

Impact of new religious movements in Christianity: (a case study of Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu City)

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Abstract:

This study is focused on the impact of New Religious Movements in Christianity, with specific reference to Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu City. It is a descriptive and evaluative study that tends to critically consider the challenges of the society at the time of the foundation of this movement, and how these challenges historically escalated into the New Religious movement in question. It also relates how they shaped the nature of the teachings of this movement and how these teachings positively or negatively influence the society in Kisumu. In attaining this, the four congregations of Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu were selected. A pastor, three leaders and five members were selected from each congregation and interviewed. The researcher also conducted several interviews among other churches that have been in existence in Kisumu and their perception about this new movement was considered. Two Catholic Parishes, an Anglican Church, an Africa Inland Church, two Pentecostal Churches and two African Instituted Churches were selected and two leaders from each church interviewed. The research realized that membership into this new religious movement is mainly composed of people who formerly belonged to the Pentecostal charismatic prosperity churches. The study also through a critical evaluative approach, found out that the prosperity gospel had become less appealing to people of the middle and low class who had considered such churches as economic exploitative faiths. With this respect, Repentance and Holiness Ministry (R.H.M) was revealed to be most appealing to masses because of Dr. Owuor's approach of free worship where congregants pay no money during the worship services. In this process, the Pentecostal churches were revealed to be the mostly affected while the Catholic Church is the least affected. This is based on the observation that the Catholic Church does not focus so much on the gospel of money. Besides these, attaining membership in Catholic Church is a very long procedure that involves discipleship, unlike the Pentecostals that only focus on the concept of salvation and spirit filling. The research also evaluates the doctrines of R.H.M. This is achieved through personal attendance and active participation in the meetings, critical review of the available literature and examining the lives of the followers. The study thus establishes that eschatological beliefs are the 1110st vocal in the movement because many people, who are frustrated in this life, easily withdraw their attention from the present and reflects to the future as the only option of self fulfilment. This study also evaluates methods of attracting followers into this movement. In this process, the study confirms that women are the majority of followers. This is based on the fact that the African society exposes women to more challenges than men, making them to be quick to follow New Religious Movements (N.R.Ms) in their quest for solutions to their social and economic challenges. Finally, the research discovers that the main cause of splinter groups in Christianity is based on the fact that many religious founders focus on different aspects of Christology rather than Christ in wholesome. Furthermore, the differences that are experienced between the N.R.Ms and the existing churches are always based on personal differences, rather than in the interest and defense of the faith.