Anderson, Allan Heaton. *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018. Pp. Xi + 274.

Review by Kgatle, Mookgo Solomon. "Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism by Allan Heaton Anderson." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 16, no. 1 (2021): 122-124.

In recounting the growth of Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa, with particular reference to South Africa, Anderson's book demonstrates that this process has been shaped both by Pentecostalism's continuity with African cultural beliefs and its confrontation with and discontinuities from those beliefs. Most previous studies, conducted by scholars of anthropology, theology, and religious studies, stress the continuity of Pentecostalism with local traditional cultures. This book fills a research gap by highlighting discontinuities between Pentecostalism and the same traditional local cultures, without dismissing their interconnections.

Therefore, this book's main contribution is the exploration of tensions that exist within Pentecostalism due to its continuities and discontinuities with traditional local cultures, as the subtitle suggests. Pentecostalism, for example, stands in agreement with African Traditional Religions (ATR) in linking social problems like sickness, poverty, unemployment, inequality, and so forth to demon possession and to the spirit world. Thus, both ATR and Pentecostalism identify the causes of social problems in the same way; however, their approaches in dealing with such problems differ. While ATR uses African cultural practices and traditions to find solutions, Pentecostalism uses the power of the (Christian) Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts conferred by the Spirit to confront these issues in the spirit world.

This book presents a long-term empirical study that involves a South African township, Soshanguve, where the residents are confronted with social problems like poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Soshanguve offers a perfect case study for understanding how Pentecostals in South Africa deal with daily challenges. The author has a vast amount of experience working with this community, and, over the years, he has collected evidence from the township as both a pastor and a researcher. Therefore, the author is both an insider and an outsider, as he attended charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Soshanguve and participated in research conducted among these congregations.

One of the disconnections that this book highlights is between ancestral worship and Pentecostalism. Almost all the Pentecostals surveyed by the author argued that "they were opposed to the practice of offerings to ancestors; they did not reverence the ancestors and did not consult healers/ diviners" (p.60). This suggests that Pentecostals are opposed to the veneration of ancestors, and demonstrates the discontinuity between Pentecostal and ATR practice. Pentecostals have separated themselves from ancestral

worship without, however, dis-integrating themselves from African society. Pentecostals do not dismiss the existence of ancestors, but they highlight their limitations as mediators between humankind and God, arguing that human beings can instead have a direct relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals do not dismiss the existence of witchcraft and the spirits through which witchcraft is understood to operate; however, they also acknowledge a power above witchcraft and demons. Pentecostals in Africa understand witchcraft as something caused by evil spirits in order to let bad things happen in people's lives, in what is normally recognized as "misfortune." The misfortune is sometimes considered to be caused by a curse, which Pentecostals believe to run from generation to generation. Accordingly, Pentecostalism grants help to and relieves the fears and anxieties of anyone who is afraid of the power of witchcraft, without engaging in traditional antimagical practice.

In recognizing the presence of witchcraft, spirits, and misfortune in the African spirit world, Pentecostals see a need for deliverance by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in interpreting problems like sickness, demon possession, curses, and so forth as caused by witchcraft, Pentecostalism stands in continuity with ATR. However, the difference is that instead of embracing the spirit as an ancestral one, Pentecostals seek to exorcize it in deliverance sessions. The methods of receiving deliverance vary from one Pentecostal church to the other, but "reading the Bible and praying, and by attending church" are among the common ones (p.136).

The power of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts are important to the works of deliverance, healing, and other miracles in African Pentecostalism. It is this power of the Holy Spirit that has found a market in the religious world in Africa and allowed Pentecostalism to grow freely. This is because, in Africa, many people live in constant fear of the spirit world that they cannot see and know. This book emphasizes that the Holy Spirit has power above all the other powers and has the ability to bring healing, deliverance, and salvation in people's lives.

Spirit-Filled World is important for the study of African Pentecostalism—as recent scholars have begun to explore the subject of discernment in the context of the abuse of religion. This book can assist African Studies scholars in their research, as it warns them against dismissing certain cultural elements as "evil," and not including the "evil" elements among cultural phenomena to be analyzed. It is also an important contribution to the studies of global Pentecostalism, as it puts the concept of the spirit world in a global perspective. The book can help readers understand that the idea of the spirit world within the African context is part of a wider global culture. In the words of the author, "African culture is not a static phenomenon, and in today's world there are global forces changing the nature of Pentecostalism in all its variety of different forms in Africa" (p.207).

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Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock 2015, 212 p., ISBN 978-1-4982-3707-9, price US$ 26 (paperback).

Review by Kahl, Werner. "Asamoah-Gyadu J. Kwabena, 'Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa'." *PentecoStudies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 230-232.

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Professor of Contemporary African Christianity and Pentecostal/Charismatic Theology at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, has extensively researched and written on the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in West Africa. The present book offers a critical reflection and assessment of this phenomenon with a focus on the situation in Ghana with occasional references to Pentecostal/Charismatic developments in other sub-Saharan regions, especially Nigeria.

Asamoah-Gyadu bases his presentations and analyses on personal fieldwork, theses written under his guidance, and the most relevant literature. He combines an academic outsider perspective with an experiential insider faith perspective, himself taking "a charismatic orientation to my Methodist faith" (p. 158). He addresses "all those who want to know about contemporary Pentecostalism in Africa, whether or not they are academics" (p. xi). His attitude towards the subject is one of critical appreciation. The ambiguity of the phenomenon is already reflected in the title of the book: Sighs and Signs of the Spirit. He observes that "Pentecostalism always appears to be a movement in transition, with pains and glories in equal measure" (p. xi). Especially the "prosperity gospel," a teaching widespread in Pentecostalism, is a recurrent theme in the book. Asamoah-Gyadu evaluates Pentecostalism in twelve chapters from various perspectives: Christian renewal in Africa (revitalization of the church, emancipation from Western theological and financial influence); the force of Pentecostalism (gospel of power and mission); new symbols expressing a dominion theology (the eagle instead of the dove); prosperity hermeneutics with particular reference to Old Testament figures; use of mass and electronic media; spiritual power of the spoken word; the role of prophecy; transdenominational renewal movements; the Church of Pentecost as a model; spiritual warfare; a theological response to the prosperity gospel; and the future of Christianity in Africa.

Asamoah-Gyadu describes and reflects upon a dynamic religious phenomenon that has changed and shaped faith, church and theology in Ghana. In the past generation virtually the whole range of Christianity has become more or less charismatic. Trinity Theological Seminary, the prestigious theological institution in Ghana for the education of ministers in classical Protestant mission churches, has witnessed some developments that are paradigmatic for the changing ecclesial landscape in the sub-region: "Pentecostal and charismatic pastors now apply in their numbers to study at Trinity. Not only have they come to appreciate the need for rigorous and critical academic training, but Trinity itself has responded positively to changing paradigms in Christianity by creating space for the ministries of healing, exorcism and deliverance in the curriculum" (p. 158). As indicated by the quotation, also Pentecostalism has

undergone some transformations in the past decade as concerns, for example, the attitude towards theological education that has shifted from rejection to embracement. As such, Pentecostalism in the sub-region reflects some worldwide trends.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the rise of Pentecostalism in its various forms in Ghana is the expression of a grassroots movement. Indigenous Pentecostalism signals a spiritual emancipation from Western theology and mission church bodies abroad. It has been so meaningful to many in the sub-region since it shows some continuities with African Traditional Religion that, however, have been challenged and qualified Christologically. This brand of Christianity, at its best, combines spiritual experience with communal care, giving expression to a holistic ethic. Here, the Church of Pentecost serves as an example. "Pentecostal churches are thriving in Africa and among African communities in the West primarily because of their emphases on belief, experience, conviction and commitment to what the Spirit of God is doing in the world" (pp. 147–8). Healing, exorcism and deliverance are seen in Ghanaian Pentecostalism as vital parts of evangelism, and Asamoah-Gyadu makes transparent the plausibility of this approach in much of sub-Saharan Africa. He lists three factors:

- "The biblical worldview of mystical causality within which exorcism operates resonates very strongly with African worldviews on the causes of evil, including the belief in spirit possession" (p. 160);
- The ministry of healing and deliverance is seen to be biblical ("Pentecostals speak of a different kind of 'apostolic succession' that puts the emphasis not only on ecclesiastical authority and inheritance but also on the power of God that was evident then and now"; p. 160); and
- The importance of prayer.

Asamoah-Gyadu offers a balanced assessment of, and a critical reflection on the phenomenon. While he is in general positive about Pentecostal churches and charismatic developments in the sub-region, even to the point of passing a personal confession according to which they "have been inspired by the Spirit of God" (p. 176), he at times criticizes certain features of the phenomenon. This applies in particular to the widespread message of health and wealth: "There is a difference between being prosperous in Christ and being materialistic" (p. 175). The criterion to identify problematic tendencies in Pentecostalism is both biblical and Christological. Asamoah-Gyadu favors the application of a "'Christological hermeneutics' in which Jesus Christ becomes the standard and our focus is on the Cross" (p. 175). A "holistic gospel" needs to be preached which corresponds to general biblical concepts of prosperity that "encapsulates God's physical and spiritual deliverance, and personal and communal well-being" (p. 175).

Asamoah-Gyadu's useful and insightful book offers not only a reliable and balanced presentation of recent trends in Pentecostalism in Ghana and a critical analysis of the phenomenon; it also contributes to the development of a contextual Pentecostal theology and pneumatology in West Africa which are Christologically qualified.

Wariboko, Nimi and Adeshina Afolayan, eds. *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020. Pp. 322. $37.

Review by Mugambi, Kyama M. "African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, edited by Nimi Wariboko and Adeshina Afolayan." *Mission Studies* 38, no. 3 (2021): 474-475. Used with permission.

Wariboko and Afolayan bring together a diverse group of scholars to consider "the critical junctures at which World Christianity invigorates and is invigorated by African Pentecostalism" (p.5). A celebration of Ghanaian theologian Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu's empathic, analytical posture, the book attempts to engage theology with context to illuminate the discussion.

The editors divide the book's task into four parts. A historical section examines the trajectory of Christianity in Africa over time. These essays lay the theological, historical foundation upon which the other sections build. The next section views Christianity from the prism of worldviews and formations that inform African understandings of spiritual realities. Here the contributors navigate the tension between the "hyper-spiritualized" and the "hyper-materialized cause and effect understanding of reality," that attends religion on the continent (p.10). The third section engages media and Pentecostal practices, reflecting on the role of media and the mediatization of Pentecostal expressions. And a final section addresses issues relating to Pentecostalism on the continent.

The book excels in the variety of its slate of contributors who effectively address their topics. Coming from West, South, and East Africa, and beyond, such heterogeneity is hard to find in a one-volume work. Of note are refreshing contributions by women scholars from the continent. This is very significant, given the dearth of African women scholars in African Theology. Likewise, the rich mix of senior and junior scholars offers much needed multi-generational perspectives on African religious studies. A further strength of this book lies in its careful balance between broad analysis and specific contextual examples.

However, the book's diversity is both a strength and a weakness. The scholars individually engage the task of the book from very different perspectives. Readers will thus not find here a sustained book-length analysis on a particular aspect of Asamoah-Gyadu's scholarship. Additionally, the extent to which this volume will be accessible to an audience in Africa that most needs it may constitute another of its setbacks. Fortunately, this is remediable through a re-examination of publishing dynamics, which necessarily include distribution and pricing.

Bringing to bear their extensive backgrounds in philosophy and religious studies, the editors propose a scholarly category of Pentecostalism studies for which Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is the exemplar. This might be the volume's most important contribution to Pentecostal scholarship going forward. Their proposed "Legon discourse" (referring to Asamaoh-Gyadu's base at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, a suburb of Accra, Ghana) appreciates in its analyses both contextual and theological dimensions of Pentecostalism without sacrificing theoretical dialogue. Its

balanced sympathetic view does not neglect the role of healthy critical engagement with the subject.

This book successfully achieves its task. A well-written offering, it affords readers a broad range of perspectives to enrich their thinking about World Christianity in general and African Pentecostalism in particular. Wariboko and Afolayan present here a worthy scholarly engagement with, and fitting tribute to, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, one of the most prominent African scholarly voices on the subject today.

Mugambi, Kyama M. *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020. 348 pp. $54.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4813-1355-1.

Review by Grant, Paul G. "Mugambi, Kyama M., A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya." H-Africa, H-Net Reviews. September, 2021. URL: https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56179

In the concluding pages of *A Spirit of Revitalization*, Kyama M. Mugambi takes his readers through central Nairobi on a Sunday morning in 2018. Within a tight radius of five hundred meters, a colorful diversity of living congregations collectively represents the history of Christianity in Kenya as European-initiated and African-initiated movements alike hold their services. "This small area in Nairobi," Mugambi says, "acts as a microcosm of African Christianity," not only in urban Kenya but in many other places around the continent (p. 287).

Mugambi presents twenty-first-century Kenyan Pentecostalism as heir to four distinct phases of East African Christian history: nineteenth-century European missions, early twentieth-century African-Initiated Churches, the East African Revivals of the late colonial years, and the postcolonial emergence of a newer form of Pentecostalism that reconfigured legacy, missionary-era Pentecostalisms for the distinct experiences and spiritual needs of the educated, urban middle class. Drawing on all four of these threads, a movement of "Progressive Pentecostal Churches" (PPCs) began emerging in the 1990s, confident and unconcerned with European and American opinion. The cumulative impression is one of rooted cosmopolitans—both Kenyan and Christian—capable of strategically and critically engaging with the world on their own terms.

The core of Mugambi's research is a lengthy list of oral interviews conducted over several years. These conversations make the book. Mugambi's interlocutors sometimes confirm, sometimes complement, and sometimes contradict conventional wisdom. The author treats his sources fairly but not uncritically, and a cumulative image of a raucous but vivacious church culture begins to appear.

Holding it all together is the author's steady and disciplined approach. *A Spirit of Revitalization* is meticulously plotted in a sequence of at times overlong chapters. After an introduction that frames the book as a globally significant local study, eight chapters follow in groups of two: chapters 1 through 4 as a historical narrative, and chapters 5 through 8, in turn, as sociological profiles.

Chapter 1 is concerned with the African-Initiated corrective to missionary Christianity, which the author calls Spirit-Roho churches. These autochthonous movements reconfigured a foreign religion to suit indigenous sensibilities and meet indigenous needs; while Mugambi does not trace a genealogical line from these churches to twenty-first-century PPCs, he stresses their rootedness in African orality as a shared feature.

The second chapter turns to the well-researched East African Revival. Mugambi is conversant with the scholarship while emphasizing a few original points, the foremost of which is that "the key to understanding the Revivalists lies in their creation of a cross-

cultural Christianity within a context where monocultural religious expressions were the norm" (p. 63).

Chapters 3 and 4 narrate two distinct postcolonial Pentecostal expressions. The variety that was first established in Nairobi had come from Canada in the early and mid-twentieth century, but in most cases had become fully nationalized during the 1970s and 80s. Mugambi distinguishes between these "Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Churches"—an imprecise category he glosses with an acronym (NPCCs) and discusses in chapter 3—and the PPCs, the subject of chapter 4. All told, the differences between the two are neither doctrinal nor ontological but social and organizational—an argument developed in the subsequent two chapters.

Chapter 5 focuses on modes of "discipleship" in urban Kenyan Pentecostalism—the process by which these churches, having rejected historic mission churches' Europe-derived catechisms, have taught their youth and their converts the fundamentals of faith and praxis. Chapter 6 is about leadership: how new leaders have been identified, developed, and equipped, especially as Kenyan churches of all expressions, including the mission churches, have fully nationalized their leadership structures in the last four decades.

The final dyad of chapters applies the foregoing historical and sociological arguments to case studies of two large networks: Christ is the Answer Ministries (chapter 7) and the Nairobi Chapel (chapter 8). These twin chapters constitute the core of the book and are convincing and compelling; each of the two congregations appears here as globally minded and locally rooted (Mugambi uses the word "glocal" sparingly).

A Spirit of Revitalization is perhaps the most important book on contemporary African Christian history to be published in the last few years. The book's descriptive agenda—the reformulation of a transnational religion into a rapidly evolving urban social situation in a booming country—is always difficult, demanding an author's facility in the literatures and methodologies of multiple disciplines, principally history and theology. Few scholars pull it off perfectly: even the late Lamin Sanneh struggled to reconcile those fields in *Translating the Message* (1989; 2nd ed., 2008). Readers familiar with the questions and arguments of the Yale-Edinburgh Group on World Christianity and Princeton Theological Seminary's World Christianity conferences will recognize much of the theoretical framework here, especially the intellectual fingerprints of Sanneh, Andrew Walls, and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu.

In elegantly subordinating theological interventions to concrete historical facts, Mugambi offers a model for research in world Christianity that thinks globally and eternally while retaining the messy inconsistencies and contingencies of human lives. Written with all the strengths of an insider who can speak to transnational theoretical debates, *A Spirit of Revitalization* is rich in ground-level detail while remaining conversant in current interventions from Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere in Africa. Mugambi rewards careful readers: several of his keenest observations and conclusions are either buried in the middle of long paragraphs or in discursive footnotes. The latter function as repositories for unsupported (but never incredible) arguments, usually drawn from decades of personal experience.

In his 2010 African religious travelogue, V. S. Naipaul described a similar religious scene in Uganda in distinctly pessimistic terms. "Foreign religion," Naipaul wrote, "to go by the competing ecclesiastical buildings on the hilltops, was like an applied and contagious illness, curing nothing, giving no final answers, keeping everyone in a state of nerves, fighting wrong battles, narrowing the mind."[1] Naipaul's caustic dismissal of millions of African Christians, as if they were hapless intellectual recipients of noxious alien ideologies, proceeded from an a priori contempt for religion of any sort: Naipaul could not conceive of African reconfiguration of an originally foreign religion as anything but false. Writing from Kenya, Mugambi sees things differently: where Naipaul saw wrong battles, Mugambi sees new solutions; where Naipaul saw no final answers and a narrowing of the mind, Mugambi saw "a fresh Christianity reimagined within particular cultural, historical, and social contexts" (p. 296).

A Spirit of Revitalization seems to occupy a different universe than Adriaan van Klinken's *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (2019). Almost mutually exclusive lists of names and congregations appear in the two books' indexes, although the two authors are arguing in a similar direction: that twenty-first century Kenyan Christianity is a robust ecosystem, unbeholden to European leadership or American money. Whereas Klinken's approach is ethnographic, complicating the story of East African Christianity caricatured in Naipaul's 2010 book or Roger Ross Williams's film *God Loves Uganda* (2013), Mugambi's goal seems to be to invite church leaders in Europe and North America to listen and learn from Kenyan innovation: he names several examples of large American churches and networks receiving Kenyan Christian training material, and others hiring Kenyans as pastors. *A Spirit of Revitalization* is imperative reading both for scholars of African religion and world Christianity.

Note:

[1]. V. S. Naipaul, *The Masque of Africa* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 6-7.