

A Theological Reflection on Pentecostalism and Prosperity Preaching in Nigeria

Felix O Ajedokun, PhD

Fajedokun@nbts.edu.ng

Department of Theology and Philosophy

The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

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Abstract

Pentecostalism and prosperity preaching are inextricably linked and have been subjects of discussion among academics (theologians and religious scholars) and non-academics (church members). Nigeria appears to be the birthplace and epicentre of the prosperity gospel in West Africa. Material and health prosperity are highly valued by prosperity preachers, mostly among Pentecostal pastors and leaders in Nigeria. Although God is committed to the prosperity of His people, patterns observed over the past few decades have shown that proponents of the prosperity gospel often have an uneven interpretation of the Bible and engage in unethical behaviour. Prosperity preachers in Nigeria give undue weight to claims like confession leads to possession, poverty is a curse, and redemption is a route to prosperity. A theological reflection on these assertions is necessary to bring balance to the gospel of prosperity and health. As a result, this paper examines the growth and development of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, discusses current trends in prosperity preaching, and provides a theological reflection on these trends.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Prosperity preacher, Theology, Nigeria

Introduction

It is undeniable that poverty exists, and it is a serious social challenge affecting large numbers of people in the world. While the reality of poverty is undeniable, it is also true that people from different perspectives have responded to this challenge, and the church is not exempt from this effort. The promotion of material prosperity and the lack thereof as signs of godliness has caused Christians either to remain in poverty and think that piety is associated with poverty, or to focus on material possession at the expense of core values of Christianity¹. Both the belief that the church has no other business than spiritual issues² and that Christians are to live and enjoy the pleasures of the world in a manner that surpasses the material possessions of unbelievers lack biblical and theological balance³. This paper focuses on the examination of Pentecostalism and prosperity preaching, with special attention to the theological response to trends in prosperity preaching among Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Pentecostalism is a global movement primarily

¹ M. Taylor, *Christianity, poverty and wealth* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2003), 25.

² *Ibid.* 27.

³ D. O. Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2007), 39.

concerned with the experience of the Holy Spirit's work and the practice of spiritual gifts.⁴ Pentecostalism is characterised by a central place given to the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship.⁵

Meanwhile, it is essential to note that Pentecostalism is a movement with numerous distinct strains. For example, there are classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, as well as a plethora of indigenous and independent Pentecostal churches. These churches differ in what they emphasise; some emphasise the prosperity gospel of health and wealth, while others focus on evangelism, healing, and ecstatic worship.⁶ In Nigeria, the emphasis on the prosperity gospel among Pentecostal churches is readily apparent. The aid of media, the teaming population of people gathering for worship, volumes of books written by prosperity preachers and other practices are magnifiers of Pentecostals' focus on the prosperity gospel in Nigeria. As Miller and Yamamori noted, emphasis is placed highly on material and health prosperity among Pentecostal pastors and leaders in Nigeria. This thought implies that prosperity preaching or gospel cannot be divorced from Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

The prosperity gospel connotes the declaration of material and health well-being based on a hermeneutical approach to the Bible, in a way that suits this purpose. Historically, the prosperity gospel is taken as a movement and is often characterised by statements like "God's will is healing", "God's will for you is wealth", "poverty is of the devil", or "God is a rich God. All His children ought to be rich". This understanding is based on the hermeneutical concepts of prosperity based on some biblical passages that are related to divine assurance of well-being, such as John 10:10, II Corinthians 8:9, and III John 2⁷. In view of the current wave of prosperity preaching visible among the Pentecostal circle in Nigeria, there is a need for some theological reflection on them.

Growth and Features of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

Since the early 1970s, Pentecostal Christianity has emerged as a significant global force, particularly in Latin America and Africa. Nigeria has played a significant role in the spread of Pentecostalism across the African continent. "Nigeria has been the site of Pentecostalism's greatest explosion on the African continent, and the movement's extraordinary growth shows no sign of slowing"⁸. The origin and growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is traceable to the 20th-century belief that the "end of the world was to be accomplished by a worldwide outpouring of the Spirit". This belief had a definite impact on the subsequent development of Pentecostalism in the West and elsewhere in the globe. The beginning and spread of Pentecostalism in the West can undoubtedly be traced to the efforts of Charles Parham and William Seymour. The former was

⁴ Anderson Allan, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 13.

⁵ Droogers Andre, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success" in Corton and Marshall-Fratanl, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 41.

⁶ Donald E. Miller and Tesunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1.

⁷ Basilius M. Kaseru, *The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and Its Impact Among the Poor in Namibia*, A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Theology, South African Theological Seminary, 2012, 25.

⁸ Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 2.

responsible for originating a new doctrine of Baptism in the Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues and the establishment of the "Apostolic Faith Movement" in 1901. The latter was an African American preacher who led the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, which later transformed Pentecostalism into an international movement⁹.

Scholars such as Diara and Onah¹⁰ and Ukpong¹¹ Share a similar view that the political landscape in Nigeria has aided the growth and development of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. In the view of Diara and Onah, "the beginning of the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria could be traced to the period after Nigerian independence. The political independence of Nigeria seemed to have, in turn, encouraged religious independence in the country, giving rise to a situation whereby the strong tie of membership of the mainline churches was loosened"—From the perspective of Ukpong, the explosion of global Pentecostalism in Nigeria emanated naturally from the religious and political scenario of the country between 1950 and 1970.

The rapidly proliferating independent churches, mainly of the new wave or firebrand Pentecostal type, began to gain ground across the country in 1986 with the founding of Benson Idahosa's Church of God Mission. Subsequently, the activities of World Action for Christ (WATC) in 1970 are also significant to the spread of Pentecostal beliefs in Nigeria. Leadership, economic, and marital factors are among other features that contributed to the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.¹²

Significant features of Pentecostal doctrines are similar across the globe; thus, in Nigeria, the doctrines of Pentecostal churches are parallel to those obtainable in the global Pentecostal movement. They believe in the Trinity, the concept that there are three distinct persons within one God, and they also believe in faith or divine healing. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is cardinal to the belief of the Pentecostal churches. It is evident in miraculously speaking in a language unknown to the speaker and perhaps the congregation¹³.

Trends in Prosperity Preaching among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

There are observable trends in prosperity preaching in Nigeria, and these trends have been points of discussion in the media, among scholars and even among other Christian denominations. The reason for this may be connected to the way and manner the prosperity gospel or preaching is given momentous attention among the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Three of these trends will be discussed, including the view that salvation is a means to prosperity, poverty is a sin, and positive confession leads to material possession.

⁹ William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen, eds., *Global Dictionary of Theology* (England: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 641.

¹⁰ Benjamin C.D. Diara and Nkechinyere G. Onah, "The Phenomenal Growth of Pentecostalism in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: A Challenge to Mainline Churches", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol 5 No 6 April 2014, 395-402.

¹¹ Donatus Pius Ukpong, *The Presence and Impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*. <https://www.glopent.net/.../presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism-in-nig..> accessed 13th May 2016.

¹² Benjamin C.D. Diara and Nkechinyere G. Onah, "The Phenomenal Growth of Pentecostalism in the Contemporary Nigerian Society, 398-399.

¹³<http://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/pentecostal-protestant-beliefs-Christians-/2015/04/02/id/636031/#ixzz4DbtK7AFk>. Accessed 14th May 2016.

(a) Salvation as a means to prosperity

Salvation in the teachings of prosperity preachers goes beyond spiritual redemption to cover human physical needs. The prosperity gospel asserts that the atonement has been given for both material prosperity and physical healing. The fundamental tenet of the Christian life is understanding that God placed human sin, illness, disease, sadness, grief, and depression on Calvary's Jesus. This misinterpretation of the extent of the atonement results from two mistakes made by proponents of the prosperity gospel.¹⁴ Hammond is known as "The success coach", and he stated that "When poverty moves in, the Will of God moves out"¹⁵. Oyedepo, who is regarded as the most popular prosperity preacher in Nigeria, expanded Hammond's view, basing his argument on II Corinthians 8:9. His concept of prosperity is linked to the message of salvation, or rather, he sees it as being part of the "salvation package". Thus, he sees salvation as a means to wealth or deliverance from economic poverty. He writes, "Redemption is a cure for poverty, as it gives you access to the cure for poverty. When you were saved, you were redeemed from the plague of poverty, because your Father is very wealthy"¹⁶.

In another view, Anita Oyakhilome, the wife of the celebrated Chris Oyakhilome, shared the view that being a Christian is a sure way out of poverty. This thought is connected to Copeland, who claimed that Christian is marked down for all-around blessing in God. Once one is converted, the individual becomes an heir to the blessings which God gave Abraham. These blessings cover all areas of human existence – Spirit, Soul and Body, financially, socially and health-wise¹⁷. The view that salvation ends poverty is a popular and common trend in the preaching of Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria.

(b) Poverty is a Curse and a Sign of Ungodliness

According to prosperity theology, poverty is often viewed as a symbol of ungodliness or a curse brought on by sin or a lack of faith. According to the theology, God wants all obedient Christians to be blessed financially, and Jesus' atonement includes relief from illness and poverty. It is possible to attribute adherents' lack of wealth to a lack of faith or a failure to follow the "rules" of heavenly blessing. Pastor Korede Komaya boldly declared that "poverty means there is a sin in your life."¹⁸

"Sweat-less success" is an important focus of prosperity theology in Nigeria. As Christians, the knowledge and practice of the truth empower every believer to be a winner, regardless of the circumstances.¹⁹ Prosperity preachers affirm that life is meant to be a smooth cruise, free of all struggles and full of material wealth. Sweating is a curse. It symbolises struggles". Oyedepo

¹⁴ K. L. Sarles, *A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel* (Bibliotheca Sacra Volume: BSAC 143:572 1986).

¹⁵ Hammond, K. (2004). *The wealth covenant: the covenant of divine blessing*. Online article. Accessed from: www.KenHammonds.com

¹⁶ D. O. Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion Publishing House, 2007), 74 .

¹⁷ Kenneth Copeland, *Welcome to the Family* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1979), 22.

¹⁸ Poverty means there is a sin in your life. [https:// www. youtube. com/watch?v=6K0iJxSGo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K0iJxSGo). Accessed on September 30, 2025.

¹⁹ David Oyedepo, *Breaking Financial Hardship* (Lagos, Nigeria; Dominion Publishing House, 1995), 81

believes that poverty is a curse and self-made. He uses Malachi 3:6-9 to establish this. According to him, 'it comes primarily as a result of a willful act of disobedience to the law of abundance by the believers'.²⁰ The belief that poverty is a curse has led to all sorts of practices and the deification of objects, such as handkerchiefs, the Bishop's mantles, and the 'anointing oil', which are believed to possess spiritual powers in themselves.

Oyedepo, in one of his publications, states that "The anointing oil is not a chemical product. It is the Spirit of God, mysteriously put in a bottle, designed to communicate the power of God in a bodily way. It is the power of God in your hand, in the person of the Holy Spirit, to humiliate Satan. It is the power of God placed in a tangible form in the hand of man, to make an open show of the devil".²¹ The belief that anointing oil and other objects possess power that can neutralise poverty and bring prosperity is seen as a sure means out of the bondage of curse and scourge of sin. This position implies that a poor believer is likely to be committing sins and living in disobedience to the divine laws of prosperity.

(c) Positive Confession Leads to Possession

Another trend observable in Nigerian Pentecostal preachers is the emphasis on positive confession. The belief that man is made for life, not for death, for health, not for disease, and for success, not for failure, is central to the prosperity gospel in Nigeria. It is often referred to as the "claim it and have it gospel. Positive confession is noted as the "creed of prosperity". The more a believer confesses his or her prosperity in the Lord, the more he or she becomes prosperous.²² The key to obtaining God's abundant material benefits is having confidence in him. According to this theory, prosperity preachers gauge a person's faith by their level of wealth, which is seen as a sign that they are a true child of God. Therefore, a Christian's life can be changed and made more prosperous materially by this religion. This faith functions "as a force in itself without reference to its object. This force is wielded not by God, but by the humane believer."²³

This kind of faith was taught by the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, who included it in his seven steps to God's promises being fulfilled²⁴. "Positive confession" is closely tied to the confidence in the teachings of prosperity preachers. According to prosperity preachers, "positive confession" refers to the act of sincerely confessing with your mouth anything you desire, and it will materialise. Idahosa explained this principle further while referring to Mark. 11:1-14 and said:

If the tree died because Jesus spoke and cursed it for not bearing fruit, then we as Christians must also speak and expect mighty significant results. God speaks and expects results. Moreover, we are made in the image and likeness of him. It was not until God spoke that the things created began to fit into their respective places. Your visions and dreams of what

²⁰ David Oyedepo, *Covenant Wealth*, (Lagos, Nigeria, Dominion Publishing House, 1992), 21.

²¹ David Oyedepo, *Satan Get Lost: Outstanding Breakthroughs In spite of the Devil* (Dominion Publishing House; Lagos, Nigeria 1995), 136.

²² Benson Idahosa, *Power for Your Zero Hour* (London: Highland Books, 1986), 18.

²³ P.R. Young, "Prosperity Teaching in an African Context" *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 15:1, 1996, 4-17.

²⁴ B. Idahosa, *I Choose to Change: The Scriptural Way to Success and Prosperity* (Crowborough: Highland Book, 1978), 21-22.

you want to be will not materialise until you speak to them. Please speak to your visions and dreams and bring them into fruition.²⁵.

The believer is urged to behave and live as if the advantage claimed has already been obtained in order to fulfil this positive confession. To act otherwise is to be disloyal.

Theological Reflection on Prosperity Preaching in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches

There is a need for a balanced biblical and theological view of the concept of prosperity, because holding either extreme position — that being poor is synonymous with pioussness and that being materially rich is a demonstration of goodness—is a partial understanding of Christian values and the essence of Christianity. Theology is a reflection on God and its consequences for a holistic human living. This affirmation implies that theology is not complete until it addresses human challenge, especially the challenge of human sin and the need for salvation. Samuel Kunhiyop advocates for examining the prosperity gospel from a theological and ethical standpoint, arguing that "we must examine the biblical material, for it is the starting point for meaningful Christian discussion"²⁶. The prosperity gospel "owes its growth to an element of biblical truth, however, it has systematically distorted this truth and gone astray," according to an examination of the different biblical scriptures used by its proponents. Boesak, Weusmann, and Amjad-Ali state that "its reaction against the extreme theology of poverty which equated poverty with godliness has led it to fall into the other extreme of a Faustian covenant, embellished with insatiable materialism and consumerism."²⁷

Theologically, the prosperity gospel misrepresents the nature of God. The Bible portrays God as a loving Being who is unaffected by human shortcomings. However, prosperity preachers downplay God's nature, suggesting that the degree of one's faithfulness determines the amount of God's benefits one receives. Prosperity preachers are adept at portraying a god who is mocked by business deals and nepotism with his people. In this sense, God is viewed as someone who takes money on the proviso that it be multiplied.²⁸. Additionally, Coleman contends that "Oral Roberts professed that if one sowed it, then God would grow it"²⁹. For this reason, the prosperity gospel is the contemporary gospel that is promoted to consumers rather than preached to repentant sinners.³⁰. Through financial sacrifices and seed planting, prosperity preachers in disguise ethically appear to guide their audience toward an "altruistic life." However, the fact that the same preachers who are benefiting themselves are receiving these so-called seeds completely negates any "altruistic" objective. Technically speaking, they present an "egocentric life" rather than an

²⁵ *Ibid.* 75-76.

²⁶ S. W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian ethics* (Nairobi, Kenya: Hippobooks, 2008), 138.

²⁷ A. Boesak, J. Weusmann, C. Amjad-Ali (eds). In danger of losing our soul: consumerism. In *Dreaming a different world*. Globalisation Project by Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche, Germany and Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, 2010. Accessed from: <http://academic.sun.ac.za>, 2011-04-10.

²⁸ Emmanuel Ayobami Ayigun, "Prosperity Gospel: A Watershed of the Gospel of Christ" *Light in a Once-Dark World*, vol. 3, 2020, 285-308.

²⁹ S. Coleman, "Conservative Protestantism and the world order: the faith movement in the United States and Sweden". *Sociology of Religion* 54(4):1993, 353- 373.

³⁰ M. Horton, *The Agony of Deceit* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), 28.

"altruistic life." Their adherents pay large tithes and gifts in response to their egocentric motivation, believing that the more they give, the larger the multiplied financial return they will receive. The prosperity gospel is primarily anthropocentric in its theological orientation rather than Christocentric, as evidenced by an examination and critique of its doctrine³¹.

Similarly, preachers of prosperity undermine the theology of pain. They assert that Jesus already endured suffering on the cross for the sake of the believers. However, reality has shown that believers are not immune to hardship. This thought is not far from the truth. A believer's experience of agony or anguish does not imply a lack of faith. To spread the gospel, early Christians and missionaries endured great suffering and gave their lives in the process. If the gospel does not include pain, then these people's efforts will be in nought. Mother Teresa stated that "God calls us to faithfulness, not success."³² Furthermore, contrary to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:20 that one should put one's wealth in heaven, this gospel implies that Christians must receive their rewards and inheritance right away. Christianity is often criticised as a utilitarian religion due to the prosperity gospel mindset of its preachers. This position indicates that prosperity teaching is beneficial as long as the results ensure the preachers' happiness. Prosperity teachers portray Christianity as a path to both social and economic success. As mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 regarding the fruit of the Spirit, the Christian faith is evaluated by its material possessions rather than by morality and conduct. This practice implies that rather than being worshipped, the name of God is utilised (to deceive people)³³.

The criticism of prosperity theology also stems from a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of Jesus Christ. There is a significant misinterpretation of Jesus Christ's mission in the teachings and sermons of prosperity instructors. The gospel contains no indication that Jesus came to win praise from people or to pursue wealth. In contrast to today's preachers who have assimilated into Nigeria's bourgeoisie, he had a very modest demeanour and interacted with the country's impoverished and downtrodden. Jesus frequently preached against covetousness and greed (Luke 12:15, Matthew 13:22). Jesus came into the world as a saviour to deliver people from the devil's enslavement and sin.

Prosperity teachers have used Jesus' capacity to save people from sin to also save them from poverty to wealth. Jesus did not come to deliver people from poverty to wealth. This notion is an incorrect interpretation of Jesus Christ's mission. By his own example, Jesus turned down the devil's promise of worldly glory and wealth (Matt. 4:8), something that most modern preachers would have done. It was mind-blowing that, upon the passing of renowned world evangelist Billy Graham in February 2018, Benny Hinn, a worldwide prosperity preacher, publicly acknowledged that he had taken prosperity teaching too far. He stated thus:

Did Elijah the prophet have a car? No! Did he even have a bicycle? He had no lack. Did Jesus drive a car or live in a mansion? No, he had no lack. How about the apostles? None lacked among them. Today, the idea is abundance and palatial homes and cars and bank account. The focus is wrong... it's so wrong. We all sadly make the mistake of thinking

³¹ D. Liroy, "The heart of the prosperity gospel: self or the Saviour?" *Conspectus*, 4(1):2007, 41-64.

³² B.O. Igboin, "The Gospel of Prosperity: An Appraisal of its Syncretistic Contours". *Epha: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies* Vol. 6 number 1 & 2. June 2005, 168-179.

³³ Ubuane Gabriel Osezee, "A Hermeneutical Critique of Prosperity Theology in Nigeria" *Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities*, Vol.18. No.4 December, 2020, 75-85.

that this is what God wants and Go says 'No that's not what I want'. It's time to live biblically. You know it all comes to one thing. Do we loves Jesus, yes or no? If we love Jesus then it's all about Jesus. If we don't love Jesus then it's about other things.³⁴.

The above confession cannot be farther from the truth than from a man who has been a prosperity preacher for decades and was well known globally.

The Prosperity Gospel's anthropocentric focus is one of its main theological problems.

Faith is sometimes used as a weapon to control supernatural benefits, and God is frequently portrayed as a means to a goal. This viewpoint challenges a theocentric theology, which worships God for who He is rather than just what He provides. The Prosperity Gospel reverses the biblical hierarchy of Creator and creature by elevating human desire and reducing God to a celestial benefactor³⁵. Worship becomes a self-serving endeavour, and religion ceases to be a response to divine revelation, instead becoming a means of achieving personal growth. Furthermore, the cross is marginalised by the reinterpretation of the theology of atonement. Some prosperity preachers contend that, in addition to ensuring redemption from sin, Jesus' death also ensured material prosperity and physical well-being throughout this lifetime. The Bible does not guarantee that believers will be free from hardships or need, even while it teaches holistic salvation that encompasses spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being (Romans 8:18–25). In prosperity circles, the cruciform character of the Christian life - emphasised by Jesus Himself in Luke 9:23 - is sometimes minimised or disregarded, leading to an unbalanced theology of glory without suffering³⁶.

It is essential to acknowledge that the gospel of Christ impacts all aspects of human life, not just spiritual matters. God's material and physical care and provision for His people demonstrate His love towards them. He cares for man's well-being, and He does provide prosperity, but this is done within His sovereignty. The prosperity gospel advanced by Pentecostals contains elements of truth when considered alongside biblical and theological revelation. However, the manner in which this biblical provision for prosperity is expressed has always raised questions. Prosperity preaching contains a grain of biblical truth, but this truth has been significantly distorted. It is evident that God is love, possesses the power to bless, and graciously provides for His people; yet God does not promise material prosperity to all. Instead, God promises something far better.³⁷. Jesus' salvation is meant primarily to save humanity from sin and grant them hope of eternal life. This thought is the primary aim of salvation; other things are secondary.

A belief that salvation is a means to prosperity to an extent sounds plausible, as it seems to suggest that Christ's death was concerned with the entire human condition. Moreover, the entire incarnation of the Son of God demonstrates that God has a profound concern for His creation –

³⁴ L. Blair, "Televangelist Benny Hinn Admits Going too Far with Prosperity Gospel in Wake of Billy Graham's Death". Retrieved from Christianpost.com. 25/6/2025.

³⁵ Ayodeji J. Adewuya, "Re-Examining the Prosperity Gospel: A Biblical Critique of Its Theology." *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2011, 112–127.

³⁶ Moses Ogunewu, "Atonement and Prosperity: A Theological Reflection on the Soteriology of the Prosperity Gospel." *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2017, 86– 98.

³⁷ David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth and Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 17.

the human race. This idea is definitely something positive. The fact that God gave his Son and came to live in the form of man amongst men surely serves as evidence of the great concern of the Creator. It is an admirable reality to note that the incarnation has both a material care and a spiritual care for the human race.³⁸ However, to claim that "redemption is a cure for poverty" can only make sense theologically if it refers to spiritual poverty. Redemption is a means to prosperity in terms of the riches of divine grace and the love of God, which was made effective through the poverty of Christ.

It is wrong to equate poverty with sinfulness. While it is true that poverty can be a consequence of sin, it is not theologically right to think that poverty is a sin. Christ was never sinful, and he became poor for the sake of His people. Indeed, He was rich in His person, for He is the eternal God. He is rich in His possessions and in His position as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is rich in His power, for He can do anything. However, even though He had all these riches and more, He became poor in Spirit.³⁹

Additionally, God's sovereignty is a crucial factor in attaining material and health prosperity. It implies that God is supreme and He determines what is suitable for His people according to His will. Moreover, Christians are not entitled to wealth in this world as if it were a right; instead, wealth is a blessing from God to be accepted with gratitude and humility. It is the prerogative of God to provide wealth for his children in whatever measure He desires. Thus, Christians must be aware of God's sovereignty in their pursuit of wealth and material possessions. These basic theological understandings are crucial for preaching a balanced gospel of prosperity. They will help Pentecostal preachers shift from an extreme view of material possessions to a balanced biblical and theological perspective.

Conclusion

The Bible provides knowledge that man needs to prosper both physically and spiritually. This notion implies that God truly cares for humanity, as His love is demonstrated towards them in providing for and meeting their daily needs. Apart from this, the death of Christ, which brings salvation to humanity, is not only for spiritual revitalisation but also for the complete well-being of human beings. It furnishes believers in Christ with the assurance that they are secure in the Lord and are rich in Him, because He has all things under His control. Thus, the love of God is central to and foundational in Christian theological understanding.

Meanwhile, biblical interpretation of God's wish for human prosperity must be taken seriously so as not to move towards materialism and emphasise material prosperity at the expense of the value of salvation that Christ brought to humankind. This notion serves as a serious caution to prosperity preachers and Christians in general. While God cares for human physical prosperity, He does not do so at the expense of their spiritual vitality. He provides for all the needs of humanity as the ultimate provider. He also does this based on His sovereign nature. Thus, the prosperity gospel can be both helpful and pose a danger to Christians' lives, depending on how balanced it is in relation to biblical and theological revelation.

³⁸ Basilius M. Kasera, *The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and Its Impact Among the Poor in Namibia*, 27.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 28.

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