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the country such an attractive proposition for Africans. In short, Ugba documents
the “host” factors, namely, the material and political changes that have facilitated
the metamorphosis of Ireland into an immigrant-receiving nation and highlights
the processes and implications of this development. The analysis of relevant
immigration and citizenship laws and policies provides the necessary background
information in explaining the reasons for the increased presence of African
immigrants in Ireland from the mid-1960s. Several key themes are subsequently
developed. First, the volume scrutinizes the socio-cultural, economic and political
activities of Africans migrants themselves and highlights the pivotal role of
African-led Pentecostal churches in facilitating communication and interaction
in a religio-community location that provides a “home from home” in a Western
environment. Second, Ugba overviews the history and contours of modern
Pentecostalism, from its beginning arguably in the USA in the first decade of
the twentieth century, through its journey to and presence in Africa and back
through its “exportation” to Europe, including Ireland, via African immigrants.
He highlights the controversies that surrounded the origins of Pentecostalism
and describes its presence in African countries, first as a religion of the elites,
and its subsequent spread to less privileged social and economic groups. I am not
convinced however, that such an historical detour is necessary in quite so much
detail, and was left with a sense of wishing to know more of what was distinct,
what was particularly African, about the form of Pentecostalism being exported.

Several chapters of the volume dissect the author’s empirical data (including
the questionnaire findings of 144 members, plus interviews of 18 church
members, and ethnographic observations) which offers insight into the presence
of African-led Pentecostal groups in Ireland, while presenting a comparative
assessment of the histories and activities of the four churches surveyed. The
concluding chapters examine sociological explanations of religion through
literature focusing on identity. Such an approach tends to be in vogue at the
moment (with the aim typically of “providing a nuanced understanding”), so that
the essence of the author’s theoretical framework is based upon substantive and
“meaning-making” notions of religion espoused by both classical and modern
theorists in that religious beliefs can indeed constitute a prism used by adherents
to construct self-understanding, staking differences and negotiating cultural
boundaries. Ugba articulates the importance and uses of Pentecostalism for
African immigrants in this respect and, in particular, he identifies Pentecostal
African immigrants’ self-understanding, alongside their construction of the
“other,” namely, a sometimes alienating Irish society.

Ugba relies heavily on empirical data and theories of immigrant settlement
and acculturation to arrive at some conclusions regarding the implications of
African Pentecostals’ meaningful cultural construction necessary for their long-
term presence and participation in Irish society. While acknowledging the social,
emotional and material uses of Pentecostalism, the book analyses the interface
between religious beliefs and the interpretation of self, other and social reality.
The final chapter acts as a postscript. Here Ugba discusses his research processes
and some of the major research discussion as himself an African researching
other Africans and issues related to belonging, boundaries and access that were
highlighted by his incursions in the field. The value of his book is in exploring how West African churches, with their own variety of Pentecostalism, have made themselves present globally but especially in Western Europe. Interestingly, he writes as a Jehovah’s Witness – clearly a religious culture that is a million miles away from Pentecostalism.