities (the population of Burkina Faso is just over half Muslim, while Cote d'Ivoire has a much smaller share, around a quarter Muslim population).

This collection is also strong on the emerging ethos of volunteerism – a phenomenon that is not confined to faith-based organisations as it can also be a practice of upward mobility among NGOs more generally, but which takes on new dimensions when it is understood and experienced not just as individual choices but as obligation and as religious identity work, brought out most strongly in Gosselin's chapter on evangelical Christian assistance to orphans in Burkina Faso.

The major contribution of this book lies in directing our attention to the nuancing and complexifying of neoliberalism. All the authors are clear that for an NGO to survive in the national and global competition for monetary and symbolic resources, neoliberal rationality is the only game around. However, describing a faith-based organisation or an individual with strong faith commitments as 'neoliberal' does not exhaust what can be said about them, and the authors are at their best when they explore how non-instrumental and reverent ways of being intersect with bureaucratic imperatives.

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Democracy Works: Re-Wiring Politics to Africa's Advantage by Greg Mills, Olusegun Obasanjo, Tendai Biti and Jeffrey Herbst.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xxii + 266, $34.95 (pbk).
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Can Africa be democratic? With 44 attempted coups since 2000, multiple ongoing famines, and presidents-for-life on the airwaves, outside observers likely overlook day-to-day successes and failures of African governments in administration and democracy. Some countries have made tremendous progress, even if others remain stagnant – but even the latter are not irredeemable, and democracy can work for Africa.

This work by two scholars and two statesmen reviews the history and present state of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors note that, on average, African states score 60% lower than industrialised countries on indicators of governance – but that difference is not evenly distributed: Those states that outperform are almost invariably those with democratic regimes. How they have sustained democracy is central to the authors' analysis.

Sophisticated autocrats long ago learned not to interfere with an election on voting day; instead, manipulation of elections begins months or years in advance, through voter registration, media suppression, discreditation of opponents, and stacking election commissions and courts. This contrasts with committed democrats willing to check even their own power, told through interviews with heads of state and national leaders. The authors show that the perceived successes of authoritarian states, such as Rwanda, are largely projected out of context, unlikely to be replicated.

The authors debate at length the role played by the African Union and donor states in shaping African politics. Foreign donors have de-emphasised democracy promotion, instead favouring stability and strategic geopolitics. Election monitors are singled out for particular criticism, for their disproportionate willingness to