

Across three great regions of the world—sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and southern and eastern Asia—two trends are rearranging the social and political landscapes. One of these, the growth of democracy in civic life, politics, and governance, has attracted the attention of some of the most prominent scholars of public affairs. The late Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard famously called this movement “the third wave” of democratic revolutions in modern history. This trend is anything but inevitable, however. Despite dramatic advances, democracy in many lands is fragile, and there have been many setbacks, as any reader of the “world” section of the daily news can attest.

The other development, which until recently was nearly invisible to most scholars and pundits, is Christianity’s dynamic development in these regions, which is causing a seismic shift of the faith’s place and role in the world. Christianity, it turns out, is not just the fading tribal religion of the Europeans. The faith is practiced worldwide, in many more places and languages than any other religion. The great majority of Christians now live outside Europe and North America. Just as the nations of the Global South and East are the most interesting places to study democracy these days, so too the main questions about Christianity increasingly arise from its new heartlands in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

One of those questions, which has received surprisingly little attention, is what these two trends have to do with each other. A number of political scientists, including Huntington, have noted that a re-energized Roman Catholicism, with a new theological purchase on freedom, has been a critical force for democratization, especially in parts of Latin America. What about some of the other dynamic Christian movements, notably the Pentecostals and other evangelicals? By the year 2000, twelve percent of Latin Americans identified as Protestants, and two-thirds of them were Pentecostals. In Africa, where Christians now make up half of the continent’s total population, Pentecostals and charismatics account for more than a third of the Christians. Christians constitute small minorities in Asian nations except South Korea (30 percent) and the Philippines (85 percent), but wherever there are Christians in Asia, evangelicals in general and Pentecostals in particular are on the rise. So what relationship do these religious movements have to the public life of these regions?

A cadre of evangelical intellectuals from the Global South and East dec

led protests against human rights violations. Yet in spite of some initial success at electoral politics, Peruvian evangelicals have played a negligible role in government.

The same might be said of evangelicals in the Philippines. During the "People Power" uprising against the Marcos regime in the mid-1980s, both the Philippines

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the notion that there are new theocracies arising or, as Philip Jenkins put it, a “new Christendom.” Even in Zambia, where the born-again president proclaimed the land a “Christian nation,” the main effect of that rubric was to fortify the opposition, which contrasted his regime’s shenanigans to that ideal.

5. There are some signs of political maturation and principled approaches among evangelical movements. In some nations where evangelicals’ engagement in politics has had time to ripen, authors saw a definite turn from more self-serving to principled approaches. In South Korea, early evangelical attachments in politics were more about gaining legitimization from the rulers than about serving biblical norms. In the 1960s and 1970s, only the more liberal churches spoke out against repressive rule. But in the great “Democratic Struggle” of 1987, large numbers of the more conservative holiness and Presbyterian churches joined the democratic movement. The first democratically elected president, longtime dissident and reformer Kim Young-Sam, was an elder in a conservative Presbyterian church and schooled in Calvinist social thought. His regime had limited success in effecting reforms, but in the ensuing years evangelical citizens’ reform movements, such as the Christian Ethics Movement and the Citizens Committee for Economic Justice, have multiplied. These groups constitute some 70 percent of all the nation’s NGO

