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Global Pentecostal Historiography: A Critique of its Engagement in Sustainable Development

This study discusses the phenomenon of global Pentecostal historiography and offers a critique of its engagement in sustainable development initiatives. The origins and growth of the global Pentecostal movement are replete with its developmental interventions aimed at addressing socio-economic and political issues in its various contexts. This assertion can be historically traced to the origins of modern Pentecostalism in at least three places: (a) the Azusa Street Revival, in the USA; (b) the development of Pentecostalism in the Republic of South Africa; and (c) the development of Pentecostalism in Malawi. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism's attempts in participating in transformational development causes faced challenges from both inside and outside the movement. Consequently, Pentecostalism surrendered its pursuit of sustainable development initiatives i.e., the social concern mandate and only focused on the evangelistic mandate. Therefore, the study argues that an understanding of Pentecostal historiography offers a reflection of the knowledge production and development of attitudes that informs Pentecostals either to engage in sustainable development or shy away from it. The study has two implications: (1) Pentecostal historiography provides a framework for evaluation of Pentecostalism's contribution to the 2030 sustainable development agenda. (2) Pentecostalism's emphasis on healing and God's provision for material needs captures the essence of the goals of sustainable development. Therefore, Pentecostalism is only a short step away from a fully developed wholistic theology of social concern which can provide a praxis for its contribution towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, historiography, sustainable development, Republic of South Africa, Malawi, United States of America



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