

“Sowing into the Anointing”: Charisma, Money and Vulnerability in Contemporary African Pentecostalism

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu PhD

Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana

In this paper, I wrestle with the relationship between money and vulnerability in contemporary Pentecostal Christianity of the prosperity-preaching kind. It looks at Pentecostal fundraising methods and the exploitation of the fears and anxieties of the vulnerable in society. Pentecostalism holds an interventionist theology, and money—tithes, offerings, reciprocal gifts to anointed charismatic leaders—is at the heart of charismatic religiosity. Benefits from charismatic power, reminiscent of the sale of indulgences, often occur through “sowing” into charismatic anointing. These benefits include money, resulting in wealth, as a sign divine favor. The principle of “sowing” money for existential breakthroughs in particular, lends itself to exploitation and sometimes, even simony, as expectant charismatics sow “apostolic offerings” into the lives of superiors for success in ministry. The vulnerable and hurting are pressured into believing that their release lies in how much money they give to the anointed charismatic whose grace helps to solve their problems. With specific references to contemporary Pentecostal preaching, writings, and practices, this paper develops an understanding of the relationship between charisma and money on the one side and the exploitation of vulnerabilities for personal gain on the other.