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**Regeneration as sustainable development: The case of Charismatic Christian Farming in South Africa**

With attention increasingly placed on spirit-lead forms of development across the world the functional role of faith-based actors' role in development has been gradually nuanced and complicated.<sup>1</sup> Yet how religious agents envision, engage and address concerns related to anthropogenic climate changes that increasingly challenge humans' ability to live and prosper remains understudied. Especially so, in relation to the growing impact of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Africa where calls for moral regeneration gradually have moved Christians into the public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

Against the present-future concerns of changing environmental patterns, this paper explores a network of Charismatic Christians in contemporary South Africa and their promotion of a biblical grounded approach to sustainable agriculture. Known as Farming God's Way (FGW), the model is used as a case to analyze how discourses around sustainability takes place in the intersection of conservative textual ideologies and alternative agrarian science aimed at eradicating poverty while regenerating nature (SDG 2, 13, 15).

Drawing on ethnographic methods and analysis of FGW's media output, the case reveals Christian farming's proximity with discourses of ecological restoration and regenerative forms of agriculture, with farming experienced as a moral responsibility and core (spiritual) practice to produce a viable wider framework for ecological, social as well as economic sustainability. Highlighting FGW as a form of intertextual creative labor<sup>3</sup> of restoring a biblical order through alternative farming principles, the paper argues for paying attention to the ways in which practical and materially rooted forms of religious revival becomes enacted as sustainable development. Situated in the paradigm of material religion, the case of FGW reveals a site where conservative religious paradigms and scientific discourses on sustainable agriculture currently converse in strives of developing particular ways of Christian living seen to regenerate societies as well as land.

Keywords: Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, faith-based actors, sustainable agriculture, Farming God's Way, South Africa,

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Erica Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development: Protestant Ngos, Morality and Economics in Zimbabwe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Dena Freeman, ed. *Pentecostalism and Development : Churches, Ngos and Social Change in Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> B. Bompani and C. Valois, "Introduction: Christian Citizens and the Moral Regeneration of the African State ", ed. B. Bompani and C. Valois, *Christian Citizens and the Moral Regeneration of the African State* (London & New York: Routledge 2018).

<sup>3</sup> James S. Bielo, "Literalism as Creativity: Making a Creationist Theme Park, Reassessing a Scriptural Ideology," ed. Philip Goff, Arthur Farnsley, and Peter Thuese (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).