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Book Review

Pentecostalism in an African Context

By Michael L. Zadell

Ruth Marshall

Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria

As truth becomes hyper-partisan and societal issues go unresolved, growing numbers around the globe are acting upon the belief that secular problem solving has reached a limit. With the growth of global Pentecostalism, political identity is increasingly informed by faith. *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* is the product of Ruth Marshall's sixteen-year engagement with such a struggle to redefine society and politics. Her provocative monograph is a redefinition of the political and an intimate study of personal transformation that has a critical eye on the history of a revolutionary movement facing a public sphere of radical insecurity, corruption, violence, supernatural enchantment, and socioeconomic / moral destabilization.

Marshall breaks with anthropological and sociological trends that either write religion out of analysis or recognize it as only metaphor. Rather, she interprets the movement as a direct form of action upon the world that began at a specific time in Nigeria's postcolonial history. At the intersection of the global movement and local concerns, and through a prescriptive regime of conversion, Christian discourse and discursive practice, the evangelicals of Nigeria are developing a new type of citizen and citizenry.

She reorients the analytical realm of the political through the use of Foucauldian models of power, subjectivity, and governmentality. Political spirituality, the will to found anew, connecting truth to governance of the self, one with the other, is integrated within the space of subjectivation. (45-47) Subjectivation within the movement is an act of faith, rooted in a relationship between the self and the self, mediated by the Holy Spirit. Subjectivation in this sense is a new experience of the world. The born again experience and the discursive practice of personal testimonies reconstitutes the world through personal and collective redemption. Within the individual and the collective it is a rupture with the past self and the "sins of the father" – as well as the production of a new moral ethic that produces the new citizen who becomes an example to the community.

Marshall builds her historic narrative around a series of doctrinal engagements between the movement and the world and examines each for their political effect. She begins with a constituency of believers that reorient themselves away from denominational attachments or institutional leadership and toward the global Pentecostal movement that knows no borders and no official hierarchy or doctrine. It is ongoing ruptures such as these that give the movement a strong egalitarian nature. Faced with a perpetual crisis of government corruption, greed, and predation - an environment which in truth had become Orwellian, and an oil boon that widened the gap between rich and

poor - these born agains began to break with the world and established a new antimaterialist ethic in the late 1970s. Wealth accumulation, which had lost its connection to work, was viewed through a prism of the demonic or the supernatural. The anti-materialistic holiness doctrine was challenged by an American inspired prosperity doctrine claiming that the fruits of the spirit included God's material reward in the here and now. By the 1990s, the born again movement was linked to the same issues of enchantment, corruption, and greed that it strove against.

Ruth Marshall adds to the realm of what is historic and present, which is crucial to capturing the identity of the movement. It is faith in the messianic time of the present that gives urgency to change. And it is connections to the apostles, "a rupture in staging a link and space beyond local historical trajectories," (89) a link confirmed only through the recognition of faith that is a part of evangelical political identity as well.

She dedicates the latter portion of her work to unintended consequences. Since the 1990s, pastors have become involved in government; some participating in the same cycle of corruption. To the Born Again community, "God is not a democrat," (211) and there is always the threat of a charismatic pastor leading the movement toward theocracy. The implicit otherness quality present in a worldview of good and evil has already brought with it vengeance and violence against non-believers. But it is the essential egalitarian nature of revival that is the best guard against theocracy, keeping the movement revolutionary and striving for the free and pluralistic society essential for its existence.

With *Political Spiritualities* Ruth Marshall makes new use of political/social theory, bridging a gap between faith and reason, and adds to the legacy of works that locate identity outside Western paradigms of modernity and otherness.