

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
AND IN THE PROSPERITY PREACHING IN GHANA**

BY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of the research undertaken by Agbenu Abraham Ofoe under the supervision of Dr. Nicoletta Gatti and Dr. Dapila Fabian towards the award of M. Phil Degree in the Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon.

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ABSTRACT

The spread of the theology of the Prosperity Gospel, which characterized contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, has created an intense scholarly debate among those who considered the ‘Prosperity Gospel’ as ‘non-Christian’ and those who perceive it as a way to contextualize Christianity in the Ghanaian context. The study entered the debate from a different perspective by focusing on the relationship between the prosperity theology and poverty and wealth. To reach this aim, the research engaged the Lukan teaching on wealth and poverty with the teachings of prominent Ghanaian prosperity preachers: Archbishop Duncan Williams (Action Chapel International), Dug Heward Mills (Lighthouse Chapel International) and Dr Mensah Otobil (International Central Gospel Church).

The communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa was employed as the theoretical framework. The approach consists of three steps — the analysis of the reality, the analysis of the text and the engagement between the reality and the text. Recorded sermons and books written by the selected prosperity preachers were the tools utilized for the analysis of reality. The narrative criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin was employed to exegete chapter 16 of the Gospel according to Luke, the text that has the higher concentration of the terminology of ‘poverty and wealth’ in the Lukan narrative.

The research discovered that the message of the Prosperity Gospel is pivoted on good health, materialism, wealth and success. Preachers of the prosperity theology often adopt the fundamentalist reading of texts such as Gen 13:2, Deut 8:18, Mk 10:29-31, 2 Cor 8:9 and 3 John 2 to classify wealth and possessions as the hallmark of God’s blessing and poverty as a curse, an ‘infectious’ disease and the result of sin. It is noted from the study that the view of the Prosperity Gospel preachers contradicts the theology of Luke which

considers the poor as ‘blessed by God’ (Lk 6:20), indicates solidarity with the poor as a condition of discipleship (Lk 6:20; 5:26:30, 7:39, 19:1-18) and proclaims the eschatological reversal as instrument of divine justice (Lk 16:19-31). However, the Lukan teaching does not simply condemn ‘riches’ but the modality of acquisition and the relationship with riches. In other words, the Gospel of Luke warned against greed, selfishness, unbridled consumerism, and enslavement to material and worldly materials to the forgetfulness of God and one’s neighbour (Lk 16:9-12).

The study recognized the theological and biblical ‘weaknesses’ of the prosperity theology but recognized the just desire of building a society free from poverty. If prosperity adherers are wrong in considering wealth as proof of faith, critics of the prosperity may also be wrong to ‘canonize’ poverty and to present a God who does not desire the prosperity of his faithful and provide solution to the problem of poverty.

The research proposed a holistic theological education for Pentecostal/ Charismatic leaders in order to positively contribute to the development of the Ghanaian society through a correct interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, churches need to recognize the social cause of poverty, to advocate for social justice and constructive solidarity towards the poor.

DEDICATION

To Keiffer Antwi Boasiako who immensely encouraged and continually had faith in me

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background to the Study

One of the prevalent global challenges is poverty.¹ Though poverty is, and has always been, a global challenge, its definition is an object of debate. There are three major elements which have been considered as the basis for international and comparative definition of poverty. These include the ideas of substance, basic needs and relative deprivation.² The United Nations (UN) Report (1995) defined poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.³ The emphasis of these elements does not only depend on a person's income, but also on access to services.⁴

In 1998, the UN developed a more general definition of poverty. According to the UN (1998), poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society.⁵ It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It

¹ Craig Blomberg in an effort to suggest a stable biblical response to the worldwide predicament states that "various solutions have been tried to solve the global problem of poverty: socialism, capitalism, liberation theology and others. Yet all these attempts lack solid scriptural support." Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches* (Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 21.

² United Nations, *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*, Copenhagen, March 1995; www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/.../undp-in-action-1995.html

³ United Nations, *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, household and communities.⁶ It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environment, without access to clean water or sanitation.⁷

Though the problem of poverty is a global challenge, the part of the world mostly affected by poverty is the Sub Saharan Africa. Africa is the second world's largest continent, after Asia and according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty.⁸

Poverty is present in Ghana. Although the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report 2016 indicates a rapid reduction in monetary poverty from 51.7% in 1992 to 24.2% of the population in 2013,⁹ the report indicates that the annual rate of reduction of the poverty level slowed substantially from an average of 1.8 percentage points per year in the 1990s to 1.1 percentage point per year reduction since 2006.¹⁰

Though the reduction in poverty rate might be viewed as an achievement by the country, poverty is an issue of concern as 24.2% of the country's population are considered poor.¹¹ At the regional level, the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions have the highest poverty rates. Nonetheless, substantial progress has been achieved since 2006 in the Upper East region as poverty has plunged from 72.9% in 2006 to 44.4% in 2013.¹² The region

⁶ United Nations, *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*.

⁷ In a similar trend, Essamuah and Tonah define poverty as an unacceptable physiological and social deprivation that an individual or community experiences. M Essamuah and S. Tonah, "Coping with Urban Poverty in Ghana: Analysis of Household and Individual Livelihood Strategies in Nima Accra": *Legon Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2004): 54-73.

⁸ International Fund for Agricultural Development, "Report, 2016". <https://www.ifad.org/web/rdr/reports> [accessed on 9th June, 2018].

⁹ Edgar Cooke, Sarah Hague and Andy McKay, "The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report (2016)," https://www.unicef.org/ghana/resources_10232.html, [accessed on 19th July, 2018].

¹⁰ Cooke, Hague and McKay, *The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

of great concern is the Northern region which saw its high level of poverty fall only marginally from 55.7% to 50.4%.¹³ The high percentage rate of poverty in the Northern part of Ghana has led many youths to migrate to the south to seek for greener pastures.

Until recently, the pattern of north-south migration in Ghana had been male dominated. However, this pattern has changed and nowadays the dominant migration stream from north to south are of female youth, moving independently from their families towards major cities such as Accra and Kumasi.¹⁴ These migrants live in deprived areas in the cities, on the margins of society due to numerous factors. These include: their social classification, the nature of their migration, their employment situation and housing conditions in the urban environment.¹⁵ They also need to fulfil other financial and social obligations back home. The situation has resulted to streetism, hunger, substance abuse, drug peddling, child labour, prostitution, incidences of sexual abuse of both young boys and girls by unsuspecting people.

The pattern and effects of poverty in Ghana has steered the Government of Ghana to initiate and implement necessary social intervention policies to aid in curbing the challenge of poverty. These interventions include the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty, Cash Transfer System to Poor Households, Ghana School Feeding Program,¹⁶ the National Health Insurance Scheme,¹⁷ and the Free Basic and Senior High School Education.

¹³ Cooke, Hague and McKay, *The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report*.

¹⁴ Lisa Bierman, *North South Migration in Ghana: Social Network and Possibilities for Mobility of Young Returnees and Non-migrants in the Northern Ghana*, https://theses.uibn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/123456789/5453/Biermann%2C_Lisa_1.pdf?sequence=1 [accessed on 19th July 2018].

¹⁵ G. Abdul-Korah, "Where is Not Home? Dagaaba Migrants in the Brong-Ahafo Region, 1980 to the Present," *African Affairs* 103 (2004): 71-94.

¹⁶ A pilot project to provide food for children at school.

¹⁷ A form of National health insurance established by the government of Ghana with the goal of providing equitable access and financial coverage for basic health care services to Ghanaian citizens.

The government of Ghana is not the only institution concerned about solving the problem of poverty in Ghana. It is observed that since the arrival of Christianity on the Ghanaian landscape, missionaries and local churches have worked towards the alleviation of poverty. While the Historic Mission Churches followed the path of education, health care, etc., Charismatic churches adopted the trend of preaching the Prosperity Gospel.¹⁸

Charismatic churches preach material success, good health and wealth as a sign of God's blessing and favour.¹⁹ According to the Prosperity Gospel, also known as the 'faith Gospel,' God has met all the needs of humanity in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty.²⁰ Some of its advocates clarify that no believer should be ill, no one should die of sickness and anyone who drives a cheap rather than luxury car has not understood the gospel.²¹

It is important to notice that scholars generally agree in attributing the great popularity of the prosperity preaching in Africa to its consonance with the traditional cultural-religious background. For example, in the Ghanaian traditional context, poverty is perceived not only in material terms, but also in spiritual terms. In this instance, evil spirits are held responsible and need to be appeased by rituals or other social practices to revert it. Poverty is, therefore, regarded as evil and undesirable. Traditional proverbs underline serious consequences of poverty such as the reduction to animal status — "If you are poor, you eat the goat's skin" (*ohia wu a wurwe aberekey were*); the loss of human dignity — "If you are

¹⁸ Statistics from the 2010 population census in Ghana depicts Christianity as the largest religion in Ghana, with approximately 71.2% of the country's population being members of Christian denominations. Cf. Philip Allotey, *Religion and Conflict in Ghana* (Accra: Wiseman Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Poverty, Wealth and Social Justice in Africa," www.qscience.com>rels.2012.justice.13 (accessed on 8th June, 2018).

²⁰ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity, Its Public Role* (London: Hurst and Company, 1998), 39.

²¹ Paul Gifford, *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 147.

poor, you eat from the dung heap” (*ohia wu a na wurwe sumina-due*); the loss of personhood — “the poor has no rights” (*ohiani bu mfu*) and social isolation — “the poor has no friends” (*ohiani nni yonko*).²²

With the connection between traditional African culture and prosperity preaching generally accepted by scholars, the socio-economic impact of Prosperity Gospel has generated a wide-ranging debate in Africa. For instance, Mayala Oluta establishes that the prosperity Gospel functions as an element of hope in the African struggle against a seemingly all-pessimism. The scholar affirms that it is the most important contribution to poverty alleviation made by Christianity through the creation of a positive mind-set.²³ It is, in fact, regarded as having a transformative potential, where the mind-set of people is transformed, leading Christians to embrace an attitude of positive thinking and zeal to give to the poor and the needy in society, with the expectation of blessings from God as reward for giving.

²² Amoah adds that Akan proverbs highlight that poverty is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. For example, the proverb — *Ohia te se owo onno faako*, meaning “Poverty is like honey; it is not found in one place” — implies that poverty is not limited by geographical location social status. Amoah enlisted other Ghanaian proverbs to support her argument: *Ehia batani hia paani* (“Both the employer and the employee can be poor”); *Ohia na ema obroni si ne ntoma wɔ aborekyire bɛhata wɔ abribiriman mu* (“It is because of poverty that the whiteman washes his clothes in Europe and dries them in Africa”). This proverb signifies that poverty is not only an African problem. Elizabeth Amoah, “African Traditional Religion and the Concept of Poverty”, in *Religion and Poverty. Pan-African Perspectives*, ed. P.J. Paris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 116.

²³ Mayala Oluta, *The Gospel in Contemporary Africa* (New York: Orbis Books 2004), 121.

On the contrary, other scholars have defined it as an “impetus for delusion.”²⁴ Their focal objection is that the Prosperity Gospel places much emphasis on spiritual forces, an “enchanted religious imagination” that downplays “functional rationality” underpinning modernity.²⁵

Asamoah-Gyadu affirms that the term ‘wealth’ as preached by prosperity adherers is a condition of material abundance and ability to fend for oneself and the community without unnecessary difficulty and hassle. He adds that wealth is an instrument that could lead to individualism and the blind pursuit of selfish interest at the expense of others. Likewise, Amoah considers wealth in the African context as a system which is not merely acquisition or piling up of material things for individual use, but rather it must be community centred, and promote the welfare of the community.²⁶ Nonetheless, she emphasized that in the African traditional context wealth is acquired through hard-work, modest living, sacredness of all life and the adherence to traditional morality.²⁷

It is important to add that, according to the teaching of the Historic Mission Churches (HMCs), poverty and wealth in any society have implications for social justice.²⁸ Against this backdrop, HMCs’ scholars accuse the Prosperity Gospel to ignore social injustice:

²⁴ Adekunle O. Dada, “Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion?” *Orita* 36, no. 1-2 (2004): 95-107. Kent Van Til, for example, opines that Prosperity Gospel is a heretical or truncated form of Christianity, which ignores significant parts of the confession, such as “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell”. From the proclamation by Kent further asserts that the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel could lead many Christians to seek for wealth in an ungodly manner as an evidence of God’s blessing. Hence, an act that could lead many Christians to backslide in the faith and end up in hell

²⁵ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 55.

²⁶ Amoah, “African Traditional Religion,” 120.

²⁷ Ibid, 120-122.

²⁸ Cf. Emmanuel K.E. Antwi, “Development of the ‘Whole’ Person and for ‘Every’ Person? *Populorum Progressio* 14 and Development in Ghana,” in *Religion and Sustainable Development: Ghanaian Perspectives*

Infirmity, poverty, and high mortality indices form part of social and structural sin. Oppression and exploitation of the weak by the powerful — countries, groups or people — are realities that must trigger a cry for justice and fairness directed to God. Unfortunately, it (prosperity gospel) ends by qualifying the poor as *cursed*, the sick, the dying. Portraying itself more as a *liberal ideology* than as a *biblical theology* of prosperity that revalues the condition of the fallen, the poor and the sick, as reasons and stimuli that give meaning to the ministry and the Christian Service in the world.²⁹

It is important to note that the two (opposite) approaches of poverty alleviation adopted by HMCs and Charismatic churches are both based on the Bible, with special emphasis on the words of Jesus transmitted by the evangelists. It is imperative, therefore, to explore their teachings about wealth and poverty.

On the theme of wealth and poverty, the Gospel according to Luke is considered by scholars as one of the New Testament (NT) writings that pay more attention to the problematic relationship between wealth and poverty, as the following data demonstrate.

The most common term utilises in the NT to identify the poor is *πτωχός*,³⁰ which refers to an indigent, an individual reduced to beggary, a mendicant. Out of the 34 recurrences in the New Testament, 10 are in the Gospel according to Luke.³¹ To describe the wealthy, the New Testament utilizes the word *πλούσιος* 28 times; eleven are found in the third Gospel.³²

tives, eds. G. Ossom-Batsa, N. Gatti and R.D. Ammah, *Grandi Opere* (Città del Vaticano: Urbaniana University Press, 2018), 193-210. Social justice in the current context, refers generally to situations in which the resources of communities and states, legal systems and power structures in all their forms are consciously and systematically deployed for the benefit of all members of the community without discrimination. Cf. Asamoah- Gyadu, "Poverty, Wealth and Social Justice in Africa".

²⁹ N. Gatti – G. Ossom-Batsa, "The Prosperity Gospel and the Poor: Intercultural Reading of Job 24:1-17," Paper presented at the Conference on "Pragmalinguistica e testi biblici," organized by the Faculty of Theology, Pontifical Gregoriana University and Association *Evangelium und Kultur* (Gregorian, Roma, 18-21 September 2018). Cf. J.A. Barreda, "Il vangelo della prosperità: uno schiaffo alla vera missione cristiana," *Euntes Docete* LIX, n. 3 (2006), 163.

³⁰ Other words are *πένης* (cf. 2 Cor 9:9), *πενιχρός* (cf. Lk 21:2), and *πτωχεία* (cf. 2 Cor 8:2, 9; Rv. 2:9).

³¹ Matthew 5x; Mark 3x; John 2x; Epistles 12x; Rev. 2x.

³² Matthew 2x; Mark 2x; Epistles 7x; Rev. 4x.

From the above data, it possible to conclude that the theme on wealth and poverty is an integral part of Luke's Gospel. The evangelist has, in fact, offered an in-depth analysis of the teaching of Jesus Christ in relation to poverty and wealth, often using unique material, logia and parables which are not present in the other Gospels (cf. for example, Luke 6:20;24, 12:13-31; 16:1-13; 16:19-31; 18:18-23).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The evangelists who authored the Gospels did not write a history or biography of Jesus but wrote from the perspective of believers and offered contextualized narratives of the life of Jesus.³³ In view of this, there are different accounts of the teachings of Jesus which differ from one another, reflecting the specific needs/problems/challenges facing the communities to whom they are addressed.

For example, while Matthew, Mark and John did not elaborate on the topic of wealth and poverty, the issue is at the centre of the Lukan narrative, probably because the evangelist was contextualizing the message of Jesus in a community that had challenges concerning riches and poverty.

Just as for the Lukan community, the issue of wealth and poverty is still problematic for Ghanaian contemporary churches. HMCs and Charismatic Churches do not only offer an opposite interpretation of the teachings of Jesus, but also explicit their theologies in their textual choices. For example, while HMCs frequently quote Luke 6:20 — “Blessed are you

³³ Vincent P. Branick, *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 158-9.

poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” — the verse is absent from Charismatic preaching, which privileges text like Mark 10:29-31, omitting the reference to persecution:

Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up a house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come.

The situation offers an important hermeneutic challenge that the researcher wants to address. Against this background, the thesis offers an analysis of the teachings on wealth and poverty in the Gospel of Luke through the narrative analysis of Luke 16:1-31, the text which has a high concentration of terminology concerning wealth and poverty.³⁴ The call to action proposed by the third evangelist is compared and contrasted with the teaching of selected Ghanaian Charismatic Leaders (Duncan Williams, Dug Heward Mills and Mensah Otabil). From the ‘engagement’ between text and culture, a new journey is proposed for the Christian communities living in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question for the study is:

What is the teaching of Luke on wealth and poverty?

The sub research question is:

How is Lukan’s teaching on wealth and poverty related to the doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana?

³⁴ For example, chapter 16 has the only three recurrences of μαμωνᾶ in the Luke’s gospel (4x in the NT); the only recurrence of φιλάργυρος (2x in NT); 4x the term πλούσιος and 2x πτωχός.

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Several researches have been conducted on wealth and poverty in the African context due to the relevance of the phenomenon. The review of literature is organised into two major themes. The first part focused on the theme of the Prosperity Gospel, with special emphasis on the socio-economic impact of Prosperity Gospel. The second part analysed literature on the theme on wealth and poverty in the Gospel of Luke.

1.4.1 Prosperity Gospel

The review considers the influence of the prosperity preaching to the physical, mental and spiritual development of society. There has been a wide debate among scholars in relation to the socio-economic effect of the Prosperity Gospel. This is due to variance in scholarly views in relation to the theology of prosperity. Scholars such as Lucas Zapf,³⁵ Schliesser³⁶ and George Folarin³⁷ consider the Prosperity Gospel as having a positive impact. However, Ebenezer Obadare,³⁸ Eric Z.M. Gbote and Selaelo T. Kgatla³⁹ are of an opposite view concerning the impact of the Prosperity Gospel on society.

A. Negative Evaluation of the Prosperity Theology

Eric Z.M. Gbote and Selaelo T. Kgatla argued extensively against the doctrine of the Gospel of Prosperity. In their article entitled “Prosperity Gospel: A missiological assessment”,

³⁵ Lucas Zapf, “Martin Luther, Wealth and Labour: The Market Economy’s Links to Prosperity Gospel,” in *Pastures of Plenty: Tracing Religio-Scapes of Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond*, ed. A. Heuser; Study in the Intercultural History of Christianity, 161 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), 279-292.

³⁶ Christine Schliesser, “On a Long Neglected Player: The Religious Dimension in Poverty Alleviation. The Example of the so-called ‘Prosperity Gospel’ in Africa.” *Exchange* 43, no. 4 (2014): 339-359.

³⁷ George Folarin, “Contemporary State of the Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria”, *Asia Journal of Theology* 21 no.1 (2007): 69-72.

³⁸ Ebenezer Obadare, “Raising Righteous Billionaires: The Prosperity Gospel reconsidered,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 45-62.

³⁹ E.Z.M Gbote and S.T. Kgatla, “Prosperity Gospel: A Missiological Assessment,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no 4 (2014): 70-81.

the authors cogitate the prosperity theology as the outcome of misinterpretation of biblical texts. According to them preachers of the Prosperity Gospel ignore basic moral standard in propagating the message of the gospel to the multitude. The elimination of essential morals by prosperity preachers has led to the delusion and manipulation of the message of the Gospel, thereby giving an altered and erroneous meaning. They observe that prosperity preachers use “self-defined images and understanding in interpreting texts such as John 10:10, Malachi 3:10, Mark 11:24, Job 1:3-9 and others.”⁴⁰ They suggest that the hermeneutical and exegetical blunder of the Gospel of Prosperity is in the section of the definition attributed to faith. In their view “faith is the undoubted belief Christians have in the mysteries of God without seeking proof or evidence for things of God”. Bowler describes this kind of faith as an authoritative voice which proclaims new Christian methods for physical, spiritual and monetary lavishness.⁴¹

In this light, they argued that the salvation of Christians is by faith; therefore, Christians must live by faith and hence receiving the uprightness of God by faith. Such a phenomenon grants the believer an access to God’s grace, to be steadfast in the Christian belief, obtain the assurance of the Holy Spirit and wait for Jesus Christ’s second coming- all by faith.⁴² Gbote and Kgatla views the prosperity preaching as a contrast to the Biblical definition of faith.

⁴⁰ Gbote and Kgatla, “Prosperity gospel: A Missiological Assessment”, 70-81.

⁴¹ Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2013), 57.

⁴² Gbote and Kgatla, “Prosperity gospel: A Missiological Assessment”, 70-81.

From their argument, it can be realized that the propagators of Prosperity Gospel practices the act of ‘the sale of blessings.’⁴³ Therefore, the message of the Prosperity Gospel contradicts the true teachings of the Bible which emphasizes that salvation and blessings are obtained through the grace and mercy of the Creator.⁴⁴ Gbote and Kgatla considers the preaching of the Prosperity Gospel as ‘an enemy’ to faith and spiritual growth in the life of Christians.

On the economic grounds, Ebenezer Obadare’s article “Raising Righteous Billionaires: The Prosperity Gospel Reconsidered”, reveals that the Prosperity Gospel does not propose any convincing route towards alleviating poverty in Africa.⁴⁵ He expatiates by identifying critical blind spots of the Pentecostal teaching of the Prosperity Gospel. Such as: faux individuation, moral slovenliness, susceptibility to being a regulatory valve for the state, neglect of structural barriers to upward mobility and added the fact that it has developed no cogent political economy.⁴⁶ He points out that the message of the prosperity preaching has no historical and philosophical knob on which it might be established. He adds:

...it is challenging to perceive how a message of the Gospel that is based on personal revolution can yield development without acknowledgement of, never mind constant interaction with and the restrictions integral in the social ecology.⁴⁷

He suggests that, bearing in mind the predominant ideologies and approach of the Prosperity Gospel, it could be an impediment to the emergence of an ethic economic development.

Similarly, Asamoah-Gyadu, questioning the *modus operandi* of the prosperity preachers, emphasizes that their principles do not consider the social causes of poverty: rather, it is

⁴³ Gbote and Kgatla, “Prosperity Gospel: A Missiological Assessment”, 70-81

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ebenezer Obadare, “Raising Righteous Billionaires,” 45-62.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

limited to the assertion that if you give you are blessed and if you do not give you are not blessed.⁴⁸ Likewise, Bradley Koch in his thesis debunks the influence of the prosperity preaching on the wealth of its adherers. Koch states that realistically, the theology of the prosperity preaching fails to attain its assertions: that is by averring the promise of the Bible on wealth, a person becomes wealthy.

With the question of the influence of the Prosperity Gospel on poverty alleviation, Nigerian academic, A.O. Dada entitled his 2004 article, “Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion?” Dada attempted to answer the question by conducting interviews in ten churches pastored by leading prosperity preachers in Ibadan, Nigeria.⁴⁹ His findings reveal that, although many Pentecostals were attracted to the churches by the Gospel of Prosperity, their economic statuses had not changed. He reveals, however, that their churches had become rich, some to the extent of establishing universities. Analyzing the paradox resulting from the differences between teachings of prosperity preachers and real-life situation of the adherents using the theory of cognitive dissonance, Dada concludes that in Nigeria the Prosperity Gospel is an impetus for delusion. He notes that the adherents are deluded in three ways: that they should patiently wait for the day when wealth will manifest, that they are personally responsible for lack of prosperity through sin and through failure to sow ‘seeds of prosperity.’

⁴⁸ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 217.

⁴⁹ A.O. Dada, “Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion?” *Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 36, no 1&2 (2004): 95-105.

Dada, Obadare and Asamoah-Gyadu are not alone in questioning the Gospel of Prosperity. McKnight also argues strongly against this gospel,⁵⁰ stating that it makes God a “vending machine in which believers put in faith and out comes blessings — money, homes, cars, beautiful spouses, clever kids, good neighbors, big churches, and plush vacations.” Referring to several biblical personalities who obeyed God but lived no prosperity lifestyle from Abraham to Paul, McKnight describes the Gospel of Prosperity as “hogwash.”⁵¹ He accentuates that the Christian life is characterized by carrying the cross of Jesus, and believers must trust and be faithful to Him in in blessings or suffering. Jones⁵² also takes a similar position against the gospel of prosperity. He isolates and examines four crucial areas of error relating to the Prosperity Gospel teachings: The Abrahamic covenant, atonement, giving and faith. Jones exposes the erroneous ways in which these doctrines are presented in prosperity teaching. He concludes that the Gospel of Prosperity is individualistic and proposes a ‘worldly’ theology.

B. Positive Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel

Despite the above criticisms, other scholars consider the Prosperity Gospel as having a positive effect on humanity and society.

Lucas Zapf in his article, “Martin Luther, Wealth and Labour: The Market Economy’s Links to Prosperity Gospel” has done a comprehensive work by connecting the secular

⁵⁰ Scot McKnight, *Prosperity Gospel and Its Problems- Christianity*, www.beliefnet.com (accessed 4 July 2018).

⁵¹ McKnight, *Prosperity Gospel and Its Problems- Christianity*.

⁵² D. Jones, “The Bankruptcy of the Prosperity Gospel: An Exercise in Biblical and Theological Ethics,” www.bible.org (accessed August 2, 2018).

market economy to the Christian teaching of the Prosperity Gospel. He examines the linkage between Protestantism and Capitalism to the Martin Luther's reformation theology,⁵³ and indicates that Prosperity Gospel is a consequence of the above connection. He argues that religion offers the promise of an improved life after death, while the modern days, economy promises wealth as the betterment in life. In his opinion, the message of the prosperity teaching offers a Christian integration of the two dimensions.⁵⁴ In support to the doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel, Zapf believes the preaching on prosperity has abolished the ascetic epitome of austereness, where the issue of poverty fails to be of theological relevance.⁵⁵ He argues that "economy" started with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, where sin brought scarcity in the Garden. Therefore, scarcity is personified as a sin and poverty is justified as sinfulness.⁵⁶ Zapf concluded by considering the reformation of Martin Luther as the introduction of an economic action into the realm of Christian religiosity to eliminate the challenge of poverty through the prosperity preaching towards economic development.⁵⁷

Similarly, Kakwata considers sin as the cause of poverty or scarcity.⁵⁸ While Zapf considers scarcity as the starting point for the economic activities of man — labour was needed to provide food and exchanges and trade were reallocations of the fruit of labour —,⁵⁹

⁵³ Zapf, "Martin Luther, Wealth and Labour," 279-292.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Frederick Kakwata, "A Theology of Sin Related to Poverty," *Die Skriflig/Luce Verbi* 50, no 1 (2016). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2033>

⁵⁹ Arndt, Danker and Bauer, *A Greek- English Lexicon*. Biblework.edition.

Kakwata cogitates a restoration of the relation broken by sin between God and man as the effective measure to break the poverty cycle.⁶⁰

Schliesser affirms that historically, the extraordinary spread of the message of the prosperity theology in Africa is best understood against the circumstance of the major economic crises in the 1980's and 1990's.⁶¹ She states that during this era, theologians of Pentecostal background redefined the relationship of Christianity with wealth. In place of identifying poverty as a 'spiritual feature,' they considered physical wealth as a guarantee of the blessings of God.⁶² Schliesser believes that Prosperity Gospel has a transformative potential, transforming the mind-set of people toward positive thinking and encouraging the zeal to give to the poor and needy in society with consequent blessings from God as reward for giving. Schliesser, therefore, enlists the Gospel of Prosperity as a tool contributing to poverty alleviation, due to its influence on the positive thinking and mentality of the people in society.⁶³

Ogbu Kalu shares a similar opinion, as he considers the prosperity message as being able to fill the "bowls of the poor" in a time he defines as "fragile political era."⁶⁴

George Folarin's "Contemporary State of the Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria" contends that the Prosperity Gospel is a theology that shows that God is interested in all aspects of the life of Africans. He states that the early missionaries failed to apply the gospel to the existential needs and culture of Africans. For this reason, many members of HMCs continue to

⁶⁰ Kakwata, "A Theology of Sin Related to Poverty".

⁶¹ Schliesser, "On a Long Neglected Player," 5.

⁶² Ibid, 8.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ogbu Kalu, "From the End of History to the beginning of Poverty: Poverty and Social Engagement in Contemporary African Christianity," *Falling Walls Conference* (1989): 90.

consult traditional religious priests in times of existential crises. Folarin articulates that the gospel of prosperity with its emphasis on deliverance has brought renewal as people devote themselves more to prayer and fasting. Therefore, he concludes, the message of the Prosperity Gospel enhances the faith of Christians. Secondly, Folarin considers the Prosperity Gospel as a doctrine that gives hope to the hopeless as it promotes an optimistic mentality.⁶⁵ Kate adds that this type of mind-power surged in the late nineteenth century centring on confidence about the progress and potential perfectibility of the human race.⁶⁶ Folarin presents testimonies of people who were stopped to commit suicide by sermons from prosperity gospel preachers; some of them later became successful.

Lovemore Togarasei suggests that Prosperity Gospel has contributed to poverty alleviation in Africa through its teachings on entrepreneurship.⁶⁷ Presenting Enock Sitima⁶⁸ of Bible Life Ministries in Gaborone (Botswana) as case-study, Togarasei affirms that prosperity theology helps believers to implement wealth creation through financial management. To him entrepreneurship teachings have led a sizeable number of members of the church to start their own businesses, an act which promotes the creation of employment.⁶⁹ Togarasei further discloses that some of the richest citizens of Botswana and Zimbabwe belong to Pentecostal/ charismatic churches. He adds that members are found in farming, education,

⁶⁵ Albanese, however, defined this 'mentality' as *mental magic*, because its discourse of control and efficacy is centred on the role of thought and speech. Cf. Bowler, *Blessed*, 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Lovemore Togarasei, "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal," *Exchange* 40 (2011): 336-350.

⁶⁸ According to Sitima, African schools and universities prepare people for bondage. Instead of education, he said, what children need is an entrepreneurial spirit.

⁶⁹ Togarasei, "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity": 336-350.

banking, law, transport and such other sectors, as consequence of the entrepreneur teachings of the church.⁷⁰

Togarasei explains that the teachings on entrepreneurship by Prosperity Gospel leaders are supported with examples of Biblical characters with entrepreneurial spirit. His view is supported by Apprill in a study on Pentecostal/ charismatic entrepreneurial spirit in Congo Brazzaville. She writes, “they reassert the value of individual initiative in the production of wealth, founding on the letter of the Bible the necessity of work and entrepreneurial spirit. In this spirit the creation of business is no longer a last resort imposed by the crisis, but a true behavioural ethic founded on an ethic of belief.”⁷¹

Besides contributing to poverty alleviation through teaching entrepreneurial spirit, Togarasei emphasizes the creation of employment opportunities. He asserts that Prosperity Gospel adherers make huge contributions to the churches in the form of ‘sowing’ seeds of prosperity. As a result, churches become rich and engage in a number of projects that create employment.⁷² Additionally, he considers the emphasis on Afro-optimism by the theology of prosperity to respond to the needs of the less fortunate ones in their communities. Asamoah-Gyadu supports this view when he writes that African Pentecostalism has initiated a shift from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism and hope.⁷³

Togarasei concludes his argument by stressing that the Gospel of Prosperity is not only concerned about material prosperity or wealth. Rather, it is holistic as it addresses all areas

⁷⁰ Togarasei, “The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity,” 336-350.

⁷¹ E. Dorier-Apprill, “The New Pentecostal Networks of Brazzaville,” in *Between Babel to Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. A. Corten and R. Marshal-Fratani (London: Hurst and Company 2001), 293-308.

⁷² Togarasei, “The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity,” 336-350.

⁷³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 351.

of an individual's life. Corten similarly suggests that the Gospel of Prosperity is associated with denial of debt, unemployment, drug-consuming children, discord, family divisions, prostitution, vices, loss of control of one's life and oppression, denial of problems, difficulties, pain, anguish, suffering, sadness, denial of life in ruins, of the opposite of being abandoned, lost, hurt, desperate, betrayed.⁷⁴ Marshall, adding his voice to the debate, states that the theology of the Prosperity Gospel among Nigerian Pentecostals/ charismatics has led members who are husbands not to abuse their wives or betray them, and are more likely to respect them, assist in child rearing and spend less money on smoking, drinking, entertainment or other women, with not only ethics but economics consequences.⁷⁵

1.4.2 Teachings on Wealth and Poverty in the Gospel of Luke

The theme of poverty and wealth is one of the pivotal themes in Luke in his Gospel. It is observed that the author targets his message to a community with the challenge of dealing with the poor and the wealthy. Phillips provides a survey on the subject of wealth and poverty in the Lukan narrative.⁷⁶ He argues that the readers of the Lukan narrative are incited to deliberate upon the right Christian answers to matters relating to wealth and poverty. He clarifies that historically, the exposition of the Lukan Gospel attracted various attempts by its readers to apply the patterns, prohibitions, socio-economic directives and the structures of texts into their daily lives and the lives of their Christian society.

⁷⁴ Corten, "Transnationalised Religious," 106-123.

⁷⁵ R. Marshall, 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria', in *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, ed. Paul Gifford (Ibadan: Sefer 1992), 8-39.

⁷⁶ Thomas E. Phillips, *Reading Recent Readings of Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke and Acts* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing, 2003).

He further states that the numerous research conducted on the theme of wealth and poverty in the third Gospel and the Book of Acts stemmed from two major elements: (1) the absolute number of texts in the Lukan Gospel linked to the theme of wealth and poverty and (2) the enormous diverse viewpoints of the texts in the Gospel of Luke linked to the subject.⁷⁷ Similarly, Forbes considers the trepidation of the author of Luke for the underprivileged and the marginalized as well documented. He summarizes and outlines several concerns the author discloses in his Gospel, articulated in parables such as the Great Feast (Lk 14:15-24), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14).⁷⁸

Miller's "Bridge Work and Seating Charts: A Study of Luke's Ethics of Wealth, Poverty, and Reversal" analyses the 'status reversal' and the appropriate use of riches and other possessions in the sovereignty of God. He examines the sociocultural imperial hierarchy of primary readers and exegetes the teachings of Jesus in Luke 14 and how they challenged the social and economic circumstances in the first and twenty first centuries.⁷⁹ According to him, contemporary readers of the Gospel of Luke and followers of Jesus Christ fail to take issues relating to wealth and status seriously, although it is predominant in today's world.⁸⁰

Noah reiterates the opinion and established that humans spend much of their time and energy managing money, as money is part of the daily life of humanity. He affirms that from

⁷⁷ Phillips, *Reading Recent Readings*, 232-260.

⁷⁸ Greg W Forbes, *The Role of the Lukan Parables in The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 23.

⁷⁹ Amanda C. Miller, "Bridge Work and Seating Charts: A Study of Luke's Ethics of Wealth, Poverty, and Reversal," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 68, no. 4 (2014): 416-427.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

infancy humans study the rules, both implicit and explicit, about the structure and image of the society to which they belong. He upholds his view by establishing that though teachings about ‘monetary issues’ are prominent in the Gospels, and particularly in Luke, humans frequently ignore them, as Jesus’ teachings are considered as just symbolic and metaphoric.⁸¹ He asserts that perhaps the world is frightened by the deep-seated message of Jesus concerning wealth and poverty.⁸²

The same opinion is shared by Richard Halverson,

Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man’s real nature, money or wealth is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man’s true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man’s character and how he handles his money.⁸³

Finally, Joshua Noble’s “Rich toward God: Making Sense of Luke 12:21” suggests that the concluding verse of the parable of the rich fool (12:16-21) warns about the consequences of not being, as it is typically translated, “rich toward God.”⁸⁴ He states that the meaning of the phrase is most often explained as being “rich in God’s sight,” but parallel instances of the Greek construction suggest that the expression has the more specific meaning of giving one’s wealth to God.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Timothy Noah, *The Great Divergence: America’s Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Richard Halverson, *AZQuotes*; <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/841643>

⁸⁴ Joshua A. Noble, “Rich toward God: Making Sense of Luke 12:21,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2016): 303-320.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Therefore, he adds that Luke 12:21 is a NT example of imaging almsgiving as a gift directly to God. He concludes by suggesting that the results of the grammatical and contextual investigations of the phrase εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν in Luke 12:21 have converged to point toward the same meaning: giving or lending one's wealth to God.⁸⁶

The above reviewed literatures contributed to this research by providing information on the theme of the Prosperity Gospel and the Lukan teachings on wealth and poverty. However, the scholars did not offer a comparative analysis of the theologies of wealth and poverty of Prosperity Gospel and the Gospel of Luke. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge the gap by addressing the issue of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and its relationship with the teachings of wealth and poverty in the Lukan Gospel. Furthermore, the research intends not only to 'compare' the two theologies but to 'engage' them, as the following section illustrates.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The research adopts the Communicative Perspective of African Biblical Hermeneutics propounded by Ossom-Batsa as its theoretical framework. The approach is based on a tripartite level of the interpretation of a text. It includes the adherence to the biblical text, attention to the action suggested in the text and the context of the interpreter.⁸⁷

The approach considers the text as the centre of the interpretation process. To adhere to the biblical text, the research places the text in its unique position and apply the necessary exegetical tools to discover its organization, as well as its semantic and communication

⁸⁶ Noble, "Rich toward God," 305.

⁸⁷ George Ossom-Batsa, "African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 91-104.

force. Furthermore, the research analyses the narrative content within the context of the relationships among the author of the Lukan Gospel, the texts and the readers, through a critical reflection on the linguistic and the non-linguistic elements of the text.⁸⁸

Through the analysis of the text, the research identifies the call to action suggested by the text to the implied reader; the communicative function of the text. The identification of the action of the text is the basis for a fruitful contextualization of the text, respectful of the culture of the text and the culture of the contemporary readers. The aim of the hermeneutical process is, in fact, to make the Word of God alive and relevant in the daily life of the Ghanaian Christian community.

Regarding the third step, Ossom-Batsa establishes that the context of a text is not the point of reference for the interpreter, but the frame within which the dialogue between God and humanity takes place. After reaching an informed understanding of the text through the exegetical process, the readers are invited to interpret the text into their own context. The engagement between the text and the reader aims at transforming the hearths, mentality and attitude of the readers, so that the transformed people can find ethical solutions for changing circumstances in their environment.⁸⁹

1.6 Methodology

Following the theoretical framework, the research is organized into three methodological steps:

1. Exegesis of the reality

⁸⁸ Ibid. According to Ossom-Batsa, the studying of the organization of the text and the communication force of the different elements helps to highlight its functional organization.

⁸⁹ Ossom-Batsa, "African Interpretation of the Bible," 91-104.

2. Exegesis of the text
3. Engagement of the two cultures

The first step analyses the concept of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana by examining publications and recorded sermons of Archbishop Duncan Williams (Action Chapel International), Dug Heward Mills (Lighthouse Chapel International) and Mensah Otobil (International Central Gospel Church).

The second step focuses on the exegesis of the text. One of the synchronic methods, Narrative criticism, is employed to exegete Lk 16:1-31. The method was chosen because the author of the third gospel categorized its work as a narrative, an orderly account (διήγησιν - 1:1) in the preface of the gospel. According to Tate, the narrative criticism is the study of narratives, focusing not only on traditional narrative elements such as plot, setting, and characterization, but also the role of the reader. Marguerat and Bourquin reiterates that the narrative criticism is a method of reading the text through the exploration and evaluation on how a specific pericope is made tangible in a narrative.⁹⁰ Since all narratives are told through the voice of a narrator, much importance is attached to the activity and person of the narrator in determining the meaning that the author wants to communicate to his readers, to transform their lives.⁹¹

Finally, in the third step, the researcher engages the reality and text in order to contextualize the teachings of Luke on wealth and poverty in the contemporary Ghanaian Christian community, to examine the perlocutionary effect of the text on the readers.

⁹⁰ Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (Paris: SCM Press, 1999), 3.

⁹¹ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, Third Ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2008), 336.

1.7 Organisation of the Chapters

The research is structured into five chapters. Chapter One deals with the general introduction of the research. It covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology and organization of the chapters.

Following the theoretical framework, Chapter Two presents the exegesis of reality, studying the concept of poverty and wealth in prosperity gospel. It entails the historical background of the Prosperity Gospel, its message and the prosperity theologies of three Ghanaian leaders: Archbishop Duncan Williams, Dug Heward Mills and Mensah Otabil.

Chapter Three analyses the Parables and Teachings of Luke on Wealth and Poverty (Lk 16:1-13; 16:19-31) to discover the call to action, the perlocutionary effect of the text on the reader (step two of the theoretical framework). The fourth chapter is the contextualization of the text in the Ghanaian context, through the engagement of reality and text, according to the third step of the theoretical framework. Chapter Five brings the thesis to an end with the general summary of the work, some recommendations and a general conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

PROSPERITY GOSPEL IN THE GHANAIAAN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The chapter explores the concept of the Prosperity Gospel. After discussing its definition, it presents a historical overview of its development before focusing on the message of the Prosperity Gospel in the Ghanaian context, through a critical analysis of the prosperity preaching of three key proponents.

2.2 Definition of the Prosperity Gospel

The Prosperity Gospel is a dominant contemporary preaching trend in Ghana, and in West-Africa in general.⁹² Heuser defines the Prosperity Gospel as a gospel which centres on a multifaceted connection of an act of speech surrounded with health, wealth, faith and victory, in combination with the necessary customary practices around ancillary evidence of blessings considered to be divine.⁹³ Gifford,⁹⁴ Anderson⁹⁵ and Pew Forum,⁹⁶ in a similar trend, define the Prosperity Gospel as a trans denominational theology which places much emphasis on good health, liberation from ailment and physical wealth as endowments from God for people who have adequate faith.

⁹² Andreas Heuser, "Charting African Prosperity Gospel Economies," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1-9. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the word Prosperity is the state of being successful, especially in the accumulation of wealth. In the light of this study the word prosperity signifies the accrual of wealth and good health based on one's good work or giving power to the Church.

⁹³ Heuser, "Charting African Prosperity," 1-9.

⁹⁴ Paul Gifford, "The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: Expecting Miracles," *Christianity Century* (2007), 20-24. <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2007-07/expecting-miracles-0>

⁹⁵ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 146.

⁹⁶ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. 2006. Spirit and power: A 10-country survey of Pentecostals. Available at http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Christian/Evangelical_Protestant_Churches/pentecostals-08.pdf accessed on 17/10/2018.

The prosperity theology bestows that all the needs of humanity has been met by God through the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Therefore, all Christians must partake in Christ's victory over evil, sickness and poverty. Gifford summarizes his view on the prosperity preaching by stating: "It is based on the right of blessings of wealth and health secured by Jesus Christ that is obtainable by the Christian through the application of faith by positive confession."⁹⁷

The Lausanne Theology Working Group accepts the above definitions by describing the Prosperity Gospel as a theology of the blessings of health and wealth, which is obtainable by believers by confessing positively and sowing seed through an honest giving of offering and payment of tithe. The Prosperity Gospel is based on the fundamental principle that faithful Christians are rewarded by God with monetary success, physical wealth and good health in accordance to the glorious riches in Jesus Christ (cf. Philp 4:19)⁹⁸.

From the above definitions, it is noted that the theology of the Gospel of Prosperity considers redemption or salvation as a medium of blessings to the Christian by God's merciful and gracious work. The faith in the death of Christ Jesus is appropriated to decree health, wealth and happiness, where God is considered as the Saviour, Lord and Liberator.⁹⁹ Believers are guided to accept the truth that anything they crave for in life would be realized through faith.¹⁰⁰ The prosperity doctrine justifies faith as a channel by which a Christian

⁹⁷ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 62.

⁹⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 202.

⁹⁹ Michael Horton, *The Agony of Deceit* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), 65.

¹⁰⁰ Hill in his book *Your Magic Power to be Rich: Think and Grow Rich the Ladder to Success the Master – Key to Riches* considers this kind of faith as the head chemist of the mind, when blended with the vibration of thought, the subconscious mind instantly picks up the vibration, translates it into its spiritual equivalent and transmits it to infinite intelligence as in the case of prayer." Cf. N. Hill, *Your Magic Power to be Rich: Think and Grow Rich the Ladder to Success the Master – Key to Riches* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher-Penguin, 2005).

could transport success into reality. According to Coleman, Prosperity preachers look at faith as an extreme mystical power which Christians can use to receive their desired success in life.¹⁰¹ It is the tool which Christians can use to achieve their visions of attaining wealth and riches.¹⁰²

From the above background, it can be established that the basic idea is that the Christian has the right to every kind of prosperity. Wealth is, therefore, considered as the essential indication of true Christianity. On the contrary, poverty designates a deficient faith or inadequate understanding.¹⁰³

2.3 Historical Overview of the Prosperity Gospel

The dissemination of the Prosperity Gospel among Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have been attributed to Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, and E. W. Kenyon. They were early Evangelical and Pentecostal Preachers in the nineteen centuries in USA who portrayed prosperity as the promise received by humanity from the fulfilment of the covenant of God.¹⁰⁴ The message was popularized by televangelists and the writings of Normal Vincent Peale on ‘Positive Thinking’ in the 1950s.¹⁰⁵

However, scholars have contrasting opinions about the origin of the movement. For example, Mark Hellstern disagrees with the late date and argues that Prosperity Preaching originated at the beginning of the seventeenth century among the Puritans and the first settlers

¹⁰¹ Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 150.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 375.

¹⁰⁴ Gbote and Kgatla, *Prosperity Gospel: A missiological Assessment*, 70-81.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

at Jamestown in the United States. They viewed material prosperity as an end goal of their “New Jerusalem,” but for the good of the community rather than individual.¹⁰⁶

The American Prosperity Gospel, according to Bowler, can be traced to “certain ways of thinking about spiritual power that emerged and competed for attention, early twentieth century”. This thinking about spiritual power took on different labels: “mind cure, success literature, positive thinking, self-help, and prosperity theology.”¹⁰⁷ In *A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*, Bowler notes that the prosperity theology centres on four interconnected subjects: faith, that serves as the authority to release spiritual forces and convert words spoken into reality; the demonstration of health and wealth as the proof of the power of faith; the impediment of faith which characterise the believer’s impervious life to any socioeconomic and political victory; and the Gospel.¹⁰⁸

It is believed that after the second world war, America turned into a fiscal powerhouse after seasons of depression, a state that led Americans to regard themselves “to be double blessed.”¹⁰⁹ The economy grew, sustaining the nations middle class. Within this era America enjoyed good health as medical advances staved off previously deadly illnesses with mass vaccination against polio and tuberculosis. The triumphant mood of the nation is the base to the act of Positive Thinking, which was adopted by Christian Pentecostals and linked it to the Gospel of Christ.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Hellstern, “The ‘Me Gospel’: An Examination of the Historical Roots of the Prosperity Emphasis within Current Charismatic Theology,” *Fides et Historia* 3 (1989): 73.

¹⁰⁷ Bowler, *Blessed*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Simon Coleman reveals that as the prosperity movement dawned, Essek William Kenyon, considered as the ‘grandfather’ of the faith Gospel, was in his twilight years. Kenyon died in the first year of the post-World War II, an era where healing revivals gave national attention to the incipient Prosperity Gospel. He reveals that the post war generation rediscovered Kenyon’s Faith Gospel, which echoed the Gospels of health and wealth that resounded in the American culture.¹¹⁰ Kenyon’s Faith Gospel became the primary Christian vehicle of mind-power, a refinement of the mechanism by which the believer’s authority and God’s power met.¹¹¹

It is noted that post-war Pentecostals inherited the rich legacy of the faith gospel initiated by Kenyon. In the 1940’s, healing evangelists of independent Pentecostal background started to propagate the message of the relevance of faith with high spirit and financial blessings.¹¹² Their concentration on the power of the mind to gain both wealth and health is regarded as the foundation of the prosperity movement. This movement, which is devoted to securing God’s blessing, had been constructed from multiple religious’ elements with wide appeal across racial and denominational lines.¹¹³

After 1945, hundreds of preachers broke away from Pentecostal denominations to establish their autonomous evangelistic churches, ministries whose ‘lifeblood’ was the bold examples and promises of their charismatic founders. These restless and self-reliant ministers used each other’s magazines, platforms, radio and later television broadcasts and personal endorsements to spread their gospel of healing, prophecy, deliverance, wealth and faith.

¹¹⁰ Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity*, 103.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 106.

¹¹² Ibid., 23.

¹¹³ Ibid.

This was viewed as a wholesale renewal that stimulated America with the message of faith. That is faith for healing, faith for deliverance, faith for prosperity and faith to release the will of God by loudly speaking positive words.

In the 1950's the faith gospel gained massive dominance as most ministers published periodicals with faith healing at heart. These included Oral Roberts' *Healing Waters*, Gordon Lindsay's *Voice of Healing* and Jack Coe's *Herald of Healing*. Rank and file of Pentecostal Americans gathered under the canvas to hear the principal themes of this revival: healing, prophecy and evangelism.

Ministers of the faith gospel adopted approaches that were believed to pressurise God to act and they searched for supernatural methods to experience God's power. Their exhortations were experimental and fundamentally utilitarian, favouring practices over philosophy. For example, ministers applied every possible method available, from silent prayer, anointing oil, anointed handkerchiefs, laying on of hands and classic prayer of faith.¹¹⁴ However, the belief in 'spoken faith' took on added weight. Botch observes that most mid-century preachers began to preach with "F.F. Bosworth's *Christ the Healer* tucked under their arm, agreeing that faith wielded the authority to confess and possess."¹¹⁵ Bowler insinuates that Pentecostals enjoyed the post-war economic boom as contented middle-class citizens, and had the believe that God might have initiated the economic boom. That generation of Pentecostals searched for explanations on how "God and the believer's piety could work in tandem."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Anton Bosch, "The True Origins of the Prosperity Gospel," *Christian Witness Ministries* 257 (2014): 3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Bowler, *Blessed*, 32.

The propagation of the Pentecostal faith in the financial sector has led to the establishment of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI). The fellowship promoted the Prosperity Gospel as a prodigy of modern Pentecostal faith. Founded in 1952, the organization spread rapidly as an association of spirit-filled businessmen who gathered in local chapters and annual conferences across the country.¹¹⁷ The fellowship was not only a sanctified alternative to the weekly meetings and 'pancake breakfasts' of other popular organizations, like the Lion's Club or the Rotary Club, but also a place that reconciled old-time religion with mounting expectations for economic success. Their annual events were rather grand affairs held in high-ceilinged ballrooms, row upon row of long banquet tables where men of commerce could exchange business cards and hear an inspiring message.¹¹⁸ The fellowship served as a faithful companion to independent Pentecostal revivalists, and platform for ministers like Oral Roberts, John Osteen, Jack Coe, Gordon Lindsay, R. W. Culpepper, William Branham, and Kenneth Hagin.¹¹⁹

In the 1960's, those who had championed prosperity during the healing revivals noticed an end of era for them. Its leading lights traded tents for churches, itinerancy for institutions, and most notably, healing for prosperity.¹²⁰ The pre-eminence of prosperity theology prompted some teachers to attempt to reconcile divine wealth with the realities of the missionary field. The number of faith-building ministries devoted to prosperity grew in number

¹¹⁷ Michael Budde and Robert Brimlow, *Christianity Incorporated: How Big Business Is Buying the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 132.

¹¹⁸ Budde and Bromlow, *Christianity Incorporated*, 132.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 78.

and presence as new ministerial headquarters and Bible schools were established across Canada and the United States, especially in the Southern states of United States.

Gordon Lindsay and his Christ for the Nations ministry established his 40,000 square foot headquarters and a Bible school in Dallas, Texas, adding to the growing number of like-minded faith teachers.¹²¹ Kenneth Hagin founded his evangelistic association in 1962 with a new headquarters in 1966 in Tulsa. The southern prairies of Tulsa, Oklahoma, became the prosperity gospel's educational heartland.¹²² Oral Roberts University, founded in 1963, was the largest and most ecumenical vision of spirit-filled educational institution fitted with an unending vision for expansion

In the 1980's, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, and Marilyn Hickey, whose reputations were inseparable from Christian teaching on "divine money", became the most frequently featured speakers in USA.¹²³ Prosperity preachers dominated conference circuits as the must-see superstars of the Pentecostal charismatic world. African American leaders, nurtured by this tight circle of white prosperity ministries, grew in number and stature.¹²⁴ A flood of black teachers, nurtured inside faith institutions, began to spread their message of divine prosperity to African American audiences.

Within the same time, however, prosperity preachers faced challenges due to financial mismanagement and the prosperity gospel suffered a decline in popularity.¹²⁵ When in the '90s

¹²¹ Budde and Bromlow, *Christianity Incorporated*, 135.

¹²² Bowler, *Blessed*, 41.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 80.

prosperity teachers returned to the spotlight, their approach had changed significantly. New faces like Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, T. D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, and Eddie Long replaced flamboyant stereotypes with a ‘polished,’ business-like image. By the mid-1990s, these postmodern prosperity preachers would not beg for funds but rather focus on the returns. They authored reading materials in the form of relationship guides, financial principles, and family reconciliation.¹²⁶ The new generation of teachers set aside the ‘hard prosperity’ that had characterized the previous decade in favour of the “therapeutic inspiration” of prosperity.¹²⁷

Some scholars describe the ways that the Prosperity Gospel aligns with the expectations and dynamics of the culture of capitalism, the free market, and the individual as the subject of consumerism.¹²⁸ It is noted that the prosperity Gospel blends the Christian faith with the idea of a capitalist society, a society that promotes accumulation of capital. The aim is to pursue the elimination of poverty and the promotion of wealth among humanity. From the above analysis, it is clear that Prosperity Gospel contains vivid strains of American-style materialism and individualism.

2.4 The Prosperity Gospel in Africa

After the event of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, Pentecostal Missionaries began to establish their missions in Africa. Lucy Farrow, an Africa- American who partook in the

¹²⁶ Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 80.

¹²⁷ The prosperity movement that emerged in full health and vigor in the early 1990s was more diverse than ever before. It had survived the disgrace of many of its standard-bearers and outgrown its denominational boundaries. It appealed both to white Americans and those of color. It was no longer a child from the wrong side of the tracks but a powerful movement with boundless confidence.

¹²⁸ Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 96.

revival at Azusa Street, arrived in West Africa, precisely Liberia, in 1907. Other missionaries later joined in neighbouring country, Sierra Leone.¹²⁹ The message of Pentecostalism spread at a rapid pace, as Africans adopted and transmitted it into their language and assisted in the spread of the Pentecostal teachings due to their familiarity to the traditional culture and religions.¹³⁰ A major accomplishment of Pentecostalism during the first six decades of its existence in Africa was the planting of significant roots, primarily in the English-speaking colonies of Great Britain. These roots included the forming of Churches, Bible Schools, primary and secondary schools.¹³¹

The emergence of joined interdenominational Bible Study groups, such as the Scripture Union, and its style of worship received a mixed reaction as students belonging to these interdenominational groups attempted to infuse the Pentecostal style of worship into the HMCs. The youth, therefore, moved into churches that accepted charismatic worship.

The youth's movement was led by Benson Idahosa. He was born as a sickling child on 11th September 1938, in Benin City, Edo State of Nigeria. Benin City was known as the City of Blood, due to its practices of human sacrifice to the gods. After high school he worked with the Canadian company Bata Shoes as a salesman, and whittled a successful career as a sales manager.¹³² In 1959, Idahosa became a 'born again Christian.' Believing to have received

¹²⁹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 115.

¹³⁰ In illustration, David Martin emphasizes that the evangelizing competence of some Sierra Leonean Pentecostals carried the message from the British colony to as far as French colony of Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso by 1921. David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 148.

¹³¹ Martin, *Pentecostalism*, 148.

¹³² Garlock, *Fire in His Bones*, 87.

a call from God, he became a lay minister in the Assemblies of God Church. He was a member of the Assemblies of God till the year 1968, when he began his own ministry.¹³³

In 1971, he met an American evangelist, Gordon Lindsay, who conducted a crusade in Nigeria. Lindsay, who had a classical Pentecostal background, offered a two-year scholarship to Idahosa to study in his seminary, Christ for All Nations Bible College in Dallas, Texas.¹³⁴ It is observed that through his studies, he encountered the early manifestations of the prosperity preaching. In America, he began preaching on weekends in local churches creating a network with many high ranked leaders of American Pentecostalism. Idahosa returned to Nigeria passionate about evangelism. He promoted the Prosperity Gospel as a measure to reveal the goodness of God and to combat against the devil and his sycophants, defined by him as the evil of African poverty. Idahosa, therefore, emphasized that the socio-spiritual state of Benin City at his time needed intercession to change its “sanitary conditions, caused by the dirt of sacrifices and idolatry.”¹³⁵ In this regard, Idahosa associates the course of poverty in Benin City to idolatry and the worship of the devil.

Using the Church of God headquarters in Benin City as his base, he started a different phase of his ministry by planting satellite churches in adjacent towns in Edo State. After fifteen years, Idahosa had more than one thousand churches across Nigeria. He built additional churches in other countries in the quest of promoting the Prosperity Gospel in Africa. According to Clement Adayobi, this was an effort by Idahosa to liberate Africa from the era of post-colonial economic depression and poverty.¹³⁶

¹³³ Garlock, *Fire in His Bones*, 87.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ E. O. Akinwumi, “Idahosa, Benson Andrew 1938 to 1998,” <http://www.dacb.org/stories/nigeria/idahosabensona.html> (Accessed 15/10/2018).

¹³⁶ Clement Adayobi, *The Life and Ministry of Benson Idahosa* (Lagos: Brantia Press, 2004), 67.

In 1974, Idahosa inaugurated a weekly television broadcast titled “Redemption Hour” on a local outlet of the National Television Authority of Nigeria, in Benin City.¹³⁷ The programme became popular across the nation. In the same year he established a seminary — the All Nations for Christ Bible Institute. Although the Institute catered for Nigerians, it became a centre of dissemination of the Prosperity Gospel throughout Africa and contributed to the massive spread of prosperity ideology in the whole continent, within a very short time. To reach the aim, Idahosa offered scholarship to other Africans; among them were 15 students from Ghana, seven from Chad, four from Ivory Coast, three from Kenya, two from Cameroon and one each from Togo and Sierra Leone.¹³⁸ Some of these students launched the first neo-Pentecostal Churches in their countries. An example is Nicholas Duncan Williams of Ghana.¹³⁹

Other contributors to the spread of prosperity preaching include Bishop David Oyedepo, who considered Idahosa as his spiritual father and adopted his message of prosperity. Oyedepo founded the Living Faith World Outreach also known as Winners Chapel in Lagos, in 1983. Sixteen years later, the church was present in thirty-eight African countries.¹⁴⁰ The motto of the church — “I am a winner” — was displayed on stickers adorning cars, shops and houses in Lagos and Accra.¹⁴¹ Explaining this slogan, Bishop Oyedepo

¹³⁷ Vincent Iyawe, *Archbishop Benson Idahosa: Achievements and Legacies of a Colossus* (Benin City, Nigeria: Gift-Prints Associates, 1999), 54.

¹³⁸ Garlock, *Fire in His Bones*, 102.

¹³⁹ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004), 26.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

¹⁴¹ Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, 5.

affirms, “it gives you an identity. It gives you a sense of conviction that you are heading for something positive.”¹⁴²

Oyedepo’s prosperity messages were popularized through the publication of books with titles like *Understanding Financial Prosperity; Success; Winning the War Against Poverty; Walking in Dominion; Possessing Your Possession; Success Strategies; Understanding Your Covenant Right; Exploring the Riches of Redemption; Breaking Financial Hardship; and Showers of Blessing*. In 2011, Forbes declared Bishop Oyedepo Nigeria’s richest pastor, having an estimated net worth of US \$ 150 million. He owns four private jets; innumerable properties in the UK and in the US, and a publishing company.¹⁴³

According to Larbi, Idahosa contributed greatly to the development of the neo-Pentecostal movement in Ghana and hence the emergence of the prosperity preaching. After Evangelistic crusades held in Accra in the early 1977, he established the Redemption Hour Faith Ministry at Laterbiorkoshie, Accra, with Emmanuel Mettle as the first resident Pastor and Isaac Agyare and George Ferguson as assistants.¹⁴⁴ It is evidential that Idahosa’s Redemption Hour Faith Ministry was the precursor of neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana.¹⁴⁵

Duncan-Williams returned to Ghana from Nigeria in 1978 and made some initial effort to work with the Church of Pentecost. When the attempt failed, he started meetings with a

¹⁴² Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 264.

¹⁴³ Forbes is an American business magazine owned by Forbes, Inc. It features original articles on finance, industry, investing, and marketing topics. See <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/06/07/the-five-richest-pastors-in-nigeria/> accessed on 20/10/2018.

¹⁴⁴ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Center for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 228.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

small group in his father's residence, at the Airport Residential area, Accra. Duncan-Williams established the Action Faith Ministry in 1979 after a meeting with Idahosa's assistant, Rev. J.S.B. Coker.¹⁴⁶ According to Asamoah-Gyadu, Duncan-Williams used his ministry to propagate the message of the Prosperity Gospel. The Ghanaian scholar describes him as a "chief advocate of the Prosperity Gospel since the 1980s,"¹⁴⁷ and offers some examples to support his assertion.

During a primetime TV talk show in Accra, Duncan-Williams specified that "Jesus wore designer clothing", construing that the seamless nature of Jesus' robe as he entered into Jerusalem, spurred people to gamble for it.¹⁴⁸ He further contends that the donkey on which Jesus rode to Jerusalem was probably the most expensive means of transport in Jesus' days.¹⁴⁹ From the above examples, it seems that Duncan-Williams read the gospel narrative with ideological lens to support his prosperity claim. In fact, he intended to portray Jesus as a wealthy man and to detach him from the image of poverty attributed to him in the history of interpretation of the biblical texts. For Duncan-Williams, the principal message of the Prosperity Gospel is that God wants his children to flourish and to have the best of everything.¹⁵⁰

Mensa Otabil, the founder of the International Central Gospel Church in Accra, is considered another pioneer of the prosperity preaching in Ghana. However, he had no direct contact with Idahosa.¹⁵¹ Otabil's ministry, which started in February 1984, attracts adherents

¹⁴⁶ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 205.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 66.

from the high socio-economic class in Accra.¹⁵² Unlike Duncan -Williams, Otabil's prosperity gospel discounts extreme materialism, leaning more towards a prosperity that results from education, attainment of professional skill and transformation of culture.¹⁵³

Other prosperity preachers who promoted the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana in the 1980s include Owusu Twumasi of Holy Fire which emerged in Takoradi in 1982; Nii Tackie Yarboi of Victory Bible Church which made its appearance in 1985, Charles Agyin Asare of Word Miracle Church which was formed in 1987; Eastwood Anaba the founder of Fountain Gate Chapel; Sam Korankye Ankra of International Bible Worship Centre (now Royal House Chapel) and Dag Heward-Mills of the Light House Chapel International. The development and the fast spreading teaching of the prosperity in Ghana were viewed with considerable concern by the HMCs because many members were attracted by prosperity message.¹⁵⁴

Scholars assume that the remarkable spreading of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa can be understood against the background of a major economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, an era of extreme poverty and political instability. These economic situations influenced the theological shift by Pentecostal preachers, and redefined their view on wealth. Instead of perceiving poverty as a spiritual virtue, material wealth became the hallmark of God's blessing. The objective of prosperity preachers within the period of hardship was the promotion of wealth and hence poverty alleviation.

¹⁵² Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 66.

¹⁵³ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 113-139.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

2.5 Prosperity Teaching on Poverty

From the various definitions of the Prosperity Gospel and its historical background, it is inferred that the poor become the target of the prosperity theology. Christians living in poverty are exhorted to deal with their inadequate faith, which is believed to be the cause of their situation. Adherents of this theology proclaim that “God wants his children to be rich, He wants them to be buoyant, and so He blesses with prosperity, not poverty”.¹⁵⁵ Young explains that the main element of the prosperity teaching is that all Christians have the responsibility to be prosperous in every area of their lives, notably in the areas of financial prosperity and in the realm of physical health and well-being.¹⁵⁶ He made this observation in relation to Idahosa’s statement:

No one in God’s family was ever destined to exist in sickness, fear, ignorance, poverty, loneliness or mediocrity. God’s abundant goodness will be enjoyed and utilized by those who discipline themselves, become decisive, bold, adventurous, believing, daring, risking and determined.¹⁵⁷

It literally means that poverty and sickness must not be present in Christian life. In Idahosa’s view, it is not the will of God for a Christian to be poor or suffer from ill-health, whether it is because of sin, ignorance or lack of faith.

The prosperity theology views poverty as a disease and a curse, which prickles, bites, chastens and makes human susceptible to deadly sicknesses, hence, it must be hated. It is referred to as a destroyer of destiny and could cause people to perish (cf. Deut. 28:15-20; Gen. 28:48).

¹⁵⁵ Asamoah Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 202.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Young, “Prosperity Teaching in an African Context”. <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk.>pdf>ajet> accessed on 27/10/2018.

¹⁵⁷ Young, “Prosperity Teaching in an African Context”.

Preachers use various texts to support their assertion and sometimes interpret the texts out of context, by following the fundamentalist approach in their interpretation. One of the favourite biblical texts is 3 John 2. From their interpretation of the verse, it is claimed that it is the wish of God that all believers should prosper in all their ways.¹⁵⁸ Salvation is considered holistic, regarding soul and body. Salvation of the soul is deliverance from sin and growth in spiritual maturity; likewise, salvation for the body is the deliverance from sickness, demon oppression and possession, and poverty. Based on their interpretation of the text, prosperity preachers propose three ideas: Poverty is not the will of God for His Children; God is willing to deliver the human from material poverty; God is ready to meet all human needs here and now.¹⁵⁹ Prosperity preachers proclaim that God calls humans to a life of abundance and glory, not degradation and shame.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, God is happy when Christians prosper because he does not take delight in poverty.

They support 3 John 2 with other passages such as Psalm 1:3, the blessings and curses in Deut. 28—30, Psalm 84:11, etc. They argue that the atonement made by Jesus Christ was not only for the purpose of salvation from sin, but also from poverty and sickness. This belief is ‘proved’ with various texts such as Isaiah 53:4-5; Mark 8:16-17; 2 Corinthians 8:9.¹⁶¹ Referring to Gal. 3:13-14, it is also contended that poverty — emotional, financial, physical, or spiritual — is the curse of the law, while prosperity is the result of the atonement of Christ.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Young, “Prosperity Teaching in an African Context.”

¹⁵⁹ Folarin, “Contemporary State.”

¹⁶⁰ David Oyedepo, *Exploits in Ministry* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), 5-6.

¹⁶¹ Dada, “Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context,” 95-105.

¹⁶² Benson Idahosa, *I Choose to Change: The Scriptural Way to Success and Prosperity* (Crowborough: Highland Books, 1987), 58.

For example, Oyedepo of Winners Chapel International interprets 2 Cor. 8:9 as follows to prove that poverty is a sin:

- a. Sin brought material poverty.
- b. Atonement restores material blessings.
- c. The Christian that remains in material poverty is sinning against redemption.¹⁶³

Oyedepo emphasizes that redemption does not only cleanse humanity from sin, but it also restores them to dignity, health and wealth. According to him, poverty is a curse and it is self-afflicted, because it is a wilful act of defiance by a believer to the law of profusion.¹⁶⁴ He defends his opinion by stating that the curse of poverty was obviated on the cross. He adds that the death of Jesus Christ has redeemed humanity from the curse of the law so that the children of God can partake in the Abrahamic blessings.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, if the believer obeys God, the punishment of poverty would be alleviated.

Similarly, Joseph Oladapo states that material poverty manifests as a result of sin. However, the death of Christ paid for the sins of men and its consequences. Therefore, any Christian who does not realize and claim his material inheritance would remain poor.¹⁶⁶ It is, therefore, established that prosperity preachers consider poverty as a consequence of sin., hence, stimulating the belief that Jesus paid for sin and its consequences, including the effect of poverty.

¹⁶³ Folarin, "Contemporary State."

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

Aside poverty being allied as a curse and punishment for sin, it is also proclaimed that the cause of poverty is the mind-set of a person. According to Collins Owusu of the Living Praise Chapel, having a poor mind-set is the foundational cause of poverty.¹⁶⁷ Quoting Prov. 23:7 which states: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you”, Owusu reiterates that until a poverty mentality is healed, prosperity will not be in view.¹⁶⁸ It is, therefore, upheld for Christians to acquire “a dreamer’s” mentality, that is, painting positive pictures of the future.¹⁶⁹

The dreams should not be futile thoughts, but concrete portraits supported with biblical texts.¹⁷⁰ Martin Luther King Junior is used as a human example of a dreamer. He had a dream in which he saw racial discrimination in America ended. Although he was beaten and jailed, he held on and carried the dream of change. Abraham, Joseph and David are used as biblical examples of men with the dreamer’s mentality.¹⁷¹ Abraham was called by God to see far and a land was given to him. David dreamt of building a temple for God and it became a reality. Joseph had a dream of leadership and it was realized.

Oyedepo believes that whatever is too big for your mind, will also be too big for the hand.¹⁷² Therefore, Christians are beseeched by the prosperity teaching to display the attitude of positive mentality, which serves as a measure of saving humanity from the curse of poverty. Idahosa stated that the revelation of Paul in Romans offered a complete exposition of

¹⁶⁷ Collins Owusu, *Break the Yoke of Poverty* (Accra, Anointed Press, 2017), 24.

¹⁶⁸ Owusu, *Break the Yoke of Poverty*, 26.

¹⁶⁹ David Oyedepo, *Winning the War against Poverty* (Legos: Dominion Publishing House), 15-17.

¹⁷⁰ Oyedepo, *Winning the War against Poverty*.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

the central truths of Christianity (cf. 10:10). He believed that positive mentality and confession comes from the heart through the utterance by the mouth. How one uses the mouth determines the result or outcome of one's life.¹⁷³ According to Kenyon, a Christian's faith is measured by his/her thinking and confessions. Therefore, a person becomes what he/she confesses.¹⁷⁴

Hagin reiterates that a negative mentality denies the grace and ability to live the word of God. He re-emphasized that positive thinking and declaration fulfil God's plan and purpose for a person's life, which is the plan to be rich and not poor.¹⁷⁵ Charles Fill encouragingly explains that the Creator (God) had provided for the needs of his creatures and would not allow human minds to desire what is not possible. He further reveals that God provided a universal seed substance that responds with magical power to the active mind. Additionally, he explains that one needs to realize that God has provided the needs for man's daily life and if a person lacks anything, it is because he /she did not use the mind in making the right contact with the super mind and the cosmic ray that automatically flows from it.¹⁷⁶

The concept of the image of God in the creation account in Gen. 1:27, which states: "God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them", is one of the most quoted text to proof that "humans cannot be poor." For example, Huber argues: "since man is divine and one with God, by thinking you are

¹⁷³ Idahosa, *I choose to Change*, 73.

¹⁷⁴ Essek William Kenyon, *The Two Kinds of Faith, Faith's Secret Revealed* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, Inc., 1998), 66.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth Hagin, *Right and Wrong Thinking* (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications, 1985), 61-62.

¹⁷⁶ See, John Haller, *The History of New Thought: From Mind Cure to Positive Thinking and the Prosperity Gospel* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation Press 2012), 217.

one with God, you cannot be poor, because God cannot be poor. By faith we are thus made prosperous.”¹⁷⁷

As presented in the literature review, scholars disagree about the effects of the Prosperity Gospel on poverty alleviation. In the researcher’s personal opinion, prosperity preaching has affected the image of the poor in society as the poor are considered cursed, sinful and accused of possessing evil spirits. This has led to stigmatization against the poor as some Christians resist to associate themselves with the poor to prevent them from being ‘infected’ with the spirit of poverty. Agama opines that these perceptions about the poor has led some Christians not to give to the poor, as it is assumed that the poor will use what has been given (money, food, cloths, etc.) as a point of contact to destroy the wealth of the giver.¹⁷⁸ This perception hinders many from solidarity with the poor.

The prosperity view on poverty has led to various social injustices in society, such as the exploitation of the poor. In this instance, prosperity preachers exploit the poor by enforcing them to give to be blessed.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the general view of poverty popularized by the Prosperity Gospel affects the poor in society psychologically and mentally leading them to pursue wealth in an ungodly manner. Finally, it is noted that Prosperity Gospel focuses on the spiritual causes of poverty but fails to address the socio-economic causes of poverty, such as unemployment, effect of economic indicators, corruption etc., and, therefore, offers no realistic path in the alleviation of poverty in Ghana.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Haller, *The History of New Thought*, 217.

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Agama, *Poverty in Africa: The Case of the Prosperity Gospel* (Lagos: Unity Press, 2016), 81.

¹⁷⁹ Agama, *Poverty in Africa*, 83.

2.6 Prosperity Teaching on Wealth

Asamoah-Gyadu observes that prosperity theology teaches the combination of faith, positive speech and giving as measures for Christians to increase in material wealth.¹⁸⁰ The prosperity message is wealth-centred and reminds Christians of their right of blessings of health and wealth won by Christ through His atonement. The atonement of Jesus Christ has been widely discussed by scholars who have proposed various theories. However, scholars and Christians are unanimous in the view that the atonement of Jesus was aimed at enhancing the relationship between man and God.¹⁸¹ Dada observes that from the traditional belief that Christ's death was to remove the effects of sin, that is guilt and condemnation, however, a new emphasis has emerged.¹⁸² In fact, the theological matrix of the Prosperity Gospel is the motif that acquisition of wealth is part of the reasons for the atonement.

On this premises, Oyedepo asserts that wealth is part of the seven-fold redemptive heritage received by Christians through the atonement of Jesus. It means that Jesus was not only a channel of salvation but also riches.¹⁸³ He offers the following interpretation of 2 Cor.8:9: "When you are saved, you were redeemed from the plague of poverty, because your Father is very wealthy."¹⁸⁴ On these premises, he concludes that there are no houses in Heaven, no boy's quarters, no bungalows but only mansions, because Jesus said, "in my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you."¹⁸⁵ Prosperity preachers

¹⁸⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 202.

¹⁸¹ Folarin, "Contemporary State," 78.

¹⁸² Dada, "Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context."

¹⁸³ Oyedepo, *Winning the War against Poverty*, 52.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

believe that the statement by Jesus gives an idea of the riches a believer inherits from God through the atonement of Christ.

In reference to the same text, Adeboye considers the death of Jesus as vicarious. He proclaims that Christ died so that the Christian will live, was beaten for us to be healed, he became poor for us to be wealthy. He, therefore, concludes that if a person does not want the wealth that the poverty of Jesus purchased, then s/he must refuse the salvation his death has purchased. Similarly, when a person receives salvation through the death of Jesus, then s/he must receive the wealth that His poverty purchased.¹⁸⁶

On the Christian doctrine of the new covenant through the death of Jesus Christ, Oyedepo argues in his book *Possessing your Possession* that as part of the new covenant, believers ought to prosper. As the covenant is sealed by the death of Christ, all who believe in His message will along with the salvation of their souls obtain all good things in the world including wealth, health and success.¹⁸⁷ On this bases, Avanzini writes in *The Wealth of the World* that God will give the wealth of the ‘ungodly’ to Christians so they will rule the earth in the last days.¹⁸⁸

Secondly, the Prosperity Gospel teaches that God is the God of abundance and wealth. His nature and attributes overflow in riches, wealth, abundance and diversity. Since God is the God of abundance, His creatures must be rich in resources as they receive wealth from God as the source of riches. Prosperity preachers support this argument with Hag. 2:8 (“the silver is mine and the gold is mine says the LORD of hosts”) and Deut. 8:18 which states:

¹⁸⁶ Asonzeh Ukah, *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power: A Study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008), 81-84.

¹⁸⁷ David Oyedepo, *Possessing your Possession* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2006).

¹⁸⁸ John Avanzini, *Powerful Principles of Increase* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1989), 86.

“You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth; that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as at this day”.

According to Owusu, since humans are born into a universe full of wealth and riches, they are created and born for wealth. Therefore, every human being was born to be wealthy and must enjoy a wealthy relationship with God, with other humans and with the resources of the planet.¹⁸⁹ Wealth is considered as a natural human condition as it is the original plan of God for humanity. Adding his view, Joseph Osabutey emphasizes that because the God of wealth created humans, He has deposited in them the inner wisdom, power and possibility to produce wealth. Therefore, humans are specially designed for wealth creation. Hence, whatever a person conceives, God will help him/her achieve it. Osabutey summarizes his view on wealth by proclaiming that to be fully human is to be wealthy and successful.¹⁹⁰

Prosperity preachers describe the wealth possessed by many biblical characters as significant in their stories. Therefore, they often refer to biblical characters ‘blessed’ with wealth by God to enhance the faith of their followers. Owusu asserts that Adam who is considered as the earthly father of all humans bore the image of God; hence, he was placed in the garden of wealth and riches. Referring to Abraham, Owusu presents Abraham as the spiritual father of faith. He observes that Abraham had abundant wealth due to his exceptional faith. For this reason, Oyedepo defines Abraham as the father of wealth, the first person to exhibit faith and wealth and the first to be called wealthy. Referencing Gen. 13:2, he por-

¹⁸⁹ Owusu, *Break the Yoke of Poverty*, 75.

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Osabutey, *The Land of the Rich* (Accra: Love and Grace, 2017), 23-42.

trayed Abraham as very rich in livestock, money (silver and gold), employees, transportation (camels and donkeys), and land.¹⁹¹ Prosperity teachers view Abrahams wealth as the foundation for the wealth promised to the children of Israel and Christians.

Other biblical characters used as case study by prosperity proponents include Isaac the son of Abraham, who is credited with wealth to the Lord's blessings; Job who was blameless, upright and feared God; Saul and the kings that followed him, especially David that was called by Nathan 'a rich man.' Based on the examples of the above biblical characters, E.G White claims that God has entrusted men with wealth to bring glory to God. Therefore, Christians must pursue and accumulate wealth to proclaim the glory of God.¹⁹²

Though the Prosperity Gospel teaches the accumulation of wealth, it runs through a whole range of principles: positive confession leading to the sowing of seed.¹⁹³ It emphasizes that the covenant right of prosperity of the Christian depends upon the obedience to the basic lay down principles for prosperity. God identifies and blesses the Christians who faithfully keep the covenant by the sowing of seed.¹⁹⁴ The sowing of seed is the offering of money which is considered as seed sown for encouragement and hope by the believer.

Roberts explains that the doctrine of seed sowing is based on Luke 6:38:

We should make our giving of money as seed. Seed- money is thanking God in advance. It is like the Grace you say before a meal. It is an act of seed planting, an act of faith of expecting a return just as the farmer does at harvest time.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Oyedepo, *Possessing Your Possession*, 82.

¹⁹² See, Clarence Anderson, *The Christian's Pursuit, Accumulation, and Use of Wealth* (Washington: Adventist University Press 2003), 19.

¹⁹³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 401.

¹⁹⁴ Rimamsikwe Habila Kitaue and Hilary Chukwuka Achunike, "A Historical Discourse on Tithing and Seed Sowing in Some Nigerian Pentecostal Churches," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 18 (2013), 1-13.

¹⁹⁵ Oral Roberts, *Miracle of Seed Faith* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Abundant Life Publication, 1970), 30.

It basically means that whatever a Christian ‘sows’ is a seed offered to God that causes the believer to have a future expectation to receive from God. Roberts summarizes his view by claiming that a believer can overcome his/her lack by giving and expecting to receive back from the giving.¹⁹⁶

It is held that tithing, offering and seed sowing are not equivalent.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, Christopher Tetteh of the Bread of Life Church admonishes Christians to be careful when it comes to seed sowing, offering and tithing as tithes are considered to belong to God.¹⁹⁸ Hornby defines offering as something given to God as part of a religious worship. It is a “love gift” to God.¹⁹⁹

On the doctrine of tithing, Watkins and Watkins define tithing as the donation of the tenth part of a person’s income to the church.²⁰⁰ On a contrary, Rimamsikwe and Hilary quantify a tithe as the tenth percent of one’s increase, profit or earnings.²⁰¹ In their interpretation, payment of tithes and giving of offering predate the giving of the law. In Genesis 14:17-20, Abraham is reported to have paid his tithe to Melchidedek. Jacob imitated and ‘covenanted’ the tenth of all his proceeds to God (Gen. 28:22). In the Mosaic law, God declared as sacred the tenth of all produce, flocks and cattle which are to be offered to Him.²⁰² The

¹⁹⁶ Roberts, *Miracle of Seed Faith*, 35.

¹⁹⁷ C.E. Hummel, *The Prosperity Gospel* (Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 73.

¹⁹⁸ Christopher Tetteh, *Principles of Blessing* (Accra: Adom Press, 2010), 56.

¹⁹⁹ Albert Sidney Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 7th Edition (New Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.

²⁰⁰ Morris Watkins and Lois Watkins, *All Nations English Dictionary* (Katunayake, Sri Lanka: New Life Literature, 1992), 103.

²⁰¹ Rimamsikwe and Hilary, *A Historical Discourse*, 1-13.

²⁰² Ibid.

payment of tithes was enforced during the era of the kings. Whenever good kings who kept Israel in true worship reign, the practice of tithing was upheld.²⁰³

Rimamsikwe and Hilary understand the concept of ‘seed sowing’ to include tithes and offerings.²⁰⁴ Ibrahim observes:

To sow a seed is to donate money generously through the faithful payment of tithes and offerings to their ministers in order to reap the harvest in the future. Offering times is often called ‘blessing time’, with the exhortation that those who give bountifully will receive bountifully and those who give sparingly or refuse to give will face threatening curses. The more the seed, the more the harvest.²⁰⁵

Ibrahim adds that the concept of seed sowing in Christianity has presented the image of God as a multiplier.²⁰⁶

To conclude, the researcher recognized the positive element of ‘giving’. The conviction of money-offering as a form of ‘seed’ of the future economic blessing of God, has motivated Ghanaian Christians to donate generously to their churches. Some churches have accumulated wealth and as consequence engaged in social projects such as feeding the poor, support of the elderly, building of schools, hospitals and other array of social responsibilities. A side-product of the social responsibility of churches is the creation of job opportunities for their members, with the consequent reduction of unemployment rate in Ghana.

However, there are negative effects like exploitation of church’s members by unscrupulous ministers. Furthermore, emphasis on materialism and wealth can increase corruption and criminal practises. The view of wealth as proof of faith can affect the mentality of the rich

²⁰³ Rimamsikwe and Hilary, *A Historical Discourse*, 1-13.

²⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

in society by creating a sense of superiority that leads to various forms of social indiscrimination and injustice in society and in the churches.

2.7 Prosperity Theology by Prominent Ghanaian Preachers

In the history of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana, there are preachers who are considered as major proponents of this ‘gospel’ in the country. These include Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams, Mensah Otabil, and Dag Heward-Mills. Even though they belong to the same movement, they differ significantly in their doctrine. This section, therefore, analyses the prosperity theology and view of the above preachers.

2.7.1 Nicholas Duncan Williams (Action Chapel International)

Duncan-Williams was born on 12 May 1957 by E.K. Duncan-Williams and Florence Bruce. He is the General Overseer of Action Chapel International ministry and is considered the founder of the Charismatic Movement in Ghana.²⁰⁷ He is known for his extravagant lifestyle and dressing. Speaking at the first graduation ceremony of the Action Chapel International Bible College in Kumasi, Duncan-Williams classified himself as “an expensive Pastor.” He stated that he is so expensive that the perfume he uses cannot be found on the shelf of any shop in Ghana. He boasted that the rich people in his church could not show the kind of attire he wore, because they could not afford it. He defended his position by expatiating that the Creator of heavens and mankind was expensive, hence the kingdom of God and the streets of heaven are made with pure gold. He intimated: “...as a Christian, you should wear the best of clothing, drive expensive cars and live in comfortable houses

²⁰⁷ “Action Chapel International Ministry,” *Today Newspaper*, 11 April 2017.

so that the glory of God could be seen in your life, because the God you worship is expensive.”²⁰⁸ Duncan-Williams chastised Ghanaians for not celebrating wealth like the Nigerians and consider it as the reason why many rich Ghanaians hide their wealth. He asserted that every Ghanaian must succeed and pay taxes to the government.²⁰⁹

The theology of prosperity by Duncan-Williams is presented in his book *You Are Destined to Succeed*. Interpreting Gen. 1:29-30, Duncan-Williams emphasizes that God never planned for mankind to be poor, suffer sickness and to fail or feel defeated. In this manner he interprets the Bible by stating that, “the Word of God is a tree of life that produces riches, honour, promotion and joy.”²¹⁰ He observes that being created in the image of God refers to success. He quotes Casey Treat: “In all truth, God is the most successful Being in the universe. He is the only one who’s never had to cut back, lay people off, take out a loan or a lease and has never rented anything. God is successful.”²¹¹ Duncan-Williams argues that prosperity inevitably accrues from the inexorable application of spiritual laws. He further states: “God simply created His spiritual laws and freely gave them to everyone.” Everyone then has the choice to implement the laws of poverty or to implement God’s spiritual laws of prosperity.

²⁰⁸ N. Duncan-Williams, “I am an Expensive Pastor;” <http://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/showbiz/news/201111/77015.php> (accessed on 2/11/2018).

²⁰⁹ N. Duncan-Williams, “Nigerians Celebrate Wealth, Ghanaians Hide, Destroy It;” <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Nigerians-celebrate-wealth-Ghanaians-hide-destroy-it-Duncan-Williams-647582> (accessed on 2/11/2018).

²¹⁰ N. Duncan-Williams, *You are Destined to Succeed* (Accra: Action Faith 1990), 102.

²¹¹ Ibid., 72.

Duncan-Williams recalled how he grew up in an HMC which held the view diametrically opposed to God's Word. He highlighted that they preached a doctrine which can be summarized as "poverty promotes humility," a view that Duncan-Williams considers not true.

He added that:

The early missionaries erred tragically by not teaching Africans God's Word and the laws regarding prosperity through giving, sowing and reaping. This could be the reason why the missionaries were given all their resources by the church and Christians overseas, so they felt they could not preach the full counsel of God regarding prosperity like any other doctrine in the Bible.²¹²

Arguably, he states that "through his full Gospel many members of 'his flock' have become rich: therefore, society must provide the best for their leaders to show them forth as examples. He prayed that God help him to be a good and worthy example of the standards of God's Word."²¹³ He concludes his book by uttering that "it does not matter what you think: God's Word stands. I believe that God raised me as a leader and example to my generation about His goodness, mercy and prosperity."²¹⁴

Duncan-Williams began expressing his view on measures of poverty eradication in his sermon, "The Blessings of the Blessed", by stating that anyone who cares for the poor is blessed. He asserts that a person who cares for the poor is delivered by God in times of trouble, receives divine preservation and is kept alive by God. Such persons receive blessings to outsmart others and the Lord will be their doctor and nurse and they will not suffer from sickness.²¹⁵ However, quoting Prov. 28:27, Duncan-Williams specifies that: "it is a curse to be blessed and not to help in the propagation of Gospel by not giving to the

²¹² Duncan-Williams, *You are Destined to Succeed*, 154.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid 156.

²¹⁵ Nicholas Duncan-Williams, "The Blessings of the Blessed," Sermon preached in Action Chapel International on 11/3/2018. Recorded version on CD.

church”. He states that there are some people in the church who are wicked and selfish and do not want to give. There are others who are also afraid to give because they do not want people to reveal their richness. He exhorts the members by proclaiming that God wants His riches and blessings to be seen, so He can be glorified. In a sub-topic of his sermon, Duncan-Williams exhorted the church on the true way to give to the poor and how to eliminate poverty in the world.²¹⁶ Introducing the section, he lists some measures his church is taking to help the poor in the society. These include awarding of scholarships, adopting and supporting children in the orphanage, drilling of boreholes for communities that had the challenge of safe drinking water, and the building of classrooms for students studying under trees. However, he reveals that there are no blessings in giving to the poor. He defends his argument by stating that blessings come from giving to support the Gospel, sowing into higher mantles and fulfilling, observing and following divine protocol.²¹⁷

Quoting Luke 7:22, he indicates that the only biblical solution to poverty is the Gospel. He continues by stressing that it does not matter the economic measures the United Nations implement and the ideas they bring to the table; they cannot solve the challenge of poverty because, according to the Bible, poverty is a spirit, a disease, an epidemic and a curse.²¹⁸ He believes that this is the reason why foreign aid could not change the condition of Africa, because “poverty is a spirit, and only the Gospel has the mandate and authorization to uproot and totally eradicate poverty out of society.” He, therefore, advocates to the members of his church that the best way of helping the poor is by supporting the Gospel.

²¹⁶ Duncan-Williams, “The Blessings of the Blessed.”

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ He made this statement without quoting any biblical texts to justify his claim.

Giving several examples, he narrates that “when it is your birthday and you cook and eat with orphans and give them your cloths, you are not transforming the poor but sympathizing with them. Transformation comes through the Gospel, not by giving to the poor”. He further highlights that the way to support the poor is by giving to the church through offerings, tithes and vows. The money accumulated by the church will then be used to preach the Gospel and the poor will share in the “business of the Kingdom of God” as the Gospel will reveals the path to wealth to the poor. Then, Duncan-Williams encourages his members to give towards a crusade been organized in Sierra Leone to buy plane tickets, books hotels and renting of cars.²¹⁹

The second method of giving to the poor according to Duncan-Williams is by giving to the carriers of the Gospel, the Preachers of the Gospel. Using the church in Philippi and their giving to Paul as an example, he quoted Phil. 4:1 and stated that it was not because Paul desired a gift from the community and not because he was in want; “Paul wanted the church in Philippi to follow a protocol which will make them wealthy.” Duncan-Williams considers this type of ‘protocol’ as the system where the lesser will be blessed with wealth by giving to the greater. He states: “If you do not give to the people who are blessed, you will never be blessed”.

He cautions his church that they can never tap into his anointing with empty handshakes. However, they can only be blessed with wealth and riches, when they sow into his anointing and that will authorize him to confer blessings upon their lives. He, further, announces that everyone has an account in Heaven and for the account to be credited, the members

²¹⁹ Duncan-Williams, “The Blessings of the Blessed.”

must give to him, the carrier of the Gospel; he then will send an e-mail or a text message to Heaven for their account to be credited. He further highlights that their heavenly account cannot be credited by giving to the poor.²²⁰

He concludes his sermon by elaborating that a person cannot be blessed if s/he does not give “an expensive offering”. Less expensive offerings do not move God to bless a person to be prosperous. He used the sinful woman portrayed in Luke 7:36-50 as an example, claiming that the perfume used by the woman in anointing Jesus may be value \$33,000 in contemporary currency.

The researcher observes that the doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel by Duncan-Williams is not biblical, and it is an example of ‘extortion’ by prosperity preachers from the poor. It is noted that his intent is not about giving to the poor but vis versa. Though he refers to himself as a rich and expensive Pastor, his focus is on adding to his wealth by extracting from the little owned by the poor. His teaching on the right way of giving to the poor by giving to the preachers of the Gospel is an approach the researcher considers as ‘heresy’ as it contradicts the biblical teaching of helping the poor in society (cf. Luke 3:10-11; 18:18-22).

2.7.2 Dag Heward-Mills (Lighthouse Chapel International [LCI])

Dag Heward-Mills was born on the 14th of May 1963 to a Swiss mother, Elizabeth and a Ghanaian father Nathaniel Heward-Mills in the United Kingdom. When Dag Heward-Mills enrolled into University of Ghana Medical School in October 1982, he began a fel-

²²⁰ Duncan-Williams, “The Blessings of the Blessed.”

lowship which later became a branch of Calvary Road Incorporated (CRI), currently Harvest Chapel International. Heward-Mills started a fellowship in Korle-Bu known as the Korle-Bu Christian Centre (KCC), which was later transformed into a church and renamed as Lighthouse Chapel International in December 1989. He has since trained more than 1,870 pastors and 4783 lay ministers worldwide and sent over 485 missionaries into other towns and cities within Africa, Europe, and Asia²²¹.

In his book, *Name it, Claim it, Take it*, Heward-Mills introduces a modality of reading the Scripture, focusing on the concept of 'faith.' He argues that believers can exercise faith to receive spiritual, physical, financial and material breakthroughs. For him, faith is the reason for prosperity, miracles, victories and answers to prayers. Quoting from Heb. 10:38, he explains that God is not interested in Christians who do not walk in faith. Many people, according to him, read patience, gentleness, holiness into Heb. 10:38, and ignores the faith aspect.²²² He admits that patience plays a vital role in the life of believers. However, the faith component which is equally important should not be ignored.

In his submission, the ability to 'claim' or 'possess' requires faith: without faith Christians cannot receive anything from God. Abraham was considered the righteous man due to his faith in God. When natural circumstances indicated otherwise, Abraham believed El' Shaddai was capable of giving him a child, even in his old age.

Heward-Mills proposes three hermeneutical steps believers could follow to access wealth, success, health and progress.

²²¹ Albert Toss Mills-Odoi, "The Doctrine of Salvation in the Lighthouse Chapel International" (MDiv Thesis, Trinity Theological Seminary, 2008), 1.

²²² Dag Heward-Mills, *Name it, Claim it, Take it* (Wellington: Lux Verbi BM, 2008), 2.

A. 'Name it'

The author elaborates that whatever believers need from God, it must be verbally mentioned and will be received. People blame God for permitting negative natural occurrences like earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, volcano on earth. He argues that if God is the creator of the universe and his wonderful deeds are revealed in creation, why then should people attribute evil things like shipwreck, famine, epidemic etc. to him and not the devil?²²³ The question that arises is what does the devil use his time for? God told Abraham he is El Shaddai: implying he has within his capacity to counteract physical and metaphysical forces that may attempt to inhibit his purposes and provide Abraham with a child, even when he was infertile.²²⁴

In the same vein, God bestows long-life, success, protection, promotion and affluence on Christians who request them by faith. God sent Christ as a propitiation, which signifies God's good intentions for his children, the Christians. It also suggests that God never wants Christians to suffer frustration, intimidation, death, or failures, but rather enjoy perpetual life and prosperity.²²⁵

Satan, according to Heward-Mills, is the one who sets limitations and prevents Christians from being inundated with fortune. Satan often instigates barriers against Christians, essentially against their wellbeing and socio-economic advancement. Yet, Christians can confidently name, claim, and take what belong to them through faith. Unfortunately, Christians have been tutored to believe commitment is all about holiness, righteousness, faithfulness to God and humanity; it does not involve richness or wellbeing. This conception is

²²³ Heward-Mills, *Name it, Claim it, Take it*, 26.

²²⁴ Ibid., 26.

²²⁵ Ibid

unbiblical, since God has bountifully reserved numerous blessing for all those who entrust their faith in him.²²⁶ Holy, sanctification and righteous living are important, but faith transcends them and Christians who desire visible manifestation of God in their lives must first exercise their faith.

B. 'Claim it'

Claim denotes making declarations. The believer who needs something from God must declare or confess it by faith in order to attain it physically. Heward-Mills presented four levels of confession through which the believer can have what s/he prays for.

First, the believer must confess to the Father; thus, the believer's admission on daily basis to the Heavenly Father for sins committed. Second, confession of faults to friends: besides the Father, one must speak to the neighbour about issues of conflict or misunderstanding for resolution. The third step is the confession in Christ for salvation: Genuine repentance from sin that brings salvation in Christ and, finally the confession of faith.

Heward-Mills indicates the word faith is derived from the Greek origin *ὁμολογία*.²²⁷ The usage of the word in Heb. 10:23, symbolizes confession that speaks of faith in Christ. It expresses the authority Christians possess through faith. Thus, the confession that Christ died and was resurrected, which is a confession of the faith that empowers believers to name, claim as well as bring into reality whatever has been declared or mentioned through faith.²²⁸

²²⁶ Heward-Mills, *Name it, Claim it, Take it*, 29.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

C. 'Take it'

According to him, 'take it' is the act of acting on God's word by faith in order to possess what you have declared. This aspect of faith demands real strength and courage. Using Josh. 1:8, the writer argues that God instructed Joshua to be strong, courageous and meditate on his word.²²⁹ Meditation and obedience to God's word enabled Joshua to 'name' 'claim' and 'possess' the promised land. Due to this fact, believers who have named and claimed must be obedient to the word of God that instructs them to 'tithe' before any 'take' could be realised. This is because, without tithing, offering, and giving, the confession of prosperity cannot be operative.²³⁰ Furthering his principles, he asserts that after naming and claiming fortunes, health, properties, etc., God must guarantee the faith level of the believer in relation to tithing in order to effectuate his promises.

In addition, another alternative way that precipitates God to respond to the naming, claiming prayers of believers is the 'seed' principle. When the seed is not sown, then it presupposes nothing has been planted and God cannot supernaturally release his favour on believers. He elucidates that when a farmer plants, the rain allows it to grow and yield more fruits. When believers refuse to tithe, the rain that God brings will not produce the required fruits of prosperity because seeds have not been cultivated.²³¹

Advocating from an excerpt of his work, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians Can Become Rich*, Heward-Mills explains that tithing embodies the principles of wealth creation and miracle of prosperity.²³² Comparing the concepts and

²²⁹ Heward-Mills, *Name it, Claim it, Take it*, 55.

²³⁰ Ibid., 56

²³¹ Ibid., 55.

²³² Dag Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians Can Become Rich* (Wellington: Lux Verbi. BM, 2010).

practices of tithing by contemporary Christians and Jewish community, he states that Jews have augmented their wealth beyond the ordinary person in all communities around the world, because of their approach to tithing. Christians will flourish in wealth when they become habitual tithers.²³³ He narrates that prosperity constitutes an act of ‘sowing a seed’ and ‘harvesting’ the returns in the future. Refusal from paying tithes exempts Christians from the basic principles of sowing and reaping. Christians’ inability to pay tithes harm their finances; when they avoid tithing, they extricate themselves from the foundational and functional principles of success and divine blessings.²³⁴ Heward-Mills underlines that tithing attracts assorted blessings, favours, and opportunities because it is scriptural.

Heward -Mills doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel may be influenced by Duncan-Williams; however, his doctrine of prosperity is much centred on the loyalty of the members to the Church and to him. In this sense, members of his church display their loyalty through their giving to him and the church. The researcher considers the prosperity principle of Heward-Mills as lacking a realistic and economic path for the attainment of wealth and therefore, may not serve as a reliable approach in solving the problem of poverty in the wider economic sense. Furthermore, his focus on ‘loyalty,’ with consequent risk of ‘personality-cult,’ seems very far from a Christ-like style of leadership, as portrayed in the Gospels.

2.7.3 Mensah Otobil (International Central Gospel Church)

Mensah Otobil, a former Anglican, established the International Central Gospel Church in February 1984. In its earliest days, the International Central Gospel Church was characterized by its dynamic evangelism: those attending the second service would conduct a

²³³ Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor*, 99-105.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

coordinated evangelism programme beforehand, while those attending the first service would conduct a similar exercise afterwards. Through such methods, Otabil claims that the church in April 1987 increased from 700 to 1500 members in only one week.²³⁵ Today, the International Central Gospel Church is considered one of the biggest charismatic churches in Ghana

Gifford presents Otabil as a charismatic leader very different from his contemporary first-generation neo-Pentecostal preachers in Ghana. Whereas many charismatic preachers focus only on the principles of sowing and reaping, faith and prayer as ways to make wealth, Otabil's 'brand' of prosperity theology is a combination of Black liberation theology, personal responsibility, education and hard work.²³⁶ According to Otabil, members of the church must not only be trained to become religious leaders, but must also be formed to be at the forefront of businesses and politics. This conviction reflects in the church's slogan: "Raising leaders, shaping vision and influencing society through Christ".

His business and political ideologies have led many to classify him as motivational speaker; however, his sermons reveal his identity as a prosperity preacher. He is a strong believer in a brand of Prosperity Gospel that affirms the Bible as a 'contract' between God and man in which both sides are required to fulfil their commitments. He promotes the notion that God's blessings for the Christian are not only spiritual but also economic; however, to materialize them, it requires hard work on the part of the Christians. This is an area of departure of Otabil's doctrine from other prosperity preachers such as Duncan-Williams

²³⁵ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Virginia: Indiana University Press, 1998), 80.

²³⁶ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 80.

and Heward-Mills, who emphasizes on giving as the sole channel of releasing God's blessings.

In his book *Enjoying the Blessings of Abraham*, Otabil proclaims that a Christian needs the blessings of Abraham to operate in his/her life and live by divine provision. According to him, the natural man is limited but God is unlimited; therefore, He will bring divine provision to the way of Christians to meet their needs. He asserts that it is simply not possible for a person that operates under the blessings of Abraham to be poor.²³⁷ He builds his argument on the standard biblical texts of the prosperity Gospel: Gen 22:13-14; Gen 26:12-24; Dt 28:15-22; Gal 3:13-14.

Another approach by Otabil in the proclamation of prosperity is his application of the Black theology, which basically is directed on the liberation of the black race from poverty. In his book *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia: A Biblical Revelation on God's Purpose for the Black Race*, Otabil expresses the conviction that the Bible has been interpreted by the whites and asked the question whether God ever used the black people and whether the blacks are on the agenda of God.

He confronts the question: "Is the Black race cursed?" (Gen 9:25). He emphatically answers: "No", and reveals that even Ham was blessed (Gen 9:1).²³⁸ According to Otabil, Num. 23: 20 shows that such a blessing cannot be reversed. He observes that Cush is the father of the black race and he was never cursed, and he adds: "Cush the son of Ham was never cursed; he received a double blessing as firstborn."²³⁹ He defends his argument by

²³⁷ Mensah Otabil, *Enjoying the Blessings of Abraham* (Accra: Alta International, 1992), 19-20.

²³⁸ Mensah Otabil, *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia: A Biblical Revelation on God's Purpose for the Black Race* (Accra: Alta International, 1992), 18.

²³⁹ Otabil, *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia*, 38.

emphasizing that the Cushites were the rulers of the world after the flood; Nimrod (a black man) was the first political leader and motivator mentioned after the flood.²⁴⁰ The leadership of the black race after the flood depicts their wealth. It shows the prosperity and blessings of blacks.

Otabil admits that Abraham's Cushite children were disinherited but shows how they were subsequently restored to their inheritance. One of them was Jethro who he considers as a priest before Aaron. Otabil views Jethro as the person who taught Moses 'leadership,' all that he needed to know to lead the Israelites from Egypt. For example, Otabil considers Jethro the law-giver to Moses,²⁴¹ and he further states that it was Jethro who invented grass root organization: "When you understand that Jethro was of the Cushites or black race then it makes nonsense of the assumption that black people cannot govern themselves."²⁴² He, therefore, thinks that the nation of Israel, and for that matter all nations, owe this black priest an honour for being the vessel through whom principles of local administration were established. Furthermore, Otabil believes that Hobab, Jethro's son, by acting as a scout for Israel, won back their inheritance for Abraham's Cushite children (Num. 10:32).²⁴³ The inheritance of the black race is an inheritance of wealth and prosperity which has been transferred to the current generation.

He notes that the New Testament equally shows prosperous blacks in key roles. The Magi were blacks (Matt 2:1-12); the value of gold, frankincense and myrrh they presented to Jesus signifies that they were rich and prosperous men. He also observes that the first to

²⁴⁰ Otabil, *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia*, 39.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 48-49.

²⁴² Ibid., 49.

²⁴³ Ibid, 51.

hear the Gospel was the Ethiopian Eunuch (Act 8:26-40). The Eunuch was a man of power, the chief treasurer of a kingdom wealthy from its iron smelting, gold mining and trading position. He was, therefore, a wealthy man. From the above background, Otabil considers the black race to be blessed; hence, it must prosper physically and spiritually.

In addition, as a Prosperity Gospel adherent, Otabil initiated a 20-year development plan and launched it in the year 2014 as a blueprint for igniting a savings culture among his church members. It is a plan for the accumulation of wealth, improvement of the social status and enhancement of the physical well-being of ICGC members. Though the development plan is primarily a personal development template for the members, it also has aspects which deal with wealth redistribution, such as supporting charity, especially church-based ones.

The researcher noted that the prosperity theology of Otabil eliminates the ‘automatism’ of faith by naming and claiming. His teachings on prosperity focuses on the human role in the acquisition of wealth. It includes hard work, investment, development of business ideas and the ‘sowing of seed’. Otabil considers the sowing of seed as a base capital to start a business, talent, money, time, etc, which could be developed to acquire wealth.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the content of the Prosperity Gospel by presenting its origin in the USA and its subsequent influence in Africa, especially in Ghana. It is noted that a common influence by the American preachers on Ghanaian neo- Pentecostal leaders is the stress on acquiring abundant wealth for God’s work and His servants. Similarly, it is observed that the Prosperity Gospel refers to the situation or scenario in which the Gospel is preached in a fashion of material gain. This raises the question of the authenticity of the

message preached by prosperity preachers as they seem to interpret the text to suit their message. Some prosperity preachers are even said to misinterpret the text for their personal gain.²⁴⁴

The leaders of the Prosperity Gospel emphasize offering, tithing, seed sowing and hard work as principles requisite for prosperity. The research reveals that in their teaching the key is the application of God's promise and how it could be applied in the life of the Christians today. Hence, the assertion that the Prosperity Gospel is integral to the corporate identity of neo- Pentecostalism in Ghana.

From the data collected, for example the sermon preached by Duncan-Williams on the *Blessings of the Blessed*, the researcher concludes that the prosperity theology is sometimes being used as a tool by preachers to amass wealth for themselves at the expense of their members. Prosperity preachers in this instance are characterized by greed and selfishness, as they use various schemes to extract money from church members with the hope of enjoying wealth.²⁴⁵

From the research it is also noted that the Prosperity Gospel offers no realistic economic path to poverty alleviation in the lives of Christians, with the exception of the prosperity theology propagated by Otabil, who offers economic guidance to his members on how to attain wealth through hard work, planning and saving attitude.

Finally, prosperity preachers manifest a lack of awareness of the social causes of poverty, such as political corruption, social oppression, injustice, climate change, nepotism, etc. As

²⁴⁴ Ayawa Odugu, "The Message of the Faith Gospel and Its Effects on the Socioeconomic Development of Nigeria", www.religion/ur-nigeria.com (accessed on 10th September 2018).

²⁴⁵ Odugu, "The Message of the Faith Gospel."

many scholars have emphasized, the Prosperity Gospel silences consciences because it does not educate to speak for those who have no voice, to be responsible for the destiny of the nation, and to denounce injustice.²⁴⁶ Richards sums up this position by stating that the Prosperity Gospel is politically irrelevant.²⁴⁷

Considering the message of the prosperity theology and its connection to scripture, it is imperative to explore the biblical underpinning of wealth and poverty. Hence, the next chapter, therefore, analyses the teachings of the Gospel of Luke on the theme of wealth and poverty.

²⁴⁶ “On this evidence, Pentecostal spirituality offers no realistic path out of the economic crisis in Africa. To its identified critical blind spots – faux individuation, ethical sloppiness, susceptibility of being a regulatory valve for the state, neglect of structural barriers to upward mobility – may be added the fact that it has developed no cogent political economy to speak of. The Prosperity Gospel has no lever – historical or philosophical – on which it might be grounded.” Obadare, “Raising Righteous Billionaires,” 8.

²⁴⁷ W. Richards, “An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina,” *Journal of Asia Mission* 7, no. 1 (2005): 85-106.

CHAPTER THREE

WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

3.1 Introduction

The present chapter examines the *logia* of Jesus on wealth and poverty in the Lukan Gospel. It begins with the overview of the Lukan Gospel, considering the authorship, date and the target audience of the Lukan narrative, to disclose the socioeconomic and cultural settings of the Lukan community.

It further explores the definition and narrative usage of wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel before dealing with an exegetical study of Luke 16:1-31.

3.2 Authorship of the Gospel of Luke

There are two opinions in relation to the authorship of the third Gospel. The first is the critical view which considers the Gospel of Luke as having an anonymous author. Such adherers suggest that the anonymous author was not an eyewitness; hence, he wrote his narrative adopting existing written sources, such as a travelogue by an eyewitness.

Basing their argument on the letter to Philemon, they opine that Paul merely includes Luke's name among his co-workers. Though 2 Timothy 4:11 mentions the name of Luke and refers to him as being "with me", scholars of the critical view discredit the testimony of 2 Timothy because it is a deutero-pauline letter.

The second line of argument, which is the Traditional view, proposes that Luke, physician and fellow missionary of Paul wrote the narrative under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁸

They base their argument on internal and external evidence.

The first internal evidence is the unity of the Gospel and Acts.²⁴⁹ According to Plessis the ‘we’ passages in Acts (cf. 16:10-17; 20:5; 21-18; 27:1-26) indicate that the author was a travel companion of the Apostle Paul.²⁵⁰ Price emphasizes that the most natural explanation of the transitions from the third to first person plural is the presence of the narrator during those phases of his story, which he consequently records in the first person.²⁵¹ Similarly, Hinson and Kroll emphasize that a survey of the location of Paul’s close associates suggests that only one individual could have authored the passages which record these experiences. Timothy was with those awaiting Paul’s arrival at Troas (Acts 20:4-6), and neither Titus nor Silas was with Paul on the journey to Rome. Thus, the only close associate that best describes the self-reference in the ‘we’ passages of Acts is Luke.²⁵²

However, there are arguments against using the ‘we’ passages as evidence. Robbins claims that the first-person plural was a common literary device used to narrate sea-voyages and not an evidence of the author’s participation.²⁵³ Nonetheless, there are two key weaknesses in Robbins’ theory. Firstly, not all sea-voyage accounts adopted this literary device (Acts

²⁴⁸ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House), 4.

²⁴⁹ It is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written by the same person.

²⁵⁰ Isaak Du Plessis, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction and Theology, Guide to New Testament* (Halfway House: Orion Publishers), 52.

²⁵¹ Christopher Price, *Discussion on the Genre, Historicity, Date and Authorship of the Acts of the Apostles*, www.academia.edu (accessed on 15 December, 2018).

²⁵² Edward Hindson and Michael Kroll, *The KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers).

²⁵³ See, Price, *Discussion on the Genre*.

13:4-5, 17:14-15),²⁵⁴ and secondly, the ‘we’ passages in Acts begin when Paul was on land in Philippi, not while at sea (Acts 16:10-17).²⁵⁵

The second evidence available for the authorship of Luke is the external evidences, namely the writings of the Church Fathers in the first centuries of the Christian era.²⁵⁶ The oldest canonical list of New Testament writings, known as Muratorian Canon (170-200 CE), and the early Church Fathers, for instance Irenaeus (180 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (155-215 CE), all concur on Lukan authorship. Other ancient authorities such as Eusebius and Jerome supported Luke’s authorship.²⁵⁷ From the above internal and external evidence, the researcher assents to the Traditional view, hence considering Luke as the author of the third Gospel.

From the Lukan narrative, we can deduct some information about the author. Luke was probably a second-generation Christian from Antioch. Scholars, such as Kummel, assume that Luke was a Gentile, grounding their assumption on the fact that he seems to have little knowledge of the geography of Palestine, and avoids sematic expressions.²⁵⁸ Moreover, Utley suggests that he writes the most grammatically correct koine Greek of all the New Testament authors leading many scholars to presume that Greek was his mother tongue.²⁵⁹ In addition, scholars, such as Bart Koet and Gregory Sterling, suggest that the theology of Luke and Acts points to a gentile Christian writing to a gentile community. They conclude

²⁵⁴ Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts: The Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 312-334.

²⁵⁵ Robert Stein, *Luke*. The New American Commentary, 24 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 23.

²⁵⁶ Thomas Constable, “Notes on Luke,” www.soniclight.com (accessed on 20th December, 2018).

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 149.

²⁵⁹ Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (1996); www.freebiblecommentary.org (accessed from on 20th December 2018).

that it is plausible, however, that the Lukan community was made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians, as the narrative is rooted on a gentile mission.

3.3 Date of Writing

There has been debates relating to the date of writing. Conservative and evangelical researchers such as Carson,²⁶⁰ Robinson and Geldenhuys²⁶¹ suggest an early data, prior to 60CE. They emphasize that the collection of data of the content of the Gospel of Luke, and the abrupt ending of Acts with Paul's trial in 62 CE indicates that the Gospel of Luke was written early. Other authors propose the 60s CE as the date of authorship of the Lukan Gospel: for example, scholars such as Morris²⁶² and Esler²⁶³ propose 63 CE, immediately before Paul's death in 64 CE.

The second group proposes a later date between 70-90 CE. Their proposal is motivated by the argument that in Luke 21:20, the author made reference to the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE). Plessis,²⁶⁴ who regards Luke 21:20 as *vaticinium ex eventu*, places the writing of Luke after 70 CE. Scholars such as Kummel²⁶⁵ and Maddox²⁶⁶ prefer a date between 75-85 CE.

²⁶⁰ Donald Carson, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 16.

²⁶¹ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 79.

²⁶² Leon Morris, *Luke*. New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 22.

²⁶³ Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivation of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27.

²⁶⁴ Plessis, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 156.

²⁶⁵ Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 173.

²⁶⁶ Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 9.

A third group of scholars, namely O'Neal²⁶⁷ and Knox²⁶⁸ has argued for a second century date. The date has been suggested on the grounds that Luke knew of and consulted Josephus' *Antiquities* (published about 94 CE). They assume, for example, that when Luke referred to Lysanias as Tetrarch of Abilene (3:1-2), he depends on Josephus.

The researcher follows the commonly held date of 85-90 CE, as the arguments in favour of the 80's and 90's outweighs the arguments for an early or later date. The date of authorship of Luke is relevant for the study as it gives information about the audience and the socioeconomic situation within the period.

3.4 Audience

The Gospel of Luke was addressed to Theophilus (1:3). It has been suggested that since Theophilus means 'lover' of God', the name may not refer to an 'actual' person, but to a metaphorical or fictional one.²⁶⁹ However, it is possible that Theophilus was a 'real' person. According to Black, he was probably a Gentile Christian and a person of high social class as the description 'most excellent' is a polite form of address. Plessis suggests that although Theophilus is the named recipient and certainly an intended reader, Luke also may be writing for a much larger audience, which may predominantly be Gentile.²⁷⁰

Plessis follows Black's view by explaining that due to his audience, Luke avoided Semitic expressions, such as 'rabbi' and 'hosanna' and preferred the term 'lawyer' rather than the

²⁶⁷ James O'Neal, *The Theology of Acts* (London: SPCK, 1970), 64.

²⁶⁸ John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 142.

²⁶⁹ Plessis, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 154.

²⁷⁰ Matthew Black, *Luke* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 92.

Jewish 'scribe' (Lk 10:25; 11:52).²⁷¹ However, there is still an open debate about the audience of Luke's Gospel; Jewish, Gentile, or mixed. Brown, for example, suggests that Luke may be addressing the churches founded by Paul.²⁷²

The emphasis of Luke on poverty and wealth was probably an answer to the economic tension which characterized his community. Stegemann and Stegemann suggest that the vast majority of the community of Luke lived on the fine line between hunger and assurance of subsistence.²⁷³ However, they add that some of the population were wealthy, owned land and engaged in trade and merchandise.²⁷⁴ In a similar trend, Denis Lawson suggests that the community of Luke was composed mainly of relatively wealthy merchant class; due to the introduction of a stable currency (gold, silver and copper coins were minted) money was easier recycled.²⁷⁵

To sum up, the tensions addressed by Luke were not just 'religious' between Jews and Gentiles; they were also socio-economic caused by the disparity between wealth and poverty. The differences in class led to table tension which flared up at table fellowships.²⁷⁶ Probably for this reason, the Lukan narrative gives significant attention to the theme of poverty and wealth, possessions and renunciation of possessions, communal sharing and social obligation.

²⁷¹ Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 161.

²⁷² Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 265.

²⁷³ Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 189-190.

²⁷⁴ Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 189-190.

²⁷⁵ Denis Lawson, *The Socioeconomic Community of Luke* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1998), 45.

²⁷⁶ Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 187.

3.5 Semantic Analysis of Poverty and Wealth in Luke

This section discusses the vocabulary of poverty and wealth in the Lukan Gospel.

3.5.1 Narrative Usage of Πτωχός in the Gospel of Luke

The term ‘poor’ (πτωχός) occurs ten times in the third Gospel: 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13; 14:21; 16:20,22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3. Luke uses the word πτωχός in various forms. It includes the usage of πτωχός in its literal form — to indicate the underprivileged, the outcast — and its spiritual usage. The following section analyses the different use of the word ‘πτωχός’ in the third Gospel.

A. Πτωχός in its Literal Form

Some passages in the Lukan narrative use πτωχός in its literal form, to indicate basically a beggar, someone who depends on the help of others for living. For example, in Luke 16:20,22; 18:22; 19:8 and 21:3, the πτωχοί represents those who lack and are in need. It shows a state of distress, and the need to help the person in distress.²⁷⁷

In the narrative of the young ruler (18:18-23), the expression ‘poor’ is used as a call to help the needy. In the Nazareth episode (4:16-30) where Jesus quoting Isa 61:1 refers to himself as being sent to evangelize the ‘poor,’ the direct reference to the severe famine at the time of the prophet Elijah (4:25-26) has been interpreted by Plummer as a description of the poor as those who experience hunger.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, ABC (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1986), 2:121.

²⁷⁸ Alfred Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburg: T.T. Clark Ltd., 1977).

The usage of πτωχοί in the Lukan beatitude (6:20), unlike the parallel of Matt. 5:3, permits only the literal and economic interpretation, especially in view of the second beatitude (6:21) which stands in apposition to the first, limiting it to the hungry or those in need.²⁷⁹

A further example is the narrative of Lazarus, described as πτωχός (Lk 16:20-21). The meaning of the term is emphasized by the vivid portrayal of his status: he was laid (ἐβέβλητο) at the πυλῶνα (porch or gateway) of the rich man, which indicates his need for a shelter. He was also εἰλκωμένος (covered with sores) and, therefore, in need of medical attention or dressing. Furthermore, Lazarus pathetically desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The verb ἐπιθυμῶν (desire) in the present tense indicates a constant state of hunger.

In a similar view, the word πτωχός is used in 14:13 and 14:21 which state:

καὶ παραγενόμενος ὁ δοῦλος ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα. τότε ὀργισθεὶς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ· ἔξελθε ταχέως εἰς τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως καὶ τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπείρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς εἰσάγαγε ὧδε.

These texts give account of whom to invite to a feast and banquet. In both instances the poor are mentioned. The meal and the banquet imply the materialistic motif of food and wealth which the needy lack and hence, they are unable to pay back.

Finally, in the narrative of the poor widow who offered two mites in 21:3 the term πτωχή, qualified with the phrase πάντων ἔβαλεν reveals the economic status of the widow and her extreme generosity: she has virtually nothing and she offered all she had.

²⁷⁹ Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*.

B. Πτωχος in Spiritual Terms

Unlike the above texts, the πτωχοί in the context of 4:18 and 7:22 are the receivers of the Gospel and the kingdom. According to Fitzmyer, the original Hebrew text (Isa. 61:1) translated by Luke in 4:18 states “to announce good news to the poor he sent me.”²⁸⁰

It implies that the term ‘poor’ refers to the audience to whom Jesus has been sent, in this instance, the receivers of his message. A similar nuance can be found in 7:22: “Go tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news proclaimed to them.”²⁸¹

Seccombe regards the word ‘poor’ in the Lukan narrative as a soteriological term, characterizing Israel in its great needs of salvation.²⁸² He maintains that Luke was influenced by the book of Isaiah in the writing of his Gospel. He asserts that Luke does not only quote from it extensively, but he has also adopted its theological categories (4:8).²⁸³ He argues that in Isaiah 49:13, the poor are explicitly identified with the nation returning from captivity. He further acknowledges the influence of the Psalter, where the salvation of the poor is identified with the salvation of Israel.

Seccombe traces the stream of the writings during the inter-testamental periods such as Psalms of Sol 10:6, and shows the knowledge of idea that the ‘poor’ are the heirs of Israel’s salvation.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, ABC (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 1:532.

²⁸¹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 532.

²⁸² David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz: A. Fuchs, 1983), 19.

²⁸³ Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 19.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Luke's use of 'poor' is linked with the term עָנִי – עֲנִי, the most frequent term utilized in the prophetic literature (25 times) to portray the oppressed, humiliated, violated in their humanity and deprived of their legal rights (cf. Isa 3:15; Ezek 18:12; Amos 8:4). After the exile, especially in the Psalms, the term עֲנִיִּים became synonymous with the humble, the spiritually poor, those open to the salvation of God.

Adding to the argument of Seccombe, Kvalbein suggests that the book of Psalms is the official prayer book of the Israelites: when praying, they describe themselves as 'poor and needy', they do not refer to their economic status, but their helplessness and need of God's intervention.²⁸⁵

C. Underprivileged and Outcast

Other scholars, such as Green, tend to recognize the Lukan poor as a group of underprivileged and outcast. These include sinners, women, children, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors, categories loved by Jesus and often at the centre of his ministry. Green interprets the interest of Jesus towards them as 'natural sympathy' and a sign of his universalism.²⁸⁶

Green considers the subject of poverty and wealth as an issue of power, privilege and social status. He, therefore, amplifies the definition of 'poor' to include the disadvantaged, marginalized and the excluded.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Kvalbein also emphasizes on the interconnection of Luke with the interpretation of Isaiah, Psalm and even with the writings in the inter-testamental period. Hans Kvalbein, "Jesus and the Poor: Two Texts and Tentative Conclusion," *Themelios* 12 (1987): 80-86.

²⁸⁶ Joel Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90.

²⁸⁷ Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 90.

To back his argument, Green offers an interesting analysis of seven of the ten occurrences of the word poor:

4:18	6:20	7:22	14:13	14:21	16:20,22
Poor	Poor	Blind	Poor	Poor	Poor
Captive	Hungry	Lame	Maimed	Blind	Ulcerated
Blind	Mournful	Leper	Lame	Lame	Hungry
Oppressed	Persecuted	Deaf	Blind	Maimed	
		Dead			
		Poor			

He insists that in each text, the category ‘poor’ stands at the head of the list, except in 7:22 where it appears in the final, emphatic position. He concludes that the meaning of the word ‘poor’ is explained by the others. Green, therefore, observes that Jesus’ vocation of proclaiming the Good News to the poor embraces the excluded, marginalized and the disadvantaged in society.²⁸⁸

Against this backdrop, Green describes Luke’s portrayal of salvation as *status transposition*, that is the reversal of status.²⁸⁹ Jesus’ universalism and inclusiveness of the poor and the marginalized is manifested in concrete action to eradicate the maltreatment of such

²⁸⁸ Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 90.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 92.

groups in the society and restore them to their ontological status of the “image and likeness of God” (Gen.1:27).

From the above analysis, it emerges that Luke did not only refer to ‘economic poverty’ but to other dimensions of suffering; it includes the politically oppressed and the socially ostracized, the sick, the mentally ill and the sinners.

3.5.2 Narrative Usage of Πλουσίοις in the Gospel of Luke

The third Gospel provides various references to Jesus’ attitude towards wealth. The Greek word πλουσίοις, to be rich or to become rich, appears 11 times in the Lukan narrative. Wealth in the Lukan Gospel is defined as a suitable accumulation of resources and possessions of values, such as land, money and honour. Wealth is manifested in abundant food of good quality, clothing and luxurious shelter.²⁹⁰

A. Πλουσίοις as Possession of Fertile Land

Jesus often used farming methods and equipment to illustrate important teachings, because he lived in a traditional agricultural society. In this context, the size and fertility of the herd and land determine a person’s wealth.

An example is in the parable of the rich fool (12:13-31), where the reader encounters the first of the three ἄνθρωπός τις πλούσιος (a certain rich person), protagonist of Luke’s parable. The size and fertility of land possessed is used as a measure of his status, as the cognate terms employed by the evangelist demonstrates.

The word χώρα, which ordinarily means country, is used to depict the size of the land owned by the rich man. It indicates that he did not own an ordinary land for farming, but

²⁹⁰ Larry Taylor, *The Rich and Poor in the Gospel of Luke* (London: SPCK, 2003), 89

a vast land of the size of a country.²⁹¹ The word εὐφόρησεν qualifies the land as fertile, which brought forth plentifully. The statement καὶ εἶπεν· τοῦτο ποιήσω, καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω καὶ συνάξω ἐκεῖ πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ μου emphasizes the wealth of the harvest that allowed him to demolish his barns and build larger ones. Additionally, his final statement καὶ ἔρω τῇ ψυχῇ μου, ψυχὴ, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλά· ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου reveals that he acquired his wealth from the fruitfulness of the land. Therefore, he had plenty of wealth for years ahead to live in luxury by eating, drinking and making merry.

B. Πλουσίοις as Luxury and Expensive Lifestyle

Wealth is, further, defined by the lavish and expensive lifestyle of a person. It is evident in 16:19-21 which states:

Ἀνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον εὐφραινόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς. ²⁰ πτωχὸς δέ τις ὀνόματι Λάζαρος ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ εἰλκωμένος ²¹ καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου· ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ.

The rich man lived a luxurious life considering his clothing and his sumptuous fare. The narrative describes the rich man as being clothed in purple and fine linen. The verb ἐνέδιδύσκετο, which is an imperfect middle indicative, indicates continuity and suggests that this was the habitual attire of the rich man. Πορφύραν, purple, is not only a colour but a status symbol. It was the costliest dye made from the purple colour found in a vein around

²⁹¹ Taylor, *The Rich and Poor*, 92.

the neck of a particular specie of shellfish.²⁹² Since so much labour was involved in extracting the dye, only the rich and the royalty could afford the purple garment.

Furthermore, the rich man wore βύσσον, a linen which is very expensive, delicate and soft. The linen was sometimes dyed purple or crimson. The kind of linen worn by the rich man grew along the Nile and could be exchanged for its weight in gold. A robe of fine linen is said to have been sold for six times its weight in gold. It means the rich man was flamboyantly clothed.²⁹³

The rich man was not only adorned with lavish attire, but feasted sumptuously every day, as the passive participle εὐφραίνόμενος indicates.²⁹⁴ In 12:19 means to eat, drink and make merry. The rich man's festive lifestyle is further described by the addition of the adverb λαμπρῶς which means sumptuously. To sum up, the rich man lived a habitual extravagant life.

C. Πλουσίοις as High Level of Investment and Ownership of Assets

Finally, wealth is defined by the money, investments and properties or assets owned by a person. In 16:1-13, the word οἰκονόμον or steward represents someone who manages properties or, generally, the affairs of a rich person. Οἰκονόμον also denotes a keeper of buildings, grounds or animals. The avowal in vv. 5-7 provides additional evidence of the wealth of the rich man. It states:

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἓνα ἕκαστον τῶν χρεοφειλετῶν τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ ἔλεγεν τῷ πρώτῳ· πόσον ὀφείλεις τῷ κυρίῳ μου; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν βάτους ἐλαίου. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ καθίσας ταχέως γράψον πεντήκοντα.

²⁹² Albert Pastine, *Land of the Rich: The New Testament View of Wealth* (Nashville: B&G Publishing Group, 2003), 131.

²⁹³ Taylor, *The Rich and Poor*, 103.

²⁹⁴ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek- English Lexicon*, Biblework Edition.

ἔπειτα ἑτέρῳ εἶπεν· σὺ δὲ πόσον ὀφείλεις; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν κόρους σίτου.
λέγει αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ γράψον ὀγδοήκοντα.

The phrase καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἕνα ἕκαστον τῶν χρεοφειλετῶν τοῦ κυρίου indicates that the rich man had debtors as part of his investment. The debts owed by his debtors are part of his wealth. On the bases of his investment, property and debtors, the rich man is designated as rich or wealthy. Similarly, the expression πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς and ἐγενήθη· ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα in 18:22 and 23 respectively depict the great assets owned by the young ruler who is classified as very rich.

The analysis reveals the Lukan use of πλουσίους to depict ownership of fertile land, expensive and luxurious lifestyle and high level of investment and ownership of assets. The following section analyses the importance and use of wealth through an exegetical study of Luke 16:1-31.

3.6 Wealth and Poverty: Exegetical Study of 16:1-31

The attitude of Jesus towards wealth and poverty is expressed through his parables and teachings. The current section analyses 16:1-31, one of the most interesting and challenging literary unit of Luke.

The first challenge regards the delimitation of the different pericopes; the second, the nature of the steward's actions. It raises the questions of whether the steward used an accepted or a fraudulent way to his advantage. In other terms, was his behaviour within the bounds of conventional expectation and legality? Understanding the legal and cultural framework of the actions of the steward could affect the interpretation of the text.

3.6.1 Delimitation

The whole chapter 16 teaches on wealth and poverty. Scholars are not unanimous in the delimitation of some of the pericopes. The first concern is the decision on where the parable of the unjust steward ends. Jeremias suggests that it ends at v. 7 and considers v. 8a an application of the parable.²⁹⁵ Other scholars hold the view that the story ends at verse 8a. For example, Fitzmyer contends that the parable ends at verse 8a and verse 8b-13 are three applications to the parable.²⁹⁶ A third group of scholars, such as Hultgren, consider v. 8 the end of the parable with only v. 9 serving as an interpretative application.²⁹⁷

Identifying the end of the parable plays an integral role in the interpretation of the text. The researcher employs Fitzmyer delimitation considering vv. 8-13 as integral part of the parable.

3.6.2 Structure of 16:1-31

Meyers structures Luke 16:1-31 as follows:

1. Parable of the unfaithful steward (Lk 16:1-8)
2. Teaching on God and Mammon (Lk 16:9-13)
3. Attack on Pharisees as lovers of money (Lk 16:14-18)
4. The parable of Lazarus and the Rich man (Lk 16:19-31).²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 46-47.

²⁹⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 621.

²⁹⁷ Arland Hultgren, *The parables of Jesus; A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2000), 136.

²⁹⁸ Clay Myers, *From Capital to Community: Discipleship in Jesus' Parable about a Manager of Injustice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51-68.

Adopting the Narrative Criticism, which analyses the narrative content within the context of relationship between author, text, and readers, the researcher structures Luke 16:1-31 as follows

1. The parable of the ‘unjust’ steward (16: 1-13)
 - a) The accusation of the steward (16:1)
 - b) Dismissal by the master (16:2)
 - c) Action by the steward before dismissal (16: 3-7)
 - d) The master’s praise to the steward (16:8)
 - e) Application of the parable (16:9-13)
2. *Logion* about the Pharisees and their love for money (16:14-18)
3. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus
 - a) Life on earth (16: 19-21)
 - b) Fate after death (16: 22-31)

The researcher drew the above structure through the movement of the various actions and activities that took place at the various stages of the narrative. From the text it may be observed that the movement of activities was greatly informed by the actions and activities of the various characters in the passage.

3.6.3 Textual Analysis of Luke 16:1-31

The current section deals with the analysis of the pericope, following the structure of the text provided. It examines words, phrases, clauses and sentences as well as the syntactic arrangement of the text, in order to reveal the meaning intended by the author.

A. The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς· ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον, καὶ οὗτος διεβλήθη αὐτῷ ὥς διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ. ² καὶ φωνήσας αὐτὸν εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί τοῦτο ἀκούω περὶ σοῦ; ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου, οὐ γὰρ δύνη ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν. ³ εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος· τί ποιήσω, ὅτι ὁ κύριός μου ἀφαιρεῖται τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ; σκάπτειν οὐκ ἰσχύω, ἐπαιτεῖν αἰσχύνομαι. ⁴ ἔγνω τί ποιήσω, ἵνα ὅταν μετασταθῶ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας δέξωνταί με εἰς τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν. ⁵ καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἕνα ἕκαστον τῶν χρεοφειλετῶν τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ ἔλεγεν τῷ πρώτῳ· πόσον ὀφείλεις τῷ κυρίῳ μου; ⁶ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν βάτους ἐλαίου. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ καθίσας ταχέως γράψον πεντήκοντα. ⁷ ἔπειτα ἑτέρῳ εἶπεν· σὺ δὲ πόσον ὀφείλεις; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν κόρους σίτου. λέγει αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ γράψον ὀγδοήκοντα. ⁸ καὶ ἐπήνεσεν ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν· ὅτι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἑαυτῶν εἰσιν. ⁹ Καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπη δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς. ¹⁰ Ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ πιστός ἐστιν, καὶ ὁ ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ ἄδικος καὶ ἐν πολλῷ ἄδικός ἐστιν. ¹¹ εἰ οὖν ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ἀληθινὸν τίς ὑμῖν πιστεύσει; ¹² καὶ εἰ ἐν τῷ ἄλλοτρίῳ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ὑμέτερον τίς ὑμῖν δώσει; ¹³ Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἕνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονησεί. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ.

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ² And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' ³ And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' ⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸ The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal habitations. ¹⁰ "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

The parable depicts the socio-economic structure of Palestine.²⁹⁹ Traditionally, 16:1-13 has been understood as portraying a steward who cheated his master, yet commended for his wisdom, a quality which is presumed to be imitated by the disciples of Jesus in dealing with their material possession. However, considering the statement in 15:1-3 and 16:1, it is observed that the parable of the unjust steward is a continuation of Luke 15.

The phrase Ελεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς (He also said to the disciples) marks a transition from the three parables of chapter 15 which were addressed basically to the Pharisees (15:1), to chapter 16: the presence of the conjunction καί (16:1) expresses the continuity with Jesus' teaching. However, the most interesting connection is thematic: both textual unities have salvation as the major theme.

There are several debates on the audiences of Luke 16. Jeremias argues that the audience of the first parable are the unconverted, the hesitant, the waverers and the crowd. He maintains that it would be hardly been addressed to the disciples.³⁰⁰ On the other hand, Cadoux, viewing the parable as a parable of conflict, suggests the religious leaders as the audience.³⁰¹ Stein concurs that the parable was originally directed to critics of Jesus and a hostile audience, that Luke re-interpreted as a disciple parable with the introduction of 16:1.³⁰²

The researcher is of the opinion that the parable is directed to the disciples *and* to the Pharisees as Luke 15:4-32 was targeted at them. Both disciples (16:1) and Pharisees (16:14) are, in fact, addressed in the literary unit.

²⁹⁹ In Palestine it is common to have rich landowners in urban settings to appoint a manager to oversee their investment at their hometowns (their rural areas).

³⁰⁰ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 46-47.

³⁰¹ Arthur Temple Cadoux, *The Parables: Their Art and Use* (London: James Clarke 1930), 119.

³⁰² Robert Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 110.

a) The Accusation (16:1)

As it is common in Luke, Jesus introduced the rich man with the circumlocution ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος (v. 1). Greene assumes that Jesus used the word τίς (a certain) not only to qualify *the* rich man, but to address *any* rich man;³⁰³ he considers the phrase ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος as an inordinate assumption and generalization. Contrary to Greene's view, the researcher believes that the sentence does not intend to raise animosity against the rich man, but it is a necessary introduction to the parable to focus the reader's attention on the wealth of the rich man.

The beginning of the narrative introduces the main characters, the master and his steward and their relationship: the master received reports that the steward was squandering (δὲ διασκορπίζων) his goods. Scholarly opinions diverge concerning the meaning of the accusation towards the steward expressed by the verb διασκορπίζων. Scholars such as Philip Derret³⁰⁴ and Peter Latosa³⁰⁵ argue that διασκορπίζων suggests that the steward has not brought sufficient return or profit on the assets which the master has entrusted to him; hence, his incompetence has entered the public domain. Adding to their argument, Lyre considering διασκορπίζων to mean scattering of seed in the agrarian context, interprets the accusation as a lack of attention by the steward in using the owner's resources responsibly, resulting in low profitability.

³⁰³ Dwaine Greene, "The Parable of the unjust Steward as Questions and Challenge", *ExpTim* 112, no. 3 (2000): 86. Supporting his argument, he adds that the term must have raised animosity against the rich man.

³⁰⁴ Philip Derret, *The Unjust Steward* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71.

³⁰⁵ Peter Latosa, *Parables in the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 147.

However, a second group of scholars, for example Landry and May refute the claim of low profit as the offence of the steward. They enumerate three bases to support their argument: the commendation of the master who was concerned about his profit after the steward further slashed the profit, secondly, the use of the word διασκορπίζων in Luke 15:11-32, where the prodigal son squanders his inheritance in selfish and immoral activities. The scholars, therefore, think that selfish and immoral activities can be the causes of the steward downfall. Finally, they suggest that if the steward was accused of poor return on the master's investment, presumably he could have cleared himself by showing the record books to the master.³⁰⁶

Since the offence of the steward is not clear and justified, it raises the question of the authenticity of the report received by the rich man. Scott claims that there are several good reasons to refute low profitability as the offence of the steward. Quoting Walter Bauer, he defines the word διεβλήθη as bringing charges with a hostile intent.³⁰⁷ Therefore, the master may have considered the steward's offence based on the hostility attached to the accusation against him, but not necessarily on profitability.

Finally, a third group of scholars defends the steward as not guilty of the charges against him. For example, Snodgrass considers the Greek word διεβλήθη to mean: calumniate, slander, accuse and defame. He, therefore, opines that linguistically, the balance is slightly in favour of viewing the passive form of the verb διεβλήθη (he was accused) as a signal of a

³⁰⁶ David Landry and Ben May, "Honor Restored: New light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 2 (2000), 292.

³⁰⁷ Bernard Scott, "A Master's Praise (Luke 16:1-8a)," *Biblica* 64 (1983), 177.

false or slanderous accusation.³⁰⁸ Snodgrass speculates that in many cases, διεβλήθη suggests malice; hence, the steward was not guilty but was a victim of malice.³⁰⁹ To support his argument, he refers to v. 3, where the steward was introduced. According to him the phrase εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος (the steward said to himself) reveals the use of a monologue by the author, which could suggest that the steward may not be guilty of the accusation. If he had defrauded the master, he would have saved the money for an unexpected day, as the day of his dismissal.³¹⁰

In the researcher's view, the phrase τί τοῦτο ἀκούω περὶ σοῦ; ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου, οὐ γὰρ δύνῃ ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν suggests that the steward was guilty. The master may have investigated the report and found it reliable; hence, he decided to dismiss him from his post.

b) The Dismissal (v. 2)

In interpreting v. 2 it is important to study the relationship between the dismissal of the master and the steward's reflection. It is observed that there is a conflicting content between the dismissal command of the rich man and the monologue of the steward. In vv. 3-4, the steward speaks as if he is not yet fired. Examples are the phrases ὁ κύριός μου ἀφαιρεῖται τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ (my master is taking the stewardship away from me?) and in v. 4, ἵνα ὅταν μετασταθῶ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας (when I am put out of the stewardship). However,

³⁰⁸ Klyne Snodgrass, *Interpretation of Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 30-50.

³⁰⁹ From the text it is noted that the steward did not attempt to defend himself. Could his silence suggest an acceptance of guilt to the accusation? The narrator did not answer the question but allowed the readers to extract the inner thoughts of the steward by employing interior monologue as a literary device. Describing interior monologue as a literary device, Sellev says it is used to give readers or listeners access to characters' private moments as they think out their plans and strategies. Philip Sellev, "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 2 (1992): 239-253.

³¹⁰ Snodgrass, *Interpretation of Parables of Jesus*, 30-50

the verb connected with the dismissal is presented in the present tense in 16:2 (γὰρ δύνῃ ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν [you are no longer able]), indicating that the steward is fired ‘on the spot.’ From the observation of the text, it can be concluded that the steward is fired and yet has the opportunity to plan until he turns in the account books as the dismissal is seen to be in progress. The dismissal of the steward is incomplete till he hands over the account books to the master. Otherwise he would not have had any room to help himself out of the situation.

c) Action by the Steward before Dismissal (vv. 3-7)

Bevis’ interpretation is based on the assumption that the steward is a slave: in this state, he has two choices: hard labour in the farm or run away from his master with the risk to become a beggar. The second choice, to beg, is dismissed for of the shame associated to it.³¹¹ Furthermore, Donahue points out that the audience of Luke would not expect a person of his status to beg or dig. The statement evokes more sympathy in the readers than contempt.³¹²

However, the researcher considers the two options available in his socio-economic context as emphasized by the steward in his monologue as a sign of desperation in maintaining his status. It is observed that the steward secretly and rapidly calls the debtors of his master. It must be understood that there are quite a number of debtors and those mentioned in the text are just two examples. This is evidential due to the phrase ἕνα ἕκαστον (one by one) in v. 5 and ἑτέρω (another).

³¹¹ Mary Ann Beavis, “Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 1 (1992), 49-50.

³¹² Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 164.

It is important to identify the activity of the debtors, as it will aid in understanding the method of reduction of their debts. From the text Donahue proposes three possibilities: the debtors could be merchants, usurers (money lenders) or tenants. Jeremias suggests that the debtors might be merchants or tenants.³¹³ Bailly also similarly suggests that the parable is likely to illustrate the condition of a rent, which is associated to tenants. However, majority of scholars are of the opinion, shared by the researcher, that the debtors were tenants who may have rented land from the master to grow olives and wheat, considering the agricultural background. Additionally, they might be tenants who have hired a plot and an olive grove from the master at a rate of returns.

The steward implemented his plan by reducing the debts owed by his master's debtors. According to the text, the steward used his authority over the wealth of his master to secure his future after the dismissal. The phrase, δέξωνταί με εἰς τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν, depicts the reason for the steward's action, which is basically to receive a warm reception by the debtors into their homes. It suggests that the steward has anticipated a change from his current status to a state of poverty; hence, the decision to use his position to make friends for himself.

Derrett argues that the parable is focused on the appropriate use of wealth. Therefore, the action by the steward is justifiable as it is based on the Jewish law of agency and usury. He supports his argument by emphasizing that the action by the steward, using the unrighteous mammon, gains approval by executing the law of God required of him.³¹⁴

³¹³ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 46-47.

³¹⁴ Derrett, *The Unjust Steward*, 74.

d) The Master's Praise to the Steward (16:8)

The praise of the master for a steward, tagged as unjust, is difficult to understand. Scott submits that v. 8 of the parable diverts the attention of the readers away from the mischievous character of the steward.³¹⁵ In a similar trend, Mason observes that in the master's praise, Jesus disengages the steward's dishonesty from his foresight to invite his disciples to reflect on the importance of prudence in their lives. He adds that the praise in the text does not necessarily constitute moral approval of the steward plan or actions by the master or Jesus. It is, however, the shrewdness of the plan, not the plan itself that is praised.³¹⁶ Jesus, then, used the master's praise to counsel his followers to use worldly wealth to acquire friends for themselves.³¹⁷ Finally, Nolland opines that v. 8 of the parable advocates for the disciples to seize opportunity that exists in the midst of threat.³¹⁸

The researcher assumes that the master's praise was centred on the action of the steward by using wealth to secure his future and by making friends with his master's debtors. In the researcher's view the phrase, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός εἰς τὴν γενεάν τὴν ἑαυτῶν εἰσιν, associates the act of the steward to the act of worldliness and the people of the world, therefore, serving as a counsel to the disciples to use wealth to attract men to themselves.

³¹⁵ Scott, "A Master's Praise," 186.

³¹⁶ Livingston Mason, *Parables of Jesus: The Unjust Steward* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21 – 18:34*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 797.

e) Application of the Parable (vv. 9-13)

Vv 9-13 are considered the application of the parable, the counsel given by Jesus to his disciples. Through the parable Jesus brings his disciples into a narrative world in which they felt relaxed, because they were not directly implicated. At the end, Jesus changed the literary genre from narrative to direct discourse in order to show the implication of the parable to their lives.³¹⁹

There are various scholarly opinions on the connection of the application to the parable. Lasota suggests that vv. 9-13 are not original to the parable of the unjust steward.³²⁰ Likewise, Mason submits that Luke or pre-Lukan tradition may have added words of Jesus from another context in order to elucidate the parable. Considering the logical relationship and verbal connection that is established between vv. 1-8 and 9-13, the researcher suggests that the recommendation of Jesus is the climax of the parable, the application or call to action.

Vv 9 -12 centres on the obligation with worldly wealth as a test of a person's ability to handle heavenly wealth. In v. 11 the word μαμωνᾱ which is derived from מָנָה; meaning "what is trusted in" is used to signify wealth or riches that is entrusted by God to man.³²¹

Since in the Lukan context the parable is about wealth and its use, it can be deduced that Jesus views the disciples as the stewards of the wealth they might possess on earth.

From the analogy the application of the parable is made clear by Jesus:

³¹⁹ It is observed that the section are the authentic words of Jesus. Dolax proposes that verse 9-13 of the text is parallel with the undisputed saying of Jesus in Matthew 25: 21,23 and Luke 19:17. Dolax, *The Unfaithful Steward*, 104.

³²⁰ Latosa, *Parables in the Gospels*, 149.

³²¹ Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*. Biblework Edition.

- a) If the disciples are not faithful in the use of the wealth entrusted to them on earth, then they cannot be faithful with the heavenly riches.
- b) Unrighteousness in earthly wealth means that they will be unrighteous in their heavenly riches; hence, they might not be trusted with true riches.

From the interpretation of vv. 9-12, it can be concluded that faithfulness and righteousness in the disciples' use of earthly wealth (using wealth in the will of God) might be a criterion for the realization of true heavenly wealth. Mathewson suggests that the use of worldly possession reveals where the person's ultimate loyalty lies; for this reason, it can become a 'test' of one's ability to handle eternal reward.³²²

He further opines that Jesus in v. 13 was highlighting to the disciples that loyalty cannot be shared between wealth and God. If a person uses his wealth to please God then it means his ultimate loyalty is to God but if the use of his wealth does not please God, it means his ultimate loyalty is to mammon.³²³ Though Mathewson's argument is understandable, the researcher considers the phrases Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις and οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ to signify that θεῷ and μαμωνᾷ are Lords or rulers over a person's life. It means that either God or wealth can be the centre of a person's life. The decision to be ruled by one signifies disloyalty to the other.

The application raises concern for the modern teaching of the Prosperity Gospel, where wealth and prosperity are the centre of the theology of God and of the consequent pastoral

³²² Dave Mathewson, "Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13): A Reexamination of the Traditional View in Light of Recent Challengers," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995), 31.

³²³ Ibid.

praxis. It can, therefore, be concluded that the loyalty of the Prosperity Gospel to wealth and riches signifies disloyalty to God.

B. The Pharisees and their love for Money (16:14-18)

Ἦκουον δὲ ταῦτα πάντα οἱ Φαρισαῖοι φιλάργυροι ὑπάρχοντες καὶ ἐξεμυκτήριζον αὐτόν. ¹⁵καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς ἐστε οἱ δικαιοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁ δὲ θεὸς γινώσκει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν· ὅτι τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὑψηλὸν βδέλυγμα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. ¹⁶Ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου· ἀπὸ τότε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται. ¹⁷εὐκοπώτερον δέ ἐστιν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν παρελθεῖν ἢ τοῦ νόμου μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν. ¹⁸Πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμῶν ἑτέραν μοιχεύει, καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς γαμῶν μοιχεύει.

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵ But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶ "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone enters it violently. ¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void. ¹⁸ "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

As observed, the Pharisees have been listening to the advice of Jesus to the disciples. According to the account, they ridiculed (ἐξεμυκτήριζον) Jesus because they are lovers of money (φιλάργυροι). Summers contests the definition of the Pharisees as lovers of wealth, but neglects to explain why the author used the word φιλάργυροι.³²⁴ On the contrary, Blomberg defends the author's statement, referring to Matt. 23:14, where the Pharisees are described as devourers of widows' houses.³²⁵

Love is an important theme in the Lukan Gospel, addressed to someone called Theophilus (lover of God). The Gospel of Luke, therefore, places emphasis on the love for God and fellow humans. To be a lover of money is to transform possession into an idol (mammon).

³²⁴ Ray Summers, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972), 206.

³²⁵ In the view of endorsing Luke's use of φιλάργυροι, he also quotes the words of Jesus as saying that the cup and platter of the Pharisees were full of extortion. Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1990), 186.

The mockery of the Pharisees (v. 14) shifted the attention of Jesus to them. Therefore, in vv. 15-18 Jesus condemned the attitude of self-justification common among the Pharisees. Jesus further stated to the Pharisees that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Blomberg rightly suggests that the Pharisees used the common theology of their time, retribution theology, to justify their love and desire for wealth. Based on their justification, wealth demonstrates 'how good' a person is, and how s/he faithfully follows the law.

Walter opines that in vv. 16 and 17, Jesus differentiated between the era of the law and the prophets (Old Testament) which ended with John the Baptist, and the era of the Gospel centred on the Kingdom.³²⁶ The focus on the Kingdom of God as the pivot of the Gospel is contradictory to the Gospel of the Pharisees which is positioned on wealth and riches. Walter further emphasizes that the Pharisees placed much value on riches, prestige, pleasure, while the Good News as preached by Jesus values faith, discipleship and holiness which are the requirements to receive the Kingdom of God.³²⁷

In v. 17, the statement of Jesus affirms that the Gospel has not changed, and not even one dot (μίαν κεφαλαίαν) has been taken out of it. It signifies that the aim and focus of the Gospel remains on the Kingdom, as specified by Jesus, and not on wealth as believed by the Pharisees.

Scholars debate the relationship between the theme of wealth and theme of divorce (v. 18). According to Geldenhuys, v. 18 is a glossa.³²⁸ However, Carlos suggests that the verse

³²⁶ Paul Walter, *The Gospel in Parables: Luke 16:1-31* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 20-24.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 81.

needs to be understood in the context of the discussion about wealth. He argues that in the Jewish culture, a wife was considered a possession to the husband. Therefore, Jesus might have viewed the attitude of the Pharisees towards women as a simple extension of their attitude towards wealth.³²⁹

The researcher considers v. 18 to recall the relation between God and Israel in the Old Testament as a husband and wife. In relation to the phrase “Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν” and θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ, it reveals that the love of μαμωνᾷ (wealth) may cause a ‘divorce’ between the Jews and God. Therefore, the love of wealth is a marriage between Israel and μαμωνᾷ, which Jesus refers to as adultery.

C. The Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον εὐφραινόμενος καθ’ ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς. ²⁰ πτωχὸς δέ τις ὀνόματι Λάζαρος ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ εἰλκωμένος ²¹ καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου· ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ. ²² ἐγένετο δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχὸν καὶ ἀπενεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραάμ· ἀπέθανεν δὲ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος καὶ ἐτάφη. ²³ καὶ ἐν τῷ ᾄδῃ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις, ὁρᾷ Ἀβραάμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ. ²⁴ καὶ αὐτὸς φωνήσας εἶπεν· πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἐλέησόν με καὶ πέμψον Λάζαρον ἵνα βάψῃ τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ δακτύλου αὐτοῦ ὕδατος καὶ καταψύξῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν μου, ὅτι ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ. ²⁵ εἶπεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ· τέκνον, μνήσθητι ὅτι ἀπέλαβες τὰ ἀγαθὰ σου ἐν τῇ ζωῇ σου, καὶ Λάζαρος ὁμοίως τὰ κακά· νῦν δὲ ὧδε παρακαλεῖται, σὺ δὲ ὀδυνᾷσαι. ²⁶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνανται, μηδὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν. ²⁷ εἶπεν δέ· ἔρωτῶ σε οὖν, πάτερ, ἵνα πέμψῃς αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν οἶκόν τοῦ πατρός μου, ²⁸ ἵνα γὰρ πέντε ἀδελφούς, ὅπως διαμαρτύρηται αὐτοῖς, ἵνα μὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλθωσιν εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον τῆς βασάνου. ²⁹ λέγει δὲ Ἀβραάμ· ἔχουσι Μωϋσέα καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας· ἀκουσάτωσαν αὐτῶν. ³⁰ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐχί, πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἀλλ’ ἐάν τις ἀπὸ νεκρῶν πορευθῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετανοήσουσιν. ³¹ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· εἰ Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδ’ ἐάν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῇ πεισθήσονται.

There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he

³²⁹ Bryan Carlos, “Exposition of the Parable of the Unjust Steward”, *ANEJAT* 2 (June 2010): 65-82.

lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.” ²⁵ But Abraham said, “Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.” ²⁷ And he said, “Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” ²⁹ But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” ³⁰ And he said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” ³¹ He said to him, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”

The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus narrated in vv. 19-31 is unique to the Gospel of Luke because one of the characters is identified with a proper name, and the narrative brings the reader in the afterlife.³³⁰ It is interconnected to the parable of the unjust steward as both parables address the theme of wealth and poverty. It is directed to the Pharisees who were classified as money-lovers (v. 14); it is the only instance in the NT where the Pharisees are accused of being covetous.

The parable, therefore, deals with the attitude of the Pharisees towards wealth. Jesus questions their theology based on the concept for retribution that considers wealth as a sign of spirituality and blessings from God, and poverty as the result of sinfulness and a curse from God. The narrative challenges this view, comparing and contrasting two characters, the Rich man and Lazarus, who personified ‘blessing’ and ‘curse.’

³³⁰ James Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth in Luke's Travel Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 136.

Interpreting this parable, some commentators have regarded this parable as similar to a story from Egypt (Setme and Si-Osiris). Gressman asserts that the story travelled from Egypt to Palestine where it was adapted by the Jews. In each of the parables, a rich man and a poor man experienced reversal after death. It is therefore assumed that the story must be familiar to Jesus and his generation. However, it is observed that there is a major difference in the two stories. In the Jewish – Egyptian story, the destiny of the rich and the poor were determined by their good and bad deed. Nonetheless, there is no indication of deeds in the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus. Seccombe therefore concludes that there is no clear literary dependence of the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus on the Jewish-Egyptian story.

The eschatological outcome is ‘scandalous’ for those who believe in the retributive theology. The researcher structures the parable in two subsections:

- a) Their life on earth (19-21)
 - b) Their fate after death (22-23)
- a) Their Life on Earth (16:19-21)

The first section of the narrative speaks about the different status of the rich man, ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος (16:19; cf. v. 11), and Lazarus. Luke offers a vivid portrayal of the position of the rich man by using words in the imperfect tense such as ἐνεδιδύσκετο (dressed) and words in the present participle such as εὐφραίνόμενος (rejoicing). It reveals that the decadent and lavish celebrations were customary way of life for the rich man. Furthermore, the rich man’s dressing suggests his association with royalty.³³¹

In a similar trend, the narrator used imperfect verbs and present participle words such as ἐπιθυμῶν (desiring), πιπτόντων (were falling), ἐρχόμενοι (coming) and ἐπέλειχον (licked) to offer an appalling picture of the status of Lazarus, emphasizing his endless suffering. It is unclear why Lazarus resided at the gate of the rich man. However, Metzger suggests that Luke wants to portray how abundance of wealth and poverty can coexist in a close proximity without any alternation.³³² Additionally, he emphasizes that Lazarus was placed at the gate of the Rich man’s estate because there he would have the best chance of receiving

³³¹ In Luke 7:25, Jesus made a remark that those who wear fine clothing and live in luxury are said to dwell in royal palaces.

³³² Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 140.

food.³³³ Scott conversely argues that the gate is a metaphor for relational possibility and suggests the rich man may be the patron of Lazarus.³³⁴

b) Their Fate after Death (vv. 22-31)

The second part of the narrative reveals the afterlife of the two men. Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man is in Hades. The author, however, concealed the underlying reasons of their fate. Jesus did not indicate that the rich man acquired his wealth unjustly, neither did it mention any good deed of Lazarus; therefore, the readers perceived that the Kingdom of God is forever closed to those who close their hearts against the needy. The rich man failed the ethical demands and conditions to qualify him to inherit the Kingdom of God: to care for the brother in need.

Robert Louis states: “Behaviour is a mirror and anticipate the believer’s expectation of salvation. If salvation means God will put an end to the oppression of His people (Lk 4:18), His people must cease to oppress one another. If it means an end to hunger and want, His people will share what they have now with the hunger and naked.”³³⁵ Based on this argument, the rich man ended up in Hades due to his failure to put an end to the oppression, hunger and want of Lazarus despite his wealth.

To sum up, although there are various views to the interpretation of 16:1-31, it is noted from the exegesis that Luke outlined the steps towards the attainment and use of wealth. The evangelist focuses on the use of wealth to make friends to oneself; faithfulness to God

³³³ Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 140.

³³⁴ Bernard Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Oklahoma: Fortress Press, 1989), 174.

³³⁵ Robert Louis, *The Gospel and Honor: Historical Study of wealth and Poverty* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2000), 129.

in the treasures entrusted to ma; the need to be aware of the plight of the poor; and re-focusing of attitude towards the poor and a resolution for consistent sharing of wealth and almsgiving to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

3.7 Theological Synthesis

The section discusses the major themes that emerged from the narrative analysis to reach an informed understanding on wealth and poverty from the Lukan perspective, and the consequent call to action that the text proposed to contemporary Ghanaian leaders and followers of the Prosperity Gospel.

3.7.1 Stewardship

The theology of stewardship develops from the parable of the unjust steward (16:1-13), which presents the unjust steward as just a ‘manager’ of the wealth belonging to the master. Leo opines that humans are stewards to the wealth owned by God. It means that when people possess wealth, they control part of God’s wealth.³³⁶ Therefore, the wealthy are stewards to God and must take responsibility of using their wealth to the glory of God, not only doing no harm, but benefiting others through its use. It is in the use of the wealth that a steward may glorify God.

Leo further suggests that portions of the wealth owned by humanity must be returned to God for His work on earth. Stewardship in the Christian setting is limited to the appropriate use of wealth to support the church and other charitable activities. Luke observed that the ‘folly’ of the rich is not realizing that God has made him a steward of *His* goods, that must

³³⁶ Sampson Leo, *Wealth and Poverty in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998), 32.

use it to help the poor and needy.³³⁷ A person who views himself/herself as a steward to God's wealth must distribute it freely, be generous and give to the poor.

In relation to stewardship, Jesus asks those entrusted with wealth to be faithful and honest with their trust, using it as means to bless others. The phrase, ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου (16:2), suggests that every steward will be accountable to God for the management of His wealth. The accountability will determine his/her destiny: on the ground of faithfulness to the earthly riches, God will entrust true and eternal treasure (16:12).

3.7.2 Giving

According to Gillman, in the Lukan community, possessions and wealth were used for the benefit of gaining honour. For the elite, they were means to obtain social recognition and acceptance and to maintain their status of honour as evident in 14:12. It is to ensure that wealth was circulated primarily among the rich.³³⁸

The treatment of Lazarus by the rich man confirms the above picture and shows the lack of concern of the rich towards the poor. Moxnes suggests that the attitude of the wealthy is based on the principle of reciprocity, which means that favour bestowed has to be returned. It is observed that the poor had nothing or little to give in return.³³⁹ Therefore, Luke advocates that members adopt new patterns of wealth distribution by unconditionally giving to the poor.

³³⁷ Leo, *Wealth and Poverty*, 32.

³³⁸ John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith: Reading of Luke –Acts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 101.

³³⁹ Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 149.

On the condition of love, Luke encourages his audience to give and share ‘oneself’ with others. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), he reveals the failure of the rich man to show love to Lazarus through giving. Luke speaks movingly of the poor man’s needs, but he also focuses on the hardheartedness of the rich man and his inability to ‘see’ Lazarus, and to express love by helping the poor neighbour.

Luke reveals that the concern of the rich man is for himself. He only gives the crumbs from his table to the poor man and devotes the rest of his wealth to providing himself with fine clothing and sumptuous banquets. Gillman links the attitude of the rich man to the Christian community, where people give to the church, using their resources on themselves and leaving the poor with the crumbs left over.

Moreover, in an evaluation of the narrative of the young ruler (18:18-23), Luke suggests that giving to the poor and needy is a sign of conversion. He emphasizes that the relationship of a person with his/her wealth manifests the relationship with Jesus. Comparing the narrative of the rich ruler to Zacchaeus’ story, Gillman suggests that the rich ruler chose wealth over Jesus and giving to the poor, while Zacchaeus choosing to follow Jesus in the service of the poor was set free by obsession with wealth and possessions.

It is important to notice that Luke’s emphasis on the wealthy giving to the poor and the needy is based on the principle of ‘status reversal.’ In 16:9, Jesus recommends to his disciples to use wealth to make friends so that they can be received into eternal habitation when their ‘earthly’ wealth ends. From the analysis of chapter 16, it is observed that the praise of the master is due to the prudence manifested by the unjust steward, by using his

authority over his master's wealth to secure friends for the future. Luke further re-echoes this principle as he reveals the opposite destiny of Lazarus and the rich man (16:19-31).

The Gospel of Luke can be considered as 'a gospel of reversal'. The theme is introduced in the song of Mary, as she responds to the words of Elisabeth:

He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away (1:51-53).

While the expressions about the wealthy in the passage could be hyperbolic — describing the disappointment of the mighty and exalted whom God overlooked, choosing lowly Mary instead — the passage nonetheless illustrates the inadequacies of wealth and riches and the disappointment they could bring to those who are obsessed with it.

3.7.3 Wealth and Spirituality

From the analysis of chapter 16, it is observed that the choice of wealth and material possession is incompatible with belonging to God. The theology is based on the statement, Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ (16:13). According to Luke, the quest for materialism and possessions can lead a person away from God and can lead to a decline in true spirituality.

The researcher suggests that 16:13 is centred on the theme of idolatry. In the context Mammon is considered as a god. The researcher opines that the love of Mammon leads to idol worship as Mammon becomes a god. The researcher stresses the argument by echoing the phrase, “You cannot serve God and Mammon” (16:13 - οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ

μαμωνᾶ). Therefore, ‘devotion to wealth’ is incompatible with devotion to God and love towards co-humans.

3.7.4 Wealth and Poverty and Solution to Retributive Theology

According to Dodd, the most common interpretation of the parables is based on the eschatological approach. From the eschatological perspective, the dishonesty of the steward is commended for his quick thinking and action in the face of a crisis. The approach, therefore, claims that the steward’s prudent use of material possession is to be imitated by the disciples in the face of the coming eschatological kingdom.³⁴⁰

In a similar trend, it is observed that the second parable, relating to the rich man and Lazarus, ended on an eschatological note. It, therefore, suggests that access to wealth and its usage could have an eschatological effect. The same concept is reiterated in other teaching. For example, 6:24 admonishes: “Curse to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation” and 9:23-25, further, states:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

3.8 Conclusion

From the analysis it may be noted that Luke did not ‘demonize’ wealth in his Gospel, as he describes Jesus accepting the company of the rich and calling some of them to discipleship (5:27-31). He even commended the generous gift of a woman (7:36-38). However,

³⁴⁰ See, Leo, *Wealth and Poverty*, 142.

Luke places much emphasis on Jesus' condemnation of the attitude of those who consider wealth acquisition a priority over God and fellow humans

From the exegesis of the parables in Luke 16, it can be construed that wealth is useless when it comes to the afterlife: humans must focus on the Gospel, to receive eternal salvation. Therefore, wealth must be used to glorify God and exercise stewardship through kindness and generosity.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that Luke considers the poor as the receivers of the Gospel and the underprivileged in society and advocates to the Christian community to give to the poor and needy without expecting anything in return.

The attitude towards wealth condemned by Jesus is present in contemporary preaching, which place prosperity at the centre of Christian life, rather than the Gospel of salvation. Moreover, proponents of the Prosperity Gospel consider poverty as a curse and the poor as sinners. Secondly, the prosperity preaching emphasizes various erroneous teachings, such as making the act of kindness an investment rather than a Christian service.

The contradictions between the contemporary Prosperity Gospel and Jesus' Gospel narrated by Luke offer a hermeneutic challenge in the quest to contextualize the word of God in the contemporary Ghanaian context.

In the next chapter, the two 'Gospels' are engaged in a dialogue to explore the challenges that Luke's narrative offers to the 'prosperity theology.'

CHAPTER FOUR

ENGAGEMENT OF REALITY AND TEXT

4.1 Introduction

Loba- Mkole asserts that the reading of a text involves an intercultural process, the dialogue between the culture of the readers and the culture of the text.³⁴¹ The discussion of the present chapter focuses on the dialogue between the Lukan teachings on wealth and poverty and the perspective of the Ghanaian proponents of the Prosperity Gospel, following the third step of the theoretical framework of the research. From the dialogue between the reality and the text, a call of action is proposed to address the challenges posed by the contemporary theology of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana.

4.2 Summary of the Culture of the Reality

The advent of Pentecostal and neo Pentecostal churches in Ghana has popularized and contextualized the preaching of the Prosperity Gospel. Adherers consider the Gospel as a channel of blessings to the believer. According to them, it is centred on the intention of God to make Christians financially prosperous, wealthy and visibly attain fortunes.

Prosperity preachers, who believe to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, select texts such as Matt. 6:33; John 10:10; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 3:14; James 4:2 and 3 John 3:2, as supporting scriptures to the proclamation of a gospel of abundance, security and material prosperity.

³⁴¹ Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, "Rise of Intercultural Biblical Exegesis in Africa," *HTS Teologiese/Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2008): 1348-1364.

In the light of the prosperity preaching, salvation is defined as a total liberation from sickness, demon oppression and possession, and poverty. Adherers, therefore, consider salvation as a holistic liberation of the soul and the body.

Against this backdrop, poverty is viewed as contrary to the divine will of God, as a curse and a disease which could be infectious, hence it must be hated. Christians suffering from poverty are considered sinful and/or possessed by evil spirits. Last but not least, economic hardship is considered as the consequence of having a ‘mind-set of poverty’.

With poverty being labelled as evil, prosperity preachers admonish their followers to adopt the ‘mind-set of wealth and riches’. Quoting 2 Cor. 8:9, prosperity teachers identify material wealth and prosperity as one of the redemptive elements brought by the death of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the atonement of Jesus is a conduit for attaining wealth. Prosperity adherers, therefore, link riches and prosperity to the new covenant in Christ.³⁴²

Although the Prosperity Gospel teaches wealth attainment, its acquisition is based on various principles. These include positive confession leading to the giving of offering, ‘sowing of seed,’ and payment of tithes. It is believed that offering supported by faith provides ‘the potency’ that releases God’s blessing to the believer.

Though there are many propagators of the Prosperity Gospel, the research highlights the prosperity theology of Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams of Action Chapel International, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills of Lighthouse Chapel International and Pastor Mensah Otabil of International Central Gospel Church.

³⁴² Wealth in the prosperity theology includes financial prosperity, prosperity in health and material prosperity.

Duncan Williams, who refers to himself as an ‘expensive pastor’ and boasts about his wealth, asserts that a Christian must live an expensive life as God is an expensive God. He proclaims that it is not in the agenda of God for Christians to be poor, suffer sickness and fail. He views the Gospel as a tree of life that yields riches, honour, promotion and joy. He, therefore, declares that the prudent approach towards poverty alleviation is by giving towards the proclamation and preachers of Gospel. According to Duncan Williams, there is no blessing in giving to the poor. Quoting Phil. 4:17, he defends his argument by suggesting that a person can only be blessed when he/she gives to those who are blessed (referring to himself as blessed). He further submits that a Christian can be prosperous by implementing God’s spiritual laws of prosperity (which include sowing of seed and tithing).

Heward–Mills bases his prosperity theology on three hermeneutical principles: “Name It”; “Claim it”; and “Take it”. He states that in acquiring spiritual, physical, financial and material breakthrough, faith must be exerted by verbally mentioning, making a declaration and acting on God’s word in order to receive it. However, the ‘guarantee’ for receiving is the application of the ‘seed principle’: the payment of tithes and generous offering.

Mensah Otabil offers a different perspective to the contemporary neo-Pentecostal theology of the Prosperity Gospel. He adopts a combination of Black liberation theology, personal responsibility, education and hard work as measures of attaining prosperity. Otabil refutes the assertion of the ‘curse’ of the black race. Referring to Gen. 9:1, he emphasized that also Ham was blessed. Furthermore, Otabil enlists biblical characters of black origin blessed with wealth. These include Nimrod, Jethro, the Magi (Matt. 2:1-12) and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). The motive of the prosperity theology adopted by Otabil aims to change the poverty mind-set of the black race.

These and many other issues surfacing from the reality understudy confirm that adherers of the prosperity view poverty as an unacceptable, sinful and evil condition, that must be abhorred by Christians. Some wealthy Christians feel reluctant to give to the poor as poverty is considered to be an ‘infectious spirit’ and could be transmitted from a poor person to another. This perception has led to discrimination against the poor in the society, causing the poor to suffer from isolation and emotional, mental and psychological trauma. This attitude sometimes leads people to commit suicide.³⁴³ Furthermore, it blinds eyes and silences consciences preventing Ghanaian Christians to see and denounce the real social and economic causes of poverty: injustice, exploitation, corruption and nepotism.

4.3 Summary of the Culture of the Text

The discussion on wealth and poverty is one of the major thematic preoccupation in the Gospel of Luke. The author of Luke places much emphasis on the theme, probably because he addresses the economic tautness that arose between the rich and the poor in his community. The most frequent term used to describe the ‘poor’ is πτωχός. The term has a variety of nuances that include literal, spiritual and social meaning.

Literally, Luke uses πτωχός to signify a beggar or a person who is a potential receiver of alms who lacks and is in need (16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8 and 21:3). In this instance πτωχός is used in the economic sense. In spiritual term, Luke uses πτωχός to depict the humbles, the receivers of the Gospel and the Kingdom (4:18; 7:22). In the same trend, it denotes Israel in her need for salvation (4:8). Finally, πτωχός depicts the underprivileged and the outcast

³⁴³ Counselor Albert Okra suggest the stigmatization and discrimination against the poor and the needy as one major cause of suicide in the Ghanaian society. He supported his statement with examples of cases of attempted suicide that were reported to his office. He made this revelation during an interview on Joy FM on the 16th July 2018. www.myjoyonline.com

in society. These included the sinners, women, children, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors, captive, lame, maimed, the blind, the deaf, mournful and the oppressed (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13; 14:21; 16:20,22).

To describe wealth, the Greek word *πλουσίους* is the most used. It is defined as possession of resources and properties that allow the wealthy person to have a quality and luxurious life. As a Gospel targeted on an agriculture-based community, *πλουσίος* is used for a person who possesses a large fertile land. An example is the use of *πλουσίος* in 12:13-31 to designate the possession of the fertile land by the 'rich fool'. Secondly, *πλουσίος* is used to define the lavish and luxurious lifestyle of a person, as used in 16:19-21. Furthermore, *πλουσίος* defines ownership of large investment, properties, assets and money by a person (16:1-13).

From the exegetical study of 16:1-31, it is observed that the author outlines the significance and the use of wealth and the proposed attitude of the rich towards the poor. He, further, elaborates on issues relating to wealth acquisition and its correlation to God and His Kingdom. In 16:1-13, the author reveals the praise of the unjust steward by his master, for using his authority over the master's wealth to make friends and to secure a welcoming home after his dismissal.

The author emphasized on the application of the parable of the unjust steward by stating the recommendation made by Jesus to his disciples. Jesus instructed his disciples to make friends and secure eternal home with the prudent and righteous use of mammon. Luke also laments on stewardship and faithful use of the wealth that is entrusted by God. From the

application, it is deduced that faithfulness and righteousness in the use of earthly wealth is the requirement for the acquisition of the true heavenly wealth.

In v. 13, the author focuses on the idolization of wealth. According to Luke, loyalty cannot be shared between God and wealth. When people use their wealth in a manner that pleases God — doing justice and helping others — their ultimate loyalty to God is manifested. However, when wealth becomes the pivot of a person's life and it is used in manners that do not please God – selfish aims – it signals that the ultimate loyalty is to 'mammon.' In this case, mammon becomes an idol.

Against this backdrop, it is possible to understand the condemnation of the Pharisees by Jesus for their love of money (16:14-18). It is important to notice that the Pharisees used the common OT theology, retribution theology, to justify their love for money. Therefore, the Pharisees considered wealth as proof of obedience of the law.

In addressing the issue of retribution, the author divulges the criticism of Jesus about the attitude of self-justification among the Pharisees, stating that what is highly valued among humankind is an abomination in the sight of God. Luke, further, opines that the Kingdom of God or Salvation is the pivot of the Gospel. To offer a vivid example of the contrast between 'human' and 'divine' perspectives, Luke narrates a second parable.

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, the author exposes the attitude of the rich towards the poor. He offers a contrasting picture of the luxurious and abundant life of the rich man and the poor and needy life of Lazarus. Luke, further, unveiled the indifference of the rich man towards Lazarus. In the second section of the parable, the author revealed the eschatological fate of the two characters. Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham, while

the rich man was in Hades in order to emphasize that the true ‘retribution’ is eschatological and to reveal in the uncaring attitude towards the poor, the rich man’s ethical failure to qualify to inherit the Kingdom of God.

From the analysis of the text it is observed that the author of the Gospel of Luke does not consider wealth as evil. However, he entreats his audience to use their wealth in accordance to the will and purpose of God. The rich and wealthy must use their wealth to transform the life of the poor and needy in the community.

4.4 Intercultural Engagement of the Text and the Reality

The section aims to engage the two cultures to explore ways to bridge the gap between the Lukan teachings on wealth and poverty and the modern day preaching of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana. The preaching of the prosperity is a common phenomenon among neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic churches in Ghana. From the analysis, it is observed that preachers of the Prosperity Gospel centralize their message on material, health and financial prosperity. They teach their audience on how they can receive the blessings of wealth. Prosperity preachers, further, teach their followers to detest poverty as poverty is seen as evil, a disease and a curse. However, the author of the Gospel of Luke admonishes his audience to use their wealth to help the poor and considers the poor as blessed (6:20). Additionally, Luke cautioned his readers against making wealth the focus of their lives, as it could lead to idolatry.

The assumption that Christianity is based on biblical teaching can raise a question: can a teaching that contradict the gospel be still considered ‘Christian’? The disparity in teaching between the text and the reality is an appeal to a theological discussion to explore possible

ways to bridge the gap between the text and the reality. The following section presents a tentative contextualization of the Lukan teaching of wealth and poverty in the Ghanaian Charismatics context.

4.4.1 Discipleship

The theme of discipleship is a major topic of discussion among Ghanaian Christians. Christians are urged to be true disciples and make disciples for Christ in fulfilment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).³⁴⁴

A disciple is a follower of Jesus called to share in the ministry of Jesus which involves mutual acceptance, trust and responsibility to abide by His teachings. During a homily, Rev. Oppong Donkor admonished churches to adopt strategies to ensure the birthing of new Christian disciples.³⁴⁵ He stated: "If the Gospel of Christ is really relevant to all aspects of life, then we need to show the unbelievers how it is relevant to their lives as well."³⁴⁶ His statement uncovers the significance of discipleship to the contemporary church and the world. However, does the preaching and doctrine of the prosperity theology equip a Christian believer to be a good disciple of Christ? Does it convey the message to 'rebirth' new disciples?

The noun *disciple* is used 37 times in the Gospel of Luke to exclusively indicate the followers of Jesus. It can, therefore, be deduced that to be a disciple is to be a follower of

³⁴⁴ Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

The Great Commission is the command by Jesus after His resurrection to his disciples to extend the Gospel to all nations. It is considered as a core mandate of every Christian to fulfil.

³⁴⁵ In the chapel service for the 2015/2016 batch of ministerial students of Pentecost Theological Seminary.

³⁴⁶ Rev. Oppong Donkor, chapel service for the 2015/2016 ministerial students of Pentecost Theological Seminary. www.myjoyonline.com/news/2015 (accessed on 27th March 2019).

Christ and walk in his footsteps. From the analysis of the culture of the text, it is noted that Luke outlines some qualities and characteristics of a true disciple. The following section discusses these qualities and how they may be applicable to today's Christians.

A. State of Self- Denial

Since Christians are regarded as disciples of Jesus, their call into the faith and daily life must depict the character, attitude and teachings of Jesus as illustrated in the New Testament. In Luke 5:11, it is observed that Jesus commanded his first disciples to leave everything they had and follow Him. These included their fishing gear, boats, kinship, and homes. The disciples heeded the command of Jesus (5:28), left behind their assets, properties, wealth and possessions to serve as followers of Jesus, presumably positioning them in the state of lack and poverty. In a similar trend, Jesus instructed the rich young man to sell all his possessions, distribute to the poor and follow Him (18:22). In contrast to the response of the disciples to Jesus' command, he became sad because he was rich and was not ready to abandon his riches. Observing his attitude, Jesus stated: "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. For 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" (18:24-25).

From the above background, it is clear that Christians must detach themselves from wealth and possessions to serve as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Refusal to detach oneself from wealth could be a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) to the inheritance of the Kingdom of God. However, adherers of the Prosperity Gospel teach the opposite. The prosperity preachers ascribe riches and wealth to God and the Gospel. The 'blessings' of wealth, possessions and riches is used as the standard to assess one's faithfulness to God. Wealth is, therefore,

devoted to the call to discipleship as the Christian faith is promoted as a conduit for the attainment of wealth and riches.

According to Amenyo, being a disciple of Christ requires the commitment to self-sacrifice. Quoting Luke 9:23, he emphasizes that a disciple must deny himself by denying worldly materials and possessions, take up his/her cross and follow Jesus. Additionally, he opines that the cross is a symbol of suffering and rejection by the world. He, therefore, questions the contemporary image of Christianity as a faith of luxury and wealth.³⁴⁷ In a parallel trend Rev. Thomas Akwetey associates the increase in corruption, immorality and other social vices in Ghana to the modern teaching of the Prosperity Gospel. According to him, in the quest to be prosperous, Christian disciples seek wealth in an ungodly manner. An act he considers as a tool used by Satan to destroy Christian disciples.³⁴⁸

From the Lukan Gospel, it is noted that the act of self-denial by the disciples in 5:28 prompted Jesus' statement in 6:20-25:

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

³⁴⁷ Gershom Amenyo, *The Disciple of Christ* (Accra, 2017), 32.

³⁴⁸ Thomas Akwetey, *The Church and Corruption*, www.peacefmonline.com (accessed on 2nd April 2019).

From the words of Jesus, poverty is neither a curse, a sin nor a disease, but a choice of self-denial and rejection of the world to serve as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Poverty is considered as a state of eschatological expectation of the Kingdom of God, which brings laughter and joy. Riches and wealth on the other hand are not beheld as blessings but a curse. With the high apocalyptic expectancy among Christians, prosperity preachers must focus and educate their followers on a life of selflessness and self-denial to attain the ultimate goal of Christianity, that is inheriting the Kingdom of God. Such lifestyle would depict the community of the disciples of Jesus that is accentuated on the prophecy of the Kingdom. Therefore, they detached themselves from worldly possessions and attached themselves to the only rich one - Christ. The detachment of the disciples from worldly possessions led none of them to be poor, because everything they had was shared (Acts 4:34).

To attain the goal of selfless discipleship in Christianity, Christian leaders should live a self-sacrificing lifestyle: serving the poor and sharing with the poor and working to create a better society free from corruption and built on solidarity. Such acts by Christian leaders would be emulated by their followers.

From the analysis of the reality, it is observed that prosperity preachers boast about their wealth and possessions. They live an extravagant life: driving expensive cars, flying in their private jets, acquiring the most expensive mansions, high level of investments, and wearing lavish cloths. In the pursuit to obtain these possessions, it is noted that prosperity preachers use several techniques to extract money from the congregation for their egotistic gain. Furthermore, prosperity teachers use their wealth to enhance the faith of their followers and to create an image of reality of wealth attainment to their adherents. In the desire to emulate the extravagant life of their leaders, some followers consider poverty as a curse,

disease, sin and ungodly and they are, therefore, led to acquire wealth by all means every means, even illegal manner, which are hindrances to their inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

The lavish lifestyle of leaders of the Prosperity Gospel contradicts the selfless leadership style of Jesus, a life he commands his followers to emulate. From the textual analysis, it is deduced that Jesus' philosophy was to uplift the poor through giving and not to amass wealth for himself,³⁴⁹ a characteristic he encourages his followers to imitate. The first community described in the book of the Acts of the Apostles practiced sharing where no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common (Acts 4:32-37).³⁵⁰

According to Lawson, a leader's character, behaviour and attitude has a mental, psychological and physical effects on the followers.³⁵¹ Therefore, Christian leaders must adopt the self-sacrificing life of Jesus, which will serve as an example to imitate for their followers.

A change in the sumptuous lifestyle by leaders will affect a change in perception of their followers. Followers will no longer view poverty as evil, but a state of self-denial and selflessness which are the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

³⁴⁹ The argument is based on Jesus' statement in Luke 9:58: "And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head".

³⁵⁰ Acts 4:32-37: "Now the community of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus, Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

³⁵¹ Peter Lawson, *The Leader and His Character* (Kumasi: Yamza Press, 2017), 53.

B. 'Rebirthing' New Disciples

As part of the roles in the fulfilment of the 'Great Commission' (Matt. 28:20), Christian disciples are expected to 'rebirth' new disciples. Various methods have been adopted by the Christian communities to accomplish this goal.³⁵² These include personal evangelism, organizing of crusades and the use of modern technology to propagate the Gospel.

However, it is observed from the analysis of the texts that Luke suggests an additional method to be adopted, which is applicable to contemporary Christianity.

In 16:9, the author suggests the use of 'unrighteous mammon' to make friends. Palour opines that the syntagm 'unrighteous mammon' means worldly wealth or riches. He, therefore, submits that Jesus was recommending to his disciples to use their earthly riches to make friends into the Christian faith. Consequently, he proposes to give money and other resources towards the propagation of the Gospel as a method Christians could use in rebirthing disciples.³⁵³ His view is parallel to the teaching of Duncan-Williams. He instructed his congregation to contribute money and other resources towards the organization of crusades and other evangelism-related activities.

However, using one's wealth to rebirth disciples must not be limited to giving towards crusades and evangelism, as proposed by prosperity preachers. Kelly suggests that the best tool for the proliferation of the Gospel is one's character and relationship with others.³⁵⁴ The author of Luke, therefore, suggests the use of wealth and riches to build good relationship for the Kingdom of God (16:9). A person could build a good relationship by helping

³⁵² Potter Lahaye, *The Ministry of Jesus and Disciple Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13-24. Potter uses the word rebirthing disciple to depict the making of new disciples by Christians.

³⁵³ John Palour, *Media and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 213.

³⁵⁴ W.H. Kelly, *The Message and Gospel* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1989), 156.

the poor, and by a process of constant conversion, to mould his/her character to depict the attitude and personality of Christ. The application of the ‘holistic’ evangelistic approach proposed by Luke could have other positive impacts, such as; social justice; environmental awareness; sanitation, job creation, human right advocacy etc. on society.

In interpreting the subsequent words of Luke — “...so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal habitations” (16: 9) — it is generally accepted that the use of worldly riches is limited to the earth. However, when it is used to accomplish the will and purpose of God on earth, it may grant an eternal habitation and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God, when earthly wealth becomes useless. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, it is perceived that the failure of rich man to use his earthly wealth to secure a future habitation led to his state of anguish in hades after life.³⁵⁵

Prosperity preachers are noted for the organization of huge and lavish crusades to disseminate the Gospel. For example, Dug Heward-Mills is well-known for organizing the Healing Jesus Crusade and Mensah Otabil is associated to the Greater Works Crusade. However, these crusades are characterized by prosperity centred sermons and activities (wealth accretion and healing). At the Greater Works 2017, Mensah Otabil admonished his members “to sow special seed” for specific types of miracles, the highest amount being \$5000 and the minimum \$70. According to Otabil, sowing of “the special seed” would result in the status change of the giver to a position of a millionaire. Other ‘miracles’ he enlisted

³⁵⁵ The rich man failed to use his riches to accomplish the will of God by his refusal to assist and provide for Lazarus. It is also observed that the rich man refused to use the advantage of his riches to make friends with poor Lazarus. The afterlife passage of the two characters suggests that did not have the riches he enjoyed on earth. Suggesting that his wealth and riches were only limited to the earth.

included: Seed of a Thousand Times More, Seed of Completion, 24 Hour Miracle, 100% Life Improvement and Seed of Perfection.

Although followers of the Prosperity Gospel contribute money and other resources in the fulfilment to the Great Commission, it is eminent that activities of prosperity preachers fail to achieve the goal of rebirthing new disciples into the Christian faith.³⁵⁶ Christian leaders must, therefore, use resources accrued from members to reach out to the world with the Gospel of holistic salvation for the development of every person.

4.4.2 Holistic Approach to Poverty Alleviation

From the analysis, it can be established that the foremost objective of the prosperity Gospel is poverty alleviation. With the motive of transforming the contemporary Christian community into a community of prosperous and rich Christians, prosperity preachers give hope to the hopeless stimulating optimistic mentality among their adherers, a mentality that views poverty as evil and riches as blessings of God.

However, riches and wealth can be attained only by performing the ritual of “seed sowing”, tithing and offering supported with the faith of the believer. Unfortunately, although adherers practise the “prosperity rituals,” the challenge of poverty is present in the lives of many Charismatic Christians in Ghana. It can, therefore, be affirmed that the approach of poverty alleviation applied by prosperity preachers presents some limitations and needs to be re-evaluated. The following section examines some challenges to the methodology of the Prosperity Gospel ‘suggested’ by the Lukan Gospel.

³⁵⁶ As prosperity preachers propagate the message of prosperity and healing rather than the message of salvation and the Kingdom of God.

A. Almsgiving and Assistance of the Poor

The analysis of the text reveals that one major objective of the author of the Gospel of Luke was to induce his audience to consider solidarity with the poor as a moral imperative and a condition to true discipleship. Luke repeatedly states that the rich must use their wealth to support the poor in the community (12:32-33; 16:19-31; 18:22).

The author adopts 'almsgiving' as a catalyst to alleviate the problem of poverty in his community. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, there was no indication that the rich man was oppressive towards the poor. The author did not record that he ordered Lazarus to leave or refuse him 'the crumbs' from his table. However, Whitley suggests that the sin of the rich man was his self-indulgence and indifference towards the need of the poor,³⁵⁷ the neglect to use his wealth to transform the human conditions of Lazarus.

Like the rich man, the doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel is based on the philosophy of self-indulgence. Prosperity preachers adopt the principle of "giving and receiving" and "sowing and reaping," to extract money from their congregation, even the poor.³⁵⁸ With the desire to prosper, the poor in the congregation offer the little they own to their wealthy leaders.

Bannor opines that the high rate of extortion of money by churches from members is a major cause of poverty in contemporary Christianity.³⁵⁹ He, further, explains that members offer to the church as seed offering, with the expectation of receiving financial blessings,

³⁵⁷ Gillian Whitley, *Riches and Poverty in Luke: The Call for Giving* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 2003), 46-53.

³⁵⁸ This is evident in the teachings of Duncan-Williams, Dug Heward-Mill and Mensah Otobil as they admonished their followers to give, in order to be blessed with prosperity.

³⁵⁹ Peter Bannor, "The Church and Corruption," www.ghanaweb.com (accessed on 8 June 2019)

monies, which could have served as capital to establish a business or to meet basic human needs.

In adherence to the poverty alleviation ‘agenda’ proposed by the author of Luke, giving must not be limited to the ‘church.’ Christian leaders must educate their followers to give alms to the poor, care for the widows, assist destitute, welcome orphans and assist the sick and the dying. Since the lack of basic needs is used as an indicator for the definition of poverty, giving of alms by Christians must become a tool to meet the basic needs of humanity. These include food, clothing, shelter and other basic social amenities. Wallis, for example, proposes that the church can work in conjunction with government in order to create a greater pool of resources to provide for the poor.³⁶⁰

However, it is the opinion of the researcher that helping the poor cannot be limited to food, shelter, clothing and basic social amenities; churches must also provide educational and training opportunities for the poor. In fact, education and vocational training could serve as a catalyst to pull families and communities out of the cycle of poverty. Churches can attain this goal by establishing schools and technical training institutes and the design and implementation of financial interventions (e.g. scholarships; micro-credit schemes; etc.) for easy accessibility by the poor.

Education and technical training can equip the poor to find employment, a state which can transform the status of the poor, as requested by the gospel. In the area of education, it is well-noted that prosperity preachers have established schools and even tertiary institutions such as Dominion University College (Duncan-Williams) and Central University (Mensah

³⁶⁰ J. Wallis, “Poverty in America,” <http://uspoverty.change.org> (accessed on April 11, 2019).

Otabil). However, considering the level of fees charged by private universities in Ghana, it raises the question on whether the poor can acquire their education in the universities established by the churches they belong to, and where they sow their ‘seed.’ Often the same people who support the establishment and keep sustaining church-based educational institutions cannot afford to educate their children in them.

B. Stewardship and Accountability

Despite the abundant natural resources and the availability of human capital, poverty is still a major challenge in Africa. One of the major causes of poverty in Africa is the issue of corruption. A situation where individuals employed as ‘stewards’ over the country’s resources, use their positions to illegally and immorally accumulate wealth for themselves at the expense of the state and the poor.

Although 71.2% of Ghana’s population are Christians, it is concretely established that the issue of corruption in Ghana is not just a perception but inherently pervasive as there has been various uncover on the issue.³⁶¹ The influx of the Prosperity Gospel which appears to be promoting materialism, greed and crass individualism is seen by some scholars as a cause of corruption in Africa. For example, Obadare states: “Unsurprisingly perhaps, a shallow understanding of prosperity often leads Pentecostalism into a moral rabbit hole in which churches more or less license flagrant criminality.”³⁶² He supports his statement with many concrete examples from the Nigerian newspapers. The situation is similar in Ghana, where newspapers report daily criminal cases concerning Christian leaders.

³⁶¹ For example, there has been various expose by investigative journalist Ana Aremeyaw Anas on corruption. These include the expose on the anti-galamsey task force, “Number 12” (expose on the Ghana Football Association), etc.

³⁶² Obadare, “Raising Righteous Billionaires,” 5-6.

Bannor opines that the best way of alleviating poverty by the church is to fight against the problem of corruption. However, the church is failing in the area of fighting corruption as a measure of alleviating poverty. The churches fail to investigate the sources of wealth by its leaders and members, hence, their failure to hold church members accountable for the mismanagement of resources entrusted to them by the state and private individuals. Offerings are accepted from people with questionable characters. Furthermore, the rich and wealthy in the church are hailed and classified as ‘blessed,’ irrespective of how they attained their wealth.

In the quest to deal with the challenge of poverty in the community of his audience (16:1-9), Luke challenges his readers to reflect on the accountability by stewards entrusted with the management of resources. The author emphasizes on the request by the master to the unjust steward to account for his stewardship (16:2). The act of accountability could serve as crisscross on mismanagement and corruption.

It is deduced that the issue of accountability is a major challenge that the text poses to reality. In fact, while in the Gospel of Luke accountability is inherent to stewardship, the theme is absent in the preaching of the Prosperity Gospel. Adhering to the teachings of Luke, churches must ensure its members are held accountable for the management of resources, in order to promote the culture of integrity in the Christian community. In the pursuit of upholding accountability, prosperity preachers have an important role to play in setting the right example by their conduct and activities. Prosperity teachers must work to create structures that will ensure transparency and accountability in the management of their churches’ financial resources.

Although the Prosperity Gospel stresses on wealth and prosperity, its leaders must invest more in teaching the congregation on godly values and virtues. Their teachings must inspire their members to rise to higher levels of transparency, accountability and integrity in their businesses and places of work. This could be achieved by teaching and deliberating more on fighting corruption and promoting social justice.

Another major concern identified from the analysis of the reality is the high level of attention associated to giving, “seed sowing” and offering. The high demand of giving by prosperity preachers is a contributing element to corruption in Ghana. Therefore, to fight corruption and promote accountability, prosperity preachers must ensure that fund-raising activities are carried out in an ethical and biblical manner, avoiding to put financial pressure on their members.

In conclusion, Luke’s emphasis on humans’ accountability to God on how they use the wealth entrusted to them was a measure to address the problem of poverty, as it is evidential in the parable of the unjust steward and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31). The issue of accountability and stewardship should, therefore, be considered by preachers as a measure to promote the appropriate use of resources owned by the state, church and private individuals in the contemporary society, hence alleviating poverty in Ghana.

4.4.3 Love and Solidarity

The theme of love and solidarity is pivotal in the theology of Luke’s Gospel probably because, as the textual analysis exposes, the poor were discriminated against and harassed by

the rich and powerful in the community. The analysis of the reality reveals a similar situation caused by the hatred of poverty — considered as a result of sin, a curse, an infectious disease — by prosperity adherers. This perception has led prosperity adherers to disassociate themselves from the poor. The situation has created both physical and psychological effects on the poor, hence adding to their plight.

Although prosperity preachers attach no importance to the social causes of poverty, such as inequality, underdevelopment, and stigmatization, the author of Luke views these conditions as very sensitive. Therefore, Luke promulgates the theology of solidarity and love for the poor, oppressed and vulnerable in the society. In his narrative, he highlights the ‘fraternization’ of Jesus with the poor, the marginalized and the sinners (6:20; 5:26:30, 7:39, 19:1-18). He also reveals the socialization of Jesus with the rich and powerful in the society (14:12; 18:18-27).

By these texts, Luke may have intended to admonish the rich audience to show solidarity to the marginalized. Additionally, Luke appeals directly to the rich and elite Christians who were ignoring or maltreating the poor to desist from such acts. He entreats them to ‘see’ the suffering of the poor (16:19-31) and to ‘invite’ the poor and outcast of society to share their life (14:13-14). Luke’s adoption of the philosophy of status reversal gives his audience something to reflect about (16:19-31): the parable of the rich man and Lazarus admonish the rich to consider the possibility to face the same destiny. The parable, then, emphasizes the message of solidarity for eschatological reasons.

In addition to solidarity, Luke beseeches his audience on the message of love and communitarianism. He entreated the rich to share their wealth with the poor in a spirit of sincerity,

honesty and goodwill. He emphasizes giving out of love and compassion to those in need (14:13-14).

The theology of Luke on love and solidarity demands a call to action for contemporary Prosperity Gospel adherers. Prosperity adherers must desist from associating wealth with faith in Jesus Christ, because it leads to favouritism. As noted, the Christian faith do not discriminate on the basis of finance, education and social status. Jesus moved among both the rich and the poor and he displayed fairness among both parties without favouritism. The Prosperity Gospel adherers, therefore, are wrong to afford peculiar benefits, blessings, affections and opportunities to people based on the car they drive, their designer shoes and their ability to give to the church. Prosperity preachers and their followers must treat members in the church with fairness and equality, irrespective of their financial status and social class. Finally, prosperity preachers must use their teachings to amend the perception of their followers on poverty, being seen as evil, a curse and infectious. The amendment of perception would expunge fear and create confidence among the rich to embrace the poor in society, and to recognize in any person the ontological “image and likeness” of God (Gen.1:27). The churches would, therefore, become discrimination-free, able to promote an atmosphere of love, solidarity and communitarianism.

4.4.4 The Message of the Gospel

The Gospel or “Good News” is the heart of Christianity. It is defined as a plan designed by God to save humanity from eternal separation from him. Basically, the ultimate goal of the Gospel is the attainment of salvation and the inheritance of God’s Kingdom by mankind. From the above background, it can be apprehended that the Gospel contains apocalyptic

and eschatological message. The previous analysis has, however, disclosed that the message of the Prosperity Gospel and the teaching of the Gospel of Luke on wealth and poverty present dissimilarities in relation to the eschatological horizon of salvation.

The teaching of Prosperity Gospel is located ‘now and today’, it is about what a person can gain in life on earth. Its emphasis is on the best an individual can possess while in the world, right now. However, Luke’s teaching on wealth and poverty is aimed at attaining eschatological goals. It focuses on the life the rich and poor must live on earth, which would reflect in the world after life. Furthermore, it admonishes the Christian community to have the ambition of accruing riches in Heaven.

On the premises of salvation and inheritance of God’s Kingdom as the ultimate goal of the Gospel, it requires that Christian preaching must stress salvation and issues relating to the world after life. Berko asserts that “a message of the Gospel that is preached which fails to admonish humanity on acquiring salvation could be considered as murder, as it could lead to eternal destruction and death of followers of such messages.”³⁶³

The teachings of the author of Luke must, therefore, serve as a wakeup call for the adherers and preachers of the Prosperity Gospel. Prosperity preachers and their followers must apprehend the view that the earth ‘is a temporal destination’ for the existence of humanity. Therefore, whatever a person accumulate on earth is temporal and would be lost when he/she dies.

³⁶³Charles Berko, “The Church and Salvation;” www.myjoyonline.com (accessed on 27 June 2019).

4.5 Conclusion

From the engagement of the reality and the text, it is comprehended that Luke does not consecrate poverty but indicates solidarity and justice as ways out of poverty. Together, he underlined the risk of transforming riches into idols. Luke advocates for the detachment from possessions, and for the solidarity with the poor as steps towards the holistic development of the community, with the ultimate aim to create a community where there will be no poor, as ‘prophecy’ of the kingdom of God (Acts 4:34-35).

Luke beseeches his readers to avoid the consecration of wealth and riches. He repudiates the retributive theology of considering wealth and riches as blessings or sign of faith; on the contrary, he views riches and wealth as a possible obstacle to salvation. Interpreting the call to action of the text, the researcher proposes solidarity with the poor, transparency and accountability as measures to address the challenge of poverty in the contemporary society.

The research, further, establishes the importance of the Gospel to the Christian faith. The Gospel has the vital goal to offer eternal salvation to humanity. It must, therefore, be protected to avoid distortion, and Christians should consider any message that regards material possession as its prime focus, but fails to persuade Christians to desire, pursue or treasure eternal salvation as a ‘false’ Gospel. Luke, in fact, outlines the key characteristic of the message of the Gospel, which is its focus on salvation and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

Although Luke emphasizes that the message of the Gospel is about salvation, the researcher does not refute the view that God desires the integral development of all his children, as propagated by adherers of the Prosperity Gospel. The message of material blessing and

healing is still relevant to the congregation, as some church members are suffering with financial and health issues.

However, the blessings of God are not limited to material prosperity, and cannot be achieved through ‘magic’ promise or the exploitation of the poor. Being at peace with God by doing His will, the joy and assurance of salvation, and the certainty that God is with us even in situation of suffering, sickness and poverty, are forms of blessings. Therefore, poverty must not be perceived as a curse as thought by the prosperity theology, but a situation of life that should challenge the Christian community to put in place strategies towards the holistic development of every person and the whole person.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The final chapter of the research is divided into three sections, namely: the summary, conclusion and recommendations. The summary offers a brief account of the research guided by the statement of the problem and research questions. The conclusion outlines the main findings of the research, whilst recommendations have been offered by the researcher to suggest further studies and to aid to restructure the teachings and theology of the Prosperity Gospel.

5.2 Summary

The research aimed at engaging the teaching on wealth and poverty of the Gospel according to Luke and of prosperity preaching in Ghana, with the idea that the interpretation of a text is not complete until it is made alive and relevant in a specific context.

In order to investigate the problem, the research addressed the following questions:

- a) What is the teaching of Luke's Gospel on wealth and poverty?
- b) How is the doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana related to the Lukan teaching on wealth and poverty?

To answer these questions, the researcher employed the communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa as theoretical framework. The framework follows a tripartite step approach: exegesis of the reality, exegesis of the text and engagement of the reality and the text.

Following the framework, the researcher starts to examine the teaching of the prosperity Gospel in Ghana.

Firstly, the research unveils the definition of the Prosperity Gospel and its historical background. The Prosperity Gospel is considered as a trans-denominational teaching which emphasizes the ‘blessings’ of health, wealth and material prosperity. Believers could acquire the blessings through positive confession, seed sowing and giving of offerings supported by faith.

The Prosperity Gospel is associated with contemporary neo-Pentecostals/Charismatics churches. Historically, the prosperity preaching is ascribed to early Evangelical and Pentecostal preachers of the nineteenth centuries in USA. The preachers include Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson and E.W. Kenyon. They view prosperity as a covenant and the realization of the divine promise of God to man.

In West-Africa, prosperity preaching was popularized by archbishop Benson Idahosa, who embraced the message of the Prosperity Gospel during his study at Christ for All Nations Bible College, Dallas, Texas. He led the prosperity crusade when he returned to Africa after his studies in the USA. After the establishment of All Nations for Christ Bible institute in Nigeria, Idahosa offered scholarship to some African preachers to be trained in his seminary. The gesture fuelled the spread of the prosperity theology in Africa.

Ghanaian preachers such as Duncan-Williams and Charles Agyin Asare benefited from his scholarship to study in All Nations for Christ Bible Institute and began promoting the message of the Prosperity Gospel in Ghana. The message was well received on the background of the economic crisis that affected the Country in the 1980s and 1990s.

From the definition and historical background of the prosperity theology it is deduced that ‘poverty’ became the target of the prosperity message. Prosperity adherers consider poverty as an element conflicting with Christians life, perceived as the result of sin: it is evil and a ‘contagious’ disease. It is, therefore, outside the will of God for a Christian to be poor. Quoting 3 John 2, prosperity preachers proclaim that it is the divine will of God that all believers must prosper and enjoy wealth, beheld as part of the seven-fold redemptive heritage received by Christians through the death of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:9). It is further stated that Christ died for the Christian to live, was beaten for the Christian to be healed and became poor for the believer to enjoy wealth.

The research examined the prosperity theology of prominent prosperity preachers in Ghana. It is observed that the prosperity principles of Duncan-Williams are essentially to give to a person who is blessed — referring to himself — in order to receive the blessings of wealth and prosperity; and to give towards the propagation of the Gospel. He defends his position by emphasizing that there are no blessings in giving to the poor, as giving to the poor is not the solution to the problem of poverty. Heward-Mills develops his prosperity theology on three hermeneutical principles: “Name It”; “Claim it”; and “Take it”. However, the guarantee of receiving what is desired is through the application of the ‘seed principle.’

Dissimilar to the prosperity view of Duncan-Williams and Heward-Mills, Mensah Otabil combines prosperity with Black liberation theology, to demonstrate that the black race is ‘blessed’ with wealth and prosperity. Mensah Otabil refutes the claim that the black race is cursed and preaches that prosperity is a ‘blessing’ but required human responsibility; hard work, saving attitude and economic planning.

Following the second step of the framework, the research analysed the theology of Luke's gospel on poverty and wealth. The author of the Gospel employs the Greek word πτωχός to designate poverty with three nuances. Literally, the word πτωχός is used to signify a beggar or a person who lacks and are in need (16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8 and 21:3). In the spiritual term, πτωχός depicts the receivers of the Gospel and the Kingdom (4:18; 7:22). Finally, sociologically, πτωχός depicts the underprivileged and the outcast in the society.

On the theme on wealth, the author uses the Greek word πλουσίους, to designate a person who possesses a large fertile land (12:13-31) and to define a lavish and luxurious lifestyle (16:19-21). Πλουσίους defines, in summary, an ownership of high level of investment, properties, assets and money by a person (16:1-13).

The researcher, further, dealt with an exegetical study on Luke 16:1-31. From the study, it is observed that the author guides his readers to reflect the importance of the correct use of wealth, and on the attitude of the rich towards the poor. He, further, elaborates on issues relating to wealth acquisition, God and His Kingdom. Jesus entreated His disciples to use their earthly wealth to make friends with the poor and to gain 'eternal wealth'; he advised them against the idolization of wealth; against loyalty to mammon rather than God.

Finally, the author exposes the attitude of the rich towards the poor through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The author highlights the moral failure of the rich man which led him to hades after his death. Through the parable, the author calls his readers to consider themselves as 'stewards' of the wealth entrusted to them by God. He, further, entreats his audience to give to the poor, and provides solution to address the challenge of retribution theology followed by the Pharisees.

The third and the final stage of the framework engaged the text and the reality in a dialogue. It sought to provide solutions to the gap created between the teachings of wealth and poverty in the Gospel of Luke and the contemporary teaching of the Prosperity Gospel. The researcher observed that there are some disparities between the teaching on wealth and poverty in Luke and the theology of the Prosperity Gospel.

The author of the third Gospel challenges the perception of Prosperity Gospel adherers of perceiving poverty as a curse. Luke presents poverty as a state of self-denial to serve as a true disciple of Jesus Christ, a state where a person leaves behind his/her properties, assets, wealth and possessions, to serve as a follower of Jesus Christ. As true disciples, Luke entreats his audience and readers to use their wealth and earthly riches ‘to rebirth new disciples’ (16:9). Luke beseeches Christians to contribute their wealth towards the propagation of the Gospel and use their riches to make friends for the Kingdom of God. On addressing the challenge of poverty, Luke proposes solidarity with the poor; stewardship and accountability as holistic measures to alleviate poverty in society.

Luke’s proposal differs from the prosperity teaching on giving. It is observed that adherents place much emphasis on giving, seed sowing and offering to the church, with less prominence on sharing with the poor. Luke, further, entreats his community and his readers, to serve as good stewards to the resources entrusted to them by God, as they will be held accountable. The warning must serve as a wakeup call for prosperity preachers to establish organizational structures to promote stewardship and accountability in the church. Such a decision will serve as an example for the congregation to emulate, by serving as good stewards in their secular jobs and positions.

In addition, Luke's theology on love and solidarity is said to overcome the prosperity adheres' hatred of poverty and the poor. The Christian community is entreated to love and show solidarity to the poor. Finally, Luke discloses the message of the inheritance of the Kingdom of God as the core message of the Gospel, a theology that contradicts the Prosperity Gospel teachings which is characterized by a 'here-now theology'. The doctrine of Luke, therefore, constitutes a call to action on Christians to accept the inheritance of the Kingdom of God as their foremost objective.

5.3 Conclusion

The thesis examined the teachings of the Gospel of Luke on the theme of wealth and poverty and the contemporary teachings of the Prosperity Gospel. From the research, it is discovered that wealth and prosperity are not evil in themselves. Jesus did not condemn riches. However, what is at stake in the Lukan Gospel is the relationship with money: churches and Christians cannot be slaves to Mammon (16:13). The call is to become rich in God (12:21) by embracing fully the poverty of Jesus and the way of the Gospel and by making a place for the poor in one's life (14:12-24).

It is noted that the parables and personal interactions in Luke against riches do not simply condemn riches. What the parables and teachings condemn is how people seek wealth and how they use it. In other words, what is at stake is the warning against greed, selfishness, unbridled consumerism, and enslavement to material and worldly realities to the forgetfulness of God and one's neighbour.

Therefore, despite the weaknesses of the prosperity theology, the researcher cannot totally question the authenticity of the message of prosperity preachers. Prosperity adherers are

wrong in considering wealth as prove of faith. However, critics of the prosperity may also be wrong to ‘canonize’ poverty and to present a God who does not desire the prosperity of his faithful and does not propose solution to the problem of poverty. Nevertheless, scholars need to oppose the fundamentalist interpretation of the scripture and the ‘manipulation’ of biblical texts to support prosperity teaching.

It is imperative that the message of the Gospel is preached ‘in context,’ explained correctly; above all, the call to action or application of the message must be in line with the actual meaning of the text. The church must stand for the truth as it is postulated in the Bible, which is the optimum of all doctrinal discussions. A continual attempt to manipulate the actual message of the Bible by prosperity adherers has the prospect to cause inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the fundamental teachings of Christianity.

Prosperity preachers, therefore, could add value to their prosperity theology when properly constructed. Their Gospel could focus on Christ on the cross with the promise of deliverance of sin for all through His power. Deliverance is not only an action of God, but the experience of the deliverance of God needs to move disciples to actively work for the deliverance of fellow humans and the world. Therefore, for prosperity preachers to be biblical, there is the:

- need to change the idea of prosperity, moving towards a holistic prosperity- based teaching not on individualism, but on solidarity;
- need to be aware of the socio-economic causes of poverty; to advocate for social justice and for a society free from corruption and nepotism; and

- need to incorporate the eschatological dimension that is an integral part of the Christian message.

5.4 Recommendations

The research reveals the theology of the Prosperity Gospel as one of the twenty-first century challenges in Ghanaian Christianity, a practice that promotes and justifies material accumulation. Selected biblical texts are employed by prosperity proponents as proof-text for their opinions. The hermeneutical approach to Scripture by these proponents is literal, often fundamentalist and incoherent.

At the end of the research, the researcher articulates some recommendations for both academic and pastoral purposes. From the academic point of view, the researcher proposes some areas that need further study.

- a) More Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches should be considered for research in relation to the interpretative approach to Scripture, to unravel the real problem of fundamentalism in the reading of Scriptures.
- b) There must be more academic contribution to the subject of wealth and poverty, considering the narrative approach to Scripture in order to forestall the fundamentalist reading of the Bible.
- c) More research to address the popular perception that people who attain hierarchical positions, especially pastors, are ‘untouchable’ and ‘controlling’ in order to prevent these leaders from misleading the lives of adherents with teaching that are contrary to scripture.

For pastoral purposes, the researcher proposes the following:

- a) There is the need for relevant and responsible theological education among Ghanaian charismatic preachers for a better understanding and interpretation of Scripture.
- b) Members of the Ghanaian Charismatic community should frequently engage in biblical, social, academic or communal workshop. This will not only encourage them to be open, critically minded, assertive, but also develop their acumen to prevent fundamentalist approach to Scripture which usually generates intolerant and hostility towards people of other beliefs.
- c) Christian organisations such as the Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council and National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC) should engage communities in Bible discussion to educate Ghanaian Christians about the appropriate use of Scripture.
- d) Finally, the researcher calls for an integrative and inclusive approach to interpretation of Scripture by Pentecostal/Charismatic Preachers, an approach able to consider the historical, cultural and contextual reality of text.

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