The three books under review are part of a four-volume series titled “Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South,” although the final volume, with the working title *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Global Perspective* (edited by Timothy Samuel Shah, the series editor), is still not due until at least 2010. Combined, the three books provide seventeen case studies — all by either experts in the field or researchers local to the regions being studied — that serve as windows into the complex matrices which are evangelical Christianity’s interface with the public square in general and with the political order in particular across the three continents. Each volume includes a substantial introduction by the editor, and two of them have concluding reflections by recognized scholars (Daniel Levine for Latin America and Paul Gifford for Africa).

For purposes of this review, however, space constraints lead me to focus on what these books have to tell us about Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity and their relationship to democracy in the global south. In the Guatemalan context, for example, the presidencies of Charismatic Christians Rios Montt and Elias Serrano that often get the lion’s share of the coverage obscure the much more pluralistic nature of Pentecostal and Charismatic politics that are present on the ground electorally, in terms of party politics, and at the community level. Similarly, in Brazil, where the increasing number of congressmen and women from especially the Assemblea de Deos and the Igreja Universal de Reino de Deus has been noted for almost two decades, an excellent overview charts the major developments, follows the career paths of the prominent politicians, and notes adjustments in both denominations over time. It should also be noted that in the Peruvian context, Pentecostal theologian Darío López Rodríguez carefully describes counter-democratic trends among evangelicals who supported, however ambiguously, the Fujimori government during the last decade of the twentieth century.

Developments in the African context must be understood in terms of what scholars have identified as Africa’s three democratic revolutions: the anti-colonial struggles leading to independence, the challenges to one-partyism and military governments during the 1980s, and the ongoing battle against violence, immorality, and corruption that hinder democratic processes. The essays in this volume discuss Pentecostal and Charismatic movements variously: in their resistance against Sharia law and Islamization in northern Nigeria; the role of the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa in Kenya during the administration of Daniel arap Moi, who served as president from 1978 to 2002; the fortunes of Pentecostalism in Zambia, declared as a “Christian nation” by Charismatic Christian Frederick Chiluba, who served as president from 1991 to 2001; the struggles of Pentecostal and Charismatic Zimbabweans under the regime of Robert Mugabe; the contributions of
Zionist and Apostolic Christians to the building of democracy in Mozambique; and the various responses of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians (for example, Ray McCauley's Rhema Church, Nicholas Bhengu's Back to God Crusade, and Frank Chikane and his Apostolic Faith Mission denomination) to apartheid in South Africa, both before and after the democratic elections of 1994 (particularly noteworthy is Bhengu's rejection of the fight for freedom and equality as defined by the white man). In many cases the authors persuasively show how Pentecostal churches have functioned as "schools of democracy" in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Asian context is very different from the African and even Latin American ones in that the latter two have seen, especially in the regions and countries of the case studies, spectacular Pentecostal growth. On the whole, however, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Asia remain in the minority demographically, even if a growing one in some cases. Still, readers will be treated to explorations of how Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in rural China and in north and northeast India (two separate case studies) have served as a leaven for democratic processes on the one hand, and yet also hindered democratic reforms given their fragmented nature on the other hand. South Korean Pentecostal scholar Young-gi Hong also provides insightful perspective on the role that Pentecostals have played within the wider evangelical contribution to democratic consolidation in that country since the 1980s, a challenging task given the existing elitist, patriarchal, and military culture of the nation. In the Muslim-dominated Surakarta region of Indonesia, even Pentecostal churches are embracing the national motto of Pancasila as providing a "neutral" Indonesian ideology of pluralism in order to survive as a minority religious group. Last but not least, Catholic Charismatic Renewal movements and other Pentecostal and evangelical coalitions are discussed with regard to the "People Power" events in the Philippines between 1986 and 2001.

While the case study approach does not provide comprehensive coverage of evangelical Christianity and democracy in the global south, its strengths are that focused elaborations of what is happening in specific regions and nations allow for a much more in-depth treatment of the issues than possible with generalized surveys. Details that would not otherwise appear will be found, and this in turn enriches our understanding of the diversity of Pentecostal intersections with politics around the world. But the three volumes under consideration also illuminate the assorted ways in which countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are negotiating the meaning of democracy in its various phases and are crafting their own democratic forms of life, drawing from different traditions and resources.

It is also clear that the political meaning of democracy in the twenty-first century is inseparable from the many economic factors that define our globalizing situation. Not a few of the case studies suggest that economic criteria have become the measure of success or even have come to define a workable democracy, and the degree to which evangelicals buy into such norms is the same degree to which they will fail to form and nurture a distinctively evangelical religious identity in our time. This means that Timothy Shah and his colleagues may have another multivolume project on the horizon that explores “Evangelical Christianity and Economics in the Global South,” and if so, the Pentecostal dimensions of such a project will be no less central than in the present endeavor.

Reviewed by Amos Yong