

SOWING SEEDS OR SOWING INJUSTICE? PROSPERITY GOSPEL, WEALTH ETHICS, AND THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NIGERIAN PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANITY

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ABSTRACT

Pentecostalism in Nigeria has metamorphosed into a consequential religious phenomenon in Nigeria and Africa at large. However, one of its dominant theologies, the prosperity gospel, has faced several criticisms from rational minds. Employing a qualitative socio-theological and critical discourse analysis, this study draws on liberation theology, Max Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis, and Ogbu Kalu's African Pentecostalism framework to examine the socio-theological justification and consequences of the prosperity gospel as it relates specifically to Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity. The study evaluates how prosperity shapes and is shaped by entrenched structures of inequality and clientelism in the country. It frames prosperity theology in Nigeria as a complex ideological formation that forecloses prophetic engagement while simultaneously enabling individual agency to navigate systemic injustice. The study

further reveals attempts by newer Pentecostal movements to recover a more socially oriented ethics. Though these remain on the margins, the study argues that these emerging theological insights offer valuable pathways for restructuring the church's engagement with contemporary Nigerian society. The study concludes that while the prosperity gospel is deeply embedded in Nigeria's socio-cultural fabric, its transactional ethos distorts biblical faith by prioritizing individual wealth over communal justice and accommodating corrupt systems. The paper argues that reclaiming a prophetic, socially responsible Pentecostalism is not merely a theological imperative but a vital pathway toward fostering ethical governance, equitable development, and a credible church witness in contemporary Nigeria.

Keywords: *Pentecostalism, prosperity gospel, economic justice, liberation theology, wealth ethics*

1. Introduction

Some theological movements in Nigeria, such as the prosperity gospel, have gained attention in scholarship, popular enthusiasm, or political consequence (Mpigi, 2017). Pentecostalism in Nigeria has grown to the point that it defies a smooth sociological explanation, with the prosperity gospel being at the centre of public religious life that is undeniable, particularly in reference to Nigerian Pentecostalism, in which the subject of wealth, blessing, and divine favour cannot be unmentioned. Churches like The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Winners Chapel, and a host of smaller but no less influential ministries have allegedly built an economy of spiritual investment which consists of sowing, offering of different kinds, and tithing as tagged as mechanisms of divine returns (Walton, 2012).

Yet this raises theological and ethical questions, like what does it mean to preach individual prosperity in a country where there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor? (Hirschfeld, 2019). How do ordinary Christians explore the cognitive and moral force between their aspiration for personal prosperity and what many seem to recognise as a collective moral crisis at some level? Also, what theological stance is within Nigerian Pentecostalism itself as a challenging factor for the dominant prosperity orthodoxy? (Atoi, Babale, & Olowoyeye, 2022).

This study evaluates these questions seriously as not only a theological problem but also a sociological issue (Berger, 1967). It asserts that the theology of prosperity in Nigerian Pentecostalism is not merely a corruption of authentic Christianity imported from North America but a self-adapted theology that is deeply rooted in the

Yoruba, Igbo, and wider African cosmological frameworks evident in the relationship between spiritual power, prosperity and materialism (Frost, 2021). Also, this study argues that the prosperity gospel has a serious ethical issue that does not just speak of wealth but the displacement of preferential option, as termed by the liberation theologian (Fitzgerald, 1999). Moreover, this study also evaluates the emerging factions within Pentecostalism in Nigeria from the popular Sam Adeyemi's civic Christianity to a more radical criticism of theologians aligned with a notable arm in the Pentecostal body in Nigeria, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and their social engagement programme, which represents genuine, if tentative, departures from the prosperity consensus (Vaughan, 2025).

This study examines the theological architecture of the Nigerian prosperity gospel, tracing its doctrinal foundations, African cultural inflexions, and the "seed-faith" economy that underpins its financial practices. It also critically evaluates the socio-economic and ethical implications of this theology through a Weberian lens and liberation theology, highlighting how it intersects with structural inequality, political clientelism, and the displacement of prophetic critique. Furthermore, it explores how ordinary believers negotiate, adapt, and occasionally subvert prosperity teachings in their everyday practices. Section 5 identifies emerging ethical alternatives within Nigerian Pentecostalism, focusing on civic Christianity, structural prophetic engagement, and reconstructive theological resources that prioritise communal flourishing over individual wealth accumulation. Finally, the last section concludes the study by synthesising the key findings and offering theological and practical recommendations for a more socially responsible Pentecostal witness in Nigeria.

2. The Theological Architecture of Nigerian Prosperity Gospel

2.1 Doctrinal Foundations and Their African Inflexions

The concept of prosperity gospel is often understood as a theological embrace of materialism, physical health and worldly success, which are regarded as a promise for authentic faith (Gbote & Kgatla, 2014). This faith system dates back to the mid-twentieth-century North American Word of Faith movement, which was associated with popular personalities of Christian faith such as Kenneth Hagin and later Kenneth Copeland (Jackson, 1989). This movement posits a theological understanding that believers can use their faith system as a mechanism for claiming the covenant promises, which do not exclude the material ones (Elazar, 1980). This faith system is traceable to Nigeria through the expansion and adaptation of Kenneth Hagin's teaching by popular and influential Christian leaders in Nigeria, one of which includes the late Benson Idahosa, whose ministry in is geographically located in Benin City from the 1970s onwards, established a template that subsequent generations of Nigerian Pentecostal leaders would emulate and elaborate (Adedibu,

2024).

However, the origin of the prosperity gospel in Nigeria cannot only be treated as a straightforward derivative of North American models (Omavuebe, 2021). African Pentecostal movements must be understood on their own terms, as creative appropriations shaped by indigenous religion. Therefore, in the southern part of Nigeria, the correlation between materialism and spiritual fidelity was a cultural ideology before the arrival of Christianity in Nigeria (Aluede & Ikhidero, 2024). For instance, in the Yoruba philosophical system, the theology of *ori* (personal destiny) and its relationship to *iwa* (character) alignment is expected to yield what is known as visible prosperity (Oyeshile, O. A. 2021). Recent research on religio-ethical practices among the Yoruba reinforces this connection, affirming the modifications in spiritual identity, some of which include name changes, which are often pursued specifically to alter material trajectories, indicating an entrenched belief that spiritual status dictates economic outcome (Oyebanji et al., 2025). For the Igbos, there's a cosmology similarity in their theology and that of the Yorubas. In this vein, the Igbos believe in the concept of *chi*, that is, the personal spiritual guardian whose benevolence or displeasure is thought to determine the trajectory of one's material life (Ugwu, A. K. 2022). Therefore, materialism and prosperity gospel, in this light, did not impose a non-existing ideology on a passive African religiosity; this belief is found to be pre-existing in the cultural infrastructure, though furnished with a new theological vocabulary (Mokhoathi, 2020).

The creative appropriation of indigenous worldviews within Nigerian Pentecostalism extends beyond prosperity theology to encompass broader questions of how faith communities negotiate modernity, technology, and traditional ethics. Empirical studies of religio-ethical reasoning among Nigerian Christians demonstrate that believers frequently employ hybrid frameworks drawing simultaneously from biblical imperatives, cultural norms, and contemporary scientific knowledge to resolve complex moral dilemmas (Oyebanji, 2024). This hermeneutical flexibility, while sometimes criticised as syncretistic, may in fact represent a sophisticated theological resource for constructing an economically responsible Pentecostalism that honours both African cosmological insights and prophetic commitments to justice. Rather than rejecting indigenous epistemologies outright, a reconstructive ethic might discern within them resources for challenging the transactional ethos of prosperity gospel while affirming culturally resonant visions of communal flourishing.

This matters because it helps to explain the movement's extraordinary resilience and popular appeal. When the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Enoch Adeboye, preaches that God does not design poverty for his children, he speaks into a cultural sphere already populated by the same ideology; his message

propels not as innovation but as confirmation of an existing philosophy (Adeboye, 2010, cited in Obinna, 2012). The prosperity gospel introduces a key theological idea: that the relationship between God and people works like a transaction (Barron, 2022). In this view, tithing and financial giving are not just acts of worship or generosity; they are framed as spiritual investments that guarantee returns, such as health, wealth, or breakthroughs. This idea resonates with traditional African beliefs that link spiritual actions to material outcomes, and it also aligns with North American “Word of Faith” teachings that emphasise speaking and giving in faith to receive blessings (Court, 2020). However, this system has attracted several criticisms, with rationalists stating that faith has been reduced to a formula for personal gain, thereby reflecting personal interest rather than the core gospel message of salvation.

2.2 The Seed-Faith Economy

One of the core teachings of the prosperity gospel is the doctrine of seed-faith, which teaches that giving or sowing into church functions is a spiritual seed that, in turn, multiplies back as a reward to the giver by God (Abilawon & Kolawole, 2026). This doctrine is often rooted in some biblical texts as a justification for the teaching, some of which include Malachi 3:10, 2 Corinthians 9:6 and Luke 6:38. These biblical texts, as used by the preachers, are interpreted to see giving as an act that is beyond just worship but rather a spiritual investment that will yield individual returns. One of the most influential figures of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, David Oyedepo, the founder of the Living Faith Church, popularly known as the Winners' Chapel, affirms this logic by constantly affirming that giving to God is not giving away, but rather sowing for harvest (Kuponu & Talabi, 2021).

The Christian social ethics has a problem with this formulation, which is not to give generously, since it's a central biblical virtue, but the problem lies in restructuring the motive of giving for self-interest rather than genuine concern for others and things of God (Griffiths, 2021). The seed-faith theology has systematically reduced the intent of genuine giving to a form of investment in which the giver sees himself or herself as the primary beneficiary of the act (Mwongera, 2025). In Nigeria, this perspective flows freely towards the institutional church and its pastoral leadership, not towards the poor. Therefore, big Pentecostal churches in Nigeria control big assets ranging from universities to hospitals, event centres, media empires, and real estates with remarkable scales, with sustainable growth that is often financed by members' offerings, tithes and donations, members of whom are themselves far from wealthy (Kauppinen, 2020).

This concentration of church material wealth raises lots of questions about distributive justice, affirming that prosperity theology is not equipped enough to ask in Nigeria (Ezeakunne, 2021). This theological stance assumes that poverty is either

a spiritual problem or a temporary condition awaiting divine manifestation or reversal. This structural ideology that analyses poverty in the kind that liberation theologians posit as contradictory to authentic theological reflection is clearly absent when considering the intellectual discourse that surrounds the prosperity gospel in Nigeria (Atoi, Babale, & Olowoyeye, 2022).

3. Prosperity Theology, Inequality, and the Silence of Prophecy

3.1 Weber in Africa: Protestant Ethics and Their Discontents

In Max Weber's account of the relationship between Protestant theological convictions and the cultural conditions of capitalist development, Weber posited that Calvinist theology generates within believers an intense curiosity about election that could only be partially alleviated through material success, to a culture of disciplined labour, frugality, and reinvestment rather than lavish spending (Guiheux, Macchi, Chessel, & Thomann, 2026). Weber opined that this “Protestant work ethic,” though originally motivated by religious concerns, unintentionally helped lay the cultural groundwork for modern capitalism (Hanemaayer, 2023). Weber's theory has been evaluated on many empirical and theoretical grounds and has proved generative as a framework for comparison (Thomas & Tee, 2022). Hence, several scholars have argued whether African Pentecostalism might be understood as producing an analogous cultural formation. Scholars have argued whether Pentecostalism in Nigeria encourages economic development in the Global South (Golo & Novieto, 2022). Standing on Max Weber's position, some scholars have argued that the Pentecostal movement in Africa and Latin America alike promotes a practical virtue of hard worksobriety, and delaying immediate rewards that can help individuals improve their economic well-being over time. However, some scholars contend that any positive, disciplined habits fostered by African Pentecostalism are often weakened by the prosperity messages with strong emphasis on “magical “thinking, which is propounded with the ideology that spiritual acts like seed sowing, fasting and prayer or anointing attract wealth instead of banking on handwork, investment and financial intelligence (White, 2020). This opinion matters, since Weber's original “Protestant ethic” was basically about motivating believers and people at large to work and reinvest their earnings intelligently, a view that contradicts the core message of the prosperity gospel, which often promotes the reception through sowing as a channel to wealth, rather than economic practices that create wealth. Max Weber's position emphasises building wealth through disciplined effort, while the prosperity gospel banks on receiving wealth through spiritual alignment (Coleman & Lindhardt, 2020).

This differentiation poses a firm implication on the relationship between the prosperity gospel and Nigeria's political economy (Smith, 2021). Nigeria at large faces serious problems like corruption, a culture of *egunje* (unofficial payments and

favours needed to get things done). These systems would be likely challenged by a genuine Protestant ethics which fumes against corruption and emphasises values such as hard work, honesty, integrity and accountability. However, prosperity theology, for the most part, does not (Heuser, 2020). Instead of questioning how wealth is acquired, it tends to accept the status quo, with a focus on divine blessing and personal success, and it hardly criticises corruption or unjust systems. In practice, the prosperity gospel teachings remain natural or perhaps deliberately silent on whether wealth comes through the right source since the believer gives generously, has faith and receives their breakthrough. This is a theology that encourages the accumulation of wealth and aspiration without proper accountability for how it is gained (Cornelio& Medina, 2020).

3.2 Liberation Theology and the Preferential Option

The liberation theology of the Latin American developed by the likes of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasises a key aspect of Christian theology, rather than beginning with deep doctrinal propositions and moving towards their practical applications, it started with the social reality of the poor and looks into the perspective of the gospel from the starting point (Simut, 2021). The idea that God especially stands with the poor and marginalised is the major idea that constituted the “preferential option for the poor”. Hence, this commitment must be the central perspective for the interpretation of the scripture and the guide to Christian ethics. This perspective, championed by liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, became the movement's most influential and debated contribution to global Christianity. In simple terms: if faith doesn't prioritise justice for the oppressed, it has lost its way.

In Africa, the liberation theology was represented by the likes of Jesse Mugambi and others, who sought to adapt and indigenise these insights within specifically African contexts (Mugambi, 2020: 158). In his work, Jesse Mugambi argued that Africa's theological task in the post-independence period was not merely to critique colonialism. According to him, the primary concern of earlier African theologians was to articulate positive visions of human flourishing which banks on both African cultural resources and Biblical imperatives of justice (Ibanga, 2023). In his framework, Jesse Mugambi included economic justice as a factor that warrants theological concern. He therefore posits that the church without economic and political engagement is theologically serious with structures that perpetuate poverty.

From this lens, the prosperity gospel in Nigeria can be subjected to a fundamental theological deformation (Edigbo & Nwube, 2025). This is so because the Nigerian prosperity preachers have deemed it fit to locate the problem of poverty and subject it to an individual's spiritual condition, unresolved sin, insufficient faith and

inadequate tithing. This ideology shifts attention from the structural issues that surround Nigerian poverty, the shift from other factors to oil that has resulted in economic disruption and political corruption, the poor education and health care system that reproduces inequality across generations, and, not to mention, the land tenure systems that dispossess millions of Nigerians. Prosperity gospel in Nigeria tends to create a “theology of blame”, in which suffering is always the sufferer's own spiritual fault, which sorrowfully applies with painful precision to the Nigerian context (Dube, 2009).

This individualisation of suffering obscures the reality of structural moral evil. As observed in analyses of security crises such as banditry, social destabilisation is frequently the result of systemic ethical failures and governance deficits rather than merely personal spiritual inadequacy (Oyebanji et al., 2024). This individualisation of poverty or suffering obscures the reality of structural moral evil. As observed in analyses of security crises such as banditry, social destabilisation is frequently the result of systemic ethical failures and governance deficits rather than merely personal spiritual inadequacy (Oyebanji et al., 2024).

The philosophical distinction between natural and moral evil, as articulated in recent Nigerian theological scholarship, provides a critical lens through which to interrogate the prosperity gospel's theodicy. When systemic failures, whether manifested in environmental disasters or economic collapse, are reframed exclusively as consequences of individual spiritual deficiency, the structural dimensions of moral evil are obscured (Oyebanji, 2025). This theological manoeuvre not only exonerates institutional actors from accountability but also imposes a burdensome hermeneutic of self-blame upon the impoverished, thereby reinforcing the very inequalities that liberation theology seeks to dismantle. Consequently, a prophetic Pentecostal ethic must recover the capacity to name structural sin without diluting its spiritual vocabulary, ensuring that calls for personal faith do not inadvertently legitimise unjust socio-economic arrangements.

3.3 Complicity and Clientelism

Another perspective on the prosperity gospel's relationship to inequality concerns its functional integration into Nigeria's political economy. Pentecostal churches in Nigeria are not merely religious institutions; they have the political influence (as political actors) to command the allegiance of millions of voters (Pratama, Habibi, & Ningtias, 2024). Hence, the relationship between the political class in Nigeria and major Pentecostal ministries is often in some sense characterised by mutual benefit, wherein politicians seek the legitimating endorsement of influential and popular ministers, as the church is provided with access to state resources and the protection that political relationships offer.

In his study, Gifford analysed this type of relationship as he posits that the prosperity

gospel or theology is particularly well-suited to the patronage logic of African electoral politics, since it informs its adherents of thinking about power in terms of access to a beneficent character, be it divine or human, instead of in terms of citizens' rights and structural accountability (Gifford, 2004). When influential Pentecostal churches in Nigeria endorse a politician, they legitimise the existing political order and its associated corruption. Hence, the prophetic tradition in Christianity, the willingness of religious leaders to speak truth to power even at personal cost, is, with notable exceptions, noticeably absent from the public discussions of Nigeria's major Pentecostal ministries. This absence is particularly stark given evidence that religious leaders possess the capacity to function as effective peace builders and agents of conflict resolution when they choose to engage civically (Oyebanji & Olayinka, 2024). Instead, this is often referred to as “pastoral capitalism”, in which the messages of blessing and anointing are deployed to naturalise arrangements that a more critical theology would name as unjust (Ohaeri, 2016). Pastors live in mansions and drive luxury cars while preaching to congregants who struggle to afford school fees, and are not, in this sense, confronted with an ethical contradiction, but they are rather presented as models of faith, an affirmation that divine blessing is available to anyone who sows sufficiently and faithfully. The gap between congregational poverty and pastoral prosperity is therefore rendered theologically productive, as an incentive structure, rather than morally troubling (Barron, 2022).

4. Lived Religion and the Negotiation of Prosperity Theology

Despite the emphasis of prosperity theology on individuals' wealth, many Christians in Nigeria retain a residual social conscience, which is evident in informal giving, welfare in the church and other family support networks that sit sometimes uneasily with the prosperity gospel and individualist framework (Edigbo & Nwube, 2025). This moral awareness hardly finds an explicit theological articulation. Some believers are privately bothered by the variance between their church theology and surrounding social needs, which cannot mount serious pressures to the prosperity consensus (Gould, 2021). The Liberation theology, which is expected to provide such language, remains largely absent from Nigerian Pentecostalism, which is excluded from history through movements that are hostile to mainline ecumenical Christianity, with which liberation theology has been associated.

This affirms that there is an impending critical structural problem; the theological tools that are capable of challenging the accommodation of prosperity gospel to injustice are those Nigerian Pentecostal factions that are vigorously suppressed. Hence, a genuine ethical discomfort cannot easily become prophetic critique; this is so because the prophetic tradition itself has been arguably displaced (Coffey, 2020).

4.1 Beyond Passivity: What Ordinary Believers Actually Do

Scholars of prosperity gospel often underestimate believers, treating them as passive victims of manipulation rather than active participants who engage logically with theological ideologies. Sighting from Robert Orsi's work on the sociology of religion, any adequate account must attend to how ordinary people actually adapt, contest, and subvert official theology in practice (Baigent, Pound, Bruce, Bullivant, Harris, & Orsi, 2022).

Some earlier research among Nigerian Pentecostal churches affirms that there is greater complexity that is more than mere ideological reproduction (Adedibu, 2024). Some Pentecostal worshipers seemingly embrace seed-faith frameworks at the same time maintaining a sceptical distance from the pastoral emphasis of guaranteed rewards in the form of returns. Some believers deploy prosperity gospel language to articulate legitimate aspirations for dignity and economic security, even recognising that this theology may not serve their actual interests.

In most cases, women often occupy ambivalent positions. Prosperity gospel proffers them the ideology of claiming wellbeing against patriarchal suppression; however, its theological anthropology remains deeply gendered as it seeks to continually attribute women's poverty to spiritual failures, lack of absolute submission to their husbands, which compounds their problem rather than challenging subordination (Mathiasen Stopa, 2023).

The gendered implications of prosperity theology warrant further scrutiny, particularly in contexts where traditional family structures intersect with Pentecostal ethics. Sociological analyses of Christian communities in Southwest Nigeria reveal that religious doctrines concerning marriage, authority, and resource distribution often reproduce patriarchal arrangements, even as they promise individual empowerment (Ogunbiyi et al., 2025). For women navigating prosperity gospel frameworks, this creates a distinctive tension: the promise of divine breakthrough may offer rhetorical resources for challenging economic marginalisation, yet the underlying theological anthropology may simultaneously reinforce subordinate roles within both household and ecclesial hierarchies. A socially responsible Pentecostalism must therefore interrogate how prosperity narratives either subvert or sustain gendered inequalities, ensuring that aspirations for material flourishing do not come at the cost of relational justice.

5. Emerging Alternatives and the Future of Nigerian Pentecostal Ethics

5.1 Civic Christianity and Developmental Theology

Pentecostalism in Nigeria is not ultimately captured by the prosperity gospel (Ogundu & Wori, 2021). A growing number of voices are genuinely craving for economic solutions that individual's aspirations and structural poverty. A notable preacher, teacher and pastor in the Nigerian Pentecostal setting, Sam

Adeyemi, founded an initiative called the City Builders at Daystar Christian Centre, Lagos. This initiative represents one of the most developed expressions of this civic Christianity. Adeyemi is a strong critic of individualism and prosperity gospels, emphasising that Christian transformation must be both social and personal, with the church bearing responsibility for governance, public institutions, and social infrastructure (Mawikere, Hura, Mawikere, & Mawikere, 2024).

Adeyemi's philosophy draws on a Reformed sphere sovereignty, the Biblical doctrine of shalom, and secular development economics (Adegbile, 2024). He recontextualises blessing not just as personal consumption but as a resource for community transformation, making the use of wealth, rather than its acquisition, theologically central in ways pure seed-faith theology never permits. However, a robust civic Christianity must also extend beyond physical infrastructure to include moral governance in emerging digital ecosystems and public health sectors (Olayinka et al., 2025; Oyebanji, 2025). This perspective attracts growing interest among younger, educated Nigerian Pentecostals who are uncomfortable with cruder prosperity gospel, particularly within Lagos's professional class (Katsaura, 2020).

Moreover, the digital mediation of religious content introduces new complexities for ethical formation among Nigerian Pentecostal youth. As algorithmic curation increasingly shapes spiritual consumption, prosperity gospel narratives often optimised for engagement rather than theological depth may inadvertently cultivate aspirational individualism at the expense of communal discernment (Oyebanji et al., 2025). A robust civic Christianity must therefore contend not only with theological content but also with the epistemological architectures through which that content is disseminated, ensuring that digital evangelism fosters critical reflection alongside spiritual enthusiasm. This requires intentional pedagogical strategies that equip young believers to interrogate the ethical implications of wealth accumulation within a digitally saturated religious marketplace.

5.2 Prophetic Pentecostalism and Structural Critique

Though small, another tradition within the paradox of Christianity in Nigeria combines explicit structural critique with Pentecostal spirituality (Smith, 2021). Some other personalities have argued that the Biblical prophetic tradition attending systematically to widows, orphans, and the marginalised often provides a basis for a genuinely prophetic Pentecostalism, refusing the prosperity gospel's quietism and clientelism.

From the African liberation theology's perspective, especially Mugambi's reconstructive concept, a tradition that calls Nigerian churches beyond charitable giving toward prophetic advocacy on governance, taxation, land rights and public expenditures (Umanah, Ekanem, Oko, & Olusakin, 2025). These are areas where Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have been conspicuously disengaged.

The Nigerian Pentecostal churches hold a formidable economic interest in real estate, education and media, which are arguably dependent on political relationships that sustained prophetic critique may jeopardise (Adeleye, Aluko, & Olowoyeye, 2025). Reform pressures internally are further limited by the role of the prosperity gospel in justifying pastoral wealth. However, there are growing inequalities and a widening gap between prosperity assurances and lived reality, creating new, previously unavailable space for dissent (Power, 2020).

The ethical responsibilities attendant upon religious communication in Nigeria's increasingly polarised digital public sphere cannot be overstated. While freedom of religious expression remains a fundamental right, the amplification of prosperity gospel messaging through social media platforms raises pertinent questions about the moral consequences of theological discourse that privileges personal enrichment over structural critique (Oyebanji et al., 2026). Prophetic Pentecostalism, therefore, must develop a digital ethic that balances persuasive witness with accountability to the broader social good, resisting the temptation to instrumentalise faith for algorithmic visibility. Such an ethic would demand that religious leaders exercise discernment not only in what they proclaim but also in how their messages circulate within networks that may amplify inequality under the guise of divine favour.

5.3 Theological Resources for an Alternative Ethics

To reconstruct the ethics of economics in Nigerian Pentecostalism, there is a need to draw on multiple traditions at the same time (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2020). For instance, Mugambi's reconstructive theology, which articulates African visions of comprehensive human flourishing beyond individual success, needs to be employed. Also, the Gutiérrez's liberation theology that grounds its theological stance in the concrete situation of the poor is a tradition that should also be considered when restructuring the Nigerian Pentecostal economic ethics. Within the Nigerian Pentecost community itself, there are factors such as healing prayer, communal worship, and other shared feasting that preserve social dimensions that are not entirely captured by prosperity individualism (Ye, 2026).

Weber's concept of the *Beruf*, a calling that transforms ordinary work into ethically significant activity, thereby offering an overlooked resource (Kemple, 2022). This tradition, if adopted within the Nigerian Pentecostal movement in Nigeria, will seemingly correct the tendency of the prosperity gospel to bypass mundane economic activity in favour of miraculous abundance.

6. Conclusion

Prosperity gospel in Nigeria is no doubt a locally shaped movement which is arguably not just an American import, emerging from socio-economic hardship,

political corruption and traditional belief which resonates around spiritual powers. While it resonates with many Christians, this study argues it distorts biblical faith by prioritising individual wealth over justice for the poor and accommodating, rather than challenging, corrupt systems in society. Although there are emerging voices within the Nigerian Pentecostal community that are beginning to offer alternative ideas that emphasise civic responsibility and social ethics. The argument over the prosperity gospel is therefore more than just theological, as it stands to significantly influence both the church's witness and Nigeria's moral future.

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