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Breaking the Spirit of Poverty: Neo-Pentecostal Poverty discourse and 2030 Development Agenda in Kenya

Poverty is one of Africa's most intractable wicked problems. Decades of deliberate and strategic socioeconomic policies have not yielded considerable concrete results to eradicate it. Upon succeeding brutal colonial administration, the burgeoning African governments promised its citizens material well-being through socioeconomic development. A half a century later, the continent is perpetually witnessing a blatant betrayal of dreams. Religious organizations, just like African governments that succeeded colonial governments, continue to promise poverty eradication by divine means to its adherents whose numbers keeps exploding across the continent. Neo-Pentecostal variant of African Pentecostalism is particularly renowned for its promises of wealth, health, and prosperity through supernatural divine power. The expediency of these promises to alleviate poverty and bring about social transformation is debatable. Some scholars argue that African Pentecostalism is an elaborately complex increase in religious activities devoid of social structural transformation, while others on the other hand, opines that it positively contributes to development. The paper is a research finding of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of neo-Pentecostal church sermons (discourses) on poverty and strategies (practices) in Kenya. The essay not only tests Pentecostal doctrines of poverty eradication but also identifies neo-Pentecostal development theory and its relation to 2030 development Agenda in Kenyan context. As a religious community neo-Pentecostal variant of Christianity has competing and conflicting points of departure for a post-2030 development age in Kenya.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, poverty alleviation, wealth, religious activities, social transformation, Kenya