

The Renegade God: The Social World of Healing and the Faith of Unity Religion in Uganda

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Abstract

While many scholars of religion in Africa and elsewhere repeatedly assert that Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity is the fastest growing religious section in Africa, this assertion lacks empirical verification. In Uganda, for example, the fastest growing religion is not Christianity or any of its splinter groups; it is, unarguably, the Faith of Unity (FoU) religion. The Faith of Unity Movement is a society of religious believers who are not, by self-designation, not Christian but espouses and exhibits a strongly Catholic habitus and aesthetics. Founded by Dosteo Bisaka — popularly known as “*Owobusobozi*” — “the power of the Lord God of Host” in human form — in February 1980, the FoU movement has a single mission of producing cosmic harmony through physical healing. With a written scripture of its own called *The Book of God*, an elaborate and colourful ritual economy and a total membership of more than five million spread across seven countries (as at 2016), the FoU represents an example of an emergent religious culture that re-inscribes and privileges *religion as healing*, a practice that is consistent with indigenous African religious culture.