argument is oversimplified at best and wrong at worst. The book would have been strengthened by harder statistical corroboration, but as Gebissa points out repeatedly (and correctly), reliable numbers are hard to find. Finally, his admirable attempts to generalize—about a huge province, where local conditions vary widely—occasionally seem overly ambitious, and even forced. Still, he argues convincingly that while farmers, aware of shifting market forces, base their cropping decisions on a variety of farm-level factors, they have aimed above all else to ensure food self-sufficiency, first by production and later by purchase (with cash-crop proceeds). Employing a broad array of sources, including oral interviews and previously unconsulted archival documents, Gebissa illuminates important historical issues often neglected in present-day policy and sustainable-development debates: the reasons why farmers choose to plant qat, how doing so affects their household economies, and how, in often unforeseen ways, government decisions and actions, in Addis Ababa and elsewhere, affect farmers’ lives.

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NOTES

1. Qat is the standard scholarly spelling, though for Kenya and Ethiopia, miraa and c’at, respectively, are common. The preference for khat in this book is not explained.


Gifford, Paul. 2004. GHANA’S NEW CHRISTIANITY: PENTECOSTALISM IN A GLOBALIZING AFRICAN ECONOMY. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. xiv + 216 p. $60.00 [cloth]; $24.95 [paper].

Who cares about Africa? This seems to be the critical question Paul Gifford broaches in Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing Economy. Gifford spends many pages educating the reader about political and economic problems that make life in the African continent difficult. One assumption on which the book is based is that if people in the West were educated regarding the difficulties of the African situation, their response would be forthcoming, but Gifford is not content merely to remind us that more than half of Africa’s 870 million people survive on less than a dollar per day: he points up and points out ways in which Christian churches in Ghana, especially the new Pentecostal churches, contribute to the problems
of poverty and lead in the direction of transforming life for many. The book deals with the response of the new Pentecostal churches to socioeconomic and political conditions in Ghana, and it provides a window for understanding the role of Pentecostal churches in West Africa.

This text is informed by liberation theology. It begins with exposition and analysis of social, economic, and political issues that bedevil the continent, but it moves quickly from the general to the particular, as the author shows how the new churches adapt their messages to Ghanaian contexts. The test to which these churches must submit is to what extent they contribute to the liberation of the populace, not only spiritually, but also economically. Gifford raises serious concerns as to how much the churches contribute to the economic health of the nation, as even the progressive churches, which teach the value of education and industry, demand that their members take time off from work, sometimes a week to attend church conferences. This is one reason Gifford argues for the seeming lack of progress in the economic life of the country, granted the emphasis of many megachurches on education and industry.

Gifford, who seems to have collected hundreds of sermons from Pentecostal churches in Ghana, divides these churches into two categories. On the one hand, there are churches that teach the need for a miraculous response to the ills besetting individuals and the country. Churches that articulate the miraculous approach to matters of health and finances are categorized as “the faith gospel.” This perspective, imported from televangelists in the United States of America, teaches that those who would succeed in their finances, or experience deliverance from the “bondage of poverty,” or “conquer in the business world,” need to rely on the grace of God and church teachings. “A man had been very ill in Nigeria, and spent the equivalent of 60 million cedis at Enugu hospital. He attended all sorts of clinics, but to no avail. One day, when passing this pastor’s church, the man had gone in, and given his life to Christ; as he left the platform after giving his life to Christ, he staggered and when asked why, replied that his burden had been lifted” [p. 155]. Not only was this man healed of his curse, but the man who placed the curse on him was sentenced to death by the pastor. The church protects Christians. It is quite clear throughout this text that the author’s sympathies are not with the miraculous churches, which represent the “faith gospel” perspective, but on the other hand, with those which teach that individual and political development come not from the miraculous, but from industry informed by church teachings. Although Gifford does not use the term, we may refer to this perspective as the “political gospel,” which is set in tension with the “faith gospel.” Gifford expresses sympathies for the psychological benefits of the miraculous emphasis, as he maintains it helps self-esteem of individual members but cannot see any benefit beyond that. Because of this, he devotes much of the text to a discussion of the “political gospel” advocated by Evangelist Olabil, who pastors a 7,000-member church in Ghana. Olabil highlights the importance of education and hard work, and uses his pulpit to critique national policies that create hardships for most Ghanaians,
who are marginalized. He teaches that miracles are not the answer: economic, social, and political change must come from “below”—that is, through hard work by Christians, not by looking for miracles from “above.” Both perspectives aim at change in personal and corporate terms. Gifford does not suggest merging the faith and political-gospel perspectives, but this may be one step forward.

This book is required reading for anyone who seeks to understand the role of Christianity, particularly the new Pentecostal churches in Ghana. Most of Gifford’s research is limited to megachurches in the capital city of Ghana. The reader would benefit from an assessment of the message and influence of smaller churches in rural areas, such as Kumasi. Perhaps a sequel will lead us in this direction.

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Hasty, Jennifer. 2005. THE PRESS AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN GHANA. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 2005. 189 pp. $55.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper).

In the early 1990s, a handful of privately funded newsmagazines emerged in Lagos, Nigeria. Coming at a time when the cynicism of military dictatorship was plain for all to see, the new publications—particularly TELL, TheNEWS, and later the tabloid TEMPO—took on an adversarial role, that of being the nemesis of the government of the day. This role was visible in magazine headlines, and could be felt in the very prose of news reports. Journalism, the profession of objectivity, suddenly turned aggressive, speculative, and unapologetically sensationalistic. There were screaming headlines; sources became “impeccable” or “anonymous.” It was a virtual rewriting of the rules of reporting, and it got caught in the spawn of its own success when four journalists were imprisoned as accessories after the fact of treason in the “phantom coup” of February 1995.

This revolution in print media was tagged “guerrilla journalism,” recording its most salutary gains at the height of the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, despite the earlier imprisonments. A decade later, the phenomenon has not received the kind of scholarly attention it deserves. When an American student of anthropology attempted such a study in 1996, she encountered hostile consulate officials; unable to secure an entry visa to Lagos, she went to Ghana. While hoping that the embassy in Accra would be less impervious than its sister in New York, she found solace in the unfolding drama of official corruption in Jerry Rawlings’s government, and in this manner began to turn to Ghana’s version of adversarial journalism. It was similar to what she’d yearned for, but less dramatic. The book under review is the product of that happy accident, and the author is Jennifer Hasty.

Hasty’s book, The Press and Political Culture in Ghana, is a high-minded study of a subject that is probably historical, if the past-tense format