



## Pentecostal Entrepreneurship and Karl Marx's Conception of Religion: Implication for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The role of religion in socio-economic development has often been undermined in national discussion by some who simply dismiss it as mere irrational feelings with no tangible benefits. This conception of religion is rooted in Marx's maxim that religion is the *opium of the people*. On the contrary, rehabilitators of religion like Weber think differently insisting that socio-economic development interlaces with religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, this paper examines the role of religion in socio-economic development against the backdrop of Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Using the methodologies of desk research and discursive analysis, the paper argues that recent socio-economic infrastructure like hospitals, schools, restaurants, hotels, fuel stations, vocational schemes, etc. of some Pentecostal churches in Nigeria strongly subscribe to the vital role of religion in socio-economic development. In essence, religion alleviates the socio-economic status of the people than worsen it as envisaged by the denigrators of religion like Marx. Moreover, the paper concludes that rather than see religion as providing a temporary sigh of relief or escape from the hardships and injustices in society, it should be seen as playing a crucial role in socio-economic development. In this light, the paper recommends a balanced understanding of the role religion plays in human society. It also reveals how religious beliefs and practices influence economic conditions.

**Keywords:** Religion, Pentecostal entrepreneurship, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Socio-economic, and Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

Religion has remained a central force in shaping social structures, economic behavior, and value systems across societies. In classical social theory, however, its

role has been vigorously contested. For example, Marx (1970) famously described religion as the *opium of the masses*, arguing that it functions as an ideological tool that dulls the pain of material deprivation while sustaining systems of inequality. From this perspective, religion is seen not as a catalyst for development but as a mechanism that perpetuates passivity and false consciousness. In contrast, Weber (2002) advanced a more nuanced interpretation, asserting that religious ideas particularly those embedded in Protestant ethics can stimulate economic rationality, discipline, and entrepreneurial spirit, thereby contributing to the rise of capitalism. These contrasting positions continue to shape contemporary debates on the relationship between religion and socio-economic development.

In the Nigerian context, the rapid growth of Pentecostalism has introduced a significant dimension to this discourse. Nigerian Pentecostal churches have moved beyond purely spiritual concerns to actively engage in socio-economic initiatives, including the establishment of schools, universities, hospitals, and large-scale infrastructural projects. Moreover, these churches promote doctrines that emphasize prosperity, hard work, innovation, and self-reliance, thereby fostering what may be described as "Pentecostal entrepreneurship" (Gifford, 2004; Koko, 2018). This entrepreneurial orientation is not limited to institutional investments but extends to individual adherents, who are often encouraged to pursue economic success as a sign of divine favor. Despite these observable contributions, scholarly debates persist regarding whether such religious activities genuinely promote sustainable development or merely reinforce new forms of economic inequality and dependency. Critics argue that the prosperity message may obscure structural challenges, while proponents

contend that Pentecostalism provides both moral motivation and practical resources for socio-economic advancement (Marshall, 2009; Koko, 2019). This tension reflects the enduring relevance of Marx's critique and Weber's thesis in interpreting contemporary religious phenomena.

This study, therefore, examines Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria through the dual lenses of Marxian and Weberian theories. It argues that, contrary to Marx's reductionist view, religion particularly in its Pentecostal expression can function as a dynamic force for socio-economic development. The study also seeks to demonstrate that religion, rather than merely consoling the oppressed, can actively participate in transforming material conditions and fostering national development.

## 2. Conceptual Clarifications

A critical engagement with the relationship between Pentecostal entrepreneurship and socio-economic development requires a clear understanding of the key concepts underpinning this study. These include: religion, Pentecostalism and Pentecostal entrepreneurship, and socio-economic development. Clarifying these concepts provides the analytical framework necessary for situating the argument within broader scholarly discourse.

### 2.1 Religion

The concept of religion remains one of the most contested in social and philosophical inquiry due to its multifaceted nature and diverse expressions across cultures. Notwithstanding, Durkheim (1912/1995) defines religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things that unite individuals into a moral community. This definition underscores the social function of religion as a source of cohesion, moral regulation, and collective identity. In contrast, Marx offers a more critical interpretation, viewing religion as an ideological construct that legitimizes existing social inequalities by providing illusory comfort to the oppressed. His famous characterization of religion as the "opium of the masses" suggests that it deadens critical consciousness and reinforces structures of domination (Marx, 1970).

However, reducing religion to mere illusion overlooks its capacity to shape values, motivate action, and influence institutional development. Berger (1990) expands the discourse by presenting religion as a "sacred canopy" that provides meaning and order to human existence. From this perspective, religion is not only a reflection of social realities but also a force that

can transform them. In contemporary societies, religion often operates as a dynamic agent capable of influencing economic behavior, social responsibility, and community development (Koko; 2020a). Thus, its role in society cannot be understood solely in terms of passivity or domination but must also account for its potential as a driver of social change. It is this latter role of religion that this study is concerned.

### 2.2 Pentecostalism and Pentecostal Entrepreneurship

Pentecostalism, as a distinct expression of Christianity, has experienced remarkable growth globally, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. It is characterized by an emphasis on the active presence of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, and a strong focus on personal transformation and experiential faith (Anderson, 2013; Koko, 2020a). In Nigeria, Pentecostalism has evolved into a powerful socio-religious movement with far-reaching influence beyond the spiritual domain. A defining feature of contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism is its entrepreneurial orientation. Pentecostal entrepreneurship refers to the application of entrepreneurial principles within religious institutions and among adherents. This includes the establishment of schools, universities, hospitals, media organizations, and large-scale religious infrastructures. Beyond institutional development, Pentecostal teachings often encourage individual economic initiative, discipline, and innovation as expressions of faith. Central to this entrepreneurial ethos is the prosperity gospel, which links spiritual devotion with material success. As Gifford (2004) and Koko (2020b; 2020c) observe, this theology reframes wealth creation as both a divine promise and a moral responsibility. In this regard, Pentecostalism resonates with Weber's (2002) thesis on the Protestant ethic, where religious beliefs foster economic rationality and productivity. However, Pentecostal entrepreneurship differs in its explicit affirmation of wealth as a sign of divine favor, thereby creating a unique blend of spirituality and economic ambition. This development challenges traditional critiques of religion by demonstrating its potential to inspire enterprise and socio-economic engagement.

### 2.3 Socio-Economic Development

Todaro & Smith (2020) conceive socio-economic development as referring to the comprehensive improvement of the economic and social conditions of individuals and communities. It encompasses not only economic growth but also advancements in education, healthcare, employment opportunities, income

distribution, and overall quality of life. Contemporary development theory increasingly recognizes that development is not solely driven by state mechanisms but also by non-state actors, including religious organizations.

In many developing contexts such as Nigeria, where state capacity is often constrained, faith-based institutions play a crucial role in bridging gaps in service delivery. Clarke (2006) and Koko (2019) note that religious organizations are significant contributors to education, healthcare, and social welfare, particularly in rural communities. These contributions highlight the practical relevance of religion in addressing socio-economic challenges. Moreover, socio-economic development is deeply influenced by cultural and ethical values. Traits such as discipline, trust, accountability, and a strong work ethic often reinforced by religious teachings are essential for sustainable development. It is within this intersection that Pentecostal entrepreneurship becomes particularly significant. This is because Pentecostal churches promote values that encourage productivity and social infrastructure. Consequently, socio-economic development should be understood not merely as a material process but as one that is shaped by ideological, cultural, and institutional forces. The engagement of Pentecostalism in this sphere challenges Marx's reductionist view and supports a more nuanced understanding of religion as a potential catalyst for transformation.

### 3. Theoretical Underpinnings on Religion and Entrepreneurship

As already indicated, this study is anchored on two classical theoretical frameworks. The first is Karl Marx's *Opium of the Masses* and the second is Marx Weber's *Protestant Ethics*. Marx's analysis of religion is rooted in his broader critique of capitalist society and its structures of inequality. For Marx, religion is not an autonomous force but a social product shaped by material conditions. He famously describes religion as the "opium of the masses," suggesting that it functions as both a palliative and a tool of social control (Marx, 1970; Koko & Amadi, 2025). In this sense, religion provides psychological comfort to those experiencing economic hardship while simultaneously legitimizing the *status quo* by diverting attention from structural injustices. Marx argues that religion emerges from conditions of alienation, where individuals are estranged from the products of their labor, from others, and from their own human potential. Religion, therefore, offers an illusory resolution to real suffering, promising rewards in the afterlife rather than addressing material

deprivation in the present. Within this framework, religious institutions may inadvertently reinforce economic inequality by discouraging critical consciousness and political resistance.

Applied to the Nigerian context, a strict Marxian interpretation would view Pentecostalism, particularly its emphasis on prosperity and divine intervention as a mechanism that sustains existing socio-economic disparities. Critics have argued that the prosperity gospel can shift responsibility for economic success onto individuals while obscuring systemic issues such as corruption, unemployment, and weak state institutions (Marshall, 2009; Koko, 2020a). From this perspective, Pentecostal entrepreneurship could be interpreted not as genuine development but as an extension of religious ideology into the economic sphere, potentially benefiting a select few while leaving broader structural problems unaddressed. It should be stated however, that Marx's framework does not truly reflect the socio-economic contributions of Pentecostalism in contemporary society. Thus, aside the critique of Marx's position as reductionism, it also underestimates its capacity to inspire agency, innovation, and social transformation. This limitation becomes particularly evident in contexts where religious organizations actively contribute to education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

In contrast to Marx, Weber offers a more sympathetic and complex account of the relationship between religion and economic life. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2002) argues that certain religious ideas, particularly those associated with Calvinist Protestantism played a significant role in the development of modern capitalism. He highlights values such as discipline, hard work, frugality, and a sense of vocation as central to this process. Weber's thesis is not that religion directly causes economic systems but that it shapes the ethical dispositions that make particular forms of economic behavior possible. The Protestant ethic, with its emphasis on rationality and delayed gratification, fostered an environment conducive for capital accumulation and entrepreneurial activity (Koko, 2020c). In this regard, religion is seen as a motivating force that can drive economic productivity and institutional development.

This perspective provides a useful lens for understanding the rise of Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Pentecostal teachings often emphasize personal responsibility, diligence, and the pursuit of success as evidence of divine favor. Such values can encourage individuals to engage in entrepreneurial activities and to adopt disciplined approaches to

economic life. Moreover, Pentecostal institutions themselves frequently operate with a high degree of organizational efficiency, mobilizing resources for large-scale projects such as universities, hospitals, and media enterprises. Nevertheless, Weber's thesis is not without criticism. Some scholars argue that his analysis is historically specific and may not be directly applicable to contemporary or non-Western contexts (Giddens, 1990). Others contend that the prosperity-oriented focus of modern Pentecostalism differs significantly from the asceticism that Weber identified in early Protestantism. These critiques notwithstanding, Weber's framework remains valuable for highlighting the potential of religion to contribute positively to economic development.

It is important to state argue that while Marx and Weber offer contrasting perspectives, a comprehensive analysis of Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria benefits from an integration of their insights. Marx's critique draws attention to the ways in which religion can obscure structural inequalities and reinforce existing power relations. This is particularly relevant in examining the potential excesses of Pentecostal movements, including the commodification of religion and the risk of exploiting vulnerable populations. Similarly, Weber's approach provides a framework for understanding how religious beliefs can foster values and practices that promote economic activity and social development (Koko, 2020c). The entrepreneurial orientation of Nigerian Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on innovation, self-reliance, and institutional investment, aligns more closely with Weber's thesis than with Marx's pessimistic outlook. An analytical synthesis of these perspectives suggests that religion is neither inherently oppressive nor inherently liberating. Instead, its impact depends on how it is interpreted and practiced within specific socio-economic contexts. Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria exemplifies this duality: it can both empower individuals and communities through job creation, education, and social services, and, at times, risk reinforcing inequalities through its emphasis on individual prosperity. Therefore, this study adopts a balanced theoretical approach that acknowledges the critical insights of Marx while drawing on Weber's recognition of religion's transformative potential. Such a synthesis allows for a nuanced understanding of Pentecostalism as a complex social phenomenon one that simultaneously reflects and reshapes the socio-economic realities of contemporary Nigeria.

#### **4. Historical Emergence and Growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria**

The emergence and rapid expansion of Pentecostalism in Nigeria constitute one of the most significant religious developments in contemporary African Christianity. Its growth reflects not only spiritual renewal movements but also broader socio-political and economic transformations that have shaped Nigerian society over the past century. Understanding this trajectory is essential for situating Pentecostal entrepreneurship within its proper historical and cultural context.

The roots of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be traced to the early twentieth century, particularly through indigenous revival movements and interactions with global Pentecostal currents (Koko, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). One of the earliest expressions was the Aladura movement of the 1910s and 1920s among the Yoruba, which emphasized prayer, healing, prophecy, and a direct experience of divine power (Peel, 1968). Although not initially identified as Pentecostal in the classical sense, Aladura churches such as the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Church of the Lord (Aladura) laid important foundations for the later emergence of Pentecostal spirituality in Nigeria. These movements represented a reaction against the perceived formalism and Western orientation of mission Christianity, offering instead a more contextualized and experiential form of faith. By the mid-twentieth century, classical Pentecostal denominations began to take root, often through missionary activities and transnational networks. Churches such as the Apostolic Church and Assemblies of God established a presence in Nigeria, introducing doctrinal emphases on baptism in the Holy Spirit, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), and divine healing (Ojo, 2006). These developments marked a shift toward a more structured form of Pentecostalism, though still deeply influenced by local religious sensibilities.

The most significant phase in the growth of Pentecostalism, however, occurred from the 1970s onward, particularly within university campuses and urban centers. This period witnessed the rise of charismatic renewal movements, often led by educated youth who sought a more vibrant and relevant expression of Christianity. Campus fellowships such as the Scripture Union and the Christian Union played a pivotal role in disseminating Pentecostal ideas, emphasizing personal salvation, holiness, and evangelism (Marshall, 2009). These movements eventually gave rise to independent Pentecostal

ministries, many of which would become influential mega churches in later decades.

The post-civil war era in Nigeria (after 1970) provided fertile ground for the expansion of Pentecostalism. Economic instability, political uncertainty, and social dislocation created a context in which messages of hope, empowerment, and divine intervention resonated strongly with the population. Pentecostalism responded to these challenges by offering not only spiritual assurance but also practical guidance for navigating life's uncertainties. The emphasis on prosperity, success, and personal transformation became particularly attractive in a context marked by widespread poverty and limited opportunities (Gifford, 2004; Koko & Oko, 2024a).

By the 1980s and 1990s, Nigerian Pentecostalism had entered a phase of institutional consolidation and global visibility. Prominent churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel), and Deeper Life Bible Church expanded rapidly, establishing extensive networks of branches both within and outside Nigeria. These churches adopted modern organizational strategies, including media outreach, leadership training, and large-scale infrastructural development. The construction of mega auditoriums, often referred to as "prayer cities" or "camps," symbolized the growing influence and resources of Pentecostal institutions (Ukah, 2008).

A defining feature of this phase is the increasing alignment between Pentecostalism and entrepreneurial practices. Church leaders began to articulate visions that extended beyond spiritual revival to encompass socio-economic transformation. This shift is evident in the establishment of private universities (e.g., Covenant University, Redeemer's University), hospitals, publishing houses, and media enterprises. Such initiatives not only provide services but also generate employment and contribute to national development. In this regard, Pentecostal churches have evolved into complex organizations that operate at the intersection of religion, business, and social welfare. Furthermore, Nigerian Pentecostalism has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and globalization. Through diaspora networks, Nigerian Pentecostal churches have established branches across Africa, Europe, and North America, effectively exporting their model of faith and enterprise. This transnational expansion reinforces the idea that Pentecostalism is not merely a local phenomenon but part of a broader global religious movement shaped by flows of ideas, capital, and people (Anderson, 2013; Koko & Oko, 2024b).

Despite its successes, the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has not been without criticism. Some scholars argue that the commercialization of religion and the emphasis on prosperity may undermine its spiritual integrity and exacerbate social inequalities (Marshall, 2009). Others point to issues of accountability, governance, and the concentration of wealth within church leadership. These critiques echo broader concerns about the role of religion in society and highlight the need for a balanced assessment of its contributions. Nevertheless, the historical trajectory of Pentecostalism in Nigeria reveals a dynamic and evolving movement that has consistently responded to the needs and aspirations of its adherents. From its roots in indigenous revivalism to its current status as a global religious force, Pentecostalism has demonstrated an ability to integrate spiritual experience with practical engagement in socio-economic life. This historical evolution provides the foundation for understanding Pentecostal entrepreneurship as a significant factor in Nigeria's development landscape.

### 5. Pentecostal Entrepreneurship and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The intersection between Pentecostalism and socio-economic development in Nigeria has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in light of the movement's visible institutional expansion and socio-economic engagements. Far from being confined to the spiritual realm, contemporary Pentecostalism in Nigeria has developed a pronounced entrepreneurial orientation that manifests in diverse sectors, including education, healthcare, employment generation, infrastructure development, and social welfare. This phenomenon, often described as Pentecostal entrepreneurship, reflects the capacity of religious institutions and adherents to mobilize resources, create opportunities, and contribute to national development.

One of the most significant areas of Pentecostal contribution is in *education*. Leading Pentecostal organizations have established a wide range of educational institutions, from primary and secondary schools to internationally recognized universities. Notable examples include Covenant University, Redeemer's University, Bowen University, and Babcock University. Though Bowen and Babcock Universities are Baptist and Adventist, respectively, they reflect a broader faith-based model (Koko, 2020d). These institutions are not only centers of academic excellence but also serve as hubs for moral formation and leadership development. By investing heavily in education, Pentecostal churches contribute to human capital development, which is widely

recognized as a key driver of economic growth (Todaro & Smith, 2020; Koko, 2019). Moreover, these institutions generate employment opportunities for academic and non-academic staff, thereby contributing to the reduction of unemployment.

In the area of *healthcare*, Pentecostal organizations have also made notable interventions. Several churches operate hospitals, clinics, and medical outreach programs aimed at improving access to healthcare services, particularly in underserved communities. These initiatives often complement the efforts of the state, which faces challenges in providing adequate healthcare infrastructure. Faith-based healthcare delivery has been recognized as a vital component of development in many African contexts, given its emphasis on compassion, accessibility, and community trust (Clarke, 2006). Through these efforts, Pentecostal institutions contribute not only to physical well-being but also to broader social stability.

Another critical dimension of Pentecostal entrepreneurship is *employment generation and wealth creation*. Large Pentecostal churches function as complex organizations that require a diverse workforce, including administrators, educators, media professionals, and technical staff. In addition, many churches operate business ventures such as publishing houses, television stations, event centers, and agricultural enterprises. These ventures create direct and indirect employment opportunities, thereby stimulating economic activity. Furthermore, Pentecostal teachings often encourage members to engage in entrepreneurship, emphasizing self-reliance, innovation, and financial discipline. As Gifford (2004) and Koko (2020a) note, the prosperity message prevalent in many Pentecostal circles promotes an ethos of hard work and economic ambition, which can translate into increased productivity and enterprise.

Closely related to this is the emphasis on *youth empowerment and skill acquisition*. In a country where youth unemployment remains a significant challenge, Pentecostal churches have developed programs aimed at equipping young people with practical skills and entrepreneurial knowledge. These initiatives include vocational training, business seminars, mentorship programs, and financial support schemes (Koko, 2018). By fostering a culture of initiative and resilience, such programs empower individuals to become active participants in the economy rather than passive dependents. This aligns with broader development goals that prioritize capacity building and inclusive growth.

Pentecostal entrepreneurship is also evident in *infrastructure development*, particularly in the construction of mega auditoriums, conference centers, and “prayer cities.” While these projects are primarily intended for religious purposes, they have broader economic implications. The construction and maintenance of such facilities generate employment, stimulate local economies, and contribute to urban development. In some cases, these infrastructures attract international visitors, thereby promoting tourism and related economic activities (Ukah, 2008; Oko & Koko, 2024). Although critics may question the allocation of resources to such projects, their economic spillover effects cannot be entirely dismissed.

In addition to these sectors, Pentecostal churches engage in *social welfare and poverty alleviation initiatives*. These include food distribution programs, scholarship schemes, microfinance initiatives, and support for vulnerable populations such as widows and orphans. Such interventions address immediate needs while also fostering a sense of community and social responsibility. In contexts where state welfare systems are weak or inconsistent, these efforts play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of poverty and inequality.

Despite these contributions, the role of Pentecostal entrepreneurship in socio-economic development is not without controversy. Critics argue that the emphasis on prosperity and individual success may obscure structural challenges such as corruption, inadequate governance, and systemic inequality (Marshall, 2009). There are also concerns about the commercialization of religion and the concentration of wealth within church leadership. From a Marxian perspective, these dynamics could be interpreted as reinforcing existing power structures under the guise of spiritual empowerment. Notwithstanding, it is important to adopt a balanced perspective. While acknowledging its limitations, Pentecostal entrepreneurship represents a significant form of non-state participation in development. It demonstrates how religious values and institutions can mobilize resources, inspire innovation, and address socio-economic challenges in practical ways. In this regard, Pentecostalism aligns more closely with Weber’s (2002) argument that religious ethics can foster economic behavior conducive to development.

In all, Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria illustrates the complex and evolving relationship between religion and development. It challenges simplistic assumptions that religion is inherently regressive and instead highlights its potential as a dynamic force for socio-economic transformation.

## 6. Implications of Pentecostal Entrepreneurship for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The analysis of Pentecostal entrepreneurship within the Nigerian context carries significant implications for socio-economic development, particularly in rethinking the role of religion as a developmental actor. Contrary to the reductionist view that religion merely sustains passivity, the activities of Pentecostal institutions suggest that faith-based organizations can function as important partners in national development. This has implications for policy, institutional collaboration, and the broader conceptualization of development itself.

One major implication is the recognition of *religion as a complementary development agent*. In a context where state capacity is often limited, Pentecostal churches have demonstrated the ability to provide essential services in education, healthcare, and social welfare. These contributions highlight the need for policymakers to engage constructively with faith-based organizations as stakeholders in development processes (Clarke, 2006). Strategic partnerships between government and religious institutions could enhance service delivery, particularly in underserved areas, while ensuring that such collaborations are guided by principles of accountability and inclusivity.

Secondly, Pentecostal entrepreneurship underscores the importance of *ethical and cultural values in development*. The emphasis on discipline, hard work, and self-reliance within Pentecostal teachings aligns with broader development goals that prioritize human capital formation and productivity. This explains why Weber (2002) suggests that value systems can significantly influence economic behavior. In this regard, Pentecostalism contributes to shaping attitudes that are conducive to enterprise and innovation. However, this also calls for a critical balance to ensure that such values do not promote excessive individualism at the expense of collective responsibility and structural reform.

Another key implication lies in the *expansion of non-state economic actors*. Pentecostal organizations have evolved into complex institutions that generate employment, stimulate local economies, and invest in infrastructure. This diversification of development actors reduces overdependence on the state and introduces alternative models of economic participation. Nevertheless, it also raises important questions about regulation, transparency, and equitable distribution of resources. Without appropriate oversight, the concentration of economic

power within religious institutions may reproduce inequalities rather than alleviate them (Ukah, 2008).

Finally, the findings suggest a need to *reframe development discourse* to incorporate the role of religion more explicitly. Development should not be viewed solely in material or technocratic terms but as a multidimensional process that includes moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Pentecostal entrepreneurship illustrates how these dimensions intersect, offering both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. In essence, the Nigerian experience demonstrates that religion, when effectively mobilized, can serve as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation. However, maximizing its developmental potential requires critical engagement, institutional accountability, and a balanced integration of spiritual motivation with structural reforms.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has critically examined Pentecostal entrepreneurship in Nigeria through the contrasting lenses of Marx and Weber, demonstrating that religion cannot be reduced to a mere instrument of ideological control as some have suggested. It is a fact that while elements of Pentecostal practice, particularly the prosperity gospel may appear to support aspects of Marx's critique, the empirical realities of Pentecostal engagement in education, healthcare, employment generation, and social welfare reveal a more complex and dynamic role. In line with Weber's insights, Pentecostalism in Nigeria has cultivated values and institutional frameworks that encourage productivity, innovation, and economic participation. Thus, rather than functioning solely as an "opium," religion in this context emerges as both a site of meaning and a catalyst for socio-economic transformation. However, this transformative potential is not without contradictions. Issues of accountability, inequality, and the risk of excessive individualism underscore the need for critical engagement. The challenge, therefore, lies not in dismissing religion but in harnessing its constructive capacities while addressing its limitations. In our view, a nuanced approach that integrates both Marxian caution and Weberian optimism offers the most adequate framework for understanding and engaging Pentecostal entrepreneurship in contemporary Nigeria. In light of the above, the following recommendations need to be made:

***Strengthen Government-Faith-Based Partnerships (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals):*** Policymakers should institutionalize collaborations with Pentecostal

organizations in sectors such as education and healthcare, ensuring that such partnerships are transparent, inclusive, and development-oriented.

**Enhance Regulatory and Accountability Frameworks (SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions):** There is a need for policies that promote financial transparency and ethical governance within religious institutions to prevent exploitation and ensure equitable resource distribution.

**Promote Skills Development and Youth Empowerment (SDG 4 & SDG 8):** Government and Pentecostal bodies should jointly expand vocational training and entrepreneurial programs to address youth unemployment and foster sustainable economic growth.

**Encourage Inclusive Development Practices (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities):** Religious initiatives should be aligned with national development priorities to ensure that benefits reach marginalized and vulnerable populations.

**Integrate Ethical Values into Development Policy (SDG 1 & SDG 11):** Development strategies should recognize the role of moral and cultural values in shaping economic behavior, leveraging positive religious ethics to promote sustainable communities.

In all, it should be stated that Pentecostal entrepreneurship, when properly guided, holds significant promise as a partner in advancing Nigeria's socio-economic development agenda.

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