

**A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF PROSPERITY TEACHING IN  
SELECTED CHURCHES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research work was carried out by OLADAYO OLUBUKOLA OGUNMODEDE in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria under my supervision.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God almighty, the source of all knowledge and wisdom, who has been very good to me since my sojourn on earth, and who has given me the grace to attain this enviable level of education. To Him all the glory!

Also to the memory of my parents

Late Deacon Joseph Ayoola Afolabi Ogunmodede

And

Late Mrs. Victoria Idowu Ogunmodede

They gave me a good educational foundation. May their souls continue to rest in peace.

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## ABSTRACT

Prosperity teaching is the idea that health and wealth are compulsory benefits of the Christian faith. Most followers of this teaching have accepted it dogmatically, making them vulnerable to exploitation and delusion. Previous studies on prosperity teaching have examined it from hermeneutical and theological perspectives without sufficient attention paid to its appraisal from the philosophical viewpoint which is capable of providing a balanced understanding of prosperity teaching. This study, therefore, assessed prosperity teaching in terms of its principles, logicity, consistency with biblical teachings and effects on its followers.

The study adopted Immanuel Kant's Principle of Humanity. Three Pentecostal churches; Living Faith: (LFC), Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), and LivingSpring Chapel (LSC) were purposively selected because prosperity teaching is more entrenched in their practices. Data were collected from books written by Bishop David Oyedepo, Pastor Enoch Adeboye and Pastor Femi Emmanuel. Additional information was collected from thirty tapes/DVDs on prosperity teaching. Forty members of selected churches were randomly interviewed (RCCG 15, LFC 15, LSC 10). Using the stratified random sampling technique, 640 copies of a questionnaire were administered to 440 members and 200 officers from two branches each of RCCG and LFC (Ogbomoso, Oyo, Lagos, Sagamu and Otta) and LSC (Ibadan). Data were subjected to philosophical analysis and percentages.

Four basic principles of prosperity teaching were adopted at varying degrees of emphasis in the selected churches. While they all taught "wealth is a compulsory gain of salvation" and "positive confession attracts positive actions to believers", RCCG and LSC emphasized "sowing fatly to reap multiple blessings". LFC emphasized "Divine unfailing health is guaranteed to believers". A critical evaluation however reveals the illogicality and inconsistency of prosperity teaching: "wealth as gain of salvation" fails to explain why Christians like Apostles Peter and John were poor (Acts 3:6). "Sowing and reaping" contradicts Jesus' directive to Christians to give, expecting nothing in return but to store treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19). "Covenant of divine unfailing health" contradicts scientific and biblical proofs (I Tim. 5:20) of human's vulnerability to sickness. "Positive verbal confession" is hinged on a faulty premise of an anthropocentric

view that humans are in God's class, making prayerful requests unnecessary. Besides, 80.0% interviewed from LFC accepted they occasionally fall sick despite assurances of "divine unfailing health" and 55.0% in RCCG agreed they were yet to reap from "kingdom investments", negating the automation of "reaping from sowing". A total of 85.0% respondents believed they attracted blessings from positive confession, agreeing in part with the "principle of verbal confession", and 90.0% officers and members across selected churches believed they were rich. On the opposite, 70.0% members had no personal house(s), 63.0% had no personal car(s), 62.0% estimated their yearly income at less than ₦1m, contradicting the principle of "wealth as gain of salvation".

Although popularly accepted among selected churches, prosperity teaching is fideistic, negates Kant's Principle of Humanity and is inconsistent with biblical teachings and followers practical life experiences. Prosperity exponents should teach balanced theology that encourages rational faith for more effective Christian impacts.

**Keywords:** Prosperity teaching, Kant's Principle of Humanity, Southwestern Nigeria, Philosophical appraisal, Anthropocentrism

**Word count:** 500

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Religion can shape the thinking and consciousness of a people, including their economic matters. The traditional Christian attitude to wealth has always been positive, if wealth is acquired and used in the right direction. Men are created with the power of success since they were created in the image and likeness of God. God gave man power both to make and enjoy wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18 says “But thou shalt remember the lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy father as it is this day (KJV). However, what Christianity has always condemned is lust for wealth and use of wealth for purposes other than for the progress of mankind and seeking the kingdom of God.

In the Old Testament, we have the story of King Solomon who was said to be very wealthy (1 Kings 10:23, II Chronicle 1:11 – 12 9:22a).<sup>1</sup> The wealth of Solomon was enormous and spoken of in all generations. He acquired large revenue because his kingdom lay across the main route from Egypt to Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, and the route across the Syrian and Arabian deserts. Another valuable source of income was the horse and chariot trade with Asia Minor in which he acted as middleman. Although Solomon became one of the most glorious of kings, and was well loved by God, and had exceeded in wisdom and riches than those that had ruled Israel before him, he did not continue in this happy state till he died.<sup>2</sup> Solomon forsook God, and he violated the divine rules given to the Israelite not to marry foreign women. He grew insatiable in this love of women, he married foreign women to give him the opportunity to make alliances with their native countries and make more money. Solomon ended his life losing the favour of God thus sending the signal to other Israelites, and indeed as emphasized by the Old Testament prophets, that there is always a tension between the benefits and the dangers of riches. At the tail end of the Old Testament, prosperous or wealthy people were seen as wicked people and also the enemies of God because of the way they acquired the wealth and how they used their wealth to oppress the poor. Amos

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<sup>1</sup> Danny McCain. 2000. “Prosperity” a Biblical perspective *African Journal of Biblical Students* Vol. XV p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> William Whiston, 1996. *The Works of Josephus* (U.S.A.; Hendrickson Publishers; p. 225

pronounced woe unto these kinds of rich men who used their wealth to pervert justice and cheated the poor.

In the New Testament, Jesus seems to be more negative to wealth and riches in his teachings. He never asked his followers to pursue or seek material wealth (Mathew 8:20, Luke 6:24 – 25, 14:12 - 14). Jesus said “seek ye first the kingdom of God and other things will follow”. However, it seems the prosperity teachers are saying the opposite; seek ye first prosperity and other things will follow. When a rich man approached Jesus for prescription of what to do in order to enter the Kingdom of God, he simply recommended that he should sell off his possession and give the proceeds to the poor because, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19: 23 – 24. Luke 12: 22 – 34)

Jesus admonished people not too seek after wealth nor worry about it but that God will give us all we need from day to day if we make the Kingdom of God our primary concern. The New Testament teaching is that wealth can bring about much comfort and relaxation which can ultimately lead one to a state of spiritual complacency and pride. More often than not, rich people do forget God in their ultimate aim of acquiring earthly possessions. It is clear that prosperity teaching cannot be reconciled with the material poverty of Jesus Christ. He had to borrow a colt upon which to ride to Jerusalem (Matt. 14: 12 - 15); he never had more than His daily needs and He had to ask a disciple to catch a fish to get a coin to pay tax (Matt. 17: 24 - 27).

However, Jesus at no time denied the fact that the rich man could be saved if he sincerely believes. Jesus was not against the rich and was friendly to some rich women who even assisted him like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza and Susana and many others who provided for him out of their abundance (Luke 8:2-3).

The attitude of people towards prosperity in the early Christian Church is not different from that of the time of Jesus Christ. The disciples in the early church followed the footsteps of the master Jesus Christ. Christ had many disciples but only twelve of them were apostles. The numerical strength of the followers of Jesus Christ became obvious after his death, it was not just a matter of twelve people but it was some kind of crowd including wealthy people, both within and outside the Jewish world. Such increase in the membership strength of the disciples of Jesus Christ was probably as a result of the

instruction He gave to them in Acts of the Apostles as we read from (Acts 1:8): “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*”.<sup>3</sup> It should however be noted that the disciples of Jesus Christ did not reject wealthy members but they all agreed that the emphasis would be on preaching the gospel of salvation to be followed by the daily distribution of wealth. Those who had money or valuables brought them to the disciples for distribution, those who had no money to offer such as Ananias and Sapphira sold their land and brought the proceeds to the Apostles for sharing. All of them were convinced that they had a duty to contribute to the well-being of the group. We should however, note that they were stuck together like this because they believed that the second coming of Jesus Christ was imminent, when he will be coming to take them to heaven, hence there was no need to keep wealth.

In the early church, the emphasis was always on distribution of wealth. Barnabas sold a field and gave the proceeds to the church (Acts 4: 36 -37). Paul also condemned lust for material possessions. He warns that wealth is a powerful temptation for Christians and he admonished Timothy not to seek after riches because, as he said, “godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it”<sup>4</sup>. For the rich, Paul charged them not to be haughty, nor set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17).

In the history of Nigerian Christianity, the older mission churches have dominated the scene for long. The Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Catholic missions that first came to Nigeria believed that Africans were spiritually poor, for the fact that they were still under the servitude of sin and worship of demons, and as such needed to be helped out of their spiritual slavery. Hence, the “prosperity” theology of the protestant missionaries that planted Christianity in Nigeria was primarily the spiritual well being of the spiritually poor Nigerians. This was because, to these missionaries, spiritual prosperity was the best gift ever to be given to any man”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Holy Bible*: King James Version.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Corner, 2004. “*The Prosperity Message: False Doctrine in the Church*” [www.google](http://www.google). p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> S. A. Fatokun, 2000, Prosperity Theology and Nigeria Christianity, *CASTALIA: Ibadan Journal of Multicultural/Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 2., p. 49.

Dada contends that the older mission churches preached a salvation that was limited to the soul and that prosperity gospel in the Nigerian context evolved as a means of filling this lacuna in the missionary's understanding of salvation. According to Dada, the origin of prosperity teaching in Nigeria can be traced to the activities of the neo-Pentecostal churches. Neo-Pentecostalism is a new Christian order in Nigeria that lays much emphasis on the need for Christians to acquire wealth and prosper in the midst of non-believers. This is what is popularly known today as "prosperity teaching". Prosperity teaching is the idea that health, wealth and material successes are compulsory benefits of the Christian faith.

Over the years, it has been observed that the message being preached in some of the largest churches in the world has changed. Due in part to the rise of several ungodly philosophies and movements, a new gospel is being taught today. This gospel has been ascribed many names, such as the "name it and claim" gospel, the "blab it and grab it" gospel, the "health and wealth" gospel, the "word of faith movement", the "gospel of success" the "prosperity gospel" and "positive confession theology". No matter what name is used, though, the teaching is the same. Simply put, this egocentric gospel teaches that God wants all believers to be materially wealthy and healthy.

According to Robert Tilton, "I believe that it is the will of God for all to prosper because I see it in the word (of God), because it has worked mightily for someone else. I do not put my eyes on men, but on God who gives me the power to get wealth".<sup>6</sup> Teachers of prosperity encourage their followers to pray, and even demand of God everything from modes of transportation (cars, vans, trucks, planes) to big homes and large bank accounts.

According to Ayantayo, the term 'prosperity gosselling' simply refers to strong teaching about prosperity and the need for Christians to be prosperous while on earth. Within such premise, the emphasis is strongly placed on material possession or acquisition, which could be manifested in possession of cars, houses, fat bank accounts, cash in hand, clothing, abundance, fortune, and success in all endeavours,. Prosperity is therefore portrayed as divine favour, which Christians must seek and possibly pursue

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Tilton was quoted by John MacAthur Jr., 1992, *Charismatic Chaos*, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, p. 325.

with vigour.<sup>7</sup> With this development, attention is shifted from spiritual prosperity as emphasized by the pre-and-colonial revivalists, spiritualists, missionaries, and Pentecostals (as exemplified in divine testing, miracles, signs and wonders, deliverance from the demonic possession and attack, prophetic vision) to material prosperity. Thus 'Christian spirituality' or 'worth' is measured by the number of cars, houses, clothing, shoes and other worldly possession they have.

Krinsky has observed that the idea that personal material abundance should necessarily follow from Christian righteousness, a doctrine properly understood as prosperity gospel, has become an increasingly prominent feature of Nigeria's neo-Pentecostalism over this period, even as the movement was strongly associated with a strict asceticism in its early years. He asserts that although prosperity gospel was highly controversial at first, it has become a broadly accepted position within Nigerian Christianity. He said prosperity is a discernible tendency in almost all shades of Pentecostal belief and practice though it may be present to a greater or lesser extent in different movements and in different churches or denominations.<sup>8</sup>

Pentecostalism is a phenomenon that emerged at the beginning of the last century. It is a Christian experience in which the participant stresses the gifts of the spirit and personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. The worship service is usually rigorous and informal. It is now very popular in Nigeria and is usually referred to as the fourth great Christian tradition alongside, the Catholic and Protestants; although in many respects it is a branch of the latter.<sup>9</sup>

Alana in his work "*Pentecostalism in Africa: An Over View*" articulates that, new Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (NPCs), which have only sprung up since the seventies, are fast becoming a major expression of Christianity on the continent, especially in the cities. According to him, neo-Pentecostal churches began to emerge all over Africa in the eighties, particularly in West Africa, where they tend to have younger and more educated leadership and membership, including young professionals. He

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<sup>7</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, *Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 202

<sup>8</sup> Krinsky Sam, 2007, *Pentecostal Prosperity and the Political Economy of Contemporary Nigeria: The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* vol. 5, 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> Julian Ward, 1998. "The Pentecostals" in *The Lion Handbook of Christian Beliefs*, England: Lion Publishing House, p. 145.

observes that the growth of these churches has been most dramatic in Nigeria and Ghana, where Christianity has permeated every facet of the society and is evident to any visitor.<sup>10</sup>

However, we must note that neo – Pentecostal churches which emphasize prosperity or positive confession is traceable to America, from where it spread to Nigeria. Prosperity teaching actually started in America. American prosperity teachers are the mentors to those in other parts of the world including Nigeria. America is both the mentor and converging point for the prosperity teachers world over. The faith – prosperity movement is a logical offspring of America’s philosophic worldview. The American faith healers and Tele – evangelists that greatly contributed to the growth and popularity of prosperity teaching in Nigeria are Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, William Barham, T. L. Osborne, Copeland, Hilton and others.

In Nigeria today, there are many prosperity teachers. Late Benson Idahosa was the father of prosperity teaching in Nigeria. He was the first Nigerian preacher who popularized the teachings of prosperity. However, Bishop David Oyedepo remains the most popular and prominent prosperity teacher in Nigeria. He has written more books on prosperity and taught the principles of prosperity more than any other Nigerian preacher. He is indeed what can be called the Chief Apostle of the prosperity message in Nigeria. Other prosperity teachers that are famous in Nigeria include Chris Oyhakilome, Enoch Adeboye, Uma Ukpai, Wale Oke, Matthew Ashimolowo, Mike Okonkwo, Ayo Oritshajefor, Femi Emmanuel and, to some extent, Tunde Bakare and others. We must take care not to confuse Pentecostalism with prosperity teaching. They are not the same, but we cannot divorce extreme prosperity teaching from the Pentecostal Movements in Nigeria.

Prosperity teachings so exalt success as to pour scorn on the poor as stubborn infidels who have evidently refused to seek God’s aid. In this version of the gospel, faith leads to tithing, and tithing ignites prosperity. A gratified Almighty will respond by opening the windows of heaven, pouring out blessings so rich that believers will not have room to store them all. You have to pay to play – and win. And if the church’s pastor follows a dazzlingly sumptuous lifestyle, that is just his way of exhibiting God’s

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<sup>10</sup> A. Alana, 2004, Pentecostalism in Africa: An Overview, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXVI, 53-56



munificence to the world. According to Bishop Oyedepo, prosperity, or wealth, or material possession is one of the gains of salvation, one's salvation experience can only be proved by material wealth. The truth however is that most of these teachers of prosperity are men of God who are well versed in the word of God. Unfortunately, experience has proved that our acceptance of the full critical and creative authority of God's word in its written form is no guarantee that we hear its message aright. All kinds of prejudice, fears of change and ignorance, whether willful or otherwise, continually frustrate a really honest and obedient hearing of the message. Particularly important in this respect are the many unexamined assumptions, which stem from our social and cultural backgrounds. They tend to bias our understanding of the scriptures in a number of different directions. This means that alongside our acceptance of the full authority of the Bible, we also need a painstaking and constant enquiry into the relationship between man's personal and social environment and his interpretation of the biblical texts.

We have observed that Bishop Idahosa was the first to preach the prosperity message in Nigeria. The message was popularized by Bishop David Oyedepo in the mid 1980s. Prosperity teachers always refer to II Corinthians 8:9 to defend the desire for material possession and prosperity. "For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich". Based on the text, Oyedepo and others in the prosperity teachers train said that Jesus descended from His throne to take Christians into glory, thereby making wealth a part of our redemption package. Jesus, according to prosperity teachers, did not come to save Christians from sin alone, he also came to rescue Christians from the consequences of sin, prominent among which is poverty<sup>11</sup>. It is important to state that what is being emphasized in II Corinthians 8:9 is that Jesus died for us so that we become spiritually rich; it is not necessarily for us to be materially rich. I consider prosperity teaching to be the exact opposite of what Jesus taught. Whereas Jesus taught us to seek first the kingdom of God while other things will follow, prosperity teachers want us to accumulate wealth, sow fatly and our salvation experience will be guaranteed. I have tried to establish that the emergence and growth of prosperity teaching in Nigeria has a correlation with the deepening economic crisis in Nigeria as well as the high level of

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<sup>11</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to Win*, Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, p. 86.

poverty. This study has also shown that the growth of prosperity teaching and its popularity at this time of economic depression in Nigeria is not a mere coincidence.

Apart from the fact that it has been generally agreed among scholars that the ideas in prosperity teaching seem inconsistent with the traditional Christian ideas because they emphasize the benefit of salvation over the salvation experience itself, we shall specifically look at the basic principles of prosperity teaching to determine how logical they are after subjecting them to objective enquiry, examine if they are consistent with Biblical teachings and look at the effects of prosperity teaching on the followers of the teaching.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The prosperity teachers' idea that health and wealth are compulsory benefits of the Christian faith has been accepted by most of their followers dogmatically without logical reasoning. The effect of this is that most followers of this teaching are vulnerable to exploitation and delusion. Previous scholarly works on prosperity teaching have been more concerned with the faulty hermeneutics as well as the inherent theological weaknesses in the teaching, with little attention to its appraisal from the philosophical perspective which can help to detect fallacies and inconsistencies thereby enabling the prosperity teachers the opportunity of providing good reasons as evidence of their claims, and can pave the way for a balanced understanding of prosperity teaching.

While scholars have generally agreed that prosperity teaching is not theologically balanced, efforts have not been made to examine if people have applied objective inquiry in the exercise of their faith in teaching or accepting the basic promises that have been made by prosperity teachers. We need to ask the questions; Are human beings infallible and not capable of falling sick because of their devotion to God? Is it also possible to have a world free of sickness? Paul the apostle was sick, Lazarus was sick before he died, despite being the friend of Jesus. Job was sick even though he was righteous. Even Jesus' disciple, Luke, was a physician. If Christians cannot be sick, why are we having many hospitals in Nigeria today especially many owned by Christians and Christian missions? Also, should we as Christians accept that our words have determinative powers even with the tendency to transfer deity from God to man? Is it possible for everybody who has sowed to reap in multiples as promised? Can we all be rich? Did Jesus not talk about the

poor? Is this not a case of mere positive thinking?

Philosophical theologians like St. Augustine have argued that all grades of human beings are in the universe and the creator of them all is the good God. This conception, according to his principle of plenitude, leads to the theory of a hierarchy of higher and lower forms of existence.<sup>12</sup> These ideas also flow in his “aesthetic theme” where he tries to explain the world’s graded diversity. He says “evils, like poverty, are in its totality and from the standpoint of the creator, necessary to make the universe wholly good; for even the evil (poverty in this sense) within it is made to contribute to the complex perfection of the world”.<sup>13</sup> To Augustine, the combination of rich and poor people will make up an ideal society. He says they make the world beautiful like the bright and dull colours make a perfect picture. Lutheran theology also shares a similar view. Likewise is the idea that all the wealth of the unrighteous would later be transferred to the Godly plausible? Why are many sinners getting richer while many righteous people are still poor? We also need to ask; why are the prosperity teachers concentrating in city centres, neglecting the rural areas? When people claim to be rich, despite patterns of practical life that suggest the contrary, are they not being deluded? These are the begging questions that need to be answered.

Metaphysically, we need to ask: Are human beings in God’s class as claimed by the prosperity teachers? We may also ask this basic question; Why are the prosperity teachers getting richer and having stupendous wealth when indeed many of their followers are getting poorer? Are the people being used by the prosperity leaders to develop their churches and enrich themselves? Is it morally justified for the prosperity teachers to promise what they know are not realizable? Could it be morally justified for the prosperity teachers to play on the spiritual immaturity of their congregation by making them to do things they will not do ordinarily if they are well spiritually grounded or matured? This is where Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperatives come to mind and become very relevant.

Kant’s Principle of Humanity formulation says by making deceitful promises of wealth and health that is usually not forthcoming, the prosperity teachers seem to use

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<sup>12</sup> Augustine A. 1953, *Enchiridion* transl. London: E. Evans, SPCK, p. 240.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine A. 1958, *The City of God* transl G. G. Walsh, New York: Double Day, p. 160

their followers as means only. By deliberately deceiving their congregation, the prosperity teachers deprive them of the chance to evaluate fully in a rational way the issues that are before them. The prosperity teachers manouver their congregation into unwittingly serving their (prosperity teacher's) purposes by getting them to do what they would not do if they understand the situation clearly. The issue of 'seed faith' and 'wealth transfer' comes in here. Majority of the people have sowed without receiving back in multiples as prosperity teachers promised and there are no known instances of the wealth of infidels that has been transferred to the righteous as the prosperity teachers suggest. This is what the "principle of humanity" says amounts to "using people".

Thus, the moral law according to Kant forbids any man to be used simply as a means to an end. This must have influenced Karl Marx's strong protest against the exploitation of man by man. It is an offence against human dignity to use a human being simply as an instrument to attain one's ends. It is not only the person who exploits another man that uses humanity simply as means, but the man who commits suicide in order to get out of frustration, also uses humanity (in his own person) simply as a means to an end.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to assess prosperity teaching in terms of its principles such as "wealth is gain of salvation", "sowing and reaping in multiples", "covenant of divine health", "positive verbal confession", "principle of wealth transfer", and the "idea of a wealthy Jesus". This is done with the aim of subjecting them to philosophical evaluation to determine their logicity and also examine if the teachings are consistent with biblical teachings and also to find out the effects of such teachings on both the teachers of prosperity and their followers.

### 1.4 Scope of the Study

The astronomical increase in the number of Church founders began about thirty years ago in Nigeria, especially in the 1980s when things went wrong with the management of our economy. Young graduates of Universities and Polytechnics who

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Omoregbe, 1983, *Ethics a systematic and Historical Study*, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, p. 224.

could not find job, started to float churches. Since the middle of the 1960s, the writings of Kenneth Hagin flooded Nigeria and by the 1980s, he had had thousands of followers. Although Hagin was declared a heretic by the Church in the 1960s, it appears that the Church both in America and in Africa underrated Hagin's influence and therefore failed to react strongly in writing and teaching to correct several of his wrong doctrines. Most of those who floated Churches in Nigeria and elsewhere became his disciples; adopting his methodology and doctrines.

This work has been limited to three Pentecostal churches: The Living Faith Church (aka Winner's Chapel), Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Living Spring Chapel. These churches are well represented in Ogbomoso, Oyo, Lagos, Sagamu, Ibadan, and Otta which are commercial nerve centres of Southwestern Nigeria where the church leaders are based with their messages and writings on prosperity message very popular among the people and their works on prosperity is in great demand.

#### 1.5 **Significance of the Study**

This study has carefully identified the basic principles of prosperity teaching as well as its inherent logical weaknesses. This study has also revealed the inconsistencies of prosperity teaching with the Bible. It has been shown that prosperity teaching thrives in an atmosphere of mindless surrender to religious claims without applying reasoning or objective inquiry. This work has also been able to find out that the concern that inspired the birth and development of prosperity teaching in Nigeria is genuine – to solve the economic problems in Nigeria and enhance the socio – economic emancipation of the people. However, this study has discovered that the premises of the arguments in prosperity teaching and the methods employed by its exponents in implementing the ideas are faulty, which makes it a poor panacea for the crises that have engulfed Nigeria's socio – economic and political scenes.

This study has also shown that there are ethical problems associated with prosperity teaching and has proffered suggestions that could lead to a re – orientation of prosperity teaching to accommodate the use of reasoning and change the message from being just theoretical, to making it a practical solution to people's socio – economic and ethical problems. This study highlighted the need for the church to endeavour to teach a

balanced theology for ideal Christian living. The logical issues raised in this study make the study worth undertaking. This work adds to the existing literature on the concept of prosperity teaching, affording the teachers and followers of prosperity teaching the opportunity to apply rational faith in their belief system, which ensures a better comprehension of shared religious beliefs.

### 1.6 Research Methodology

Data for this work were gathered through observation, library sources and indepth oral interview. Data were collected from books written on prosperity by Bishop David Oyedepo of Livingfaith Church, Pastor Enoch Adeboye of The Redeemed Christian Church, and Pastor Femi Immanuel of The Livingspring Chapel. Additional information was collected from thirty tapes/DVDs on prosperity teaching and other digital electronic devices by the three church leaders. I attended the yearly Shiloh Convention service of the Living Faith Church held between 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at the Church Headquarters in Sango Otta where I listened to Bishop Oyedepo's teaching on prosperity. Forty members of selected churches were randomly interviewed (The Redeemed Christian Church of God 15, Living Faith Church 15, and Livingspring Chapel 10). Using the stratified random sampling technique, 640 copies of a questionnaire were administered to 440 members and 200 officers from two branches each of the Redeemed Christian Church and The Living Faith Chapel in Ogbomoso, Oyo, Lagos Sagamu and Otta and also the Livingspring Chapel, headquarters in Ibadan. Data were subjected to philosophical analysis and percentages.

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

While N stands for respondents, TN represents the total number of respondents per question. The results were then presented with frequency tables and cross tabulations.

The bulk of secondary sources for this research was retrieved through bibliographic search method. This involved consultation of academic books, articles in learned journals, newsletters, bulletins, newspapers, magazines and other library and internet materials.

## 1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Immanuel Kant's theory of Categorical Imperative. In the formulation known as the "principle of humanity", also known as the formulation of the End in itself, the categorical imperative says that "act so that you treat human beings whether in your person or that of another, always as an end and never as means only". Kant stresses the rational nature of human beings as free intelligent self directing beings. In saying they must never be treated as a means only, he means as earlier noted, we must not, as we often put it today, "use" people. We must not manipulate them or turn them to our own purposes. They, like ourselves, are not objects or instruments merely to serve the ends of others, nor are they to be lied to or deceived. To treat them thus is, in effect, to fail to respect their autonomy, and to deny the rational nature they have in common with us. They are not to be used merely for an end whose value is relative. A community of rational beings can function harmoniously only if its members respect in one another, the conditions under which rationality can flourish. This is to respect one another as ends.<sup>15</sup>

We must note that The Principle of Humanity does not prohibit people from being treated as a means at all. What it says is that they must not be treated as means only. People cannot live in complex social arrangements without many of them, much of the time – and perhaps all of them, some of the time, serving as means to the ends of others. But it is possible to respect people as ends at the same time that they serve in these capacities. They can for example be helped to practically meet their socio-economic needs. That people are often exploited and oppressed does not of itself show that there is anything wrong with treating them as means. It shows only that there is something wrong with treating them as means only.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant was quoted in Robert L. Holmes, 1993, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 142.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Holmes, 1993, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, p. 142

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 The Concept of Prosperity in the Old Testament

The idea of prosperity appears to have found much ground in the first part of the Holy Bible called the Old Testament. The Old Testament appears more positive to material possessions, because it is a historical document of Israel as a nation. The book of the Old Testament is the theological enterprise of Yahweh in his dealings with the Israelites. It is the historical document of Yahweh as the theocratic leader of Israel as a nation. In many passages, God told the Israelites, that when they obey him and follow his instructions, it shall be well with them and they shall prosper everywhere they went, even when the people of the land were in hardship. It was in this light that God gave Israel such favours that transferred the wealth of Egypt unto them.

The word prosperity is found both in a positive and negative sense in the Old Testament. The word is found in a positive sense thirty-four times and in negative sense seventeen times<sup>1</sup>. Almost every reference to prosperity in the historical books or other prose writings is positive. Wealth was normally considered a blessing from God. The negative references to wealth are found almost exclusively in poetic passages, including the prophets<sup>2</sup>.

In the first book of Old Testament, God created man in His own image.

*And he blessed them and I said unto them; be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and sub due it, and have dominion.” --- Gen 1:27-28.*

To be fruitful and multiply is often referred to as the origin of man’s prosperity according to the will of God. God gave man authority to replenish the earth, and subdue, it and have dominion. God prospered Adam and Eve in the garden by not even allowing them to labour before they could get what they needed. In many chapters of Deuteronomy, God warned the Israelites to be faithful to obey and humble themselves, so as not to forget their God who has prospered them in the land” (Duet 8;18,28). In the book of Proverbs, we also have references to prosperity:

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<sup>1</sup>Danny McCain et al 2003, *Understanding and Applying The Scripture*, Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks, p. 402

<sup>2</sup> Danny McCain et al 2003, *Understanding and Applying The Scripture*, p.403



*Humility and the fear of the lord brings wealth, honour and life (Prov. 22:40).*

Likewise Deuteronomy 8:18 says:

But thou shall remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is today.

A survey of some Old Testament characters and the perceived prosperity granted unto them by God will show how the Old Testament positively views possession of wealth which is frequently commended and even promised in the Old Testament period.

Abraham, the father of faith, had blessings and was made prosperous by God. God blessed Abraham with a son called Isaac at the age of 100 years. In Genesis 22, God called for Isaac as an offering. Abraham complied and took his son up to Mount Moriah, to offer him to God. As God was convinced of Abraham's faithfulness, he prevented him from killing his son, rather he blessed him and promised to make him and even his descendants to be prosperous. Abraham was very rich in cattle and silver till death. However, Abraham did not encourage pursuit of the riches of the world. This is demonstrated by his rejection of the riches which the king of Sodom offered him in Genesis 14:12-26.

The Old Testament made references to various people who prospered in their generations. Such include Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon, Uzziah, Hezekiah and Daniel. We have laws and promise for prosperity in the Old Testament; the only condition attached to it is that wealth must be acquired in a lawful and faithful manner. Psalm 112: 1-3 says:

Blessed is the man that feareth the lord that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth; The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house...

Joseph was reportedly rich (Gen. 39:2) says "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian".

Solomon is generally believed to be the wealthiest man of his age. Solomon, we are told, loved the Lord and he exhibited this love by going to Gibeon to sacrifice a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord. And so in Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in

a dream by night and said “ask what I shall give thee” Solomon’s request was kingdom-oriented. He asked the Lord to give him an understanding heart to discern between good and bad in judging God’s people. And this speech pleased the Lord and as a result, God said because Solomon did not seek for his own gain, He was going to add to him the other things he did not ask for. God gave Solomon riches and honour beyond measure! Solomon’s wealth was reported to be great; in fact the greatest in man’s history II Chronicles 9:13-24 cf1 kings 9-14. But Solomon’s end clearly shows the dangers of riches as he later turned his back to God. He violated the divine rules given to the Israelites not to marry foreign women. He grew mad in his love for women and laid no restraints on himself in his lust, nor was he satisfied with the women of his country, but he married many wives out of foreign nations: Sidionians and Tyrans, and Ammonites and Edomites. He served foreign baals and transgressed the laws of Moses which forbade Jews to marry any but those that were their own people.<sup>3</sup> The story of Solomon clearly shows the dangers of riches when it is not channeled towards the good purpose for which God has given it to man.

The story of Nabal found in 1 Samuel 25:2-17 tells us how not to use our wealth negatively. Nabal, of the clan of Caleb, from the town of Molen had two thousand sheep and one thousand goats. His wife was Abigail. In the story of his encounter with the servants of David, we saw how he disobeyed God and the instruction passed to him through David. His stubbornness eventually led to his death before David married his wife.

In contrast, In 2 Chronicles 26:4-5, we have the story of Uzziah.:

*He did that what was right in the sight of the Lord,  
according to all that his father Amaziah did... and as long  
as he sought after the Lord, God made him prosper.*

The point being made by the Old Testament writers is that prosperity is only sustained on the basis of good virtues and recognizing the will of the Lord which is to give to His service as well as blessing the poor.

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald .B. Allen 1980, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2ed), Chicago: Laird Harris Moody Press; p. 174.

Prosperity in Old Testament is taken to be in the form of material possessions. The number of cattle, rams, and money one has, determines how prosperous one could be. Ecclesiastes 10:19 in fact make it clear, it says

*a party gives laughter, and wine gives happiness, but money gives every thing*

If one harkens diligently unto the voice of the lord, and observes all his commandments, God has promised to set him above all nations of the earth.

*And all these blessings (prosperity) shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shall hearken into the voice of the lord thy God (Deut 28:1-2).*

However, the emphasis in the Old Testament is that we must not desperately pursue wealth and riches. Riches have their own distractions as exemplified by the stories of Nabal and Solomon. The Psalmist also warns about the dangers of trusting in one's wealth or strengthening one's self in wickedness; such men were shown to have fallen greatly (Ps. 52:7). At the tail end of the Old Testament, prosperous or wealthy people were seen as wicked people and also the enemies of God, while the poor were regarded as the righteous. King Solomon denounced his wealth when he realized his follies in his closing days and said his wealth was vanity upon vanity, all of which is vanity. This idea was very rampart in the teaching of the prophets especially Isaiah and Amos. Amos condemned the rich who joined house to house not only because they have money but for exploiting the poor with the money gotten from unjust means. It became the philosophy of the Jews at that time and formed the background on which the New Testament idea of prosperity was built- that Christ came for the poor.

One of the sins which prophets after prophets, particularly Isaiah and Amos condemned and warned Israel against and threatened punishment is the oppression and exploitation of the poor, the widow, the fatherless and aliens. The rich were rebuked for depriving the poor of their landed property and for becoming prosperous at the expense of the poor. Amos condemned the rich aristocrats for trampling the head of the poor under their feet and also because to them a poor fellow human being was worth not more than the price of a pair of the rich man's sandals. God told Israel that the kind of fast acceptable to him is the following:

To loose the bonds of wickedness; to undo the heavy burdens; to let the oppressed go free; to share bread with the hungry; to bring to your house the poor who are cast out, when you see the naked that you cover him; not to hide yourself from your own flesh. Then your light shall break forth like the morning; your healing shall spring forth – your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer, you shall cry and he will say: “Here I am” (Isa.58:6-9 cf. Ps. 41:1).

Over and over again, God warns about the transient nature of earthly possessions and that it is futile for a man to put his trust in them. (Ps. 62:10, 29:4, 28:20, 49:10; Prov. 10:15, 11:24, 13:7, 14:20, 15:27, 19:7 and 17, 20:13; 27:24; Eccl. 5:8-10, 5:19, 9:16; Isaiah 3:7; Jer. 17:11, 20:13; Amos 2:17).

## 2.2 The Concept of Prosperity Teaching in the New Testament

The New Testament provides the standard framework upon which all issues of the Christian life must be based. The New Testament is regarded as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and the continuation of same. But the distinctive aspect of the New Testament is the birth, life and teachings of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour. Thus, the teachings of Jesus Christ will be taken as the standard idea of prosperity that we can get in the New Testament. Most of the teaching of Jesus on prosperity is found in the synoptic gospels and we shall see that Jesus seems to be more negative to wealth and riches in his teaching and he never in any case admonish his followers to seek material wealth, neither did he promise wealth, or prosperity as a prize of salvation. In fact, in most cases, the word wealth or riches is used in negative ways in the New Testament.

In an account of his earthly ministry, a rich man approached Jesus as to what he should do in order to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus recommended that he should sell off his possession and give the proceeds to the poor. When Jesus saw that the rich man was very sorrowful, he said,

*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through the needle eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:20).*

This new idea from Jesus was a correction of the Old Testament idea that wealth was a symbol of God's blessing which was apparently popular during the time Jesus walked the earth. At this change, even the disciples asked "who then can be saved?" which shows that they also shared the Old Testament mentality. They were shocked, because no doubt, the religious order of the day (i.e. Pharisees) held the opinion that money equals favour with God.

In Luke 16:3, Jesus says, relating to wealth,

*No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon....*

The New Testament scripture is very clear that we are not to be obsessed with obtaining monetary wealth. God does not want money to be the focus of our Christian experience. Even in the model prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, he instructed them to pray for their "daily" bread, not for an abundance of wealth.

Philippians 4:19 says

*God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory.*

The promise here, is for our needs, not for our lusts, not even for wants. Also, 3 John 2 says

*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and be in good health even as thy soul prospereth. KJV.*

This is not however an indication of God's wish for all Christians to be financially prosperous. Spiritual prosperity is what is envisaged here. Let us also remark that the New Testament contains many warnings about the dangers of riches.

Luke. 12:15 says

*Beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.*

I Tim 6:6-8 says

*Godliness with contentment is great gain having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.*

Phil 4:11 says

*I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.*

2 Cor 6:10 says

*“we are assured that even as poor, having nothing, yet we possess all things.*

I Tim 6 9-10 says

*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Jesus says in Mathew 6:19:

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”.*

Continuing in Mathew 6; 25 Jesus says:

*Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are you not more better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit into his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the Lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin. And yet I say into you; that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so cloth the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much clothe you? O ye of little faith. Therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? or where shall we be clothed, for after all these things do the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you.*

In one of his parables in Luke 12:16

*Jesus said to them “the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruit. And he said, this I will do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and will I bestow all my fruits and goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.*

Jesus is warning that a person should not make the pursuit of earthly things, acquisition of worldly wealth, popularity, fame, honour, power and prestige, his ultimate aim or the very centre of his life. Such a person will have very little or no time at all for God. Also for such a man, all his actions, including his religious activities and goals will be directed towards increase in earthly treasures without putting God first. This will certainly blur the spiritual vision. For Jesus, earthly possessions are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. Man's priority, in spite of the abundant earthly possessions, should be in the will and glory of his Creator. A man with a misplaced priority and a misdirected goal and mind is already out of tune with God. The rich may be so immersed in his wealth that he misses all that is basic and essential in life. He erroneously assumes that he could give a full allegiance to two goals at the same time, namely, giving full devotion and time to the acquisition of material wealth as if that is the only thing he lives for, but hypocritically giving the impression that he is living for God's glory.

Even the life of Jesus did not portray him as a rich man. Jesus lived a simple lifestyle devoid of wealth and riches. Jesus Himself alluded to this fact when he said...

*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests;  
but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.  
(Matt 8:20).*

Jesus stayed in his friend's house Peter at Tiberias, not that he condemned those who own houses, but he does not want earthly things to tempt people to forget about God. The kingdom is man's cardinal goal and he would not allow any other thing to divert his

attention from it.

In Luke 8:1-3 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, whose husband Chuza was an officer in Herod's court, and Susanna, and many other women were seen to have used their own resources to help Jesus and his disciples. When he wanted to pay tax, he sent his disciple to get money from the mouth of a fish. Even in the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, he sent his disciples to look for a colt on which to ride.

The New Testament writers recognized the dangers of wealth and riches, which they can draw one away from God. The point however is that God is rich. His wealth is not limited to material things and He shares it freely with all humanity. Christians are to be Christ like in sharing freely with others out of their abundance.

The negative picture of New Testament teaching on prosperity and wealth does not however mean that Christians are denied of earthly riches and wealth. It is not a sin to be rich, but excessive ambition to be rich is sin. Misuse of wealth by not using it to take care of the poor or for the purpose of supporting God's Kingdom is also a sin. The emphasis is on contentment and righteousness. According to the New Testament writings, salvation of our souls is more important than the possession of earthly wealth and riches. Jesus, in the parable of the sower in Luke 8:11-15, warned that the deceit of wealth and his desperate pursuit, the care of the world and desire for other things could choke the message of the good news earlier received with joy, just as if it has been snatched by Satan. The struggle to preserve and retain wealth at all cost, always competes with the claim of the creator over man's life and Christ says "it is impossible to serve God and Mammon" (Matt. 6:24). This totally contradicts the popular prosperity equation of our age. However, Jesus at no time denied the fact that the rich man could be saved if he sincerely believes. Jesus also romanced with the rich of his days according to the gospels. He had dinners with some Pharisees, part of the ruling class of his day (Lk. 7 36, 11:37, 14:1). Some rich women financially and morally supported his evangelistic activities (Lk. 8:2-3) and lodged in the house of Zacchaeus the chief tax collector (Lk. 19:1-10).

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<sup>4</sup> Danny McCain et al understanding and applying the scriptures p. .406



### 2.3 The Concept of Prosperity in the Early Church

The people of the early church followed the teaching of Jesus doggedly. The idea of materialistic pursuit was played down and they had everything in common. The emphasis was that Christians were expected to sell any spare possessions, land or houses, to give to their needy brothers and sisters, especially widows and orphans. They gave willingly and honestly to support the ministry and most of it were to feed and clothe the poor (see Acts 2; 44-45, acts 4; 34-37).

In the early church, everything they had was brought to the feet of the Apostles. Some Bible verses give a picture of life in the early Church. Acts 2:44-45 says “They giveth them to all man, as every man had need”. According to Acts 4:34-35 “Distribution was made unto everyman as he had need”. In Acts 6:1 “The early church had a daily ministrations to widows”. According to I Corinthians 10:24, 33 Paul says, “Let no man seek his own, but everyman another’s wealth”. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. The story is told in Acts 4: 36, 37 of Ananias and Saphiras who tried not to comply with this directive. They held back some of the proceeds from their own land which they brought to the church. The punishment for the couple was death. This exemplifies how God sanctioned seriously this egalitarian idea of the early church. There are evidences that we have few wealthy Christians in the early church, but the emphasis was that the rich should share their excesses with the poor. Note that the decision of the early church not to keep wealth but to distribute it was due to the exigencies of the time as early Christians were convinced that Jesus was coming soon so that there was no need for the accumulation of wealth.

Paul admonished people to share their wealth with others because according to him “we brought nothing into the world and we shall take nothing out of it” (1 Tim 6:7).

Dr Lightfoot tries to give a picture of the communalism of the early church thus;

*Perhaps they had common tables, for familiarity, they are together, that those who had much might have the less, and so kept from the temptations of abundance and they who had little might have the more, and so be kept from the temptations of want and poverty.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> The prosperity message; false Doctrine in the church” [www. Google](http://www.Google) accessed 2006

Paul warns that wealth is a powerful temptation for Christians, which many people cannot resist. He advises his followers not to pursue wealth and he wrote Timothy concerning this. Paul condemns those who think that godliness is a means of financial gain and stressed that godliness with contentment is great gain. Paul concludes that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But he admonished Timothy to flee from all these and pursue righteousness godliness, love, endurance and gentleness (I Tim. 6:5-11).

James, one of the New Testament writers, against the background of the early church warns against the desire for wealth. He warns that wealth will pass away like a wild flower (James 1:10) and the wealthy man will do the same (James 1:11). He despises Christians who discriminate in the church, assigning good seats to the wealthy and lowly seats to the poor. He identifies the likely sources of the wealth of the rich to their exploiting the poor (James 2:6).

John of the apocalypses is also negative to materialistic philosophy. He stated that Jesus angrily condemned the church at Laodicea for their materialistic tendencies and life style (Rev 3: 17).

*Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked 3;18. I counsel thee to buy me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou may be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou may see.*

Jesus knew the church of Laodicea was monetarily wealthy yet he called them poor! This is in contrast to the church in Smyrna which was a poor church by monetary standards and yet Jesus called them rich!

Rev. 2:8

*And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive: 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

Elements of prosperity teaching appeared in the early church by what has been

variously identified as “the way of Balaam” (II Pet. 2:15), Balaam error (Jude 11) and the teaching of Balaam (Rev. 2:14). Balaam, as we may well know, is the pagan prophet who did his job for the money and who used his office to seduce the children of Israel into sin. Balaam is the classical example of those religious leaders who rather than being used by God for God’s own glory, use God to try to serve their own selfish ends.

The church in Ephesus, to which Paul assigned Timothy, suffered the same fate. In his letters to Timothy, Paul said particularly that there were fake ministers of God in Ephesus who used their position to serve selfish, material gain (I Tim. 6:5). To this group, he recommended Godliness and contentment which is a great gain (I Tim. 6:6). Some teachers capitalize on their listeners/gullibility to mislead them (I Tim. 3:6) and ultimately ruin themselves and their hearers (II Tim. 2:14) cf. I Tim 6:5-10 (II Peter 2:1-19) (Jude 10:16).

Peter said:

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up... Bold and arrogant – these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand... they are experts in greed – an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness ... they mouth empty, boastful words and by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (II Peter 2:1-19).

Jude said:

... these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals – these are the very things that destroy them.

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.

These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm – shepherd who feed only themselves – they follow their own evil desires; they boast

about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage (Jude 10-16).

The summary of the New Testament and Early Church position on prosperity teaching is best exemplified in these powerful words from Paul to Timothy:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, *supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself*. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts; which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:3-10).

#### 2.4 **The Relationship between Religion and the Economy**

The question of what religion has to do with economics has been a question asked by many believers and scholars alike. The argument has been that since religion represents the spiritual and eternal while economics on the other hand represents the material, the secular and temporal, both have no desirable relationship.

The traditional idea in Christianity has been that church members should carefully avoid all matters of political, economic and social interest especially as her members are aspiring to win ultimately the kingdom of God. From the very beginning, Christianity has had to struggle against the two-fold temptation of either to escape from the world in order to be preserved from evil or remain in the world and become subjected to it. Jesus Christ was once quoted as saying:

No servant can serve two masters: either he will serve one and leave the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Thus, according to Obijole, it would seem to be right for Christians to avoid interest with other members of the society in political, social and economic areas. He says perhaps this was the idea behind the hermitic practices of certain early Christians, and the formation of monasteries for monks in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup> However, the modern Christian understanding is that religion cannot and has never stood aloof of economic interest of the society. God is the author of the human society and is interested in the promotion of the rule of law, and the improvement of our social and economic life. Man is also responsible to God for his conduct in political, economic, international, personal, private and social affairs. It is in line with the new thinking of a strong relationship between religion and economy that Emile Durkheim has described religion as “a social phenomenon” and that religious beliefs carry with them social obligations. Thus, the goal of every religion is harmony and well-being of the individual within the society. It aims at achieving “total well-being” which includes all facets of life especially economic life.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Protestant Ethics and the Development of Calvinism

Calvinism is a series of theological beliefs first promoted by John Calvin, one of the leaders of the Protestants reformation. They were affirmed by the synod of Dordt as being the doctrine of salvation which is contained in the Bible. It laid the foundation for reformed theology.

One school of thought attributes Calvinism with setting the stage for the later development of capitalism in Western Europe and America. In this view, elements of Calvinism represented a revolt and implicitly of profit in general. Such connection was advanced by influential works by Max Weber.

Calvin introduced the doctrine of calling together with his insistence upon work and frugality in contrast to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that discourages such. For Calvin, religious piety is not irrelevant to common life; in fact, it is the ground for a proper use of goods. The calling is the context where Christian faith is experienced

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<sup>6</sup> Obijole Bayo, 1993. Religion, A mobilizing tool for Economic recovery (A Christian perspective) *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXV/1-2, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> E. Durkheim 2002. in Hagin *Religion and Capitalism*, New York: Mac Publishing company, p. 50.

and Christian service finds expression. Calvinism has significant influence on both politics and economic. In economics, the ethics of salvation became transformed into the typical middle class ethic of capitalist commercialism: a systematic division of labour, emphasis on specialization, the sense of profitability, the abstract duty and the obligation towards property as something which ought to be maintained and increased for its own sake. The owner of the wealth, according to Calvinism, is a steward who is only administering a divine gift entrusted to him. The outlook gave room for youthful capitalism, men of quality it needed, both energetic directors and middlemen as well as men willing to be exploited, if only by so doing they could get work.

This religious ideology of Calvin preserved the inherited character from the puritans – the frowning on pleasures, self-glorification, the sense of obligation to workers and to give respect to employers, the sense of duty or service to God, strict honesty and a great extension of philanthropy. Commercial life was regarded as a life of service to God and to the community.

Calvin expressed himself on usury in a 1545 letter to a friend, Claride de Sachin, in which he criticized the use of certain passages of scripture invoked by people opposed to the charging of interest. He reinterpreted some of these passages and suggested that many of them have been rendered irrelevant by changed conditions. He also dismissed the arguments linked to Aristotle that it is wrong to charge interest for money because money itself is barren. He said that the walls and the roof of a house are barren too, but it is permissible to charge someone for allowing him to use them. In the same way, money could be made fruitful. He qualifies his view however by saying that money should be lent to people in dire need without hope of interest, while only a modest interest rate of 5% should be permitted in lending transactions.

Although Calvin's protestant ethic in inspiring capitalism has its problems, in that it created the problems of usury and exploitation, economic activity was strictly controlled and mobilized by a religious form of totalitarian state in which the most innocent pleasures are forbidden and ceaseless work was the order of the day. It became the springboard for later industrial revolutions of Western Europe.

#### 2.4.2 Max Weber and Protestant Ethics

Max Weber wrote his famous book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1930 which is considered a founding text in economic sociology and sociology in general.

It is the opinion of Weber in this book that capitalism in Northern Europe evolved when the protestant (particularly Calvinist) ethic influenced large numbers of people to engage in trade and the accumulation of wealth for investment. In other words, the protestant work ethic was an important force behind the unplanned and uncoordinated mass action that influenced the development of capitalism. This idea is also known as the Protestant Ethic Thesis.<sup>8</sup>

The traditional Roman Catholic view, Weber argues, is usually accompanied by a rejection of worldly affairs, including the pursuit of wealth and possession. He however notes that the reformation profoundly affected the view of work, dignifying even the most mundane professions as adding to the common good and thus blessed by God, as much as any “sacred” calling. Weber defines the spirit of capitalism as the ideas and esprit that favour rational pursuit of economic gain. He says there are many reasons to find its origins in the religious ideas of the reformation. Many others like William Petty, Montequieu, Henry Thomas Buckle, John Keats have also noted the affinity between Protestantism and the development of commercialism.

The Roman Catholic Church assured salvation to individuals who accepted the church’s sacraments and submitted to the clerical authority. However, the Reformation had effectively removed such assurances. Martin Luther, he acknowledged, was one of those devout believers within Protestantism who were able to adjust to this new worldview. Weber said in the absence of such assurances from religious authority, Protestants began to look for other “signs” that they were saved. Calvin and his followers taught a doctrine of double predestination, in which from the beginning God chose some people for salvation and others for damnation. The inability to influence one’s own salvation presented a very difficult problem for Calvin’s followers. It became an absolute duty to believe that one was chosen for salvation, and to dispel any doubt about that: lack

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<sup>8</sup> Samuelson, P. 2005. *The Spirit of Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Harper Torch Books, 108.

of self confidence was evidence of insufficient faith and a sign of damnation. So, self-confidence took the place of priestly assurance of God's grace. Worldly success became one measure of that self-confidence. According to Luther, "Vocation" from God was no longer limited to the clergy or church, but applies to any occupation or trade. However, Weber saw the fulfilment of the protestant ethic not in Lutheranism, but in Calvinist forms of Christianity. He summarized his conclusion of the new ideas of the protestant ethic as saying that an individual was religiously compelled to follow a secular vocation with as much zeal as possible with the probability that a person living according to this worldview was more likely to accumulate money. Also was that the new religions (in particular Calvinism and other more austere protestant sects) effectively forbade wastefully using hard earned money and identified the purchase of luxuries as a sin. Donations to an individual's church or congregation were limited and donation of money to the poor or to charity were generally frowned on as it was seen as furthering beggary. This social condition was perceived as laziness, burdening their fellow men and an affront to God; by not working, one failed to glorify God.

We cannot but agree with professor Hagin when he rightly said:

Industry and innovations are directly associated with religious dogma<sup>9</sup>

The protestant ethic has been closely associated with the rise of capitalism and the industrial revolution of the eighteen and nineteen centuries Europe which eventually spread later into other continents of the world including Africa. The religious independents, the congregationists, the Baptists, the Mennonites, the Quakers and the Anglicans were the leading entrepreneurs and the business executives after the reformation. It was their acquisitive, combined with ascetic nature that accounted for the increased volume of saving and investment. Without this capitalism, the rapid economic revolution that took place after the reformation would have been impossible.<sup>10</sup>

Max Weber also sought to set aright Marx's theory that the structure of economic relationship between individuals and groups in society is of decisive weight and that religious images have virtually no meaning apart from this structure. In his view, the

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<sup>9</sup> Hagin was quoted in O. Otite, 2001. *An Introduction to Sociological Studies*, Ibadan: Heinemann Books, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>M. Weber in P. 2004. Hammond; *Methodology of Social Science*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 102.



larger economic context in which religion arises only stands as a framework in which the internal significance of religious meanings and acts can be interpreted. Religion is joined to the economic activity, just because without the former, certain kinds of economic behaviour would not seem rational and consistent.

## 2.5 The Development of Capitalism in Nigeria

Nigeria got amalgamated in 1914 and remained under British protectorate until 1960 when she got her independence. With British colonization came the attendant features like missionary agencies, British form of education, economic set up and British governmental processes. The British came to Nigeria with a racist ideology which contemptuously denigrated the original Nigeria setting as having no system of ethics and no principle of conduct, on the one hand, while on the other hand, glorifying the “civilizing mission” and “white man’s burden” of the colonial order. There is a consensus among Nigerian scholars that it was the British colonizers who changed the material and spiritual circumstances of the people of Nigeria by compelling them to participate in colonial economic activities dominated by profit motive and individualism”.<sup>11</sup>

The British colonialists promoted the leading theological tenets of Protestantism in Nigeria such as individualism, the distrust of human authority and the idea of hard work as a divine calling, which at the same time led to the rise of capitalism as an economic system. These values were consequently reinforced by the educational system and religious institutions. Perhaps, these values also enabled Africans to carry on their activities in the British interest. Colonization provided a myth whose primary objective was the complete alienation of the colonized, enabling control of them. The acceptance of colonial mentality reflected a Eurocentric devaluation of African culture and a corresponding glorification of the European way of life (including capitalism) which has been sustained to date.

## 2.6 History of Prosperity Teaching

Prosperity teaching has generated much controversy and is now very popular all over the world. According to E. M. Okwori, "This teaching is not a theology as such;

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<sup>11</sup> Dike Victor E, 1999, *Leadership, democracy and the Nigerian economy: lessons from the past and directions for the future* (Sacramento, CAI The Lighting Press, p. 99.

nobody took time to formulate it into a logical system".<sup>12</sup> The advocates of prosperity are popular preachers who advance their position mostly from the pulpit and sometimes through their writings.

It has been said that prosperity preaching has a charismatic flavouring to it but is by no means limited to Pentecostalism. It seems to be a blending of the positive thinking of Norman Vincent Peale or Robert Schuller and the Faith ministry of Oral Roberts. However in the Nigerian experience, prosperity has only been taught by the pentecostalists.

It has been suggested that the prosperity message came into being in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the fact is that the notion that "godliness is gain" has been around since even the time of Job, which is considered one of the oldest letters of the canon of scripture. Job's friends admonished him to return to God so that he could be wealthy. Because we live in the last days, and with new economic challenges, this teaching has become all the more prevalent, but this idea is not a product of our day - it far precedes our generation.

Quite often, prosperity preaching is against a background of poverty, oppression, deprivation, unemployment and marginalization. Various sources have traced the origin of prosperity preaching to the United States of America. According to Hanna, it arose in the United States after World War II. It was championed by Oral Roberts in the 1950s and became particularly popular in the decades of the 1990s. It was popularized among the blacks in the USA who are often oppressed among the down trodden. More recently, the theology has been exported to less prosperous areas of the world with mixed results.<sup>13</sup> However, Lisa articulates that prosperity preaching can be traced to the Word of Faith movement. The movement had its origin within Pentecostal circles with preachers like E. W. Kenyon and Williams Branham, who began a new teaching of the scriptures. According to Lisa, Hanegraff states that E. W. Kenyon was influenced by science of mind principles, which promotes the positive confession aspect of faith theology. Through what he calls "Revelation Knowledge", Kenyon hopes to create

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<sup>12</sup> E. M. Okwori, 1995, *Godliness for gain: a theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, Jos, Nigeria: Tony Press, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> R. Hanna, Sept. 18, 2008, *Does god Want You to be Rich?* Retrieved May 05, 2010, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/articles/.html>. p. 1.

“Supermen” and “Superwomen”, a master race of Christians no longer bound by “sense knowledge” or by demons, disease and poverty. This hope is the central thrust of all Kenyon’s writings. Kenyon also teaches that man by nature is on God’s class of being, that is God and man possesses a common nature; both are spiritual beings. Man is not a physical being. The only difference between God and man is a matter of degree, not of kind. Oral Roberts and Kenneth Hagin cite these men as having influenced their thinking on faith.<sup>14</sup> Kenneth E. Hagin is the acknowledged “father” of the modern Word of Faith Movement and is viewed by charismatic Christians globally as a true prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Kenneth Hagin has been active in ministry since the 1930’s and worked around the fringes of Pentecostal healing revival of the 1940’s through late 1950’s.<sup>15</sup>

Keneth Hagin’s writings reveal word for word direct copying from the various writings of Kenyon, (though Hagin falsely claims that his teachings came to him as a direct revelation from God). He says “we live in the body but we are spirit beings”.

Abogunrin says “The faith movement is deeply rooted in Gnostic teachings and principles, as well as in certain aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism, and it places more emphasis on following certain principles, guidelines, formulas and techniques in order to achieve success and for one to actually discover who he is”<sup>16</sup>

#### 2.6.1. Prosperity Teaching in America

Prosperity teaching started with the Word of Faith Movement in America. McConnell in his book “*A Different Gospel*” conducted a research into the origins of the word of faith teaching and found word-for-word parallels between the writings of E. W. Kenyon, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostal evangelist who had been influenced by New Thought and Kenneth Hagin, the then leader of the Word Faith Movement. McConnel has proved the genesis of prosperity movement in New Thought and demonstrated its unbiblical character while also strongly hinting that it is downright dangerous to people’s health and financial well-being (in so far as they were being taught to act like they were

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<sup>14</sup> R. Lisa, June 200, Origin of Prosperity Theology retrieved May 05, 2010 from <http://theologica.ning/forum/>, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> L. Robert, 2008, The Counterfeit Dreams and Visions of “Prophet” Kenneth Hagin. Retrieved May 05, 2010, from <http://www.discernment.org/wordfaith/kenhagin.htm>. 1

<sup>16</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 2007, Jesus Pronouncement on Wealth in the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria, in *Biblical Studies and Corruption in Africa* NABIS, Ibadan, p. 271

well and rich even when they were not).<sup>17</sup>

The idea is that God promises that if you have positive faith and truly believe and speak that faith with your mouth in positive affirmations (e.g. God is my source of healing and prosperity; I am well and rich), God is obligated to heal you and give you financial blessings beyond your wildest dreams. This is the same idea in the New Thought movement.

The New Thought movement was started by Phineas Quimby in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its main promoters were Mary Baker Eddy, Ernest Holmes and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore (founders of UNITY). Its main popularizer was Napoleon Hill whose book *“Think and Grow Rich”* is still in print. A mild version of New Thought was popularized by Norman Vincent Peale and through him, by Robert Schuller. New Thought entered into the fabric of American folk religion as positive thinking. But the Fillmores taught that true faith that works to bring healing and financial prosperity must be spoken in positive affirmation. Ultimately, it goes back to the Puritans who taught that financial success was a “sign of election” From there it entered into American ethos and prepared the way for New Thought and the Word Faith Movement. The Word Faith “prosperity gospel” has been said to be a little more than New Thought with a charismatic veneer thrown over it. It is deformed because it makes God a cosmic slot machine and turns salvation into a self-centered acquisition of physical blessings. The cross plays almost no role in it whatsoever. The prosperity gospel has been described as a “spiritualization” of the American dream and a logical offspring of Americans philosophic world view. The package, beliefs, assumptions and action patterns align with what social scientists have labeled as the American dream and have always been a fragile agglomeration of (1) individual freedom of choice in life styles (2) equal access to economic abundance and (3) the pursuit of shared objectives mutually advantageous to the individual and society.

The work of Catherine Ponder on the New Thought is also very relevant here. In 1958, when America was in a recession, members of Catherine Ponder’s Unity Church congregation were asking her for guidance on how to get through it. She started giving

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<sup>17</sup> D. R. McConnel was quoted by E. M. Okwori 1995, in *Godliness for Gain: A Theological evaluation of the Nigerian Version of Prosperity Gospel*, Jos Nigeria, p. 41.

prosperity classes, teaching that prosperity was first and foremost a state of mind. A mindset of lack could only manifest negative results while a positive mindset could manifest good results. Many members experienced dramatic turnarounds; unexpected raises, promotions, debt paid – yet what struck Ponder was how many people wondered whether it was ‘right’ to seek prosperity i.e. whether it was consistent with spiritual values. Didn’t the Bible say “You cannot serve God and mammon”? (Matthew 6:24). Ponder responded to the first question by making a distinction. Mammon is wealth that is worshipped for its own sake; it is wealth without God. Prosperity teaching, on the other hand, puts God first as the source of our supply. She agreed that Jesus had told a wealthy man to go and sell everything he had, but it was because he was still attached to his riches, he did not yet recognize God as the source of his supply. In her book the “*Dynamic Laws of Prosperity*”,<sup>18</sup> she classically wrote a compendium of the secrets and techniques of prosperity which is – Desire + Visualization and Affirmation = success.

Ponder says the brain works in terms of mental images, and whatever images it has are likely to become reality. You can, therefore, literally see your way to success. The secret of turning desires into reality is to write them down. Ponder talks in terms of radiation and attraction i.e. the thought that we give out keep coming back to us in same form. We engage in radiation and attraction all the time, but because we are not properly aware of it, we don’t see the error in radiating thoughts of negativity and lack. Thoughts of prosperity attract success but you must give full measure for the good you wish to receive. The practice of tithing, she argues, puts us in tune with the universal law of attraction.

Catherine Ponder’s teaching on prosperity and healing influenced many in the twentieth century. Her own life reads as an example of her teaching. She went from condition of financial hardship as a single mother to discovering for herself the ancient secrets of manifestation to becoming a world-renowned authority, richly rewarded for her work and endeavours. She found three Unity churches from scratch. Ponder advocates the application of New Thought techniques and asked her readers to re-awaken to older dreams of greatness, happiness and wealth, and to employ the usual New Thought techniques of visualization and affirmation to progress towards greatness.

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<sup>18</sup> Mary Lyn Rands, 2012, [Miraclenews.net](http://Miraclenews.net).

However, in the new thought teaching, it is not enough to think and visualize what we want, we must also express faith. God works by faith. It's our faith that activates the power of God".<sup>19</sup> This same concept is also taught by New Age teachers such as Eckhart Tolle, Rhonda Byrne and others who teach that your life will follow your expectations, and what you expect is what you get.

The New Age book by Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*, which gained popularity in America due to Oprah Winfrey's strong promotion, teaches that we can "create (our) own happiness through the law of attraction". Whether it is cash, health, prosperity or happiness, all can be ours if we just learn to use "the secret". Byrne tells us "Disease cannot live in body that is in a healthy emotional state. But if you have a disease and you are focusing on it and talking to people about it, you are going to create more disease cells".<sup>20</sup>

Well known personality within the Word Faith Movement include Kenneth Hagin (deceased), Kenneth Copland, Robert Filton, Paul Younggi Cho, Benny Hinn, Marilyn Hickey, Fredrick Price, John Avanzini, Charles Capps, Jerry Savelle, Morris Cerullo, Joyce Meyer, Paul and Jan Crouch and also Joel Osteen.

### 2.6.2 Prosperity Teaching in Nigeria

Fatokun has traced the history of the development of prosperity gospel in Nigeria and has divided it into three stages namely: The prosperity theology in the pre-colonial Nigeria Christianity, prosperity theology in the colonial Nigerian Christianity and prosperity teaching in the post colonial Nigeria Christianity.

He says that critically examined, 'Prosperity Theology' is not entirely a new theme in Nigerian Christianity. The theme is as old as Christianity itself since the idea is developed from the Holy Bible, the one and only universally recognized sacred text of the religion which has been in use almost from the inception of the Faith.

According to Fatokun, the evangelical revival in Europe in the eighteenth century led to the formation of different missionary societies which aimed at bringing the Gospel

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Lyn Rands, 2012, [Miraclenews.net](http://Miraclenews.net).

<sup>20</sup> Rhonda Byrne was quoted in Andrew Strom, 2011, *The prosperity and seed faith doctrines*, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

of Salvation to the heathens in their various lands.<sup>21</sup> The Africans, for example, were considered spiritually poor, that they were still under the servitude of sin and worship of demons, and as such needed to be helped out of their spiritual slavery. This humane feeling prompted the Missionaries from Britain in the nineteenth century<sup>22</sup> to come to Nigeria in strict compliance to the Great Commission of 'Making disciples of all nations' (see Matthew 28:19 & 20). Hence, the 'prosperity theology' of the protestant missionaries that planted Christianity in Nigeria was primarily the spiritual well being of the spiritually depraved Nigerians. Yet 'prosperity' in the conception of the pre-colonial Christian, was not strictly restricted to spiritual well-being, that is having assurance of salvation from sin, but also included physical well-being. But it is evident from their approach that spiritual prosperity was foremost in their hearts than physical and material blessings.

Fatokun identified Colonial Nigerian Christianity as covering a period between 1861 to the eve nation's independence (Oct. 1 1960), that is, barely a century of contact. The colonial era coincided with the rise of Pentecostalism in Nigeria which has a strong characteristic for the conception of prosperity in that era.

The Pentecostal Movement attempted to recapture the ardour of Primitive Christianity, believing that the chosen people in the historical Christian churches have become the 'frozen people of God'.<sup>23</sup> And in reaction to this said growing formalism, nominalism and spiritual decay, the early Pentecostals arose to preach a 'prosperity of spiritual revival' which expressed itself in divine healing miracles, signs and wonders, deliverance from demonic possessions and attacks, prophecy, vision etc.

In other words, prosperity, as conceived and preached by the rising Pentecostal Evangelists in the colonial period, was mainly concerned with the problems of salvation from sin, divine healing and deliverance from various types of illness and diseases, demonic possession and spiritual attack, as these manifold ills constituted a major

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<sup>21</sup> S. A. Fatokun, 2000, Prosperity Theology and Nigeria Christianity, *Castalia: Ibadan Journal of Multicultural/Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2. p. 50

<sup>22</sup> Though Nigeria had earlier in the fifteenth century had contact with Christianity through the Portuguese Expedition and Catholic Christianity was established in the Old Bini kingdom, but that Missionary Enterprise was a failure (due to its miscarriages) such that the Christianity so brought had completely faded away by the end of the eighteenth century.

<sup>23</sup> K. M. Donnel and W. J. Hollenweger, 1971, 'The Pentecostal Movement' in *One in Christ: A Catholic Ecumenical Review*, p. 324.

hindrance to the well-being of man in his society.

Fatokun says the 1960 national independence brought about a radical change in the conception of prosperity among the Pentecostal circle in Nigeria. Towards the close of that decade and onward, there arose the new Pentecostal Movement which began to see prosperity as more than salvation from sin and deliverance from demonic influences. In their opinion, material poverty is a horrible disease which Christians must endeavour to eliminate totally. Christ, in their interpretation, became poor that they might become rich. He also identified the methods used by the prosperity gospel teachers; that they ask their members to think like millionaires so that they can become millionaires and that their way of thinking is a great determinant of what they will become.<sup>24</sup>

According to Fatokun, another method used is that they encourage their followers to sow fatly so that they might reap good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. He observed that there is a shift of emphasis from the basic redemptive work of Christ to just one of its benefits. He however, believes that the material prosperity gospel preached by the neo-Pentecostals is complementary to the spiritual and physical prosperity message emphasized in the pre-colonial and colonial eras. On the opposite, he notes that the presentation of the material prosperity message by most neo-Pentecostal ministers in the country is becoming absurd. While it is true that God is interested in the material well-being of His people that does not mean that such should now be emphasized above the basic element of Christian faith.<sup>25</sup> Fatokun concludes that, while it is a well-established fact that Christians need both spiritual, physical and material blessings from God in order to live a balanced life, yet it is a truism that all Christians cannot become millionaires, as the material prosperity apostles seem to suggest.

Ayantayo is more concerned with prosperity gospel and social morality. He defines social morality as beliefs or ideas of a society about what is right or wrong, and about how people should behave. With the background that prosperity teaching is the emphasis strongly placed on material possession or acquisition, Ayantayo says Christ was an itinerant preacher who had no time to accumulate wealth. According to Ayantayo,

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<sup>24</sup> S. A. Fatokun, 2000, *Prosperity Theology and Nigeria Christianity*, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> S. A. Fatokun, 2000, *Prosperity Theology and Nigeria Christianity*, *Castalia: Ibadan Journal of Multicultural/Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2. p. 49



prosperity preachers boast of having capacity to make a person rich. As a result, they introduce series of pranks and tricks, which are manifested in manipulating and playing upon the intelligence, or ignorance (at times) of their audience. Majority of the people in the audience are carried away by the techniques and methods of the prosperity teachers.

Ayantayo says the church should promote a new orientation in which prosperity seekers should be informed about some of the snares associated with desire for prosperity. For the purpose of emphasis, prosperity seeking (at all times) at the expense of spiritual development, leads to the following moral problems which he has identified; deceit in that the lips will try to cover up from the desires that are in the heart (Ezk. 33:31, I Thess. 2:5); slavery to inward passions and desires (Titus 3:3, II Pet. 2:19), blindness to the fact that life is more than food and the body, more than clothing (Luke 12:13), selfishness; that we think principally of ourselves (Luke 12:19, 21) hoarding rather than using our possessions to profit others (Matt. 6:19). In addition it encourages us to accumulate so as to put aside and ultimately destroy all other moral values (II Tim. 3:2ff). Likewise it always brings antagonism and conflict in human relationship (Jam. 4:1, 2) because by it, malice, envy and hatred enter into our lives.

Ayantayo concludes that the church should be modest and disciplined in its teaching about prosperity, so that it could be a model for church adherents. Government too should caution the excesses of religious groups in terms of its emphasis on prosperity all the time perhaps through disguised censorship. Finally, he advised that the church should place high premium more than before on the importance of morality or moral consideration in all religious and non religious activities. While prosperity is good, it is important for us to pursue it through honest means especially within the ethos of the society. To act otherwise is to erode the societal norms and such would bring negative effect to members of society.<sup>26</sup> It has been observed that the greatest problem of prosperity teachers is that they over-emphasize the benefits of redemption at the expense of the redemption experience itself.

According to Abogunrin, prosperity teaching in Nigeria has been greatly influenced by belief in destiny, or predestination as taught in African religion. God has

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<sup>26</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, *Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 215.

destined everyone to be rich, but in order to realize this, one must follow certain principles and above all obey God's injunction by paying tithes. He says "the basic message of prosperity gospel is that it is God's will and plan to free all believers from sickness and material poverty... The faith movement teachers are quite correct in pointing believers to God and the wonderful promises made in his word in order to get their needs met. But in defining basic needs, faith teachers have gone beyond Jesus and Paul. According to Jesus, man's basic needs are food, drink and clothing. According to Paul man's basic needs are food and covering and with this we should be content. The doctrine fails to make any distinction between need and wants. Under normal circumstances, God has promised to meet every legitimate need of his children. However, nowhere has God promised that he will give what we need to satisfy our lust and desires. Instead, Christians are urged to crucify their lust (Romans 6:1-4)"<sup>27</sup>

According to McConnell D. R., Prosperity message is man-centred as against the orthodox Christianity that is God-centred. They tend to be fear-motivated "power-drunk, and seekers after quick solutions to the common problems of human life."<sup>28</sup>

Ken Camp says contrary to the notion that Christianity consists of ease and plenty, the writings of Paul, Peter, James, Hebrews and the Revelation give pointed instructions for suffering and sacrifice in the service of God. They specifically refer to the costliness of following Christ; to pain and persecution; to the linking of life and death in this relationship journey with God; grounding the conviction of countless followers through the centuries that "to live is Christ and to die is gain". This is no cheap grace we have received.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 2007, Jesus Pronouncement on Wealth in the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria, in *Biblical Studies and Corruption in Africa* NABIS, Ibadan, p. 271.

<sup>28</sup> D. R. McConnel was quoted by E. M. Okwori 1995, in *Godliness for Gain: A Theological evaluation of the Nigerian Version of Prosperity Gospel*, Jos Nigeria, p. 41

<sup>29</sup> Ken Camp, 2006, *Prosperity gospel not all good, some Baptist leaders say*. Associates Baptist Press, p. 16.

John F. MacArthur Jr says the prosperity teacher's idea is that the believer uses God whereas the truth of biblical Christianity is just the opposite, God uses the believer. Prosperity teachers see the Holy Spirit as a power to be put to use for whatever the believer wills.<sup>30</sup> The Bible teaches, however, that the Holy Spirit is a person who enables the believer to do God's will. Many of them claim that Jesus was born again so that we might become little gods. Scripture however teaches that Jesus is God, and it is we who must be born again.

He also queried the principle of positive confession. He said though it is true we can actually tell God what you would like his part in the covenant to be, yet the idea portrays God as not Lord of all; he is not able to work until we release him to do so. He is dependent on human instructions, human faith and above all human word to get his work done. He asked rhetorically: why pray at all if our words have so much creative force? He says the prosperity teachers deny God's sovereignty, remove the need to pray to God for any relief from burdens or needs, and give the Christian himself both dominion and creative power. He said prosperity teaching claims that health and prosperity are every Christian's divine right because in their system, Christians are gods, deserving those things. Why do they teach that a believer's words have creative and determinative force? Because in their system, the believer and not God is sovereign.<sup>31</sup>

Samuel Oladele Deji also contends that the prosperity teaching that money is a sign of God's blessing and that poverty is a sign of God's displeasure may adversely affect the spiritual life of believers. It turns Christianity into a religion of personal gain. Self, and not Christ, becomes the centre of focus; The emphasis is on "my blessings", "my peace", "my prosperity". Crudely stated "love Jesus, and get rich". Some expound mathematical formulas such as the hundredfold doctrine, give one naira and get one hundred in return. Thus, the motive in giving is not to bless others, but to get something for themselves in return. It is a serious distortion because the teaching rests upon a piece of important biblical teaching, namely the generosity of God. But it is a distortion, because it turns one aspect of the Bible's teaching on wealth into the whole message. This distortion fails to see the dark side of wealth.

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<sup>30</sup> John MacArthur Jr, 1992, *Charismatic chaos, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House*, p. 325.

<sup>31</sup> John MacArthur Jr, 1992, *Charismatic chaos, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House*, p. 325.

J. C. Agunwamba agrees that not all Christians can be rich. He says Christ mentioned that the poor would always be with us. If the poor are no longer among us, there will be no need to practise charity among us. Not all of us can be entrusted with great wealth. No wise and really affectionate mother will permit her infant to play with razor, or with fire however much the child may desire to have them. And so, our heavenly father will not entrust us with wealth if he knows we cannot all handle it profitably.<sup>32</sup>

Scott McKnight has also observed an absurdity in the prosperity teaching. He states that God could be seen in the teaching of the prosperity teachers, as “The vending machine God; put in faith and out pops blessings – money, homes, cars beautiful spouses, clever kids, good neighbours, big churches, and plush vacations.... In the prosperity gospel, God is there for us; we are here for God to bless.”<sup>33</sup>

Andrew Strom contends that what the prosperity teachers do is to twist certain scriptural passages to fit their theology and exploit the gullible. He takes the “seed faith” doctrine and says “What they are really saying is “Give to get” – the motivation for giving is not so much to bless that ministry, but to get something back from God. The motivation is all twisted. He queried: Do they expect God to “bless” something so wrong-hearted? But he said the prosperity teachers love this doctrine because it enables them to gather huge sums of money. He concludes that the purity of simply “giving from the heart” is lost and replaced with selfish motives. People give because the preacher “guaranteed” they will get a “big return” on their investment. The motivation is so wrong that it is no wonder that this doctrine has produced disastrous fruit in the church. It is one of the sickest things around.”<sup>34</sup>

Hermeneutically, it has been opined by Stenhammer that prosperity teaching is poor in that it is an exercise in proof-testing, where Scriptures are taken out of their proper setting and used to support an argument which is not itself from Scripture. Scriptures tend to be used without considering the literary and cultural contexts, linguistic gaps, literary genres, and other crucial areas. Moreso, biblical texts are read through the

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<sup>32</sup> J. C. Agunwamba, 2000, *Prosperity God's way*, Ibadan: Scripture Union (Nig) Press, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Scott McKnight, 2010, *Prosperity gospel*. Retrieved from <http://www.theological.com/3/prst/2010/prosperitygospel.html>

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Strom, 2011, *The prosperity and seed faith doctrines*, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

lenses of pragmatic materialism and the desire to justify (Biblify) the American dream, and often an exercise in individual hermeneutics where promises or prophecies are taken to apply directly and without limitations to each believer.<sup>35</sup> The hermeneutics of the prosperity movement leaves much to be desired. Their methods of interpreting biblical text are highly subjective and arbitrary. Bible verses are quoted in abundance without attention to grammatical indicators, semantic nuances, or literary and historical context. The results are a set of ideas and principles based on distortion of textual meaning.

According to Folarin, the major problem with the prosperity gospel as currently practiced in Nigeria is that it is not fully delivering on its promises of wealth, health and freedom from demonic oppression. This is as a result of their method of biblical interpretation which takes Scriptures out of context, not with the truth of Scripture. He says further that the prosperity gospel, as being currently preached in Nigeria, fails to distinguish the scope of the blessings available to believers between the incipient and the futuristic aspects of God's kingdom, and that prosperity preachers exhibit a family hermeneutics procedure because many of them neither attended standard theological schools nor passed through good Sunday school classes that could have helped them approach Bible interpretation more systematically.<sup>36</sup>

U. Joseph, commenting on prosperity teaching says: It is a "doctrine of demons" sent to deceive the people of God in order to draw their hearts away from absolute devotion to the Lord alone and get them to set their affections on the things of the earth, to stifle their spirituality and get them to prostitute themselves with idols of greed. It is designed by the hoards of Hell to be a stumbling block and cause of reproach in the church because when many of the unsaved see preachers promising prosperity doctrine and ideas of earthly abundance, it causes them to turn away from the church and even blaspheme the way of truth.<sup>37</sup>

J. Piper, commenting on prosperity gospel said: when I read about prosperity preaching churches, my response is; "if I were not on the inside of Christianity, I

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<sup>35</sup> Mikael Stenhammar, 2010, The poverty of the prosperity gospel. Retrieved from [www.conversion.ianssanen/conversations/10293](http://www.conversion.ianssanen/conversations/10293) on 1-3-2011.

<sup>36</sup> George Folarin, 2007, The Prosperity gospel in Nigeria: a re-examination of the concept, it's impact and an evaluation. Cyber Journal for Pentecostal – Charismatic Research. Accessed September, 2010, p. 1-3.

<sup>37</sup> U. Joseph, 2008, Prosperity Preachers and Financial Gain retrieved from <http://www.pureteachers.com> p. 12.

wouldn't want in". In other words, if this is the message of Jesus, no thank you. Luring people to Christ to get rich is both deceitful and deadly. It's deceitful because when Jesus himself called us, he said things like, "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33), And it is deadly because the desire to be rich plunges people into ruin and destruction."<sup>38</sup>

Oshitelu is of the opinion that though the prosperity teaching is condemnable, yet he aligns himself with William James who says that "religion is very optimistic in the face of callousness and absurdity of the world". He says it is the extremity of the prosperity preachers that the orthodox believers are rejecting. He supports the notion that the power of religion can bring a great change in a man's status. When a man or a woman comes in contact with the ultimate Reality, or what Rudolf Otto taught us to call the "numinous", there is a shaking experience, a total re-orientation, a "new-birth". He says that the poor need to be numinous centered because they grew up in the culture of poverty that "has a string feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence, and inferiority". The poor then need to be reoriented by religion and to him, the preachers of prosperity are trying to fill this role even though they appear to be derailing.<sup>39</sup>

It is my opinion that the prosperity message is against the application of tests of reason and vibrant mental habit to theological concepts hence should be re-oriented to acknowledge the fact that Christianity is not opposed to reasoning and does not encourage mindless surrender, but to accept rational faith which is capable of providing a balanced understanding of the principles contained in prosperity teaching. The truth is that Christianity must be based on the foundation of objective truth (Jh. 8:32; 6:69; 4:39, 41-42. A correct perusal of the New Testament will show that prosperity teaching stands in sharp contrast to the gospel of the New Testament and the example of the saints who preached that gospel.

## 2.7 Philosophical and Ethical Basis for the Prosperity Teaching

We have observed that the basic technique and methodology in the prosperity teaching is summarized as; – Desire plus Visualization and Affirmation equals Success.

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<sup>38</sup> J. Piper, 2007, Prosperity Teaching; Deceitful and Deadly, retrieved from <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource/librery>.

<sup>39</sup> G. A. Oshitelu, 2001, Religion and poverty eradication in Nigeria, *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXXII/1&2, p. 97.

The emphasis is on the brain working on mental images and whatever images it has are likely to become realities. This idea is very similar to that of Rene Descartes who proposed the theory of “Dualism; mind-body dichotomy. He based his own logic on intuition and deduction. According to him, there are two ways by which the mind operates in the search for truth. Intuition is the basic operation; by it the mind clearly and distinctly grasps an object without any fear of error and without the illusions of the senses for it springs from the height of reason alone. Hence, whatever the mind grasps by intuition is free from error and therefore true without any grounds for doubts. Mind and body then are, according to Descartes, two separate substances or rather two different kinds of substances each of which can exist without the other. However, they nevertheless interact. Man is essentially a thinking being, he is essentially mind. Not only does the body influence the mind, the mind too influences and moves the body. The interaction according to him takes place at the pineal gland which is situated in the innermost part of the brain.

Explaining this position, Geulinx, a follower of Descartes had to explain the fact that the mind seems to control or move the body into action. When the mind wills something, or makes a decision concerning something, the body moves. Bodily movements follow mental acts such as, willing, desiring, deciding and others. Going further, Geulinx explained this with a theory known as “occasionalism”. According to him, it is God who moves the body on the occasion of the mind willing or desiring something. It is not the mind but God himself who moves the body when mental acts (acts of will) take place. God has arranged the mind and the body in such a way that bodily movements follow mental acts as if there were interactions between them.<sup>40</sup>

Descartes has been dubbed as the father of modern Western philosophy, the philosopher that with his *sceptic* approach has profoundly changed the course of Western philosophy and set the basis for *modernity*. The first two of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, those that formulate the famous methodic doubt, present the portion of Descartes' writing that most influenced modern thinking. It has been argued that Descartes himself did not realize the extent of his revolutionary gesture. Descartes shifted the authoritative guarantor of truth from God to humanity. (While the traditional concept

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<sup>40</sup> William Frankena, 1995, *Ethics*, India: Prentice Hall of India, Prentice New Delhi, p. 395.

of “truth” implies an external authority, “certainty” instead relies on the judgment of the individual). In an *anthropocentric* revolution, the human being is now raised to the level of a subject, an agent, an *emancipated* being equipped with autonomous reason. This was a revolutionary step that posed the basis of modernity, the repercussions of which are still ongoing: the emancipation of humanity from Christian revelation truth and Church doctrine, to a person who makes her own law and takes her own stand. In modernity, the guarantor of truth is not God anymore but human beings, each of whom is a “self-conscious shaper and guarantor” of their own reality. That way, each person is turned into a reasoning adult, a subject and agent, as opposed to a child obedient to God. This change in perspective was characteristic of the shift from the Christian medieval period to the modern period; that shift has been anticipated in other fields, and now Descartes was giving it a formulation in the field of philosophy. This anthropocentric perspective, establishing human reason as autonomous, provided the basis for the Enlightenment’s emancipation from God and the Church. It also provided the basis for all subsequent anthropology. Descartes’ philosophical revolution is sometimes said to have sparked modern anthropocentrism and subjectivism. It is also possible that prosperity teaching could have derived from the moral theory known as Ethical Egoism. Ethical Egoism has generally presupposed what is called psychological egoism – that each of us is always seeking his own greatest good, whether this is conceived of as pleasure, happiness, knowledge, power, self-realization or a mixed life. Ethical Egoists have often been hedonists as Epicurus was, identifying the good or welfare with happiness and happiness with pleasure. But they may also identify the good or welfare with knowledge, power, self realization, or with what Plato called the mixed life of pleasure, knowledge and other good things. Ethical Egoism advocates prudentialism as the whole story about moral life. Prudentialism is “living wholly by the principle of enlightened self-love” and seeks to replace morality with “cool self-love” or “rational self love”<sup>41</sup>

Ethical Egoism says that morality requires nothing more of us than that we maximize our own good. Whatever maximizes our own personal good – and only that – is right. To choose always the act that best furthers this end is our sole obligation. One

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Omoregbe, 1983, *Ethics a systematic and Historical Study*, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, p. 220



ought always to maximize one's own personal good as an end not as a means to anything else in all we do. This universalism claim is supposedly morally binding on everyone. It should not be supposed that the point of egoism is actually to bring about the greatest good overall, which is the idea in utilitarianism, which says one ought to maximize the greatest good. It might or might not be that everyone who is acting on Ethical Egoism would bring about the greatest good, but whether it did would be incidental to egoism.

In Ethical Egoism the fundamental obligation each of us has is to maximize his or her own good, nothing else. If doing so brings about a greater good, fine. But if it does not, that is fine also. What is true is that if everyone accepted Ethical Egoism and were successful in doing as it prescribes, then a great deal of good would result. Each person would in fact have maximized his or her own good and that almost certainly would make the world a better place; it might, in fact, be difficult (realistically) to imagine a greater good. Be that as it may, according to Ethical Egoism, no one has an obligation to bring about such a greater good (other than by making the contribution to it entailed by maximizing his or her own good) and its achievement would simply be a happy-by-product if everyone is doing the right thing.

In short, Ethical Egoism says the goal of a person's action should be his own self-interest; the promotion of whatever is to his own long-term advantage should be the end at which he aims. Once it is known that a certain action will contribute more than any other to the long term advantage of the person acting, he should do it.<sup>42</sup>

In relation to prosperity teaching, the exponents of prosperity teaching encourage their followers to pursue whatever maximises the follower's own good, (in this case wealth). If wealth maximises the followers' own good, then the pursuit of wealth, and only that, is right. Pursuit of wealth by the followers is therefore considered as consistent with rational self love. It seems the prosperity teachers want their followers to see the pursuit of wealth as to the follower's long term advantage hence that should be the end at which they should aim.

The reservation about Ethical Egoism is the assumption that people tend to interpret and misapply Ethical Egoism as encouraging greed and selfishness which

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<sup>42</sup> John Hospers, 1978, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, Great Britain, Unwin Brothers Ltd, p. 600.

however may not necessarily be so. Another objection is that Ethical Egoism is a consequentialist position. It requires we judge correctly what is right even in a single situation and requires predicting accurately what the consequences will be of all the acts open to you in that situation. It requires furthermore that you be able to assess accurately how those consequences would affect your own good over the long run. Ethical Egoism is concerned with your good throughout your life. It is however, impossible to predict confidently such a long run. There is in fact, considerable evidence that people miscalculate all the time about what is to their advantage; at least, many of them bring ruin on themselves, even when they have apparently been trying to do what is for their own good.

However, scholars like Immanuel Kant have objected to Ethical Egoism. Kant is of the opinion that one cannot will the Egoistic Maxim to be a universal law. According to Kant, we can never know for certain how what we do will affect either our own happiness or that of others in the long run. This is a matter of the consequences of actions and we can never be certain what those will be. The fundamental principle of morality could not be one prescribing that we promote happiness, whether of ourselves or others. If we can never know for certain what the consequences of our actions will be, and then if promoting happiness were the only right thing to do, we could never know what is right. Happiness for Kant, though it is a component of the highest good, is not good without qualification. The other component of the highest good, and the only thing that is good without qualifications, is a good will. We must not only do what is right, it is equally important to do it for the right reasons. For us to deserve any moral credit, so to speak for doing what is right, we must do it because it is right. The only motive that confers any moral worth on us is the motive of what Kant calls duty; doing what is right because it is right. Those who act from the motive of duty are said to have a good will. For Kant a good will is the only thing that is unconditionally good in itself.

To Kant, the universality of the maxim of an action shows that the action is right, and its non-universality shows it is wrong. The moral law of Kant forbids one to perform any action the maxim of which cannot be willed as a universal law. To act for the sake of duty (or to act from duty) is to act, not because one hopes to gain anything from the action, not because one just feels like doing it or because one has a natural inclination to

doing such things, but purely out of reverence for the moral law. In other words it means doing something because the moral law demands it, even if one stands to lose materially from such an action.<sup>43</sup>

## 2.8 Conclusion

Karl Marx has described religion “as the opium of the masses”. The positive point being made by Karl Marx is the mobilizing power in religion which can be used either for good or bad.<sup>44</sup> In spite of the fact that different scholars have worked on the hermeneutics and theological problems associated with prosperity teaching from the various reviews made, there has been no major work which examines the rationality or logicity of the principles in the prosperity teaching, pointing out the incoherence with biblical teaching. This major and significant gap in scholarship is what this research hopes to fill.

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Omoregbe, 1983, *Ethics a systematic and Historical Study*, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, p. 220

<sup>44</sup> S. A. Aluko, 1994, *Christianity and Communication: The Challenge to the Church*, Ibadan: Daystar Press. He quoted Karl Marx

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE BASIC PRINCIPLES IN PROSPERITY TEACHING

#### 3.1 Background to Prosperity Teaching

It has often been said that the 21<sup>st</sup> century man is estranged and in profound anxiety and deep despair. Human intentions and ideals are frequently frustrated by seemingly senseless suffering and the world often seems alien, hostile and absurd. Berger Peter has observed that the important function of religion in this regard is to offer him solace. Berger says:

The sacred cosmos which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of harmony. To be in a "right" relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare of threats and chaos. To fall out of a "right" relationship is to be abandoned on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity as a religion is to prepare its adherents for "complete living" – not how to live in the mere material sense only, but in the widest sense. The significant thing about the 'God-concept' is the conviction that there exists another higher measure of human thought and action than that expressed in nature and society – namely God as absolute provider, source of justice, goodness and love.

It has been observed that the religious acknowledgement of a good and loving God received its strongest energies from the people's discontent with their fate in nature, the spheres of inequality and repressive and discriminatory formations of society.

The dysfunctional approach to religion contends that the fundamental human needs that religion seeks to fulfill, whether be it the need for social stability or for personal integrity, have been explored and weighed at varying lengths by numerous theorists. Some like Marx and Freud have discredited religion as a fantastic smokescreen that conceals from the pious certain unpalatable truth about the human situation. They criticised religion for exploiting humanity's worst instincts, for creating subterfuges that allow people to avoid dealing constructively with suffering and injustice. They construed religion as a kind of pathology or sickness, an instrument of oppression of the masses in

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<sup>1</sup> Berger Peter, 1969, *The sacred canopy*, New York, Doubleday Press, pp. 26-27.

the hand of the bourgeoisie.

Similarly, Nietzsche, the man who announced to the world that God was dead, described religion, especially Christianity, as a demoralizing emasculating force since it preaches humility and thereby robs men of pride and the will to live.<sup>2</sup> Before him, Machiavelli, at the Renaissance, had castigated Christianity for inducing meekness and the patient acceptance of injuries and because, as he put it – “It causes us to attach less value to the honours and possessions of this world”.<sup>3</sup> Generally, the dysfunctionalists reject religion on the ground that it seduces humanity away from its true task and challenges, that it conjures up figments and illusions about the world which render people powerless to cope with their real situation. It is in this same way that traditional or mainline Christianity has often been accused of promoting fatalism. Fatalism is the belief that all events are irrevocably fixed so that human effort cannot alter them. It is the doctrine that all the happenings in the world of nature and all events in man’s life (including poverty or riches) are predetermined from the beginning of time, so that a human being should just be contended with where he finds himself and in fact has no part in shaping the course of things”.<sup>4</sup> Fatalism is the view that what will be will be. It is most prevalent in areas where hopeless misery exists without any effort to relieve it and in an area without advanced means of scientific and social control.<sup>5</sup>

The practical implication of this is that the mainline churches have not encouraged their members to vigorously pursue prosperity; they are rather to accept any position they found themselves, either rich or poor and be contended with it without trying to make any changes.

Fatalism seems to run counter to a large part of normal human experience and to cut the ground from under vigorous human effort to improve conditions. The relationships among human beings (including the dichotomy), is so completely fixed that nothing can be done to challenge them. Fatalism builds up this doctrine on the basic fact of some inescapable evils, before which man became helpless. It shares affinity with predestination, which is the belief that God has decided everything that will happen, and

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1953, *The anti-Christ*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Harold H. Titus, 1953, *Living issues in philosophy*, New York: American Book Company, pp. 173-174

<sup>4</sup> Harold H. Titus, 1953, *Living issues in philosophy*, 174.

<sup>5</sup> Harold H. Titus, 1953, *Living issues in philosophy*, p. 175.

that no human effort can change things.

In contrast, Determinism says nothing about fate or being fated. It alleges merely that “whatever happens has some causes. It is committed only to the proposition that everything that occurs happens or depends on a set of causal factors which may be physical, mental or spiritual. In determinism, all events, including human actions and decisions (choices) without exceptions, are totally determined”.<sup>6</sup>

Of recent, however, new ideas have started to spring up in the church. Men are now being encouraged to make concrete efforts on their own to face the problem in this world and be more involved in what they become in the society in accordance with God’s will. Contemporary civil society appreciated religion only in so far as it is a band-aid for the social system’s victims who otherwise could possibly rebel.

Emile Durkheim, from the functional approach elaborated the functional value of religion in upholding the unity and stability of the society. Berger Peter affirms that religion carries through the dialectic of self and society by creating a system of symbolic order that resolved all potential conflicts of the individual with the norms and intentions of those to whom he must remain loyal and trustworthy.<sup>7</sup> I am of the opinion that the prosperity teachers have taken a leaf from the functional approach to religion by trying to propagate that religion encourages the ‘have nots’ to also get out of their derided state to achieve the heights which has been guaranteed for all Christ’s followers according to their own interpretation of the Bible.

According to Dada, the effort of the Nigerian church to influence the public arena and thereby engender social change led to the birth of prosperity teaching in Nigeria. The church in Nigeria has over the years explored different means of responding to social maladies that are afflicting our nation. In Nigeria today, as in most African countries, poverty, diseases, violence and corruption are ever-present realities. Prosperity teaching perhaps according to Dada, emerged as a response to these debilitating social conditions”<sup>8</sup>

Prosperity teaching has brought the kind of ideas that make Christians to be very

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<sup>6</sup> T. H. Harold, 1973. *Living Issues in Philosophy*, New York: American Book Company, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> Berger Peter, 1969, *The sacred canopy*, New York, Doubleday Press, p. 32

<sup>8</sup> A. O. Dada, 2004, Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion? *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religion Studies* XXXVI/1 & 2, p. 96.

optimistic in the face of callousness and absurdity of the world. According to Olukunle “a measure of anticipatory futuristic hope as taught among prosperity faithful is better than hopelessness of our social, economic, political situation”.<sup>9</sup>

There are variations of prosperity teaching. Some believe all these principles, some believe most of them while some believe only a few of them. Not all prosperity teachers are the same but the same ideas that will be enumerated below cut across all of them.

### 3.2 Wealth as a gain of Salvation

Prosperity gospel writings carry titles like “How to write your own ticket with God”, “Godliness is profitable”, “The laws of prosperity”, “The laws of success”, “Bible ways to enduring wealth”, “Exploring the riches of redemption”, “Biblical keys to financial prosperity”, “Prosperity; the choice is yours” and “Favour; the road to success”. Prosperity teaching as we have observed, is traceable to the Word Faith Movement.

The idea of total – man atonement according to the prosperity teachers is that salvation through Christ’s death on the cross did not only affect the spiritual aspect of man but also his physical aspect. The prosperity teachers say that Christ died essentially so that all of us, being originally condemned sinners, might, by believing in him, be reconciled to the father and be saved from the penalty of sin. An automatic bonus that comes with this ‘wholistic’ salvation is overcoming poverty and dwelling in abundant wealth.

Benson Idahosa, the first proponent of the prosperity teaching in Nigeria has drawn his own list of bonuses that come along with the wholistic salvation thus

You are made for life and not for death  
You are made for health and not for disease  
You are made for success and not for failure  
You are made for faith and not for confusion  
You are made for love and not for fear.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> O. Olukunle, Personal Religious profession and public performance in contemporary Nigeria society" in Record of Proceeding of the Sixteenth Annual Religious Studies Conference Ibadan. *ORITA* publications 1992, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Idahosa Benson, 1992, ‘Sermon of the month’ *The Christian Mirror* vol. 1 No. 6,

It is the view of Idahosa that having material wealth is a sign of God's blessings; that poverty is a sign of God's displeasure and that God is a God of riches, who right from creation, desired that man should prosper. The general idea of prosperity teachers is that if we are not rich, it must be because we are not right with God. Keeping the law of the kingdom faithfully ensures health, riches and honours.

Pastor Femi Emmanuel says that for the Christian, success is his birth right. You are created with the power of success. This is the essence of your being created in the image and likeness of God. He says God gave man the power both to make and to enjoy wealth.<sup>11</sup> He quoted Deuteronomy 8:18 which says:

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth that he may establish his covenant which he swear unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

Matthew Ashimolowo argues also that salvation comes with material blessing. He quotes the Bible that "If you are willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). He opines that the Lord has promised to give us our heart desires if we delight ourselves in Him but we should "seek first the kingdom of God and all its righteousness and all other things shall be added to you (Mt. 6:33).<sup>12</sup>

According to Kenneth Hagin, the Bible truth of redemption is that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of law which includes spiritual death, sickness and poverty. He quotes:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Gal. 3:18).

According to him, at the original sin, man became separated from God which is the spiritual death. When we accept Christ, we have passed from death unto life. If you've been born again, then you've been made a new creature in Christ. The bible says you've been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Accordingly, we can enjoy the blessing of Abraham even as gentiles through Jesus Christ and we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. He quotes further Galatians 3:29

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<sup>11</sup> Femi Emmanuel, 2003, *The laws of success*, Nigeria: Fom-man Publishing House, p. 11

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Ashimolowo, 2010. *Kingdom Benefit* retrieved from [www.comwinners.com](http://www.comwinners.com) faith



And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham's blessings that we are qualified to enjoy at redemption according to him are threefold in nature; it was first a spiritual blessing, second, it was a physical blessing. And third, it was a financial material blessing.<sup>13</sup> According to Kenneth Copeland, Jesus was anointed to preach to the poor. What is the gospel to the poor? He says the gospel to the poor is that Jesus has come and they do not have to be poor anymore.<sup>14</sup>

He says it is God's will to prosper His people and spiritual things are not to be separated from material things because spiritual laws govern material things. A spirit created all matter. So, the laws of prosperity will work for anyone who will meet the biblical requirement to walk in them. He said that Jesus became poor that we might become rich. He bore the curse of poverty in order to get us out of it, not to leave us in it.

Bob Buess is another teacher of the prosperity gospel. He says that God wants all Christian to prosper financially. According to him, at redemption, we are to be filled with God's fullness which includes financial prosperity. According to Eph. 3:17-20

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to his power that worketh in us.

Buess also buttressed his teaching that it is not impossible for all good Christians to have abundant wealth. Nothing is impossible with God. Matthew 17:20 says "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed... nothing shall be impossible with you". As we embrace Christ, he pours out upon us a river of favour which includes wealth in abundance. We are made to swim in it and enjoy it"<sup>15</sup>

Owolabi Awolola, a new emerging prosperity teacher from the Baptist background also argues that Christians should expect material wealth to come their way

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth L. Hagin, 2005, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, Canada: Faith Library Publication, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Copeland, 1990, *Prosperity: the choice is yours*, Texas: KCP Publishing, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Bob Buess, 1975, *Favour, the road to success*, Benin City: Rhema Publishing Ministry, p. 20.

as a seal of God's approval. He quotes Proverbs 10:22, "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it".

He says what is revealed in the passage is that it is only God who gives the genuine type of wealth. When God blesses, no iota of sorrow is added. Everybody should prefer that and work towards it. He quotes from the book of Job 22:21-25, 29

Acquaint now thyself with him, and he be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the laws from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. When men are cast down then thou shalt say, there is lighting up; and he shall save the humble person.

It is his view that if we submit to God and follow his divine principles, wealth will surely follow us. Christians are to be lifted up when every other person and business is brought low. That is what God does to those who submit to him. It significantly shows a testimony of God's goodness over those who depend on him for wealth. God is ready to prosper His people if only they will submit to Him, keep His laws and follow His laid down principles. He enjoins Christians to consider Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.<sup>16</sup>

Bishop Oyedepo also shares the view that material wealth is part of the gain of salvation, and that the absence of wealth means one is in sin<sup>17</sup>.

The idea of covenant of abundance forms the basis of the teaching on prosperity by Bishop Oyedepo. He says prosperity is not just having money; it is a state of well being which you enter into through the covenant of abundance. He says prosperity is a covenant that God has with man. He quotes Deuteronomy 8:18

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore into thy fathers,

<sup>16</sup> Owolabi Awolola, *Principles of financial prosperity*, Ogbomosho: Armstrong Olus Communication.

<sup>17</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, Ikeja: Dominion Publishing House, 1007, p. 14

as it is this day.

Oyedepo says the power to get wealth is released to man on the platform of the covenant. When one step into the covenant, you encounter the power to get wealth. Man has a winner covenant with God the father who has destined him for success. The covenant started with our father in faith, Abraham. God called Abraham and gave him a covenant. He told him He would bless his seed and make them great. He signed the covenant of prosperity, wealth, strength and constant victory with Abraham on behalf of Israel. It is Oyedepo's submission that it is on the basis of this covenant that Israel has remained a prosperous nation today that any nation that stands against Israel is politically and economically against God's channel of blessings. He contends that today, believers are the real Israel. According to him:

Every truth in the Old Testament is a figure, a type, a shadow of some real things in the New Testament. The children of Israel were a picture of the believers under the new covenant.<sup>18</sup>

The Israelites enjoyed their victories on the basis of the covenant received by Abraham which was sealed with the blood of bulls and goats. That covenant also belongs to us as Christians. Jesus by His blood came to consecrate a better covenant.

At the new birth, God makes a Christian to be an overcomer and winner in every fight. He has imparted His seed nature into you and that changed you from being a gentile into a bonafide seed of Abraham. Your new identity is based on your wholehearted acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ and His victory on the cross. That qualifies you to be Christ's. So you are Abraham's seed. Christ went to the cross that you might receive the blessings of Abraham and his seed in the covenant. If you must partake of the blessings, you must come under the covenant. Moreover, the covenant was made to Abraham and his seed. Christ is the seed we are talking about. If you belong to Christ, you are also Abraham's seed according to the promise and you are covered under the covenant. He quotes Galatians 3:29:

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

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<sup>18</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 85

He says at New birth, you are connected by covenant to the original source of power. It is a privileged position that guarantees your future. Oyedepo says

Prosperity in the kingdom doesn't answer to fasting nor does it answer to prayer, or prayer of agreement. It only answers to your understanding and practice of covenant details.<sup>19</sup>

He said if we look at Hebrew 9, the bible talks about the Holiest of all, where we have the tables of the covenant. Among the tables of the covenant is the covenant of prosperity, the one that brings you into an encounter with the power to get wealth. He concludes, "Once you locate the covenant and you enter into it, your struggles all come to an end".<sup>20</sup>

For the upright, things never go wrong. If you will be upright in the covenant, things will keep on going being right for you, no matter what's going on where you are. For it is the blessing of God that make rich and adds no sorrow with it (Proverbs 10:22).

According to Oyedepo, when you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you are born again something new and significant happens to you. When this happens, you consciously step out of Satan's fold. He comes into your heart and gives you a new life. Your old nature gives way and a new nature of Christ is born in you. The new birth is a spiritual initiation that re-establishes the divine nature in a man. When you come to Jesus, a spiritual rebirth, which necessitates a spiritual transfer, takes place, and a new growth (in the spiritual realm) starts off in you. It is a translation, an initiation into a new realm of life.

New birth is not joining a church, it is not carrying a new name; it is connecting to a new source - a divine source - for a new order of life - walking in majesty, enjoying affluence, commanding influence on earth.<sup>21</sup>

Oyedepo says there are many in the church today, who though born again, hardly have anything tangible to show for their Christianity. They can hardly be differentiated from the rest of the world. They are subjected to all the buffeting and intimidations of the devil, they are ruled by fear, plagued by diseases, poverty, and lack. But the truth is

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<sup>19</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 23

<sup>20</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, 25

<sup>21</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, Ikeja: Dominion Publishing House, p. 23

that they are simply victim of ignorance more than anything else. This ignorance, according to him, is because such people do not know the secret of God. He said one could be a university professor and an authority on the New Testament and yet be gagged in poverty, sickness, fear and defeat because “he has no spiritual grasp of the truth”. He says every blessing of God is transmitted through sound understanding. When you grasp it, it becomes yours. It is the secrets of God that make stars in the kingdom. We are to pray to God to provide us with a supernatural access into His secrets concerning kingdom prosperity.

Oyedepo opines that Jesus said He has been anointed to preach the good news to the poor; that "you don't have to remain poor". I have paid the price for your supplies. This is authenticated in 2 Corinthians 8:8:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

So, among the reasons for which Jesus came is to redeem you from poverty. Jesus came not only to enrich your spirit, but also to enrich you all round. Redemption has established such a spiritual status for you that grant you the privilege to have heavenly life in this world. The word of God has the power to connect you to your heavenly inheritance and therefore it is possible to live the heavenly immunity in this world of crises. You can enjoy heavenly provisions in this world of scarcity.

To Oyedepo, redemption is the believer’s assurance of abundance. If you are saved, you are secured materially. Salvation equals material security. This is part of God’s package for you in redemption. It also establishes the fact that God is not interested in the emptiness of His people. Rather He is committed to their abundance. Redemption is not complete without divine provision; as it goes on to authenticate the validity of redemption.

Everything Jesus suffered, He suffered on your behalf. They took away His clothes so that you will not walk naked. They stripped Him naked so you can be clothed with the garments of salvation. Jesus was thirsty so that your cup will never run dry.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 71

He concludes that Jesus will not come down until the latter rain has had its full effect. And among the prominent events of the latter rain, is the decoration of His bride (the church), with divine providence. We shall be swimming in unusual affluence, enjoying the abundance of the sea and living under divine conversion of fortune.

Oyedepo also says if a Christian is not prospering, it means he is in sin, because sin is the mother of poverty. Sin stripped Adam naked. Adam lost his beauty to sin. Poverty arrives upon man right there in Eden at the invitation of sin. This is where all man's struggle began. God sent man out of plenty into lack. He drove them out of comfort into the wilderness of want. So the foundation of human depravity is sin.

Therefore according to him, until you step out of sin, you cannot step into plenty. He quotes Job 22:23-24.

If thou return to the almighty, thou shalt be built up. Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust and the gold of Ophir as stones of the brooks.

To him, iniquity is the cheapest way to block your heavens. Until you step out of iniquity, you will not step into prosperity. He says the secret of God are not for the general public but for the righteous who have experienced the redemptive power of God. He quotes:

And he said unto them, unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. Mark 4:11

If you enjoy sin, you can never come in touch with God's secrets. If sin has become your lifestyles, you are without - you can't have access to his secrets, for his secrets are with those who fear Him (Ps. 25:14).

Lack and want are not holiness; God's secrets are not free. That's why everywhere you see wealth or prosperity in the kingdom, you discover that it is tied to righteousness because the secret that will lead you into the realm of pleasure, that realm of accomplishment, come only by practical righteousness.

On the other hand, in the kingdom of darkness, there are all forms of evil. All manner of sickness, afflictions, embarrassments, torments and bad luck hold sway in this kingdom of darkness. All the people there are captives and

subjects so long as they continue there. They are ruled and governed by the devil as they are the children of disobedience.<sup>23</sup>

According to Oyedepo, when Jesus died, and rose from the dead, He went into the Holy of Holies in heaven to present His blood of eternal redemption on the basis of His substitutionary death and resurrection on our behalf. By this, He obtained eternal victory for us and made us victors over crucifixion, burial and resurrection, that is our victory. You were joined with Him in the likeness of His death.

As He died, you died with Him. As a matter of fact you went to hell with Him completely identified. When God raised Him up and exalted Him far above principalities and powers, you were with him exalted.<sup>24</sup>

In identification, you were raised together with Him far above all your enemies. Everything, He put them under your feet - that is the secret of your victory.

According to Oyedepo, men at redemption are in God's class of being. By virtue of Christ's redemption work, man becomes a new creation. If you have accepted Him as your Lord and saviour, this new status grants you entrance into God's class. By this new creation, you have become accepted in the beloved, the family of the father God. You are translated into the kingdom of God at salvation. Since God is a spirit, He has also created you as a spirit.

So you are in God's class of being as a new creation person. You are accepted in the beloved. You are God's offspring. You are His loved son. You occupy a special place in His heart. You have His nature, His life, His spirit, His faith, His love. Everything about Him has been made available to you through the new creation. It is not forgiveness of sin alone. It is comprehensive. You are exalted into the heavenly places and seated there with Him.<sup>25</sup>

Since man has become one with Christ, he is joined with Him. He has been given Christ's very life, God's divine nature. God produces after His kind. Man are in God's class, a god on earth!

Oyedepo quotes Psalm 83:6

<sup>23</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 57

I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most high.

He said Jesus re-echoed this statement in the New Testament thus affirming it's authenticity that man are gods”

Jesus answered and said unto them, is it not written in your laws, I said, ye are gods?<sup>26</sup>

Oyedepo says man is even higher in class than the angels. You cannot compare yourself with angels when you've been redeemed. Angels are only created but you are both created and regenerated. You have a better standing with God. Jesus did not die for angels. He died for you. The angles are your messengers. They are sent to minister to you.

Pastor Adeboye says when you are saved, your prosperity is by divine decree. Psalm 34:10 says “The young lion do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing”. The second decree is in Deuteronomy 28:1:

“And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee.

To Adeboye, God wants Christians to be prosperous. It does not bring glory to God to see you suffer. When your neighbours know that you are Christian, they want to see you with a good job, a nice car, that your children have good clothes. God is going to supply all these. Poverty is alien to God's plan and programme for His children. He asked rhetorically, how can the owner of all the good things deny those that belong to Him of riches, blessing and prosperity? The Bible says “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2). Your life becomes a blessing when you give generously to the poor and to the progress of the people and work of God. Prosperity is one of the privileges that a child of God enjoys. God is great. He is not just great, He is the greatest. He possesses all wisdom, riches and glory. As a child of God; you are expected to show forth the glory, riches and honour of God.

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<sup>26</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 59



Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause; yea, let them say continually, let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant (Psalm 35:27).

The plan and delight of God is for you to prosper. Prosperity implies abundance, fullness and sufficiency. True prosperity comes from God. it is an offer that is reserved for those who are part of the common wealth of Israel by faith through repentance from sins.<sup>27</sup>

According to Femi Emmanuel, outstanding success is every Christian's legacy in destiny, but there are certain principles of God that deliver wealth. God's wish for us is success. Being born-again is not sufficient. As a matter of fact, you do not need to be born again to be successful, you only need to obey certain principles and being born-again is just a plus for achieving success. Christians, as children of God, share a covenant with Him. And the terms of the covenant is that we succeed in everything that we do, if only we believe in and obey the purpose of God in our life.<sup>28</sup>

However, the concept that wealth is a compulsory gain of salvation is logically faulty and not in accordance with Biblical teaching. It is materialistic and fails to explain why great Christians like Peter and John were poor (Acts 3:6). Even Paul the great Apostle confessed that he was not materially rich (Cor. 1:5-9). Millions of example throughout the world and throughout history can be given of Godly people living in poverty yet we have many ungodly people living in wealth.

### 3.3 **Sowing and Reaping in Multiples**

According to prosperity teachers, lack of material wealth is due to lack of faith. Lack of faith in this sense will be in the inability to give tithes and offerings as well as to give to the church and the poor.

Citing 2 Corinthians 9:10-11, the prosperity teachers say if you love God, you will pay tithes:

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be

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<sup>27</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *Born to be A Blessing*, Lagos: Printme Communication Company, p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> Femi Emmanuel, 2003, *The Laws of Success*, Ibadan: Fem-Man- Publishing House, p. 12.

made rich in everyway so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

The thinking here is that if you are not giving much back to God, material blessings may not manifest in your life. The principle here is “of giving and receiving”. The “seed faith” giving or miracle faith is the idea that God is “obligated” to repay a multiplied version of whatever seed of faith – in cash or kind – that the believer “saved” into the ministry or God’s work.

Pastor Femi Emmanuel calls it the law of kingdom investment. He says Divine Investment brings divine dividends. There are divine opportunities in which you must invest in order to be connected to divine wealth. There is a wealth we acquire through the instrumentality of the power of God, and which we dispose of for the expansion of the kingdom of God. These divine opportunities constitute what Emmanuel calls Kingdom Investment; that is, doing business with God.<sup>29</sup> Kingdom Investment gives you the power to get wealth. It is the investment you make into the kingdom of God that opens the door of abundance. Giving and gaining go hand in hand. Whatever you give to God is not lost, rather it is an investment that will come back to you bigger, larger and better than what you gave. He quotes from Luke 6:38

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give unto your bosom.

Quality sowing will always bring quality harvest. The secret of living in plenty and prosperity is to give to God’s work cheerfully. For those unwilling to give, devourers will always get into their inheritance and you become poor if you do not give cheerfully to God’s work.

Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee  
(Deut. 28:47-48).

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<sup>29</sup> Femi Emmanuel, *The Laws of Success*, p. 148.

Pastor Femi Emmanuel charges Christians not to allow the church to even beg before committing their wealth to God's work. In fact as a Christian, you should beg the church to accept your contribution in form of money or open services to which you are ready to render because this guarantees a wide door of blessings and prosperity. He says the Macedonian church learnt this many centuries back. Despite the severe trials and extreme poverty they went through in their time, they pleaded with Paul for the privilege of sharing what they had with the troubled saint in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1-5). The giving ability of the Macedonian church surpassed all the surrounding churches in Asia Minor. They gave sacrificially, willingly, cheerfully and above all they gave their best. They sowed quality seeds. Consequent upon that, they were to reap the harvest of their sowing through Apostle Paul's prayer that;

But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

According to Kenneth Copeland, the concept of sowing and reaping go together. He said the purpose of abundant wealth is to preach the gospel, feed the poor and meet the needs of others. God increases us so that we may increase our production in the world. We are to establish God's covenant. God does not prosper us financially just so that we can be more comfortable but to use it to win the world. Prosperity he says "enables you to go about your fathers business ... meeting the needs of others, spirit, soul and body."<sup>30</sup> A prosperous man is one who helps to establish God's covenant and understands that his needs will be taken care of, he encourages people to give and see the miraculous take place right in their homes.

Gloria Copeland, another prosperity teacher said; give \$10 and receives \$1000; give \$1000 and receive \$10000, according to Mark 10:30.<sup>31</sup> Whereas Jesus taught his disciples to give, hoping for nothing in return, prosperity teachers asked their disciples to give because they will get a great return.

Kenneth Hagin says there is a law of sowing and reaping, both in the natural and the spiritual realms. He said there are supernatural manifestations for us very often in the area of finances when we faithfully obey God and sow seed. He gives an illustration that

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<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Copeland, 1990, *Prosperity: the choice is yours*, p. 22

<sup>31</sup> Gloria Copeland was quoted in Andrew Strom, 2011, *The prosperity and seed faith doctrines*, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

you cannot reap a fruit which you have not sown. Hagin quotes from Luke 6:38

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give unto your bosom". For with the same measure that ye mete with it shall be measured to you again.

Also, he refers to the books of 2 Corinthians 9:6:

He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Hagin says that prosperity is in both the Old and the New Testaments and that the commandments found in Malachi 3:10 still apply to us as Christians today.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

He contends that like the law of gravity which works for all human beings, there are also spiritual laws that when you come in contact with them, they will work for you no matter who you are. Hagin told the story of a woman who was a member of his church whose husband was not a Christian. He said the man was a contractor and has a business partner. Even in their disbelief, the man was quoted to have told his partner that he believed if they start paying their tithes and offerings at their wives' churches, God will prosper them. They approached Pastor Hagin and he approved of it because according to him, they would like to have the extra money for the church. Hagin said that he was a witness to the fact that in thirty days time, their business turned around, and they were out of the red and in the black. He said he tried to figure out how a sinner could be blessed by giving tithes and offerings. This man who paid his tithes to his wife's church was a sinner when he first started paying his tithes and giving offerings. And God blessed him because he found a spiritual law that works. He concluded that he had come to the conclusion that there is a law of sowing and reaping which the man got in contact with, practiced it and it works for him and his family.<sup>32</sup>

Owolabi Oladeji, following the trend of his foremost prosperity teaching leaders, gave a more vivid explanation into the 'seed faith' doctrine. He emphasized quality

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<sup>32</sup> Kenneth L. Hagin, 2005, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, pp. 122-123

offering. According to him, Abel and Cain his brother were inspired to bring offerings to the Lord. In spite of this, their responses differed and that landed them in different destinations of life. Whereas Cain offered to the Lord a little offering, Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. He gave a choice gift out of genuine faith in God. God rejected the offering of Cain but He accepted the gift from Abel and blessed him. The lesson from this, he says, is that God only accepts quality seed (offering). He quotes Gal. 6:7

Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Owolabi's view is that the reason why some people are poor today is because they are not giving enough to God's work. He says that David the King was rich because he gave sacrificially.

And the king said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing flour and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver 2 Sam 24:24.

According to Owolabi, a Christian holds whatever he has in trust for God. This is a divine financial rule. Whatever wealth or position you hold, or whatever is permitted to come into your hand, is not your own, you are only a care-taker. A man receives nothing except it is given to him by God. Although a thing is in your care, it is God's own. So you must allow him access to whatever part of it He demands. This is a financial rule which governs abundance in the kingdom. When you break that rule, you rule yourself out of the covenant promise.<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Oyedepo is also a major teacher of the principle of "sowing and reaping". This is what is also known as "seed faith" "miracle seed" etc. He says life is not having fun. Life is no game, life is business! Your level of investment will determine your level of ultimate attainment in life. Faith is essentially a channel of divine rewards. It delivers to you your covenant rights, and your covenant rights demand your personal input before God can be committed.

The way God prospers is different from the way the world

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<sup>33</sup> Owolabi Awolola, *Principles of financial prosperity*,

prosper. What the world calls prosperity is how much you have; but in the kingdom of God, prosperity is determined by how much you give.<sup>34</sup>

Oyedepo emphasize tithing as the master-key to financial miracles. Tithing guarantees prosperity and is an inescapable covenant obligation. No one escapes poverty when they do not pay their tithes because according to Malachi 3:8-9, they come under a curse. He said tithing does not enrich God. It is in order for you to secure your covenant destiny with Him. Prosperity is impossible without tithing. He says every other offering answer on the earth, but tithing answers in heaven. Tithing has a heavenly transaction link, which guarantees you the opening of the windows of heaven. When your tithing answers and your harvest is due, the heavens open up to you. Tithing is your God-given privilege to establish your destiny of prosperity. Sickness has no right to touch you, when you are under this covenant of tithing. Accidents and misfortune have no right to affect you either, because God has committed Himself when he said:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if a will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall be room enough to receive it.

And I shall rebuke the devourer for your sake, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts”  
Malachi 3:10-11

Oyedepo gave the example of Oral Roberts when he was on his dying bed, as a teenager. He said to his mother. “I have some tithing there in my suit pocket. Help me go and drop it in church, I don’t want to get into heaven owing God”. He said because of this tithing, tuberculosis dropped out of his life”<sup>35</sup> To Oyedepo, tithing does not only guarantee you a blessing, it also established an insurance against wicked arrows of life.

Oyedepo also advocates for kingdom promotion offering. This includes your freewill offering and your kingdom demand offerings. He quotes 1 Corinthians 16:2

<sup>34</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 185

<sup>35</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 199

Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

He says,

If you are not a giver, no fasting, no prayers or prophecy can rescue you from being a beggar. We are to give to the poor but it becomes foolishness when we don't give first to God. Kingdom demand offerings are demands for the promotion of God's work on earth and whatever you give for the kingdom's sake comes back to you hundredfold, manifold more in this present time, and in time to come, life everlasting (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29-30, Luke 18:29-30). Whatever you let go for the kingdom's sake, Jesus said it is an investment; it will surely come back to you in multiplied forms. As you keep dreaming kingdom dreams, your business and career can't be doomed. Every kingdom demand is a covenant device for your lifting. So jump at it.<sup>36</sup>

Bishop Oyedepo also teaches giving to the prophets. He said "the prophets are God's anointed messengers, sent to be a blessing to us. Everything you give to God's prophets attract prophetic rewards, because they are messengers of God. So, we provoke prophetic utterances from them, with the prophet's offering we give to them.

Lastly, Oyedepo teaches giving to the poor. He says when you give to the poor, you're giving to them on God's behalf; you're lending to the Lord. The word of God says you're sure of getting it back. Ministering to the needs of the poor, is one of God's covenant strategies for your prosperity (Proverbs 28:27).

The liberal soul shall be made fat. The giving soul shall be made fat. He that blesses shall be blessed in return.

The seed faith principle's is better exemplified by Oyedepo's testimony of his experience:

When we were to start church planting, there was a great need of money; but the offerings that came in were inadequate. It was an opportunity for me. As I sat down discussing the matter with God, He said to me "My son, give me that your car". I knew it was God speaking to me. When I told my wife what the Lord had to me, she simply

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<sup>36</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 203

said, "Praise the Lord". That was it! So I called one of my staff and ordered him to drive it straight to the car dealer and let it go". It was a Mercedes Benz 280. From that moment, the car left my heart, my mind and my head. I was so excited, I felt very privilege. After that sacrifice, I was going home one day, when the Lord said to me "my son David, even if you don't want to be rich, it's too late! God swore to me the way he swore to Abraham in Genesis 22.<sup>37</sup>

Oyedepo says what prospers is your seed. No one ever sees increase without first putting in his seed. When there is no seed, there is no prosperity (Zechariah 8:12). As you see the day exchanging position with the night, then know that the covenant of God, the covenant of increase, remains intact. It anchors on one truth – seedtime before harvest.

Pastor Adeboye on his part, emphasized sowing fatly to reap abundant blessings. He says the secrets of explosive financial breakthroughs can be summed up in "knowing what to do to get the best result and doing it". He illustrated the kind of giving that can provoke God to banish poverty form one's life thus:

A young man once walked unto my office and said: "Daddy, I want to give you a house". I gave him a terse answer. "I don't need your house, I already have my own house", because I live in the redemption camp. I simply explained to him that I did not need a house in the city where the house gift was located. The man insisted that I must receive the gift, but I insisted I would not.... In his bid to convince me, he told me that he had two houses and that offering to give me one was okay by him. I told him that I know some pastors who would gladly accept such a gift and I could give him their names. He insisted that he must give me this house by all means. When I saw his unyieldedness, I told him to go home and pray and to come back after three months. Three months later, he came and said "Daddy, I have prayed and I'm convinced that God wants me to give you the house. The keys are here". I prayed and asked God to tell me what to do. God told me to accept the gift and I did. In the course of making enquiries, I discovered that one of the branches of the Redeemed Christian Church of God needed an accommodation in the same vicinity of that house and I willingly offered them the facility to make use of it for church services. Within a short time, the man came back with a request. He asked "Daddy will you kindly accept to go somewhere with me? I

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<sup>37</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp, 202-203



obliged. He took me to a place where there was a very big estate. Beaming with smiles, the young man said “Daddy this is what the Lord has done for me”. I want you to dedicate this estate to His glory! Displaying a fatherly sense of humour, I said. “Young man you must be very smart. You gave God a house and you got an estate”. If the young man had held on to his house, he wouldn’t have come anywhere near becoming the owner of an estate.<sup>38</sup>

Adeboye encourages his disciples to keep sowing. He says “if you want to experience the ultimate financial breakthrough, you must keep sowing. The first seed you sow may open the door to blessings, but it takes persistent sowing to keep the door of blessing open.”<sup>39</sup> He cited the story of Solomon who kept on increasing in wealth because he kept on giving. At the end, he attained the level of ultimate financial breakthrough. He became so rich that nobody could attempt to count the amount of silver which he had (I Kings 8:63). He continued; the law of sowing and reaping stands the test of all time and age. A plower will not waste time in tilling the ground for fun. He tills the ground in order to reap what has been sown. The Bible says “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy (Psalm 126:5). Adeboye asked; “do you know why God said that the poor shall never cease from the land? God said this because the poor will never sow their way out of poverty. The way out of poverty is to sow so as to reap. You also sow more to reap more. This is the infallible truth of riches. A person who is qualified for greatness is not the one who will just sow ordinarily. He or she will be somebody who is ready to give an unusual sacrifice like Elisha, Abraham and Solomon. God is jealous. He cannot share anything with you. Your life must be laid on the altar. You must be ready to surrender all things to Jesus.”<sup>40</sup>

However, we must note that this idea views faith as a means of material gain rather than acceptance of heavenly justification. Sowing and reaping in multiples also contradicts Jesus’ directive to Christians to give, hoping for nothing in return, but to store treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19). Christian’s reward for any good done does not necessarily have to be on earth, but in fact preferably in heaven.

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<sup>38</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2005, *Ultimate Financial Breakthrough*, Lagos: Integrity Press, pp 18-21.

<sup>39</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2005, *Ultimate Financial Breakthrough*, p. 21.

<sup>40</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2005, *Uncommon Greatness*, Lagos: Printme Communications Company, p. 37.

### 3.4 Covenant of Divine Unfailing Health

This teaching is tantamount to saying that a true child of God cannot be sick.

Kenneth Hagin said that the sin of Adam and Eve led to spiritual death for man. But with the coming of Jesus Christ, we have passed from death unto life. If you have been born again, then you have been made a new creature in Christ. The bible says you have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13).

According to him, Gal. 3:13 says “you have been redeemed from the curse of the law. The curse of the law, which is the penalty of breaking God’s law, includes spiritual death, sickness, disease and poverty. On redemption however, man is redeemed from sickness and disease. Sickness can only come to Christians who break God’s law. According to Deuteronomy 28:58-61:

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God, then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

Moreover, he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou was afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sicknesses, and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, then will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

Whenever Christians keep to the laws of God, they are bound to be enjoying good health and escape from those curses stated above.<sup>41</sup>

Kenneth Copeland says “when you are walking in the word of God, you will prosper and be in good health. It is God’s will for us to be made whole – spirit, soul and body, and to be kept that way until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:23). Only when we remain in sin and refuse to be regenerated that we experience pain and sicknesses.<sup>42</sup>

Kenneth Hagin said:

I do not deny the existence of disease. What I deny is the

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth L. Hagin, 2005, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, p. 11

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Copeland, 1990, *Prosperity: the choice is yours*, p. 16.

right of that disease to exist in a Christian's body, because a Christian's body is the temple of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

All prosperity teachers usually refer to:

III John 1:2 which says "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

This is a cardinal verse in the prosperity teaching and that is why it is often referred to as the gospel of health and wealth.

For Bishop Oyedepo, true Christians are above sickness. He says Christians are masters over sickness. He quotes 3 John 2:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

He says that the health of the Christian is an important part of God's redemption plan for him. God is not only concerned about your spirit and your soul, but also your body. This is why the Bible says in Isaiah 53:5 that

But he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

He contends that abundance without health equals lack, because whatever wealth you are able to amass is eventually eaten up by sickness. Every born again child of God has a covenant of divine health with the father. He could not have said "I am the Lord that healeth thee" if He had not made adequate provision for your health (Exodus 15:26).

According to Oyedepo,

There is a place where you stand in God and never get sick again. It is the realm where the divine nature in you is so stirred up that you become immune to sickness and disease.<sup>44</sup>

When you give your life to Jesus Christ, you become a partaker of the blessings of Abraham; Jesus hung on a tree, so that these blessings could become ours, and replace the curses hanging over our heads before. Oyedepo says talking about Israel's forty years journey in the wilderness, the Bible records that none among their tribes was feeble, their

<sup>43</sup> Kenneth L. Hagin, 2005, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, p. 12

<sup>44</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 78

legs were not swollen, and their clothes did not wax old (Deut. 29:5). That is your heritage in God, as a spiritual Israelite. Jesus has paid the price for your sickness. The same day you were delivered from sin, your body too was delivered from torture and torment. It's affirmed in Psalm 103:3 "who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy disease" If you are a child of God, you are in God's priority list for complete health. Until you are healthy, no sinner in this world is permitted to walk the streets sickness-free!

According to Oyedepo, Christians are not permitted to be sick. If Jesus cannot prove himself in your life, you have not found Him. Diseases are only meant to be found in the land of Egypt, not in Canaan. At redemption, you are not permitted to see what the world is seeing, to suffer what they are suffering or to be held down by what is holding them down. According to Oyedepo, there is a report that on the day Jesus died, He did not only pay the price for your sin, He also paid for your sickness. As they were beating Him, the price for your divine health was being paid. So you cannot be enslaved again by sickness. It is possible to live your life absolutely free of disease and sickness. "By covenant, you are not supposed to have anything to do with sickness and disease."<sup>45</sup>

By his own personal experience, Oyedepo says he cannot be sick;

For long, I have been shouting, "I cannot be sick! Because I'm already raised up, far above sickness when Jesus came out of the grave. And I know He never went back there, and that all the saints that believe in Him came out of the grave with Him. I believe in Him, so I'm out of the grave, and I can't go back there! No, never."<sup>46</sup>

According to Femi Emmanuel, good health is a gift from God. It is the divine heritage Christians have as children of God. Christians are not only carriers of God's anointing; they are also His temple. That is why His wish for you is that you remain healthy. I Corinthians 3:16 says "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you?" Femi Emmanuel says divine health is a possibility. It is a covenant right once you are in Christ. Divine health is a state of being healthy at all times. It means living seven days in a week, four weeks in a month and twelve months in

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<sup>45</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p 84

<sup>46</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 86

a year without getting sick. Divine health is a function of the covenant we share with Christ. That was why Jesus Christ died. By His death, good health was made our covenant right. This is the reason we have the divine right not only to health but also to long life. Divine health is a state in which no sickness is permitted to stick itself to a Christian. God is a good pay master; divine health is the payment voucher He offers. Not only does He pay you when you serve Him, He pays well. In order to stay healthy and be free from diseases. Femi Emmanuel says there are certain spiritual and natural laws you must keep. As Christians, there are covenant levels of operating in which you are free from those evil things that are common to most people. You are not only spiritual, you are also physical. Your body is a vehicle for the Holy Spirit. So, it must be available and healthy, for it to fulfill God's purpose in life.<sup>47</sup>

For Pastor Adeboye, as a result of keeping God's commandment and obeying Him totally, the righteous man goes beyond the level of asking for healing because God keeps him in sound health. To have unlimited sound health is better than asking for divine healing. Holiness is the master key to divine health, because God is the personal physician of the righteous. He quotes God as saying:

If thou wilt diligently harken to the voice of the Lord God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these disease upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians for I am the Lord that healeth thee (Exodus 15:26).

The moment you become the anointed of the Lord, a decree will back you up. An angelic bodyguard is deployed to protect the anointed, and no evil is to be permitted to come near him. He quotes Psalm 121:7:

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, he shall preserve thy soul.

Pastor Adeboye gave an example of himself that it is about the thirty years since he discovered the master key of holiness, and he has not visited any doctor since then because he has enjoyed divine health.<sup>48</sup>

To deny illness as prosperity teachers are doing is to deny the scientific and

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<sup>47</sup> Femi Emmanuel, 2003, *Healing and Long Life*, Ibadan: Fem-Man Publishing House, p. 33

<sup>48</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2004, *Master Key*, Lagos/Ibadan Expressway, CRM Bookshop, p. 117.

biblical proofs of human's vulnerability to sickness. It also contradicts biblical teaching that the revealed will of God does not guarantee that all sickness of all believers at all times and in all places will be healed; even if they have faith. The Bible teaches that God does not guarantee believers a sickness-free world. Timothy was sick (I Tim. 5:23). Paul the great Apostle confessed a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

### 3.5 The Principle of Positive Verbal Confession

This has also been widely referred to as the principle of "name it, claim it". The prosperity teachers say that words have power. But power in this sense, is no reference to literary force, or to the ability of the words to either build up or destroy its hearer depending on the chain of thought or feeling it rouses in him. This power is anything but natural. The confessed word "means a lot in the spiritual realm". It has the power to "make your life-style successful and it has the same power to bring you down"<sup>49</sup>

By confession through action, we determine the outcome of our faith by our actions. "Positive" actions bring "positive" results and so forth. Positive confession teaches people that their words are determinative. We should learn to put our faith in our word or according to Hagin "put our faith in our faith. Hagin said:

Did you ever stop to think about having faith in your own faith? Evidently, God had faith in His faith, because He spoke the words of faith and they came to pass. Evidently, Jesus had faith in His faith, because He spoke to the fig tree and what He said came to pass<sup>50</sup>

Hagin says faith in God and His word that is acted upon will bring results every time. He quotes from mark 11:23

... whatsoever shall say... and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

To buttress his point, he also quotes from Mark 11:23 what Jesus said:

For verily I say unto you... that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast unto the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

<sup>49</sup> E. M. Okwori, *Godliness for Gain*: p. 10

<sup>50</sup> Kenneth L. Hagin, 2005, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, p. 61

The principle is that if you talk about your trials, you talk about your difficulties, you talk about your lack of faith, you talk about your lack of money, and your faith will just absolutely shrivel. But if you'll talk about your wonderful Heavenly father, if you talk about the word of God, then your faith will grow in leaps and bounds. If you talk about sickness, it will develop sickness in your system; if you talk about your lack of finances, it will stop the money from coming in. In claiming what we desire from God, we should get the word in our heart. Get the revelation of it in your spirit, be convinced in your own heart; then say it, and it will work! Believers are enjoined to meditate on the word until it becomes a reality in one's heart. You can say with your mouth what you believe in your heart, and results will be forthcoming automatically.

According to Copeland, salvation is available to every human being on the face of the earth, because the word says that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32), also (Rom 10:13). But this higher spiritual law of life will work only when it is put into action. This same rule is true in prosperity. There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God's word; faith causes them to function. They will work when they are put to work, and they will stop when the force of faith is stopped. The success formula in the word of God produces results when used as directed.<sup>51</sup> It doesn't make sense to the natural mind that with faith you can have whatever you say, even though it may be contrary to what you can see with your physical eye; but Jesus said it and by the eternal Almighty God, it is so! When you act on it, mix your faith with it and do not doubt in your heart, this spiritual law will work for you.

To Bob Buess, success comes as you confess, speak and believe in God's word. Through confession, you should expect good things to start flowing to you. He quotes Num. 20:

...speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water...

In like manner, he admonished Christians to speak to their rock of limitations, Buess gave the story of his Pastor John Osteen whose church desired a lovely international centre Church edifice thus;

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<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Copeland, 1990, *Prosperity: the choice is yours*, p. 31

At that time all natural resources had been exhausted to raise money for the projects. But the pastor continued to have his congregation speak to the rock of natural limitations that stopped the construction of that building. During their convention, God interrupted the service. One man arose and pledged a large offering for the new building. Another arose and made another offering. Then a river of love flooded the congregation. Everywhere, people were jumping up pledging offerings towards this building and realized a lot of money. They started the building by faith. They depleted their account on several occasions, but God always brought it in as they needed it. They paid cash for the entire building as they built it. Such is the wholesome power of positive confession.<sup>52</sup>

Buess concludes that as you have the Lord through His word, a new fresh flow of success begins to flow through you. Christians should continue to practice this meditation on the word of God. Pronounce this word to your life and that of others positively, and success cannot by-pass you anymore.

Bishop Oyedepo also teaches the principle of “positive verbal confession”. Words, he said have power. But the power in this sense, is no reference to literary force, or to the ability of words to either build up or destroy its hearer depending on the chain of thought or feeling it rouses in him. This power is anything but natural. It is spiritual. It does not operate between one man and another, but between a man and himself. He said the confessed word means a lot in the spiritual realm. It has the power to “make your lifestyle successful and it has the same potent power to bring you down”. It is very important here for you to note that there is great power in you. The moment you get what the word says about your situation, faith is built up; you present your case and you stand to address the situation. The creative miraculous power is released into the situation. Oyedepo says

“if you take the word of God and speak it boldly to your situation by faith, it is as powerful and as effective as Jesus speaking it”.<sup>53</sup> He adds “What proceeds from your mouth is a spiritual force that makes or unmakes you. If your mouth has negative ideas, your words will definitely, be negative. And negative words will yield failure and

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<sup>52</sup> Bob Buess, 1975, *Favour, the road to success*, p. 54

<sup>53</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 127.



frustration. On the other hand, a heart full of healthy, holy ideas shall yield success, joy and life abundant”<sup>54</sup>

He quoted from Numbers 14:28

Say unto them, as truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.

Oyedepo says God prospers us through our giving, working, thinking, trusting, waiting and then talking. Talking is the sixth pillar of kingdom prosperity. Whatever you are not able to say, you have not believed. In the world of the spirit, your mouth is what gives expression to your choice. Whatever man doeth not withstanding, he shall have only whatsoever he saith. Until you talk prosperity, you will never prosper. That is the word of God. Prosperity is produced on the ticket of faith, and faith is given expression through your mouth. He said

You must talk prosperity everywhere both in your privacy and in the public. Prosperity only answers to those who talk it. You make your way prosperous by giving (which is what provokes divine blessing), by working (provides the channel for the blessings to flow), by thinking (enhances greater results) by trusting (without which your results will not be delivered into your hands), by waiting (because you need patience to bring forth fruits), and then prosperity comes into your house by talking”<sup>55</sup>

According to Oyedepo, our mouth is a weapon of war (Luke 21:15). Until you say it, God cannot deliver. You have to keep talking your supremacy over the forces of wickedness. With a closed mouth; you die a victim (Ps. 81:10-14).

Positive or negative, God is committed to whatever you say (Isa. 44:26),

Oyedepo says angels act on what you say because they are your messenger, they take whatever you say as an instruction, so they go ahead to carry it out (Eccl. 1:56).<sup>56</sup>

In the parable of the sower, “the seed is the word of God” and you are created in His image. So, every word you speak is a seed you are sowing, and “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22) and Galatians 6:7 says what

<sup>54</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 132

<sup>55</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 288

<sup>56</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 119

you sow is what you reap. When therefore we talk of victory, we cannot be a victim of failure. When you talk of protection, you cannot suffer destruction. The tongue is a sword of evil, when you don't know how to put it to work, it has cost many their lives because, "death and life are in the power of the tongue". He quotes again;

What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days,  
that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy  
lips from speaking guile

Psalm 34:12-13.

Femi Emmanuel also encourages positive confession. He said you cannot be thinking sickness and living in good health. According to him, the Bible says "we are ensnared by the words of our mouth". He admonished his disciples, Do not talk sickness, even if you feel sick, do not confess it because your confession will automatically become your possession. Proverbs 18-21a says "Death and life are in the power of the tongue".<sup>57</sup> He encourages Christians to talk life and confess good health. You cannot talk death and yet live long. Believers should say "all is well" even in the face of contrary manifestation. That is the language of faith. Every time that man vocalized their faith, they were not denied. Many of the things we believe God for are not materializing because we have not spoken them into existence. Faith that is silent is nothing but wishful thinking. He says faith has a voice! It must be heard. We have to confess what we believe in order to make it a reality. God made man after His image, and likeness. Man possesses some of God's attributes, one of which is the power of confessions. Whatever a man confesses about his life will eventually come to pass; whether good or bad. God said that whatever a man speaks, and he does not doubt in his heart about what he has said, but sincerely believes in his words, he shall have whatever he said, for with the heart man believes, but with the mouth, he confess for results.<sup>58</sup>

Pastor Adeboye is also of the opinion that our words have the same powers as God's words. He says the word of a father spoken by his son has the same power effect. When you speak the word of God, heaven backs you up. That is why the word cannot fail. Whatever you do with the word here on earth is established in heaven. He urges Christians to speak what God has spoken. Say what God has said and doors will open

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<sup>57</sup> Femi Emmaniel, 2005, *Breaking the Barriers of Life*, Ibadan: Fem-Man Publishing House, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Femi Emmanuel, 2010. *Faith: Master Key to Exploits*, Ibadan: Fem-Man Publishing House, p. 82.

before you. “Thou shall decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways” (Job 22:28). He admonished his followers;

Open your mouth and decree peace for your life and blessing for your tomorrow. It shall be according to your decree ... from now on, whenever you wake up in the morning you will say; I decree wealth to come to my life, breakthrough, flow unto my territory”. “Prosperity come! And it shall be so unto you”<sup>59</sup>

Though many people believe they have attracted blessings from the principle of positive confession, it presents our words as being determinative and excludes the need for prayerful requests and confession of our sins. God asked Christians to dwell on His words, not on our own words. This anthropocentric principle seeks to transfer deity from God to man.

### 3.6 The Principle of Wealth Transfer

This is the principle that all the wealth in the world will be transferred to the Christians before Christ returns. The general verse that is always quoted here is Prov. 13:22.

A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

This principle teaches that anyone who gives heartily to God's work is righteous and will ultimately inherit the wealth of the unbelievers who are not giving to God's work.

Owolabi Awolola was very lucid in treating this principle and his views generally represent the teachings of the prosperity teachers like him.

He said God can make you wealthy by transferring the wealth of the heathens to you according to Isaiah 45:3. Well informed Christians will enjoy the luxury of the nation's wealth which for long has been beyond their reach. The good men and the just are the children of God whom God has decided to make wealthy through wealth transfer from sinners. He quotes;

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<sup>59</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2003, *Your Tomorrow will be Alright*, Lagos: Printme Communications Company, p. 62.

For God giveth to man what is good in his sight; wisdom, and knowledge, and joys but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit Eccl. 2:26.

He also refers to Job 27:16-17

Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.

According to him, Pharaoh in Gen 12:10, 13:2, sent Abraham out of Egypt with great wealth even though it was a time of afflictions. The gifts which pharaoh gave to Abraham because of Sarah whom Abraham lied was his sister, were never collected back from Abraham.

And he entreated Abram well for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and the asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and the asses, and camels.... And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold Gen. 13:2.

Also, he said God transferred the wealth from Abimelech to Abraham when in Gen 20:14 it was said

And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

Similarly, he said God transferred the wealth of a heathen nation to Isaac during a time of famine. While everyone was suffering from lack in the land of Gerar, Isaac became great.

And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became great; for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him Gen. 26:13-14.

For the nation of Israel, God also transferred to them the wealth of Egypt. He quotes from Ex. 12:35-36:

Speak now in the ears of the people, and let everyman borrow of his neighbour and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold.... And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses, and

they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

Awolola said Egypt was greatly spoiled and impoverished because God had transferred its wealth to Israel. He said one of the reasons Pharaoh's great army pursued the Israelites towards the Red sea after he released them was the wealth they took away. They really pursued, but the wealth which was now in the hands of the people of Israel could not be retrieved and Pharaoh's men perished.

Lastly, Awolola cited the transfer of wealth to the Israelites in the days of Elisha. In the days of Elisha the prophet, famine struck Samaria to the extent that women began to eat their own children as found in 2 Kings 8:7. Within the same time, there was war between Israel and Syria. To transfer the wealth of Syrians to the Israelites, God caused the Syrian army to hear the sound of war which scattered them from their camp. The lepers who discovered the great leftovers reported the incident to the King of Israel. What followed was the great abundance of substance for the people of Israel. There was so much for everybody to eat that even a basket of fine flour or two baskets of barley sold for only one shekel.<sup>60</sup>

Bishop Oyedepo also teaches the principle of wealth transfer. He said by the Israelite's redemption, the Bible says "they spoiled the Egyptians". There was a supernatural transfer of wealth that was initiated and provoked by redemption. He quotes;

And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.

And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptian, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptian" Exodus 12:35-36.

Bishop Oyedepo says it was a supernatural arrangement! After all, the Egyptians could have said "we have just lost our children, why must we also lose our property?" We see there a supernatural conversation of wealth on the platform of divine favour. Their four hundred years of labour in Egypt was paid for in form of supernatural arrears

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<sup>60</sup> Owolabi Awolola, *Principles of financial prosperity*, pp. 100-104

in one day! Egypt's wealth was handed over to Israel overnight. Oyedepo says there is coming such a massive unheard of conversion of wealth of the heathen to the body of Christ in these last days. Redemption is the Christian's authentic guarantee for divine provision. He quotes (Isaiah 61:1-11) especially verses 5-7:

And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the nation shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame they shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Bishop Oyedepo says God has promised to give the Christians, the riches of the Gentiles and the unbelievers. There is coming such a divine conversion of wealth that will be monitored supernaturally by heaven.<sup>61</sup>

According to Pastor Adeboye, Christians need to take over the money in the country (Nigeria) in order to be able to accomplish the work that God has assigned to us. If we do not take over this money quickly, those who are holding it will take over this country from us. That is why Christians must be prosperous.<sup>62</sup> He concluded that God has decided to give the hidden riches of the gentiles to Christians.<sup>63</sup>

This kind of teaching is traceable to the Jehovah witness and has been reinterpreted by the prosperity teachers. We must note that this kind of teaching may tempt some Christians to lust after the riches of perceived sinners or relax from hardwork in the hope of wealth that is expected to be transferred to them from the sinners. Proverbs 12:12 however warns us that it is the wicked that desires the plunder of evil men.

### 3.7 The Idea of a Wealthy Jesus

It is also the view of some prosperity teachers that Jesus was materially rich in his earthly life and so his followers, i.e. the Christians should also be rich like Jesus.

John Avanzini was quoted by John T. MarcArthur as saying that Jesus was

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<sup>61</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 74

<sup>62</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2011, *Austerity to Prosperity*, Lagos: Printme Communications Company, p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> E. A. Adeboye, 2011, *Austerity to Prosperity*, p. 56.

actually quite wealthy during his earthly ministry. He pointed to Judas' role as treasurer and concluded that Jesus must have got to handle lots of money to need a treasurer. He said he believes the scripture teaches that Jesus had a big house and wore designer clothes.<sup>64</sup>

Paul, it has been argued, said that God will supply all the needs of the people of Ephaphroditus "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). By this is inferred that Jesus had abundant wealth in glory during the time of his earthly ministry.

Furthermore, prosperity teachers claim that Jesus wore a robe worthy of a king just prior to His crucifixion depicting the fact that he was truly rich. Reference is also made to Mary and Joseph, Jesus parents, who had money to pay for the inn prior to Christ's birth. The prosperity teachers say this suggests that Jesus came from a wealthy home and was raised by wealthy parents. The same parents, they claim was seen in the Scriptures as good tax payers, all suggesting their rich background.

Bishop Oyedepo teaches that Jesus was rich in the course of his earthly ministry. He says Jesus had a treasurer in the person of Judas Iscariot. He also wore a robe worthy of a king just before his crucifixion. According to Oyedepo:

Bible calls him second Adam. He lived in "Eden" while He was here on earth – in the realm of no lack and want. Because He knew no sin, He was not permitted to know lack.<sup>65</sup>

On the contrary, the Bible nowhere portrays Jesus as materially rich during his earthly ministry. Emiola Nihinlola's view is useful here to correct the impression in this principle. He asks rhetorically:

How shall we reconcile the prosperity doctrine with the material poverty of Jesus Christ? (II Cor. 8:9)? How shall we be Christlike?, he had to borrow a colt upon which to ride (Matt. 21:1-3). He built no house and had to use those of others to hold important meetings (Mark. 14:12-15), he never had more than his daily needs and he had to fish to get coins to pay tax.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> John T. MacArthur was quoted in D. R. McConnell, 1982, *A Different Gospel*, London: Longman SPCK, p. 20

<sup>65</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 50

<sup>66</sup>Emiola Nihinlola, 2004, *The Fullness of Redemption*, Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, p. 34.

He dressed like his disciples. The accusers had to bribe Judas to identify him so that they will not arrest the wrong person.

### 3.7 Conclusion

What prosperity teaching does is maintaining a positive outlook on life rather than a right relationship with God. If the prosperity teaching is correct, grace becomes obsolete, God becomes irrelevant, and man becomes the measure of all things. Whether it is the Abrahamic covenant, the atonement, giving, faith, or the biblical interpretation of any given verse, the prosperity teacher seeks to turn the relationship between God and man into a financial *quid pro quo* transaction. God is reduced to a kind of cosmic talisman, attending to the needs and desires of his creation. This is a wholly inadequate and unbiblical view of the relationship between God and man and the stewardship of wealth as taught in the Bible.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND FACTORS FAVOURING THE SPREAD OF PROSPERITY TEACHING IN NIGERIA

#### 4.1 Methods and Techniques of Spreading Prosperity Teaching

One of the reasons that have been advanced for the popularity of prosperity gospel in Nigeria is the effective methods and techniques that prosperity teachers often employ in passing their message to the people.

Firstly, the prosperity teachers more often than not, capitalize on the power of oratory. They are often powerful preachers who raise the morale of their listeners through interesting stories of miracles and a bit of luck and then trick them into believing that Christians should excel both spiritually and materially because, according to these preachers, a healthy material possession is an indication of a Christian spiritual authority. They often sermonize their members to “think like millionaires” so that their way of thinking is a great determinant of what they will become. Prosperity teachers organize time to time crusade or revival with tags or labels associated with prosperity. Quite often, the crusade are well captured “from poverty to prosperity”, “grass to grace”, “New Millennium Breakthrough”, “Success is my portion”, “Unlimited prosperity” etc. There are always Biblical quotations to back the caption of the aforementioned crusade tags. The prosperity teachers have been accused of always quoting areas that favour prosperity in the Bible, leaving out the dangers associated with it as contained in other Bible passages. Ayantayo has quoted Obiora as saying this much about prosperity teachers;

Crusade is found to be a forum where well fed individuals boost their ego, project false assumptions, dish out intriguing half truths, innuendos, understatement, exaggeration, inarticulate promises, insinuations, deliberate generalizing or distortion of facts, false-testimonies, and imputation for improper motives – all geared towards achieving their aims; eventual accumulation of wealth and fatty bank account.<sup>1</sup>

Ayantayo says another method used by the prosperity teachers is to encourage their followers to “sow fatly” so that they can get multiples in return. They often boast of

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<sup>1</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, *Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 209

having the capacity to make a person rich. At times, they instruct their followers to donate money in order to be a beneficiary of Jesus' gift which could be cars, houses, passport, overseas visa, job, double promotion, success in business, journey mercy and success in overseas trip among others. They go to the extent of introducing different forms of offerings with attractive tags or prophetic labels e.g. "Rehoboth offering", "poverty eradication offering", "spiritual abundance offering", "open heaven offering", "success offering" etc. They also often set a limit to what to give. This involves a kind of gambling method because the preacher asks the first 10(ten) luckiest members of the audience to donate ₦50,000.00, until it gets to the least lucky person who may be asked to donate ₦100 or less. To accompany these, the prosperity teachers sell anointed water, candle, oil, and handkerchief to willing members of the audience, claiming that their use will open the way to all-round and everlasting success. Ayantayo contends that "majority of the audience are carried away by these techniques and methods, including the educated people among the audience."<sup>2</sup>

Another means of dissemination of prosperity ideas is the use of Television and Radio and handbills for their revivals, crusades, and seminars. Those who could not participate in the crusade, prosperity preachers give them opportunity to buy tape and videocassette of the crusade. Today, we have many cassettes of prosperity messages on sale in churches almost on weekly basis. More or less, some of these prosperity preachers own private studio. Prosperity teachers also use the forum of book writing and publishing to popularize their ideas. Many of the prosperity teachers are authors of books and some of the churches have bookshops where they sell books, magazine and even anointed oil, handkerchief, candle and prosperity water"<sup>3</sup>

In Nigeria, Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church has written more books on prosperity than any other Nigerian preacher. His fast selling books include "Bible Sense for Financial Fortune", "Born to Win", "Covenant Wealth", "Success Buttons", "Understanding Financial Prosperity", "Exploring the Secrets of Success".

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<sup>2</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, p. 209

Pastor Femi Emmanuel has written books like *“The Laws of Success”*, *“You can be an Achiever”* and *“Prophesying on Material Things”*. Pastor Enoch Adeboye has written books like *“Your Tomorrow will be Alright”*, *“Key to Prosperity and Health”*, and *“The Ultimate Financial Breakthrough”*.

Besides, it has been identified that the prosperity teachers often undertake paid advertisement to sell their message. They employ the services of professional advertising agents who are good in the choice of words such that will be catching enough to win the attention of the public. Some are on Radio, Television, Banner and Bill Boards. Those on Radio and Television are aired intermittently, while those on bill boards, and leaflets are placed and pasted in conspicuous places for the people to see. It must be remarked that craze for material wealth has really eaten deep into many of these prosperity teachers that they even go to the extent of defrauding the churches and as well as engage in many other vices as evident in reports in the national dailies and magazines. In fact, it has been contended that some, in a bid to get members who can donate money, go to the extent of getting magical and fetish powers for “signs and wonders”. Others commercialize the gospel through sale of prosperity handkerchiefs and “Breakthrough anointing oil” thus diverting people’s faith from Christ, the original miracle worker.

Harrington (in Obiora 1995:52) said:

The new evangelism, whether in soft or hard selling, is a quasi-religious approach to business, wrapped in a hoax - a hoax voluntarily entered into by producers and consumers together. Its credo is that of belief -to-order... It is the truth-to-order as delivered by advertising and public relations men who believed in them and voluntarily believed by the public.

This issue of “church business” is now like discovering a goldmine, where men and women who walked the “ghettos” some years ago can proudly today become either the “Joneses or the Multi-millionaire at the expense of their followers and most especially the pure principle of the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

According to Abogunrin, many charismatic prosperity leaders are involved in occultic practices, involving sacrifice and the use of juju and talisman. The way many of

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<sup>4</sup> Harrington (in Obiora 1995:52) was quoted by Olalekan Dairo Privatization and Commercialization of Christian Message, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 215

them raise money is quite dubious. You can go to a church with a car and good shoes, but return home barefooted, and with nothing. After donating all the money a person has on himself, he is encouraged to sow seed by parting with his car, shoes, bag and jewelry. Many of them are palace prophets, dancing round the corridors of power and houses of rich men and women. The same pastor could prophesy, promising victory to political opponents competing for the same office, and shamelessly collecting money from all of them. Church properties are registered in the name of the founder and his family. Most of them ordain their wives and some of their children, with a view of their taking over from them in the event of death. The church is viewed as the major family business enterprise. Many of them also set up other business empires in addition to church business. They are the alpha and omega of their church affairs and finances.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.2 Factors Favouring the Spread of Prosperity Teaching in Nigeria

Yusufu Ameh Obaje has summarized the plight of the average Nigerian when he says:

Our tragic situation has left many of us spiritually depraved, religiously enslaved, socially crippled, culturally disoriented, morally disabled, economically bankrupt, politically distressed, psychologically disturbed, mentally confused, academically paralyzed, intellectually depressed, existentially corrupt and generally insecure.<sup>6</sup>

This general state of helplessness has been identified as a major factor why the people of Nigeria easily embraced prosperity teaching and gave it much attention with the hope that it can bail them out of their socio-economic problems and guarantee them prosperity and success. The anti-intellectual stance of the prosperity teachers immensely contributed to its wide success in Nigeria. For the Nigerian, the emotional and experimental modes of worship are a more agreeable way of expressing religion. Prosperity teaching which de-emphasized intellectual objectivity but stressed a subjective faith with a promise of prosperity could not only have been readily accepted.

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<sup>5</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 2007, Jesus Pronouncement on Wealth in the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria, in *Biblical Studies and Corruption in Africa* NABIS, Ibadan, p. 275.

<sup>6</sup> Yusuf Obajeh, The role of religious leader's on national rebirth: *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXIH/1&2 June and December, 2001.

E. M. Okwori has argued that perhaps more importantly, it is the socio-economic factor that has assisted the prosperity message to be accepted and continues to enjoy popularity. He says desperation means gullibility. "The harsh socio-economic condition in our own part of the world is not unrelated to why a gospel that promises sure relief from these hardships is widely and enthusiastically accepted".<sup>7</sup> Victims of harsh circumstances, according to him, easily become victims of fake promises. In Nigeria today, it is difficult to separate the success of prosperity teachers from the peculiar socio-economic context into which this message is being brought and propagated. Okwori has simply described the prosperity gospel as

A gospel of socio-economic exigency, not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

He quoted the African Guardian magazine as making a good observation on the role of socio-economic condition in the insurgence of "spiritual sects" thus;

In their promises of deliverance from mundane problems, spiritual sects touch a nerve in the contemporary Nigerian mood. A society stretched on the rack of ignorance, disease and poverty become easily seduced by the blandishments of functional utilitarian religion. People eagerly defer to an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent deity. But in doing this, they also expect, in fact demand tangible quid pro quo. They expect to be shielded from witchcraft, from hunger, from sickness.... Spiritual sects in effect promise to wrest such a social contract from the Supreme Being, to invoke his name in restoring sight to the blind, sound to the deaf.<sup>9</sup>

This view is also corroborated by Dada who has identified that the popularity and spread of prosperity message in Nigeria can be hinged on three factors; these are the unfavourable socio-economic condition, the long rule of the military and undue emphasis on the other-worldly aspect of faith by the older mission churches.<sup>10</sup>

The development and spread of the prosperity message in Nigeria was greatly enhanced by the long military administration in Nigeria and the paraphernalia that goes

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<sup>7</sup> E. M. Okwori, *Godliness for gain: a theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of prosperity gospel*, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> E. M. Okwori, *Godliness for gain: a theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of prosperity gospel*, p. 3

<sup>9</sup> The African Guardian of October 16, 1986 was quoted by E. M. Okwori in *Godliness for gain*, p. 398

with it. The first military *coup d'état* took place in Nigeria in the early hours of January 15<sup>th</sup> 1966. Before the military came to power, the civilian politicians were alleged to be extremely corrupt and irresponsible. It was the corruption and the irresponsibility of the civilian administration that invited the military into Nigeria body-politics. The purpose of the military intervention was actually to create necessary changes and remedy the situation at hand. Unfortunately, the purpose was defeated because the military themselves ended up with worse corrupt practices. The opportunity was used to amass wealth for themselves. No wonder today, all retired army officers seem to be very wealthy. Moreover, their regime was known for the violation of fundamental human rights of citizens, and the use of autocratic and despotic means to compel citizens to submit blindly to their authority. The military administration ushered in the civil war which took place in Nigeria from 1967-1970, in which about a million Nigerians were killed and property worth millions of naira were destroyed. Nigeria experienced twenty-nine years of military rule, and the influence of the military rule on Nigerian politics affected the traditions, customs and values cherished by the society.

The military ruled Nigeria up to 1979 when they handed over to the civilian president Shehu Sagari. Due to alleged corruption, the military took over power again in 1983 and remain in power until 1999 when we had a transition to civilian regime. The military era witnessed the emergence of millionaires who did nothing to be rich, but amassing wealth from the state treasury for work not done. The social implication is that the “get rich quick” attitude became the order of the day. It was in this atmosphere that the prosperity message had the opportunity to flourish in Nigeria. Those who could not make it in the political terrain ran to the Church for their own share which prosperity preachers promised. It is extremely important to note that it was only religious worship that was not banned by the military juntas when they came to power, so a lot of people embraced prosperity message when the military brutality became acute.

Furthermore, Dada says that undue emphasis on the other-worldly aspect of faith in the older mission churches to some extent enhanced the development and spread of the prosperity message in Nigeria. He opines that the missionary-founders of the older

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<sup>10</sup> A. O. Dada, Prosperity gospel in Nigerian context: a medium of social transformation or an impetus for delusion? In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXVI/1&2 June and December 2004, p. 95

mission churches in Nigeria preach a salvation that was limited to the soul. According to him, the implication of this is that the bodily needs of the adherents were not met. Hence prosperity gospel in Nigeria emerged as a means of satisfying the people's physical needs.<sup>11</sup>

On this, Dada quotes Abogunrin as saying

The salvation of the soul as preached by missionaries is important, but salvation limited to the soul will be meaningless in the African context. Salvation must be related to man's body, health, victory over demonic power, and continued protection from these powers, provision of daily needs, the security of the society in which he lives, and man total wellbeing.<sup>12</sup>

Dada then concluded that prosperity message in Nigerian context evolved as a means of filling the lacuna in the missionary's understanding of salvation. The prosperity message seems wholistic in character to an average Nigerian and that is why it has attracted the attention of the Nigeria people

#### 4.3 Conclusion

What has been generally agreed is that prosperity teaching can be a real problem to the church if not well managed. This is because of its astonishing popularity and success among Nigerians. Today, the prosperity teaching churches are hard to avoid as they present an ostentatious expression of prosperity and are central to the ubiquitous culture of revivals and miracles crusades, so much so that they overwhelm more traditional charismatic or Pentecostal doctrines. However, the premises of prosperity teachers' arguments, their methods of implementing their prosperity ideas are generally faulty, making the extent and depth of their contributions to people's lives to be limited in scope, making it a half measured panacea for the crises that have engulfed the nation. The methods and techniques involved in putting across the prosperity message to the public and the uncritical manner in which messages are accepted dogmatically leaves followers

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<sup>11</sup> A. O. Dada, 2004, *Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion*, 100.

<sup>12</sup>S. O. Abogunrin was quoted by Dada Oyinloye in Dada A. Oyinloye: "A millionaire through Jesus (I! Corinthians 8-V) from perspective of some Nigeria prosperity preachers". *African Journal of Biblical Studies*. Vol XV; April 2001 p. 82.

vulnerable to manipulation and delusion and it seems prosperity teachers are merely exploiting the spiritual immaturity or ignorance (at times) of their followers.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE FAITH AND REASON CONTROVERSY: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE PRINCIPLES IN PROSPERITY TEACHING

#### 5.1 Between Faith and Reason

Faith and reason are both sources of authority upon which beliefs can rest. Reason generally is understood as the principles for a methodological inquiry, whether intellectual, moral, aesthetic, or religious. Thus it is not simply the rules of logical inference or the embodiment of the wisdom of a tradition or authority but presupposes demonstrability before a proposition or claim is ordinarily understood to be justified as true or authoritative. Faith on the other hand involves a stance toward some claim that is not, at least presently, demonstrable by reason. Thus faith is a kind of attitude of trust or assent. As such, it is ordinarily understood to involve an act of will or a commitment on the part of the believer. Religious faith involves a belief that makes some kind of either an implicit or explicit reference to a transcendent source. The basis for a person's faith usually is understood to come from the authority of revelation. Revelation is either direct, through some kind of direct infusion, or indirect, usually from the testimony of another.

The basic impetus for the problem of faith and reason comes from the fact that the revelation or set of revelations on which most religions are based is usually described and interpreted in sacred pronouncements, either in an oral tradition or canonized writings, backed by some kind of divine authority. These writings or oral traditions are usually presented in the literary forms of narrative, parable or discourse. As such, they are in some measure immune from rational critique and evaluation. In fact, even the attempt to verify religious beliefs rationally can be seen as a kind of categorical mistake. Yet, most religious traditions allow and even encourage some kind of rational examination of their beliefs.

The key philosophical issue regarding the problem of faith and reason is to work out how the authority of faith and the authority of reason interrelate in the process by which a religious belief is justified or established as true or justified. Four basic models of interaction have been identified as follows:

(a) **The Conflict Model:** Here, the aims, objects or methods of reason and faith are understood as same. Thus, when they seem to be saying different things, there is genuine

rivalry. This model is thus assumed both by religious fundamentalist, who resolve the rivalry on the side of faith, and scientific naturalists, who resolve it on the side of reason.

(b) **The Incompatibilist Model:** Here, the aims, objects and methods of reason and faith are understood to be distinct. Compartmentalization of each is possible. Reason aims at empirical truth, religion aims at divine truths. Thus no rivalry exists between them. This model subdivides further into three subdivisions; first, one can hold faith is transrational inasmuch as it is higher than reason. This latter strategy has been employed by some Christian existentialists. Reason can only reconstruct what is already implicit in faith or religious practice. Second, one can hold that religious belief is irrational, thus not subject to rational revelation at all. This is the position taken ordinarily by those who adopt negative theology that assume that all speculation about God can only arrive at what God is not. The latter subdivision also includes those theories of belief that claim that religious language is only metaphorical in nature. This and other forms of irrationalism result in what is ordinarily considered fideism; the conviction that faith ought not to be subjected to any rational elucidation or justification.

(c) **The Weak Compatibilist Model:** Here, it is understood that dialogue is possible between reason and faith, though both maintain distinct realms of evaluation and logicity. For example, the substance of faith can be seen to involve miracles; that of reason to involve the scientific model of Christianity which adopts this basic model.

(d) **The Strong Compatibilist Model:** Here it is understood that faith and reason have an organic connection, and perhaps even parity. A typical form of strong compatibilism is termed “the natural theology”. Articles of faith can be demonstrated by reason, either deductively (from widely shared theologized premises) or inductively (from common experience). It can take one of these forms; either it begins with justified scientific claims and supplements them with valid theological claims unavailable to science, or it starts with typical claims within a theological proof for God’s existence; an example of the latter would be the argument that science would not be possible unless God’s goodness ensured that the world is intelligible. Many, but certainly not all, Roman Catholic philosophers and theologians hold to the possibility of natural theology. Some

natural theologians have attempted to unite faith and reason into a comprehensive metaphysical system.

The interplay between reason and faith is an important topic in the philosophy of religion. It is closely related to, but distinct from, several other issues in the philosophy of religion; namely, the existence of God, divine attributes, the problem of evil, divine action in the world, religion and ethics, religious experience and religious language, and the problem of religious pluralism. Moreover, an analysis of the interplay between faith and reason also provides resources for philosophical arguments in other areas such as metaphysics, ontology and epistemology.

## 5.2 Prosperity teaching as a form of Fideism

Prosperity teachings can be categorized as belonging to the incompatibilist model and teaches what has been generally considered as fideism.

Fideism is the conception of religious truth as being based on faith and subjective experience, but having nothing to do with reason or objective inquiry. Most modern ideas of faith like prosperity gospel are fideistic, since they deny or denigrate the role of reason in Christianity.

The encyclopedia of philosophy defines fideism as “the view that truth in religion is ultimately based on faith (by which it means something unproved and unprovable) rather than on reasoning or evidence.<sup>1</sup> Fideism owes its origin to distrust in human reason, and the logical sequence of such an attitude is skepticism.

The fideistic element of prosperity message is evident from its exaltation of mystical “Revelation knowledge” (a term Oyedepo frequently uses) over rational, “sense knowledge”. In communicating with God, the esoteric channels are preferable. Meditation on the Bible should be a spiritual means by which the word of God is imparted into one’s spirit according to Oyedepo. He contends that “when we pray in the spirit, we assuredly pray in accordance with the will of God, so we are more certain of receiving than when we pray with the natural mind”.<sup>2</sup> For the same reason, the prosperity message has also been linked to deism which is the idea of an impersonal God which

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia of Philosophy quoted in Frank E. 1985. *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 113

<sup>2</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 119.

inevitably is the destination of all fideistic beliefs.

According to Popkin and Stroll; the general contention of the fideists had usually been that religious knowledge is beyond the limits of man's rational faculties and understanding...<sup>3</sup> Fideism represents a combination of a complete skepticism about the possibility of human knowledge, at least in the area of religious knowledge, and an appeal to knowledge through faith, unsupported by rational evidence.

According to Okwori, prosperity gospel is generally anti-intellectual and encourages mindless surrender, or what Apostle Paul calls zeal without knowledge. This is the attitude that the prosperity teachers encourage and what their message thrives on. All sense of objectivity is cast away with an appalling sense of impunity so that what we are left with is an unmitigating reign of pious error and an unwincing devotion to superstitious fallacy... In an atmosphere of intellectual apathy, stupidity builds upon stupidity, fury breeds more fury until such a point where even the most outrageous falsehood easily passes from fiery tongues into itching ears without anyone raising an eyebrow.<sup>4</sup> However, Christianity is not opposed to reasoning; Proverbs 18:15 says "the mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge". I Thessalonians 5:21 says "Belief is based on evidences"; in Isaiah 41:21 we hear that "Faith should not be irrational". Also the scripture refers to itself as having been written to produce both faith (John 20:30-31) and knowledge (I John 5:13). In Hebrews 3:4 Paul in his letter tells believers to do away with childish thinking and reasoning. Christians are advised to set an example for others in teaching by modeling integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech. The physician Luke in his prologue to his gospel revealed that he determined the truth through careful investigation. Isaiah 1:18 says "Come now and let us reason together says the Lord".

Aristotle and Plato found a principle of intellectual organization in religious thinking that could function metaphysically as a halt to the regress of explanation. Both thinkers developed versions of natural theology by showing how religious beliefs emerged from rational reflections on concrete reality as such. The Stoics and Epicureans

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<sup>3</sup> Popkin and Stroll were quoted in Bocheski, J.M. 1980, *The Logic of Religion*, New York: New York University Press, p. 130.

<sup>4</sup>E. M. Okwori, *Godliness for Gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, p. 45

derived certain theological kinds of thinking from physics and cosmology.

The writings attributed to St. Paul in the Christian scriptures provide appeals for a new examination of divinity, not from the standpoint of creation, but from practical engagement with the world. In his famous passage in Romans 1:20, Paul is less obliging to non-Christians. Here, he champions a natural theology against those pagans who would claim that even on Christian grounds; their previous lack of access to the Christian God would absolve them from their guilt of unbelief. Paul argues that, in fact, anyone can attest to the truth of God's existence thereby using his or her reason to reflect on the natural world. Thus, this strong compatibilist interpretation entailed a reduced tolerance for atheists and agnostics.

St. Augustine emerged in the late fourth century as a rigorous defender of the Christian faith. He responded forcefully to pagan's allegations that divination beliefs were not only superstitious but also strong compatibilist. He felt that intellectual inquiry into the faith was to be understood as faith seeking understanding. To believe is "to think with assent". It is an act of the intellect determined not by reason, but by the will. Faith involves a commitment "to believe in a God". "to believe God" and "to believe in God". Augustine argued further that the final authority for the determination of the use of reason in faith lies not with the individual, but with the church itself. St Thomas Aquinas claimed that the act of faith consists essentially in knowledge. Faith is an intellectual act whose objects are truth. Thus it has both a subjective and objective aspect. He concludes that we come to know completely the truths of faith only through the virtue of wisdom (sapientia). Aquinas says that "whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit". The spirit "enables judgment according to divine truth".<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther contends that though reason is often very foolish; by it's reflections on the nature of words and our use of language, it can help us to grasp our own spiritual importance. John Calvin gave a more measured response to the power of human reason to illuminate faith – in his *Institute of the Christian Religion*, he argued that the human mind possess, by natural instinct, an "awareness of divinity".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin was quoted in Partnership Gateway to Unlimited Greatness by Ige R. O. 2012, Golden Satellite Publishers Ltd. p. 30.

Fideism amounts to a repudiation of the demand for “rational belief” (Isaiah 41:21, I Peter 3:15, I Thessalonians 5:21; Philippians 1:7). It also entails the notion “believing for some evidence” e. g. “I believe because I want to believe”, However, Faith is a volitional commitment of an informed intellect. It is a joint act of the will and intellect, not one without the other. Knowledge without commitment is disbelief, and commitment to faith should generate evidence (e.g. by credible testimony, cause/effect relationships, direct experience etc), which then is examined by the subject. At the same time, the evidence points to the object of faith (whether it be the oneness of the church, existence of God, the deity of Christ, His benevolence etc). This evidence enlightens the intellect which then makes a volitional commitment not only possible but also rational knowledge. Faith without commitment is disbelief (John 8:30-46, 12:42, 43; James 2:19); commitment without knowledge is irrationality. Neither is a genuine option for a Christian.

Augustine was correct when he said:

For who cannot see that thinking (Latin term for reason) is prior to believing? For no one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is believed... It is necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has proceeded; although even belief is nothing else than to think (i.e. reason) with assent... Everybody who believes, thinks – both think in believing, and believe in thinking”.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3 A Philosophical Appraisal of the Principles of Prosperity Teaching

We have established in this work that most of the ideas in prosperity teaching can be traced to the Word Faith Theology in America. Most of the Word Faith teachers influenced the writings of the Nigeria-based prosperity teachers.

Bishop Oyedepo himself alluded to this fact when he said:

My own personal encounter; In March 1981, I went on a three-day adventure into the word of God. I sat down with my Bible and Gloria Copeland’s book “God’s will is prosperity”. On the third day, while reading, I found it! Light dawned from heaven like a lightning! I stood up and began to spin around in the room in the excitement of my discovery! I came out and announced to everyone, at the

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<sup>7</sup> Augustine A. 1958, *The City of God*, p. 320.

top of my voice, “I can never be poor”. It was a verdict backed up by light from heaven! Poverty ended in my life that day.<sup>8</sup>

It is therefore, not surprising that most of the noticeable defects in prosperity teaching in Nigeria are traceable to the same flawed ideas they shared with the Word Faith Theology.

John F. MacArthur, Jr. has said that the Word Faith Movement is every bit superstitious and materialistic. He says the Word Faith theology has turned Christianity into a system not different from the lowest human religions – a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled and exploited for the Christian’s own ends.<sup>9</sup>

In his teaching of the covenant of abundance, Oyedepo says prosperity is a covenant that God has with man which started with Abraham and extends to believers today who are now the real Israel since Jesus has come to consecrate a better covenant by His blood. If you belong to Christ, you are also Abraham’s seed according to the promise and you are covered under the covenant. He lays much emphasis on a new birth which is a spiritual initiation into a new realm of life. He says:

People may be born again and yet live in poverty and diseases because they don’t know the secret of God.<sup>10</sup>

For this, Oyedepo has fallen into the heresy of gnosticism. Gnosticism derives its name from the Greek word ‘gnosis’ which means knowledge. The name reflects the idea of the Gnostics that to have or not have knowledge spelt the difference between the saved and the damned of humanity. Those who have this knowledge were the pneumatic’ (the spiritual) or the “*gnostikoi*” (those in the know). Those who lacked it were the “hylic” – the damned slaves of matter.

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<sup>8</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 127

<sup>9</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr. (1993). *Charismatic chaos*, Michigan: Zondervant Publishing House, p. 324.

<sup>10</sup> David Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity*, p. 62

Apart from undermining scriptural authority, such a claim makes Christianity a cult into which people get initiated instead of an objective faith by which they are converted. Added to that, classism, segregation and spiritual pride will take the place of brotherhood and mutual submission which are the ideals in pure Christianity.

Prosperity teaching has also been linked to animism. In his excellent and carefully researched book *A Different Gospel*, D. R. McConnell has convincingly demonstrated that there is the “cultic” “metaphysical” or “pagan” element to the prosperity gospel. This cultic element has much in common with animism. Basically, both of them are man centred as against orthodox Christianity which is God-centred. They tend to be fear-motivated, “power-drunk” and seekers after quick solutions to the common problems of human life.<sup>11</sup>

A further distinction has also been made between animism and Christianity which the prosperity teachers are not conscious of. To the animist, religion would be thought of as a system of beliefs, feelings and behaviours which issues in rites, rituals and liturgies, by which familiar spirit beings are manipulated to provide success, happiness and security in all life. Christianity however is an ultimate concern, which motivates God-centered patterns of life, worship and mission and answers the question of the meaning of life. The prosperity ideas like the “law of faith”, the “seed faith” doctrine have strong animistic connotations.

Prosperity teaching also tends towards a religious idea called dualism. This is a belief in a world of two conflicting opposites of good and evil. This conflict is externalized from man. Man is just a passive observer of what is going on; he is not expected to internalize the struggle between good and evil. Oyedepo says, there is what he call the “Devil’s kingdom” – man came under Satan’s feet at that point of God’s verdict upon Adam. It was that day that Satan became “the god of this world”. Man was reduced to dust, and he is now food for the devil until Jesus came and reversed the situation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> D. R. McConnell was quoted by E. M. Okwori in *Godliness for gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of prosperity gospel*, Jos Nigeria. P. 41

<sup>12</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 114



Our Christian experience has however shown and taught us that the devil has never been a contender with God, not even in the control of the universe. God is God, the only God in the Christian faith who created the world and who has always controlled the world and its inhabitants. Besides, the concept that the universe (including God) is governed by impersonal spiritual laws as taught by the prosperity teachers is not biblical. It is nothing else but deism. It has been observed that the prosperity teachers present the believers as using God, whereas the truth of the biblical Christianity is just the opposite; God uses the believer. Word Faith theology sees the Holy Spirit as a power to be put to use for whatever the believer wills; the Bible teaches, however that the Holy Spirit is a person who enables the believer to do God's will. The concept of God that the prosperity teachers have, especially the one that conceives God as manipulatable, can, (and in fact does, in subtle and unsuspecting ways), lead to polytheism.<sup>13</sup>

Another major flaw in prosperity teaching is the over-bloated view of humans as being in God's class. It seeks to transfer deity from God to man.

Oyedepo, for example, encourages his followers to act like little gods. He says:

You have become one with Christ. You are joined with Him. You have been given His very life; God's divine nature.... You are His son, God produce after His kind. You are in God's class. You are gods on earth.<sup>14</sup>

Oyedepo thus denies the sovereignty of God. He has deposed God and put the believer in His place like the other word of faith teachers like him. According to Oyedepo, man is a God-like creature who, through faith, can command health, wealth and all "the good things of life" unto Himself. He is the master, and God the servant to serve his wish. From that basic error all their other fallacies follow. Why do they teach that health and prosperity are every Christian's divine right? Because in their system, Christians are gods, deserving those things. Why do they teach that believer's words have creative and determinative force?

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<sup>13</sup> E. M. Okwori in *Godliness for gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of prosperity gospel*, Jos Nigeria. p 48

<sup>14</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 58

Because in their system, the believer is sovereign, not God. In contrast, the true Christian God is not in anyway our class. We are his servants, not he ours. He has called us to lives of loving services and worship not godlike supremacy. He blesses us, but not always materially. In no way can we write our own ticket and expect him to follow our script – nor should any real believer desire such a scenario. The life of a Christian is a life spent in pursuit of God’s will but not a strategy to get him to go along with ours.

### 5.3.1 A Critique of the Principle of Wealth as a gain of Salvation

Prosperity teachers say that redemption is the believer’s assurance of abundance. If you are saved, you are secured materially. Salvation equals material security, and if a Christian is not prospering, it means he is in sin. The Bible however contains the story of people who were rich yet knew they were not yet saved. The Bible teaches that salvation is not equal to material security. Zacheus had money but knew he still needed salvation which was why he had to climb a tree to meet Jesus Christ. Nichodemus was also rich, yet he sought Jesus at night to seek for his salvation. The truth is that there are many rich people today who are not saved. Also, there are many good believers today who are not wealthy.

It has been contended that the teaching that wealth is an essential gain of salvation is not only materialistic but it is also superstitious. Superstitions are irrational beliefs that future events are influenced by specific behaviour without having facts. It is a belief or practice that is not based on facts or events that can be proven. It is an irrational belief in an object, action or circumstance that are not logically related.

The Bible, especially the New Testament contains many warnings about the danger of riches. Even though the prosperity teachers mention people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Solomon as a proof that God truly wants his children to be rich, they did not take cognizance of Elijah and Elisha, who apparently had meagre income and associated with the poor and widow. We also learn about Peter and John Acts 3:6 as people who were not rich;

Then Peter said, silver or gold I have none, but such as I have give I thee.

In the Old Testament, the Lord made provision for the poor, and this could not have been a sign of displeasure from him Leviticus 12:8:

And if thee be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring tow turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

Jesus himself said “for ye have the poor with you always” (Mark. 14:7). Philosophical theologians like St. Augustine have argued that all grades of human beings are in the universe and the creator of them all is the good God. This conception, according to his principle of plenitude, leads to the theory of a hierarchy of higher and lower forms of existence.<sup>15</sup> These ideas also flow in the aesthetic theme where he tries to explain the world’s graded diversity. He says evils, like poverty, are in totality and from the standpoint of the creator, necessary to make the universe wholly good; for even the evil (poverty in this sense) within it is made to contribute to the complex perfection of the world.<sup>16</sup> To Augustine, the combination of rich and poor people will make up an ideal society. He says they make the world beautiful like the bright and dull colours make a perfect picture. Lutheran theology also shares a similar view. The emptiness of wealth is further demonstrated by great thinkers.

According to Martin Luther,

Riches are the pettiest and the least worthy gift God can give man. What are they to God’s word, to bodily gifts such as beauty and health or to gifts of the mind such as understanding, and wisdom. Yet men toil for them day and night and take up no rest. Therefore God commonly gives riches to foolish people to whom he gives nothing else.<sup>17</sup>

Also Samuel John said;

With respect to the mind, it has rarely been observed that wealth contributes much to quicken discernment or elevate the imagination, but may, by hiring flattery or laying diligent asleep, confirm error and harden stupidity.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Augustine A. 1953, *Enchiridion* transl. London: E. Evans, SPCK.

<sup>16</sup> Austine A. 1958, *The City of God* transl G. G. Walsh, New York: double Day.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Luther was quoted in E. M. Okwori, 1995, *Godliness for gain: a theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, Jos, Nigeria: Tony Press, p. 215.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel John was quoted in E. M. Okwori, 1995, *Godliness for gain: a theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, Jos, Nigeria: Tony Press, p. 216.

In I John 2:15 the Bible says

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world". If any man loves the world, the love of the father is not in him, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Jesus in fact asked His followers not to seek worldly comforts like the Gentiles, for our father in heaven knows that we need all these things. But we should seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Paul in Colossian 3:2 admonished Christians; "Ask the Lord to help you to be heavenly minded. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth".

A deep reflection would unveil the fallacy that all of us must excel. By definition, everyone cannot be excellent; somebody has to be in the middle of the pack, and someone has to bring up from the rear. Millions of examples throughout the world and throughout history could be given of godly people living in poverty and the children of the wealthy wasting their inheritance. Prosperity teaching thrives only where a woeful mishandling of the Bible takes place, and in particular with a literalistic and unnuanced reading of the Old Testament. Ultimately, the prosperity theology goes back to the "puritans" who taught that financial success was a "sign of election". From there, it entered into the American ethos and prepared the way for New Thought and the Word Faith Movement.

According to Emiola Nihinlola, the prosperity teaching is a hoax. It is an attempt to justify human covetousness (Luke 2:15) at the expense of spiritual prosperity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Emiola Nihinlola, 2004, *The Fullness of Redemption*, Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, p. 34.

As stated earlier, wealth as a gain of salvation fails to explain the poverty of the Apostles. Peter and John disclosed they had no gold or silver (Acts 3:6.). Paul, the great Apostle was also not rich as testified in Corinthians 1:5-9 “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. For we would not, brethren have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life”. Paul continued in I Corinthians 4:11-13

Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands, being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.

Jesus Himself said the poor will always be with us (Mark. 14:7). Jesus directed Christians to lay up treasures in heaven not on earth (Matthew 6:19). It is true that Solomon and David were rich. What about Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Job who were godly people who lost their riches.

James reminded the people that God has high regard for those who are considered poor by the world but are rich in spirit and faith. (James 1:9-1, I Cor. 1:26-27). The scriptural principle is that God in His sovereignty can choose to bless us with riches or He can choose to bless us by taking our riches away.

### 5.3.2 A Critique of the Principle of Sowing and Reaping in Multiples

This is also known as “giving to get”. Prosperity teachers say that God is obligated to give back in multiples whatever a Christian gives to God’s work; but no biblical formula assures that God will multiply and return to the giver whatever amount is given to a particular ministry.

It has been argued that prosperity teaching so exalt success as to pour scorn on the poor as stubborn infidels who have evidently refused to seek God’s aid by not giving to His work. In this version of the gospel, faith leads to tithing, and tithing ignites prosperity. A gratified Almighty will respond by opening the windows of heaven, pouring out blessings so rich that believers will not have room to store them all. You

have to pay to play – and to win; and if the church Pastor follows a dazzlingly sumptuous lifestyle, that is just his way of exhibiting God’s munificence to the world. It seems as though most leaders who teach that God wants Christians to be rich, live lavish lifestyles and there is need to figure out if there is any correlation. What is certain is that Jesus and the Apostles did not set the example of extravagant lives.

Sowing and reaping, it has been argued, has an animistic connotation. Stayne submitted that “Its quite obvious that the animists man’s giving is not altruistic, not a result of generosity. Animist giving is rather a subtle way of inducing his world, whether it be human or supernatural, to reciprocate by blessing him with the fulfillment of his desires”.<sup>20</sup> This also aligns with the purpose of giving in prosperity teaching.

Prosperity teachers talk about “Seed faith offerings”. Oyedepo for instance emphasized tithing, kingdom promotion offering and giving to the prophets. He said “whatever you let go for the kingdom’s sake comes back to you hundred fold – manifold more in this present time and in time to come, life everlasting. Whatever you let go for the kingdom’s sake, Jesus said it is an investment; it will surely come back to you in multiplied forms”. By this, Oyedepo is actually preaching “give to get”.<sup>21</sup>

Pastor Femi Emmanuel calls it “kingdom investment” where the divine investment brings divine dividends. He says the secret of living in plenty and prosperity is to give to God’s work cheerfully, which he called “doing business with God”.<sup>22</sup> We must observe that the motivation for giving is not so much to bless that ministry, but to get something back from God. The motivation is so twisted. Do they really expect God to “bless” something so wrong-hearted? Much of the reasoning behind this “seed faith” teaching is a distortion of “Sowing and reaping”, which is a biblical concept, but when it is distorted and sold as a means of ‘giving to get’, then it is well beyond the scriptures. The purity of simply “giving from the heart” is lost and replaced with selfish motives. People give because the preacher “guarantees” they will get a “big return” on their investment. The motivation is so wrong that it is no wonder that this doctrine has produced disastrous fruits in the Church. Many people have stolen in their places of work

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<sup>20</sup> Stayne was quoted by E. M. Okwori in *Godliness for gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of prosperity gospel*, Jos Nigeria. p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 59

<sup>22</sup> Femi Emmanuel, *The Laws of Success*, p. 148.

to get money to sow as a “seed of faith”.

E. M. Okwori commenting on the idea of “sowing and reaping” principle of the prosperity teachers contends that “to say that those Christians who give generously, will be rewarded generously and those who give sparingly will be rewarded accordingly” differs from saying that those who give more money will be rewarded with larger sums of money. The shift of meaning is in at least two areas. First, there is a change of attitude from the biblical to an unbiblical one. He quoted Getz as saying:

Nowhere in the Scriptures are Christians taught to give so that they might obtain earthly abundance. Secondly, this selfish understanding of the passage ties the reward down to earthly one when it doesn't necessarily have to be so. The “generous” blessings Christians receive for their generosity need not be limited to material ones. In fact, it's preferable if it were more heavenly than anything else. After all, is that not what Christ meant when he asks believers to lay-up treasures for themselves in heaven? (Matt. 6:19-20).<sup>23</sup>

“Giving to get” is manipulative. It makes people feel guilty to give to receive. Studies have shown that it is the poor and needy who give most often to the prosperity teachers. This is because, these people often feel that only a “financial miracle” can save them. It is not uncommon for desperate Christians to give and give, well beyond their means, in the hope that God will rescue them. Some may even lose their homes. The elderly and the sick give sacrificially as taught with the hope of getting some improvement and return which more often will never come. It has also been suggested that the preachers often use this teaching to make money. The truth is that God does not measure your love for Him by how much you give to your local church but by your obedience to His commands. Christians should however be generous of their own freewill and not be manipulated into trying to keep to an Old Testament law. A better indication of how much you love God is reflected in how you treat other people. Jesus taught us to take care of those in need (Matt. 25:34-36, Matt. 25:40). God is not after the Christian's money but his heart.

In contrast, prosperity teachers asked their disciples to give because they will get a great return. As we have noted, faith is thus viewed as a means of material gain rather

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<sup>23</sup> E. M. Okwori, 1995, *Godliness for gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, Nigeria: Tonykes Press, p. 66

than acceptance of heavenly justification. “Sowing and reaping in multiples” contradicts Jesus teaching to his disciples to give, hoping for nothing in return. The Bible teaches clearly the kind of “giving” God expects from Christians when it says “Not because I desire a gift but I desire fruit (saved souls) that may abound to your account” (Philippians 4:17).

We must know that all things do not end in success. Some plant seeds, yet get no harvest; some people get sick and are not healed. Things do not always work out the way we desire.

Christians generally believes that no labour of theirs in the Lord will be in vain. Every genuine act of generosity will be rewarded, but not necessarily here on earth, but in fact, preferably in heaven. But the prosperity teachers have re-defined this reward strictly in terms of “here” and “now”.<sup>24</sup>

### 5.3.3 A Critique of the Principle of Covenant of Divine Unfailing Health

Prosperity teachers say that good Christians cannot suffer because Christians are believed to have mastery over sickness. But we should never assume that a person who is living and striving to walk uprightly before God is in sin or unbelief just because he is suffering. Suffering is a part of the Christian life. Before the tragedy that befell Job, we have a record of his standing with God. The scripture makes it very clear that Job was not an ungodly, faithless person. He was indeed a friend of God. Paul said, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and fellowship of His sufferings. The apostle Peter tells us we are called to suffer (1 Peter 2:21-25).

It is not biblically correct to say that Christians cannot suffer. God sometimes causes us to suffer that we may know that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. The Bible in fact teaches that there could be reward in heaven for earthly suffering; Lazarus the beggar was rewarded and comforted in heaven. Even Jesus as the captain of our salvation was perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:9, 10). In I Peter 2:21 “Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example”. In Phil. 3:8, Paul said he suffered loss of all things that he may win Christ. Psalm 34:19 says, “Many are the afflictions of the

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<sup>24</sup> E. M. Okwori, *Godliness for Gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, p. 11.



righteous” while John 16:36 says, “Ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer”. Likewise, I Peter 4:13-16 says, “We as Christians should rejoice because we are partakers of Christ’s sufferings”. The Holy Spirit says “For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil 1:29). Stephen was stoned to death, Job suffered afflictions, and Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon. These are example of people of God who still experienced suffering.

The prosperity teacher’s idea that a Christian cannot be sick is also not consistent with our Christian experience. Prosperity teachers say that every form of sickness or disease on an obedient child of God is a work of the devil and unless one receives the “light”, one’s lot is to remain in the sickness. Oyedepo argues that however, “there is a place where you stand in God and never get sick again. It is the realm where the divine nature in you is stirred up that you become immune to sickness and disease.”<sup>25</sup>

Biblical evidence abound however that no mater the level of our spirituality, we are human after all and capable of falling sick. Luke, the disciple of Jesus was a physician. Jesus healed many people in the course of his earthly ministry spiritually, and it has been suggested that Luke must have been complementing these healing with his professional training as a medical doctor.

As I have shown earlier, to deny illness as prosperity teachers do, is to preach the infallibility of man who is only mundane with a lot of limitations. Man is not god – only God cannot be sick. The Bible tells us Paul’s confession about himself in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 thus:

... so to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said “my grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weakness, so that’s why I take pleasure in all my weakness, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions and trouble that I suffer for Christ, for when I an weak, then am strong.

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<sup>25</sup> David O. Oyedepo, 1986, *Born to win*, p. 132

It has been argued that what Paul was referring to was a sickness that tormented him in his physical body. If Paul, the great apostle was sick, who then cannot be sick? Even Job, who God testified was righteous, was also sick. The truth is that there is a possibility that God can use the instrument of disease or illness on his servant as an agent for fulfilling God's purposes in the life of his children. The Bible teaches that God has never promised us a trouble free (sickness free) world and experiences have shown that man appreciates God the more when they are under one affliction or the other which is when they usually grow closer to Him. Prosperity teachers' denial of diseases and problems as 'lying symptoms' robs believers of an opportunity to face the reality of their problems and also the opportunity to minister with compassion and understanding to suffering people. How can you help somebody whose symptoms you believe are lies of satan; or worse, the result of sinful unbelief in the sick person's life? Consequently, many believers of prosperity teaching tend to be unfeeling, even to the point of being coarse and abrasive toward people they assume do not have enough faith to claim a healing.

What is certain is that people of God suffer the same ups and downs, successes and failures, health and sickness and so forth as the unbelievers. One has only to glance through the Psalms to realize that this is not our "best life now". We live in a corrupt world and until the Lord returns, our sin-tainted universe will often disappoint and grieve us. Stories of successes and failures can be lined up from here to eternity but such stories are not the basis of truth, or of life; the word of God is. We may ask, if prosperity teachers claim that Christians cannot be sick, why are the big churches, including prosperity teaching ones, building big hospitals in all the nooks and corners of the country today? There are standard hospitals within the camp of the Redeemed Christian Church of God on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, just as we have a similar hospital at the Living Faith Church Headquarters in Otta, Ogun State.

Prosperity teaching is different from the gospel of Jesus Christ who died and rose again to bring us reconciliation with God. It places an emphasis upon physical healing, material blessing and success that is very different from traditional evangelism. The difference does not lie in the conviction that God can and does bless His people with physical healing or material prosperity, as this has always been accepted as biblical; the difference lies in the conviction that Christians ought to expect God to bless them

physically and materially here and now. The problem is that when the realities of life kick in – through sickness, redundancy, bereavement etc, who do people blame? Instead of blaming the person who related these promises to them in God’s name, they blame God himself. That is both unjust and tragic. It is a huge slur on the character of God, whereas it is the prosperity teachers who should have to answer for these problems not God. And supremely, it completely by-passes the spirituality of the cross of Christ both for our rescue and our inspiration and life-style blue print Phil. 2:5-11. Sickness sometimes is meant to teach us lessons of life.

According to E. P. Hood:

Of all the know-nothing persons in this world, commend us to the man who lies “never to have known a day’s illness”. He is moral dunce, one who has lost the greatest lesson of his life, who has skipped the finest lecture in that great school of humanity – the sick-chamber.<sup>26</sup>

Covenant of “divine unfailing health” which promises Christians mastery over sickness contradicts scientific proofs that human beings are vulnerable to sickness and capable of falling sick. It also contradicts biblical teaching that the revealed will of God does not guarantee that all sicknesses of all believers at all times and in all places will be healed, even if they have faith. It was in connection to prayers for the sick that Jesus said, “The prayer of the righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16b). Therefore praying for the sick and expecting positive results in terms of healing is biblical. But it is unscriptural to use this promise and rule out those occasions, which could be many, when God’s will overlooks our immediate convenience and concerns itself with our sanctification through trials (James 1:2-30) and chastisement (Heb. 12:5-11). The bible teaches that God does not guarantee believers a sickness-free world. Timothy had stomach upset and frequent illnesses for which a natural treatment was prescribed (I Tim. 5:23). Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus (II Tim. 5:20). Epaphroditus was sick and almost died (Phil. 2:26, 27). To say that these close associates of Paul and early church leaders did not have enough faith to receive divine healing would be preposterous. It was revealed in the Bible that it is only our immortal resurrected bodies that will never be

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<sup>26</sup> E. P. Hood was quoted in E. M. Okwori, 1995, *Godliness for gain: A theological evaluation of the Nigerian version of the prosperity gospel*, Nigeria: Tonykes Press, p. 216.

sick. I Cor. 15:42, 43 says, “so is the resurrection.... It is sown in corruption, raised in incorruption, sown in weakness, raised in power”. The truth is that God can be honoured even in human illness (John 8:1-3).

#### 5.3.4 A Critique of the Principle of Positive Verbal Confession

The principle of “positive confession” also contains many errors. Prosperity teachers say that either “positive or negative”, God is committed to whatever you say (Isa. 44:26). Angels act on what you say (Eccl. 5:6) because they are your messengers, they take whatever you say as an instruction, so they go ahead to carry it out”.<sup>27</sup> Positive verbal confession is hinged on a faulty premise of an anthropocentric idea that places man in the class of God. It seeks to transfer deity from God to man. From the over-bloated idea of man as little gods, prosperity teachers think that the inexhaustible power source called the “omnipotent God” is only a servant of the “spiritual force” called “faith”. This idea subverts the sovereignty of God, makes God nothing but an errand boy at the service of the will and whim of man. He is no longer the same God who the prophets of Israel always reverently referred to as “sovereign Lord”. The God of our Christian experience is the ONE “who works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11) and who “is in heaven and does whatever pleases Him” (Psalm 116:3). No plans of his can be thwarted (Job. 42:2). He does things for his own sake (Isaiah 48:11). God’s will has precedence over the will of man and as Christians; we should recognize the sovereignty of God. The Bible says “But our God is in heaven; he hath done whatever he had pleased” (Psalm 115:3).

If our words have so much creative power, it means the believer’s words are determinative. It reduces the power of God. God is no longer the object of faith. Why pray at all if our words have so much force? What the prosperity teachers are teaching about ‘positive confession’ is dangerously close to explicitly denying the need to seek any help from God through prayer. Prosperity theology therefore denies God’s sovereignty, removes the need to pray to God for any relief from burdens or needs, and gives the Christian himself both dominion and creative power. But we ask; Can man be equal to God? The answer is No.

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<sup>27</sup> David. O. Oyedepo, 2004, *Exploring the riches of redemption*, p. 119

The concept of positive confession looks magical and superstitious especially when it is believed that words can determine faith. It turns faith into a magical formula and our words into a magical instrument by which one may get things done. There is no biblical basis for any of those ideas. The only appropriate objects for our faith are God and his infallible word, certainly not our own words. Positive confession also rules out confession of sin which is a crucial teaching of I John 1:9. In fact, positive-confession principle actually encourages believers to ignore and deny the reality of their sins and limitations. It has produced multitudes who perpetually wear emotionless smiles and pretend all is well, even when they are not, out of fear that a negative confession will bring them bad fortune.<sup>28</sup>

Positive confession demotes God and deifies man while trying to redefine the nature of faith as a “human force” generated by human beings, and directed at God in order to force God to perform. The true Good News however is the person and work of the incarnate God-man, Jesus Christ, and not material benefits. All things do not go the way we wish. The statement “your situation will change for the better” leaves no room for the cancer patient who does not get better or the factory worker who is laid off and never again finds a comparable job or the footballer who has a career ending injury. The prosperity teacher says God want Christians to feel good about ourselves; God wants us to have healthy positive self-images, to see ourselves as priceless treasures who are strong, courageous, successful and overcoming. However, Paul teaches that

Rather than chase after good self-images, Christians should not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment (Rom. 12:3).

Positive verbal confession is simply to maintain a positive outlook on life rather than a right relationship with God. As Christians, prayers should be used for all our requests, not simply “positive confession”. Confession of sin is what is required of us, not the confession that seeks to rival God’s word. It is seems like a self-help programme that has been baptized in the name of God who has asked Christians to dwell on His word not on our own words. God admonished Christians; “If ye continue in the word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John

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<sup>28</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr. *Charismatic chaos*, 343

8:31-32). It is only when we ask anything according to God's will that He will hear us (I John 5:14b). The Psalmist understands the supremacy of God's wish over our spoken words when he prayed "And let the word of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight Oh Lord! my strength and my redeemer (Psalm 19:14).

### 5.3.5 A Critique of the Principle of Wealth Transfer

On the idea of wealth transfer, we see a lot of errors. Prosperity teachers say the Bible teaches that the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just. There is nothing wrong with what the Bible says. The problem is with the interpretation. We may think about it, if this were true the way it is usually taught, then a sinner's wealth would always flow to the righteous. Without trying too hard, we should be able to come up with some names of sinners whose fortunes have not flown to the righteous. Nevertheless, this portion of a verse is used to get people excited and ready to receive this great flow of money that supposedly will come to the righteous real soon. Using this portion of scripture as an excuse it seems, some very notable ministries have supposedly accepted sums of money from various organizations that seek to compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ and substitute it with a gospel of wealth and health. These ministries did not plunder the wicked, instead they sold out and have become subject to a different gospel. They often plunder poor Christians, and those who do not understand the Bible. As a result of this popular teaching, we have Christians lusting after the riches of sinners. There is something wrong with that. We are warned in the book of proverbs:

"The wicked desire the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes" Proverbs 12:12.

True Christianity teaches us that it is wicked to desire the riches of evil men. So we are not to be expecting any transfer of wealth to us.

### 5.3.6 A Critique of the Principle of the Idea of a Wealthy Jesus

It is also not biblically correct to state that Jesus lived as a materially rich man with abundant wealth during his earthly ministry. The Bible gives us a picture of Jesus Christ who was not materially rich. When he wanted to pay tax, he took money from the mouth of a fish.

Jesus built no house and used the house of others to hold important meetings (Mark 14:12-15). Mary Magdalene, Joanna whose husband Chuza was an officer in Herod's court and Susana and many other women used their resources to help Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8-13).

Isaiah chapter 53 gives us a clear picture of who Jesus is... He has no form of royal kingly pomp, that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire Him (v2)... He was oppressed, he was afflicted, He was submissive and opened not His mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter... (v7). And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth (v9). Jesus lived as a poor man. He dressed simply like his followers. His accusers could not identify him when they wanted to arrest him and he was only pointed out to them by Judas Iscariot. The Bible tells us that Jesus was born in a borrowed stable; was laid up in a borrowed manger and thirty three years later ended up in the borrowed grave prepared for Joseph of Arimathaea who took the responsibility for the burial of Jesus (Mk. 15:43). He was so poor that when a certain scribe came and wanted to follow him, he replied that "foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the son of man had nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. 8.20).

Jesus was not a man of abundant wealth but lived a modest life. He did not set the example of luxury and extravagant life for his followers. The idea that Jesus had a treasurer in Judas Iscariot which has been alluded to as the reason for believing that Jesus was rich is not plausible. It only emphasizes Jesus commitment to helping the poor despite his lean resources. It is supposed to be a lesson in giving and compassion, that Christians should give, not only because they have in excess, but to meet the needs of others which is the wish of God for their lives.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

Many Christians who are opposed to prosperity teaching have maintained that our salvation is wholistic when salvation from sin and its bondage is a result of placing saving faith upon the finished work of Christ. Whatever progress of the soul we make after our salvation is as a result of our obedience to God and results in our spiritual maturity. As for bodily or circumstantial success, that was never guaranteed to the

Christians, be it automatically or on condition. In fact, it has been observed that God is best demonstrated by the deprivation, affliction and suffering he allows us to go through. God is more interested in our becoming spiritually wiser than in our getting richer, in our becoming patient than problem-free, in our becoming reliant on Him rather than having comfort and ease that can turn our mind from Him. New Testament Christianity nowhere suggests that a “double blessing” involving the material and the spiritual awaits all Christians for the taking. There is only one true blessing, and that is the spiritual one. We become doubly blessed only as we get more of it, not when we add wealth and health to it. In fact, the two things belong to entirely different categories, and cannot summate one another.

Prosperity teachers erroneously value material and spiritual blessing as equals and insist that the two kinds of blessings are to be had simultaneously. Our Christian experience has however taught us that on a preferential scale, spiritual blessings outweigh whatever material blessing we experience. Besides, the desire for the “best of two worlds” can only result in worldliness and “God and mammon” cannot be served at the same time. The motive for this desire is selfish and can lead one to exhibit greed and covetousness in the guise of faith in God. The tragedy of prosperity teaching is that a person does not have to be spiritually awakened in order to embrace prosperity; one only needs to be greedy.



## CHAPTER SIX

### THE EFFECTS OF PROSPERITY TEACHING

#### 6.1 Effects on Prosperity Teachers

The point that has often been made by most scholars is that prosperity teaching generally has favoured only its proponents and their cronies. The methods and techniques involved in putting across their message to the public negates Immanuel Kant's principle of humanity as the prosperity teachers are mostly exploiting the gullibility and immaturity of their congregation to satisfy their material quest rather than a genuine concern for follower's socio-economic emancipation.

The prosperity teachers have been accused of jeopardizing faith for economic pursuit. They are often misled by their own convictions as observed by John MacArthur that:

Although charismatic deny that they are trying to add to scripture, their views on prophetic utterance, gifts of prophecy and revelation really do just that. As they add – however unwillingly – to God's final revelation, they undermine the uniqueness of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Besides a distrust for that means of knowledge that involves the use of man's natural facilities in preference to channels that are esoteric creates a problem of credibility for the prosperity teachers who make the repudiation. If the intellect is not to be trusted, on what grounds are we being given the "teaching" with which to persuade us? And if the body of teaching which we receive all comes from a specially revealed source, then it is apart from scriptures and is often rejected. The prosperity teacher contradicts himself when he uses the process of shoddy intellectualism to try to convince us to shun intellectualism. The only non-contradictory way he can speak is the unacceptable one of becoming a subjective dictator of truth.

Today, it has been contended that prosperity teachers employ the power of oration as instrument of impressing their adherents about the need for them to live prosperous lives. In most cases, they dwell on their own material possessions just to convince their adherents to donate generously or to sow plentifully. At times, they claim to have inspiration from the Holy Spirit. But in most cases, one can hardly reconcile what they

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur, 1993, *Charismatic Chaos*, Michigan: Zondervant Publishing House, p. 214.

claim to have been doing at the instance of Holy Spirit with the functions of Holy Spirit as specified by the Bible. As a result of this, many people become skeptical to believe what they say.

Besides, prosperity teachers have been shown to encourage idleness or laziness among their adherents by teaching that wealth does not come by hard work but by divine favour. They claim that once their followers have faith, they are sure of becoming prosperous even if they do not work hard. Arising from the foregoing is the general idea that prosperity teaching makes the teachers to become legalizer of crimes in Nigeria.

Ayantayo quotes Adegbesan thus:

It is our contention that this criminal state of affairs was made possible because of the attitude and activities of some religious leaders, which are considered being collusive and permissive. These activities were collusive when religious leaders were associated with criminals acting as their talisman. Report on newspapers are replete with cases of religious leaders who gave criminals prayers, blessing, “*tira*” and other charms before they embarked on their nefarious activities. Usually, the proceeds of such successful ventures were shared with the religious leaders...<sup>2</sup>

Too often, prosperity teachers seem satisfied with the outward show of piety and not commitment to God by their followers, particularly if they are generous with their ill-gotten wealth. Most prosperity teachers are also egocentric. They intrinsically seek a transfer of divinity from God to man in an anthropocentric value system. Most prosperity teachers are also fideistic in their approach to issues of faith. Prosperity teachers demand the discouragement of reason in matters of faith thereby promoting the reign of pious error and an unwavering devotion to superstitious fallacy.

On the positive note, the prosperity message has made its teachers to be very popular in Nigeria. We must note that the prosperity teaching churches are among the fastest growing churches in Nigeria of today and these teachers are among the greatest religious leaders in the nation.

Many prosperity teachers have become large employers of labour and have

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<sup>2</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, (2010). *Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 211.

encouraged their followers to struggle and help other members of the congregation by giving them jobs while they sternly teach the habits of thrift and sobriety.

## 6.2 Effects on the Followers of Prosperity Gospel

We have emphasized earlier that prosperity message thrives in the absence of use of human reasoning. Most followers of prosperity teaching are therefore people who seem to be gullible. In an atmosphere of intellectual apathy, stupidity builds upon stupidity, folly breeds more folly until such a point where even the most outrageous falsehood easily presses from fiery tongues into itching ears without anyone raising an eyebrow. Most followers of prosperity teaching based their faith on emotional considerations rather than on biblical facts. This has had far reaching effects on the individual psyche of their followers.

One outstanding effect of prosperity message on its followers is the lust for materialism. Ayantayo has contended that lust for materialism is one of the effects of prosperity gospeling. He says “The fact is that the quest for prosperity has heightened the desire for materialism among many Nigerians. Materialism is the tendency to value material things like wealth, money, cars, properties, clothing, high profits in merchandise and bodily comfort too much and the moral, spiritual and intellectual too little or not at all”.<sup>3</sup> Religion has been commercialized and followers of prosperity teaching today believe that carrying the Bible is one of the quickest means of getting money.

The “spirit of individualism” is another effect that prosperity has had on its followers. We have suggested that prosperity teaching could have derived from Ethical Egoism which teaches that each individual must first and foremost pursue those things that give him the highest happiness. Prosperity teachers unconsciously inculcate the spirit of “individualism” on their followers. All in the desire to pursue material possession in order to be prosperous, we discover that people are more concerned about themselves than others. We have cases of people stepping on other people’s toes in the pursuit of property. The slogan now is survival of the smartest person. A smarter person is the one who is clever enough to manoeuvre situations at his or her disposal to amass wealth no

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<sup>3</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, (2010). Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critique, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 209.

matter whose interest is affected.

Prosperity teaching has made Nigerians to be over-ambitious and desperate to be rich. This is encouraged by the display of wealth by prosperity teachers who asked their followers to justify their standing with God by displaying their earthly possessions like flashy cars, gorgeous dresses etc. Connected with this is the principle of “seed faith” which made people to steal in expectation of manifold returns on their seed of faith which in many instances, never come.

In keeping with the “seed faith” doctrine, it has been observed that the poor and sick, the elderly are the people who give most, in the belief of a magical solution to their problems, and sometimes until they lose their home without the promises being realized.

Most of the adherents of prosperity message have been found to have been exploited by their leaders. Poverty in Nigeria has rendered millions helpless, and the prosperity teachers seem to have been exploiting the situation to enrich themselves at the expense of their followers. Most followers of prosperity teaching are trapped in self deception. More importantly, it has been discovered that the real life situation of most followers of prosperity message did not match their expected promised state of riches and abundance. To find a meaningful answer to the poser of reconciling the difference between the real life situations of these adherents who are mostly in poverty despite a promised state of riches, Dada has proposed the application of the social psychological theory of cognitive dissonance.<sup>4</sup> The cognitive dissonance theory was first propounded by Leon Festinger in 1957. The theory says that dissonance is around whenever you simultaneously hold two cognitions that are psychologically incompatible. Cognition is what people know, believe or feel – the term is loosely used in general theory – so cognitive dissonance arises when two cognitions are inconsistent with one another.

Dada says it may be justified to some extent, if one posits that adherents of prosperity teaching in Nigeria experience cognitive dissonance. This fact is evident in two incompatible cognitions that confront them. Prosperity preachers claim that it is the will of God that all believers should be materially rich. However, in real life, most of these adherents are either living in poverty or a little bit above the poverty line. Dada

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<sup>4</sup> A. O. Dada, Prosperity gospel in Nigerian context: a medium of social transformation or an impetus for delusion? In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXVI/1&2 June and December 2004, p. 102

says this situation might lead to delusion if not properly managed. Delusions are basically false or incorrect beliefs that have no basis in reality. A delusion of grandeur is a false belief that one is rich, famous or powerful or has some great mission in life.<sup>5</sup> In view of the scenario above, most adherents or prosperity teaching in Nigeria would be considered to be deluded.

The religious ingenuity of a Nigerian is, however, brought to bear in resolving the conflict and dissonance that resulted from prosperity teaching. As a measure of helping to resolve the – dissonance that came as a result of prosperity message, prosperity teachers are now advocating patience. They admonish their followers to wait patiently for the time the much – expected wealth will manifest. According to these preachers, there is a divine time – frame, for the fulfillment of God’s promise of wealth to believers. Patience definitely inspires hope, which helps sustain prosperity teaching in Nigeria. Also rationalization is another means employed in resolving cognitive dissonance that prosperity teaching engenders. Rationalization is a process whereby conscious reasoning is substituted for unconscious motivation in explaining events or situation. In some instances, sin or failure to adequately contribute to the preacher’s church or ministry are adduced, as some of the reasons prosperity promises remain ineffectual in the lives of some believers. This, perhaps, account, for the massive and aggressive support for prosperity preacher’s ministries by their followers, in spite of the absence of appreciable or tangible achievement to show for their efforts.

### 6.3 Effects on the Church and Society

The exponents of prosperity message in Nigeria have one time or the other claimed that their message engenders physical and spiritual transformation which ultimately resulted into national economic and financial reformation. Oyedepo himself had declared:

And I say with all sense of humility, we are going to continue to bring life to dying people and rescue nations from the pangs of poverty and penury.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Dada quoted B. O. Smith, Psychology, science and understanding, in his article on prosperity gospel in Nigeria. *ORITA* XXXVI/1&2 June 2004, p. 103

<sup>6</sup> David Oyedepo, Winner’s World Publication (July 2004), p. 12

In the midst of economic downturn that is hovering over Nigeria, there is the need to raise people's hope for a better future and the fulfillment of the promise of material blessing by God. Prosperity teaching has made Christianity popular because it has raised peoples hope of a better future.

Oyedepo himself has acknowledged that the reason for the church social contribution to the society is because the prosperity promise makes sense only in the context of enriching the wider community far beyond the narrow confines of the church.

However, it has been argued that instead of ameliorating the economic condition of the people, prosperity teaching has made Nigerians to be overambitious in order to justify their standing with God which the teachers say can only be done by displaying their earthly possessions like flashy cars, gorgeous dresses, big houses etc. many people have resorted to economic frauds in order to meet up with this religious demand.

Prosperity teaching also seems to be exploitative. It is strongly believed today that religious institutions with prosperity leaning have become means and ways of wealth, status and sex differentiations in society in spite of their avowed religious beliefs in justice, unity, love and brotherhood of man. It has been observed that the poverty in the country has rendered millions helpless, and the prosperity teachers have been exploiting the situation to enrich themselves at the expense of their followers. Associated with the problem of selfhood and egocentrism is the increase in wave of crime in the society. Most people engage in crime such as drug and child trafficking, money laundering, advance free fraud, cheating, extortion etc all in efforts to become rich since they have been taught that prosperity is the basis for their being recognized in the church and the society at large.

Abogunrin contends that the tragedy of the matter is that when members donate their millions, the prosperity teachers do not bother about the sources of such heavy donations. Prosperity churches are usually the ones patronized by drug barons, smugglers, armed robbers and women of easy virtue. Most of the messages preached quite often in those churches are the type that will not trouble the conscience of such listeners. What they hear always is that the more they give to the church, the bigger the blessing. They ride the latest cars and live in mansions. They go out in company of several armed security guards and in a convoy of cars, with pilot cars blowing the siren in

the lead. There are also those who carry whips to scare away other legitimate road users. He goes on with an example:

About two years ago a young hotel worker stole millions of naira from his employers and donated this to one of the prosperity churches in Lagos for the purpose of becoming “multi-multi millionaire”. He was arrested and he confessed that he donated the money to church in order to receive a hundred fold from God. The church leader agreed that the church received the money and that it was a voluntary donation. The church leader refused to return the stolen money because the donor was not forced to do so. His relations based in U.S.A. had to pay the money back in order to prevent the young man from going to jail. The matter was published in *The News Magazine*, Vol. 26, No. 23 of 19 June 2006. Several newspapers had published the matter before then. That church is yet to refund the stolen money given as offering. There are matters that are worse than this, relating to moral matters and probity. There is hardly any week that similar matters do not appear in the dailies or periodicals.<sup>7</sup>

The concentration of prosperity teaching churches in city centres has also promoted rural-urban migration as many youths have migrated to the city centres with the hope of catching up with the prosperity train. Many youths who would have been useful in the farm to produce farm goods and contribute to the growth of the socio-economic condition of their communities have drifted to the cities where sadly, there is no job waiting for them and thereby complicating the already saturated unemployment market. Population exploitation in our major cities is partly traceable to this phenomenon.

Ayantayo has advised that the church should be modest and disciplined in its teaching about prosperity so that it could be a model for church adherents. This he said is essential because the church is expected to live Christ-like life which means the church and followers will have self control, and be contented with what they have and shun worldliness.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth in the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria, p. 276.

<sup>8</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 215

How can we reconcile prosperity teaching with the reality of poverty in Nigeria? We should know that this kind of preaching especially hurts the poor. Many people have followed church leaders, given all they possessed, and received nothing in return, becoming wounded or bitter when the reality of their bank accounts fail to match promises made in God's name. The truth is that a mature biblical faith is not "Delivery faith" which seeks "quick exit" from difficult circumstances, but is rather "sustaining faith" which instead focuses on God's faithfulness through all of life, even when economic hardship or illness or suffering or sorrow show up in a Christian's life.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

The general opinion is that prosperity teaching favour only its proponents, their family and cronies and this has generated a feeling of cynicism among the vast majority of Nigerians.

It has been argued that prosperity teaching negates Immanuel Kant's principle of humanity as stated in the Categorical Imperative since prosperity teachers are mostly exploiting the gullibility and spiritual immaturity of their congregation to satisfy the preachers' material quest, rather than genuine concern for the follower's socio-economic emancipation. This is because the practical life experiences of the followers often do not match the promises that have been made to them in the name of prosperity teaching.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, DATA ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Summary of Findings

1. Five basic principles of prosperity teaching were adopted at varying degrees of emphasis in the selected churches as follows: While they all taught “wealth is a compulsory gain of salvation” and “positive confession” attracts positive actions to believers, The Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Spring Chapel emphasize “sowing fatly to reap multiple blessings”. Living Faith Church emphasizes “Divine unfailing health is guaranteed to believers”. A critical evaluation however reveals the illogicality and inconsistency of the prosperity teaching with Biblical teachings.
2. Wealth as compulsory gain of salvation is simply materialistic as it seeks to promote the quest for accumulation of wealth instead of salvation of the soul which is the main essence of Christianity. It fails to explain the poverty of the apostles like Peter and John as revealed in Acts 3:6. Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Job were godly people who lost their riches. Jesus said the poor will always be with us Mark 14:7. Zacheaus and the rich young ruler approached Jesus for their salvation despite being rich (Matthew 19:16). Many non-believers are rich today while many Christians are in poverty.
3. “Sowing and reaping in multiples” implying a motivated relationship between giving and prosperity has an animistic connotation. The animist man’s idea of giving, as imbibed by prosperity teachers and followers is not altruistic, nor a result of generosity. It is rather a subtle way of inducing his world, whether it be human or supernatural, to reciprocate by blessing him with the fulfillment of his desires. It is also magical with the theme “my will be done” in an attempt to force the supernatural forces to do man’s bidding and will. It is a possible means of manipulating people who are gullible and spiritually immature. Biblically Jesus taught his disciples to give, hoping for nothing in return. Jesus asked us to lay our treasures in heaven not on earth (Matt. 6:19). James said God has high regard for those considered poor by the world but are rich in spirit and faith (James 1:9-11, I Cor. 26 - 27).

4. The covenant of divine health promising a Christian's mastery over sickness contradicts scientific and biblical evidences that man is mortal and is very vulnerable to sickness no matter the level of righteousness. The Bible teaches that God does not guarantee believers a sickness-free world. Timothy had frequent illnesses (I Tim. 5:23). Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus (II Tim. 5:20). Epaphroditus was sick and almost died (Phil. 2:26-27). Paul confessed a sickness which was a thorn in his flesh (II Cor. 12:7-10).
5. The principle of "positive confession" which assumes man's words have creative and determinative force is hinged on a faulty premise of an anthropocentric idea that places man in the class of God. Isaiah 20:16 however says the potter cannot be considered equal to the clay. God's will has precedence over the will of man because he does all things; no plans of His can be thwarted (Job 42:2). This idea also overlooks the importance of prayer for all human requests. Paul warns us "Not to think more highly of ourselves, but to think so as to make sound judgment" (Rom. 12:3).
6. The principle of "wealth transfer" which states that before the end of time, all the wealth of the sinners would be transferred to the righteous is also not plausible. There are many examples of sinners who are very rich today and whose fortunes have not flown to the righteous. This idea has the tendency to discourage hard work on the part of believers, in an endless wait for a wealth transfer that may never come.
7. On the claim that Jesus was rich during his earthly ministry simply because he had a treasurer in the person of Judas Iscariot, it has been argued that all pointers in the scripture portray Jesus as somebody who relied on other people's assistance throughout his ministry on earth. However, Jesus kept his meagre resources and used them judiciously to take care of the less privileged. This should rather be for us Christians, a lesson in giving and compassion; that we give, not only because we have in excess, but to be a source of blessing to others who lack.
8. Prosperity teaching is dualistic in its worldview, fideistic in its approach to biblical truth, deistic in its relation to God, anthropocentric in its value system, pantheistic in its view to the cosmic whole and subtly polytheistic in its

conception of deity.

9. Most prosperity teachers have not applied logical reasoning in their teachings which are often emotionally based. Most followers of the prosperity message seem spiritually immature and gullible which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and delusion. Prosperity teaching is not based on sound logic. It is a teaching that emphasizes faith without reasoning or objective inquiry.
10. Prosperity teaching, though popularly accepted among selected churches, negates Immanuel Kant's principle of humanity as the prosperity teachers are mostly using their congregation as means to satisfy their quest for material wealth rather than genuine concern for followers' socio-economic anticipation.
11. Prosperity teaching is inconsistent with the Bible which teaches rational faith, based upon knowledge refined through testing (1 Thess. 5:21).
12. Prosperity teaching negates the practical life experiences of most of the followers as their real life situation do not match their expected promised state of riches implying that they are likely engaged in self-deception.

## 7.2 Data Assessment

A total number of 640 copies of a questionnaire were purposively administered to 440 members and 200 church officers in purposively selected Pentecostal churches namely; The Livingfaith Church, The Redeemed Church of God, Livingspring Chapel in Ogbomosho, Oyo, Lagos, Otta, Sagamu and Ibadan which are some of the economic nerve centres of Southwestern Nigeria where prosperity teaching is very popular. Data were subjected to philosophical analysis and percentages.

### Background of the Respondents

#### SECTION A

The sample profile and coverage of the respondents show that 380 (59%) were men while 260 (41%) were women. Those who were below the age of 18 were 70 (11%) while between the ages 18-40 were 420 (66%) those between 41-65 were 120 (19%). Also 30 (4%) of the respondents were between the ages 66 – 80.

As for marital status, 410 (64%) respondents are married while 230 (36%) were

single.

For the level of education 50 (8%) were secondary school leavers. 180 (28%) were NCE/OND holders, 300 (47%) have HND/Degree, 60 (9%) have post - graduate degrees while 50 (8%) had no formal education.

The study also reveals that 180 (28%) of the respondents are employed; 320 (50%) are unemployed and 140 (22%) are under – employed.

The study also shows that 120 (19%) of the respondents have spent less than 10 years in the church. 150 (23.4%) have spent above 10 years 310 (48.4%) have spent 20 years above, while 60 (9.2%) have spent above 30 years in the church.

Also 200 (32%) are ministers and church officers while 440 (68%) are ordinary members of the church.

As for the economic status of the respondents 576 (90%) consider themselves to be rich while 64 (10%) consider themselves to be in middle class. None of the respondents consider themselves to be poor or very poor.

## SECTION B

- 1) **Nigeria is facing deep economic crisis**  
540 (84%) of the respondents strongly agree that Nigeria is facing deep economic crisis while 100 (16%) Agreed and supported the notion.
- 2) **The church is an avenue to solve our economic and social problem**  
250 (39%) strongly agree to this view 300 (47%) said they agree while 60 (9%) disagree with this view while 30 (5%) said they have no idea
- 3) **That one should be wealthy to serve God well**  
410 (64%) strongly agree with this view 220 (34%) agree with this view 10 (2%) disagree with this view
- 4) **That wealth and riches cannot turn away one's heart from God**  
350 (55%) strongly agree 250 (39%) agree 40 (6%) said they have no idea
- 5) **That it is our divine right to be rich and successful**  
510 (79%) strongly agree 120 (19%) agree with this view 10 (2%) said they have no idea
- 6) **That wealth and good health are guaranteed for a true child of God**

- 480 (75%) strongly agree 160 (25%) agree with this notion
- 7) **Christians are at liberty to also pursue worldly wealth**  
500 (78%) strongly agree 140 (22%) agree with this notion
- 8) **Do you agree that Jesus was rich during His earthly life?**  
150 (23%) strongly agree that Jesus was materially rich. 200 (31%) agree with the view. 280 (44%) strongly disagree with this view while 10 (2%) said they have no idea.

### SECTION C

- 9) **Can you say that you have experienced wealth transfer to you from the unrighteous?**  
440 (66%) respondents said they are yet to experience wealth transfer. 160 (25%) respondents believe they have experienced wealth transfer. 40 (6%) said they have no idea.
- 10) **Do you agree that your “seed faith” donations to the church always come back to you in multiples?**  
355 (55%) agreed they have not been receiving their seeds in multiples. 185 (29%) say they have received their seeds faith in multiples. 100 (16%) of the respondents said they have no idea.
- 11) **Do you agree that Christians are not immune from sickness?**  
550 (86%) agreed that Christians are not immune from sickness. 90 (14%) believed that Christians are really above sickness.
- 12) **As a Christian, do you occasionally fall sick?**  
512 (80%) admit they occasionally fall sick. 128 (20%) claim they don't fall sick because of covenant of divine health.
- 13) **Do you agree that “positive confession” always attract prosperity to Christians?**  
544 (85%) agree that positive confession always attract prosperity. 96 (15%) say they have not really felt prosperity despite positive confession.

(14) **Do you agree that any Christian who is not rich is in sin?**

350 (55%) agree that poor Christians are sinners. 260 (41%) disagree that poor Christians are sinners. 30 (4%) said they have no idea.

(15) **Do you agree that one can be rich without being a good Christian?**

380 (59%) agree one can be rich without being a good Christian. 260 (41%) believe one can not be rich without being a Christian.

(16) **Do you agree that there are many non Christians who enjoy good health?**

340 (53%) agree that many non Christians enjoy good health. 300 (47%) disagree that non Christians cannot enjoy good health.

(17) **Do you think your church's teaching on prosperity can lead people to be desperate to acquire wealth at whatever expense?**

550 (86%) said no. The argument is that wealth is their covenant right for which they don't have to be desperate. God will give them wealth as long as they serve him. 90 (14%) said yes. Only if one does not understand the message and have sufficient knowledge.

(18) **Do you agree that the emphasis on prosperity by your church can be a distraction to the salvation of the soul?**

590 (92%) of the respondents said No. 50 (8%) of the respondents however said Yes, that the emphasis on prosperity can be a distraction to the salvation of the soul.

(19) **Is poverty a curse?**

600 (94%) of the respondents agree that poverty is a curse by saying Yes. 40 (6%) of the respondents said No, that poverty is not a curse.

(20) **Do you agree that all good Christians must be rich?**

576 (90%) respondents said Yes, that all good Christians must be rich. 64 (10%) disagree saying all Christian may not be rich.

(21) **Do you consider yourself to be rich?**

576 (90%) respondents believe they are rich. 64 (10%) do not consider themselves to be rich.

(22) **Do you have a personal house(s)?**

448 (70%) respondents said they don't have a house. 192 (30%) said they have houses

(23) **Do you have a personal car?**

400 (63%) respondents said they have no car. 240 (37%) have cars.

(24) **What is your estimated yearly income?**

20 (3%) put their estimated yearly income at ₦5m and above. 227 (35%) put their estimated yearly incomes at ₦1m and above. 393 (62%) put their estimated yearly income at less than ₦1m.

### 7.3 **Observations from data collected**

Prosperity teachers encourage their followers to “live big” to show God's goodness. They teach them theories of achieving success instead of practical helps. Consequently, a critical evaluation of the average follower's practical life shows that most followers are on a venture in self-deception as 80.0% interviewed from Living Faith Church accepted they occasionally fall sick despite assurances of “divine unfailing health” and 55.0% in Redeemed Christian Church of God agreed they were yet to reap from “kingdom investments”, negating the automation of “reaping from sowing”. A total of 85.0% respondents believed they attracted blessings from positive confession, agreeing in part with the “principle of verbal confession”, and 90.0% officers and members across selected churches believed they were rich. On the opposite, 70.0% members had no personal house(s), 63.0% had no personal car(s), 62.0% estimated their yearly income at less than ₦1m, contradicting the principle of “wealth as gain of salvation”.

### 7.4 **Recommendations**

In the light of the discussions above, I will like to make the following recommendations.

We should diminish the apparent unbridgeable gaps between faith and reason. Faith and reason should not be seen as antithesis but rather as supplements to each other. Reason will thus be used to the uttermost and in the right way, that is, constructive and not destructive for human development. Ignorance as we have discussed is a major

contributing factor in man's impoverishment especially among the poor religious believers.

Besides, all believers must be wary of the fact that any concept of faith that severs it from its objective, epistemological base (i.e. its foundation of knowledge) is at variance with biblical teaching.

Believers should not accept faith as a mindless surrender to things taught by the church, which one should believe blindly with no supporting evidence. In contrast, the Bible challenges its readers to test it and come to reasonable conclusion. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says "Test everything, hold on to the good". God himself in His revelation to Isaiah stated "come now and let us reason together..." God, the creator of humans and human reasoning ability wants us to use that ability to determine His plan of salvation. The Psalmist tells us that the universe "declares the glory of God" and that His "voice goes out into all the earth" (Psalm 19). The Bible says that the evidence for God's design of the universe is so strong that people are "without excuse", in rejecting God and His plan of salvation.

It is also recommended that Christians should direct their minds to know; to investigate and to seek wisdom and explanation. Christians should use their minds in all aspects of life and always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. According to Proverbs 18:15 "The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge". We must be well equipped to give reasons for our belief that the gospel is a revelation from God and not a human construction or people will not take it seriously if not disposed to do so already. Loud rhetorical assertions that God is "really" out there are not going to substitute for an intellectually solid theology that backs up its faith with works. Evidence has to be forthcoming to validate the confidence that God is not made in man's image but is the Lord and saviour of mankind, who is capable of providing for all our needs.

The book of Proverbs in the Old Testament gives practical advice for living; raising children and making good choices versus bad choices. Many of the verses discuss the importance of acquiring knowledge and wisdom even to the extent of choosing knowledge over riches. Faith is of utmost importance to the Christian, but the Bible does not encourage us to limit our belief to faith alone. In fact, it commands us to add first



moral excellence, then second knowledge. Christianity must be based on the foundation of objective truth (John 8:32; 6:69; 4:39, 41-42). Commitment without reflection is the paralysis of all action. Using the Kantian terms, we can say that reason without faith is empty and faith without reason is blind. Faith is a volitional commitment of an informed intellect. It is a joint act of the will and the intellect, not one without the other. Knowledge without commitment is disbelief and commitment without knowledge is irrationality. Daniel, one of the greatest examples of faith, who had an amazing prayer life, was also a man of great knowledge and intelligence and used this ability to witness to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Solomon, in his prayer to God asked for wisdom and knowledge, both of which God granted him. The Bible encourages believers to have a knowledge-based-faith, built upon sound biblical doctrine. When Paul preached the gospel, he did it through reasoning from the scriptures and not an appeal to blind faith. Paul in his letters told believers to do away with childish thinking and reasoning. Christians are advised to set an example for others in teaching by modeling “integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech”. The evangelist Luke, in his prologue to his gospel revealed that he determined the “truth” through careful investigation... “it seemed fitting for one as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order. Most excellent Theophilus, so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught...” Luke 1:3-4.

Jesus also encouraged the use of reasoning in making theological points. He almost always taught using parables and examples. He did this, specifically, so that people would think deeply about what he was saying. In fact, in many instances, Jesus would ask people what they thought of what he says. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, he explained the scriptures to his disciples and “opened their minds” so that they could see how he fulfilled the messianic prophecies:

“Come now, and let us reason together says the Lord”  
(Isaiah 1:18).

When Jesus was confronted with the issue of a woman who was accused of adultery, he did not pass a direct judgment. He simply asked whosoever had not sinned before to cast the first stone and everybody disappeared. This is the value of making people to reason before decisions are taken or religious claims are accepted.

Lastly, I would like to recommend what has generally been described as “rational belief” or “rational faith”. In this view, the object of faith generates evidence (e.g. by credible testimony), which then is examined by the subject. At the same time, the evidence points to the object of faith (whether it be the oneness of the church, the existence of God, the deity of Christ, prosperity teaching etc); this evidence enlightens the intellect, which makes a volitional commitment not only possible but also rational. Augustine was correct when he said:

For who cannot see that thinking is prior to believing? For no one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed... it is necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded; although even belief is nothing else than to think (i.e. reason) with assent... Everybody who believes, thinks... both thinks in believing, and believes in thinking...<sup>1</sup>

For us as Christians, we are not required to flee into the land of irrationality in order to escape the challenges of the skeptic. For the church, concrete efforts should be made to confront the unbalanced teachings of the prosperity preaching with balanced doctrines. The kind of message that should be used to address the prosperity teaching should not just be one that contains a balanced doctrine, but one that places the right emphasis on balanced doctrine. Our challenge to the prosperity teachers will be to prove that their teaching contains the kind of errors that need to be corrected and that they need to respond positively to corrective measures. Besides, it is also recommended that there should be a strong emphasis on theological education for the prosperity teachers. This will equip them with the skill of exegesis, which is the basic tool in a correct interpretation of the word of God.

In practical terms, it is highly recommended that prosperity teachers should do more to influence the life of their followers rather than just giving them the theory of how prosperity can come their way. Dada has said that the energy, human and material resources at the disposal of some religious leaders whom he classifies as “prosperity preachers” can be re-channeled for the campaign for social justice and fundamental human rights.

Also, religion especially the Christian faith should endeavour to harmonise the

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine A. 1953, *Enchiridion*, p. 187.

two aspects of eschatological perspective, namely, the concept of “this wordly” and “other wordly”. The emphasis or rather over-emphasis on “other world” has meant that most Christians are indifferent to what is going on around them. I have remarked that this has been a major reason for the acceptance of prosperity teaching which encourages followers to be economically active to better their own lots.

Patience Akpan Obong, commenting on the new fashion among the prosperity teachers who are now acquiring aeroplanes has said:

Anyone who can afford a private jet should go for it. But I have issues with preachers who fly high on the sweat of their congregations. While it is appropriate for the prophet to live on the offerings at the temple, just how many private jets can one “man of God” fly? There is a thin line between prosperity and greed and it appears that many Nigerian church leaders have since crossed it”.<sup>2</sup>

Obong says if the offering and tithes are overflowing at the Lord’s temple, then we need to thank God. However, the competition should not be about who has the latest private jet but about which church has the best mechanism to care for its congregation. One way of showing care, as has been suggested by other scholars, is to reduce the tuition fees paid in universities run by prosperity teaching churches in Nigeria. She contends that the prosperity church leaders should learn a lesson from the Roman Catholic Church that has been great at giving back to the society through its hospitals, schools and charitable organizations. It may not have as much money in its coffers as the current prosperity churches but it has a strong commitment to social justice and compassion for the “least of my brothers” as prescribed in Matthew 25:34-40

She concludes:

“To whom much is given, much more is expected. Our prosperity Bishops have been given so much by their weary and tired congregation. It’s time they started giving back in more substantive ways than CDs and books on “Seed time and harvest time”. This congregation may already be tired of doing all the seeding while the leaders do all the harvesting. The harvests should start spreading out to meet practical needs among the faithful.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Patience Akpan Obong wrote *Old Time Religion is Alive and Well* in the Saturday Punch of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Patience Akpan Obong wrote *Old Time Religion is Alive and Well* in the Saturday Punch of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

The prosperity teachers should try to do better than they are doing presently to touch the lives of their followers in more practical ways. Ayantayo says the church and its various organizations together with government and non-government establishment should individually or collectively design palliative or preventive programmes to alleviate the plight of the poor.<sup>4</sup> It is when they are given the basic infrastructures and need of life that it would be proved that they are not being used as means to an end only, but as ends in themselves as Immanuel Kant suggested.

Oshitelu contends that our religion or faith must be shown in concrete deed. This is the message of social Gospel, and the liberation theology. The prophetic witness of religion, and especially Christianity should not be forgotten; only authentic solidarity with the poor and a real protest against poverty of our time can provide the concrete, vital context necessary for a theological discussion of poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Abogunrin enjoins the church to take practical steps in alleviating poverty among the brethren. He posits that there is need for a thorough re-examination of the church's approach to various needs of the society and he believes that Jesus was not indifferent to the economic situation and the plight of the poor, that Jesus did not only use comforting words, he took practical steps to bring relief and succour to them<sup>6</sup>.

Obijole makes the point clearer when he says;

It is not enough to state the Christian doctrine and propagate what hopes it has for men after this world. Whereas such appeal is rewarding to whom the Christian want to influence or convert, it was the good works done by Christ and his disciples on earth, and the personal examples of spiritual and moral discipline that convinced non-Christians to become Christians. It is therefore incumbent on Christians today, not only to expand Christian doctrines theoretically, but to show practically what Christians can do to improve the economic, political and social situation around them<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> J. K. Ayantayo, Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critic, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, p. 215

<sup>5</sup> G. A. Oshitelu: Religion and poverty alleviation in Nigeria *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religion Studies* XXXIII/1 and 2 June and December, 2001. p. 97

<sup>6</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin: Jesus pronouncements on wealth in the context of Health and wealth Gospel in Nigeria. Biblical studies series; A publication of the Nigerian Association of Biblical studies Ibadan. No 6:239 p. 245-246.

<sup>7</sup> Obijole Bayo, 1993. Religion; A mobilizing tool for economic recovery (A Christian perspective) *Orita: Ibadan journal of Religion Studies* XXV/1-2 June and December, p. 69.

## 7.5 General Conclusion

The truth is that because of its anti-intellectual stance, prosperity teaching is not based on any sound logic. Prosperity theology thrives on and encourages a mindless surrender or zeal without knowledge.

However, distrust for that means of knowledge that involves the use of man's natural faculties in preference to channels that are esoteric creates a problem of credibility for the one who makes the repudiation. If the intellect is not to be trusted, on what grounds are we being given the "teaching" with which to persuade us? And if the body of teaching which we receive all comes from a specially revealed source, it is apart from scriptures and must be rejected. The prosperity teacher contradicts himself when he uses the products of shoddy intellectualism to try to convince us to shun intellectualism.<sup>8</sup>

According to Jack Van Impe, "prosperity teaching discourages the application of tests of reason and vibrant mental habit to theological concepts. It tends to sever faith from its objective epistemological base and is therefore at variance with biblical teaching. It has been described as man-made teaching that is completely out of harmony with the Bible".<sup>9</sup>

Christianity is not about mindless surrender. Since Christianity is not opposed to reasoning, people should be more rational and discerning in exercising their faith and belief in the prosperity message.

The development of the Christian thought with the aid of Greek philosophy was certainly *praeparatio evangelia* without which Christianity would have remained at best a sect of the Jewish religion, and would have remained within a narrow confine of Jewish community and exclusivism, rather than the universal religion that it is today. It was certainly a genuine and necessary attempt to articulate God to the philosophically minded people which convinced people like Justin Martyrs, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and St. Augustine who are good examples of such highly educated and philosophically minded individuals that later accepted Christianity. St Augustine was helped to overcome the perplexing problems he had, such as the problem of evil, by means of philosophical analysis. His philosophical mind led him to accept the Christian faith as reasonable and

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<sup>8</sup> E. M. Okwori (1995) in *Godliness for Gain: A Theological Evaluation of the Nigerian Version of Prosperity Gospel*, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Van Impe, 1988. *Sins Explosion*, America: Jack Van Impe Ministries, p. 350.

hence his conversion. It was also with the aid of philosophy that all the early Christian philosophers such as Justin, Clement and Origen commended the Christian faith to others.<sup>10</sup>

The Christian faith requires a trained mentality which could appreciate and define its doctrines, and apprehend and formulate its implications with relevance. It is only with the assistance of the educated in Greek classical tradition and inspired by the Christian revelation such as we find in Justin, could the church defend the essentials of the Christian faith against the seemingly and persistent infiltration of heresy and corruption in whatever disguise it sought to manifest itself. Clement said that philosophy does not make Christian faith more true, it only helps its understanding. Thus the assumption that a thing which is accepted on faith cannot be subjected to logical investigation is wrong. Likewise, it would be wrong to assume that things which can be subjected to logical investigation cannot be accepted in faith. Prosperity teaching is weakly theorized, unscriptural and seems oblivious of the need for reason in ascertaining religious truth.

Christians are encouraged to use their minds in all aspects of life including our spiritual life in prayer and worship. Ultimately, God wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth of His salvation through Jesus Christ, so that they may spend eternity with Him in the new creation. Christians should always re-evaluate their religious conviction logically since an unexamined life is not worth living, just as an unexamined religion is not worth adhering to.

This whole issue of the proper relationship between faith and reason is one of the most crucial issues, if not the most crucial issue, facing the church today; for it is fundamental in nature. We must be dedicated to exploring the correct relationship between faith and reason in such a way that truth only and not tradition, theory or theology should be our ultimate guide in this most significant matter. The truth is that people who preach or accept the prosperity message should be more committed to informed intellect. Faith is a joint act of the will and the intellect, not one without the other. Knowledge without commitment is disbelief and commitment without knowledge is irrationality. E. M. Okwori quoted Dorothy Sayers as saying:

It is fatal to let people suppose that Christianity is a mode

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<sup>10</sup> G. A. Oshitelu, 2002. *A Background to Christian Philosophy*, Ibadan: Oputoru Books, p. 162.

of feeling; it is vitally necessary to insist that it is first and foremost a rational explanation of the universe. It is hopeless to offer Christianity as a vaguely idealistic aspiration of simple and consoling kind; it is on the contrary, a hard, tough, exacting and complex doctrine, steeped in a diastic and uncompromising realism. And it is fatal to imagine that everybody knows quite well what Christianity is and only needs a little encouragement to practice it.<sup>11</sup>

As believers, we must honestly try to distinguish those elements of our religion or faith that are of real meaning and of value from those that derive from sentiment, tradition or unthinking obedience to authority. We need to identify the demons that drive the prosperity message and dispose our minds of every superstitious fallacy that makes us habitable to similar thoughts without reasoning.

G. A. Oshitelu has contended that “as rational beings, believers are enjoined to apply the tests of reason and the findings of psychology to theological concepts. We should have a good and vibrant mental habit in exercising our faith. We must guard against sentimental or traditional religious beliefs which have been crystallized into dogma and which have a tendency to be manifestly irrational. We must avoid credulity. God wants believers to be knowledgeable, especially regarding their faith. A lack of knowledge leads to apostasy and destruction, as God Himself said to Hosea “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”.

A zeal for God is not sufficient to please Him, since many Jews have this zeal, it is misplaced since it is not in accordance with knowledge. The Bible encourages believers to have a knowledge-based faith, built upon sound biblical doctrine. As good practising Christians, we must not allow greed to becloud our sense of reasoning in our attempt to achieve our spiritual and human goals. Prosperity teaching itself needs to be re-oriented to accept the need for rational reasoning in the course of exercising our faith and also accept the fact that people’s needs are better met practically but not theoretically.

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<sup>11</sup> E. M. Okwori (1995) in *Godliness for Gain: A Theological Evaluation of the Nigerian Version of Prosperity Gospel*, p. 56.

Prosperity teaching presents faith not as a theocentric act of the will or simply trust in God but rather as an anthropocentric spiritual force, directed at God. We should know that it is practically unreasonable to accept that none of us good Christians will have challenges in life. If we are all rich, healthy, and prosperous, will God still be relevant for most of us? Any theologian that views faith solely as a means to material gain rather than acceptance of heavenly justification must be judged as faulty and inadequate. God is more interested in our becoming spiritually wiser than in our getting richer, in our becoming patient than problem free, in our becoming reliant on Him rather than have comfort and ease that can turn our mind from Him.

Prosperity teaching seeks to make God irrelevant and man becomes the measure of all things. It has been generally observed that prosperity teaching is a mixture of common sense, helpful practical advice, and a multitude of success stories interlaced with a heavy dose of exaggerative teaching. It is purely an emphasis on positive outlook on life rather than a right relationship with God.

The philosophy of prosperity message is from the world, not from God who consistently calls us to live for higher values than this world and self. It is simply a pure self-help programme that has just been baptized with the name of God. Prosperity teachers seem to be exploiting the gullibility and spiritual immaturity of their followers.

It is often based on emotional considerations without the necessary penchant for biblical facts. To attract people with promises of prosperity is simply natural but not spiritual. This is not the message of Christ. It is not what he died to achieve. The truth is that all things do not end in success. Some plant seeds yet get no harvest, some people get sick and are not healed; things do not always work out the way we desire.

Besides, prosperity teaching fails a vital test of logic which is the principle of falsifiability. This principle states that all logical propositions must be falsifiable i.e. we must be able to determine if they are true or false. In prosperity teaching however, head or tail the teacher does not lose. If you are wealthy and prosperous, his reason is that you are doing the will of God. If on the other hand you are not healthy or prosperous, he attributes it to your sinful acts and disobedience.

Although popularly accepted among selected churches, prosperity teaching is fideistic, and negates Kant's Principle of Humanity and is inconsistent with biblical



teaching and the practical life of followers. We have however shown that Christianity is not opposed to reasoning and objective reasoning. The Bible emphasizes rational faith, based upon knowledge and refined through testing (I Thess. 5:21). Therefore, prosperity teachers and followers should be more knowledgeable and rational in exercising their faith and the exponents of prosperity should teach a balanced theology that is suitable for ideal Christian living.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**  
**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear Sir/Ma,

This questionnaire is designed to carry out a research and obtain information on **A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF PROSPERITY TEACHING IN SELECTED CHURCHES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**. The research which is for academic purpose is to be submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. The information given will be treated as strictly confidential. I therefore solicit your cooperation and honesty in responding to the questions.

Yours faithfully,

**OGUNMODEDE, OLUBUKOLA OLADAYO**

**SECTION A**

**RESPONDENT'S PERSONAL DATA**

Tick a box as appropriate and give answers in few words to the open ended questions.

1. Age: Below 18  18-40  41-65  66-80  above 80
2. Sex: Male  Female
3. Marital Status : Single  Married  Separated  Divorce   
Widowed
4. Level of Education: Primary  Secondary  NCE/OND  HND/Degree   
Post graduate  No formal educa

5. Occupation: Employed  Unemployed  Underemployed
6. Winner's chapel branch you are attending .....
7. How long have you been in the church? Less than 10  above 10  years  
 20years above  30years above
8. Status in the Church: Minister  Officer  Member
9. What will you consider as your economic status? Very Rich  Rich   
 Average  Poor  Very poor

**SECTION B**

Mark any of the following that you agree or disagree with as to the following expression.

Strongly agree SA, Agree \_ A, Disagree\_ D, Strongly Disagree \_ SD, No idea \_ NI

S/N	SENTENCE	SA	A	D	SD	NI
1	Nigeria is facing deep economic crisis					
2	The church is an avenue to solve our Economic and social problems					
3	One should be wealthy to serve God well					
4	Wealth and riches cannot turn away one's heart from God					
5	It is our divine right to be rich and successful					
6	Wealth and good health is guaranteed for a true child of God					
7	Christians are at liberty to also pursue worldly wealth					
8	Jesus was rich during His life time					

### SECTION C

Tick a box as appropriate and give answers in few words to the open ended questions.

- 9 Can you say that you have experienced wealth transfer to you from the unrighteous? Yes  No  N/I
10. Do you agree that your “seed faith” donations to the church always come back to you in multiples? Yes  No  N/I
11. Do you agree that Christians are not immune from sickness? Yes  No  N/I
12. As a Christian, do you occasionally fall sick? Yes  No  N/I
13. Do you agree that “positive confession” always attract prosperity to Christians? Yes  No  N/A
14. Do you agree that any Christian who is not rich is in sin? Yes  No  N/A
15. Do you agree that one can be rich without been a good Christian? Yes  No  N/A
16. Do you agree that there are many non Christians who enjoy good health? Yes  No  N/A
17. Do you think your church teaching on prosperity make people to be desperate for wealth? Yes  No  N/A
18. Do you agree that the emphasis on prosperity by your church can be a distraction to the Salvation of their souls? Yes  No
19. Is poverty a curse? Yes  No
20. Do you agree that all good Christians must be rich? Yes  No
21. Do you consider yourself to be rich? Yes  No
22. Do you have a personal house(s)? Yes  No
23. Do you have a personal car? Yes  No
24. What is your estimated yearly income? ~~₦~~5m and above  ~~₦~~1m and above  less than ~~₦~~1m

## QUESTIONS FOR ORAL INTERVIEW

These questions have been designed to supply further information not clearly stated in the Questionnaire.

1. Do you agree that health and wealth are compulsory benefits that a Christian ought to experience?
2. Do you agree that prosperity teaching is contributing to the socio-economic emancipation of the people and the development of Nigeria economy?
3. Is it true that a saved Christian cannot be sick?
4. Do you occasionally fall sick despite assurances of divine health?
5. Do you agree that Christians must reap bountiful blessings when they sow fatly?
6. Have you reaped bountifully from your kingdom investments?
7. Do you agree that the methods employed by prosperity teachers in implementing their ideas are generally faulty? If yes, suggest ways of improvement.
8. Do you agree that followers of prosperity teaching are generally being deceived or used by the teachers of prosperity to enrich the leaders?
9. Compared to other Christians, do you agree that followers of prosperity teaching are doing better spiritually and economically than their counterparts?
10. Do you think that the church should be encouraged or discouraged in its teachings of prosperity?

**LIST AND PARTICULARS OF ORAL INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS**

S/N	NAMES	PARTICULARS	AGE	DATE OF INTERVIEWED
<b>MALES</b>				
1	Gbade Adesola	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Oyo	53	October 2, 2011
2.	Victor Isthor	Pastor, Redeemed Church of God, Aketan, Oyo	49	May 26, 2012
3.	Samuel Adeleye	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Ojongbodu, Oyo.	54	May 11, 2012
4.	Funmi Oyetosho	Member, Livingspring Chapel, Sango, Ibadan.	62	Nov. 12, 2010
5.	Daniel Adesina	Member, Livingspring Chapel, Sango, Ibadan.	58	Nov, 13, 2011
6.	David Alese	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Iperu-Remo.	55	May 13, 2011
7.	Adeniyi Adeyemi	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Sagamu.	42	May, 11, 2011
8.	Iyke Obanya	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Sagamu.	54	May 11, 2011
9.	Abiodun Ajibowu	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	52	Dec. 5, 2011
10.	Isaac Majolagbe	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	50	Dec. 5, 2011
11.	Simeon Olalere	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	62	Dec. 5, 2011
12.	Solomon Adeleye	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	58	Dec. 5, 2011
13.	Ayodele Oludiran	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	56	Dec. 5, 2011
14.	Femi Adefolaju	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	63	June 2, 2012
15.	Jide Agbeluyi	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	55	August 13, 2010
16.	Bayo Alamu	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	54	August 13, 2010
17.	Adewale Ogunesan	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	52	Sept. 6, 2011
18.	Oyekanmi Oduguwa	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	43	June 15, 2012
19.	Femi Odubela	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	51	July 16, 2012
20	Adekunle Adelanwa	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	44	July 16, 2012

S/N	NAMES	PARTICULARS	AGE	DATE OF INTERVIEWED
<b>FEMALES</b>				
1	Ronke Fakayode	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Oyo	38	October 2, 2011
2.	Sade Ojediran	Pastor, Redeemed Church of God, Ladigbolu, Oyo	44	Aug. 12, 2011
3.	Serah Akindele	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Rehoboth, Oyo.	47	Sept. 6, 2011
4.	Bose Ibitola	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Oyo.	40	June 2, 2011
5.	Esther Isthor	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Oyo.	41	Sept. 10, 2011
6.	Jumoke Akindele	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Oyo.	50	Nov. 12, 2012
7.	Adenike Balogun	Member, Livingspring Chapel, Sango, Ibadan.	51	Nov. 12, 2010
8.	Abigail Fadoju	Member, Livingspring Chapel, Sango, Ibadan.	43	Nov, 12, 2010
9.	Bimpe Fayokun	Member, Livingspring Chapel, Sango, Ibadan.	47	Nov, 13, 2010
10.	Lolade Akinyede	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	38	Dec. 5, 2011
11.	Yemi Majolagbe	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	41	Dec. 5, 2011
12.	Kemi Durodola	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	40	Dec. 5, 2011
13.	Bukola Adedeji	Member, Winner's Chapel, Oyo	47	Dec. 5, 2011
14.	Toyin Oladele	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Ogbomoso	42	April 6, 2012
15.	Bimbo Aboderin	Member, Redeemed Church of God, Ogbomoso	53	April 6, 2012
16.	Funmilayo Ajamu	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	45	May 9, 2012
17.	Jadesola Aribike	Member, Winner's Chapel, Ogbomoso	50	May 13, 2012
18.	Victoria Sodiya	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	48	June 15, 2012
19.	Adekemi Showumi	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	53	July 1, 2012
20	Funmi Osifeso	Member, Winner's Chapel, Sagamu	49	July 2, 2012

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