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Poverty, prosperity and faith: An analysis of the prosperity gospel in the neo-Pentecostal church Winners Chapel International in Bamenda, Cameroon.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated solely to the Lord God Almighty whom my fathers serve and whom I serve. If it had not been for your mercies, I would have been long consumed. Thank you, Lord, for letting the boundary lines fall for me in pleasant places. Indeed, when you turned the captivity of Zion, it was like a dream and my mouth was filled with laughter.

Abstract

Cameroon has undergone a period of economic crises, which has rendered its citizens extremely poor of which the UN Millennium development goal has its objective to eradicate extreme poverty in Sub Saharan Africa. As a researcher, I wanted to find out how the prosperity gospel preached to the adherents has influenced their views towards poverty and prosperity. Poverty is not predominantly an issue of a certain group of people but an international challenge, it is paradoxical seeing that prosperity gospel is rapidly growing in Cameroon.

This dissertation critically reviews the theological interpretation of poverty and prosperity in Winners Chapel International Bamenda. Prosperity theology has been greatly criticized maintaining that it is irresponsible, promotes idolatry, it is contrary to the Bible and that the preachers of this theology quote scriptures in a certain way to argue their claim.

A qualitative study with the application of semi-structured interview was conducted in Bamenda. This research discovered that the prosperity gospel has a remarkable influence on the lives of the adherents who view themselves as having observed an economic change because they worship in this church. The adherents believe it is their covenant right to prosper because God wills prosperity for all God's children. Their belief is that if they play their part God will equally fulfil his part. Poverty is viewed as a combination of wrong mentality and wrong covenant. Their belief is that with faith and the right application of the covenant poverty can be eluded.

This research was governed tremendously by the exponential growth of Pentecostalism and the advent of the gospel of prosperity in Cameroon notably in Bamenda an Anglophone region. This research has shown that poverty is not only multidimensional and complex but has several fundamental causes. Urban areas in Cameroon are facing major challenges arising from globalization, demographic changes and migration of the young well-trained people. A conclusion cannot be drawn mainly that poverty is because of wrong covenant and mentality.

Abbreviation

AIC: African Independent Churches

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

DAC: Development Assistance Committee

ECAM: Cameroonian Household Survey

HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

US: United States

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

Figure

Figure 1: Map of Cameroon (Location of Winners Chapel)

Figure 2: The summary of the relationship between poverty and prosperity in Winners Chapel Context.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

One of the main concerns of development has been to eradicate poverty towards an achievement of universal well-being. It has not been the case because for the past 50 years, many people remain hopelessly poor. The part of the world mostly affected by poverty is the Sub Saharan Africa. After Asia, Africa is the second world's largest continent and according to IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural development), more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty. Poverty is a complex phenomenon because it involves what Mats Hårman (2010) terms both material and nonmaterial aspect of life. Therefore, understanding poverty in Africa will require an analytical framework with different dimension. Poverty is not just a lack of finance it is of course, any lack that reduces a person's status in life; and deprives them of social acclamation and respect.

Christianity in Africa is experiencing an explosive growth mostly especially with the Pentecostal churches or neo-Pentecostals, with estimate showing about 16000 people becoming Christians in Africa and 7500 people ceasing to be one in the West (Gifford, 1990, p.383). There has been a dramatic shift in Christianity from the global North to the global South. John Mbiti the father of African theology holds that Africans are generally religious as such it is not strange that Christianity is booming in Africa. Over a period of one century Pentecostalism is estimated to be over 500 million adherents and Paul Gifford terming it a 'paradigm shift' with Africa experiencing a tremendous change in Christianity. Pentecostal movement is mostly traced to North America from Los Angeles and flowed around the world, as Kalu puts it, it is 'a religion made to travel' and upholds a strong missionary impulse within its genes (Kalu, 2008, p.11-13). Peter Berger 2006 promotes that Pentecostalism is the fastest growing religion and contemporary Pentecostalism is dated around the 20th century. Anderson 2014 promotes that older Pentecostal churches have aided in the emergence of new ones and this form of Christianity appeals to the new generation of Africans. Christianity as noted by William Kay 2011 reached Africa early because of the record of Acts 8:27. According to him African religion is centered on animism and ancestral spirits thus Africans could easily accommodate Pentecostalism since they both acknowledge the spiritual realm (Kay, 2011, p. 46-47)

Historically churches in the 1970's or what is termed main line churches demonstrated their concern for souls. They preached the poverty theology which promotes that possessions are a curse and condemned materialism in every ramification and little attachment should be

made with the world notes Adogame 2011. By 1980, a new form of Pentecostalism emerged with a different disposition. They preached a theology of affluence or what is termed the prosperity gospel or health and wealth gospel or better yet some call it the ‘success gospel’. Cameroon like many other African countries have experienced an explosion in Pentecostal church growth and brings along with it the prosperity message. In this study, I looked at Winners Chapel Bamenda, a neo Pentecostal church commonly known as a ‘prosperity church’ or a ‘prosperity oasis’ in an urban area where poverty is not a strange phenomenon.

Chapter one gives an overview of the entire study, chapter two brings to light the existing literature on this subject, chapter three is the methodology to adequately get an efficient data for the study, chapter four is the theology of David Oyedepo and chapter five is the presentation and analysis and chapter six the conclusion and suggestion for further studies.

1.2 Background to the studies

Religion has been ignored within the field of development until recently. Development has quickly been associated with modernization and secularization. This has been described as a ‘development taboo’. According to Gerrie ter Haar 2014, people’s religious worldview as far as development is concerned is not only based exclusively on material terms nor economic terms. He notes that according to religious believers, growth and health goes hand in hand with material prosperity. As observed there is extreme poverty in Sub Saharan Africa and equally a rapid growth in neo Pentecostal Christianity with its emphasis on prosperity that has literally raised eyebrows. Pentecostalism has been defined from sociological, historical, phenomenological, and theological perspectives as such scholars still talk of the complexity of defining Pentecostalism. Corten and Marshall-Fratani said sociologist of religion did not create the term Pentecostalism as an ‘analytical abstraction’ to group people who practice and adhere to a set of doctrines bearing a close family resemblance; because the term itself is often ignored or rejected by believers (Corten and Marshall- Fratani, 2001, p.4). Adogame 2011 promotes that the lack of definition is a result of the elastic and broad understanding of the phenomena and as such, it is generally and broadly used.

Cameroon like many countries in the Sub Saharan Africa has experienced an explosion in Pentecostalism. Lovemore Togarasei (2011) article looks at it as very paradoxical within a continent that is known as the home of the World’s poorest people. Every African country is said to have a unique history of Pentecostalism which is partly because of different colonial experiences, different religious background and incomplete mission history (Anderson, 2014 p. 67). The origin of Pentecostalism is mostly traced to the

event in 1906 in Azusa Street. Ogbu Kalu is very categorical when he says African Pentecostalism did not originate from the Azusa Street and cannot be an extension of American electronic churches. However, Pentecostalism has experienced an explosive growth; to Paul Gifford (2007) article, Pentecostal churches have this in common a focus on 'achieving success therefore discussing African Pentecostalism without laying adequate emphasis on success is like discussing computers without mentioning soft wares'.

The church has been playing a very dynamic role historically that is by giving to the poor, caring for the widows, the sick, orphans and equally visiting the sick and dying persons. Allan Anderson 2010 promotes that Pentecostalism owes its success to the fact that not only does it address the spiritual aspects of people's life equally issues caused by modernization processes are addressed. According to William kay 2011, through missionary agencies, Pentecostalism became global. To him it was because they planted self-sustaining congregation and they adapted local culture.

The British anthropologist Simon Coleman is one of the first scholars to observe the international dimension of the prosperity gospel though he did not put so much interest in Africa. The 'prosperity gospel' or 'doctrine of prosperity' or 'blab it and grab it' or 'name it and claim it' or 'positive confession theology' or 'dominion theology' or 'the faith gospel' is considered a new wave of contemporary Pentecostalism. The characteristics of early Pentecostal churches were speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* and a retreat from the world has now shifted to an emphasis of miracles, prosperity and divine health in the 1980s. According to the prosperity gospel God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of his son Jesus Christ, therefore every Christian can share in the victory Christ accomplished by his dead as such sin, sickness and poverty has no hold over a believer. When the prosperity gospel is mentioned names like E.W. Kenyon, A.A. Allen. Oral Roberts, T. L: Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, John Avanzini with each of them having played a vital role articulating this gospel (Gifford, 2001, p.62). Ogbu kalu 2008 puts it aptly that prosperity message flowed into Africa from many places beside the United States with preachers from Southeast Asia, the West Indies, and the United Kingdom. Some African pastors equally propagated it within the continent through Bible schools.

With the explosion of new churches in the 1980s, the fire convention held by Reinhard Bonnke in Harare in 1986 became a crucial example of prosperity theology insertion point into Africa. Benson Idahosa (1938-1998) of Nigeria is regarded as one of the pioneer preachers of the prosperity doctrine; he studied at the Christ for the Nations Bible Institute in Dallas. Benson Idahosa's flamboyant career made it attainable; he awarded scholarships to

African students in his All Nations Bible Seminary Benin City thus serving as a breeding camp for adherents of the prosperity gospel. A combination of Benson Idahosa and Enoch Adeboye comprise David Oyedepo's theological path of which after an 18-hour vision was called to 'liberate the world from all oppressions of the devil through the preaching of the word of faith'. Oyedepo has a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship to achieve material success. Oyedepo's ministry is known as The Living Faith Church International commonly known as Winners Chapel with the headquarters in Nigeria. A church presumably the largest church in the world with 50000 seats has a local branch in urban Bamenda (Drønen, 2013, p.46). The Anglophone part of Cameroon has acted as a gateway of Pentecostalism, most Pentecostal churches stem from Nigeria and then moved subsequently to other parts of the country.

According to the anthropologist Akoko Mbe Cameroon has experienced a bloom in Pentecostalism because of the economic crisis experienced by the nation. He illustrates that the gospel of asceticism, which was a main concern of main line churches is now the gospel of accumulation. He goes further to say some have used the economic message as a strategy to escape economic hardship. That is some churches take advantage of venerable congregation who are desperate for a change in their economic situation by preaching a gospel which says God wants everyone to be rich (Akoko, 2007, p.4). Asamoah-Gyadu equally says the problem with the prosperity theology is that it is built on a selective hermeneutical method; as such, the interpretation of the scripture is the basic problem (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p.215). David Maxwell upholds that Pentecostalism in Africa or 'born-again' explosion also coincides or could be said to have been stimulated by the beginning of its socio-economic malaise, external debts contraction in the state, and not forgetting the dramatic population rise and food scarcity.

The Hebrew tradition has a detailed typology of poverty and six broad causes and the Old Testament's diagnosis of poverty draws a distinction between external, internal and moral causes. Poverty as such did not result from lack of money but break down of moral orders. Prosperity was viewed as a full range of God's peace, which included equity, justice, righteous acts and responsible or good governance (Kalu 2008, p. 99, 257). The causes of poverty vary from one country to another with over 40 percent of Cameroonians living below national poverty line according to the World Bank. According to Hopper poverty is shaped depending on how it is defined, he promotes that Amartya Sen (1981, 2001) looks at poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely low income. Therefore, the measurement of poverty is done typically at household level and it is not enough if inequality

and gender issues are not put into consideration (Hopper 2012, p. 17). Poverty increased significantly in Cameroon from 1984-1996 and Cameroon suffered an economic and social crisis which was blamed on poor macro-economic. In Cameroon unfortunately, researchers have based their focus on the fact that Pentecostal churches preaching the prosperity gospel are out to dupe the Christians off the little economic resources. Paul Gifford on the other hand presents prosperity preachers as entrepreneurs having successful enterprises with others viewing them as role models (Adogame 2011, p. 158-159).

1.3 Motivation of Study

Pentecostals came with the understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and subsequently an evidence of speaking in tongues or glossolalia. This was rather strange in my hometown Bamenda that was categorized by mainly the mainstream churches. The mainstream churches were considered appropriate and the Pentecostal churches had a new doctrine and as such termed sects, that is a sect with a bad connotation. Whereas to Aldridge a sect is a gathered community of people who described themselves by exclusive terms as saints or elects. People become members of this sect by their own free will as such a community of committed believers (Aldridge, 2013, p. 98).

Growing up I saw Pentecostal churches organize their meetings in a single room with very people in attendance. They made a lot noise with their songs, they clap their hands and spoke in tongues or prayed very loud. These provoked citizens in that vicinity and one could see literal hatred at times on the faces of the people. Most people who attended these meetings were economically poor and were often provoked or insulted out rightly. After a while, I realized it was not so anymore, the poorly dressed Christians who came around for evangelism were no longer looking poor but there had been a dramatic change. What is said to have happened was the prodding question. I had this mind-blowing question, had their God decided to start giving them financial blessing or was wealth no longer considered worldly!

As time evolved the Pentecostal position on wealth and poverty changed, a group of neo Pentecostals encouraged not only spiritual growth but material growth as well. Historically Pentecostals distinguished themselves from mainstream churches by preaching the doctrine of holiness and the theology of poverty. My encounter and fellowship with Pentecostals changed my perspective greatly and I heard a pastor say, 'what you don't understand abuse is inevitable'. Pentecostals churches were regarded as the church for the poor and within a short period of time the language changed totally, pastors are now counted amongst the wealthiest people in the world in the Forbes magazine. I am aware of the challenges and criticisms

centered on the prosperity gospel preached in Bamenda-Cameroon and I want to be able to contribute to the already existing knowledge and present the views and attitudes of the Christians as someone fascinated by the doctrine.

1.4 Research Question

This study seeks to explore how neo Pentecostal teaching on prosperity has influenced the attitude of the adherents towards poverty and prosperity in urban Bamenda, a city where poverty is not a strange phenomenon. The prosperity gospel is not a new phenomenon. It did not begin in Winners Chapel Bamenda, where I conducted the study. Bamenda has experience an in flood of Pentecostal churches originating from the neighboring Nigeria. The gospel of asceticism has taken another turn and the health and wealth, or the success gospel is now preached to a people who are undergoing a trend of economic deprivation. It has become very vital to understand if this Pentecostal church, which is commonly called a ‘prosperity church’ has influenced the views of the adherents towards poverty and prosperity in this denomination. Very little research has been done so far on Pentecostalism in urban Bamenda to access the experience of the Christians who attend a prosperity practicing doctrine. This issue has triggered the desire to understand the shift from a doctrine of asceticism to accumulation and to what extent they believe it has been beneficial to them.

In other to find answers to the research questions, it is vital to probe into the understanding of Pentecostal theory, the prosperity gospel and its ability to effect economic change as such giving a clear understanding of the attitude and views of the Christians towards poverty. To understand the potential benefit of the prosperity gospel and its implication to the Christians, the following question served as guideline for this dissertation.

- What is the theological interpretation of poverty/ prosperity in Winners Chapel Bamenda?

It is imperative to explore the theoretical and practical framework of Winners Chapel Bamenda towards poverty and prosperity to be able to answer the research question. To adequately build upon the literature review, the following sub questions are considered;

- How do the adherents of Winners Chapel view poverty?
- How has the prosperity gospel taught by Winners Chapel influenced the attitude of the adherents according to them?
- Do the adherents experience change in economic state because of their attendance in Winners Chapel?

1.5 Aim of study

The fastest growing segment of the Pentecostal movement is the neo Pentecostals that emerged around the 1970s and are quickly identified by their independence, large and loosely affiliated churches. According to Philip Jenkins (2010), Pentecostals have impactfully shaped the global Christianity. There is no doubt that there is a significant connection between the prosperity gospel preached and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa where Bamenda is situated. Drønen 2013 believes globalization has spread the influence of Pentecostalism. To him Globalization has affected the migration of youths and if that be the case then globalization has aided in the mass spread of Pentecostalism. To Yong 2012, because of globalization trends, the prosperity message is orchestrated from developed regions and telecasted to majority of the world (Yong, 2012, p.27).

The main aim of this study is find out, if the prosperity gospel preached in an urban area affected by poverty has changed the attitude and views of the people being preached too, since a lot of criticism is centered on prosperity gospel flourishing in Africa a continent noted for abject poverty.

1.5 Research Methodology

The two main types of research strategies are quantitative and qualitative. A qualitative research strategy was used for this study because it is adequate for a social science study as such getting an understanding of the views of the Christians at Winners Chapel towards poverty. A qualitative research is a research that usually emphasizes the collection and analysis of data.

I will not be carrying out any scientific test to prove my findings, so I prefer the qualitative research strategy (Bryman 2012, p. 36, 380pp). A qualitative strategy enabled me to study the Christians in their own cultural environment using an inductive study of which the relationship between the theory and research can be seen explicitly.

The research followed an epistemological position as interpretivism and an ontological position of constructivism. According to Bryman what should be regarded as acceptable knowledge and the nature of the social entities (Bryman 2012, p. 27pp).

1.6 Method of data collection

A case study design is often appropriate for qualitative strategy as such the methods for generation an intensive and detailed examination of a single case is participant observation

and a semi-structured interview. As a participant observer, I immersed myself in Winners Chapel Bamenda for a period thus getting a specific focus of the culture of Winners Chapel. Giving the Christians the advantage of their surroundings, I could quickly access their testimonies, messages and their views as influenced by the prosperity gospel towards poverty. It will be an advantage because I will understand the culture, norms and values of Winners Chapel Bamenda (Bryman 2012, p. 68, p 432-436). According to Silverman, I will be able to better acquaint myself with the Christians as I participate and observe them in their own setting thereby having first-hand information and collect data in a systematic manner (Silverman, 2011, p.114).

A semi-structured interview will give me rich data from different perspectives, therefore to acquire rich detailed answers and flexible response from the interviewee a semi structure interview is appropriate for the study. It will be possible for me interview a person more than once or severally to get the exact information. Questions not included in the interview guide can be asked as I pick up relevant information given by the interviewee and the questions may not follow the exact outline as on the schedule that way interviewees have a leeway on how to reply as promoted by Bryman. According to Bryman, using the semi-structured interview has an added advantage because rambling is allowed or going off a tangent is encouraged thus giving into what the interviewer sees as relevant and important. Therefore, with the semi-structured interview I will understand rather than generalize the findings (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). The people I chose for the interview are the pastors, associate pastors, home cell leaders (mostly the female) and equally those who gave testimonies of financial change.

1.7 Method of Data Analysis

Bryman edges that qualitative strategy comprises two approaches of data analysis, the analytic induction and grounded theory. Grounded theory is a mostly widely used framework for analyzing qualitative data. Grounded theory allows the date to speak for itself; as such ‘theory is an outcome of an investigation rather than something that precedes it’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 384-387). According to Silverman, the purpose of grounded theory is ‘theory construction, rather than description or application of existing theories’ (Silverman 2011, p. 67). Therefore, theoretical ideas will emerge out of data collected thus it is not theory but an approach to the generation of theory.

Bryman says, grounded theory is promoted by Stauss and Corbin 1998 as ‘theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research processes as

such data collection, analysis and theory stand in close relation to another' (Bryman 2012, p.387). This choice therefore is appropriate because theoretical ideas will emerge out of data collected.

This chapter has given an overview of the thesis paper; it provides an understanding of the background to the study that is highlighting aspects of Pentecostalism, the prosperity gospel and poverty. The motivation of the study is from a very personal standpoint, the method applied for an efficient study is highlighted, the why and what was chosen to carry out the study and how efficient or appropriate the technique used is illustrated in this chapter. The work outline of this dissertation can be seen in appendix 3.

Chapter Two

2.0 Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Peter Beyer 2006 aptly says, Pentecostalism in less than a century has witnessed a growth of over 500 million adherents; this explosive growth occurred after the second World War and it is notably in the global south. Analyzing Pentecostalism in Cameroon and most especially in Bamenda an urban town in Cameroon can be quite challenging. This is because, so many scholars have focused their attention on Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe with so very little said about Cameroon. In this chapter, I will focus on what has been said about Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel. The origin of Pentecostalism will be shown and narrowed down to Africa, the typology of Pentecostalism in Africa, and how the prosperity gospel came to Africa. Most of the literature on Pentecostalism in Africa will dwell on Nigeria because Nigeria acts as a focal point in Africa though there are some significant difference between Nigeria and Cameroon. Asamoah–Gyadu emphasizes how important it is to regard Christianity in Nigeria when studying African Christianity because references can be made to the phenomenological, historical and theological development; Nigeria is considered the fifth largest country with Christian population in the world thus greatly affecting global Christianity and greatly applicable to other African countries for example, Cameroon (Ogungbile, 2014, p.133). There are many mega churches in Nigeria with branches in Cameroon. Most of the Pastors in charge of these churches are from Nigeria as can be seen with the case of Winners Chapel Bamenda. The concept of poverty will equally be seen in this chapter and then shown in Cameroon and the relationship between globalization and Pentecostalism will be seen.

2.2 Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism with its charismatic penumbra has been observed to have had a dramatic development over the century; and noted to have transformed Christianity. When Pentecostals are mentioned the incident in the upper room in the book of Acts 2 is remembered; and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues or glossolalia is appreciated (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 12). William W. Kay 2011 describes Pentecostalism as a renewal movement within Christianity being a continuation of a series of renewal movements from the earliest days of the church. Nils Bloch-Hoell the Norwegian theologian said the Pentecostal movement had its roots in the Holiness movement and this movement

was a radical opponent of modernity, coming into existence in a period of ‘inter-confessional revival and holiness movement’. The Pentecostal movement can be dated as far back as 1886 during a holiness revival. Groups and individuals scattered around the world had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit manifested by speaking in tongues (Bloch-Hoell, 1964, p.18). Religious groups around the 19th century anticipated the return of Christ as such revival meetings were held constantly.

2.3 The controversy

According to the Swiss theologian Walter J. Hollenweger, historically there is a debate on who is the root of the Pentecostal modern movement; whether it is William Joseph Seymour the black ecumenist and pioneer of Los Angeles revival or Charles Parham Fox known as the ‘inventor’ of the doctrine of tongues (Hollenweger, 1997, p 20-23). In response to this dilemma, Robert Jr. says Seymour William (a former slave and student of Parham’s Bible school from Centerville Louisiana, (who taught himself how to read and write) viewed Charles Parham as ‘his Father in this gospel of the kingdom’. Parham anyways rejected Seymour’s work when he visited Los Angeles in 1906 saying it was seemingly and fanatic for Seymour to send out missionaries who were untested. Seymour’s work was considered a counterfeit and Parham travelled the country denouncing William. Finally, several factors worked against Parham who firstly sent out few workers or missionaries, he had power struggles with W.F Carothers and Wilbur Voliva and resigned as the projector of the movement. Finally, he was arrested and charged with sodomy and it ruined his reputation though the charges were later dropped. The 1906 Azusa street narrative under the patronage of William Seymour became the dominant story line throughout the world (Robert Jr., 2014, p.20).

William Seymour the holiness preacher from Houston to Los Angeles started his congregation in an abandoned stable on Azusa street has now mushroomed the globe. Douglas Petersen (2006) terms the Azusa street revival the locus for the Pentecostal movement. The mission of the early Pentecostals at the Azusa Street was to restore the church to the same energy or vigor as the Christian faith from inception. The Azusa street revival had a symbolic role in Pentecostalism expansion, but it is not considered its sole origin as stipulated by some authors. By 1970, Walter Hollenweger in his research largely affirms this origin and to Anderson 2014, the primacy of the Azusa Street revival is the ‘heart’ of Pentecostalism. According to Joe Creech (1995) in his article ‘Vision of Glory’, historians, social scientist and theologians have had a mythical understanding of the Pentecostal origin.

Kalu Ogbu 2008, on his part says tracing the origin of Pentecostalism; scholars should take into consideration historical dimension as well as the preceding revivals and revitalization movements because some have indigenous origins. To Allan Anderson 2014, there has not only been what he terms a white racial bias; but also, a persistent gender bias. Women leaders who played important roles in the global expansion of Pentecostalism was ignored, for example Lucy Farrow an African American leader at the Azusa Street revival was the first Pentecostal missionary to reach Liberia in Africa in 1907 (Anderson, 2014, p.127). By 1930, Pentecostalism had become a noticeable international denomination according to Peter Beyer 2006.

2.4 Definition of Pentecostalism

Scholars have not failed to illustrate the complexity in the definition of Pentecostalism. As observed by Walter J. Hollenweger and Ogbu Kalu much needs to be known about the worldwide movement, its convictions, history, liturgies and social practices before a definition can be attempted. Pentecostalism is growing exponentially, and Robeck Jr. and Yong 2014 say defining Pentecostalism has become elusive as ‘a grain of sand in a desert’. To them it maybe because the writing of Pentecostal history and theology was controlled for long by American Pentecostal denominations and equally authors being paid by these denominations. They attempt defining the movement as an encounter with the Holy Spirit or ‘baptism in the Holy spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues’ (Robeck Jr. and Yong, 2014, p. 1). Allan Anderson 2014 on his part says it is extremely precarious to define this term because some will not fit adequately in the definition since the movement has evolved with time as such Pentecostals have defined themselves by so many paradigms. He proposes that to define the term from a social science perspective, theological and historical, the movement should be defined using a family resemblance analogy. From Andre Droogers’ perspective he says Pentecostalism is a social construct being a concept that is very difficult to determine not only because of its commonality but also because of its variety of form. He notes that there is a lot of diversity in the churches which are known as Pentecostals and it is because when the movement expands to other parts of the world it has its own profile which it adopts because of its history and cultural context (Droogers, 2001, p. 46).

Pentecostalism according to Asamoah-Gyadu is, Christian groups which emphasis salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which pneumatic phenomena including speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general perceived as standing in historic

continuity with experience of the early church as found especially in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experience of his Spirit (Asamoah- Gyadu, 2005, p. 12).

Kalu looks at the complexity and fluidity of the term Pentecostalism and terms it notorious. He promotes that according to David Martin (the dean of Pentecostalism) Pentecostalism, can be ambiguous because of its dynamism thus it assumes different color in different parts of the world or as he will put it when it crosses borders, it 'goes native' (Kalu, 2009, p.21).

2.4.1 Characteristics of Pentecostalism

Because of the complexity in the definition of Pentecostalism, Andre Droogers observes some common characteristics of Pentecostalism:

- Healing which is done through exorcism.
- The presences of the Holy Spirit, which is experienced in the gift of healing, glossolalia or speaking in tongues and prophecy.
- The conversion experience with a rebirth phenomenon is very important not only is it a personal issue but things of the world or customs of one's culture are denounced, and the convert is said to have new life.
- Pentecostals have a dual worldview, which is God; is on one side with his believers and the devil on the other side with his agents or followers (Droogers, 2001, p. 45-46).

2.5 Pentecostalism in Africa

William Kay describes Africa as a continent made up of 54 countries and considered the second largest after Asia. Africa has a vast mass of land comprising many types of climate and geography; equally rich in gold, diamond, copper, mineral resources such as oil and prized ivory (Kay, 2009, p. 133). There has been a massive growth in Pentecostalism in Sub Saharan Africa since the turn of the 20th century and by the year 1920 Pentecostalism had been established in most countries of Sub Saharan Africa. The exponential or explosive growth was noticed between the 1960s and 1970s and Christians now made up half of the continent's entire population (Omenyo, 2014, p. 132). Christianity reached Africa early if one takes into consideration the New Testament reference in Acts 8:27 to a convert in Ethiopia. Therefore, African with her primal worldview is predisposed to accept Pentecostalism because both readily acknowledge the spiritual realm; as such, William Kay says a typical

African worldview incorporated belief in spirits, demons, life after dead, animal sacrifice and significance to dreams as such having elements of worldview that was like Pentecostals and Charismatic Christians. Also noted is that, during the colonial phase, there were African prophetic movements with characteristics of Pentecostalism (Kay, 2011, p. 46-47).

2.5.1 The origin of Pentecostalism in Africa

There is a strong disagreement by scholars about the origin of African Pentecostalism. Some believe it is an extension of the 1906 Azusa street revival while others say it has indigenous roots. Kalu 2008 categorically says it is not from the Azusa street and not an extension of the American electronic churches. Therefore, to him Africans have lost their own story as such incorrectly understood as derivative from Azusa Street revival whereas the movement emanated from missionary churches and evangelical spirituality (Yorubas in Nigeria) in respect to their own traditional practices. According to Ogbu Kalu 2008, when scholars are tracing the genealogy of African Pentecostalism attention should be paid to historical dimension because some had indigenous origins in as far as revival and revitalization movements were concerned. Anderson will strongly agree with Kalu because African Pentecostalism is stronger in some countries than others, because some movements emerged from African initiative and had no direct connections with revival movements in the Western World (Anderson, 2014, p.69). Asamoah-Gyadu, Pomerville, Peterson and Sepulveda believe not all Pentecostals can trace their movement back to the Azusa Street revival. Asamoah-Gyadu opposes scholars like Synan who think otherwise; to him there are evidences to suggest that not all Pentecostal outburst can be linked to Azusa Street (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 10-11). Anderson 2007 says revivals were noted to have occurred in; Wosan (1903), Wales (1904), Mukti, India (1905), Azusa Street (1906), Pyongyang/Seoul (1907), Calcutta, India (1910). In West Africa Wade Harris Prophetic movement (1910, he preached in Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana about the one and true God and the rejection of traditional religions) and to Kalu 2009 revival flares were all over the globe within a certain period and weren't connected.

Allan Anderson's view is of the fact that it is difficult to give a general history of African Pentecostalism because of the unique history in every African country, mainly because of different kinds of colonial experience, religious background and less developed mission histories (Anderson, 2015, p. 67). To Paul Gifford (1987) the Fire Conference and Christ for all Nation crusade were two events that mark African Christianity.

2.5.2 Classifying Pentecostalism in Africa

The typology of African Pentecostalism can be extremely difficult as stipulated by Cephas N. Omenyo, to him the historical and theological categories should be taken into consideration. Anderson notes that African Pentecostalism is in a continuous process of renewing and reinvigorating itself in uncountable forms in its manner of expression (Anderson, 2015 p. 69). Many scholars classify African Pentecostalism in to;

- The African initiated churches
- The classical Pentecostal churches
- Trans-denominational fellowships
- Charismatic renewal groups in the main line churches
- Older churches charismatic (Catholic, Anglican, Protestant charismatic)
- Neo-Pentecostal / charismatic churches and ministries.

The emphasis on this study is on neo-Pentecostal or some will like to call them charismatic churches, I will shed light on the others, which are equally popular.

- *African Independent Churches (AIC)*

This includes churches stated in the early 20th century by African leaders. These churches are preferably known as churches of the spirit established because of African prophets. These prophets are considered precursors of African Pentecostalism, names like prophet William Wade Harris, Joseph Babalola of Nigeria, Sampson Oppong and Peter Anim of Ghana and Christina Nku of South Africa. According to Anderson, AIC is referred to by different terms in different regions, they are called Zionist churches in South Africa, in West Africa, ‘Spiritual’, ‘Prophet healing’ and Aladura (meaning prayer) church; in East Africa they are known as ‘Pentecostals’ and ‘Spiritual churches’ (Anderson, 2015, p. 68). The African men and women who began the AIC were considered spiritually gifted to begin the church and were called by God through vision. As a mark of holiness members were compelled to wear white robes in worship as a representation of the cloth of the Holy Spirit (Omenyo, 2014, p. 136). Scholars like Ogbu Kalu and Kingsley Larbi (according to Larbi, the AIC has differing belief from Pentecostals) do not include AIC as a Pentecostal church. Though most often are added in the population of Pentecostals, Allan Anderson and Asamoah –Gyadu say AIC in their theology refer to the power of the Holy Spirit as such should be considered Pentecostals (Ngony, 2014, P.77).

- *Classical Pentecostals*

Classical Pentecostal is considered to have originated from the Western revival that took place in Azusa street. Missionaries were sent in 1906 and they arrived in places in Africa like Liberia, Congo and South Africa. Anderson divides the classical Pentecostal theology into four, holiness Pentecostals, Baptist or finished work Pentecostals, Oneness Pentecostals and Apostolic Pentecostals. They have a common theology believing in the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is an empowering experience with of course the evidence of speaking in tongues. The Assemblies of God church for example is considered a major classical Pentecostal church and was established because of the Azusa street revival. By 1920 most Classical Pentecostal churches had indigenous leaders.

- *Neo- Pentecostals*

The emphasis of this study is on a neo-Pentecostal church; Winners Chapel aka living faith Church Worldwide in Nigeria with a local branch in Cameroon. The neo- Pentecostals or neo charismatic churches (as some will preferable to call it) are equally regarded as independent neo- Pentecostal churches and these churches emerge in Africa around the 1970s. Anderson observed that neo- Pentecostal and neo –charismatic churches consist of faith churches. Their belief is that through faith you can obtain physical health and material prosperity. They are called ‘prosperity churches’; an example of a faith church is Winners Chapel founded by David O. Oyedepo (Anderson, 2015, p. 69). In Nigeria neo- Pentecostalism began in the Universities of Ibadan and Ife and major charismatic revivals took place. These revivals spread in Africa but in the West of Africa, it was only witnessed around the 1980s. Their influence can be seen because they stress on prayers, reading the Bible and healing by faith in Jesus name. By mid 1980s charismatic revivals had gained momentum and spread rapidly in West Africa. They believe firmly in evangelism as such, the Pentecostal doctrine was being promoted. According to Omenyo by the 1980s these Pentecostal movement had assumed a high social profile because of the attention they received from the media and equally they build mega churches with exuberant signboards in all the major cities in Africa they found themselves in (Omenyo, 2014, p. 137-138). Anderson 2014 considers neo Pentecostalism as ‘fluid term’ because over the past years it has been used in various ways, that is at one stage it had been charismatic churches, to the third wave churches and finally to the newer independent churches with emphasis on prosperity while embracing contemporary culture like its means of communication, the media and marketing. This is my main point of study I say more on neo-Pentecostalism as the study progresses.

2.5.3 Pentecostalism in Cameroon

As earlier observed, most Pentecostal churches came from Nigeria to the Anglophone Cameroon, for example, churches like, The Lutheran church of Christ, United Pentecostal Church, The Apostolic church, The Full Gospel Church, The Pentecostal Assemblies of God, The Church of Christ and Deep Life Bible church (Akoko, 2007, p.56). Thomas Drønen observed that the Apostolic Church was the first to be established in Cameroon and it originated from Britain and was first brought to Cameroon from Nigeria. In early 1990s, the multiparty system was introduced in Cameroon and many Pentecostal churches could flood the country. They opened branches urbanely then they went rural as well (Drønen, 2013, p.91). Kalu 2008 supports this aspect because to him the democratization of the public space has increased public participation thus allowing many voices or groups to be heard or noticed though it could be in relation to political issues (kalu, 2008, p.225). According to Paul Gifford 1998, before 1992 Pentecostalism in Cameroon was quite different from other countries because the state discouraged gatherings. There has however been a remarkable change because Pentecostalism has grown in Cameroon and having similarities with others around Africa (Gifford, 1998, p.304).

The naming of Pentecostal churches as observed by kalu 2008 can be little confusing or precarious. This is because Africans name specific movement differently, maybe based on historical experiences. For example, in Ghana, independent or new Pentecostal churches are referred to as charismatic churches while in Nigeria, Pentecostals are ‘born-again’ and Akoko observes that in Cameroon they are also referred to as ‘born-again’ (kalu, 2008, p.14-15).

According to Akoko 2007, there has been an explosion in the growth of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon with a sustainable increase noticed in the Anglophone parts of the country. To him this growth is because they believe in speaking in tongues or glossolalia, which is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that occurred in the Bible on the day of Pentecost in the upper room. Secondly, Pentecostals pray for their sick and with their faith healing doctrine attract many. They believe that physical illness has spiritual roots and should be treated as spiritual issues. Thirdly, they condemn the baptism of children and traditional beliefs. The fact that they believe in evangelism, a tool which cannot be ignored, and believers are encouraged to engage in this exercise. Evangelical strategies used is circulation of literatures, Bibles, stickers, and they organize campaign rallies. They invited prominent preachers for example

likes of Reinhard Bonnke in February 21st -26th 1989 and 20th -25th February 1990 in Kumba and Bamenda respectively acting as a springboard for the expansion of Pentecostalism.

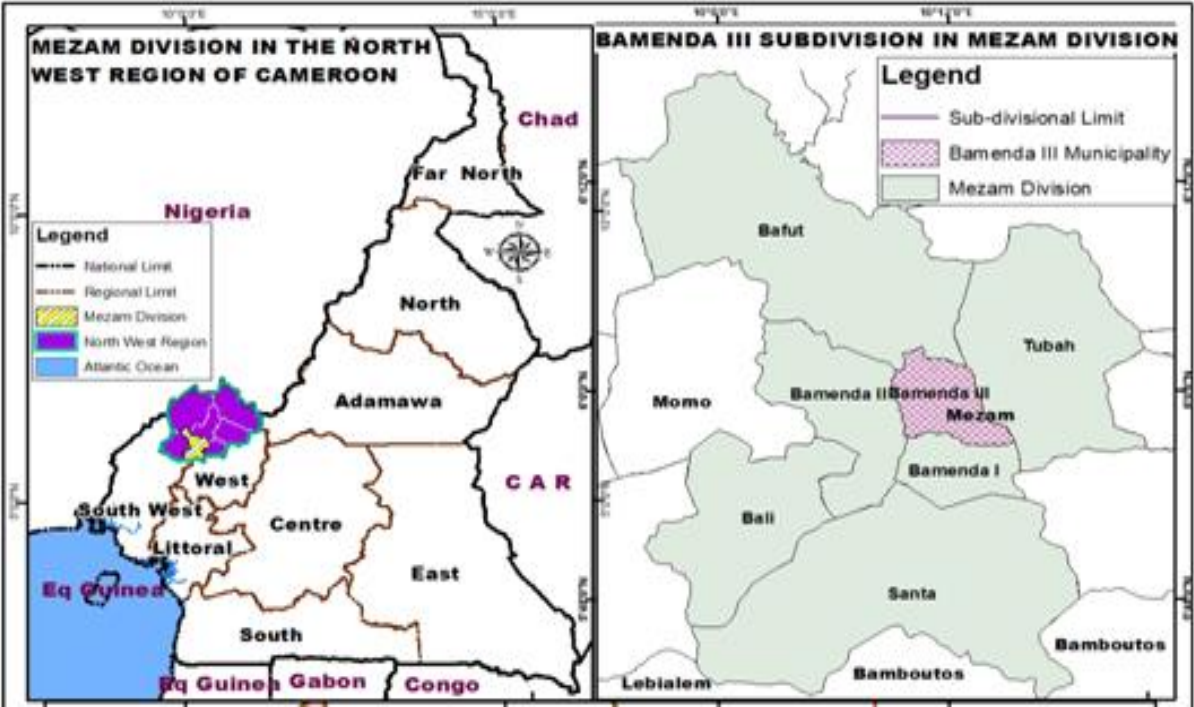


Figure 1: Map of Cameroon (location of Winners Chapel Bamenda)

Source: Adapted from Bamenda III council map

2.6 Prosperity gospel

The prosperity gospel is also known by so many names for example, wealth and health gospel, faith gospel, name it and claim it. The main line churches in the 1970s were more concerned with soul saving than financial involvements. The poverty theology was mostly encouraged or preached looking at material possession as a curse thus condemning it ferociously. Their stand was that people should have very little attachment to the world (Adogame, 2011, p.156). According to David Ogungbile 2014 the AIC for example laid a lot of emphasis on salvation and were in constant combat with ‘worldly’ things practicing instead fasting and prayers; living according to the rudiments and teaching of Jesus Christ. There was a sudden shift were material prosperity and a craving for acquisition of material things was noticed and Ogungbile 2014 looks at it as a paradigm shift from the reject to affirmation. The prosperity theology points to faith for prosperity that is true faith should be acting on the word, professing the word into reality and planting a picture of your desired possession not forgetting the fact that there is investing before reaping or a sowing before harvesting (Kalu, 2008, p.255-256).

When the prosperity gospel is mention names like E W. Kenyon and Kenneth Hagin are regarded as the inventors of this gospel though there is a disagreement on who began preaching it. Kenneth Hagin claims to the man who first received the revelation of the prosperity theology and the father of the faith movement with preachers like Kenneth Copeland, Frederick Price and Charlie Capps looking up to him as their mentor. Daniel McConnell an American conducted research and finally establish that Hagin plagiarized W. Kenyon who got the idea from the unity school of Christianity (kalu, 2008, p.256). According to Kate Bowler, Kenyon is the leading guide to the journey of the prosperity gospel. E. W Kenyon was not only a pastor but also a radio evangelist who told Christians to use their faith to dominate life circumstances. He mostly taught on principles; wanting Christians to rightfully use principles to unlock God’s treasury of blessings (Bowler, 2013, p. 15).

Preachers of the prosperity theology like A. A. Allen, T.L Osborn, Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, Lester Sumrall, Myles Munroe, Creflo Dollar and Joel Osteen cannot be ignored because they not only promoted the prosperity gospel, they had become household names in America, acting not only as pastors but equally as prophets and visionaries. The prosperity gospel became popular with millions of Americans loving. According Bowler, the preachers were charming, polished if not effusive and slick (Bowler, 2013, p.5). Kate Bowler did an extensive research on the prosperity gospel and regards it has the fastest growing movement

in the 20th century but to her it has been vaguely defined and researched. In her book *Blessed*, she traced the origin and development of the prosperity gospel from the late 19th century to the Pentecostal revival of the second War World to its explosion in the 1960s.

Deji Ayegboyin 2011 looks at the fact that prosperity preachers present themselves as entrepreneurs, by so doing they stress on a victorious or prosperous and healthy living both on the spiritual and physical realm. They portray God as a God of abundance who can provide abundantly since the silver and gold belongs to him. On the contrary, the main line and holiness movement believe that wealth is worldly and carnal as such the best designers dress or car or jet is not encouraged.

2.6.1 The prosperity gospel in Africa

Though the prosperity gospel became popular in the 1980s, its history is longer when people like Kenyon's theological influence is considered. Ogbu Kalu and Paul Gifford aptly points that, the prosperity gospel was spread into Africa by American evangelist through crusades; many young born-again leaders were sent to Bible schools and summer conferences in the United States. Books from foreign evangelist equally played a great part in impacting this doctrine in Africa with Africans having indigenous belief in spirituality.

When the originator of prosperity gospel in Africa is mentioned names like Benson Idahosa cannot be ignored, he founded the church of God Mission International with headquarters in Benin Nigeria. He is referred to by David Ogungbile as 'a crusader and founder of prosperity gospel in Nigeria' and the first television evangelist and to Ayegboyin he is the prime celebrity of material prosperity. To Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, his contact in North America influenced the core of his theology on prosperity. He held crusades in many parts in Africa and of course in Douala Cameroon (Kalu, 2008, p. 257 and Ayegboyin, 2011, p.158). Cameroon is found geographically in the West of Africa and Pentecostalism as noted by Allan Anderson is hottest in West Africa and has become prominent and influential across the region. Preachers like Nicholas Duncan Williams, David Oyedepo (a protégé of Benson Idahosa) and T. B. Joshua with very successful ministries have been very influential in West Africa; most of them basing their teachings on prosperity as noted by Jenkins (2010).

A large segment of African Christianity has been influenced by the happenings in North America, with the emphasis on the prosperity gospel saying for a fact that God wants every Christian to be prosperous. Those who are considered true Christians warrant wealth; and poverty is because of sin or lack of faith or inability to apply or understand principles. This gospel has its basis from the Bible as such preachers quote biblical scriptures to justify

their preaching. For example, Paul Gifford looks at Copeland's preaching and some prominent key text (Deuteronomy 28-30, Malachi 3:10, Galatians 3:29) he uses to justify the fact that God wants all to be wealthy. According to Copeland, people do not prosper because they are Americans rather because they follow biblical principles and he cites Paul Yonggi Cho (of South Korea who is reputed to have the largest congregation in the world) who is not an American and has prospered because he followed biblical principles (Gifford, 1990, p.378-382). According to Paul Gifford 1987 the fire conference organized by Reinhard Bonnke in Harare in 1986 was crucial as such regarded as the open door for prosperity theology in Africa. Preachers like Kenneth Copeland, Benson Idahosa, Nicky Van de Wethuizen and Ray McCauley preached in this remarkable 13 days crusade. Bonnke predicted that Africa will be the most Christian nation on the earth and in attendance were over 4000 delegates from all over Africa with over 41 countries represented.

2.7 Poverty

As far back as 1945, one of the main center focus of the UN has been to improve people's wellbeing as well as to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character. The UN therefore promotes sustainable development thereby promoting prosperity, economic opportunity and an impactful social well-being. In September 2000, world leaders committed their nations in achieving eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. These goals ranged from halving extreme poverty by 2015 to halting the spread of HIV/ AIDS and the provision of primary education universally. There has been a ferocious attack on poverty since it is regarded as a problem of development. When talking about poverty, development cannot be far off because most of the aim of development is to tackle poverty notes Hopper 2012. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its millennium development goals placed the eradication of poverty at the top of its priority. Development has not been able to provide answers to human suffering and according to Eversole et al (2005), development has failed not only in providing this answer equally its promise to economically change poor people has not been successful. Mat Hårsar 2010 looks at poverty as a major global challenge as such a deeper understanding is needed when dealing with poverty. To him, poverty is complex and a multidimensional phenomenon and to White et al (2001), poverty is not only a complex phenomenon, it equally takes many forms.

2.7.1 Defining poverty

According to Kabuya (2015) poverty is quite complex to defined because it is influenced by different disciplinary approaches, ranging from basic needs, capability to the human development approaches. Poverty he says prevents people from living long healthy and fulfilling lives even as far as enjoying dignity, self-respect and the respect from others (Kabuya, 2015, p.79). The World Bank in 2001 in its ‘Attacking Poverty’ report defines poverty as ‘multiply human deprivation, inclusive of economic deprivation as well as social and political dimension’. The economic dimension includes low-income levels and an inability to meet basic household consumption needs while the social dimension focuses on health and educational levels and as for as the political dimension is concern the World Bank terms it ‘voicelessness and powerlessness’. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2001; equally looked at poverty in a multidimensional manner and defines it in economic, human, political, socio-cultural and protective dimension (Crawford and Hartmann, 2008, p.10). Adeyemi et al (2009) define poverty as ‘lack of material well-being, insecurity, social isolation, psychological distress, lack of freedom of choice and action, unpredictability and lack of long term planning horizon’. According to International Bill of Rights poverty is ‘a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choice, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights’. Professor Sengupta Arjun an independent expert on Human Rights and Extreme poverty defines poverty as a lack of basic capability to live a dignified life and not only as a lack of sufficient income to buy goods and services (Adeyemi et al 2009). Amartya Sen (1981, 2001) equally defines poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities not only in respect to low income (Hopper, 2012, p.17).

Poverty is defined in absolute, relative and extreme terms:

- Absolute poverty is measured in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic need such as food, clothing and shelter. According to the World Bank in 1975, absolute poverty speaks of a condition where income is so low that the minimum standard of nutrition, shelter and personal necessities cannot be afforded.
- Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members in a society, as such the poor are considered poor if they fall below a given standard of living in each societal context. According to Hopper 2012, it is relatively referring to

people who do not enjoy a sense of well-being and are in either a material disadvantage compared to others living in the same society.

- Extreme poverty: most approaches according to Hopper 2012 is done economically and oriented towards quantifying it as people living on less than US \$1 per day, which is considered the standard measurement of poverty. From 2005, the poverty line was US \$1.25 per day. According to the MDGs report of 2009, 55 to 90 million estimated people live in extreme poverty.

The United Nations has its priority goal to end extreme poverty everywhere in the world. It has recorded the fact that extreme poverty rates have cut by more than half since 1990, which is remarkable achievement. It has however observed that one in five people still however live on less than \$1.25 a day in developing countries among which is Cameroon. Hopper 2012 says most approaches to poverty is done economically and oriented towards quantifying it as people living in less than US \$1 per day and was considered as the standard measurement of poverty (Hopper, 2012, p.18-22)

The UN therefore says poverty is not just a lack of income and resources, but it entails hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and basic services, social discrimination and exclusion not forgetting the lack participation in decision-making. According to the UN 836 million people still live in extreme poverty.

2.7.2 Poverty in Africa

‘Poverty is not a characteristic of a certain group of people; it rather characterizes a particular situation in which people may find themselves at a given point in time’ Bastiaensen et al (2005). The estimated population of Africa in the 1990s was 580 million. 270 million people have an average income of below 1 dollar per day according to White et al (2001). 250 million had no safe drinking water, over 200 million had no access to medical facilities and 140 million youths were illiterates. The World Development Report in 1990 showed that poverty increased dramatically in the 1980s, which can be very paradoxically since Pentecostalism with its force for prosperity grew in Africa around that same period. According to Ogbu Kalu, people have different concepts of what constitute poverty and as such, there has been a lot of debate on poverty. To him looking at the poverty line drawn by UNDP and the World Bank, most African countries are below the poverty line and he looks at the line saying it has been arbitrarily chosen (Kalu, 2006, p.65). Africa has grown exponentially over the years, but majority of its population is still wallowing in not only

economic poverty but also facing unemployment and inequality. To Kabuya (2015), poverty is not only particular to Africa alone but also an international issue.

After coming to a consensus, the economist and development practitioners, say poverty in Africa can stem from issues such as income inequality, conflict, location, natural disasters, ill health and disability, inheritance of poverty, education and lack of skill and gender discrimination. Poverty has been looked at in two categories by Kabuya (2015), which can also characterize the causes of poverty in Africa. The socio-economic factors, which entail risk, vulnerability and low capacity. There are also political and economic factors categorizing non-developmental issues, politics and corruption (Kabuya, 2015, p.78-79).

2.7.3 Poverty in Cameroon

The most recent survey conducted by (ECAM II) in 2001 showed that poverty affected 40.2 percent of the Cameroonian population with 55 percent of the country's poor people living in rural areas. According to the ECAM III survey in urban areas between 2007 and 2001 there has been a decline in poverty to approximately 5 points in Douala and Yaounde while poverty grows in the rural areas by 3 points. Poverty is considered phenomenally a rural problem in Cameroon with 52 percent of the poor being women. Majority of the poor population are women and children.

Cameroon is recorded to have gone into economic crisis in 1986 whereas according to Awing and Atanga (2011) Cameroonian economy grew at 7percent per annum from mid 1970s to 1980s with a per capita income of about \$800 and as such considered to be nearly two times most Sub- Saharan African countries. Paul Gifford 1998 holds that Cameroon observed an 'economic boom' after independence. The crisis in Cameroon led to the privatization of parastatals, retrenchment of civil servants, cut in government expenditure on social programs and capital income was reduced by half thereby increasing poverty in rural and urban areas. The crisis affected Cameroon both politically, economically and socially. Political in the sense that the government failed to meet the expectations of the Cameroonian people as such, they asked for a multiparty politics; this led to the inception of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon as observed by Akoko Mbe 2007. Since the Cameroonian government failed to contain the economic crisis, by 1989 she reached an agreement with the Bretton Woods Institutions for Stabilization and Structural Adjustment programs. The aim of these programs was to halt economic decline in the country that had encountered and restore Cameroon on a path of growth and prosperity. This program equally failed for various reasons, which cannot be elaborated in this work.

Cameroon in the mid 1980's suffered drastically economic crisis, which noticed a fall in revenue because of a fall in world prices of agricultural products and other commodities. Though Cameroon adapted the structural Adjustment program to move the country out of poverty, it failed. Cameroon was finally admitted into the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) in 2000. According to Tah 2016, many authors like Aaar (2006), Baye (2005), Baye et al (2002), Fombon et al (2001) have approached the study on poverty in Cameroon but much still need to be done by the Cameroonian government to observe a change. In 1998 and 1999, transparency international classified Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world, and in 2000 Cameroon occupied the seventh position (Akoko, 2007, p.49).

Some of the causes of poverty as observed by the 'borgen project' involves, history, which is the fact that many poor countries in the world were colonized by countries who extracted resources from them and human resource as well in the form of slaves. Secondly, war and political instability, which are natural disasters whereby people cannot work in an environment, plagued by war no matter how intelligent, hardworking and industrious they are. Thirdly, because of National debt, for example, a country like Cameroon, many poor countries owe huge loans to wealthier nations and of course, the fourth aspect is discrimination and social inequity.

2.8 Pentecostalism and Poverty

In the early decades of the inception of Pentecostalism, poverty was looked upon as a virtue, but this is not the case anymore. In most neo Pentecostal churches, you can hear pastors literally casting out the 'spirit of poverty' and encouraging their adherents to be prosperous. According to Ogbu Kalu 2006, poverty was a primary concern of Jesus as it has drawn the attention of theorist in the 1960s as well. He goes further to say; Christians do not only have to look at poverty as a deprivation but also most go further to look at it in material aspect. That is, shelter, food and money, to the immaterial including knowledge, skill, healthcare, education and access to opportunities, jobs, participation in socio political life; and not forgetting empowerment which sheds light on the vulnerable, oppressed and the fear of the powerful and finally the social aspect which draws healthy relationship, salient values, moral and religious wholeness (kalu, 2006, p.66).

As earlier seen in this chapter poverty is predominantly an issue in Africa, also noted is that fact that Pentecostalism has flourished in what is termed an impoverished continent. The Pentecostal gospel is thriving in Africa because according to Lovemore Togarasei article

(2011) earlier studies of Pentecostalism have identified its success because it promises prosperity especially to the poor. Though some have viewed this gospel as a ‘gospel of delusion’, it has contributed to sustainable development. Togarasei says Pentecostals have encouraged entrepreneurship thus contribution to poverty alleviation in Africa. In sense that, the adherents are encouraged to start their own business that creates employment thus alleviates poverty. In addition, adherents pay a sustainable amount in the form of ‘seed sowing’ into the coffers of the church, which makes them rich, and they intend open infrastructures like school, universities and hospitals, which of course creates employment. He observed that Pentecostal churches have business fellowship for men (for example the prominent Full Gospel Businessman Fellowship International) and women are taught to engage in petit businesses, which generates income for them. We will equally observe an example by one of the home cell leaders in chapter five who talks about encouraging members of her home cell to engage in income generating business. As observed by Ogbu Kalu 2008, Pentecostalism as a doctrine does not encourage idleness, he says it ‘does not encourage people to fold their arms and wait for manna to drop from the skies’ but strategies of poverty alleviation are put in place to an extend (Kalu, 2008, p. 262).

2.9 Globalization and Pentecostalism

Birgit Meyer 2010 looks at globalization and Pentecostalism as two big terms, which involve a variety of scholarly approach. To her, given that most mega churches have the ‘global’ or ‘international’ to their names then globalization is central in the study of Pentecostalism (Meyer, 2010, p. 113). As observed by Peter Beyer 2006 in the 21st century globalization stands in what he terms as ‘a high familiar and highly charged term’, which could be set to be relatively new but describes developments that have existed for a real long time though globalization has been debated and contested by social scientists. He looks at globalization as a ‘successor term’, which may have replaced capitalism and modernization. To him globalization intends to capture important aspects in the contemporary society which capitalism and modernization have not given a satisfactory approach. According to Peter Beyer, Immanuel Wallerstein in his publication around the 1970s theorize the entire globe as a single social whole (Beyer, 2006, p. 18-19, 23). Ogbu kalu 2008, on his part defines globalization as ‘the process of domesticating the global in local context’ (Kalu, 2008, p. 189). According to Michael Wilkinson (2008), Roland Robertson has written about globalization since 1960s and he is one of the major theorist of this concept; whereby

Robertson has used the concept of the global to relate with the global and local saying they intersect because what is global is local and what is local is global.

Exploring the various ways in which globalization trends can be related to Pentecostalism; there is a reason to pay attention to globalization and its effect on Pentecostalism in Africa and most especially in Cameroon. We will attempt a definition of Globalization. Andre Droogers defines globalization as ‘the process by which the world is experienced as one single place (e.g., as visible in politics, mass media, travel, tourism, and migration) (Droogers, 2014, p.196). Globalization is an ideology that sees the world as a global village. According to Wilkinson (2008), there is a confusion about what is meant by globalization as it applies to Pentecostalism. He looks the fact that globalization has been defined in various aspect been either as ‘Westernization’ or what he calls ‘Americanization’ or Westernization as a particular kind of universalization which entails that the world is becoming the same. To him others have viewed globalization as some sort of liberalization while others still view it as a spread of modern structures and cultures throughout the globe. According to Kalu 2008, globalization is a comparative concept, which can be used to explain the fact that civilization, and communities have been drawn closer and they interact because distance and space has been minimized. He says various studies done on Pentecostalism and religious studies by scholar like Roland Robertson, Peter Beyer; karla Poewe, Mike Featherstone, David Lyon, Rosalind Fratani, Birgit Meyer and Ruth Marshall only Karla Poewe interprets Pentecostalism in South Africa as a form of ‘Global Christianity’. He says according to Karla Poewe, Pentecostalism reflects a spiritual flow whereby, she identifies the source as from Azusa Street and then flows to the globe (Kalu, 2008, p. 189-190). Drønen agrees because he calls Pentecostalism a global movement that equally presents itself as a new version of Christianity. His analysis is regarded through the manifestation of global mobility, local flexibility, spiritual authority and human dignity; which can be because of white strangers and African neighbors promoting the doctrine. His bases his writing on a remote area in Cameroon- Ngaoundere, which he says has enjoyed a ‘global flow’ (Drønen, 2013, p. 211).

David Oyedepo in one of his sermons said God told him around the 1980s that he will be in one place and be speaking to many people and many people will be watching him from all around the world. According to Peter Beyer 2006, Niklas Luhmann observes religion as a social phenomenon whereby he observes it as communication; this is to say that religion as a social phenomenon constructs itself as communication. Globalization significantly involves the use of mass media as noted by Beyer and the prosperity gospel is widely spread using

media for example, televangelists, who use the media to preach the prosperity gospel. Beyer 2006 notes that people are tied together through the operation of cultural by-products in the forms of mass consumer goods. He further notes that Roland Robertson around the 1985 and 1992 expressed the idea that ‘globalization is at the same time the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal’. He stipulates that Robertson 1995 looks at globalization as ‘homogenization’ and ‘heterogenization’, meaning people of the world turn to have more in common in how they organize their social lives as the society globalizes (Beyer, 2006, p. 26).

Some of the signs of a globalized society as observed by Beyer the internet, telephone, books, newspapers, magazines, letters, planes, automobiles, radio which are means of transmission and they allow events in one part of the world to be seen in another. This clearly is seen in Winners Chapel as most of these devices are used for evangelism and preaching the message. Therefore, to Peter Beyer communication is a means by which the ‘particularization and universalization is hastened. According to Beyer, Africans were brought in as slaves into the New world colonies and this contributed to the globalization of African culture which can be seen in jazz, Reggae and Pentecostalism and re-particularizing and localizing the American culture can be seen evidently in it all. According to Anderson et al 2010, over the course of the past century not alone is Pentecostalism recognized as the fastest growing religious movement, but it has succeeded to put itself on the world map. They are quick to adapt to local demands, use market strategies, and entrepreneurial tools to blossom.

When understanding Pentecostalism and the shift in paradigm- the prosperity gospel, communication is a means to fluid its growth. A gospel some will say has been adopted from the Azusa night or from the massive use of social media by televangelist, as seen in chapter two of this thesis. Migration as observed by Beyer is equally an important factor and it is another facet of communication. People move from place to place and carry their communication orientations and habits and their particularity with them to different environment and community. To Beyer therefore, migration is a form of universalizing various particulars and particularizing universals. This will result in people talking what they carry with them and transferring back to their place of origin or elsewhere (Beyer, 2006, p.25, 59). Drønen supports this saying; Pentecostal movements have expanded because it has depended on migration and social mobility (Drønen, 2013, p.181). Michael Wilkinson (2008) believes Pentecostalism is a religion that spreads and has thrived under modernization. He says Pentecostals are globalizers, because according to the ‘Calvinist in Weber's Protestant

Ethics thesis, Pentecostal act as a catalyst to spread modern and western form of economics throughout the world' (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 101).

Bryon D. Klaus in the book titled *the globalization of Pentecostalism: a religion made to travel*, Pentecostalism as a religious movement has taken on the likeness of a culture of people. To him Pentecostalism has an 'autochthonous' character and though there are regional differences Pentecostalism, shares a common spirituality and can be said to have generated a global culture (Klaus, 1999, p. 127). This can be seen in this thesis work as the perceptive and attitude of the Christians towards prosperity and poverty bear no remarkable difference with that of the founder-David Oyedepo.

According to Meyer, recent studies have focused on music (though it has a strong physical and material effect) as a central feature through which Pentecostalism has expanded but this is not the case because they have used many other modern technologies to carry this gospel around, they use technologies such as the media to spread and endorse the prosperity message. These churches are organized as 'global mega churches' and these mega churches have the ability to do global outreaches and spread into other parts of the world and of course it is made possible using modern media facilities. She says many Pentecostal-charismatic churches use the media extensively and this goes to highlight their presence publicly. This can be seen with churches creating global outreach programs through website, having international crusades and prayers. (Meyer, 2010, p. 113, 117-124). Modernization as defined by Andre Droogers 'the process by which the results of science and technology are applied in society, causing profound changes (e.g., industrialization, secularization, urbanization, migration, and mass communication)' (Droogers, 2014, p.196).

According to Deji Ayegboyin 2011, Oyedepo is involved in what he terms 'vigorous global evangelism' (Ayegboyin, 2011, p.166). Winners Chapel International has a yearly program called 'Shiloh' (prophetic convocation) whereby adherents from all over the global gather annually in their mega church building to attend this exotic church program. During Shiloh and after there are circulation of books by Bishop David, DVD, tapes of the messages preached throughout this program, and a live streaming for those who cannot travel to Nigeria for the program. Most adherents return with tee shirts, banners, posters, sticker, which bear captivating messages to the mass, or a broad audience as noted by Meyer 2010. According to Anderson 2010, Pentecostalism has a CEO-style of leaders in its religious enterprise and with its diversity; it can adapt to local demands. With the streaming of Pentecostal churches from Nigeria to Cameroon (with over 500 Pentecostal churches) and most especially in Bamenda, Akoko Mbe looks at global Pentecostalism as an aspect of globalization. David Oyedepo

speaking 11/10/2015, God told him in 1982 that he will be speaking in one place and blessing many nations at once. Now 166 nations are streaming the service, ‘the church has gone global’.

The books and tapes of Bishop David Oyedepo are visible in most places in Bamenda and its environs. The church in Bamenda owns a library with many of his tapes and books and those of his mentors like Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, E.W. Kenyon, T.L. Osborn, Enoch Adeboye, and his friend Myles Munroe and David Abioye. In Winners Chapel the messages preach be it a Wednesday for the mid-week service or Sunday can be said to be uniform because every month has a theme or what is called the monthly declarations (given by David Oyedepo) which are in respect to the twelve tenets of the commission (see appendix 2). Wilkinson 2008 says according to David Martin’s work Pentecostalism is a religion that has replaced other religions that failed though it emerged during the modernization process, whereby modernization has led to the decline or disappearance of some religions. To him it is a global phenomenal because it not only addresses global spiritual needs but also spread and thrived under modernization.

Drønen 2012, looks at Winners Chapel as a ‘commercial giant’ because it does not only have a mega building hosting over 50,000 adherents but it possesses various multimedia productions and striving universities. According to Allan Anderson et al 2010, Pentecostalism can adapt to diverse cultural context and through this the entire global has been greatly impacted. In addition, it is regarded as a global movement that has helped its adherents to integrate into the modern world. To them Pentecostalism owes its success to the fact that it addresses not only corporeal and material issues of people’s lives equally problems caused by modernization processes. Pentecostalism is seen to be part of modern and global processes because they kind of intertwine. I have established a relationship between Pentecostalism and globalization and have showed how Pentecostalism has used the forces of globalization to thrive. Neo Pentecostalism has been recognized as a modern form of Christianity. Paul Gifford claims Oyedepo is part of a global movement, seeing that his ministry is a global faith movement even if Oyedepo makes claims of originality (Gifford, 2015, p. 127). The logo of Winners Chapel International has the world globe map because they believe it is a mandate from God to liberate mankind from all facets of human existence by preaching the world of faith (see appendix 4).

Chapter Three

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises of the method used in the research work. The essence of a social research of which this is amongst involves research that draws on the social sciences for conceptual and theoretical inspiration (Bryman, 2012, p.5). According to Bryman 2012, a research is done after reflecting on issues going on in a modern social life; as such, questions are meant to immanent from the reflections. Clive Seale 1999 looks at research as a ‘craft skill, relatively autonomous from the need to resolve philosophical or epistemological debates but it can nevertheless draw on these as resources in developing methodical awareness’ (Seale, 1999, p.31). This chapter throws highlights on the research method, the data establishment, the sample population and the application of validity, replicability, reliability and generalization in the research.

3.2 Data Establishment

There are two types of strategies used in research, which is the quantitative and qualitative method, but this work is done using a qualitative research method. This method emphasizes on words in the collection of data rather than numbers as in quantitative.

The characteristics of qualitative data according to Bryman 2012 is said to be inductive, constructionist and interpretive. Inductive in its feature meaning there is a relationship between theory and research whereby the theory is generated from the research. Looking at what science consider acceptable knowledge; qualitative strategy has an epistemological position of interpretivism which stresses on the understanding of the social world as it will be interpreted by the participants in that world. When talking about the ontological position of a qualitative research it is constructionist meaning interaction between individuals results to social properties (Bryman, 2012, p. 380).

3.3 Sampling

This study was conducted in Winners Chapel International also known as Living Faith Church Worldwide in Bamenda Cameroon West Africa. The sampling for a population was done as purposive sampling which according to Bryman 2012 purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling which aids me not to sample research participants on random basis. Since Winners Chapel is classified as a neo-Pentecostal church and equally falls on the appellation

of churches known for preaching the prosperity gospel, it was paramount for me to choose Winners Chapel as a sample for my research. In Cameroon, it has been nicknamed ‘the prosperity church’ and I saw it as a good base for my work. Winners Chapel Bamenda is in urban Bamenda (figure 1) and considered a thriving ministry in every ramification. It is in an area greatly affected by extreme poverty, which it is very paradoxical. According to Bryman, those that are sampled for a research should be relevant to the research questions posed and looking at my research questions, Winners Chapel Bamenda fits adequately in this category and it is no doubt a single unit (Bryman, 2012, p.418).

3.4 Ethnography

To answer the research questions adequately, I choose to immerse myself in Winners Chapel Bamenda. I was able to participate in the church service that is listening to the preaching first handed and equally the testimonies by the various testifiers. The behavior and conversation of the adherents is vital. How else than to be among them and observe them in their own cultural setting. This would not be possible without a complete immersion in an extended period in Bamenda. Therefore, having a detailed account of the preaching and culture of the adherents in an efficient manner it is best to be part of them. To be able to have a quick access to some of the main pastor or bishop’s books, Winners Chapel Bamenda has a library, which was very relevant for the research.

As an ethnographer, I played an overt role because I made it official I was carrying out a research work in the church as such I was able to have quick and easy access to the documents and interact with the adherents successfully. To be able to have complete access to the library and documents of the church I needed to present myself as a researcher. I had obtained a document from my institution to that effect. (Bryman, 2012, p.431-437).

3.5 Interview

Interviews are regarded as part of ethnography because according to Bryman 2012, ethnography involves a good amount of interviewing which is a contributing factor to ethnography (Bryman, 2012, p. 469). A semi- structure interview was used because it gave me an insight on how the adherents of Winners Chapel viewed the topic being researched. An interview guide was used for the interview and it was an open-ended question concerning two main themes, poverty and prosperity. I was able to give the interviewees a leeway on how to answer the questions and equally rumbling off can make the interviewees at ease with me and the research to flow with restraint. I interviewed 3 pastors, the main pastor or resident pastor

as he is known, the assistance or associate pastors, 4 home cell leaders, and 4 testifiers in Winners Chapel. The church has divided Bamenda into various districts and home cells are in these districts (seen in chapter five). I therefore use a convenient sample to choose which home cell leader to interview. According to Bryman a convenience sample is likeable to it accessibility than a non-probability sample therefore choosing the home cell leaders is also based on convenience. Testifiers for the interviews were chosen based on convenient sampling equally, since they testified of economic change (Bryman, 2012, p. 202).

3.6 Data recording and storage

A digital tape recording device was obtained from my institution and taken to the field. Before recording I asked to be, granted permission and all my interviewees gave their consent. While recording I was able to concentrate and listen keenly to what the interviewees said. I made occasional notes, which was used to ask questions for clarity. After the interview, I could listen to the data repeatedly to get exactly what the interviewees said. According to Clive Seale 1999, Atkinson argues that the quotation of word verbatim adds authentication to ethnography during the transcription process (Seale, 1999, p. 151). The digital recorded was later return to my institution and all the data collected was saved into my computer for transcription.

3.7 Data transcription and Analysis

On like the computer software program used for the analysis of data, the data was transcribed and analyzed by me. The data transcription was detailed because all the participants spoke in English. I did some grammatical editing being careful not to introduce my own words into their responses. I examined the data critically and came out with core themes and to identify these themes I did coding. Coding according to Bryman is a process ‘whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and those parts are then given labels’. I later searched for recurrences and gave the data codes. (Bryman, 2012, p.13). Coding according to Seale 1999 is ‘by far the most common initial procedure in qualitative data analysis, representing the researcher’s thought about how data might be interpreted, given a particular set of concern’ (Seale, 1999 p.154).

3.8 Validity, Reliability, Replication and Generalizability

Validity, reliability and replication are prominent criteria for the evaluation of social research (Bryman 2012, p. 46). Reliability asks the question of whether the research done is repeatable, replication seeks to know if the findings can be replicated by others and external validity equally wants to know if my research can be ‘generalized beyond the specific context’ and equally challenging the criteria for evaluation, as Bryman 2012 would say. As such the questions of whether the research work done in Winners Chapel Bamenda is capable of been generalized to all the neo-Pentecostal churches or prosperity churches, is quite ambiguous. Since measurement is not a prerequisite for my research work, Bryman proposes other means of coming out with a research work that can be considered worthy.

To be able to evaluate my research therefore Bryman talks of transferability, which is parallel to external validity and dependability, which is parallels reliability. Lincoln and Guba say, ‘auditing approach should be adapted which means records should be kept completely’ (Bryman, 2012, p.392).

3.9 Ethical issues and Limitation of Study

In respect to this research work, there was no violation of ethical principles. I presented a document from my institution to show proof of my research work and I was granted permission first by the resident pastor. Before each interview, I asked the consent of the interviewee before recoding and the fact that the material will be used for academic purposes. There was clearly no deception involved and equally no invasion of privacy because interviews were booked ahead of time and I carefully related their exact responses. Interviewees’ responses were heard clearly on tape as they gave their consent because they were not given a consent form as proposed by Bryman 2012.

To be able to gain the trust of the Christians was a very difficult task; most complain that they had been exploited by researchers. I took a lot of time to persuade them to do the interview. Some of them had these previous grievances that, materials were quoted wrongly, things they said in secret was revealed, and it posed them problems with family and job. Issues concerning the church can be very sensitive and in a small community, news travels fast. To gain the trust of some of them was not easy because it has to do with their belief and their God. I had to convince them I was different, but it is common saying ‘once bitten twice shy’.

Another challenge I had was time, I had to move from one house to another or from one office to another to be able to interview especially the testifiers. One testifier I had to drive to her house and wait for a long time in my car before I could be able to locate her house. A testifier, who was recommended by the pastor, was a very busy entrepreneur; I had to wait for hours in his office to be able to interview him.

In all, I had a very smooth research period because the church members were welcoming, and I had a cordial relationship with them.

Chapter Four

4.0 David Oyedepo's theology

4.1 Introduction

In this research work, I will look at three books written by David Oyedepo and brought out his views concerning poverty and prosperity. These books were chosen because they are in relation to my topic and to find out if the interviewees say something contrary to his doctrine and teachings or they are in total agreement with his theology. These books are *Covenant Wealth*, *Winning the war against poverty* and *All you need to have all your needs met*. Some of his sermons will be mentioned in this section.

Winners chapel is not only a Christian denomination but also a mega church with a global network of churches in over 49 countries. Winners chapel can be said to have originated as far back as 1981 with the founder being David O. Oyedepo who claims to have had an 18-hour vision in May 1981, which God spoke to him saying;

Now the hour has come to liberate the world from all oppression of the devil through the preaching of the word of faith and I am sending you to undertake this task.

David Oyedepo began his church with only four members, this highly revered man of God was born in September 1954 to his father Ibrahim and mother Dorcas. He was raised up by his grandmother; a devoted Anglican Christian who inculcated Christian virtues into him. David Oyedepo according to Paul Gifford (2007), claims that 'Hagin's baton has been passed to him' and he equally claims to have received Copeland's anointing by sleeping in a bed once slept in by Copeland. He is a Christian author, preacher and founder of living faith church worldwide also known as Winners Chapel International and its affiliated international churches known as Winners Chapel International. Living faith international as it is also called, is not only a Christian ministry but has been expanded to primary schools-kingdom heritage model school, faith academy, secondary schools and universities. The international headquarters of Winners Chapel is based in Lagos Nigeria precisely Ota, Ogun state, South West of Nigeria. This mega church covers about 70 acres and building that took 12 months to be completed and is reported to have been built debt free. It is a 50,000-seater capacity church and reputed to be the largest church auditorium in the world according to the 2005, 2008 and 2009 Guinness book of record.

The church is founded over 12 solid pillars (core) comprising faith, the word, signs and wonders, prosperity, healing, wisdom, success, holy spirit, vision, consecration, praise

and prayer. Winners Chapel has a publishing house with over 70 books written by the Oyedepo, equally runs educational institutions namely, Covenant University, Landmark University, Faith Academy and kingdom Heritage and the training college, which is the faith bible institute, hospitals, maternity homes, shopping stores, bakery, restaurant, processing plant, banks and microfinances. It is believed that Oyedepo ministries employ over 2000 of its church members and hundreds of thousands of people all around Nigeria and the world.

4.2 Oyedepo's Books

David Oyedepo talks about the fact that money and wealth is an important aspect of living in his book titled *Covenant Wealth*. To him God calls human beings to a life of abundance and glory not degradation and shame (Oyedepo, 1992, p. 5-6). According to the Bible God is excited when his people prosper and does not take delight in their continuous poverty, he uses the Bible quotation from 3Jn 2 (God wishes above everything else that man should prosper and be in health even as his soul prospers).

According to David Oyedepo, poverty is a curse and it is self-inflicted. He alludes to the Bible according to the book of Malachi 3:7-9, that is it a willful act of disobedience to the law of abundance by the believer. Therefore, if the believer does what is required of him/her by God then this curse will be alleviated. Sin to him is the principal consequence of poverty and all believers who desire to live a life of abundance should shun sin. If one is not a believer in this sense then they are automatically under a curse because it is only believers that can benefit from the blessings of God as such non-believers will perish (Oyedepo, 1992, p.31-36).

Oyedepo looks at wealth as a covenant with God because one parts with what one must get what one wants. A covenant involves what he terms a *covenantor*, which is God, and a *covenantee*, which is the believer. Entering into an agreement with God is willful and not by any force. To be able to benefit from God's blessing then one should do what the Bible requires of them (Oyedepo, 1992. P. 56). According to him prosperity preachers have missed the point, they say if one gives to God, God will in turn increase their purse but to him it is not true, God will not give the returns to everybody. God will do so only to those who promise to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Therefore, God will only prosper those whose thoughts are kingdom orientated that is, wanting the kingdom of God to flourish (Oyedepo, 1992, p.87).

Oyedepo says poverty stings, bites, humiliates and make her victims vulnerable to sickness and disease as such it is a killer; and he hates poverty with a passion. According to him the Bible defines poverty as a curse in his book titled *Win the War against Poverty*.

According to him the curse of poverty was averted on the cross therefore, one should wage a war against the killer disease called poverty. (Oyedepo, 2006, p.5-6).

Poverty is a curse, and not an influence of the economic situation of the world (Oyedepo, 2006, p.68).

However, in Galatians 3:13-14, Christ came to redeem them from the curse of the law so that as children of God they can partake in the Abrahamic blessings. He looks at the fact that, no man in his right senses enjoys poverty and will not wish to be poor or wish it to another. According to him there is recession everywhere, he likens the economic crises of this season to the biblical days of Joseph when money failed in Egypt and says poverty has no respect for sex, race or color or creed. From the beginning of creation, God created man very rich and prosperous because man was living in a garden of abundance and affluence (Genesis 1:26-30, 2:8-12). Therefore, winning the war against poverty entails one diagnosing the cause of poverty. He uses America and china to illustrate the fact that these countries have not always been rich, yet the world's economy is determined by the American dollar. For example, Ghana gave assistance to Singapore but today it is a different story entirely. To him nothing undignified a man as poverty.

Today, the world has no regards whatsoever for any inputs in world affairs from Africa, because of her poverty. Africa has no voting power, our large population notwithstanding. The voice of a poor man is not heard, and his words are despised (Eccl. 9:14-17).

He says people need to change the way they think to be able to change their lives or solve economic depression because these things are not new. He says, the cause of poverty is more the mind than the hand (Oyedepo, 2006, p.12). Possessing a poor man's mentality is the root cause of poverty; and all minds are the same irrespective of the color or race.

Until your poverty mentality is healed, your prosperity is not in view...As a man thinks in his heart so is he (pro. 23:7). So, until you reconstruct your thinking pattern, you cannot change your environment, as your environment is a subject of what goes on within you (Oyedepo, 2006, p.15, 17).

God is the creator of nature and the environment is man's creation, people should not depend solely on the government for a greater nation but possess a mentality to better their nation. He says the value of money is greater when used to enrich others than oneself therefore labor to enrich others.

He talks of having a dreamer's mentality that is painting positive pictures of the future. He says through redemption, Christians are created to be above; he calls it the *dream factor*. These dreams should not be idle thoughts but concrete pictures with scriptural backing. To concretize this, he uses the illustrations of Martin Luther King Junior who had a dream in which he saw racial discrimination in America changing, he carried a dream of change. He says one should set their imagination to see far because Abraham was called by God to see far and the land was given to him, he admonishes everyone to set their imaginations to see far. As such, 'whatever is too big for your mind maybe too big for your hand'. Whatever your mind cannot accommodate, your hand cannot accomplish (Oyedepo, 2006, p.33). He uses biblical examples of David who dreamed of building the temple for God and Joseph whose dreams paid off (Genesis 37:19 and 1 kings 8:17-19). To him, God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a garden full of treasures but when they sinned they used leaves to cover their nakedness, which to the author is a form of mental poverty. He says people today even lack the mental strength to come out of situations they may find themselves in rather excuses are made for failures, 'You are not a failure until you find someone to blame'. People turn to blame the government, the global economic situation or even a relation for their situation. After the fall of man in the garden he had to toil to harvest but people don't want to engage in hard labor, he uses the example of Abraham and Isaac and says there was famine in their time, but God did not abundant them for God is a covenant God.

According to the Oyedepo, supernatural supply is real and not just a religious doctrine because God has the power to turn lack into plenty. God favored the children of Israel when they left Egypt.

He says 'though famine is real, God always makes a way of exception for the redeemed of the Lord. God gives to every child of God a covenant exemption by his supernatural supplies' (Oyedepo, 2006, p. 44).

God does so through supernatural intervention and he uses other biblical examples to illustrate this fact. The widow of Zarephath and Elijah in 1kings 17:8-16, the widow in 2kings who was married to a prophet and was in debt and equally the marriage at Cana in John 5 and of course the feeding of the 5 thousand by Jesus Christ.

The author does not deny the fact that there are many ways of getting rich, but kingdom prosperity is unique and that is what he wants his Christians to understand. To him riches out of God is full of uncertainties and says the riches have wings to fly away. However, kingdom prosperity is generational, sorrow-free and offers impregnable protection. Wealth

can be acquired through hard work and equally through fraud and bribe but only in God can it be sustained.

Very interestingly, he says money is not evil as many people always say but the love of it that makes it evil. 'Money is a blessing if it is in the hand; it becomes a curse when it gains access to your heart'. Money is not only a medium of exchange but also a defense and gives one voice after all God created silver, gold and every precious stone. He believes adherents should not deny their need for money because they cannot do without money and the Bible says money answers all things. (Eccl. 10:19). He makes it clear that, giving money to the church does not mean one is helping God because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, it simply practicing the covenant. Give to God and equally to the brethren in need and giving should be a lifestyle (Proverbs 11:24). To him giving is a channel in which God uses to bless his children (Oyedepo, 2006, p.50-66).

Poverty to the author is not a sign of righteousness because God wants his children to prosper. To him lack is a curse since Jesus has redeemed God's children from the curse of the law. Interestingly he says, Jesus had so much and even needed a treasurer to keep his money. Therefore, if adherents walk in poverty they do not look like Jesus, so Christians should be an expression of Jesus on the earth. To him, gateway to prosperity is redemption for every door in life requires a key, Luke 11:52. The keys are wrapped in mysteries and all born –again children can have access to these keys. To him, adherents are supernaturally redeemed, and are equally rooted in prosperity; it is the believer's covenant right as children of Abraham as said in 2 Corinthians 8:9. God himself empowers this people to become rich and not a product of one's effort or skill according to Deuteronomy 8:18, which says God give himself gives the believer power to make wealth. The source of empowerment can therefore only be in Jesus Christ, so no provision is made for those who chose not to believe or be God's children.

Covenant is not an issue of luck or chance. It has no bearing with the country you live in. The economic policy of the nation has no relevance to it. It has to do with your willingness and obedience to the terms of the covenant (Oyedepo, 2006, p.104).

As children of God, they should understand the covenant blessings; this cannot be done through prayer and fasting, but an agreement entered in with God, which gets God committed to their needs. According to him, one's commitment to God will provoke heaven's commitment to them and he urges adherents be ready to serve God with their treasures.

The author talks of the guiding laws that is the seedtime and harvest time, Genesis 8:20-22, to him is the beginning of the covenant of exemption of poverty. Sacrifice is a vital tool because David in the Bible sacrificed to God constantly and God turned his captive around. So, man is expected to sow to have a harvest if not he gets nothing.

Only those who sow seeds shall have a harvest...Harvest responds only to seed, not to prayers, fasting, human connections or positions. Only seed sown produces harvest. Until seed is sown, harvest is not in view. John 12:24 (Oyedepo, 2006, p.105- 106).

In the kingdom there is nothing like 'free lunch' for other covenant exercises are to be implemented for one to be able to benefit from financial blessings. He calls it financial covenant exercises. This covenant exercises can be, maximizing opportunities that comes one's way, labor for the word of God, not relying on God to do it for you but preparing for greatness through hard work and not mere wishing. To him one cannot be a star or shine in the kingdom if they do not exercise themselves in the covenant. People like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the widow of Zarephath were operating under the covenant and enjoyed exemption during famine. To him financial hardship will creep in when one walks away from the covenant (Oyedepo, 2006, p. 110-124).

After sowing in the kingdom there are some covenant practices that will help boost one's seed sown. He points out: the key of service, stop living for things and start living for God, be ready to serve God with your treasures, the key of sacrifice, obedience to the word, and of course, you should enter a covenant with God. He further elaborates on some guidelines because according to him there is no shortcut to abundance. It is not just enough to operate the law of seedtime and harvest but there are laws, guidelines and instructions that will make the law of prosperity effective.

- Prove me now. This is according to Malachi 3:10, because everyone who got to abundance proved God for example, Abraham in Genesis 22:12, 17-18, Solomon by sacrificing one thousand burnt offerings and David in 1 Chronicles 29:28.
- It begins with love. Adherent must first love God before they can love humankind. Their love for money will disqualify them from God's provisions.
- More than you love yourself. He says adherents should lose self to gain God. Therefore, they should stop craving for money for it is a risk rather thirst for God.
- Locate a good ground. Not all grounds are profitable for good or quality harvest, so devotees must be careful where they sow.

- Giving is work. Giving to God with the right attitude is important for God does not need help, but adherents need God's help.
- Quality seed for quality harvest. The quality of devotee's seed will determine the quality of their harvest. For example, Genesis 4:4-5, Abel and Cain.
- Sow willing. You should not be coerced to give but from a willing heart, Isaiah 1:19, Exodus 35:5, 29, 1 Corinthians 9:17-18.
- Do it cheerfully.
- Give Bountifully
- Give in faith and tirelessly.

God will therefore, prosper devotees through the works of their hands, flow of divine ideas, divine favor. However, they must be patient because they may not reap the same day they sow, Luke 8:15 and Mark 4:26-29. When all these are in place, he says devotees have some *covenant fringe benefits* like divine protection and deliverance, divine health, peace, aversion of curses and longevity. To him adherents can further enhance their rate of results by honoring their father and mother, family relationship and responsibilities, finally he emphasizes on 'talk big, talk wealth'. By talking big or talking wealth, 'God is able to make you enjoy pleasures in the midst of hardship' (Oyedepo, 2006, P. 216-246).

Oyedepo makes it clear that everyone wants to prosper but prosperity can be found only through Jesus; because Jesus is the way out of poverty and success is not a matter of lack but of choice. Jesus as an example helped everyone who came to him; he feed the hungry, healed the sick and raised the dead. He advises people to labor not to be rich but to labor to help others by contributing to the society that is by being a channel and not a container. In all, spirituality matters because God will not prosper a liar or cheat.

In his book titled *All you need to have all your needs met*, he says God is all you need to have all your needs met, faith is all it takes to get God to work and understanding is all the faith requires to come alive (Oyedepo, 2004, p. 9). To him understanding the word of God is very important because it will help adherents not to suffer what sinners or the unsaved suffer. Therefore, understanding equals faith because by understanding, adherents live and by faith they live, Psalm 119:114. To him the manifestations of someone's life is as a function of their faith as in Psalm 82:5-7 God calls his children gods, but they lack understanding the understanding is God's covenant for meeting all their needs. To him the depth of a person's understanding will determine the strength of their faith for example Apostle Paul prayed that God might give adherents the spirit of wisdom, Ephesians 1:17-20.

To have all your needs met adherents must be correctly positioned that is properly aligned to God, fear God, seek him and acquaint themselves with him. According Oyedepo, spiritual prosperity is important. Spiritual prosperity here is the fact that God will meet adherents needs in respect to how their soul prospers, 3 John 2. Adherent's spiritual prosperity to him will determine their material well-being. He believes God does not bless any man above their spiritual capacity, for example, one cannot be a fraud or a cheat and expect God to bless them. To him loving God and living a righteous life guarantees prosperity.

Oyedepo looks at giving as living because God so love that he himself gave. Adherents should prove their love by giving, 1 John 3:17-18 and James 2:15-16 because giving validates the love of God. Giving is a covenant device through captivities are turned, bringing one into their dreamland in God. Are you ready for your dreamland? A land of no struggles, no stress, no borrowing, no begging, no disease, and no sickness (Oyedepo, 2004, p.96).

4.3 Oyedepo's Sermon

In David Oyedepo's sermons, he says God told him in 1987 while in the United States to get back to Africa and make God's people rich. In his sermon titled 'breaking the curse of poverty', there are conscious steps to take for things/circumstances to change in one's life. To him nothing changes on its own and time equally changes nothing. Therefore, 'every change is consciously effected by those who desire it'; if one's desire to change their position then a change of approach is needed. To him poverty is not only a curse but also a disease. One can consciously change their situation because those who desire it forcefully effect change.

Poverty is a disease; it is not only a curse but also a disease. Poverty kills, it destroys just as any physiological disease does. Poverty causes to perish. Lack and want places a yoke of iron on the necks of people to destroy them. How is poverty a disease? It destroys like cancer, AIDS; it is a destroyer of destiny. Deuteronomy 28:15-20, 47and Genesis 28:48.

Oyedepo observes that, prosperity is not magical but a conscious covenant walk, embracing the decisions of God with delight since there is no alternative source of true prosperity. It is God's blessings that make rich and add no sorrow to it.

Everyone's destiny here is going upwards today! Prosperity has become the identity of this commission. Because you are a part of this commission, prosperity has become your identity. Not everyone who is rich is prosperous; to be

prosperous means to be at ease, to be comfortable. Speak the unspeakable, think the unthinkable! I can never be poor!

In another of his sermons titled ‘empower to prosper; the fundamentals of the truth of prosperity’, he says the truth of prosperity will never be taken over by civilization thus it will never be outdated. He believes prosperity is God’s plan and agenda for God’s people. He says he has since 1982 been walking in the reality of kingdom prosperity and this was possible because he went in search of kingdom prosperity on a three search. He read books by Kenneth and Gloria Copeland and when one finds it, there are proofs. According to him, one cannot do anything against the truth but for the truth for it never gets old or outdated or old fashioned but it an eternal revelation. This truth could be seen here as God wanting to bless his children and make them blessings to others. For example, Abraham is a symbol of God’s blessing, a symbol of God’s ideal blessing he says. Therefore, to be bless like Abraham one must take covenant steps that Abraham took. Abraham was obedient to the calling of God and equally he was a tither. To him the order of prosperity is inaccessible without putting the law in place. He says until obedience is applied revelation cannot result to manifestation. The covenant of tithing is crucial and if one is not a tither, they are not qualified to prosper no matter their portfolio. Since 1982 he found the truth, he is strangely blessed, and he has never prayed for money. He even engaged into what he calls cooperate tithing (paying the tithe of your business or establishment) and today there are proofs, a plane they got worth twenty-five million dollars in 2008. He concretizes this with a testimony of an engineer who also engages in corporate tithing and his business is blossoming, in less than six months he is living a debt free life. Oyedepo regards tithing as a covenant key to open the windows of heaven. He observes that Jesus’ ministry was a giving ministry and there was never any lack.

Chapter Five

5.0 Presentation and analysis of Empirical findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter expressly presents the findings gotten from Winners Chapel Bamenda regarding the research question posed to the interviewees. Winners Chapel Bamenda also known as Living Faith Church Worldwide. It did not originate from Bamenda Cameroon but from Nigeria. Most Pentecostal churches in Bamenda have their roots from Nigeria and quickly spread throughout Bamenda as per chapter two of this thesis.

This research interview was divided into three groups and three categories of persons were interviewed. The sampling for the interview was randomly done and one snowball sampling. A pastor recommended someone to be interviewed. From the interview, I categorized my findings and identity similarities, which I later coded. Coding facilitated analysis since data from the results were first categorized.

The eleven persons interviewed in this research work include pastors, home cell leaders and testifiers, which made up the various groups, all from Winner's Chapel Bamenda. For ethical reasons the names of the interviewees are replaced, to facilitate the reading of the research the interviewees' names are substituted with alphabets. In this chapter, the responses obtained are because of sub questions raised under the main research questions. Possible discussion will be raised below the interviewee's responses to the questions.

5.2 Winners Chapel International Bamenda

Cameroon is made of up of ten regions. It is found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Bamenda is a city in the North-West Region of Cameroon. Bamenda city comprises of seven villages that is, Mankon, Mendakwe, Nkwen, Chomba, Mbatu, Nsongwa and Santa. The Germans colonized Bamenda in the 19th Century, but after the defeat of the Germans in World War 1, she was handed to the British to be administered jointly with Nigeria. The main language in Bamenda is English with a common language as Pidgin English. Akoko Mbe 2007 notes that the population of Bamenda is made up mostly of Christians. Bamenda has the largest Christian population in Cameroon. According to Paul Gifford 1998, Bamenda has undergone a process of urbanization just like Yaoundé or Douala with people coming in from all areas. Bamenda is mostly made up of self-employed people.

Bamenda is the birthplace of the largest opposition party (Social Democratic Front) and it is equally the home of the leader Ni John Fri Ndi. The party was launched in 1990 following the decree of 26th May 1990 for multi-party system in Cameroon. The Southern Cameroons National Council was born in Bamenda in 1994. They want a complete segregation from the French speaking Cameroon-La Republique. According to Paul Gifford, till the 1990s the Cameroon civil society was circumscribed with Pentecostal churches not having the advantage of growing like the other African countries (Gifford, 1998, 278, 310).

Winners Chapel International like many Pentecostal churches in Bamenda steamed from Nigeria, seeing that Nigeria shares borders with Cameroon (see figure 1). Winners Chapel came to Cameroon in 1995 and began fellowship in Douala. Winners Chapel is equally located in other prominent cities in Cameroon like Yaounde, Buea, Ngaoundere, Limbe, Tiko, kumba with branches in rural areas. Winner Chapel came to Bamenda in September 2002 and is presently located behind Our Lady of Lourdes High School Mankon (appendix 1). The Resident Pastor is from Nigeria with other associate pastors from Cameroon. Winners chapel Bamenda later divided Bamenda city into 2 districts, 12 zones and 60 home cells. David Oyedepo adopted cell units from Paul Yonggi Cho (the founder pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church) on one of his visits there. Kay 2011 notes that Cho divided metropolitan Seoul into 13 districts and then subdivided them, the sub districts were divided into sections and within this cell, units are located. Kay 2011 holds that the theology of cell argues that all living organisms are made up of cells. This system of cell allows enormous resources to be mobilized and a close fellowship, which may be small but intimate. This idea of cell is noted in Romans 16:15, where Paul greets the members in the church that meet their house that is, Priscilla and Aquila (Kay, 2011, p. 93). As observed by Deji Ayegboyin 2005, one of the prominent characteristics of prosperity churches is they have copied the habit of having one large church congregation with numerous cell groups. These cell groups have meetings in the homes of their church members as seen in South America and Korea (Ayegboyin, 2005, p.161). Home cell leaders were interviewed in this study, they head the home cells instituted by the church.

5.3 What is the perception on poverty preached or believed in Winners Chapel?

Poverty as initially said in chapter two, can be very complex and there is no fundamental definition though many attempts to define poverty has been made. Many scholars have observed poverty to be multidimensional. This research looks at poverty in the context of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel grew around the 1960s and exponentially around the

1980s in Africa. Before the growth of this gospel, there were other gospels in existence as seen in chapter two of this dissertation. The prosperity gospel claims that everyone is called by God to live a life of abundance through faith thus terminating lack that is if the individual so desires. To adequately understand the answers gotten from the interviews I came out with some similarities and differences on the interviewee's perception towards poverty preached or believed in Winners Chapel.

5.3.1 Curse

Firstly, poverty is considered mostly as a curse and as a child of God; one is admonished not to accept a curse over blessing. A curse therefore, is ugly, unacceptable and bad. According to this theology as interpreted by the adherents of Winners Chapel, God has asked his children or followers in Deuteronomy 28:1 to choose either life or death because that is what God has placed before them. Hermeneutically, it can be interpreted to mean blessing or curse. Poverty according to some of the interviewees is described as a curse, which is humiliating and degrading to a person.

Pastor A says, A poor man will not be able to speak where other people are; poverty is not good, and I can say to an extent that poverty is a curse and yes poverty is a curse, and the blessings of God, the Bible says makes rich and adds no sorrow. So! What is the opposite of blessing? It is a curse...Poverty is a bad thing, poverty is not good, poverty brings shame and reproach to a people, and to me poverty is a curse... (Interview 1, January 2016).

Pastor B claims, poverty is a curse according to Deuteronomy 28:48; it is one of the curses of the law and under the curse of the law, the Bible says we will be in want of everything..., poverty is a curse of the law and Christ has come to redeem us from the curse of the law. (Interview 3, January 2016)

Pastor C, says it can classify you as a second or third-class citizen. All three pastors made it clear they hate poverty and have zero tolerance for what they call a 'deadly disease'.

Pastor A describes poverty as ugly and concurs with Oyedepo. In his book 'Winning the war against poverty', he says it makes its victims vulnerable to sickness and diseases.

Pastor A says, poverty just as the name, an ugly name and an ugly thing and I hate poverty, it is not a comfortable thing (interview 1, January 2016).

They agree poverty is a curse and that curse is from the word of God. As astonishing as it may sound to me, Pastor A says in the Bible God has placed before man blessing and curse and has

given the option for man to choose. Therefore, what one chooses will determine which side they will find themselves.

A home cell leader says categorically, poverty is not from God, it is a curse and not the plan of God for his children as such no one should tolerate or accept it. To him one cannot love suffering because poverty is suffering in another sense. He further says that no one loves to be associated with a curse therefore no one should like poverty.

As a Christian, I look at poverty as something not good and it is not from God...Poverty is a curse; poverty is something to be hated (interview 2, January 2016).

The four testifiers interviewed, did not call poverty a curse or say it is as result of a curse when they were poor. These people have testified of changes they noticed in their finances because they joined this church. They never considered themselves as operating under a curse when they were financially poor, but they looked at it as either due to ignorance or their mentality. Maybe they did not know it was a curse or they did not see themselves as operating under a curse.

All the pastors see poverty as a curse and only one home cell leader agrees with them, but we find divergences in this view because the testifiers did not see it as a curse or call it a curse. Pertain questions I will be asking and discussing in here is, are the poor cursed in their interpretation? If so, how would the pastors and home cell leader of Winners chapel interpret or read the scripture, which says blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the kingdom of God, Matthew 5:3. Alternatively, the values as announced by Jesus on the sermon of the mount, for it goes totally in another direction from their theology and perception of poverty.

In this section, it is noted that some adherents in Winners Chapel believe poverty is a curse. Though all 3 pastors see poverty as a curse, but the home cell leader says categorically it is not a curse from God. There is certainly a contradiction in their thoughts or opinion, though they see poverty as a curse to home cell leader A not from God. Pastor A as early seen said God has given man the right to make a choice and that choice is between the blessing and the curse. We can notice a tension in this belief. One part seems to say the good and bad is from God and as a result, there is a curse from the law and another says it is not from God. The pastors will totally concur with Oyedepo's theology, who views poverty as a curse. The testifiers who have experienced economic change do not say they were initially curse. What I can certainly not say is if they support this fact or not. If they did then they either walk

towards averting this curse or made efforts to move from the curse to the blessings as per the doctrine of the church.

Jesus' ministry on the earth was centered mainly on the poor, he even had a very humble background, and he was called the carpenter's son. Oyedepo in his theology clearly does not address this part nor the interviewees, which says the poor are blessed, but they look at them as operating under a curse from the law. In Matthew 19:21, Jesus told a man to sell all he had and give to the poor for his treasure will be in heaven. Jesus considered it the one thing the man had not done. How will this be interpreted in this theology?

In Oyedepo's theology, poverty is not an influence of the economic situation of the world, but a curse. According to them, in Galatians 3: 13-14, Christ has redeemed humans from the curse of the law so that as God's Children they can partake of the Abrahamic blessings. This hermeneutic interpretation of Abrahamic blessing to Asamoah-Gyadu, is used by most preachers of the prosperity theology. They refer to Abraham's wealth in cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camel and donkeys as seen in Genesis 13:2, 24:35-36. He equally says Galatian 3:14 is very significant in the gospel of prosperity hermeneutic as quoted by Oyedepo. He further says it is believed to be the divine will for believers and has equally become a pivot message of believers in the prosperity message worldwide (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 211).

Under the prosperity hermeneutic, God is that central factor who wants his children to be blessed and not cursed though he created both. Looking at Matthew 5:3, it says blessed are the poor, how can this be justified when the poor are cursed in the theology in Winners Chapel. When advocating for the prosperity theology this certainly will not be a verse to quote seeing that, it may contradict the concept of poverty. Asamoah-Gyadu 2005 holds the view that the gospel of prosperity is built on a selective hermeneutical method. For example, Pastor A, interprets Deuteronomy 28:1 life and death to mean blessing and curse. He holds further that according to Gordon Fee; the interpretation of scripture is a basic problem of prosperity teaching because they do what he calls 'proof-texts' from the Bible. That is selected biblical verses are used to support argument. (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p.215). Kalu 2008, holds equally that the prosperity theology is based on a certain way of reading the Bible. According to him, poverty in the Old Testament as observed by prophetic tradition has a detailed typology and causes. Kay 2011 views that, most prosperity preachers view or believe poverty to be a curse. These preachers especially (the American Pentecostal) grew up in poverty, had in some point in time-gone hungry and had very little education especially during the years of depression around the 1930s. He says prosperity preaching grew around

the 1980s and became like an antidote to poverty and the core to most Christian messages (Kay, 2011, p.64-65).

Oyedepo and some interviewees place a lot of emphasis on the fact that poverty is a curse and they have given their strong reasons why they see it that way, their reason is basically spiritual, but scholars are equally of the opinion that there are many fundamental factors that cause poverty as observed in chapter two. We can not disregard the fact that the economic situation of a country influences its citizens. The fact that poverty is as a result of a curse is their belief.

5.3.2 Mindset

The Christians in Winner's Chapel look at the mind as a contributing factor to poverty. To them the mind plays a vital role on how one views poverty and equally how they can escape from what is referred to as the 'clutches of poverty'.

Pastor A, talks of controlling the mind when it comes to poverty that is, it should not be a topic to consider or it should not dwell in the mind. To him the mind of a man is like a mirror or a reflection of what the person will desire to be. Therefore, Christians are cushioned to see themselves above poverty. They should not possess what is call a poor man's mentality for as 'a man thinks in his heart so it he'. If poverty is not the plan of God for the adherents, then they should possess a 'more than' above mentality. A dreamer's mentality is what Christians should have meaning they should aspire for change and work towards effecting such. A heaven on earth kind of mentality as seen on the walls of Winners Chapel Bamenda (appendix 2). This is a monthly declaration that adherents confess to, believing its attainable.

Poverty is not a good thing and one thing I know is that it is that kind of mindset which you keep it away from you... I do not put it in my mind...anybody who stay poor or who has the mindset that poverty is the will of God you cannot be rich...If you think well you will act well and you will become the wealthy person that you should be...I come from a poor background but in my home, I do not think like any other person. I have successfully helped my siblings to think prosperity and they are living well. (Interviewed 1, January 2016).

According to pastor A, when people have a mental renewal they can escape poverty and Pastor B supports saying, 'Once your mentality is changed everything about you is changed' (interview 3, January 2016)

Home cell Leader A says Christians should think differently to obtain different results. Christians should change their mentality because poverty has a lot to do with the mindset of an individual. To him one can command a lot of change if their mind thinks or functions differently; therefore, possessing a poverty mentality is as much as remaining in poverty.

If you want to change your status from poor to rich you must start with your mentality because you realize when you think like a different way financially you turn to realize you command so many things (Interview 2, January 2016).

Home cell leader B agrees, Poverty has to do with more of the mindset, the mentality about it (interview 5, January 2016).

Home cell leader C does not look at poverty as a function of a person's mentality. She has a different not contrary view.

According to testifier A instead of blaming the government or your family relations for the poverty status, one should first work on their mindset and take responsibility or action to change their situation. She calls on Christians to stop being ignorant and change their mindset which involves hard work and personal commitment because God does not wish poverty for his children.

We have been made to understand that poverty is largely a state of one's mind, we have been taught to take personal responsibility, which means if you are poor instead of blaming the government, instead of blaming an uncle who did not help you, you can take personal responsibility. You should take personal responsibility to work and work yourself out of poverty...In addition, I think poverty in my own mind is largely a state of one's mind because I have seen people who have resources more than others and still live poorer lives, it also a function of how we manage what we have, the resources we have at our disposal (interview 6, January 2016).

To them the minds of people need to be enrich with the scriptures for lack of it boils down to poverty but if the mind is enriched with the word of God, prosperity is easily accessible. The minds of adherents need to be revised and they should be able to realize that which God has prepared for his children in his word. To testifier D, the problem people have is their mentality because they believe in poverty or difficulties and that is what makes people poor. To Testifier B and C, the lack of the word of God in the mind leads to poverty while enriching the mind with the word of God eradicates it. Testifier B says mental poverty is scriptural

poverty manifesting in the physical. To her, if you are poor scripturally, do not expect to be rich physically.

God is not a poor man, why should his children be poor; it is just lack of understanding of scriptures because mental poverty is scriptural poverty that is just manifesting in the physical (Interview 7, January 2016).

Testifier C agrees, poverty is a mentality, poverty is the word of God that is lacking in you. If you lack the word of God in you, you are poor because the Bible tells us that the poor should say they are rich, so there is no poor man. So, to me poverty is a mentality (interview 9, January 2016).

There is no clear justification that those who know the scriptures are prosperous. What about those who do not know the scripture and are prosperous or those who have the scripture and are lamenting in poverty? How can this be justified by the Christians at Winners Chapel? In addition, how can they balance reality with what one is expected to conjure in their mind if they are poor they are expected to say in their minds that there is no poverty so long as they are filled with the scriptures? Does having the scripture automatically grantee one an escape route?

Two pastors agree strongly on this aspect and Pastor C does not say anything about poverty being a mindset. These two pastors support the theology of Oyedepo as seen in the previous chapter, which holds that poverty is in the mind than in the hand of an individual. They talk of not having a poor man's mentality because it is the root cause of poverty. Testifier B and C, look at poverty mentality as lacking in the word of God which to them is because the Bible says adherents should say they are rich even if evidently, they are poor.

We see clearly here that, Pastor A and B agree with Oyedepo's theology, which hold that poverty is a mind set in respect to the fact that one must think and dream big. Testifier A sees mindset as hard work not necessarily as pointed by Oyedepo and the pastors. Testifier B and C are of a different opinion because they look at mindset as lacking in God's word. There is a clear difference of ideology behind poverty as a mindset.

In the society, people are prosperous irrespective of their mindset. It cannot be out rightly justified that having a 'rich mind' will cause you to prosper automatically. There are other factors that cause poverty; for example, there are economic, political and social reasons. The mind therefore, cannot be the sole platform or basis for poverty. Kalu 2008, looks at social alienation, which include war, bad governance and bureaucratic taxation. With advent of economic crises in Cameroon Kalu and Akoko can certainly not be far from the truth.

According to Oyedepo and Testifier A, people should not focus their minds on blaming the government but should make individual effort to elude poverty. Both believe family members should not be blamed for one's state of poverty but with the mind they can change from a deprived to a prosperous state. If I were to ask the question, does the mind of man determine whether he should be poor or rich then certainly, Kay 2009 would answer that it is based upon the individual's view on the way the universe operates. To them, if human beings can act freely then they can change events and influence situations as per common sense (Kay, 2009, p. 21). According to Asamoah- Gyadu 2005, using the example of a Ghanaian prosperity church to illustrate this, he says adherents are made to refuse the causes of poverty that is plaguing the African Continent but asked to have a right mind thereby following the principle of 'positive confession', 'refusal' or 'resistance'. Therefore, there are lapses in this teaching that if believers think rich they will become rich or if they possess a right mindset, they will become rich. To some this is a gospel of delusion and very deceptive because there is no clear correlation between the mind and riches or prosperity.

5.3.3 Killer

Some interviewees view poverty as a killer. Poverty is correlated to the devil who can snatch an individual's life. According to Pastor C, poverty has killed many people and to him it is like a deadly disease.

Poverty humiliates, many people are in the grave today because of poverty...and I can say poverty kills...I do not have facts to justify it, there are more people today that have been killed by poverty, so, it stinks and destroys destiny (interview 4, January 2016).

Poverty according to this pastor is a destroyer of destiny and should be fought with every available weapon or resources no doubt Oyedepo talks about waging a war against poverty. From the interview, Pastor A says poverty is a system and like any other system it is created by God though God does not wish for the adherents to be poor that is why an individual can make a choice.

Economic poverty is a system that God made, that is God created the whole world, he made poverty, he made prosperity for us to make a choice and God told us in Deuteronomy 30; he said he set before you, life and death, the blessing and the curse or prosperity and poverty (interview 1, January 2016).

The interviewees have these to agree upon, the fact that God is not a poor God and, so he will not wish poverty on his children. It is interesting to note that some of the interviewees had this remark to make, the fact that God hates poverty and most especially the lack of the word of God in the lives of people is the reason why people are poor. Poverty to these interviewees is easily associated to Satan (the devil) and poverty should be hated since it kills. To them it has already killed many in Africa. As previously seen in chapter two of this study, poverty is like an epidemic plaguing Africa. Scholars have equally argued that poverty is not particular to Africa only but a general phenomenon. Strategies have been put in place to extirpate poverty, but it is still a predominant issue.

Though the other interviewees show a total dislike of poverty they did not look at it in this aspect of a killer or some sort of a dreaded disease. The two pastors agree strongly with Oyedepo who says poverty stings, bites, humiliates and makes her victims vulnerable to sickness and diseases and as such, it is a killer. In his theology, no man in his right senses enjoys poverty. He says to win the war against poverty then one needs to diagnose the cause of poverty. Here we can see that poverty is not only called a disease, but a killer and it is an associate of the devil, yet God is the creator of all the systems. This ideology is questionable because it looks at God as the God of laughter, good times and prosperity only but the fact that God created the dark, bad or disease is not considered.

Do people die or are killed in Africa mainly because they choose not to believe? I pose this question under this section because they view poverty as a killer or a disease. As earlier seen there are many factors that cause poverty such as economic, social and natural factors. In Cameroon, for example accidents due to bad roads have killed a notable amount of people. These adherents do not take into consideration these factors because they choose to believe differently. For example, Cameroon has been suffering from economic crisis from the 1990s, though Oyedepo holds that the economic situation of a country should not be a stand for prosperity because as a child of God you are to prosper irrespective of the economic climate. Paul Gifford 2007 in his article titled 'Expecting miracles: prosperity gospel in Africa' says the gospel of success or prosperity does little to challenge the political structure and economic system because to them, it simply does not matter because a 'born-again' prosper under any political or economic regime.

As earlier observed, Oyedepo says poverty, being a curse is self-inflicted. He says it is a willful act of disobedience to the law of abundance. Pastor A supports this fact because he says above, that poverty like every other system is created by God and man has been given the ability to make a choice. He equates life and death to blessing and curse and prosperity

and poverty. Here, life, blessing and prosperity is on one side and associated with God while death, curse and poverty is on another side but not clearly associated with God or good things, but God is the creator of everything. Omenyo 2014 holds the view that the existence of demons and evil spirits in the society is a dormant force among Pentecostals. Demons in Pentecostal churches are believed to be the cause of illnesses, joblessness and poverty. The antidote for this according to this theology will be to choose life over death or blessing over curse, which is equivalent to prosperity over poverty. Gerrie ter Haar 2014 supports this fact and says, Africans have a traditional religious history that goes to influence the prosperity theology. Africans believe in a world of spirits which are ancestors, and this has been inculcated into the modern prosperity. As earlier seen in chapter two, Andre Droogers 2001, holds that Pentecostals have a dual worldview, to him, they place God on one side and the devil on another side. Ayegboyn 2006 holds that Africans believe in a cosmos saturated with wicked spirits, which are the causes of misfortunes and failures.

I will also discuss the scripture Deuteronomy 30 which goes to justify according to Pastor A why poverty is a killer. Asamoah-Gyadu 2005 and Kalu 2008 believes the gospel of prosperity is based on a selective hermeneutical method which is on the interpretation of selected scriptures to articulate a message. To this pastor, Deuteronomy 30 has clearly given man the ability to choose life over death or prosperity over poverty. Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 15:11, which says for the poor will never cease to be in the land and Matthew 6:11, the poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me are not in consideration. Therefore, proof-texting as observed by Asamoah-Gyadu, can be said to be applicable here. He says selected biblical verses are used to support arguments irrespective of their context. As observed in the advent of economic crisis destinies are destroyed as well.

5.3.4 Ignorance

Some of the interviewees claim that most poor people are ignorant. They are ignorant in the sense that they do not know that there is way out. That way out is, these respondents claim is in the word of God. Ignorance is either a result of not knowing what the scriptures say about one as a child of God or what God has planned for one just because one is a believer. This ignorance can be because they have refused to accept what the scripture says regarding wealth.

Pastor A said, In the same way, there are people who have not yet caught the vision of prosperity, so they will stay in that state of poverty...When I see a Christian and I see poverty on him. I do not need another prophet or an angel to

tell me he is not accepting the full gospel of Jesus Christ because anyone who accepts the full gospel of Jesus, the same Jesus who became poor that through his poverty we may be made rich... (Interview 1, January 2016).

When one knows what the scriptures says about them as children of God, they will not agree to be poor. Testifier B says poverty is a ‘robber, a cheat’ so therefore children of God should search the scriptures and come out of this ignorance. They should stand on the platform of the word of God which enlightens the mind and gives one the possibility of walking out on poverty. To this testifier of financial change poverty is an issue of ignorance because;

Our God is the creator of heaven and earth and if you operate in God’s ways, you cannot be operating in poverty. Physical when a father has money the children must partake of his money, sincerely as a child of God you must look like God...Poverty is an issue of ignorance because God is the creator of heaven and earth; everything belongs to him and when you operate in God’s own way, you cannot be operating in poverty. If there is anybody, who claims to be a child of God and you are poor there is still an element of ignorance somewhere in you and no understanding of who your father is... (Interview 7, January 2016)

We can note here that; the other respondents did not view poverty as some sort of ignorance, but they had other views. Some had same claims and others defer. Pastor A and Testifier B strongly believe that ignorance has lot to play why people are poor. They clearly support Oyedepo who says, ‘you are not a failure until you find someone to blame’. According to his theology, God has supernatural supplies for his children even during famine or drought. He holds that God has the power to turn lack into plenty, the global economic system or bad governance notwithstanding. As observed above, Pastor A talks of accepting the full gospel of Christ and he uses the scripture 2 Corinthians 8:9, which says;

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

This is another aspect of proof-texting to argue a point as viewed by Asamoah –Gyadu 2005, which to Pastor A is sufficient proof of God’s mind on this issue. Testifier B says God is the creator of heaven and earth and everything belongs to him, everything except poverty. This is because he out rightly says if one is operating in God’s ways they cannot be operating in poverty. In my understanding, this way of belief makes it difficult or impossible for the adherents to question a belief that says God created everything, yet God’s children are poor. Some give excuses why there is poverty or the existence of poverty in the church. If there is

poverty, then the creator cannot be blamed because he has also created a way out. So, if one does not know the way out then it is their ignorance in play. According to Akoko 2007, with the advent of economic crises in Cameroon Pentecostal churches grew massively and there was a notable shift from the doctrine of asceticism to accumulation. He says it was a survival strategy but is not so for Pastor A or Testifier B who believe that poverty is because of ignorance.

One may certainly question a belief that holds that the poor in Cameroon are poor due to ignorance of the law or the promises of the Bible. There many who do not know the scriptures and are prosperous. There are those who know and practice that are wallowing in poverty. In addition, Paul Gifford (1987) in his article 'Africa shall be saved: An appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke' he observed that during the crusade, demons are responsible for sickness and every other life's ills. To him there is an unresolved problem because it not comprehensible to what level the devil has been defeated. He questioned to what extent the devil has power over the regenerated human. He says this theory stipulates that in Jesus Christ, Christians are free from sickness, diseases and pains but in practice Christians cannot claim to be completely immune to all the above. There are many factors that cause poverty to out rightly conclude that the poor are poor because of ignorance will be ruling out other notable causes of poverty that we have seen in this research work. Hopper 2012 holds that inequity and gender issues should be taken into considerations when measuring poverty. We can observe that this belief does not consider inequity and gender issues as observed by Hopper 2012.

5.3.5 Choice

Some interviewees had this in common that poverty is a choice one makes. This choice can be because one chooses to disobey God's word or does not practice the word. As a child of God or someone who knows the scripture adherents choose to come out of a situation they find themselves in or stay in it. This therefore means that knowing the word of God, equally knowing God's plans, which are plans of good, and not of evil, one can walk out of poverty consciously as observed by Oyedepo. This choice is affected by knowing what the word of God says about God's children as concerns poverty and equally making a choice to come out of the shadow of poverty. Therefore, one can either practice what they hear because according to Pastor B, adherents should not be hearers only but doers of the word. Adherents can choose to practice or not to practice what they hear or what the scriptures have laid down for them.

According to Pastor A, poverty is a choice because God wants to know those who are his. So, one either chooses to be poor that is not knowing God or serving him, or they choose to serve God and come out of poverty.

God himself has given you the possibility of choosing. God created the whole world, he made poverty, he made prosperity for us to make a choice..., he said choose, so poverty exist so that God himself can see those who are choosing him; poverty exist so that God can separate, the Bible says he will separate sheep from the goat. Therefore, poverty and prosperity are a means of separation that is, those who accept the full gospel of Jesus Christ and those who accept the partial gospel of Jesus Christ (interview 1, January 2016).

Pastor A and B strongly agree with the theology of Oyedepo, which says, ‘every change is consciously effected by those who desire it, if you desire to change your position then a change of approach is needed’. People in areas affected by war, hurricanes, drought, famine, or those who die at childbirth did not make this choice. What is said about these people in this theology? Were they really given a chance to make a choice? These factors above are beyond the control of the people if they find themselves poor. Poverty as seen in chapter two of this thesis is multidimensional or multi facet. One cannot concretely agree with the fact that poverty is a conscious choice made by people. In Cameroon, for example, women and children are categorized as the poorest. Many factors are associated with this fact such as iniquity or lack of education. How will this theology address this? There is a genuine tension here. When trying to understand this aspect of poverty being a choice, the worldviews of Pentecostals needs to be put into consideration. Pentecostals have different ways of articulating the gospel as observed by Mark J. Cartledge 2014, either as ‘full gospel’ or ‘five-fold’ gospel, whereby Jesus is the savior, sanctifier, spirit baptizer, healer and coming king (Cartledge, 2014, p. 256). Andre Droogers 2014 on the cultural dimension of Pentecostalism; notes that Pentecostalism as a religion incorporates culture where by faith is used to dialogue with culture and believers though marked by their culture try to influence it. To him, Pentecostalism is part of a cultural environment though it regards itself as faith experience with the Holy Spirit. He looks at the fact that modernization has created conditions for Pentecostalism to expand but Pentecostalism has produced its own ways and style of modernizing and modernity respectively. Pentecostals have produced their own modern views by redefining local traditional customs and even demonizing them. Though Pentecostalism is global, it manifests itself in local experiences (Droogers, 2014, p.195-196).

As seen from Interview 1 above, Pastor A uses the quote in Matthew 25: 31-33, which says;

When the Son of man comes in his glory in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep and the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

As early seen proof-texting has been implemented here whereby a certain scripture has been quoted to substantiate an argument. According to Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, the fundamental principle on biblical interpretation should involve the entire Bible teaching on a subject not selective hermeneutics (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 222). We can clearly raise an argument here if we read the scripture further. Jesus (from Matthew 25: 34- 46) said, he will be rejecting those who neither gave him food while he was hungry, gave him to drink while he was thirsty, even as a stranger invited in, gave him clothes while he was naked or even fed him while he was hungry or visited him while was in prison. Finally, he casted the 'unrighteous' into the pit of hell because they refused to take care of one of the brethren. According to this pastor, the separation here will be the choice one makes to be either rich or poor by being faithful to the instructions outlined by God or by finding oneself in the right camp. He equally regards this scripture as a proof for those who believe in the full gospel of Christ Jesus and a separation between the 'full' and the 'partial. We can say Jesus rather associating himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, sick and even those in prison in Matthew 25.

Omenyo 2014 observed that, African society is very religious where there is a belief that God breaks into human life; and the sacred and the secular are united in all spheres of life (Omenyo, 2014, p. 146). If this is the understanding then Pastor A, B and David Oyedepo do not view the sacred and the secular separately. Ogbu Kalu 2008 believes, the Pentecostal map of the universe regards the Godhead as superior to all powers. Individual lives are shaped regarding their interpretation and application of the Bible. If poverty is regarded as a choice, it is because they strongly believe there is a God whom if they believe in can effect changes in their lives. According to Kalu 2008, as observed by Gerrie ter Haar, religious worldviews do not diminish with formal education, but traditional cosmologies apply to the believers in their everyday life. This is exactly what is seen in this theology and the belief of the adherents (Kalu, 2008, p. 169). As also observed by Kalu (2010), in his article titles 'Holy Praiseco: Negotiating Sacred and popular music and dance in African Pentecostalism'. Pentecostals

interpret indigenous worldviews in three ways; the covenant idea from the Old Testament, reinforcing the uncertainty in indigenous belief in the journey of human life with the conception of evil and demonic presence and by linking indigenous worldview with meaningful parts of the Bible. David Maxwell (1998) in his article ‘Delivered from the spirit of poverty: Pentecostalism, prosperity and modernity in Zimbabwe 1’, the spirit of poverty doctrine looks at ancestors to have been economic and social failures in their lifetime. He summarizes this doctrine as ‘African stay poor, not because of structural injustice but because of a spirit of poverty’. He further expounds that even though the Christians are born-again only their souls have been redeemed therefore, ancestral spirits may possess a malign influence in their blood. With this kind of understanding, it means one must understand the worldview of these adherents as applied in their theology. Their belief is that the spiritual realm plays a vital role in their physical lives.

5.4 Can you say there are economically poor people in Winners Chapel Bamenda?

This question of whether one could say that there are economically poor in Winners Chapel was asked because poverty in Cameroon is not a new phenomenon. Winners chapel is called or labelled a ‘prosperity church’. Their prosperity is seen physically in their infrastructure and the way the church is beautified (appendix 1). So, I wanted to find out if, the people who attend the church are already prosperous or do they see themselves as prosperous because they attend this church. If, there were economically poor people I would want to know if they remained poor or they observed any change after they started attending this church. Are there people who do not change even while attending this church? In a church known for preaching the gospel of prosperity or having the appellation prosperity church, would there still be economically poor people there? Alternatively, is everyone in Winners chapel economically rich?

Pastor A totally agrees there are economically poor people in Winners Chapel Bamenda though to him; poverty is not measure in respect to the acquisition of assets or skills but rather the ability to convert or transform what one has, to what one needs. He further expounds that people who have not embraced the vision of prosperity can remain economically poverty while in the church.

There are economically poor people in Winners chapel... people come the way they are, they are schooled or groomed or being molded into who they are supposed to be, in the same way there are people who have not yet caught the

vision of prosperity, so they will stay in that state of poverty...So, I can explain, that is why you still see some people in the state of economic poverty. It is a temporary situation especially for my church, my Christians, and me. I believe there is no poor person in my church, spiritually they are poor, economically they may look poor, but I can assure you it is a temporary situation. (Interview 1, January 2016).

All three pastors interviewed agreed that there are economically poor people in Winners Chapel Bamenda. Pastor A says it is temporary though he does not measure poverty by acquisition of assets, to pastor B practically there are some poor people in the church and to pastor C there are quite a few of them and he gives the reason being they have not yet understood the gospel and what it has to offer.

Yes, maybe they are just new in Winners chapel; and maybe there are some that are still to catch or get the light (interview 4, January 2016).

Home cell leaders equally agree that there are economically poor people who attend Winners Chapel. Home cell leader A had this to say that those who come to his home cell are initially very poor but as time goes on they change.

Yes, but not like before but like they say it takes time for somebody to learn something or for somebody to change or change status... Some could be poor because they are either students or adults who are just new to the church. Children or younger ones or students do not change prosperous wise, but I say with the adults maybe 6 months and you will notice a change drastically (interview 2, January 2016)

Home cell leader B claims, there are no economically poor people in the home cell because somebody who was poor financially as at the time when he was not, yet a believer surrendered his life to Christ since then things changed (interview 5, January 2016).

According to him, people are not poor like they use to be or before the joined Winners Chapel meaning after a while their status changes. To him people come poor but when they surrender or give their lives to Christ, they do not remain poor.

Yes, but not like before but like they say it takes time for somebody to learn something or for somebody to change or change status (ibid).

To him the children or younger ones or students don't change but the adults can take a very short time and their financial situation will change or he notices a tremendous change.

To home cell leader C everybody is engaged in one thing or the other and that fetched them money. He says because they engage in doing something or to get job liberates the people from poverty. To leader D most people come to her home cell and they are initially poor, but they come for prayers and counselling and they do not remain the same if they continue to follow the instructions of the Bible and adhere to the teachings.

Most people come for help, prayers, and those who care to obey the teaching and counselling have been empowered (interview 10, January 2016).

This same question was asked to people who claimed to have observed changes in their economy. I wanted to find out if they came to Winners chapel economically poor and if they have observed economic changes; or remained poor. I wanted to find out how they regarded themselves before joining Winners Chapel. The testifiers are the people who have shared testimonies of changes in their economic lives.

Testifier A, before I had barely enough to survive it was more hand to mouth kind of experience for me (interview 6, January 2016).

Testifier B blatantly said, 'my economic status was not good, it was not good'. According to Testifier C her economy was not that bad so from person to person it varies.

Testifier D said, before joining winners chapel it was deplorable, I was jobless, and my wife was jobless. We did not have our own home and I was still staying in my father's compound (interview 11, January 2016).

From the above presentation there are a quite a variety of answers and arguments. Some deny there are poor people in the church, others admit there are, and others argue they either are new, young or have not learnt or understood the principles yet. I shall discuss this inconsistency. From the interview, we can clearly see there is a conflicting view on whether there are poor people in Winners Chapel. Pastor A, said to him poverty is not measure it what a person amasses but the ability to change what they have, to what they want. He was very categorical when he said poverty is a curse. When the question was asked if there are poor people in the church, he does not give a spontaneous yes but is sure to mention that 'poverty is not measure in respect to the acquisition of assets or skills but rather the ability to convert or transform what they have to what they need'. According to this pastor, when people are in the church poverty is not a matter of a curse but the fact that the people are unable to convert

what they have, to what they need. This ‘what they have’ can mean anything and he did not elaborate on it and I would only assume it could be the word of God. Having just the word of God does not give anyone physical cash because if Deuteronomy 28:12 is quoted hermeneutically or using the application of proof-texting, God says he is going to bless the works of your hands. Therefore, an individual must engage in some activity to generate income.

Pastor A, makes mention of spiritual poverty which he says some Christians can be spiritually poor which seems accepted but economic poverty is either because they just newly joined Winners Chapel and have not got the vision/light of prosperity. This aspect of spiritual poverty mentioned is not clear whether, it is the belief in the poverty theology or the fact that if people lack the word of God they are spiritually poor. Poverty theology according to Deji Ayegboyin 2011 is a theology, which deals with the fact that possessions are a curse and shuns materialism thus advocating for little attachment to worldly things (Ayegboyin 2011, p. 156). This theology may not be advocated by these adherents because they shun poverty and to them it is not the will of God for any. Ayegboyin 2011 notes that, this has caused a great division between the new- Pentecostals and the mainline churches who focused on salvation of souls and little attention paid to the things of the world, which was considered wicked. David Oyedepo 2004 in his book titled *All you need to have all your needs met* talks of spiritual prosperity which he says an individual must be correctly positioned or aligned. To be correctly aligned means one’s soul must be nourished, and this nourishment is from the word of God because God will not bless a man above their spiritual capacity. To be spiritually prosperous, one is expected to live a righteous life because their spiritual prosperity will determine their material prosperity. He uses 3 John 2 in this context to justify his claim (which says, ‘Dear friend I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well’). This scripture has been used by the adherents and Oyedepo to substantiate different arguments. Asamoah- Gyadu 2005 says the gospel of prosperity uses 3 John 2 as one of its arch-texts which is normally cited from the King James Version. Prosperity preachers lay emphasis on ‘prosper’ in the King James Version, when arguing that God wishes prosperity for all. They therefore interpret this passage to suit the context of their message because the New International Version as seen above is not quoted.

According to the interviewees, it is okay to come poor but to remain poor is totally unaccepted. Before joining Winners Chapel, one can be considered poor but once one becomes a devotee they are not expected to remain poor. Poverty could mean because one does not know the word and what it patterns to them as a Christian or because they have not

put into practice that which is taught. Adherents are expected to change but for a noticeable change to be observed in their finances it is when they are 'illuminated' or 'catch the light'.

Testifiers attested to the fact that they came poor and they are now rich because of their fellowship in this church. There is no way for me to prove it is true because it is what they say and what they have noticed. I have no way of knowing what their financial status was before they joined Winners Chapel and what their financial status maybe at the present. It is just their word or testimony. According to Deji Ayegboyin 2011, prosperity churches have this characteristic, the fact that adherents should flourish both spiritually and materially. The prosperity gospel is considered a religion of hope even though it is striving in a predominantly poor Africa.

5.5 What is your perception on the prosperity gospel preached in Winners chapel?

This question was asked to ascertain if the prosperity gospel preached in Winners chapel has influenced the attitude of those who worship there. The concept of this gospel is that God desires for his children to be blessed materially; but it must be done through faith in the word of God, positive confession or thinking or walking in some outlined principles as seen in chapter four. Asamoah-Gyadu 2005 is of the view that the 'word of faith' movement that advocates the prosperity doctrine steamed from North America neo-Pentecostalism though some scholars have argued that some have indigenous roots. According to Ogbu kalu 2008, the prosperity theology 'demonstrates the force of American influence and the shallowness of African Pentecostalism' and the media has help to facilitate the expansion of this theology (Kalu, 2008, p.255). Though many scholars have criticized (as seen in chapter two), the prosperity gospel this has not stopped Winners Chapel from preaching and believing in prosperity. According to them, it is the complete gospel of Jesus Christ and prosperity is portrayed as one of the 12 tenets in Winners Chapel. There is a month set aside in Winners Chapel to preach on prosperity.

5.5.1 Appreciable

All the interviewees without exception had this in common, they love the prosperity gospel. According to Pastor A and C, Winners Chapel has been misunderstood for preaching the prosperity gospel whereas it is the complete gospel of Jesus Christ. If the prosperity message is not preached to the people, then the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is incomplete. Pastor A said no one wants to be poor but if someone desires to be poor, it does not mean they will not make heaven because there is spiritual poverty, 'there are people who have decided to serve

God in this manner and they live a righteous life and thus make heaven at end'. Winners Chapel apparently believes in spiritual poverty; it is a concept I have mentioned, and we will observe if Oyedepo concurs in his theology.

Prosperity is the perfect will of God, the very perfect will of God...but economic poverty is not spiritual poverty. They will make it to heaven if they live a sanctified life (interview 1, January 2016).

He further elaborates that, it is the will of God because for every single human being on earth be it black, white, tall, short, slim or fat; God wants all to prosper. God does not choose some people to prosper but wills prosperity to everybody. Pastor B has an admiration for the prosperity gospel that is been preached and he says he loves it and pastor C claims,

Prosperity is one of the things which Christ came to accomplish, so if I truly stand for the Bible, I like prosperity (interview 4, January 2016).

Home cell leader A and D think prosperity is a very good thing, it is God's plan for his children to prosper and an inheritance in Christ for his children. Home cell leader B says it is the abundant life Christ came to give to humankind.

Well prosperity is a good thing and one thing I do know is that it God's plan for us to be prosperous (interview 2, January 2016).

Prosperity is our inheritance in Christ, God's plan for us (interview 10, January 2016).

According to Testifier A, prosperity is a welcomed gospel to Africa especially people in her community currently because most people are living in abject poverty and a message of this magnitude is good for the people. Testifier C claims, he loves prosperity and it is like a package for the children of God. Testifier B notes that, even God himself does not want to see his children poor and Testifier D said prosperity is wonderful because it makes one know God better.

Prosperity to me is not a bad thing contrary to what some people have made it look like..., if you are preaching prosperity to poor people you are a bad person but if somebody is poor, what does that person need? A message, a teaching, a road map on how they can get rich. So, I think prosperity is a welcomed gospel to Africa, to people in my community currently (interview 6, January 2016).

Even God himself does not want to see his children poor and that is why he says in 3Jn 2 that he wants us to be prosperous in our health and every area of our

lives, prosperity is in fact the portion of God's own children (Interview 7, January 2016).

They all liked prosperity or the prosperity gospel because most importantly it is the plan of God for his children. Some of the interviewees quickly defend the fact that they preach the prosperity gospel because they regard it as the complete gospel of Jesus Christ. Testifier D believes prosperity makes one know God better, so we can assume those who preach the holiness or poverty theology will not know God better. These are people who through their gospel condemned attachment to the world and worldly things.

The prosperity message has been given several names in Africa and is regarded as that gospel that grew exponentially around the 1980s. The force of Pentecostal growth according to Thomas Drønen 2013 is because of 'evangelization'. The prosperity gospel has been called, name it and claim it, gospel of affluence, faith gospel and wealth and health gospel. According to Oyedepo's theology, no man in his right senses enjoys poverty and he will certainly not wish anyone to be poor. The interviewees all concur with his theology. What is interesting to note is that prosperity is looked at as an accomplishment of Jesus Christ. The question I may ask is why not salvation? Pastor A and C regard the prosperity message as the complete gospel of Jesus Christ. According to their belief, we can assume the main line churches did not preach or practice the complete gospel of Jesus Christ since they preached the poverty theology and shun materialism. As per Oyedepo's theology, poverty is not a sign of righteousness because God wants his children to prosper.

Pastor A recognizes the fact that spiritual poverty is not economic poverty because if one lives a sanctified life even though poor they will still make heaven. He acknowledges it but does not want anyone of his Christians to be economically poor. If we equate or associate spiritual poverty with Jesus Christ, then why is poverty regarded as a taboo and prosperity something to be loved and admired. As early said in this study Jesus had a very humble background and always associated himself with the poor. He equally called the poor blessed. Why will he call him or her blessed if he does not want anyone to be poor? If prosperity is to be loved and poverty hated, why does Jesus say blessed are the poor.

Prosperity to these interviewees is regarded as the perfect will of God but God said in Deuteronomy 15:11,

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be open handed toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in the land.

Home cell leader B equates prosperity to abundant life, so we can say therefore without prosperity one does not have abundant life. The scripture, John 10:10 was used to substantiate this argument but this scripture can equally be used to mean eternal life and not necessarily a life of material prosperity. Interviewee 7 considers prosperity as the portion of God's own children and I wonder where it keeps the poor who are equally God's children, or do they stop being God's children because they are poor? The prosperity message advocates that God wants the best for his children, that is they should eat well, dress well and stay in very good houses but the reality is not always so. According to Deji Ayegboyin 2011 one of the characteristics and emphasis of prosperity churches is that, they teach and demonstrate that Christians should prosper or flourish both spiritually and materially. The views of this kind of teaching goes in contrast with the mainline Christians and holiness movements which advocated for fact that it was worldly to have wealth or modern facilities or to wear the best clothes (designers) and the drive the choicest cars (Ayegboyin, 2011, p. 159). Jesus equally affirms this when he said in Matthew 26:11 and in John 12:8, that the poor we would always have. Luke 18:22, Jesus tells the rich man he still lacks one thing. Jesus told him to go sell all his possessions and give to the poor and he will have treasures in heaven. We can notice that, Jesus came through a very humble background and he was not buried in his own tomb when he died but a borrowed tomb. At some point Jesus made it clear, he did not have a bed to lay his head. In this theology these are not considered.

5.5.2 God's plan or will

The interviewees say according to 3John 2, (beloved I wish above all things that you be in health and prosper even as your soul prospers, as per the King James Version) God desires prosperity for all God's children. Prosperity is considered as something God will want for all God's children irrespective of who or what they are or even where they find themselves.

Pastor A and C view prosperity as the perfect will of God for his children who are heirs to the earth God created.

Pastor A says, the prosperity we preach as part of the 12 pillars of our commission is the will of God; that is the plan of God for every single human being on the planet earth (interview 1, January 2016).

He trusts God has a special plan to prosper his people because through the prosperity of this people God will prosper the gospel. To him if the gospel is to be spread (evangelism) far then God must prosper his children because missionaries brought the gospel initially and it would

not have been possible without money. Therefore, money is needed for missions and for the gospel to reach everyone. This is another strong argument by Pastor A, why God desires the prosperity of his children and God will prosper his people to accomplish this. Pastor B says among God's priorities, the prosperity of his children is the first. The question is why not salvation or love or charity? This is because as early said 3John 2 is used to validate this argument. The text interpreted to mean God wants his children to prosper above everything else and this prosperity is material and spiritual. They mostly stress on the material aspect of prosperity because if God wills it then it is God's wish for all to be prosperous.

All the testifiers who speak of their initial state of poverty before joining Winners Chapel equally have this belief. If they were not prospering before it is because they did not know of God's will for them.

Testifier B claims, God himself does not want to see his children poor and that is why he says in 3 John 2 that he wants us to be prosperous. He says that he wishes above all things that we should prosper and be in health even as our souls prosper (interview 7, January 2016).

Testifier C claims, Our Lord Jesus Christ was prosperous, he never lacked, there is nowhere in the Bible that told us he lacked he even had a treasurer (interview 9, January 2016).

To the testifier Jesus was never in want of anything because the Bible does not mention it and if Jesus was not in lack of anything she too cannot be poor. Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room, this is clearly not considered. We can undoubtedly see a repetition of this biblical quotation 3Jn 2 and the context in which it is used. I have discussed above in this chapter the aspect of quoting some scripture and not others. It is used here to justify why prosperity is God's ultimate plan for God's people. I can argue that 3 John 2 has been quoted out of context or just to argue this claim. Why do they not use other scriptures to justify this supposed fact? This scripture has been considered by scholars as the one of the varieties of the prosperity theology. Deji Ayegboyin 2011 calls this biblical interpretation fallacy of proof-texting. To him it is the worst kind of biblical exegesis because it is such that it can find biblical support for anything. He further says this kind of reading can be in technical sense regarded as reading predetermined belief into the Bible. He equally makes mention of the theology of the cross and theology of suffering (which so much emphasis is not laid on) without which Christianity will be considered 'artificial, shallow and superficial'. This is not taken into contemplation and even the fact that in the early church people sold their properties

and brought the proceeds to be shared amongst them (Ayegboyin, 2011, p. 169). A clear example is Ananias and Sapphira Acts 5:1-11 who sold their land and brought the proceeds to Apostles to be shared though they were punished for lying and conceiving some of the proceeds.

Testifier B says God does not want to see his children poor, yet the reality is not so because there are poor people in Bamenda, notably in Winners Chapel and they are God's children. Poverty is principally a universal phenomenon, so I cannot justify here that there are no people in Winners Chapel Bamenda. The people may believe they are not poor so long as they belong to this church, but I have no way of justifying their concept with reality. Jesus himself said in Matthew 26:11 that we will always have the poor with us and we will not always have him. Oyedepo's theology says God has rooted his children in prosperity because it is their covenant rights as children of Abraham. To him God empowers his people to become rich and not a product of one's effort or skill. Just being a son or daughter of God does not make one rich because they would have to fulfil one covenant obligation or another or better still be patient and wait for their time. In Matthew 19:24, the word of God says it will be difficult for a rich man to enter heaven and equates it with a camel passing through a needle. Where does this leave the theology that advocates the fact that God wants everybody to be rich? Or the fact that Jesus asked the rich man to sell all he has, and he will have treasures in heaven?

This kind of teaching exploded in Africa around the 1980s and most of the prosperity churches originated around this same period. The question is, was God not interested in the prosperity of his people before this phase or did God just realize that prosperity was good for his children? Some may argue that God had always wish it, but the understanding of the people was the issue. Isaac Phiri and Joe Maxwell (2007) in their article came out with some reasons why they think the prosperity gospel, or the wealth and health gospel has flourished in Africa. This gospel to them has spread firstly because; Africans equate faith with wealth because of the American influence. Secondly, material and spiritual success is linked to African traditions and thirdly, prosperity preachers are highly revered because African's possess the 'Big man' ideology.

Testier B says God does not want to see his children poor, does it mean therefore that people who are poor are not God's Children. God himself says in Deuteronomy 15:11 that there will always be poor people in the land. This scripture cannot be interpreted to mean spiritual poverty because he admonishes the people to be open handed to the poor. According to Testifier C, Jesus never lacked because he even had a treasurer. This concurs with Oyedepo's theology because he said Jesus was so rich such that he needed a treasurer to keep

his money. Poverty is not associated with Jesus because Oyedepo urges believers to have an expression of Jesus on the earth. In John 13: 29 according to prosperity preachers, Judas is the treasurer. This is because he had a bag (he oversaw the finances), which is assumed a bag of treasures, so definitely Jesus was very rich and to some justifies why God will want his people to be rich. This interpretation is used to justify the fact that Jesus Christ himself was very rich because he could afford a treasurer, poor people of course do not need treasurers. Oyedepo's theology holds that from the beginning of creation, God created man very rich and prosperous and man was living in a garden of abundance and affluence. If it is not the case, then you must 'wage a war' against poverty. This theology advocates for prosperity and Oyedepo teaches the adherents how to wage war against poverty. He believes God's desire is for God's people to prosper and God does not take pleasure in the continuous poverty of his children.

5.5.3 Transformative

The prosperity gospel is viewed as having a transformative potential. That is when people constantly listen to the plan God has for them in his word, they turn to change not only their minds but obtain the ability to work towards achieving that which is said about them in the scriptures. I cannot concretely say that the Christians learn how to work, how to get rich or how to do business in the church. Their belief is that the message preached to the Christians transforms them to achieve all the above.

Pastor A's belief is that, they empower the mind of the adherents by preaching the prosperity message, when their minds are empowered, they take the necessary steps to be economically rich.

Their mind is empowered, as he thinks in his heart so is he, Proverbs 23:7, so their mind begin to think right and think prosperous...so when you think prosperous you begin to work prosperous...We are not a bank so we don't empower people with cash but we empower them mentally and the mind of a mind is like the life of man because if you think well you will act well and you will become the wealth person that you should be (interview 1, January 2016).

According to Pastor B, the gospel has a transforming ability according to 2corinthians 8:9; which is Jesus himself became poor so that his children might be made rich. According to him one should not forget the fact that as a man thinks in his heart so is he (Proverbs 23:7). This pastor expects adherents to believe and think rich because this scripture says so. According to Pastor B, other books inform but the gospel transforms.

Yes, and the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8:9. you know by the grace of our lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, but he came poor so that we through his poverty might become rich...the gospel transforms you and once you believe it you are transformed, and the Bible says as a man thinks in his heart so is he... The gospel has a transformative power once you believe it; it can transform you (interview 3, January 2016).

To these Pastors the gospel in its totality possesses a transforming power because God has given his children power to become sons of God as such the gospel of prosperity transforms life from poverty to prosperity. According to them the gospel has transformative power because as many as believed Christ he gave them power. Therefore, the only way out of poverty is through the gospel because when one hears the gospel and believes and puts it into practice their financial condition will change.

Pastor C claims, prosperity is one of the things Christ came to accomplish on the earth so if one truly stands for the Bible then they should prosper... believing in the Bible accomplishes a lot for one's prosperity since it is for this same purpose that Christ came. He came so that the poor can become rich (interview 4, January 2016).

Home cell leader A and C agrees that the prosperity gospel has a transforming effect on the Christians when preached too,

Most people are scared to take on business ventures but when the light of the word of God opens their understanding, they can do that which they could not venture into before (interview 2, January 2016).

Home cell leader C says, when there is a transformation in mentality you, will see that things happening will not affect you because you are in the world, but you are not of this world (interview 8, January 2016).

To them, as adherent in the world one is exempted from the normal things of the world because one possesses a mentality of transformation. Therefore, what is happening in the world that is, regarding economic hardship should not affect a child of God. I observed that situations such as natural disasters for example earth quake or drought is not considered. Oyedepo claims even though famine is real, God will always make a way out for the redeemed.

Home cell leader D says the fact that Christians listen to the message they work hard, learn to pray and obey the fivefold aspects of the covenant it goes to change their financial situation,

so the gospel transforms the lives of the people. The covenant according to David Oyedepo 'is a deal enacted by God based on well-defined terms and sealed with an oath'. He believes the Bible is a book of covenants. This concurs with this home cell leader who says the fivefold aspects of the covenant should be respected if financial change is expected. In Oyedepo's theology, he believes in seedtime and harvest, tithing, offering and some other covenant responsibilities before one can manifest on the earth.

We give them the teaching of the gospel, how you must work hard, how you must pray, how you have to obey the covenant; the fivefold aspects of the covenant; you pay your tithe, give offering, you take care of your parents and you take care of the poor (interview 10, January 2016).

It can be observed for a fact that the first Christians were mostly poor. Jesus came from a poor or modest background, and he dies as a poor man, surrounded mostly by poor followers; he even said once he did not have a place to lay down his head. Jesus' cousin- John, dressed in very humble dresses and lived in the desert. How does this conform to the prosperity gospel? Was the gospel preached then not transformative enough?

The people referred to as testifiers in this research work are people, claimed to have observed financial changes by joining Winners Chapel. I wanted to find out if the gospel preached had a transformative effect on them. Testifier A, B, D claimed to have been living in abject poverty but Testifier C claims to have had a remarkable improvement in her finances since joining Winners Chapel and listening to the messages preach there.

According to Testifier A, at Winners Chapel she has learnt much about the discipline of hard work and creativity. The church organizes youth empowerment submits and through these programs her life has been transformed because she has had to discipline herself more and to work harder. She has equally become more creative and now thinks *outside the box*. To her a covenant understanding is very important because you know who you are in God.

Testifier B talks about the fact that she was a constant borrower before joining Winners Chapel however, after listening to the messages she was transformed. This being in the sense that she realized she was a covenant child of God and borrowing is not good; now she no longer borrows but has enough to share.

Before we went to Winners Chapel, we use to borrow but when we realized that as a covenant child of God it is not good to borrow and from that time, we have the covenant understanding not to borrow, we have discovered that we can never get to the point when we need to borrow. It is like when you understand the

covenant and you operate by it and you are faithful God backs himself in it (interview 7, January 2016).

Testifier C looks at the life of David Oyedepo as a life worth emulating, to her the messages preached at Winners Chapel has greatly affected her economic life. Since Oyedepo is very prosperous, she desires to be just like him and even more. To obtain this, she is going to do exactly what he does to prosper thereby obtaining the same results. Through the messages preached, she knows what he does to prosper, and she is following suit for a change in her economy. This can be said to be the 'Big man' ideology observed by Phiri and Maxwell (2007) which is regarded as one of the factors for the rapid expansion of the prosperity gospel. Testifier D says before he joined Winners Chapel he was a job seeker and his finances were deplorable but the messages he constantly heard from Winners Chapel altar transformed his life. He was once a job seeker but now is an employer of labor by running his own organization. To him he had an encounter with God via his word and the messages transformed his life completely.

Before joining Winners Chapel, it was deplorable, I had just gotten married by the grace of God, I was jobless, my wife was jobless, we did not have our own home to stay and I was still staying in my father's compound with a stepmother. It was really a terrible situation. By the leading of the Holy Spirit, I found myself in Winners chapel on one blessed Sunday...I have for the first time had a real encounter with God via his word and the teachings of Winners Chapel. The messages preached has transformed my life because right now, before joining Winners Chapel I was at the position of looking for a job just to earn about anything but right now I have started an organization, I have employed people (interview 11, January 2016).

Pastor A says the word is transformative because the minds of people are empowered and transformed to think right. This is in complete agreement with Oyedepo's theology because he says people should change the way they think to be able to change their lives. The aspect of changing the way they think as viewed by Oyedepo is such that economic depression is averted since it is not a new phenomenon. Oyedepo quotes examples of situations and people in the Bible who passed through economic depression and how they were miraculously exempted.

Some favorite scriptures are used to justify why they think the prosperity message is transformative, 2 Corinthians 8:9 and Proverbs 23:7. Proverbs 23:7 was used argumentatively

by Pastor A, B and Oyedepo. They believe that man has a lot of influence over his thoughts or the exact thoughts he harbors. That is if he or she desires to prosper then he/she should think in that light. The prosperity gospel according to them transforms one's mind from thinking poverty to thinking prosperity or wealth. This is their claim but by thinking or well-wishing cannot be a grantee to riches, so this cannot be justified. It cannot be proven in this study that the transformative power of the prosperity gospel enables one to obtain a job or to engage in any income generating activity. There is a strong agreement between these pastors and Oyedepo's theology because he says, 'until you reconstruct your thinking pattern, you cannot change your environment, as your environment is a subject of what goes on within you'. According to them if one must enjoy the prosperity promise of God, they need to transform their mind or reconstruct their mind and think wealth. This is done through the prosperity messages preached to the adherents.

Ogbu kalu 2008 holds that though the prosperity gospel points to faith as the validity of prosperity, faith goes more than just belief, it is speaking into reality what does not exist. This is a clear observation here, where adherents are admonished to think what does not exist (kalu, 2008, p. 255). This aspect of transformation of mind may blame the adherent if he/she does not witness a change in their life. The school of thought holds that reason and faith is very different. According to Paul Gifford 2010, the fact that neo Pentecostals preach the success message and encourage adherents that it is their inheritance undoubtedly has a positive effect on them. To him if a person feels victory or success is rightfully his/hers, they may show 'enormous persistence and determination and may overcome difficulties that would defeat others'.

Testifier B holds that she used to borrow when she was not a member of Winners chapel. Since she became a member, she learnt borrowing is not good and that has transformed her life. This is considered an aspect that makes Pentecostals movements to flourish tremendously because adherents live a life free of debt. The prosperity message encourages the adherents not to borrow because borrowing is unchristian like. Philip Jenkins (2010) puts it this way, the fact that most prosperity churches not only condemn poverty but also teach ways to avoid it. That is debt or the aspect of borrowing (as mentioned by Testifier B) is demonized and should be defeated. Instead of borrowing adherents are encouraged to save and buy material goods. According to this testifier when one understands the covenant and operates in it, which of course does not include borrowing then, God backs them up. According to Omenyo 2014, one of the fascinating aspects of Pentecostal-charismatic movement is their ability to respond to pressing domestic and socioeconomic challenges faced

by modern urban congregation. Home cell leader D says adherents are admonished to work (or to engage in some income generating business) though she did not elaborate on that, but this goes to support what Omenyo says about Pentecostals. On the other hand, Testifier D says he was once a job seeker, but he is now an employer of labor. Omenyo views that Pentecostals focus on contemporary challenges and give biblical tools, which help life-threatening situations (Omenyo, 2014, p. 142-143). Deji Ayegboyin 2011 holds that prosperity churches have this characteristic; the preachers present themselves as successful entrepreneurs. They serve as models for aspiring businesspersons as seen by Testifier D, as early said David Oyedepo is noted for encouraging entrepreneurship. Most adherents of Winners Chapel regard David Oyedepo as their role model; he is fondly called ‘Papa’, ‘Daddy’, prophet or mentor. Oyedepo is regarded by the Forbes magazine 2011, 2014 as one of the wealthiest pastors in Africa. Most adherents hold him in high esteem and want to emulate him. Paul Gifford in his article ‘the prosperity gospel in Africa: expecting miracles’ said he would generalize neo Pentecostal churches. He said they have one thing in common and it is ‘a focus on achieving success. He further articulates that it is a form of Christianity where a believer is either successful or something is wrong. Considering the economic crisis in Cameroon, persistent unemployment, high taxes, political instability, one cannot accuse a believer of deliberately remaining poor.

5.5.4 Hard work or diligence

According to the interviewees, Christians are to understand that hard work is a vital force for financial or economic success. The adherents are not only taught the promises of God as regarding the scriptures but also, they are made to understand that working hard is equally a medium through which God blesses his children. The Christians get teachings on how to get out of poverty and what steps to take to ‘walk out of poverty’. These messages are preached to Christians to encourage hard work or for them to get a job and in all they must be involved in something to generate income.

Pastor A says after listening to the prosperity message people are encouraged to take actions that is, according to him so when we empower the minds of power, they take necessary steps that, will help them get out of poverty and live in abundance ...

This pastor attributes poverty to laziness. He said poverty is also an attribute of laziness strictly in my context..., if you remain poor then something is wrong,

maybe you are lazy, you may not be taking appropriate steps (interview 1, January 2016).

According to Pastor C, Christians are given directives on what to do, that is, the right thing to do to avoid some wrong investments and be moderate in their spending. The gospel is preached to encourage the people to work hard, to discipline themselves and of course to be involved in financial dealings or investments.

Home cell leader A believes, diligence is necessary in prosperity because some people, who are economically poor, are probably not serving God well or you are not diligent because even the Bible says if you see a man diligent in his work he shall dine with kings and not with mere men. If you are diligent in everything you, you will realize you are prosperous..., if you are a Christian and you are diligent again for that matter there is a special bonus for that because God is going to favor those who are diligent (interview 2, January 2016).

According to home cell leader B and C, Christians should find jobs and it will go a long way to change their financial life. To them there is always what to do no matter how little because one must start from somewhere.

Home cell leader C claims, there is no food for a lazy man and since we are Christians and we obey the word of God everybody is trying to get something doing as they Bible says that God will bless the works of our hands (interview, January 2016).

According to this leader, they must teach the people what the Bible says, and they will get something to do thus changing their economic status. To home cell leader D people come to the home cells and they are taught how to work hard though she has been of financially assistance to many people. These adherents have not remained poor because they have engaged themselves in 'petit businesses' and it is generating income for them and their families.

According to Testifier A, at Winners Chapel, she has learnt about discipline and hard work and creativity. Because of the hard work learnt from the preaching in the church, she is discipline at work and it has earned her a promotion. She further says the gospel preached makes one take personal responsibility to escape the clutches of poverty. She goes on to say instead of blaming the government or family relations for your financial predicament you can

start taking steps to come out of poverty. To her the gospel teaches people to use what they have at their disposal to meet their needs and equally improve their standard of living.

The prosperity gospel preached is a gospel to take on personal responsibility than just a gospel of salvation alone...I was taught to work hard and to work yourself out of poverty (interview 6, January 2016).

According to Testifier C she is working hard and equally working for God according to Matthew 6:33, and to her one will get everything that others are craving for cheaply. Testifier D says the messages at Winners chapel or the gospel has helped him start a company because he was jobless, looking for what to do to earn a living but right now, he is an employer of labor. The essential thing is that, the people are admonished to work hard or to startup businesses, but they must do something to generate income for God does not bless an idle man.

As observed, Pastor A thinks poverty is either because of laziness or appropriate steps were not taken. He did not see the cause of poverty involving war, bad governance, inequality, drought or famine but to him it is because of laziness. The appropriate steps mentioned, could be steps careful outlined by the church to elude poverty which does not take into consideration some of the social, economic and natural challenges patterning to poverty. As earlier observed by Paul Gifford, neo Pentecostals focus on achieving success and if it is not obtained something is wrong. The fact that they cannot consider social, economic and natural issues leaves room for concern. People cannot be blame for what they cannot control or what is not within their reach to control. There is equally a high degree of illiteracy, which is a cause of poverty and this is not quickly addressed but factors such as laziness is given prominence. In Oyedepo's theology above, he considers poverty to be more in the mind than in the hand as such not much emphasis is placed on hard work. He says 'whatsoever is too big for your mind maybe too big for your hand. What so ever your mind cannot accommodate your hand cannot accomplish'. He further mentions hard work but relates it to the fact that after the fall of man, man was compelled to engage in hard labor, but hard labor only is not sufficient. Christians are encouraged to work hard in this theology though working hard alone does not guarantee prosperity, something must always accompany it. For example, hard work without practicing the covenant does not guarantee prosperity because after recognizing the covenant and walking by them God blesses the works of their hands. In Cameroon for example, over taxing is a rising issue and as such people are not encouraged to venture into businesses. The question is what role hard work should play in such a situation. Working hard

as a factor cannot be out rightly disputed but encouraged; but we must consider that there are still hard-working Cameroonians that are living in extreme poverty. Paul Gifford 2010 acknowledges the fact that neo Pentecostals preach a message of determination, which is focused on entrepreneurship. He notes that adherents are encouraged to develop thriving businesses. It can also be assumed that hard work is not over emphasized since prosperity can be obtained by positive confession or confession of faith. In addition, the fact that when a Christian recognizes it is his/her covenant right to prosper then hard work has no validity.

Testifier A made a very strong remark worth commenting ‘The prosperity gospel preached is a gospel to take on personal responsibility than just a gospel of salvation alone’. Here salvation message is portrayed to be different from the prosperity message. Prosperity as earlier mentioned is the complete message of Jesus Christ, which means it is included in the salvation package but to this testifier it is different. The prosperity message is a call to take personal responsibility and salvation is properly a gift from God. I cannot say whether Oyedepo’s theology concurs with this reasoning or belief. In chapter two, I mentioned the fact that AIC (African Independent Churches) laid a lot of emphasis on salvation and was in constant rejection of what was regarded as world things.

According to Testifier C, there is hard work and work for the kingdom, which is in total agreement with Oyedepo’s theology. Oyedepo says some prosperity preachers have missed the point when they say God will prosper everybody who gives to him. God will only prosper those who are kingdom orientated. This testifier uses Matthew 6:33 to justify this argument. It says, ‘but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well’. Since riches is not considered unrighteous, God is bound to prosper one if one works for the expansion of the kingdom. Deji Ayegboyin 2011 quotes David Oyedepo saying;

For the first time in my life, I knew that God deals with people on covenant term. From that time, the yoke of poverty was broken in my life and I knew I can never be poor. I am not in any trade, neither have I ever invested my dime into any business; yet I will never beg till my time on earth is over. Why? Because I favor His Kingdom (Ayegboyin, 2011, p.170).

The emphasis here is God’s kingdom as said by this testifier above. There are many ways to favor God’s kingdom but clearly, it was not illustrated by this interviewee.

Home cell leader A, looks at not serving God well as an aspect of not being diligent. He uses Proverbs 22:29 (do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they

will not serve before officials of low rank) to substantiate this argument. The King James Version is used for this interpretation, which is considered the favorite of most prosperity preachers. The word diligence is synonymous to not serving God appropriately in respect to the laid down principles therefore, you cannot expect to ‘dine with kings’. These principles can be many things, as we will later see.

5.5.5 Faith

Faith is a very vital force in Winners chapel. The mandate is considered one based on faith. David Oyedepo the founder of Winner Chapel International said God told him to preach the word of faith. He claims he was called by God to make Africa rich by preaching the word of faith. As earlier seen in chapter two, Winners chapel falls on the churches called neo Pentecostals. Sometime later, classified as faith ministries. These churches evolved around the 1980s. To them without faith you cannot obtain anything from God because he will only bless those who believe or have faith in him. Ogbu Kalu 2008 owes that true faith in prosperity theology is beyond mere belief. He further defines faith as per the prosperity theology as ‘acting on the word, speaking into reality what does not exist, and dreaming and envisioning the desired goals’ (Kalu, 2008, p. 225). Paul Gifford 2010 sums up the prosperity message as ‘God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ’s victory over sin, sickness and poverty- blessings which can be obtained by a confession of faith’.

Pastor A, talks of a complete acceptance or believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes prosperity, therefore without prosperity, the gospel is incomplete. According to him one's faith should engulf everything; the gospel includes the fact that though he Jesus Christ for our sakes he became poor so that by his poverty we might be made rich.

This pastor says Christians should speak prosperity because when one confesses prosperity they live it.

Someone who really want to live in wealth or prosperity as God want for every person, he needs to believe, he needs to accept, he needs to take appropriate steps and those steps need to mature, you can reap the same day you sow (interview 1, January 2016).

To him not accepting the gospel of prosperity causes one to remain in poverty. According to the Bible in Deuteronomy 15, the poor shall not cease from the land for there shall always be

poor people. Therefore, prosperity is accepting the full gospel of Christ and not just a partial gospel for God's desire is to see God's children prosper upon the earth.

Pastor B says one needs to believe or have faith in the transforming power of the word of God to walk out of poverty. Believing the prosperity message therefore brings a change of mind, which transforms the person's economic life. To him believing the gospel is vital because what one does not believe in, they cannot manifest it because 'the gospel was preach to the poor and not money given to them according to Luke 7:22'. According to this pastor when one believes in the word of God it transforms their life. As a result, they should believe the word, which says in 2 Corinthians 8:9 'that by the grace of Jesus Christ you are made rich because he came into the world poor, and through his poverty you are made rich'.

According to Pastor C, one must believe and stand for what the Bible says if they want to enjoy financial blessing.

God believes in prosperity, God believes in silver and gold and he will not want his children to be poor for according to the Bible money answers all things (interview 4, January 2016).

To home cell leader A, if one aspires to grow in their finances then there is only one person to turn to and that is God,

Because as a you child of God you believe that you are in this world though you are not of the world (interview 2, January 2016).

Home cell leader B said out of the scope of believers one can be poor but when they align (or completely surrender to Christ) themselves to the gospel then it is a different ball game entirely. To this interviewee though one is in the world they should have an understanding that their case is very different. Believing in God will cause one not to be affected by the things of the world. Isaac was different or considered himself different because he sowed in a land plagued by famine and reaped a hundredfold; he was not affected by the situation in the land.

Isaac sowed in a land where there was famine and he reaped a hundredfold (interview 5, January 2016).

Home cell leader C said according to her, believing in the word of God and acting on the word in faith that is doing completely what the Bible says then it is possible to elude poverty. As such believing the word of God which says let the poor say they are rich is very important because one's faith in the word of God is pertinent. To her one cannot remind on 'the floor' if they believe and obey the word of God. Therefore, their belief in the existence of God is very

important because believing in him is an escape route from poverty. Acting on what one believes is equally important in a believer's life. To this leader, when adherents believe and find something to do,

God is going to bless the works of your hands, for if you are not doing anything and you do not believe in the word, what God will bless! (interview 8, January 2016).

Home cell leader D talks about believing in who you are as a child of God, which is, very important. This is because the prosperity message that is been preached brings out the capabilities in them that makes them realize what is embedded in them to come out to poverty. To her, when you teach the people what the word of God says, and they believe it and take necessary steps to go out of poverty. Through their belief in the church and the word Christians engage in daily activities and it is a source of livelihood. To her through prayers and the efficacy of the word and constant believe there is a financial change but once adherents backslides or stops believing then the blessings of God ceases in their life and if they remain in the faith, the blessings remain.

According to testifier B, 'the gospel is an issue of faith', if adherents believe in God and understand the covenant then they would know he is faithful and backs himself if they are operating under the covenant. To her heaven and earth belongs to God so if one is operating in the ways of God then they cannot be operating in poverty. According to her God does not want his children to be poor according to what is written in 3John 2. One can therefore not benefit from these things if they are 'disconnected' from God.

According to testifier C, she has learnt how to put the word of God into practice, believing in the world and acting on the word based on faith. She says just by believing that if she leaves the church to her business and prayers and believes that what she wants to do she will accomplish it. She believes in the word of God from the man of God and always gets exactly what she wants because the word is not a story but something to act on. Therefore, if one believes the word of God, they must say what it says, the poor should say they are rich and not poor because the word of God should not be seen like some sort of anthem. People should believe in what they are saying because prosperity is a package prepared by God to his children.

If you know God, give your life to Christ and do the things he asks of you then you will have what he has already kept in the world for there is nothing you will

not call on God with your faith that you will not have tomorrow (interview 9, January 2016)

They believe their knowledge and their belief in God is important to escape suffering or from languishing in poverty. According to them there is nothing that they will not call on God in faith that God will not answer.

Testifier D says, your 'belief in who are or who you are not' is very important. If one believes in poverty or difficulties, then they will operate in that realm. When one has a different belief and awareness from the word of God concerning who they are then they will change completely. He said he came to realize that every human being has potentials and through the teachings of the church, he knows what he can do. To him people believe in poverty or difficulties and it makes them poor but the moment they realize their capabilities or potentials in Christ then they experience a changeover night.

Prosperity is just wonderful because it makes you know God better because in prosperity you can experience whom God is, in poverty, if you are not careful, you can, it may put you in a situation where you can doubt whether God exist (interview 11, January 2016).

To this testifier one must believe God genuinely and follow him wholeheartedly to have a better life because prosperity is a way of life. Believing in the word of God, obtaining revelation from what is says then one puts it into practice because he decided to be foolish enough to believe what the word says, and poverty is far from him.

Things of the spirit are spiritual decent, and they are foolish to the people of the world..., if you can just be foolish, you will have testimonies that will build your faith gradually and then you will come to have a full understanding (interview 11, January 2016).

Faith and belief may be used synonymously but they are quite different as earlier noted by Kalu 2008. Belief is an essential so to say but faith goes deep which entails taking on a personal responsibility. Therefore, faith is not just believing but believing and acting. As earlier observed, interview 6 (pg.86) talked about taking personal responsibility when the prosperity gospel is preached and not just a message of salvation alone. All the interviewees had a very strong argument on faith except Testifier A who does not say anything to this effect. Winners chapel is not only regarded as a faith-based ministry, it has faith as one of its tenets. There is a strong agreement between the interviewees and Oyedepo's theology, who

says God called him to preach the word of faith. According to Pastor A, by not believing is equal to not accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot equally say that all who believe in the word of God are rich. Though excuses maybe made for people who are still poor in the church, the fact that they are poor cannot be disputed. There is also a fact that there are people who do not have a belief and are living in plenty and affluence. In Oyedepo's theology, he says faith is all you need to have all your needs met so without faith one cannot have anything. He equates understanding to faith saying if by understanding one lives then by faith also one lives. To substantiate this argument, he uses Psalm 119:114 (You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word).

According to Pastor B, the gospel was preached to the people and not money given to them. Pastor B interprets this scripture to mean poverty in an economic sense and not spiritual. This is to justify his claim because I can equally argue Jesus meant the spiritually poor. I can also argue here that Jesus fed the hungry when they came to listen to him. He did not only give them 'spiritual food' as such but physical as well. Jesus stressed in the book of Matthew 25:31-46 that when he was hungry he was not given food or thirsty he was not given water. He did not emphasis the word or the application of faith here as a form of food or water. This may go to show that everything has its place and time.

According to Pastor C, God believes in silver and gold. If God did, then it must be a good thing, so Christians should believe in it as well. 2 Corinthians 8:9 is used as a justification but this scripture can also be interpreted to mean Jesus came poor so that they can have spiritual riches not only in the sense of financial prosperity. Oyedepo says money is not only a medium of exchange but it is a defense and gives an individual voice because God created silver, gold and every precious stone. According to them it is to justify the fact that money is not evil as some people will consider it. This has equally been considered the focal point of the prosperity message, if God created it then it is good.

Home cell leaders A, B, C and D, all stress how important it is to have faith in the word of God. If faith is 'all you need to have all your needs met' then why are Christians encouraged to work if all they need is faith. This shows faith is not all because inside of faith there are many other criteria for prosperity. I can say faith is pregnant. Home cell leader D said if adherents backslide or stop believing then the blessing of God also stops. I cannot aptly say this is possible because there are people who do not believe and yet prosper, why should someone stop believing and stop prospering. With this trend of thought or belief, Christians could live in perpetual fear of quitting the faith.

According to Testifier B, C and D, faith is very essential in a believer's life. Testifier B says the gospel is an issue of faith and this goes to support Oyedepo's theology. The scripture used to argue this is 3 John 2 which is considered one of the favorites of prosperity preachers. If God wishes for one to prosper as this scripture says then all they need is to have their faith in place, because believing in the word guarantees what the word says. They all agree how vital faith is, but it is not simply faith because they talk about taking actions or acting upon the word for desired results. Therefore, God will reward wealth only to those who have faith. This is their belief, but there are many who do not have faith and still prosper and some who have as earlier said but wallowing in poverty.

Kate Bowler 2013 notes that early Pentecostals stood firmly against the material world and exempted themselves from terrestrial blessings. They focus their attention on ecstatic worship, which cumulated, speaking in tongues and waiting for the imminent return of Jesus Christ. She further articulates that the present Pentecostals regard salvation as an 'all-inclusive word' meaning God has catered for the soul, spirit and body of man. Emphasis is laid on the human material body, which is regarded as the focus of divine action (Bowler, 2013, p. 21). The prosperity gospel is associated with E.W. Kenyon who urges believers to pray the prayer of faith, David Oyedepo and many neo-Pentecostal ministers have adopted this theology (seen in chapter two). We earlier saw in chapter two the controversy surrounding this kind of teaching. Some say the originator of this 'Faith' or 'Word' movement is E. W. Kenyon, and some is Kenneth Hagin. Hagin claims to have had a revelation from God but he was accused of plagiarizing Kenyon whose message was considered cultic. According to Asamoah-Gyadu, he views that McConnell in *A Different Gospel* holds that since Hagin plagiarized Kenyon then the 'faith movement' preaches a 'different gospel', which he considers cultic and heretical. Asamoah-Gyadu holds that because of this study by McConnell, biblical evidence does not support this health and wealth gospel also called faith gospel or prosperity gospel (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 204)

Allan H. Anderson 2014 points out that Pentecostals acknowledge they use the Bible universally as their source of theology. To him therefore Pentecostals need to be understood in this manner. He further expounds that, for Pentecostals their theology and the Bible is inseparable where they obtain their core messages. Their purpose for reading the Bible is to find relevant answers to their pressing needs believing in what he terms 'plenary relevance'. That is to say, 'the Bible contains all answers to human questions and must simply be read, believed and obeyed' (Anderson, 2014, p.222). This is their belief, but one cannot say it is

always applicable in a country suffering from economic crisis, inequality, illiteracy or civil unrest.

5.5.6 Positive thinking or confession

According to some of the interviewees the words adherents speak is very vital in their economic life. People are encouraged to think positive that is prosperity because it is a good thought. The power of right words is of utmost importance in Winners chapel (see appendix 2). The right word in this context is prosperity, if one is expecting prosperity then they should think prosperity.

Pastor A says when one talks prosperous and thinks prosperous they become prosperous and live in prosperity,

The mind of a man is like the life of that man because if you think well, you will act well, and you will become the wealthy person that you should be. There is a saying that, watch your thoughts they become your words and watch your words for they become your actions and your actions become your habits and your habits become your character as such thinking prosperity thoughts you begin to work towards prosperity (interview 1, January 2016).

Adherents are cautioned to be watchful of their thoughts according to proverbs 23:7, as a man thinks in his heart so is he, because they will become what they think. Therefore, when they think prosperous thoughts they begin to work towards that direction as well. According to this pastor, the mind of a man is like the life of that man because if adherents think well they will act well.

Testifier A, many people are sleeping on their minds and they are urged to think outside the box (interview 6, January 2016).

To her and the context she finds herself in most pastors are doing the jobs of counsellors and motivational speakers and not only preaching the gospel, which is a good thing. Christians need to challenge their minds to think big and equally dream big.

Testifier C, if one lacks the word of God in them, they will not confess the right words because the bible says if one is poor, one should rather say they are rich; 'so the poor should say they are rich' (interview 9, January 2016).

Adherents are encouraged to speak contrary to their actual situation. They are asked to speak what they want to see happen and not what they are feeling or experiencing. Pastor A, Testifier A and C strongly agree with Oyedepo's theology. In his theology he says possessing

a poor man's mentality is the root cause of poverty, therefore, until there is healing of the mind prosperity cannot be in view. He admonishes his adherents to construct their thinking pattern. Pastor A uses Proverbs 23:7 to argue this fact and it is the same scripture used by Oyedepo. Can prosperity occur by just positive thinking? Asamoah-Gyadu views that, the teaching on positive confession is not in any way validated by any biblical evidence, he holds that it raises difficulties both theological and pastoral. To him theologically it presents a wrong view of God who is only available to render humans services once the right principles are applied. This teaching can be considered faulted because it does not make provisions for God's will or give sufficient explanation for why things are not always better. As such, there is pain and disappointment when believers do not obtain their desires after making positive confessions. He equally says it is pastorally insensitive and unbiblical when Christians are told that by positive confession they can enjoy a pain-free life or problem-free life (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 221). By mere dreaming or positive thinking or confession may not stop someone who is going through social injustice or inequity to be prosperous. One can assume there are some lapses in this doctrine.

5.5.7 Principles

Winners Chapel teaches on principles or certain truths or behaviors that, adherents most inculcate or put in place or adhere to before they can be blessed by God. Christians are admonished to walk along these lines before they can be blessed and if for some reason they are not blessed financially then they have defaulted, or it will be a matter of time before their blessing can *mature*. When and if one aligns themselves to these set of principles or walk accordingly then, they are automatically expected to enjoy the blessings that follow their obedience. According to Winners chapel, there are some fundamental truths to prosperity and adherents must walk and not compromise. There are necessary steps to take to prosper.

According Pastor C, certain principles must be put in place before adherents can prosper. That is, 'If you fail to catch or get the light of God's plan of prosperity' for them then they cannot prosper. Being an adherent does not exempt them from being aligned, certain principles must be observed before they can prosper. He compares principle of prosperity to gravity; to him if you go up you must come down and in prosperity if you practice that which is preach to then you cannot remain the same. He further emphasizes that the principle of prosperity can be one thing or another, so it is not limited to a rule but many rules that need to be observed (interview 4, January 2016)

According to Pastor B, Jesus did not give the people money, but he preached to them, so the gospel is preached to the poor. He says Christians must put what they are taught into practice so that it can benefit them. Some of the principles mentioned are:

✓ ***Catch the vision***

To some interviewees the first principle is to *catch the vision* of prosperity. Adherents cannot partake of what they do not believe in according to them. One must believe first and foremost the plan of God and God's will for them to prosper as children of God.

According to pastor A, adherents are the head and not the tail. To him prosperity is the heritage of the children of God and their covenant right, he believes heaven and earth belongs to God; and Christians are to live life in abundance. Therefore, once they 'catch the vision of prosperity' then their minds are renewed. By so doing they have a rejuvenated mind, which thinks in the line of abundance and not lack of any good thing.

Pastor A says, 'you don't reap the same day you sow', he makes it clear that; adherents must take appropriate steps to ensure prosperity and of course the steps need to mature before they can reap since they may not reap the same day they sow. To him, it is a process to be transform or translated from poverty to prosperity, one needs to believe and accept because that is what God wills for everyone.

Pastor B said it is not only preaching and hearing the message that makes one prosper but doing what it says and practicing what the word says. According to him adherents should not be hearers only but doers as well for the benefit comes when they practice what they hear.

A home cell leader said obedience to the Bible makes it difficult for one to remain on floor, therefore been taught what the Bible requires of them is very important.

To catch the vision here can be interpreted as, having an understanding, that prosperity is a requirement for Christians or it is their covenant. Since, the prosperity message has been greatly criticized some interviewees were quick to defend their stand on prosperity. It is simple if adherents do not know it is their right to prosper then of course, they will not yearn to prosper. Adherents must recognize God's desire is for them to prosper and once it is certain, it is like a revelation. According to Oyedepo's theology, 'understanding is all you need for your faith to come alive'.

✓ ***Believe***

Adherents must believe in God first before they can prosper because God only prospers those who believe in him and his word. Adherents should believe and accept that prosperity is the will and plan of God for their lives. To Pastor A, it is not only believing but also accepting the full gospel because the gospel is partial without prosperity. When one believes they will act

on what the word says. According to Pastor A and B, adherents must take necessary steps to be wealthy, and there is a fundamental truth that Jesus became poor so that through his poverty Christians may become rich.

Pastor A claims, you can't tell me you have him completely and do not have wealth (interview 1, January 2016).

He believes there must be that belief in Jesus Christ and the fact that Jesus wants Christians to be rich. According to Pastor B, hearing the word is one thing, believing in it is another and then putting it into practice; it is what adherents put in practice that will profit them. To him adherents should know that prosperity is a priority to God for his children.

As earlier seen when discussing on faith, belief is considered essential, but a Christian must go further than mere belief. The prosperity message does not only see believing as a path to salvation but also believing in the prosperity plan of God. According to Pastor A, adherents should believe prosperity because it is the full gospel. Believing that poverty is part of the gospel is not being given adequate consideration. Prosperity therefore, is believing in the fact that, God wants adherents to be rich. They should believe it is their covenant right as children of God, which is the basis of this theology. We have seen above that this may not be the case because there are still poor people in the church irrespective of whether they are new, or they are waiting for the appropriate time to be blessed.

✓ *Tithing/ offering*

To the Pastors and home cell leaders, belief, faith, truth, discipline, hard work, diligence, understanding, knowledge is important, and the principle of tithing cannot be over-rolled. Adherents are admonished, not only to be hearers of the word but doers of the word. The aspect of doing the said word is in the form of paying tithes. Giving is regarded as a lifestyle and this aspect of giving can be in the form of tithing or offering, seed sowing, financial or material sacrifice. According to Oyedepo one does not give to help God because God is never in need. Adherents are taught they are blessed when they give. Believers are taught about tithing and other aspects of giving and they are equally asked to put it into practice. Some testifiers attest they are tithers and according to them; it has been of tremendous blessings to them.

Pastor A says to 'be translated' from a poor stage or from poverty to real wealth it is a process. He believes when adherents accept the gospel, work hard, they need to take appropriate steps and these steps at times need to mature. He mentions *sowing and reaping*; and some do not always reap the same day they sow, so here he calls for patience.

According to Pastor C, aligning to the principles is very important for if one fails to align then they will not prosper. In addition, one of this principle is tithing which is in Malachi 3, and to him it is the key thing about prosperity.

If you pay your tithe that is 10 percent of your income, God will supernaturally open doors for you; and even give you wisdom on how to operate which will guide you and equally help you avoid wrong investments... once are a giver you can never lack, for God so love that he gave and so if you align yourself to giving you prosper. By aligning yourself to the principle that is been taught at Winners' chapel you end up enjoying the available grace that is there... If you are a tither, there is no way things can ever be tied for you (interview 4, January 2016).

To him as adherents give there is no way they can live in lack because if they keep giving they are constantly being blessed, so adherents are preached to give tirelessly, ceaselessly, bountifully and cheerfully as seen in Oyedepo's theology.

According to home cell leader D, after teaching the people the gospel that is how to work hard, pray and they must obey the covenant. To her the covenant is in fivefold and tithing and giving of offering is included. There are therefore pertinent things done to enjoy financial prosperity in Christ.

Testifier B says before she joined Winners Chapel she was not paying her tithes and her financial life was not good. After learning from Malachi 3, she began paying her tithes and devourers stopped devouring the little she had. These devourers come in the form of sicknesses or breakdown. But by being faithful in tithing since it is a covenant, God has been faithful to her equally. According to her, it is good to have a covenant understanding and operate in it. Giving to the poor, she says is very important because God expects them to give to the less privilege. She used to borrow but now she no longer borrows because she is in a position now to help others around her. This change is because she joined Winners chapel and became a dedicated tither.

According to Testifier C, she has learnt to put the word of God to practice and doing what the Bible requires of her and as such, she has experience a dramatic change in her economic life. Testifier D said, initially he could not part with 10 percent of his income to pay tithes because he had not yet grasp the whole concept of tithing.

Before I was still struggling with Christianity, I could not pay tithes because I could not understand why I will get my money and remove 10 percent of it and

pay but what has transformed me dramatically is tithing (interview 11, January 2016).

The word of God made him to understand that things of the spirit are spiritually decent; and they are foolish to people of the world and he became foolish enough to start paying his tithe, now he has numerous testimonies. He learnt to depend on God because no matter the economic situation of the nation God has opened doors for him because he thought it wise to be foolish enough to obey the principles of prosperity. To him from the time he decided to pay his tithes despite the economic climate, he has been gloriously distinguished. He further articulates that, everything the scripture says should be followed and practice and he has learned to depend solely on God and not his finances. He claims he has hearkened to the word of God and practiced it genuinely and his life has turned around supernaturally.

There is a lot of controversial stand on tithing which has taken prominence in neo Pentecostal churches. Pastor A, C and Testifier B and D have a very strong emphasis on the importance of tithing. Pastor C clearly emphasizes on the 10 percent. Their belief is that as tithers adherents cannot suffer economically or suffer what others are suffering. Malachi 3 is considered the favorite scripture used by prosperity preachers to convince adherents to pay for the outpouring of God's divine blessings. According to Oyedepo, Malachi 3:7-9, if not obeyed is a willful act of disobedience to the law of abundance. The curse is alleviated if the believer does what is required of him or her. Testifier C does not lay a strong conviction or emphasis on this principle. In Oyedepo theology, he preaches about tithing and equally reaping and harvest, which some scholars view as the 'seed faith'. In his theology, he regards wealth as a covenant. To him one parts with what they have, to get what they want and their commitment to God will provoke God's commitment to them. Oyedepo says Christians are to sow to have a harvest and only those who sow, harvest. To him harvest responds only to seed and not to prayer and fasting or some sort of human connections. He regards tithing as a covenant, out of the covenant one is not qualified to prosper no matter their portfolio. This teaching stress on the covenant blessing of Abraham that has been given to the children of God through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross in respect to Galatians 3. Therefore, Oyedepo holds that to be bless like Abraham adherents must take the covenant steps Abraham took which is tithing. There are other expects of giving which is equally encouraged by Oyedepo and Testifier B concurs, for example, giving to the poor or less privilege in the society.

Paul Gifford (2007) in his article 'The prosperity gospel in Africa: expecting miracles', holds that the tithes and offerings became instruments of the prosperity gospel. They preach the theme of success which holds that every Christian is entitled to prosperity because God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ. He further says the gospel is strongly attached to the biblical image of sowing and reaping. He stipulates that the preachers regard the Bible as a contemporary document where God's covenant and commitment is paramount. Philip Jenkins (2010) in his article 'The case of Prosperity', views that in this kind of teaching where faith leads to tithing and tithing brings prosperity is as much as saying when you pay your tithe a 'gratified Almighty will respond by opening the windows of heaven, pouring out blessings so rich that believers will not have room to store'. In this teaching adherents are made to understand that they are not giving their money to help God but rather God is helping them by pouring blessing for them such that they will not have room enough to contain. Oyedepo aptly says giving money to the church does not mean you are helping God for God does not need your help since the earth is his and everything in it. What adherents are doing is simply practicing the covenant.

Asamoah-Gyadu cites some of the problems with the prosperity theology and to him the idea of 'sowing and reaping' (as mentioned by Pastor A and in the theology of Oyedepo); which is linked to the expansion of God's kingdom on the earth does not justify the restriction on material possession Jesus placed on his disciples in Matthew 10:8-10. He further says there is no indication that the early church asked for financial support for missions. He challenges the fact that in the prosperity message God has come to depend on humans for effective missionary work and to him this is a very limited view of God's ability. He equally considers the theology of giving as being manipulative. To him Malachi 3 has been translated to a formula in which people have the right to receive once given to God. The principle of giving and receiving applies to all since it is a notion that God will bless only those who give; or only those who give are expected to receive. In effect this principle does not regard the fact that some people are poor because of other factors but it boils down to the fact that if you give you are blessed and if you do not give you are not blessed (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p.217-219). There is a lot of controversy on tithing, to some it is rather a means for preachers to fatten their purse and live lavishing lifestyles and to some of the adherents it is a covenant. Some scholars view that through tithes and offerings the coffers of some churches have been fattened and they are able to have infrastructures like schools, hospitals, that has benefited the public. Some interviewees equally attested that engaging in the principle of tithing has been beneficiary to them.

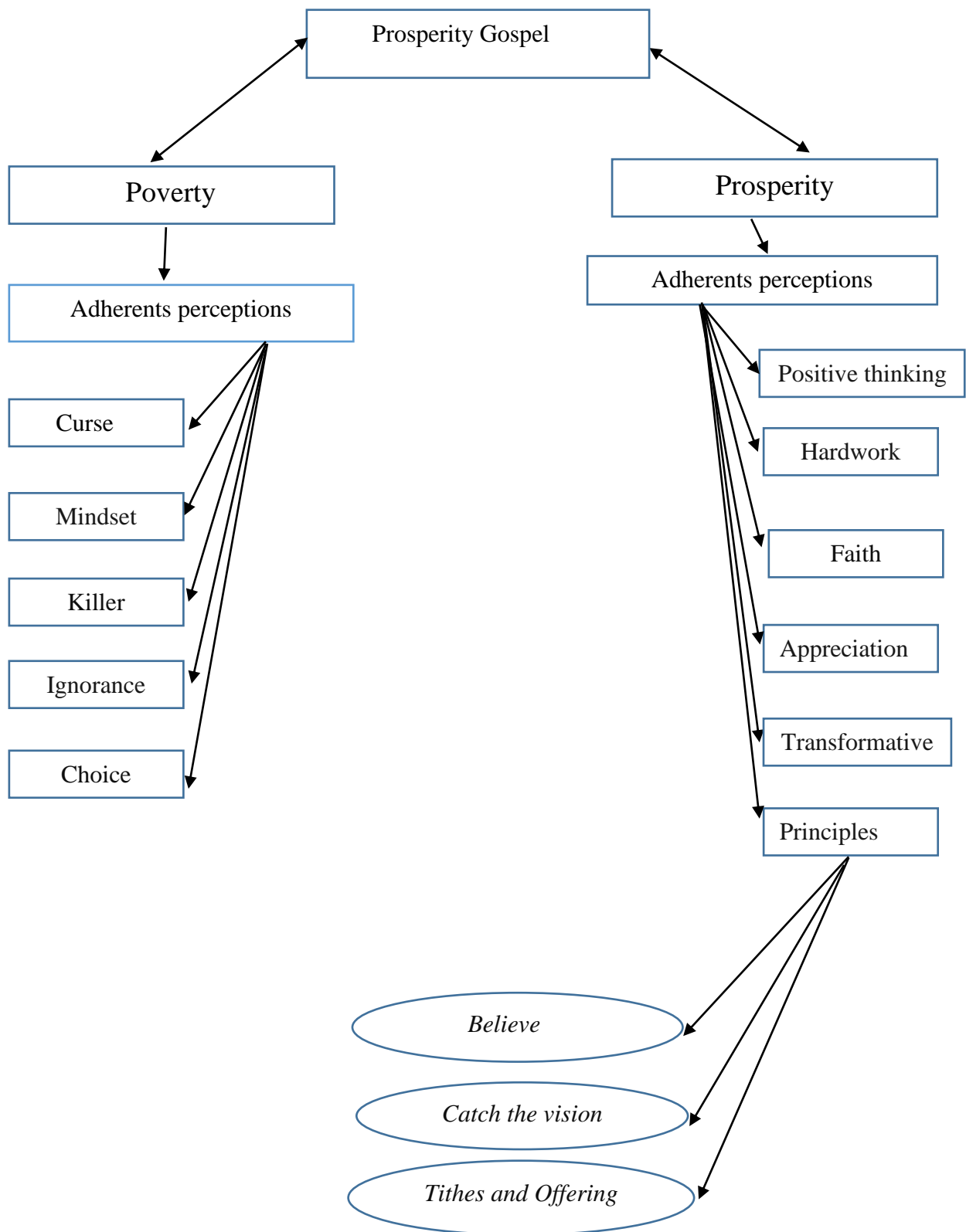


Figure 2: The summary of the relationship between poverty and prosperity in Winners Chapel context, as shown in this investigation.

Chapter Six

6.1 Conclusion

This research aimed at understanding the theological interpretation of poverty and prosperity expressed by members of Winners Chapel Bamenda. As stated in chapter two of this thesis so many factors have constituted the exponential growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and notably the change to a gospel of prosperity. Globalization has been considered as one of the means through which Pentecostalism has spread and Pentecostalism is considered a global phenomenon. Neo- Pentecostalism is regarded as a modern form of Christianity and the prosperity gospel has been traced from America, and equally said to have some indigenous roots. Andre Droogers holds that Pentecostalism is difficult to define because it adopts historical and local context. Pentecostalism has been called a global Christianity with a touch of modernity though some aspects of the African culture has been globalized.

This was a qualitative study, based on ethnography were semi structured interviewing was applied. The adherents view towards poverty and prosperity was analyzed from the interviews conducted in Bamenda in relation to the theology of David Oyedepo. Three main questions constituted this study. 1. How do members in Winners Chapel Bamenda view poverty? 2. How has the prosperity gospel taught by Winners Chapel influenced the attitude of the adherents according to them? 3. Do the adherents experience change in economic state because of their attendance in Winners Chapel?

The mainline churches considered prosperity in view of equity, justice, righteous acts and responsibilities or good governance as stipulated by Kalu 2008. This is not the case anymore; prosperity has changed its meaning from what it used to be to what is applicable now. Neo Pentecostals stress on success especially material success. Pentecostal theology has taken a turn from a gospel of poverty and waiting for the incumbent coming of Jesus Christ to that of material acclamation. The prosperity gospel has grown and has its roots deep in Bamenda. This investigation confirms that the adherents of Winners Chapel express their belief, that the prosperity gospel is the full gospel of Christ Jesus. To them God is excited when the children of God prosper and takes delight in their continuous prosperity. I observed that the content of the prosperity theology is based on a certain way of reading the Bible. Poverty as earlier seen in chapter two is predominantly a challenge in Africa. The prosper gospel to some is a gospel of hope and it promises success especially to the poor.

Based on the theoretical framework, it was necessary to understand the origin or source and movement of the prosperity gospel. In a quest to answer the research questions a

study was conducted in Winners Chapel Bamenda and books pertaining to Bishop Oyedepo were studied to shed light on his theology. This investigation finds that the adherents strongly concur with Oyedepo's theology who views poverty as a curse, killer, and form of ignorance, mindset and choice. They strongly agree that God has laid down provisions in the Bible and it is your decision to either remain in poverty or decide to walk out on poverty. David Oyedepo in his theology stresses strongly on poverty being a willful act of disobedience and it is a consequence of sin. To him poverty is a disease and it destroys like any other physiological disease. This study, however, also recognizes poverty to be multidimensional and complex therefore; the causes of poverty cannot be viewed only from a religious perspective but socio-economic, political and natural dimensions. So, my investigation also explored whether traces of this multidimensionality are found in the material.

By critically examining the responses of the interviewees and the theology of Oyedepo, I found that some interviewees acknowledge that there are economically poor people in the church but once in the church they should not remain poor. The firm belief seems to be that, a solution is found if one believes and practices what is taught. Some acknowledge the existence of poverty but trace it to religious causes. Some believe those who are poor are either just new or they are students. As a researcher there is (at least also) socioeconomic, political and natural causes to poverty not necessarily the religious version. I have however, observed that there seems, however, to be a noteworthy reluctance among the members of Winners Chapel to accept that there are also socioeconomic, political and natural causes to poverty. The adherents focused only on the religious aspect as cause of poverty where Satan is to be blamed or one's ignorance or lack of belief or mindset or choice. To them if one fulfils his part, God is willing do his and of course, prosperity is cheaply accessible. Because of the galvanizing effect of the prosperity gospel, they are motivated towards an economic change. The concept of poverty is seen in chapter two as very complex and I have tried to establish a definition. Poverty is said to have many forms as stipulated by White et al (2001). We have also seen that the economic crisis in Cameroon has greatly affected the lives of the people with other fundamental causes of poverty.

In this thesis work, I have presented some key tenets of Oyedepo's theology; to see to what extent these, are supported or contradicted to the views of the interviewees. This study shows in chapter 5 that the adherents in Winners chapel believe it is their covenant right to prosper and poverty is not regarded as the plan and purpose of God for God's children. Prosperity is appreciable, regarded as God's ultimate plan or divine agenda for God's people. It is transformative and can be acquired by hard work and diligence, faith, positive thinking

and principles that must be adhered to if one desires prosperity. Empowered by the fact that they are entitled to the blessings of Abraham through the finished work of Jesus Christ, they are confident that you must prosper if you follow the covenant adequately. Fueled by the desire to escape the poverty plaguing Cameroon-Bamenda, adherents believe by being committed to God, God will intend be committed to them and this is in harmony with Oyedepo's seed-faith concept. Oyedepo in his theology says God is the 'covenantor' and a believer is the 'covenantee'. Prosperity therefore, is not magical but it is to them a conscious 'covenant walk with God'; whereby an individual embraces God's commandment with delight. For example, to be blessed like Abraham one needs to take the covenant steps Abraham took. They therefore see salvation as addressing their physical, material and economic needs.

6.2 Recommendation for further studies

The prosperity gospel has been greatly criticized, many hold that it is a gospel of delusion and it encourages materialism and the fact that the prosperity preachers quote scriptures (proof-texting) to conveniently argue their claim (as seen in pg. 58, 77). The fact that prosperity preachers preach the covenant of seed and harvest, can in my view be having two sides to it. The good, which produces a desire for the people to work hard and the bad, which can be associated to greed, accumulation and their credibility questionable.

I have studied the theological interpretation of poverty and prosperity in Winners Chapel Bamenda and I would further suggest that studies should be done on how the local culture of Bamenda has influenced the theological view of the adherents towards poverty and prosperity. In addition, the testifiers made it clear because of the prosperity gospel they have noticed economic changes in their lives; it will be imperative to study how prosperity gospel in Cameroon aids in poverty alleviation. Despite the many connotations attached to the prosperity gospel there are many 'mushrooming' in Cameroon and some with home based influence, I therefore suggest further studies.

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Appendix

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3

Thesis work outline.

Objectives		2015			2015			2017			2017/18		
A	Chapters	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
1	Introduction												
2	Theoretical Frame work												
3	Methodology												
4	Oyedepo's Theology												
5	Presentation and Analysis												
6	Conclusion												
#	Proof Reading/submission												

Appendix 4

Logo of Winners Chapel International.

