



# PNEUMATOLOGICAL REALISM VERSUS TRANSACTIONAL PROSPERITY: REFORMING THE PEDAGOGY OF POWER IN NIGERIAN PENTECOSTALISM

Idanwojo Vincent Thankgod<sup>1</sup> & Andy-Philip Nesta, PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Christian Studies and Religious Communications, University of Abuja, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>nugwaojomi@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>nesta.andy-phillip@uniabuja.edu.ng

## Abstract

This paper examines the critical disconnect between the biblical theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) and its educational expression in contemporary Nigerian neo-Pentecostal megachurches. Using qualitative document analysis and thematic analysis, the study evaluates publicly available discipleship manuals, sermon materials, and media broadcasts from dominant ministries in urban Nigeria. The analysis reveals a widespread pattern this paper calls *transactional pneumatology*, in which the power of the Holy Spirit is redefined as a tool for personal wealth accumulation, individual social advancement, and protection against institutional failure. This popular framework stands in direct contrast to what this paper terms *Pauline pneumatological realism*, a reading of the Holy Spirit in Paul's letters that roots the Spirit's power firmly within cruciform ethics, communal interdependence (*koinonia*), and active social justice. Drawing on the indigenous scholarship of Dr. Nesta Andy-Philip at the University of Abuja, the article highlights the urgent need for pedagogical reform in Nigerian pastoral training institutions. It concludes by proposing a reconstructed Christian Religious Education (CRE) framework that re-anchors spiritual empowerment within public transparency, ethical resilience, and solidarity with the marginalized. This study contributes to the growing body of African contextual theology by demonstrating that the pedagogical crisis in Nigerian Pentecostalism is not merely doctrinal but structural, and that its resolution requires systematic institutional reform rather than superficial theological adjustment.

**Keywords:** Pneumatological realism, Transactional pneumatology, Nigerian neo-Pentecostalism, Ecclesial pedagogy, Cruciform ethics.

## 1. Introduction: The Paradox of Spiritual Boom and Ethical Decline

Nigeria is home to one of the most dramatic expansions of Pentecostal Christianity anywhere in the world. In cities like Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt, megachurches have transformed not only the religious landscape but also the built environment, the media industry, and the economic activities of millions of people. These churches are built around a central theological conviction: that the



Holy Spirit is powerfully present, actively at work, and directly accessible to every believer. This conviction generates enormous energy, creativity, and commitment within Nigerian Christianity.

However, this extraordinary religious expansion coexists with a deeply troubling reality. Nigeria continues to rank among the most corrupt nations in the world. Public institutions remain chronically dysfunctional. Poverty, insecurity, and social inequality have worsened even as the church has grown. Asonzeh Ukah's (2008) landmark sociological study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God documents in detail how the explosive institutional growth of Nigerian Pentecostalism has occurred alongside and, in some cases, contributed to the deepening of the country's social and ethical crises rather than their resolution (p. 103).

This contradiction raises a question that is both theologically serious and practically urgent: Why does an intense cultural focus on the power of the Holy Spirit fail to produce a corresponding transformation in public ethics, institutional integrity, and social justice? This paper argues that the answer lies not in the theology of the Holy Spirit itself but in how it is taught. The problem is fundamentally a problem of ecclesial pedagogy, the formal and informal ways in which the church educates, trains, and forms its members.

The central argument of this paper is that the dominant Nigerian neo-Pentecostal teaching about the Holy Spirit has replaced what this paper calls Pauline pneumatological realism, a biblical theology of the Spirit grounded in cruciform ethics, communal accountability, and solidarity with the vulnerable with a consumerist model in which the Spirit is treated as a supernatural resource for personal wealth, individual social advancement, and exemption from the structural failures of the state. This replacement constitutes a fundamental distortion of the biblical teaching, and it has produced exactly the politically passive, ethically disengaged Christianity that mirrors rather than challenges the corrupt institutional culture of the Nigerian state.

The paper draws on the indigenous scholarship of Dr. Nesta Andy-Philip of the University of Abuja, whose research on theological education, the use of Scripture in African churches, and the relationship between wealth, religion, and social accountability provides the localized analytical framework this study requires. The paper proceeds through eight sections. Sections 2 and 3 describe the methodology and establish the biblical standard of Pauline pneumatology. Section 4 presents the empirical findings of the thematic analysis. Sections 5 and 6 address the educational reforms required and propose a reconstructed CRE framework. Sections 7 and 8 offer the discussion and conclusion.

## **2. Methodology: Qualitative Document Analysis and Thematic Analysis**

This study uses an empirical qualitative research design, grounded in two complementary analytical methods: qualitative document analysis and thematic analysis. These methods are appropriate because the research questions concern how specific educational content is structured and communicated within institutional church materials—questions that require close, systematic reading and interpretation of texts rather than statistical measurement.

### **2.1 Qualitative Document Analysis**

Qualitative document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating both printed and electronic materials to identify patterns, themes, and ideological assumptions embedded in them. Bowen (2009), whose foundational paper on document analysis remains the standard methodological reference for this approach, describes the procedure as involving three distinct



stages: skimming, which provides a superficial initial examination of the material; thorough reading, which enables detailed engagement with specific content; and interpretation, which contextualizes the content within broader analytical frameworks (p. 32).

For this study, the documents analyzed include publicly available discipleship manuals and leadership training curricula from major Nigerian neo-Pentecostal ministries; transcribed sermon materials from widely broadcast messages delivered by prominent megachurch pastors in urban Nigeria between 2020 and 2026; and publicly available promotional media, conference themes, mission statements, and social media content. These materials were selected because they represent the actual educational content through which the theology of the Holy Spirit is being communicated to Nigerian believers at scale. They are not private or internal documents but publicly broadcast and widely distributed materials that form the de facto theology curriculum of millions of Nigerian Christians.

In selecting and analyzing these materials, the study follows the ethical and methodological guidelines for document analysis described by Creswell and Poth (2018) in their comprehensive guide to qualitative research design (p. 254). Documents were analyzed for their explicit theological content, implicit ideological assumptions, and the specific language patterns by which the Holy Spirit is described, invoked, and linked to material outcomes.

## **2.2 Thematic Analysis**

The findings from the document analysis were then processed through thematic analysis to identify, organize, and interpret patterns and themes across the entire dataset. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis provides the structural guide for this process (p. 87). The six phases are: familiarization with the data; generating initial descriptive codes; searching for broader themes; reviewing and refining the identified themes; defining and naming the themes; and producing the analytical report.

Thematic analysis was selected because it is flexible enough to handle the diverse formats of the source materials—sermons, curricula, and promotional content—while providing sufficient structure to prevent subjective bias from distorting the findings. The themes identified through this process are not imposed in advance by the researcher but emerge inductively from the data itself, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect what the materials actually teach rather than what the researcher assumes they teach.

The combination of document analysis and thematic analysis follows the methodological approach recommended by Swinton and Mowat (2016) for qualitative, practical theological research, which aims to move from close reading of lived ecclesial practices to critical theological evaluation of those practices in light of biblical norms (p. 42). This combination ensures that the analysis remains grounded in concrete empirical data while being evaluated against a clear theological standard.

## **3. The Biblical Standard: Pauline Pneumatological Realism**

Before the empirical findings can be properly evaluated, it is necessary to establish a clear biblical standard against which they are measured. This section presents what this paper calls Pauline pneumatological realism: the theology of the Holy Spirit as found in the letters of Paul, read in their full canonical, ethical, and cruciform depth. The term *realism* is deliberately used to signal that this theology is not a utopian ideal disconnected from the harsh realities of human experience. It is a



theology of the Spirit's work within and through those realities—including suffering, poverty, systemic injustice, and community conflict.

### **3.1 The Spirit, Ethics, and the Common Good**

Fee's (1994) landmark study, *God's Empowering Presence*, remains the most comprehensive account of Paul's pneumatology. Its foundational argument is clear and consistent: for Paul, the Holy Spirit is not an abstract divine energy available for individual use but the living, personal presence of God who constitutes and sustains the community of faith and empowers it to embody the life of the coming kingdom in the midst of a broken present world (p. 806). The Spirit is emphatically communal in orientation. The Spirit forms communities, not simply individuals.

This communal orientation is expressed most directly in Paul's account of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12–14. Paul's central principle for evaluating all spiritual gifts is unambiguous. Every genuine manifestation of the Spirit must serve the common good (*pros to sympheron*, 1 Cor. 12:7, ESV) and must contribute to the building up (*oikodomē*) of the whole community. Any expression of spiritual power that exalts an individual, fragments the community, or serves private interests at the expense of communal welfare is, by this Pauline standard, not a genuine expression of the Spirit's work.

The fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—is equally communal in its orientation. These are not private spiritual experiences for the personal comfort of the individual believer. They are, as Wright (2010) explains in his account of virtue formation in Paul, social dispositions that make communal life possible and actively break down the ethnic, social, and economic hierarchies that human cultures inevitably produce (p. 68). The Spirit-filled community is, by definition, a community in which the dividing walls of ethnicity, social class, and gender have been broken down rather than reinforced.

### **3.2 Cruciform Pneumatology: The Spirit and the Cross**

The most important and most consistently distorted dimension of Pauline pneumatology for this study is its cruciform character. For Paul, the work of the Holy Spirit is shaped by, and inseparable from, the pattern of the cross of Jesus Christ. Gorman's (2019) extensive research on Pauline spirituality demonstrates that, for Paul, the Spirit is the agent who forms the cruciform life of Christ within the believer—a disposition of self-emptying, other-oriented, sacrificial love, as demonstrated in Philippians 2:5–11 (p. 45).

This cruciform character of the Spirit's work has direct and concrete implications. It means that the Spirit does not offer an escape from suffering, social vulnerability, or material hardship. Romans 8:26 teaches that the Spirit helps believers in their weakness, interceding for them amid their groaning—not removing the groaning, but accompanying and sustaining them through it toward the ultimate eschatological hope. The Spirit's work is redemptive and transformative precisely within the context of hardship and limitation, not in removing those conditions.

Barclay's (2015) account of Pauline grace in *Paul and the Gift* provides a complementary resource for understanding the social implications of this cruciform pneumatology. Barclay argues that the grace Paul describes—given without calculation of the recipient's social worth, ethnic status, or economic value—is itself a radical social practice that dismantles the patronage networks and status hierarchies on which corrupt social systems depend (p. 565). A community that genuinely lives by



this grace embodies a fundamentally different social logic from the communities around it: one defined by radical equality, mutual vulnerability, and the rejection of transactional relationships.

### **3.3 The Spirit and Structural Justice**

Pauline pneumatology is also concerned with structural justice in ways that popular Nigerian theology has largely ignored. Romans 8:18–25 presents a pneumatological vision of cosmic scope: the Spirit's work within the believing community is part of God's larger project of renewing the entire creation, liberating it from the bondage of decay and injustice and bringing it into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The Spirit who groans within believers (Rom. 8:26) is the same Spirit who is at work in the groaning of the whole creation (Rom. 8:22).

This cosmic, structurally concerned pneumatology means that genuine Spirit-filled living cannot be confined to the private sphere of personal piety and individual blessing. It must extend into the public sphere of political engagement, institutional accountability, and the active pursuit of social justice. As Gorman (2015) argues in *Becoming the Gospel*, the Spirit-empowered community that Paul envisions in his letters is a community whose internal life of justice, equality, and transparency constitutes a visible alternative to the corrupt and oppressive social orders within which it lives a demonstration community of the kingdom that is coming (p. 45).

## **4. Empirical Findings: Thematic Analysis of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal Pedagogy**

When materials gathered from contemporary Nigerian neo-Pentecostal educational channels are processed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework, three dominant, recurring themes emerge. These themes define the functional theology of the Holy Spirit taught across major urban megachurch networks and stand in systematic contrast to the biblical standard established in Section 3.

### **4.1 Theme One: The Holy Spirit as a Tool for Personal Wealth and Social Advancement**

The most pervasive theme across the analyzed materials is the instrumentalization of the Holy Spirit for personal material gain. In the examined sermon transcripts, discipleship manuals, and promotional content, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are consistently described in terms of financial breakthrough, business expansion, career advancement, social promotion, and protection from economic hardship. The Spirit is presented not primarily as the agent of communal ethics and structural justice but as the divine enabler of individual prosperity.

This pedagogical pattern is reinforced through a specific rhetorical strategy: the selective quotation of Old Testament covenant promises about material blessing, stripped of their communal and ethical context, and applied directly to the individual believer as personal financial guarantees. The prosperity promises of Deuteronomy 28, Abraham's material wealth in Genesis, and Solomon's riches are cited as templates for the Spirit-filled believer's expected economic trajectory. The ethical conditions attached to these promises—the communal responsibilities of the covenant, the care for the poor and vulnerable, the requirements of justice and integrity are consistently omitted from the pedagogical framework.

As Andy-Philip's (2024) monograph, *God and Mammon*, demonstrates in detail, this selective use of Scripture to legitimize wealth accumulation while suppressing its ethical qualifications is not simply a rhetorical convenience. It is a systematic theological distortion that reduces the relationship between the believer and God to a financial transaction: give generously to the church (and especially to the senior pastor) and receive material prosperity from God in return (p. 45). In this framework, the Spirit becomes the supernatural mechanism that executes the financial contract.





## 4.2 Theme Two: The Big Man Pneumatology and Clerical Patronage

The second major theme identified in the thematic analysis is a deep and systematic centralization of spiritual authority around the senior pastor or apostle. In the promotional materials, conference advertising, and sermon collections of major megachurch networks, the Holy Spirit is consistently described as uniquely and preeminently flowing through the ministry's human leader. The pastor is presented not simply as a gifted teacher or shepherd but as the primary conduit of divine power, the person through whom ordinary believers must access God's Spirit.

**Table 1**

*Patterns of Clerical Patronage in Neo-Pentecostal Pedagogy*

| Identified Theme         | Pedagogical Expression in Materials                                                                                         | Social and Ecclesial Consequence                                                        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anointing Transfer       | Instruction in giving financial offerings as the mechanism for receiving the pastor's personal anointing                    | Creates a spiritual marketplace in which divine access is commercially mediated         |
| Prophetic Decree         | Weekly declarations of material breakthrough with no connection to ethical responsibility or structural reform              | Produces passive congregants waiting for supernatural shortcuts to social problems      |
| Unquestionable Authority | Explicit warnings against questioning the leader's lifestyle, financial management, or doctrinal teaching                   | Destroys institutional transparency and removes internal checks on the abuse of power   |
| Exclusive Anointing      | Claims that spiritual breakthrough is achievable only through personal connection to the senior pastor's specific anointing | Blocks believers from developing their own direct Spirit-mediated relationship with God |

This Big Man pneumatology is a direct ecclesial replication of the prebendal patronage system that characterizes Nigerian political culture. Just as political patrons distribute material resources to loyal clients in exchange for political support and personal deference, ecclesial patrons distribute spiritual blessings to loyal congregants in exchange for financial giving and personal submission. Ukah's (2008) sociological analysis documents precisely this structural parallel, demonstrating how the institutional model of the megachurch replicates the hierarchical dependency patterns of the Nigerian state apparatus within religious community life (p. 143).

This patronage model directly contradicts the Pauline theology of spiritual gifts established in Section 3. In Paul's pneumatology, the Spirit distributes gifts to every member of the community for the common good—not through a single human intermediary but directly and personally. The first letter to the Corinthians is explicit: the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one (*hekastō*, 1 Cor. 12:7) for the common good. The Big Man model, which concentrates all spiritual authority in a single human figure, is, by this Pauline standard, a distortion of the Spirit's own communal and equalizing work.

## 4.3 Theme Three: Triumphalist Escapism and the Suppression of Lament

The third major theme identified in the analysis is the systematic absence of any serious theology of suffering, communal lament, or structural social critique from contemporary neo-Pentecostal pedagogy. The examined materials reveal that hardship, poverty, illness, and social failure are



interpreted almost exclusively in two ways: as demonic attacks to be defeated through spiritual warfare or as indicators of a personal failure of faith requiring increased spiritual investment. The idea that suffering might be the Spirit's cruciform pathway through which genuine formation and communal solidarity are developed as Paul argues in Romans 8 is essentially absent from the pedagogical content.

When specific national crises are mentioned—corruption, insecurity, economic collapse—the pedagogical response in the examined materials is consistently confined to two options: individual spiritual exemption (the Spirit will protect the believer from the effects of national failure) or individual financial exceptionalism (the Spirit will enable the believer to prosper even when the nation fails). Neither option encourages informed civic engagement, organized advocacy for institutional reform, or the kind of honest communal lament that Katongole (2017) identifies as the essential first step toward genuine prophetic social engagement (p. 52).

This suppression of lament and structural critique is not theologically neutral. It is, as Andy-Philip's (2021) research on the use of the Psalms in African indigenous churches demonstrates, a form of interpretive censorship: selected biblical texts are amplified and repeated, while other texts—those dealing with injustice, corporate grief, structural sin, and the demand for systemic accountability—are systematically excluded from the pedagogical canon (p. 70). The result is a truncated spirituality that trains believers to rejoice in personal blessing while remaining silent about communal suffering.

## **5. Discussion: Diagnosing the Pedagogical Crisis**

The three themes identified in Section 4 together constitute what this paper has called a transactional pneumatology: a functional theology of the Holy Spirit in which the Spirit's primary purpose is to facilitate individual transactions between the believer and God, yielding material prosperity, social advancement, and personal protection. This transactional model systematically replaces the Pauline understanding of the Spirit as the agent of communal transformation, cruciform character formation, and structural social justice.

The pedagogical crisis this represents is severe. A church that has been formed by transactional pneumatology will produce believers who understand the Spirit primarily as a supernatural resource to be activated through the right spiritual technologies—financial giving, prophetic alignment with the senior pastor, correct confession—rather than as a divine person who calls the community to costly, sacrificial, and structurally engaged obedience. Such believers are not equipped to resist the seductive logic of the corrupt patronage networks that define Nigerian political and institutional culture, because the church itself has trained them to think in exactly those terms.

Andy-Philip's (2016) foundational research on theological education in Nigeria identifies this as the core problem with existing pastoral training models: they produce ministers who are skilled in the performance of religious charisma but lack the critical biblical literacy, the social science competence, and the ethical formation required to engage constructively with the complex institutional realities of Nigerian society (p. 18). Without these capacities, ministers default to the popular, high-demand models that have formed them, perpetuating the pedagogical cycle of transactional religion across generations.

The consequences extend beyond the institutional church into the wider society. When the church which represents the largest organized civil society network in Nigeria becomes a mirror of the



state's patronage culture rather than a prophetic alternative to it, society as a whole loses its most powerful engine of ethical renewal. As Andy-Philip's (2022) research on peace and national security argues, faith communities occupy a unique social position that gives them the potential to function as the primary institutional agents of moral renewal, civic formation, and anti-corruption advocacy—but only when their own internal culture embodies the values they are called to model publicly (p. 122).

## 6. Reconstructing Theological Education: The Case for Pedagogical Dexterity

The findings of the empirical analysis and the diagnosis of Section 5 together establish a clear mandate for the comprehensive reform of theological and pastoral education in Nigeria. This reform must be driven by what Andy-Philip (2016) calls pedagogical dexterity: the capacity to design and deliver flexible, multi-disciplinary, contextually grounded educational frameworks that can handle the complexity of urban Nigerian society while remaining firmly anchored in ethical biblical truth (p. 22).

**Table 2**

*Contrast between Existing and Reconstructed Theological Education Models*

| Existing Theological Education Model                             | Reconstructed as a Pedagogically Dexterous Model                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rote memorization of doctrinal propositions                      | Critical, multi-disciplinary engagement with biblical texts and social realities                     |
| Isolation from social science disciplines                        | Systematic integration of sociology, political science, and ethics alongside theology                |
| Financial opacity in ministry management                         | Explicit training in institutional accounting, auditing, and transparent governance                  |
| Charismatic performance as the measure of ministerial excellence | Cruciform character, servant leadership, and community accountability as primary evaluative criteria |
| Scripture used as a source of personal blessing formulas         | Scripture taught as an ethical guide for communal life and prophetic social engagement               |
| No training in civic responsibilities or political engagement    | Systematic training in civic rights, anti-corruption law, ethical voting, and public advocacy        |

This reconstruction requires engagement at three interconnected levels: the curricula of theological seminaries and Bible colleges; the educational practices of local congregations; and the personal formation culture of ministry leaders. Reform at any one of these levels without reform at the others will be insufficient. A seminary that trains graduates in biblical pneumatological realism but sends them into a church culture that rewards transactional pneumatology will find its graduates quickly reshaped by institutional pressure. A local church that adopts new discipleship practices but whose senior leader has not personally undergone genuine cruciform character formation will replicate the old patterns under new vocabulary.

## 7. A Revised Christian Religious Education Framework for Nigerian Churches

This section translates the analytical and diagnostic work of the preceding sections into a concrete, actionable framework for reforming Christian Religious Education in Nigeria. The framework is organized around four curriculum pillars, each addressing a specific dimension of the pedagogical crisis identified in the study.





### **7.1 Pillar One: The Pneumatology of Accountability**

The first curriculum pillar requires the development of a specific educational module on the public ethics of the Holy Spirit. This module should explicitly and systematically teach that the primary evidence of genuine Spirit-filled living is not material accumulation, organizational power, or the charismatic performance of supernatural gifts, but a non-negotiable, active, and demonstrable commitment to personal, institutional, and structural integrity.

This means introducing administrative honesty, financial transparency, anti-corruption ethics, and the rejection of bribery as core spiritual disciplines—practices that are just as fundamentally expressions of Spirit-filled living as speaking in tongues or prophetic ministry. Ministerial candidates should be assessed not only on their ability to preach and perform religious functions, but also on their demonstrated capacity to manage institutional resources transparently, to submit to genuine accountability structures, and to treat others with the consistent fairness and mutual respect that Paul identifies as the fruit of the Spirit.

Andy-Philip's (2023) research in his inter-textual exegesis of Deuteronomy 8:18 and Luke 12:16–21 provides valuable scriptural resources for this module, demonstrating from within the biblical canon itself that the accumulation of wealth without corresponding social responsibility and gratitude toward God is condemned as a form of practical atheism—a functional denial of the God who gave the capacity to create wealth in the first place (p. 95).

### **7.2 Pillar Two: From Patronage to Economic Solidarity**

The second curriculum pillar requires a direct and honest deconstruction of the transactional seed-sowing and spiritual investment models that have enriched church leadership while financially exploiting low-income families across Nigeria. This is not a marginal concern. Millions of Nigerian Christians in genuine financial poverty are regularly taught that their poverty is the result of insufficient giving to their church or spiritual father, and that breakthrough will come when they give more. This teaching causes real harm, and addressing it is a matter of pastoral justice, not merely theological correctness.

This curriculum pillar should teach the economics of the kingdom of God as Paul actually describes them—economies of mutual aid, voluntary sharing, radical generosity toward the poor, and the systematic redistribution of resources from those who have more to those who have less (2 Cor. 8–9; Rom. 15:26–27). Concretely, churches should be equipped and encouraged to redirect institutional resources away from prestige-building projects such as expensive new auditoriums, personal vehicles for senior leaders, and elaborate media productions—and toward community-owned cooperative societies, microcredit schemes, educational scholarships, and sustainable poverty-reduction programs.

As Andy-Philip's (2024) *God and Mammon* demonstrates, confronting material greed in ministry is not optional for Spirit-filled churches. It is one of the most direct and urgent demands of biblical pneumatology, rooted in Jesus' own teaching that no one can serve both God and money (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13) and in Paul's consistent warnings against the love of money as a root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10) (p. 78).

### **7.3 Pillar Three: Public Liturgies of Lament and Civic Mobilization**

The third curriculum pillar addresses the systematic absence of lament and structural critique from contemporary neo-Pentecostal worship. Churches must deliberately and regularly incorporate into



their corporate worship honest, specific, and publicly named lament—the practice of bringing before God in prayer the concrete sufferings, injustices, and failures of the national community, naming them truthfully rather than bypassing them spiritually.

Katongole's (2017) theology of lament, developed from an African Christian perspective, provides the theological foundation for this practice. Katongole demonstrates that honest lament is not a sign of weak faith or insufficient spiritual confidence. It is a profoundly prophetic act: the refusal to accept as normal what God has declared to be wrong, and the bringing of that wrongness directly into the presence of the God who alone can ultimately address it (p. 78). Crucially, lament is not the endpoint but the beginning of prophetic social action—it creates the emotional and moral clarity that enables organized, sustained, and effective engagement with structural injustice.

This curriculum pillar should therefore combine liturgical lament with systematic civic education: training believers to understand how democratic institutions work, what their legal rights and responsibilities as citizens are, how to vote with integrity and to advocate for honest candidates, and how to support and protect colleagues in public service who are working to resist corruption. As Andy-Philip's (2022) research on religious leaders and national security demonstrates, faith communities that perform this civic formation function become the most powerful institutional assets available to any society seeking to build genuine democratic accountability (p. 125).

#### **7.4 Pillar Four: The Formation of Cruciform Public Character**

The fourth and most foundational curriculum pillar concerns character formation. All the structural reforms, curriculum innovations, and institutional changes proposed in this framework ultimately depend on the formation of a different kind of person—people who have genuinely internalized the cruciform values of the gospel and who carry those values as second-nature, habituated dispositions into every dimension of their public and professional lives.

Wright's (2010) account of Christian virtue formation is the most useful contemporary resource for articulating what this kind of character formation requires. Wright argues that genuine ethical transformation—the kind that can actually resist the enormous pressures of corrupt institutional culture—requires the long-term, communally sustained, habitually practiced formation of second-nature virtue: patterns of choosing justice, transparency, and the common good that become automatic because they have been practiced consistently in the context of a community that models and rewards them (p. 26).

This means that theological education cannot be confined to classroom instruction. It must be embedded in formative communal practices such as patterns of prayer, mutual accountability, shared service, and honest communal discernment that habituate believers into the cruciform dispositions of the Spirit over years and decades of consistent, supported practice. The church that genuinely does this work is forming the people who, when they enter Nigerian public life, will carry with them a non-negotiable commitment to the values of justice, transparency, and the common good that no patronage network can purchase and no institutional pressure can dissolve.

#### **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

This paper has three limitations that should be made explicit. First, the qualitative document analysis conducted in Section 4 is necessarily selective: the analyzed materials represent publicly available content from major urban neo-Pentecostal networks, and may not fully capture the theological diversity of Nigerian Christianity across rural communities, mainline Protestant and



Catholic congregations, or smaller indigenous churches. A more comprehensive empirical study would require systematic sampling across a wider range of denominational and regional contexts.

Second, the thematic analysis, while structured according to the six-phase Braun and Clarke (2006) framework, involves an element of interpretive judgment that cannot be entirely eliminated from qualitative research. The themes identified and the analytical codes assigned to specific textual evidence reflect the researcher's own theological and contextual standpoint, which is disclosed in the positionality note below.

Third, the revised CRE framework proposed in Section 7 is a theoretical-constructive proposal. Its implementation in Nigerian theological seminaries and local churches would require context-specific adaptation, institutional support, and longitudinal evaluation over multiple training cycles before its effectiveness could be empirically assessed. The localized framework provided by Dr. Nesta Andy-Philip of the University of Abuja represents the most contextually grounded available scholarship on this question, and future research should build on his contributions through participatory, applied testing of this framework within specific Nigerian pastoral formation contexts.

## **8. Conclusion**

The crisis of contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism is fundamentally an educational one. The church has succeeded in building impressive institutions, generating wide religious enthusiasm, and drawing millions of people into active participation in church life. What it has failed to do is to teach those millions of people a theology of the Holy Spirit that is faithful to the biblical text—one that roots the Spirit's power in communal ethics, cruciform character, and structural social engagement rather than in personal wealth accumulation and individual social advancement.

This paper has used qualitative document analysis and thematic analysis to expose the specific shape of this pedagogical failure. Three dominant themes characterize the functional theology of the Holy Spirit in contemporary neo-Pentecostal megachurch pedagogy: the instrumentalization of the Spirit for personal material success; the centralization of spiritual authority in a single human patron figure; and the systematic suppression of lament, structural critique, and civic engagement. Each of these themes directly contradicts the Pauline pneumatological realism established in Section 3.

The path forward requires the courageous, systematic, and multi-level educational reform described in this paper, grounded in the concept of pedagogical dexterity and drawing on the indigenous scholarship of Dr. Nesta Andy-Philip. When Nigerian theological seminaries and local churches commit to teaching a pneumatology that is simultaneously biblically faithful, socially engaged, institutionally transparent, and cruciformly shaped, they will begin to produce the kind of believers and leaders that Nigeria genuinely needs.

These are people who understand their experience of the Spirit not as a personal transaction with a divine benefactor but as an incorporation into a communal body whose life of justice, transparency, and mutual care constitutes a visible, structural challenge to the corrupt social orders around it. They are people who can enter Nigerian public life—in government, business, education, healthcare, and civil society—carrying with them a non-negotiable, Spirit-formed commitment to honesty, accountability, and the common good.

When the Nigerian church becomes this kind of community which is genuinely Spirit-filled in the Pauline sense. It will cease to be a passive reflection of a broken society and become what it was



always meant to be: the prophetic, transformative, and justice-bearing presence of God in the midst of that society. That transformation begins in the classroom, in the pulpit, and in the formation of character—one teacher, one sermon, one disciple at a time.

### **Article Publication Details**

This article is published in the **Pedagogy Forward**, ISSN 3139-1338 (Online). In Volume 2 (2026), Issue 2 (May - August). The journal is published and managed by **Erudexa Publishing**.

**Copyright** © 2026, Authors retain copyright. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> (CC BY 4.0 deed)

### **Acknowledgements**

We sincerely thank the editors and the reviewers for their valuable suggestions on this paper.

### **Authors' contributions**

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### **Data availability**

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

## **Declarations**

### **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

Not applicable. This study did not involve human or animal subjects.

### **Funding**

The authors declare that no funding was received for this work.

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.



## References

- Andy-Philip, N. (2016). *These writing made easy*. Chukselis Prints.
- Andy-Philip, N. (2018). The prognosis of some corrupt practices in the Book of Judges as nexus for fighting corruption in Nigeria. *International Journal of Philosophy: Philosophy, Science and Society*, 11(1), 29–35.
- Andy-Philip, N. E. S. T. A., & Zhiya, S. J. D. (2017). The shema. *Nnadiesube Journal of Moral Education in Africa*, 2(1).
- Andy-Philip, N. (2018). RE-THINKING THE NUANCES OF SHALOM AND TSEDEQ: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE BUILDING IN NIGERIA. *Journal of the Arts/Humanities Volume*, 1(1).
- Andy-Philip, N., & ZHIYA, S. J. (2018). THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF CURBING MORAL DECADENCE AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS. *Journal Of Moral Education In Africa*, 2(2).
- Andy-Philip, N. (2021). A critical assessment of the use of psalms in some selected African indigenous churches in Nigeria. *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Religions*, 13(2), 64–78.
- ANDY-PHILIP, N. E. S. T. A. (2021). TEACHING HEAL THE SICK IN MATTHEW. *Andy-Philip, Nesta Ph. D.*
- Andy-Philip, N. (2022). Peace and national security: The strategic role of religious leaders in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Abuja Theological Review*, 8(1), 112–128.
- Andy-Philip, N., & Okworonkwo, M. E. (2023). An inter-textual exegesis of Deuteronomy 8:18 and Luke 12:16-21 and its economic implication for African social milieu. *Jos Journal of Religion and Philosophy*, 4(1)
- Andy-Philip, N. (2024). *God and Mammon: An evaluation of contemporary wealth teachings among some African Christians juxtaposed with Luke 12:15*. Chukselis Prints.
- ANDY-PHILIP, N. E. S. T. A. (2024). CHAPTER EIGHT PROMOTING HUMAN VALUES BY ABSTRACTING THE EDUCATIONAL GAINS. *Multidisciplinary Humane Perspectives on Education: Educating All for All*, 126.
- Barclay, J. M. G. (2015). *Paul and the gift*. Eerdmans.
- Barclay, J. M. G. (2020). *Paul and the power of grace*. Eerdmans.
- Bates, M. W. (2017). *Salvation by allegiance alone: Rethinking faith, works, and the gospel of Jesus the King*. Baker Academic.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Fee, G. D. (1994). *God's empowering presence: The Holy Spirit in the letters of Paul*. Baker Academic.
- Gorman, M. J. (2015). *Becoming the gospel: Paul, participation, and mission*. Eerdmans.
- Gorman, M. J. (2019). *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's theology and spirituality* (2nd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Katongole, E. (2017). *Born from lament: The theology and politics of hope in Africa*. Eerdmans.





- Nesta, A. P. (2024). “BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON”(PSALM 137: 1-6): A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ANALOGY OF THE JEWS IN DIASPORA IN LIGHT OF OIDA’S STRUGGLE FOR A HOME IN FCT, ABUJA, NIGERIA. *Academic Journal of Current Research*, 11(4).
- Odumu, F., & Hamma, H. (2026). Social investment in Nigeria: Law, institutional accountability and the limits of developmental impact. *MSI Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (MSIJMR)*, 3(6), 1–23
- Ogbodo, S. G., & Okolocha, U. E. (2015). COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL ANALYSES OF NIGERIA’S LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM. *Indian JL & Pub. Pol’y*, 2, 1.
- OKOLOCHA, D. U., & ALUKO, D. M. (2025). CHALLENGES TO THE ‘COMMITTEE SYSTEM’ UNDER THE NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL AND BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUTIONS. *KB Scholars Journal, UK*, 3(2).
- Okolocha, E. U. (2024). MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE SMART PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES AMONG FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA: LAW AND THE ENVIRONMENT. *KB Law Scholars Journal UK*, 1(5), 1-22.
- Okolocha, U. E., Mustapha, M. O., & Chinagorom, F. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NON-JUSTICIABILITY CLAUSES OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA 1999 AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA1.
- Okolocha, U. E., & Nwoko, U. D. (2025). An analysis and prognosis on the challenges and prospects in the exercise of executive powers under the Nigerian and British constitutions. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(8), 4481–4495.
- Okolocha, U. E., & ALUKO, D. M. (2025). URISTIC OVERVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS UNDER THE 1999 NIGERIAN CONSTITUTION. *KB Scholars Journal, UK*, 3(2).
- Osborne, G. R. (2006). *The hermeneutical spiral: A comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation* (2nd ed.). IVP Academic.
- Swinton, J., & Mowat, H. (2016). *Practical theology and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SCM Press.
- Ukah, A. (2008). *A new paradigm of Pentecostal power: A study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria*. Africa World Press.
- Wright, N. T. (2010). *After you believe: Why Christian character matters*. HarperOne.
- Wright, N. T. (2013). *Paul and the faithfulness of God* (2 vols.). Fortress Press.
- *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. (2016). Crossway.

### **Publisher’s Note**

ERUDEXA PUBLISHING remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations. The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of ERUDEXA PUBLISHING and/or the editor(s). ERUDEXA PUBLISHING disclaims responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.