

HERESY UNMASKED

ANALYSIS OF THE
WORD OF FAITH MOVEMENT
DOCTRINES

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Introduction

As the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is nearing and the age is also closing in on the schemes of Satan – he is working fast around the human clock to spread his deceptions and heresies. While it is evidently quite difficult for Satan to lure believers into heinous sinful activities – he’s found other means of getting to them right from their pulpits. He is using the means of heresies and even heretic preachers to divert Christians from their primary mission – God. The Word of Faith Movement has been at the very front of promoting doctrines or teachings that are nowhere taught in Scripture. These men and women distort many passages of the Bible to propagate their own ideas rather than the clearly revealed Word of God.

I want the readers to understand that I am not writing in attacking the personalities of the individuals involved in these practices, it is the ideologies and the “improper” usage of the Bible in order to achieve selfish means or spread a “wrong” Gospel other from what is revealed in the Bible. I will present a Biblical defense against the doctrines of the Word of Faith movement. My conscience is clear, and I am writing this with the sole purpose of defending the true teaching of Scripture, the truth for which many saints have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice their lives. Especially the “Prosperity Gospel” is nothing but a self-enrichment scheme being carried out in the name of God – with some selected passages of Scripture, which are interpreted outside their intended context.

The Word of Faith movement (WoF) cannot really be said to be a theology because it has not yet been systematized and at present has a loose and flexible structure of doctrines. Because of its extremities in order to explain the movement some have termed it as “hyper-faith movement,” “name-it-and-claim-it,” “prosperity gospel,” and “wealth and health gospel.” Since the 1960s, the Word of Faith Movement has emerged to be a greatly influential movement in the USA, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa. Regardless of its poor theology, this movement is growing in its influence. The Gospel in WoF is confined to apply to the here and now of the people. It seeks to overcome all forms of suffering in this world now – through a simplistic Gospel that is often a conglomeration of various heresies or extra-biblical teachings.

While both numerical growth and influence are commendable, they should not be used as the criteria for authenticity. For many people seem to think that big crowds are measurements for the truth. To use such a standard as a means of establishing what is false and true is rather logically poor or bankrupt and too simplistic to warrant truthfulness of any movement. This is the attitude that Paul predicted and forewarned that *“For the time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will heap up teachers to themselves according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths”* (II Tim. 4:3-4). Besides other heretic movements, the WoF is perhaps one of the largest movement living out the letter of this Scriptural fulfillment. It is popular because it says and teaches that which humanity is pursuing in this world – a social gospel of emancipation in this life from all suffering by following through certain prescribed principles.

Over the past forty years, the movement has raised prominent tele-evangelists who continue to propagate its doctrines. Names such as Kenneth Haggin, Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Frederick K. C. Price, Thomas D. Jakes, Myles Munroe, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Juanita Bynum, Paula White, and Maryline Hickey are amongst the leading in the USA. Africa has also a number of them such as late Benson Idahosa, William Kumuyi, David Oyedebó, Ray MacAulay, Kobus van Rensburg, Chris Oyakilome, and T.B. Joshua. There are also many in Europe, Australia and Asia. You can log onto almost any Christian TV channel worldwide and you will definitely come across many of these big shots of the movement preaching or doing one thing or another.

What exactly do these people teach? This is the question I am attempting to answer throughout the pages. Seeing that the movement has no uniformity in its doctrines we need to be careful that we do not label everyone the same. There is a great disparity of their theology although there is also a great consensus because they often borrow from each other their sermons. Therefore, we will take the time to examine the teachings of this movement, which are mudding the Gospel in these days.

ONE: GOD IN THE WOF MOVEMENT

When Satan came to Eve in the garden, his first attack was directed towards the nature of God. He laid false claims towards the character of God by lying that God did not tell Adam all the truth. Thus, he made an attack on the truth of God and by so doing; he was attacking everything that resembles God. He presented a false image of God's character or nature, which resulted for Eve to disobey the Word of God and follow falsehood. Cults and heretics teachers all around the world are aimed at distorting the truth of who God is especially by making Him too small or by minimizing Him and presenting Him other than what the Bible teaches about Him. Many of them hold to the doctrine of the Oneness Pentecostalism and reject the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the WoF movement, God is often seen from a human perspective rather than from what the Bible teaches. Thus, they have put their own human definitions and explanations of who God is which in a way limits God and makes Him too small for a thinking person to believe in Him. It was the same with what Satan did to Eve, he presented a view of a God that is too small, and this resulted that she disobeyed God (Genesis 3:1-6).

Firstly, God is not seen as sovereignly involved in His universe and it is rather man who is in control and God needs permission before He can operate (a doctrine advocated by Dr. Myles Munroe). There are different opinions being advocated, some say that this permission to operate must be granted by man, others say by Satan, and others say in the Supreme Court of the Universe. I at a point held to the view of that God needed to have the permission from man for Him to do His work. This view places God in a position of a depend being who cannot do anything out of Himself without being granted legalization by His own creatures. Charles Capps puts in clearly that the reason why God needs this permission is because:

“Satan had gained ascendancy in the earth by gaining Adam’s authority, and God was left on the outside. God couldn’t come here in His divine power and wipe them out. He had to move in an area where it would be ruled legal by the Supreme Court of the Universe.”¹

The above quote contradicts God's Sovereignty, Scripture does not teach anywhere about the Universe's Supreme Court. Scripture teaches that God is in need of nobody's counsel i.e. He's the Supreme or Sovereign Ruler and needs no advisors be they angelic or human, heavenly or earthly. This doctrine does not only undermine the Sovereignty of God but simply denies it by making God appear as someone who needs to take advice from His creatures. The Bible teaches that God is Absolutely Sovereign and in need of no one's counsel or advice on what He should do. Scripture teaches that:

- God is all knowing – Job 21:22
- God is beyond judgment – Job 36:22-23
- God determines issues by Himself – Isaiah 40:13-14
- All this belong to God – Romans 11:34,36

¹ Capps, Charles, *Authority in Three Worlds*, p. 51

➤ God cannot be instructed – I Corinthians 2:16

Secondly, many teachers in this movement teach of a God whom man can command i.e. can be told what to do by people. This mistake arises from the misunderstanding of Isaiah 45:11, the interpreters of this passage in the WoF movement fail to understand the context in which the statement is made. Here God is referring to either being petitioned by those who like to know what God has in mind concerning Israel as it regards to the prophecies made or that He rebukes those who try to question His sovereignty i.e. it can be taken as an interrogation from God to say, will you command me of what I am to do with my own people.

This view of commanding God is justified that when people stand on the Word of God they may as well command Him what to do because it is written in His Word. This has been the foundation upon which things such as positive confession and positive speaking were built as a means of creating atmospheres for answered prayers. Robert Tilton² (see his direct quote in the footnote) teaches that man can make promises to keep and command God on the bases of His Word of what His part should be in the covenant i.e. telling God what part He should play in our man-made covenants. The notion contradicts Scripture because all of the covenants in Scripture were initiated by God and never by man. That covenants were always initiated by God is clear in Scripture:

1. Adamic Covenant – Genesis 1:26-30; Jeremiah 33:20; Hosea 6:7
2. Noahic Covenant – Genesis 8:21-22; 9:2,6,12-13,22-27
3. Abrahamic Covenant – Genesis 15:4,18
4. Mosaic Covenant – Exodus 19:1-6; 21-24
5. Davidic Covenant – II Samuel 7:12-16
6. New Covenant – Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25; II Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 7:22, 9:15-20, 10:29, 12:24

Throughout Scripture we notice that God never entered a man made covenant, He always initiated the covenant. No man can tell God what to do, whether they base their claims on certain portions of Scripture. Scripture tells us that there is only one covenant and is the final one between God and man. Thus besides the **New Covenant** through Jesus Christ (who is God), there remains no other covenant and it is pure heresy for man to make a covenant and make God to be simply a participant (it has never happen in Scripture). It is either man takes God's covenant or there can be no covenant at all, God will **never** bow to the covenants made by man of deceitful and unfaithful hearts (Jeremiah. 17:9).

It is commonly taught that we can use the Word of God to command Him because He has said it in His Word – so He must definitely do it. Kenneth Copeland said:

² *"We make our own promises to do our part, then we can tell God, on the authority of His word, what we would like Him to do. That's right, you can actually tell God what you would like His part in the Covenant to be" (God's Miracle Plan for Man, p. 36).*

"As a believer, you have a right to make commands in the name of Jesus. Each time you stand on the Word, you are commanding God to a certain extent, because it is His Word."³

There is no Scripture that teaches the above stated claim, whether the believer says things as they are written in the Bible, God is not moved by such gimmicks. God acts on behalf of the believer by His own free will but only if it will bring Him glory. God cannot be manipulated with the quoting of Bible passages, God's counsel stands in all things, even our prayers cannot move God if they are not in His Sovereign eternal plan for our lives. There is no portion of Scripture teaching that believers can command God to a certain extent because they use His Word, this is false.

Thirdly, God is seen as a person who operates on certain "Laws of Faith" and He also exercises faith. This misconception is derived from the superlative phrase that was stated by Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark 11:22 which says, "Have the faith of God"⁴ or "Have faith in God" or as the Arabic version puts it "Believe in God." Advocates of the WoF overlook that the Greek phrase "*echo pistis theos*" which literally means "have the faith of God" is mere Hebraism being expressed, to indicate that our faith must have God as its Author. Thus, the believer is encouraged to have strong confidence in God as the one with whom things that appear humanly impossible are possible or He does those things that people find difficult with ease – in such a God man should have confidence. Yet, many such as Frederick K.C. Price teach that if God did not have faith, He would not have created the world. Price wrote that:

"Yes, God has faith. And He uses it. If he didn't, how could we have His kind? God operates on the God kind of faith. What other kind of faith could God use but the God kind? God believed in His heart that what He said with His mouth would come to pass, and He dared to say it."⁵

K.C. Price is not the only person propagating this kind of doctrine, there are many others in the WOF e.g. Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Chris Oyakilome, David Oyedabo etc. Kenneth Copeland puts it that:

Faith is the raw material substance that the Spirit of God used to form the universe.⁶

The above quotes are not just errors of biblical interpretation but also falsification of the passages of Scripture and the nature of God. This theory poses serious threats concerning the person of God. If God has faith, He ought to have faith in someone greater than Himself. Even if it were that His faith is in Himself it will still require that it be given to Him from somewhere outside Him. Both the notion of someone greater than God and the gift of faith to God are heretic positions to hold onto. Faith is an entity made available to created beings, God who is the Creator of being who can believe and Giver of that faith cannot have faith. There is no Scripture that teaches that God employed faith to create the universe, the book of Hebrews tells us that:

³ Copeland, Kenneth, *Our Covenant with God*, p. 32

⁴ 1899 Duoay-Rheims Bible

⁵ Price, KC, Frederick, *How Faith Works*, p. 99

⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *Authority of the Believer II*, (Fort Worth: KCM, 1987, audiotape #01-0302, side 1)

“Faith enables us to perceive that the universe was created at the bidding of God – so that we know that what we see was not made out of visible things.”⁷

This does not say that God employed faith to create the world because having a God who employs faith to create defeats the purpose of an Omnipotent and Self-Existent God. No serious Bible scholar and of Biblical Greek will agree with K.C. Price’s interpretation of Hebrews 11:3. This notion is so popular amongst those who attend churches that are of the WoF movement. We should recognize that it is a deep-seated misconception of the kind of God they serve. Of the Bible commentators who have stood the test of time, none of them propagated such a view of faith. This is a doctrine that brings God to a point of dependence because an object needs to be contingent for it to exercise faith i.e. if God used faith to create, He is dependent upon someone greater than Himself (He no longer becomes God but a creation of some other Higher Being). See Appendix I.

Fourthly, some of the WoF teachers have taught and are teaching a concept of a God that is similar to that of Mormonism. Anthropomorphic descriptions have been taken to their literal conclusions i.e. the descriptions of God as to having human features are now taken to be literal. This doctrine has been advocated by Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Jerry Savelle and not to mention Morris Cerullo who made claims of having seen a vision of God in his *The Miracle Book*. God is said to be the size of a human being with eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, feet etc but somehow a bit bigger in size than the average human being. Regardless of their doctrines contradicting Scripture many continue to follow after these men as true advocates of Biblical Christianity. Some of their teachings are stated as follow:

a) “When we use the spiritual laws that God has set up, God must obey what we request.”⁸

Who are we that God must obey our requests? Who becomes God and who is the creature in this case? Can anyone manipulate God? I would not want to serve such a God that can be manipulated by His creatures at will. We can make idols obey our request but not Yahweh. Yahweh cannot be commanded by his creatures, Him doing that will cause Him to cease to be God. God obeys no laws, He sovereignly rules in perfect righteousness. Copeland probably does not understand what a Sovereign being is capable of doing.

b) “He is only obligated to do what you say with your mouth, and if you don't say it he's not obligated to do it. But if you say it then the apostle and the high priest of our profession is obligated to carry out what you said.”⁹

I do not know whether Dollar teaches this out of conviction or just because he is a disciple of Copeland. God being obligated to do what we say is not scriptural, God does not act or respond on our words but our faith in Him – yet that faith is His gift unto us. The issue of verbal confession in order to have the expected results is a heresy on its own for example, there are believers who are mute but they do talk to God and He hears them. So we ask, is our communication with God in our words or our hearts.

⁷ Hebrews 11:3, Twentieth Century New Testament

⁸ Kenneth Copeland, Praise the Lord, TBN, 2/5/86

⁹ Creflo Dollar, TBN 10/05/1999

If our communication with God is only by verbal means then these mute believers are doomed. In another chapter, I talk about the problems with positive speaking or confession.

Preachers such as Kenneth Copeland make statements without Biblical warrant concerning the nature of God. First, he provides a humanized form of God e.g. “God is a being that stands somewhere around 6’2, 6’3.”¹⁰ Second, he provides an atheistic view of God e.g. “God is the biggest failure in the Bible...the reason you’ve never known that is because He never said He was one.”¹¹ Kenneth Copeland’s blasphemies are not even tips of the iceberg of heresies abounding in the WoF movement concerning God.

Benny Hinn took the matter even further by teaching a Trinity of his own mind rather than what Scripture teaches. Here is the new human invention of the Hinn trinity:

“Man, I feel revelation knowledge already coming on me here. Lift your hand. Something new is going to happen here today. I felt it just as I walked down here. Holy Spirit, take over in the name of Jesus...God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person; and He is a triune being by Himself separate from the Son and the Holy Ghost. Say, what did you say? Hear it, hear it, hear it. See, God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person, God the Holy Ghost is a person. But each one of them is a triune being by Himself. If I can shock you – and maybe I should – there’s nine of them. Huh, what did you say? Let me explain: God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person with his own personal spirit, with his own personal soul, and his own personal spirit-body. You say, Huh, I never heard that. Well you think you’re in this church to hear things you’ve heard for the last 50 years?”¹²

What a twisted version of the Trinity. Only Hinn is able to know what the Bible is silent about. All heresies always have something that sounds spiritual enough but can’t be justified by Scripture. Here Hinn takes the very doctrine of the Trinity and modify it to justify his new revelation knowledge. But he fails to realize that God cannot contradict Himself by giving such confused revelations. What Hinn is claiming is that the New Testament revelation concerning the Persons of God is not complete but now fulfilled by his “revelation.” We may need a third testament then.

I challenge you to examine for yourself whether the concept of God propagated by the WoF teachers is the God of the Bible or a human invention.

TWO: JESUS CHRIST IN THE WOF

Paul said, **“But even if we, or an angel out of Heaven, should preach a gospel to you beside the gospel we preached to you, let him be accursed.”¹³** Paul’s instructions to the church of Galatia was not only directed towards the preaching of another Gospel but also of preaching something else beside it. Things beside the Gospel of Christ are the Roman Catholic Traditions, regenerational baptism, prosperity gospel, positive

¹⁰ Kenneth Copeland, *Spirit, Soul, and Body*, tape # 01-0601

¹¹ Kenneth Copeland, on TBN “Praise-a-Thon,” 1988

¹² Benny Hinn, *This is Your Day* – TBN, 3 October 1991

¹³ Galatians 1:8 Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (LITV)

confession etc. They are all aimed at exalting man's view over that of Scripture and divert people from the truth. Jesus Christ in the WoF is taught with such perversion that we as Christians cannot accept their teachings as addressing the Jesus of Scripture.

Summary of what some WoF teachers say about Jesus:

Firstly, it denies the deity of Christ when He was on earth and equates Him to an ordinary human being. Copeland said, "why didn't Jesus openly proclaim Himself as God during His 33 years on earth? For one single reason. He hadn't come to earth as God, He'd come as man."¹⁴

Secondly, it teaches of a Jesus whom the Father spoke into existence – through continuous confession of faith-filled words. He said in three different teachings of his that:

"Jesus existed only as an image in the heart of God, until such time as the prophets of the Old Testament could positively confess Jesus into existence through their constant prophecies."¹⁵

Here's where we're gonna depart from ordinary church: Now, you see God is injecting His Word into the earth to produce this Jesus – these faith-filled words that framed the image that's in Him... He can't just walk onto the earth and say, 'Let it be!' because He doesn't have the right. He had to sneak it in here around the god of this world that was blockin' every way that he possibly could."¹⁶

"God was making promises to Jesus, and Jesus wasn't even there. But, you see, God deals with things that are not yet as though they already were. That's the way He gets them to come to pass."¹⁷

Judge for yourself if this is Scripturally sound, I don't find it sound.

Thirdly, it teaches that Jesus performed miracles not because He was God but as an anointed ordinary man, who needed the Holy Spirit's power – He drew from no other sources than that which is available to all men.

Fourthly, Jesus is said to have walked the earth no more than a prophet under the Abrahamic Covenant.

Fifthly, it claims that Jesus never called Himself as the Son of God but simply that He walked with God.

Sixthly, that Jesus was a very wealthy person. This will be examined as a chapter on its own in this paper.

Perverted Christology and Atonement

¹⁴ Kenneth Copeland, *Believer's Voice of Victory* magazine, 8 August 1988, p.8

¹⁵ Kenneth Copeland, *The Power of the Tongue*, pp.8-10

¹⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *The Image of God in You III* (Fort Worth, Texas: KCM, 1989), audio-tape #01-1403

¹⁷ Kenneth Copeland, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne* (Fort Worth, Texas: KCM, 1990), audio-tape #02-0017

This section addresses only the claim made by certain WoF teachers that Jesus was born again or died spiritually and all other nonsense that denies the atonement or the deity of Christ.

Jesus is said to be born again by some of the WoF teachers such as Chris Oyakilome, Kenneth Haggin, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn. That when Christ rose from the dead, that were the time He was born again because it was by the power of the Holy Spirit. Copeland said that a born again man died for him. Hinn said, that the day Christ hanged on the crossed, He became the same nature with Satan or He became a sinner because that was the only way He could purchase mankind from sin. Thus, salvation was brought by a sinful sacrifice, a sinful Jesus, who also needed regeneration. If this is not heresy then there is nothing else that will settle such false teaching.

This doctrine springs from the misinterpretation of Colossians 1:18 **“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”** To make this to mean that Jesus was born again from this passage of Scripture is a pure indication of poor scholarship amongst the WoF teachers. Such hermeneutics that defies the Person of Christ is of the devil. Colossians 1:18 is rather saying the exact opposite of which the WoF teachers aren't saying, it's teaching that Jesus is the first to have died and resurrected and never to die again. That His kind of resurrection is what the church will experience. It does not imply that Christ was the first to be resurrected from the dead for there were many that He resurrected but they all died afterwards. Thus the only person to have been resurrected and continues to live on forever is Christ, in that sense He is the first born from the dead. This is affirmed by other passages of Scripture (John 11:25-26; Acts 26:23; ICor. 15:20-23; Rev. 1:5,18). Thus, He is the firstborn from the dead as having been Himself one of the dead but rose and never to die again, He is not the first-born from the dead as being born-again or created.

This doctrine was borrowed from the great-grandfather E.W. Kenyon of the WoF movement which was plagiarized by Kenneth Hagin (grand-father of WoF). Kenyon wrote in *Identification* that:

“Jesus died twice on the cross. I knew this for many years, but had no scriptural evidence of it.”¹⁸

The above statement is justified with Isaiah 53:9. Fred Price took Kenyon's doctrine and put it this way:

Do you think that the punishment for our sin was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the thieves could have paid your price. No, the punishment was to go into hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from God. Satan and all the demons of hell thought that they had Him bound and they threw a net over Jesus and they dragged Him down to the very pit of hell itself to serve our sentence.”¹⁹

This is outrages and blasphemy in the name of biblical Christianity. Price misses the whole biblical view of hell – Scripture reveals to us that Satan and his demons aren't yet in hell but awaiting judgment (this is the first error). Secondly, he treads the blood

¹⁸ E.W. Kenyon, *Identification*, p.16

¹⁹ Fred Price, *Ever Increasing Faith Messenger*, June 1980. Quoted from Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, p. 347.

of Jesus underfoot and dismisses all Scriptural references that the death of Christ on the cross was for our redemption. Kenneth Copeland who is the current father of the movement, said something similar to Price that:

“He [Jesus] tasted spiritual death for every man. And His spirit and inner man went to hell in my place. Can’t you see that? Physical death wouldn’t remove your sins. He’s tasted death for every man. He’s talking about tasting spiritual death.”²⁰

We can see the atonement dismissed, Christology modified, and Jesus completely humanized. The doctrine of Jesus by the WoF teachers attacks the very foundation upon which the Christian faith is build. In recent times, a leading WoF teacher John Hagee wrote a book in which He denied Christ as the Messiah whom the Jews await and that the Jews are not in need of Jesus in order to be saved. It is clear that the WoF movement is teaching “another Jesus” (II Cor. 11:3-4). They proclaim a Jesus who never believed Himself to be God and who came to the earth as an ordinary man with no form of divinity in Him. This means John told a lie when he wrote that,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, He was in *the* beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one *thing* came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. There was a man sent from God; his name *was* John. He came for a witness, that he might witness concerning the Light, that all might believe through Him. He was not that Light, but that he might witness concerning the Light. He was the true Light; *He* enlightens every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him.”²¹

The first ten verses of John 1, seem not to mean anything to the WoF teachers or perhaps the Bible is wrong and they are correct.

I’m also being careful that these heretic teachings are not used as labels for all who hold to WoF teachings. There is no general consensus of the movement’s doctrines since its doctrines are not systematized. This makes it a dangerous movement because anyone can add more of his own personal interpretations – very obvious when watching tele-evangelists. Any group or movement that calls itself a Christian movement but has distorted views about Jesus Christ need to be rejected. These teachers have found their way into the homes of many Charismatic Christians and their doctrines are considered as orthodox. But Scripture condemns their doctrines as heretic and demonic, those who follow after them are deceived by following after a Jesus of their own making.

Various opinions abound concerning Christ Jesus even in non-Christian religions, therefore it becomes important that those who call themselves Christians need to make up their minds either to follow what Scripture teaches or they can follow after the heresies of men. They can choose to believe Scripture or the Jesus of Benny Hinn,

²⁰ Kenneth Copeland, *How Jesus Obtained His Name*, quoted from Hank Hanegraaff in *Christianity in Crisis*, p. 164.

²¹ John 1:1-10 LITV

Frederick Price, and Kenneth Copeland – there is no in-between position to this view. It either Scripture or men, you cannot have both. He is either the eternal God and the sacrificial Lamb who was slain for the sin of the world or the one proclaimed by Copeland and his friends.

THREE: POSITIVE CONFESSION

The doctrine of positive confession teaches that one has to speak only positive words and if it is done constantly, what you speak will surely come to pass. This is often called faith speaking. But the source of this doctrine is not Scripture, it has its origin in mind sciences and psychology borrowed from Eastern religions. This and the doctrine of prosperity are my major thrusts in the doctrines of the WoF.

With the increase of humanistic, New Age philosophies and the confusions caused by the Word of Faith Movement on the subject of directing one's destiny by determining it through your "confession" seem to be the in thing in the century we live. The worst of this is to find men and women who claim to be teachers of the Word of God going astray without realizing that they are on a cultic track. There has been no time as this, where we stood on

the verge Bible coated heresies. D.R. McConnell says that "any new religious movement [within Protestantism] must bear the scrutiny of two criteria: *biblical fidelity* and *historical orthodoxy*." Of which the WoF falls short on either counts or tests.

The whole subject of positive confession has created a mindset of making people think that they are *supermen* or some kind of deities. That anything can change by just speaking positive (faith filled) words. When this doctrine is brought to its practical sense, it is nothing but occultism or claims rooted in the New Age Movement and Mind Sciences. The doctrine was mainly introduced in the church through the teachings and belief in human ability and potentials of creativity. I at a time propagated this doctrine but thank God who shows light to His people and the Holy Spirit who leads them in all truth. It is also my desire that someone reading this paper will have the eyes of his understanding opened to the truth of God's Word rather than human doctrines.

This New Age doctrine covered in the blankets of Eastern mysticism won the minds of some who claimed to be Christians. Seeing that it is clear heresy to present the teaching in its raw form, so to appear spiritual it is termed *faith*. It is called *faith* so it can sound *spiritual* but it is not *scriptural*. This is a kind of faith that is based on the merits of man or is the will power of man and that with the supposed proper usage of his tongue he can cause anything to be that he imagines and constantly speaks.

As in many other movements, there are always key people who pioneer the effectiveness of the group. Popular names in the circles of the positive confession are mainly; Norman V. Peale and Robert Schuller are well known to be advocates of Positive/Posibility thinking which has its origin in the New Thought schools. Kenneth Haggin and Kenneth Copeland (discipler and disciple) became the modern leading advocates of Positive Confession and Word-Faith groups, which have their origins in the teachings of E.W. Kenyon, William Branham, the Manifest Sons of God, and the Latter Rain Movement. See the list of names in the footnotes below:²²

The names of people found above and the short list below are also known as the heroes of faith and of late, there has been an increasing trend of heroines (Joyce Meyer, Paula White, Gloria Copeland, Juanita Buynam, Marilyn Hickey etc) in the movement of which many of them are the wives of the "heroes." The movement professes to have a "new revelation" for many Christians who fail. And the failure is said to be because of negative confessions and inappropriate usage of the tongue. The WoF movement claims to be resuscitating the creative powers invested in each person by *God* through positive confession.

In this chapter we will address the issue of confessing long life i.e. that one can speak to your body and extend your life. Part of this is also included in the claim of divine health (next heading).

Death And Life In The Power Of The Tongue?

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."²³

²² E.W. Kenyon, Charles Capps, Kenneth Haggin, Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K.C. Price, Robert Tilton, William Kumuyi, Benson Idahosa, Chris Oyakilome, Ray Macaulay, and David [Paul] Yonggi Cho.

²³ Proverbs 18:21 KJV

The above Scripture is often used as the ground upon which the Word of Faith teachers construct the doctrine of positive confession. According to them, anything one says will happen, be it positive or negative, health or sickness, poverty or wealth, prosperity or suffering etc are all in the power of one's tongue. However, this interpretation is not supported by Scripture and no reliable Bible scholar has ever attempted to give it such a meaning. The WoF teachers are actually rewriting Scripture by interpreting it the way they think it fit to propagate their own doctrines.

However, I wouldn't want you to misunderstand me that Christians do not have to be watchful of their speech because Scripture teaches that our speech should be seasoned with grace and we are to speak in wisdom i.e. be constructive in what we say and apply wisdom (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6). The following quote places a clear emphasis on what I am saying:

“For Christians words and faith are important, but there is a limit to what words can do. It can help or hurt a close friend or a total stranger by what one says, but to treat words as if they were some ‘star wars’ type weapon by which one alters or manipulates reality is not biblical, but occultic. If one could change reality by the power of words spoken, then that would put man on the same level with God. This is exactly what teachers of the ‘positive confession,’ or word-faith movement, claim.”²⁴

But as it have to do with the positive confession doctrine this is a new invention of televangelists and many in the Charismatic churches. This is not the biblical definition of faith, it is rather occultism at work. Because if the way the WoF teachers portray faith is what the Bible teaches when addressing the subject of faith than it necessitates that we do not need God, for we will be self-sufficient. What is the need for God if through our words we can get whatever we say or change the course of our lives through “positive words”? What do we need God for if all the power of creativity is within us? If we can change our destinies or prolong our lives with the words, we speak, then Ethan was in serious error when he said: ***“What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?”²⁵***

Ethan for all his life never knew of a person that ever had control over the power of death – for this is universal that all people will die. I somehow think that the WoF preachers have a misconception of what death is or they have a very negative view of death. Death (physical) is part of this life, without it there will be malfunction in nature (except there is a supernatural intervention to change the course). Thus though death (physical) came in because of sin it is not an evil happening, it serves its purpose in the fallen world as ordained by God. There is a time span for every human being, which is determined by God not by the individual i.e. we have no say on how long we can or should live.

If the power of controlling one's destiny were handed to man, then God has no control anymore on the lives of people. Between God and man who knows what is best for man? The answer is obvious. So if God knows what is best for man and limit his life to fifty or sixty years, what confession will make God to change His mind? For if through positive confession, a person can change the length of their life, than man is God. The outcome is a humanistic concept of faith which has nothing to do with the teaching of Scripture. This is probably why many faith teachers claim that:

²⁴ Watchman Fellowship, Inc

²⁵ Psalm 89: 48 NKJV

"What you are saying is exactly what you are getting now. If you are living in poverty and lack and want, change what you are saying.... The powerful force of the spiritual world that creates the circumstances around us is controlled by the words of the mouth."²⁶

We seem to miss something here, which was not known to the generations of Christians and Jews before the 20th and 21st centuries. It is this type of teachings that have paved way for the modern "Charismatic Prophecies" i.e. people just stand up and begin saying things with the hope that whatever they say will materialize or come to fulfillment. It is important to understand the limits of man and the Christian is not an autonomous being i.e. he has to live under the will and guide of God. We should not try to mix humanistic and occultic views with the biblical teaching of man.

I believe that man even in his perfect state (when he was created and lived in the Garden of Eden) never had the power over death, Scripture indicates that he was free from the power of death as long as he remained obedient to the command of God (Genesis 2:16-17). But after he sinned, the curse of death was released upon man and his children that even to today no one can tell death away in their own power or will through positive confession. Death is legally on earth by God's permission because of man's disobedience that is why man is called a mortal as long as he is in this world. When we come to Christ the issues of death does not change, for death is part of justice taking its course because of man's sinfulness (Romans 5:12). Thus, man is a sinner and only by God's grace can he be rescued from eternal death. But as long as he remains in the earth – even if he were born again, he is not immune from physical death. As long as Christ has not returned, death will continue to rule in this physical world. Thus, even the "strongest" of the believers is susceptible to death just like the non-believer.

The issue of confessing long life is not biblical and it is deception or a placing of one's hope in manmade doctrines. Many WoF preachers have publicly announced that they will live up to 120 years, thus far I have not heard of one of them that even made it to a 100. I remember one preacher saying that there are no deaths in his church, for the day anyone will die, he will pray them to come back to life because the Bible promises 120 and he will not go for anything lower than that. This is preposterous misinterpretation of what the Bible says. You can only have long life as God determines for you, not as long as you want. Life and death is not in the power of man, none of us have the power to prevent our own death if it comes, not to talk about sustaining ourselves by what we say.

History of Christian Martyrs to the *First General Persecutions* under Nero from Fox's Book of Martyrs:

St. Stephen,²⁷ Philip (He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54), Matthew,²⁸ James the Less,²⁹ St. Mark,³⁰ Peter,³¹ Paul.³² Why could these men not stop

²⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*, Kenneth Copeland Publications

²⁷ About two thousand Christians, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the "persecution that arose about Stephen"

²⁸ Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less.

²⁹ Is supposed by some to have been the brother of our Lord, by a former wife of Joseph...He was elected to the oversight of the churches of Jerusalem; and was the author of the Epistle ascribed to James in the sacred canon.

death through confessing long life? Most of these men died in the time their ministries started to flourish. Why did they disregard their lives so much that while there was a key available they did not use it to save their lives from tragedy? Only some of the following could be true to this:

1. They did not know their “god” authority.
2. The power of confessing long life was not revealed to them.
3. They did not have enough faith to deliver themselves from death.
4. They had a misconception about dying for the Gospel.
5. They were ignorant that they did not have to die because Christ already died in their place.
6. They were trying to be heroes of the faith outside of God’s will.

OR

7. They did not have control over their deaths.
8. No one can determine his future through positive confession.
9. They were not taught positive confession by Jesus Christ rather He taught them to die for the Gospel.
10. The power of life and death is not in the hands of men.
11. God permits death of the believers even in most horrible ways.

Why couldn’t these men of great faith not prevent death? Where was their faith in those moments? What happened to their tongues that they could not speak themselves out of these atrocities? The WoF teachers must provide the answers to these questions I can imagine what Jesse Duplantis will say, “they didn’t have enough faith and anointing.” I believe that these men were not able to stop death because they did not have power over death and it was ordained by God. No believer is given power over death in this life, which they can exercise, as they like. There is no scriptural reference that tells believers that they can prolong their own lives through confessing positive words.

This is not to say that I take pride in the death of others but it is examples from which we can learn. The apostles died atrociously yet none of them is said to have exercised positive confession to prevent their deaths. If there were to be any group of people that were

³⁰ Was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by Peter, whom he served as an amanuensis, and under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel in the Greek language.

³¹ Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was.

³² Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptised at His sepulcher.

unaware of the power that was within their tongues – the apostles must be that group. If that be the case we can also not trust the revelation of Scripture as being complete because there is some revelation in it missing which was not known to the apostles.

Those who taught confessing long life are dead (Kenneth Haggin) not even having reached a hundred years. What happened to their faith? Was it God given or was it the fabrication of human superstitions? Why could not the great teachers of positive confession stop their own illnesses and deaths? Many of them died of sicknesses, what happened to their confessions of divine health and healing? Their disciples should be able to provide answers to these questions.

Christian history tells us of long records of missionaries, revivalists, preachers, theologians who influenced the modern church with their writings – yet many of them died in their fifties or sixties. For example Jonathan Edwards (1702-1758), John Calvin (1509-1564), Martine Luther (1483-1546), John Knox (1514-1572), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). While a many great atheists lived longer. Was there something wrong with their confessions? No there was not doctrine of confession. Men like William Wilberforce and Charles Spurgeon were so disease stricken in their years while laboring for the Lord.

If the teaching of confessing long life is truly of God, we will have to doubt the calling of the apostles, the early church, church fathers, and all who lived before the coming of the positive confession doctrines. Above all, Jesus' death need to be brought under questioning and everything else that Scripture teaches becomes totally questionable if there are still new revelations which are not included in the Bible.

Positive confession put besides Scripture is heresy that defies the teaching of Scripture. It questions the presence of death and the sovereignty of God in how He is to deal with His own creatures.

FOUR: DIVINE HEALTH

This doctrine of the WoF movement says sickness is of the devil and that we should live in absolute health in this world. It is said that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed and therefore for a child of God to be sick is as a result of living in ignorance of their rights in Christ. The Scripture used here is that of Isaiah 53:5 (LITV):

But He was wounded for our transgressions; *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed.

It comes down to biblical hermeneutics again in order to understand Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah. One does not necessarily need theological training to see the logical application of the passage. It is ludicrous to speak of 1) being wounded for our transgression; 2) bruised for our iniquities; 3) chastisement; and then concluded that the fourth part implies healing from bodily sicknesses. It is clear from the first three parts of the verse that it is in reference to humanity's sin. So the conclusion would be that the healing being referred to is that of our sinfulness – seeing that sin is a spiritual disease and Christ paid for it that we may be delivered from it.³³ But for those who love this life fail to see the implications of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah. This

³³ Matthew Henry commented on this passage that: "Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes (that is, the sufferings he underwent) he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease."

purpose was fulfilled when the angel appeared to Joseph (Matthew 1:21). Peter in referring to the fulfillment of the passage in Isaiah wrote that:

“who ‘Himself carried up in His body our sins’ onto the tree; that dying to sins, we might live to righteousness, of whom ‘by His wound you were healed.’”³⁴

The antecedent passages of the above passage can clearly tell us that Peter is dealing with the subject of sin. He quotes portions of Isaiah but this time he puts those words in their fulfilled state. And it is clear that Peter is not teaching any physical healing but that through the death of Christ believers are delivered from the power of sin because Christ died in our place, and we are now servants of Christ unto righteousness (Rom. 6:1-23).

The teaching of divine health is often derived from the original plan of God when He created mankind (Gen. 1:26-30). However, though sin has messed up his health they claim that through Christ, God grants immortality and long life. Therefore, through mere adjustment of one’s thought life, you can prolong your life to any age you choose. Chris Oyakilome makes claim that:

“Jesus came to deal with the problem of sin, and the Bible says He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). Meaning that if you’re born again, you can live as long as you choose.”

He uses Philippians 1:23-25 to justify his point of health and long life, he continued that:

“Paul was thinking to himself: should I go or should I stay? He had come to that point of where he knew that until he was ready to depart this world, nothing could end his life! When he was ready, he said, ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course...’ (2 Timothy 4:7). You can live as long as you choose as a child of God because death has been abolished (2 Timothy 1:10). The Bible says the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, (1 Corinthians 15:26), but already death has been defeated.

If you’re already advanced in years, you can still adjust your thinking based on the message I’m sharing with you today. Believe this truth! Choose to live a fulfilled life for Jesus. Like Paul, choose to fulfill your purpose and destiny in Christ with joy.”³⁵

It is so evident of how Oyakilome twists the passages of Scripture in his monthly booklet for the furtherance of his own doctrine of long life. Oyakilome is known to be a strong proponent of the divine health doctrine as it is often seen on his television program. Besides him, we have the famous Benny Hinn, Gloria Copeland, Maryline Hickey, T.B. Joshua, and many others who promise certain laws of faith by which people can obtain health. The belief stems from the understanding that sickness is of Satan and that believers sicknesses have been placed on Christ so they no longer need to be sick in body.

³⁴ I Peter 2:24 (LITV)

³⁵ Oyakilome, Chris, Rhapsody of Realities, *You Can Live As Long As You Choose*, December 2008,26

The inconsistency of this doctrine appears very obvious in their aging, and many of them wear glasses for reading or seeing. They fail to live up to their own confessions but expect their large crowds to live supernatural lives. A good example of the proponents of divine health and healing can be seen in the life of the late Kenneth Haggin. He kept on denying his sickness as simply symptoms yet his life was characterized by serious sicknesses, which resulted into his death. They promise empty health and healing which is not taught in Scripture.

There is no passage of Scripture that promises necessary healing in this lifetime. While we do not doubt that God can out His grace give healing to sick believers, there are no guarantees for physical healing in Scripture for sick Christians. For example, Paul was ill (Galatians 4:13), even those that worked with him were ill (Phil. 2:27; I Tim. 5:23; II Tim. 4:20). Moreover all the believers of the early church died.

“If physical healing were promised this would not have occurred. If physical healing were conditional upon faith, then we must conclude that everyone lacked faith and that Paul misled Timothy by telling him to take wine for his stomach instead of to have more faith (1 Timothy 5:23).”³⁶

Satan can be behind the cause of sicknesses but we should not forget that God also uses sicknesses for His own purposes. Admitting that we live in a fallen world and we are waiting for that day when we will be glorified with Christ, we cannot escape the reality of sickness in the body of believers. With this in mind the teaching which Fred Price embraces so dearly that:

How can you glorify God in your body, when it doesn't function right?...What makes you think that the Holy Ghost wants to live inside of a body where He can't see out through the windows, and He can't hear out the ears.³⁷

This is a statement totally unbiblical and Price knows well that his own church is filled with thousands of people who are sickly and many of them including his staff members wear eye glasses. At least for those few days that I was in the Faith Dome, I saw people in wheelchairs and a funeral was being conducted for one of the members. Just like every faith teacher, Price knows that his claim of divine health is false because he is aging and so is his wife and many other faith teachers – Oral Roberts is another example.

The Bible tells us of our bodies that will be redeemed and in the coming age there will be no sickness, death, pain, suffering etc. Therefore as long as we live in this world believers will experience sickness not because they lack faith or are ignorant of the teaching of Scripture – healing is God's own doing not man's will. If God heals a believer, we praise God and if He does not, we still praise God. So be it in health or in sickness God is still glorified.

Please discard the nonsensical pathological doctrine of the faith teachers that teaches people false hope and makes them pursue after false healing promises. God is in charge of our lives and He alone has the power to heal us, sometime supernaturally or through

³⁶ *Healing*, A Valley Bible Church Position Paper, www.valleybible.net

³⁷ Fred Price, *Is God Glorified Through Sickness?* – tape #FP605

the use of medical interventions. I do not doubt that God can heal but I have no Scriptural evidence that God will heal at all times when we are sick. Many faith teachers who hold miracle crusade make such promises to people which has wrecked the faith of many ignorant church folks who think that healing is a norm or a package of our salvation.

FIVE: MATERIAL PROSPERITY

A very prominent tenet of the WoF movement is that God promises believers material wealth. Thus, poverty is of the devil and it is not God's will that any of His children should live in want. This doctrine has been borrowed from the growing materialism of the West especially USA and it is also very strong in the same country than anywhere else in the world. Many of these preachers have distorted theological interpretations of the Bible. They make the Bible to agree with them instead of them agreeing with the Bible. In fact, many of them are poor theologians by definition – in the sense that they always want to discover new revelations or meanings in the Scriptures. They use this distorted theology to preach themselves to wealth or riches. Let me take you through some of the statements made by these men and please find the time to check it with the Bible to validate these statements and comments.

- a) **“He [also] wants His children to eat the best, He wants them to wear the best clothing, He wants them to drive the best cars, and He wants them to have the best of everything.”³⁸**

Where does the Bible state anything on how God desires the best foods, clothing, cars etc for his children? Why did not Paul, Peter, James, Stephan, Timothy, Elijah, Jeremiah, or Jesus have all luxuries that God desires for his children? On the other hand, how do we relate such a doctrine with believers living in countries where they are constantly under persecution? If God desires the best of everything for the Christians why did the church in Jerusalem have to live off donations from other believers? I have been in Angola after the war, why do not the Christians there not have the best of

³⁸ Kenneth Hagen, Quoted by D.L. McConnell A different Gospel p.175

everything that this world offers, instead they live in mud houses, unemployed, struggle to have the basic commodities of life such as food? In Africa, Latin America and Asia, majority of the Christians are very poor, they do not even have bicycles for basic means of transportation – where are the material blessings of God? Besides, many God-called Christian organizations and churches are struggling to sustain themselves financially, where are the blessings desired for them.

b) “Do you want a hundredfold return on your money? Give and let God multiply it back to you. Invest heavily in God; the returns are staggering,... Every man who invests in the Gospel has a right to expect the staggering return of one hundredfold.”³⁹

There is no scriptural support on getting hundredfold of our money by giving to the work of God. Such calculations are not only erroneous but deceptive, heretical, and rationally illogical. The seed that Jesus spoke about in His parable was not a metaphor for money. Jesus spoke of hundred fold referring to people who hear God’s Word and act according to it that such will have staggering spiritual harvest in bearing fruit that is in accordance with God’s Word. These are the persons who do not concern themselves with the pleasures of the world but pursue after God with all their hearts regardless of their shortcomings in this world – with the knowledge that one of these days God will award them with eternal life and they will inherit an eternal kingdom.

c) “Poverty is from the devil and that God wants all Christians prosperous.”⁴⁰

I acknowledge that with poverty comes many inconveniences to life, but to say that it is from the devil, is an insult on the work of redemption being performed in the lives of many Christians. Poverty came into the world as one of the effects to man’s fall and living in this sinful world there will be some poor Christians (not destitute by definition though this may entail that too). What do we say about Paul who spent his last years in poverty? Where is the wealth that is proclaimed by these preachers? Were the apostles of old ignorant of the prosperity God had in store for them? This kind of doctrine will mean that poor Christians are still under the bondage of the devil, which by definition would make their Christianity questionable. What of the early Christians who had to be on the run for their lives from persecution and lived in deserts and caves, they had to barely survive on little and trust in the supernatural providence of the Almighty. We may as well conclude that the Macedonian church was under the grip of satan for being poor not to mention the church of Jerusalem.

d) “The very first thing on Jesus’ agenda was to get rid of poverty! Would you like to know why some people, including ministries, never get out of poverty? It’s not because they aren’t smart. It’s not because they don’t have windows of opportunity. It’s because they’re not anointed. If you’re not anointed, poverty will follow you all the days of your life. His first objective was to get rid of poverty.”⁴¹

³⁹ Kenneth Copeland, *Laws of Prosperity*, p. 67

⁴⁰ Benny Hinn, TBN, 11 June 1990

⁴¹ Jesse Duplantis, Nov. 1997 Voice of the Covenant magazine, p.5

Jesse where in the Bible is this? Is it true that Jesus' foremost agenda was the termination of poverty? Then why didn't he say in Matthew 4:17 "Come out of poverty, for the kingdom of God is at hand?" We may as well dismiss the validity of our salvation since it is but a secondary thought. A statement as this may imply that every rich person is already saved without confessing faith in Jesus Christ therefore, he mistakes his materialism for anointing.

Jesus' first objective being the getting rid of poverty is an insult to God's salvation plan for humanity. The problem of humanity was not and is not an economic one, man has a spiritual problem of sin. Therefore, the primary need of humanity is not wealth but salvation from sin and the bondage of satan. The angel that came to Joseph made it plain that the child's name was to be "Jesus, because he is the one who will save his people from their sins."⁴² The law and prophets came into place just for one reason – because of men's need for salvation from sin not economic liberty. All prophets and the law were pointing towards Jesus the deliverer from sin. If poverty was the foremost plan of Jesus than we first need economic analysts to come talk to the church folks and then preaching can follow later when all the economic challenges are sorted out.

Jesse is mixing up issues here. Poverty did not come as a result of satan, man willfully disobeyed God and his disobedience caused him to be driven out of the garden the Lord had created for him. Thus, when man suffers poverty – he is simply bearing the lot of his own disobedience to God, since he desired independence from the Creator. Moreover, Scripture is clear that Jesus' mission was to destroy the work of satan – spiritual work, to free those bound and blinded by satan, and to save those who were perishing. Therefore, his concern throughout the Gospels is teaching the truth concerning God and how man can know the true God and be saved from his sin.

His mission was not to teach people concerning the true God and how they could come out of poverty. Jesus answered Judas that *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you desire you may do them good. But you do not have Me always"* Mark 14:7. Does that statement sound like someone who came to eradicate poverty? Not only does He say there will be poor people but He also says, helping the poor with whatever need they may have is a personal choice and no one is obliged to do so. Throughout Scripture Jesus never conducted a poverty eradication seminar or campaign.

The problem with these preachers is obvious, they stretch the meaning of Scripture just to justify their doctrines. My challenge is that these preachers will come to the point of questioning their own doctrines without thinking that people are just out there to label them as heretics. These people are sincerely wrong but they do not realize it, they use this opportunity to preach themselves to wealth. Beside the challenge of using common sense for interpretation of Scriptures, we are faced with a theological crisis coupled with wrong hermeneutics. These preachers have engraved these doctrines in every fiber of their being that it is almost of such a degree that their doctrines have become their namesakes.

⁴² Matthew 1:21, International Standard Version (ISV)

SIX: MAN IS GOD

WoF teachers claim that the believer is a child of God so those born of God are definitely gods. They interpret this from a biological perspective that dogs give birth to dogs, cats give birth to cats – therefore God begets gods. In this sense, man is in charge of everything here on the earth and God needs his permission in order to operate. This doctrine developed out of a wrong interpretation of what the Bible says about rulers of Israel in Psalm 82:6. The Bible is not teaching that men are gods but as we will see, it is in reference to the judges or rulers of the people of Israel who acted as the advocates of God. Below are some of the quotes made by the proponents of the WoF:

- a) **“God’s reason for creating Adam was his desire to reproduce himself.’ I mean a reproduction of himself. And in the garden of Eden he did just that. He was not a little like God, he was not almost like God, he was not subordinate to God even...Adam was as much like God as you can get, just the same as Jesus. Adam in the Garden of Eden was God manifested in the flesh.”⁴³**

It is unheard of that Yahweh has ever reproduced Himself, it is a doctrine taught nowhere in Scripture. God’s creation of man was to create a creature with personhood (intelligence, self-awareness, emotions etc) like Him but with limitation. If God’s creation of man was a reproduction of Himself than man ought to be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and perfect in every sense (righteousness, love, holiness etc). The doctrine of man being the exact reproduction of God is pure heresy, Scripture tells us that we are even made a little lower than the angels in this present age (Ps. 8:5) and state until we will receive our glorification on the last day. Adam was not God manifested in the flesh, Scripture does not teach such nonsense, only Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and there will never be another. Wherever Copeland derives his texts, he has misinterpreted them to suit his own philosophy of divine human beings.

⁴³ Copeland, Kenneth, *Following the faith of Abraham* #01-3001 Audio side 1

- b) **“Did you know that from the beginning of time the whole purpose of God was to reproduce Himself?...Who are you? Come on, who are you? Come on, say it: ‘Sons of God!’ Come on, say it! And what does work inside us, brother, is that manifestation of the expression of all that God is and all that God has. And when we stand up here, brother, you’re not looking at Morris Cerullo; you’re looking at God. You’re looking at Jesus.”**⁴⁴

God’s purpose to produce Himself? Which Bible has Morris been reading before preaching? The fact that we are sons of God does not make us God’s reproductions, these are spiritual mysteries which are not yet revealed to us. Our sonship has not been made manifest yet nor do we even understand fully of how we are God’s sons – except from the little glimpse that Scripture reveals to us. We can actually see that this whole issue is a drive to self-deification and equaling oneself to Christ who is God. This is heresy at its best no other words for it! Morris makes a messianic claim that he is Jesus. This is BLASPHEMY and his teachings should be rejected by every serious Christian.

- c) **“God came from heaven, became a man, made man into little gods, went back to heaven as a man. He faces the Father as a man. I face devils as the son of God...Quit your nonsense! What else are you? If you say, I am, you’re saying I’m a part of Him, right? Is he God? Are you His offspring? Are you His children? You can’t be human! You can’t! You can’t! God didn’t give birth to flesh...You said, ‘Well, that’s heresy.’ No, that’s your crazy brain saying that.”**⁴⁵

There is not even one Scripture that tells us that Christ came to make little gods. Scripture tells us that He purchased His church with His own blood and we are constantly being transformed to conform to the standards of God. Christ is not facing the Father as an ordinary man but as the Second Person in the Trinity i.e. as God. If we are not human anymore according to Benny Hinn because we derive our being from God than Scripture is false and Benny Hinn is correct. The Bible addresses us as human beings and as earthly beings awaiting for the return of Christ so we may be glorified with Him. Benny is right, his teaching is pure heresy and he better come to terms with it and repent from it. He is preaching doctrines of self-deification and equaling himself to Jesus.

WHAT IS MEANT BY “YE ARE GODS”?

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.⁴⁶

The context of the verse tells us that God was addressing rulers not the whole nation of Israel as individuals. This is not surprising to me that it is the old strategy used by most of the WoF teachers when interpreting the rest of the Bible that they do not read the context of the Scriptures. Careful reading into Psalm 82:6 and John 10:34 reveal totally something different from what is claimed by the WoF teachers. This is just one aspect of why we need to question their teachings. Deifying man is not just an insult to God’s intelligence for creating human beings but is the vertex of blasphemy. Making humans into *little gods* is a direct insult of their very purpose and God’s reason for creating them. God created us as

⁴⁴ Cerullo, Morris, *The Endtime Manifestation of the Sons of God*, San Diego: Morris Cerullo World Evangelism, n.d., audiotape 1, sides 1 & 2.

⁴⁵ Benny Hinn, *Our Position in Christ #2—The Word Made Flesh* (Orlando: Orlando Christian Center, 1991), videotape #255.

⁴⁶ Psalm 82:6 KJV

humans not mengods. We are made in the image of God and in his likeness as humans not as gods.

I recently attended a church service where the pastor quoted Exodus 7:1 *“And the LORD said to Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh. And Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.”* The pastor interpreted this text as a general reference to believers in relation to political and social powers in the world and that Christians because they are small gods are to rule and everything in the earth should obey their voice or command. The pastor claimed that because we are small gods we could demand what we want.

Man is man, man is not a god. Man does not have power of his own except that, which is delegated to him by God. Believers are not gods but God dwells in them. We cannot create things with our words and we cannot determine our own destinies. We are mere flesh and blood with regeneration being the only advantage we have over those who are not regenerated. The words in Psalm 82:6 are referring to princes or judges as gods because of the power of judgment that was vested in them i.e. they judged the nation, brought criminals to book, punished the wrong doers, and they administered justice and mercy. For that reason they were acting on behalf of God not that they were gods in essence but in civic responsibility, it is a hyperbole or rhetoric device to emphasize the role of these judges and how great it was.

Just as Moses was not made a deity but rather that he acted in the capacity of God in regard to the situation of delivering Israel from the land of Egypt. For example, since God commissioned Moses he also gave him power to execute that mission. Therefore, everything that Moses commanded happened because had given him such power and both Pharaoh and his whole kingdom submitted to the command of Moses.

Let no one give you a false image and nature other than what the Bible teaches. Christ came for human beings not gods. Moreover, it is ridiculous that the same who prohibits idolatry should in turn make gods. We stand on the testimony of Scripture that we are made in the image of God but God is not made in our image – He is God and we are His creation. We cannot claim any power vested in us as believers except that which is given to us by the Spirit of God and that is the power to tell the world that Jesus is Lord and declare His will in boldness.

SEVEN: WEALTH TRANSFER

The wealth transfer doctrine which is also major part of the WoF, teaches that God has promised in the last days to transfer the wealth of the unrighteous to the Church. Thus, God will take the hard-earned riches of the unbelievers and give it to believers, so they will use it to do God's work in the earth. Scripture in no place presents such a doctrine and it was never done throughout the history of God's dealing with mankind. The only time the riches of people were seized was in situations of war – but that did not continue forever. This doctrine that sounds so enticing, is it biblical?

Two main Scriptures used to advocate this doctrine:

- 1. Isaiah 45:3 “And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.”**
- 2. Isaiah 61:6 “But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.”**

I believe that the duty of godly men is to preserve and fight for the integrity of the Scriptures – they are to safeguard it against heresy and private or personal interpretations. With the current trend of twisting of Scripture, one must question the godliness of these men. Reading the above Scriptures carefully in context will show or bring us to conclusion that God was not intending to promote the kind of wealth transfer theology that is being preached by many prosperity preachers. Generalizing these Scriptures as prophetic messages to the Church would be a falsification of God's very Word. Thus, placing words in God's mouth, which he did not intend to say. The reason for this kind of doctrine is the reading of Scriptures out of their context and in the end, we will definitely have wrong conclusions and call them *revelations*.

The first verse was a prophetic message directed to Cyrus a heathen king that did not even know God for that matter. But God out of his goodness decided to make this king victorious and wealthy. The second verse is a prophetic message to Israel that God was going to exalt it after all the affliction it has gone through. Comparing these verses in the light of the

interpretations passed on by the prosperity preachers – there is a serious error of interpretation at work here! None of these verses were written or spoken with the intention of double meaning for the future church wealth transfer.

Preaching or teaching such a message is a provocation of false hope in the people. Believing such a doctrine is not simply being irrational but being ignorant for not reading the Scriptures for ourselves. Adhering to and promoting such doctrine signifies how much we hate God with our minds that we would suppress reason just for us to propagate our superstitions. God has never made any promises that He will take the wealth of the ungodly and hand it over to the church in this life or in the life to come. I hope we are considering the teaching of the Bible of being covetous in Exodus 20: 19: ***“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”***

This doctrine of wealth transfer is a message of pure greed and covetousness. Would God strip the ungodly of their hard-earned works just to give them to believers who just happen to be lazing around? If that be so, then God is at the very forefront of promoting the very things He consider as vile – injustice and oppression. A God who will do such a thing is simply encouraging laziness in Christians, because they do not have to do anything but wait that God strips one rich unbeliever of his/her wealth and hand it over to them. This is contrary to the teaching of Scripture that believers are to work for their own up keeping and the book of Proverbs rebukes slothfulness (as one of the deadly sins). Never has God intended that the Gospel must be funded by such means – it is thievery and for God to do so would be divine-robbery and contradict His very nature. Relating all these base terms to the nature of God is absurd and a contradiction. The Bible says, God is good and just!

The wealth transfer branch of the WoF undermines the authority of Scripture and its advocates prefer to follow what is convenient to them rather than teaching the revealed will of God. What they are simply saying is that the Bible does not contain all information needed for Christian doctrine – so we can improvise by adding what we want and subtract what we do not want. As Bible teachers, pastors, theologians and apologist, we are faced with a crisis of “prosperity preachers” who are preaching heresies and lopsided theology that only appeals to human emotions.

Prosperity Gospel preachers argue to defend their doctrine not because of supporting Scriptures but because of many other supporting preachers and teachers from the same movement. It is a thing of legacy – *“Dad Haggin has been teaching it for over thirty years, so it must be true”*. Such an ideology when applied to theology will result in heresy. Just because something has been coming on for many years does not qualify it as a true doctrine – the Bible is the reference point for our doctrines. Selling of indulgences was practiced for many years but that did not make it true until Martin Luther exposed it as heretic. There is no Biblical evidence that God has promised to release a *“wave of transferring the wealth of the ungodly to the righteous.”* This kind of claim is to place God in a corner for what He has not spoken or promised.

EIGHT: A WEALTHY JESUS

“John Avanzini’s claim to fame is that he teaches that Jesus Christ was a very rich man, who lived in a mansion, wore designer clothes, and had a ministry that took in so much money that it had to have a financial manager (Judas Iscariot), which is why he carried the bag of money. Never mind that what John Avanzini teaches is a complete fabrication and is not found in the Bible, he is still considered to be one of the ‘anointed’ in Paul Crouch's thinking.”⁴⁷ Let us read what the Bible says concerning Jesus:

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him...” Isaiah 53:2-3

Was Isaiah mistaken of the prophecy concerning Christ? Or was there a transcription error in this passage? Or, is the teaching of a wealthy Jesus a deliberate catch used by John Avanzini and his associates? Let us turn to Scripture without assuming what it says – is the Jesus of Scripture representative of the Prosperity Gospel Jesus. If time was to be reversed, many of these preachers will be embarrassed to preach concerning Jesus because he did not have the splendor the world requires. Let’s have a brief look of Jesus in Scripture:

JESUS’ FAMILY BACKGROUND IN RELATION TO RICHES

His stepfather Joseph was a carpenter a low-grade trade in his days. Mary’s occupation is not mentioned of which we would conclude that she was a homemaker. Joseph was well known as a carpenter in the community not as a wealthy man. As a carpenter he had a very humble position in society and could only secure a very moderate competition in his village seeing that it was a common trade amongst many of the Jewish man and mostly the Greeks. The crowds were actually shocked to hear a carpenter’s son speaking with wisdom maybe as a custom not many of carpenters’ children were educated people, that is why they said, “Is not this Joseph's son?” His parents gave an offering of the poor for sacrifices in the temple (Luke 2: 22-24). I suppose his parents used a donkey to escape to Egypt instead of a chariot pulled by horses. Jesus was born in Nazareth a town or village despised by the Jew that nothing good could come out of it, for this town was inhabited by mostly poor agricultural farmers and known for its wickedness. Whether this goodness was as a result of the moral corruption that was prevalent in Nazareth or because it is not mentioned as the birthplace of the Christ – isn’t really stated clearly. However, we know that Nazarenes

⁴⁷ Hand, A.Gary, *On Doctrine* (internet article)

were despised even by Galileans who themselves were despised regarded themselves better than the Nazarenes.

Jesus' family was poor by definition not that they were destitute and homeless. They didn't have the luxuries of their days to live flamboyant lives most of the prosperity preachers are presenting today. Gifts of gold were presented to Jesus but it is nowhere stated that Jesus lived from that gold (that gold is just mentioned once and we do not hear anything about it). So we cannot draw conclusions upon such a sentence for the gold might have been traded by his parents for family upkeep. And for sure having gold for a gift does not define one as wealthy how many people are not carrying gold today and yet are poor.

JESUS' HISTORY ON EARTH

Jesus borrowed Peter's boat without payment. He sometimes slept in the boat to have a night rest. The Bible does not state that he had a steady home where he lived for all his life. Jesus traveled in a borrowed boat, rode on a borrowed donkey. Jesus didn't have a chariot of his own. Not even on one occasion was Jesus and his disciples invited to the palace of the Caesar to go dine with him (because he was insignificant). Jesus walked on foot from one village to another to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He usually based in the house of Peter's mother in law when he was in Capernaum, why could he not find himself a hotel (or inn). He taught on depending on God for our daily needs and that we should seek God's Kingdom and Righteousness above anything else. Jesus was despised in the community he came from, who would disregard a wealthy man?

It remains that I must ask, is the Jesus of John Avanzini and his associates the same Jesus the Bible is talking about, or is it another Jesus? Hear this statement, "Jesus had a nice house, a big house big enough to have company stay the night with Him at the house. Let me show *YOU* His house. Go over to John the first chapter and I'll show you His house. Now, child of God, that's a house big enough to have company stay the night in. There's His house."⁴⁸ I hope it is not the same Jesus who said to the scribe that wanted to follow him that, "...Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" Matt. 8:19-20.

"He was buried in another man's tomb, a rich man's. If he was rich or his family, they would have buried him in his own family tomb. But this again proves that He had no money for this. Neither did his family nor the apostles have the money to bury such a burial, it was borrowed, actually donated to be exact. After all, it would not be permanent. Jesus in his ministry had borrowed many things. A manger, He borrowed boats, He borrowed a colt; He borrowed a house for Passover and He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Christ came in complete humility as stated in II Corinthians 8:9 'Christ, that though He was rich, (owning everything) yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.'"⁴⁹

John Avanzini in trying to defend his doctrine of so called "Bible Economics" is taking advantage of ignorant people to ride to his own glory. The Bible gives a picture of a Jesus that was not even attractive enough to look at, not to talk about his own house or mansion. Jesus had ministry money, which was accounted for by Judas that was not

⁴⁸ John Avanzini, *Believers Voice of Victory* program, TBN Jan.20,1991

⁴⁹ Let Us Reason Ministries, *Was Jesus Rich?* (internet article)

Jesus' personal money. Jesus spoke over many times on money and possessions but not in the context it is presented by these "prosperity preachers." If the rich young man knew that Jesus was a wealthy man – he wouldn't have refused to let go of his wealth or properties. We should deduce that the rich man didn't know Jesus as a rich man that would provide for his needs or even give him more than what he had i.e. he was richer than all of Jesus' ministry money put together.

The Jesus portrayed in the Bible was but an average person in the society. His life was so simple that it was not worth envying. You may be wondering that what my conclusion on this matter is. I would suggest that you read the scriptures for yourself and see the Jesus of the Bible and not that of John Avanzini and his associates. I at times believed that Jesus must have been a wealthy man but after careful reading of the Bible, I came to a different conclusion that Jesus was a poor man (not destitute). The Jesus I saw in the Bible was but a simple man who lived an average life not seeking after worldly possessions in order to find identity. This same kind of attitude he also imparted to his disciples.

The Jesus in the Bible told the young rich man to give away his property to the poor not sell and bring the money to his ministry. Which is the opposite "prosperity preachers" are doing today. The Jesus portrayed by these preachers is a Jesus of their own in order to justify their luxurious lives. "As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?' But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts" (Matt. 11:7-8; Lk. 7:25). "Neither John or Jesus dressed as those who show God's blessings today with thousand dollar suits and shoes. Why does Jesus' cousin John wear such bad clothing while Jesus is walking around in expensive clothing (a seamless garment), didn't He share?"⁵⁰

I've heard preachers boast about the cost of their suits, shoes, watches, their cars and the type of neighborhoods they live. Does Jesus portray such a life to his disciples or the crowds he was teaching? This is an indication that he was not a rich man for he had no earthly riches to boast about nor did his disciples. Let us go to the next chapter to challenge the theology of the "prosperity gospel."

⁵⁰ Let Us Reason Ministries, *Was Jesus Rich?* (Internet article)

NINE: PROSPERITY SCRIPTURES IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

Seeing that there are many Scriptures employed by the WoF advocated to promote the Prosperity Gospel, I will take on few of them. We will take the time to interpret each passage in its proper context – after having gone through this, you the reader must draw your own conclusion of the other texts employed by these preachers. These Scriptures are not in a certain sequential order.

Genesis 13:2 “And Abram [was] very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold.”

Often this passage is used to say that Abraham who is the father of faith was rich so are we supposed to be. However, careful reading doesn't promise that because of Abraham all believers also ought to be materially rich. God had blessed him greatly with material wealth because of the promise he made to him (Genesis 12:2-3), this was perhaps also an indication of the spiritual blessings God had reserved in Christ (Hebrew 11:8-19). To use this passage as an example for believers' wealth is to deliberately read meanings into God's word and give the Christian false hopes of what God didn't promise them. The fact that Abraham and many of the patriarchs were rich is not a universal blanket of guarantee that every Christian ought to be materially wealthy. Galatians 4, makes it clear of what kind of blessing God was referring to when referring to Abraham as the father of faith of all who believe in Christ.

Job 36:11 “If they obey and serve [him], they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.”

This verse in isolation of the historical understanding of the Jewish view of the presence of God in one's life can create a chaotic state of interpretation – supporting the Prosperity Gospel. Elihu speaks of that God is almighty and he can do whatever he wants with man and if a man is to sin against God, his sin will not go unpunished by God. Then he turns around and say that if a man is to obey God and worship him, such a person's days will be in prosperity. Prosperity in this case can mean literal material blessing as that of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and David but it could also mean tranquility of having the assurance that our conscience is not reporting us before God i.e. we're without guilt and condemnation. Thus the lesson from here cannot be interpreted as material wealth alone for commonsense tells us that there have been and are many righteous people who are not materially prospering.

The Jewish people considered having great substance as a sign of having God's presence with you. But that is not the same case Jesus came to present when he came – he taught of being rich in spirit, living upright and pleasing God. Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians 1:3-23, after making his greeting remarks continue to explain the kind of wealth we as believers have in God through Christ Jesus. Throughout this chapter all his references to blessing, wealth, riches, glory, inheritance, dominion etc is in a spiritual sense. Above all, he places the gift of salvation as great wealth and then

he speaks of our position in Christ Jesus – unto whom all powers and dominions will submit at the end of the age. He speaks of how greatly God before the foundations of the world have foreordained the saints to be partakers of this glorious wealth of God's grace. Our prosperity as believers is in the fact that we have Christ who have set us free from the dominion of darkness, and have secured for us an eternal inheritance in the Father and when this world have come to an end we will inherit this great kingdom of our Father.

For the believer his prosperity is not necessarily in the amount of material wealth he has or don't have. Our prosperity as believers is in the saving grace of God and whose power has delivered us from sin and now we have peace with Him. Even when we don't have all that this world has to offer, we have peace in us that the world cannot give nor take away from us. Is that not prosperity enough for the saints? Above all that we're consigned to be the inheritors of God's eternal kingdom which surpasses all the glory and riches of this world.

Proverbs 10:22 “The blessing of the LORD itself makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.”

It takes a deliberate ignoring of the context to derive the kind of meaning the prosperity preachers find from this portion of Scripture. Solomon isn't teaching that God is going to make believers rich – as a king he was even quite aware that there were many Jews (children of Abraham's bloodline) living in poverty. Seeing that God had made him exceedingly rich more than any king who lived before him and any that were to come after him (II Chronicles 1:12) – with that background he exclaims that if God have blessed you – there's no sorrowing that comes with it. People of the world and those who desire to be rich have to employ all sorts of unethical schemes, but the man whom God out of his own will decides to bless materially, will have his blessings with tranquility, and not worry.

Deuteronomy 8:18 “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for [it is] He who gives you power to get wealth, so that He may confirm His covenant which He has sworn to your fathers, as it is today.”

Remember what God told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, when God blessed the Israelites with material wealth it was because of the covenant he had made with their ancestors of this Jewish nation. How a Christian can take passages that are strictly related to how God dealt with the Jews and apply them today – is a giant step of spiritual fraud and deliberate twisting of Scripture. This portion of Scripture is not intended to be applied to the believers because it is directly related to the Israelites to remind them of God's covenant with them and that they should not forget Him and think that they've become wealthy and powerful out of their own efforts. Moses is calling them to see their success as God's faithfulness to His covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (their forefathers).

Genesis 1:26 “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creepers creeping on the earth.”

It is important to ask the following questions in order for us to have an accurate interpretation to this passage. When was this kind of dominion to be with man? What was the condition of man then? What is the condition of man today?

The kind of dominion spoken of was to be in a perfect world – in the absence of sin. Surely when God created man, he was sinless and he was living life according to this passage. But it is important to realize that that privilege was removed from him the day he disobeyed God’s command and ate of the forbidden tree in the middle of the garden. It is generally said by the advocates of the Prosperity Gospel that Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law and to restore the dominion Adam lost in the Garden of Eden. Now nothing could be so far from the truth, because Jesus’ coming was to restore man’s lost relationship with God. If that were the case, we are supposed to live in perfect harmony with the wild beasts and no man should lack; sin, evil, pain and suffering would be banished. And throughout the Gospels we see that Christ’s mission on earth was spiritual. Man needed spiritual healing and reconciliation with God – not an economic revolution.

This passage was the initial purpose and plan of God for creating man – but he lost it when he sinned and got kicked out of the Garden of Eden. The perfect harmony that existed between man and nature got destroyed, his economic status became laborious, and his spiritual position is that of separation from God (Romans 3:23). He virtually lost it all but God out of His own mercifulness reached out by sending His Son into the world to bring us back into His presence (John 3:16) not to the garden of Eden.

John 10:10 “The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

This passage in seclusion of the antecedent verses can be interpreted to mean anything we want it to mean from salvation to wealth. The correct meaning of it can only be captured by reading what Jesus had previously mentioned and what he continues to say from verse eleven downwards. If we truly love the Lord with our minds, we will take sufficient time to study Scripture in its full context so we may be able to arrive to meaningful and accurate interpretations.

Verses 1-9: Jesus talks about sheep hearing his voice and that he’s the Door and True Shepherd. He goes on that all who came before him (teachers of the law especially the Pharisees and Sadducees), were all thieves, they cared little about the welfare of the sheep especially their spiritual condition and relationship with God. They didn’t tell them the truth that they were lost, therefore those who place their trust in Christ Jesus shall be saved. Then in verse 10, He says that those thieves only came to steal, kill and destroy, but as for him, he came to save them from their sins – delivering them from eternal death so they may have eternal life (life in abundance). From verses 11-18, He talks about what he would do in order for these sheep to have life in abundance – He will lay down his own life to rescue them from eternal death. He tells them that through his death on the cross man will have eternal life and peace with God through the forgiveness of their sins.

This passage in no way teaches anything to do with material gain or prosperity as advocated by the WOF Movement preachers. Scripture speaks in plain human language

and doesn't present an obscured message to its readers – wealth is wealth and salvation is salvation.

II Peter 1:3 “according as His divine power has given to us all things that [pertain] to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue,”

Careful study of this verse both its antecedent and subsequent verses will surely bring us to conclude that Peter wasn't referring to riches or wealth. Verse 3 is actually incomplete because it is a continuation of verse 2 that reads “*Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,*” and it is concluded by the fourth verse that “*through which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*”

To twist this verse to mean wealth in the present world is a deliberate failure to understand the grammar of Apostle Peter's letter. Seeing also that many of these saints lived in poverty, things that pertain to life could have been the basic needs of food and clothing – and with that they were quite content, affirming Apostle Paul's exhortation (I Timothy 6:8 “*So if we have food and shelter, let us be content with that.*”).

Besides that, Peter writes a letter of exhortation to those Jews who have placed their faith in Christ, simply repeating to them the words of the Lord Jesus when he was on earth that: John 17:3 “*And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*” Seeing that the life of the Christian ought to be blameless, Peter says that not only has he given or met our necessary needs to survive this physical body but we are also commanded to live righteously representing the Lord Jesus Christ in our day to day living (I Thessalonians 2:12; 4:7; II Thessalonians 2:14; II Timothy 1:9; I Peter 2:9; 3:9). Thus we as Christians are to live godly lives, therefore, he continues to say that if any man suffers let it not be because of evil but because of righteousness and his faith in Jesus Christ. Since the Christian is called to live uprightly he continues that God has given the believer the means of living to that standard and I believe the Holy Spirit is working in the believer giving him strength to live a life that is pleasing to God.

III John 1:2 “Beloved, in regard to all things I pray that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.”

This verse or passage of scripture needs to be understood in its context in order to interpret it accurately. First of all, it's nothing more than a prayer that John is making for Gaius. Secondly, the remaining verses explain why John opened with such a statement. Gaius was known to be a man walking in truth and the saints had a great testimony of his life. Assuming that he was a very close man to John, John writes to say that the same way he's prospering in his soul through being truthful and loving the brethren – which in John's definition signified spiritual maturity – he wishes him well also to prosper in other affairs of life and even his health. John in no way is teaching the Prosperity Gospel message here, he's simply wishing that it would go well with Gaius, that his basic needs of life would be met so he continues unhindered in his service towards the brethren and strangers in general.

If John was merely writing appealing to material prosperity than he was contradicting himself – seeing that many of the Apostles didn't have such luxurious lives – if not all of them! The sentence is no different from when one writes to a friend and wish him well be it for his birthday or just a letter for casual chatting – we all wish our friends well. So the meaning of this passage must not be obscured with the interpretations of the WoF movement to support their heresies of material prosperity or wealth and health teachings that don't find their roots in God's Word.

II Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.”

It is not surprising to me that these preachers' theology is quite babyish. The above passage is often used as proof that believers ought to be rich because Christ became poor for them to become rich. Yes, that's the meaning of this passage if it were read in isolation of the other texts surrounding it. But you'll actually get the shock of your life dear prosperity adherent if you read this chapter from verse one through twenty four. Paul open's by talking about the Macedonian church that though they were poverty stricken did not withhold to give out of their neediness to support the saints in Jerusalem. Thus these saints emptied themselves regardless of their own needs to share what they had with fellow believers in Christ i.e. they shared the burden of others by giving. With that background Paul makes an appeal to the then wealthy or economically prospering church of Corinth that look at your brethren in Macedonia, though they are poor they are sharing the burdens of the saints in Jerusalem. Since you Corinthians are greatly blessed materially, you could follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, he didn't consider his glory when he thought of saving you i.e. he gave up his former glory so you may become partakers of God's glory through him. From that illustration he says, you Corinthians should see Christ as your example in this matter of helping fellow saints in Jerusalem, step out of your comfort zones and share the burden of your brethren by giving to them out of your wealth – so they also may become rich (having food and clothing).

It will only take a deceiver to ignore the context of this passage because it will help him in advocating his own doctrine. The surrounding passages of this chapter clearly teaches that Paul mentioned the above verse in a totally different context than what is taught by the Prosperity Gospel preachers and teachers.

There also many other passages employed by these heresy preachers – and seeing the context of the above passages in comparison to what they have been interpreted by these false teachers, what credibility is there in the others that they willingly continue to twist just to meet their own desires. This is a clear call why believers need to be taught the Word of God in a proper sense, so they'll know the truth and no man will cause them to waver from its truth. These preachers disregard the context of the Bible and choose to apply their own hermeneutics that will advance their own ends – that is not to love the Lord with our minds.

Bible students must learn to interpret Scripture in their historical, and cultural context. This will make us understand better that though all of Scripture is written to us, not all of its passage are for us to apply. Thus even things that deal with individuals and

nations are necessary for our information of knowing how God dealt with His people but it doesn't call or demand that we should apply or personalize those passages.

TEN: SCRIPTURE VERSUS PROSPERITY GOSPEL

I stand to defend one of the tenets which the reformers fought for against the doctrine of Roman Catholicism – Sola Scriptura. Thus, Scripture Alone is the measuring rod for all truth and if any doctrine fails to pass the test of Scripture – it is another Gospel. If any doctrine fail to pass the test of Scripture and be continually taught after stern warnings and rebuke from reliable Bible scholars – such a doctrine is a heresy and the Bible says curse be such a person who'll preach to us another Gospel than what was delivered to us by Christ and the Apostles (Galatians 1:8).

We live in the days of absolute heresy and it takes godly men and women to stand against this kind of Gospel that is appealing to human senses but not approved by God. It takes courage to stand against what appears to be popular and a politically accepted Gospel. There is only one Gospel – that of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he lived, died and rose from the dead i.e. the power of the cross through which came the redemption from sin. Apostle Paul lived most of his life defending the Gospel against false teachers who often came in the form of sheep but were actually wolves in disguise he writes to a young pastor called Timothy the following exhortation and warning in I Timothy 4:1-2,6,11,16:

“But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience...Having suggested these things to the brothers, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and by the good doctrine which you have followed...Command and teach these things...Hold on to yourself and to the doctrine; continue in them, for doing this you shall both save yourself and those who hear you.”

The Prosperity Gospel undermines the authentic teaching of the Bible and teaches doctrines of men and that of demons, coated with lies in hypocrisy. Paul goes on to encourage Timothy that you must hold on the true teaching of the Word just as you have received it from me i.e. present the same message I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ and handed to you unadulterated. In this passage, Paul mentions in the tenth verse that defending the Gospel against all heresy and adhering to the truth of God's Word is their purpose and reason for working so hard. How much more should not that be our desire as Bible teachers, apologists, and theologians today against the heresy of the Prosperity Gospel?

Throughout Scripture, we see that God's servants were not initially called to luxurious lifestyles and having all the pleasures of this world. Yes there were a selected few and some were rich and wealthy by virtue of their family situations e.g. kings. But majority of God's servants lived poor lives on earth. Our primary example is Jesus, then the apostles and many saints in the New Testament e.g. the church of Jerusalem and the Macedonian church.

Jesus at the beginning of his ministry made a statement concerning the poor, Matthew 11:5 *“the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel proclaimed to them.”* Moreover, James goes on to affirm these words of our Lord in James 2:5 saying, *“Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?”* The poor

should hear the gospel of hope that there is a coming kingdom where there'll be no hunger, no pain, no poverty and no suffering. It just demonstrates to us that Jesus' first intention was for the spiritual condition of man not the elevation of his economic status.

To show to us that Jesus had no concern of anyone's material wealth he told the rich man in Mark 10:21 to sell all his property and give it to the poor. How could Jesus tell anyone to do that if he came to proclaim a Gospel of wealth? He constantly taught of accumulating treasures in heaven and never did he teach on gathering wealth on earth. Throughout the ministry of the Apostles, they cared for the poor in the church which was the reason for appointing deacons at a later state to handle such matters. During his ministry Paul worked as an administrator for the distribution of food and other aid to poor churches i.e. he administered all the donations that were given to the saints especially of the church in Jerusalem. How come there were so many poor saints if Paul and all the other apostles knew of the existence of the principles of prosperity. Many young men are going into ministry today with the hope that they will live wealthy and quite luxurious lives. Once they are in, they find out that the grass is not as green as they really thought. I know of some pastors who are now only looking for members who have good jobs, so they may have good tithing in their churches. They go to different seminars and conferences to interact with people they consider to be financially well off – just to lure them into their churches often with a little casual prophecy over them just to give them an overview of how anointed they are. Pastors especially in the Charismatic movement are now increasingly being reported for financial delinquencies, financial abuse of members, and abnormal financial *donationism* for every small issue that arises in the church even over matters that can be settled from already existing funds.

PAUL'S LIFE

After having given his sarcastic speech to those Corinthians who boasted in their material wealth, Paul continues to write concerning himself and many others who labored in the service of the Lord during his days. He mentions something which none of the modern wealth preachers would want: I Corinthians 4:9 *“For I think that God has set forth us last, the apostles, as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men.”* Paul begins to describe their situation as apostles, that he thought they were initially appointed for death – why? He continues to mention his reason for thinking so, in I Co 4:10-13 that:

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are honorable, but we are despised. Even until this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

Where is the wealth, fame, and honorability that ought to come to believers as taught by the Prosperity Gospel advocates? What had happened to the faith of Apostle Paul and others? Paul went through moments of hunger, thirst, bare bodied, oppressed by social circumstances and homeless, reviled and persecuted, treated as if they were of no worth in the eyes of the world, often in prison, shipwrecks etc. As Jesse would say, Paul was not anointed, Creflo Dollar would say, his confession was negative, Kenneth

Copeland would say, he lacked in giving etc. If anyone was anointed Paul was more anointed than any present day preacher or teacher yet, his life wasn't the kind that is proclaimed by the WOF movement today.

In II Corinthians 11:23-33, Paul gives an account of his trials and sufferings while faithfully working for God, he mentions many near death experiences because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He'd lost everything even risking his own health for the sake of the kingdom. Where was the wealth that God promised the saints in Paul's life? Where were the big houses, chariots, servants, camels, gold and silver, boats when Paul and many other saints suffered all these things? In verse 22, he starts off with his Jewish ancestry, seed of Abraham. If Abraham is the person to whom the Prosperity Gospel advocates point as the reason for being wealthy – Paul ought to be wealthier than any present day prosperity preacher is, not to mention Jesus from the royal lineage. First Paul is of the biological seed of Abraham, from the lineage of one of Jacobs sons (the tribe of Benjamin) – he had all the rights to be wealthy then, seeing his ancestors received the direct command of God's blessing and they were blessed with material wealth. This alone should be able to serve as sufficient evidence to abandon the prosperity heresy being propagated in the Word of Faith Movement.

JESUS' OWN TESTIMONY

Matthew 8:19-20 “And a certain scribe came and said to him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.”

The scribe must have heard Jesus preach with great wisdom, enchanted by his grace, and totally captured by his great miracles. Having witnessed all these performances of Jesus, he must have said in himself that if the man can do such great miracles, draw such big crowds, speak with so much authority – surely, he cannot have any material need and if I follow him all my needs and worries will disappear just as the sickness disappeared from the sick, demons left those they tormented and deafness left the deaf etc. Whatever were the thoughts going through the mind of the scribe – Jesus responds not in a way any of the Prosperity Gospel preachers would expect. He responded by saying that

“Do you know the kind of commitment you're desiring to make, I've no earthly comfort to give you, seeing that myself have none. I've to depend on the hospitality of others to find myself a pillow to lay my head upon, in fact, I'm poorer than a fox for I don't even have a stone on my name. Following me is not a life of luxury, don't be deceived by the miracles, large following and my teachings, there's much more behind all these which the outsiders don't know. The men (Peter, Andrew, John, Matthew, Thomas etc) that you see following me have given up their earthly comforts and together we live depending solely on God's provision and we live in contentment as long as we have food and raiment and depending where we are each day – there we'll find where to lay our heads to rest.” Paraphrase

If anyone tries to present to us a Gospel of a Jesus that wants us rich with all the pleasures this world have to offer, that's another Jesus. Friends, being poor is not something to be ashamed of if that poverty is not as a result of laziness but if it is as a result of God's kingdom. The apostles in fact boasted of their poverty which was because of the Gospel, in their poverty and suffering they saw many being saved, they saw lives changes from death to life, darkness to light, sinners to saints (I Corinthians

4:9-11). Having seen the great harvest of souls, they died to all that this world could offer them so that the lost may hear the Gospel. Notice that of these apostles were men none without a trade – Paul was highly literate others were fishermen i.e. they would have made proper living if they so chose to but for the sake of God's calls the comforts of this world were not a priority.

Jesus in no place promise anyone wealth of the kind claimed or propagated by the prosperity advocates. Read the Scripture and see the true Jesus. Jesus said to the Pharisees that their distorted view concerning the resurrection was due to lack of the knowledge of Scripture (Matthew 22:29) – today this kind of ignorance of the Scripture is being displayed by these heresy promoters. I cannot think of two people in the New Testament who have caught the meaning of following Christ than Peter and Paul. Paul writes to Timothy saying,

“But they (the deceivers mentioned in the earlier verses) shall proceed no further (their acts will be exposed by true Bible believing Christians as God grants them the wisdom to defend the truth against heresy). For their foolishness shall be plain to all (truth cannot be suppressed for too long in the end it will always prevail), as theirs also became. But you have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. What persecutions I endured! But the Lord delivered me out of all. Yea, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (this is the lot of being godly in Christ, that you'll not find favor in the eyes of the world). But continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from a babe you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (II Timothy 3:9-15, brackets mine)

Peter continues to affirm that if any man follow Christ and doing good (preaching the Good News and living for God), he will surely suffer because they are doing what is unnatural to the world. Only men who preach a Gospel according to man will have peace with the world but as for those who preach, what Jesus taught will suffer. Peter says such godly suffering is actually a grace from God (I Peter 2:20), that we are blessed (I Peter 3:14), God can will that we suffer for His sake (I Peter 3:17), and there's suffering according to the will of God (I Peter 4:19).

The Bible nowhere teaches wealth in this world for the saints, neither does it teach a life of harmony for the saints in this life. Throughout Scripture the life of the true Christian is characterized by trouble and suffering in this world. If God has blessed you with material wealth – you are a rarity i.e. only a small number of saints have such lives e.g. the church of Corinth and they used their abundance to assist suffering saints not for personal comfort.

All of church history is filled with the persecution, death and suffering of the saints in this world. If we were of this world, Christ would with his coming have abolished all suffering and made this a perfect habitation. This world is given to decay and death, as saints we are looking for a city that is coming, whose builder is God. In that city there'll be no more death no more pain no more crying etc. Jesus speaks to those who are rich and are enjoying the pleasures of this world as if there is no other life after death, that they have already received their reward in this earth (Luke 6:24). This makes us understand why he said that it will be difficult for the rich people to enter into

the kingdom of God, because they think that they don't need God, seeing they have everything they need in this life.

Jesus teaches that we should gather treasure in heaven where no moth or rust shall enter to destroy it. This is riches to be acquired through living righteously, dying to the pleasures of this world and seek God's kingdom and His righteousness. If the teaching Scripture is not sufficient to convince the adherent of the prosperity gospel, than nothing else will convince them that they are in error and are following doctrines of man and of demons rather than the revealed Word of God. No man can adhere to the Prosperity Gospel without doing harm to the clear teaching of the Bible. He has to read his own meaning into the Bible, twist or ignore opposing Scriptures, find alternative meaning to words such as glory, prosper, blessing, riches etc to only fit his context. No person adhering to the Prosperity Gospel can become a serious Bible scholar – that will teach the truth of the uncomfortable life Christians are appointed to in this life. Every Prosperity Gospel advocate must take a deliberate stand against commonsense and a gigantic leap of intellectual fraud in order to accomplish his mission.

The teachings of our Master Jesus were not the kind modern men would like to hear because he spoke of persecutions, death, self-denial, hating one's own life, hating one's relatives, picking up one's cross, laying one's hand to the plough without looking back, being reviled by people for his sake, hated by the world etc. Does that sound like a call to material prosperity or wealth and health as promised by the WOF Movement? Unless we deliberately misquote Jesus' words or we are following another Jesus can we end up with the propagation of the Prosperity Gospel. Paul writes to Timothy warning him of the kinds of people that will arise to pollute the house of God, whose behaviors are completely worldly, though they claim to be godly they fail to live up to godly standards. He warns Timothy by saying beware and be on alert and (2 Tim. 3:1-6)

“Know this also, that in the last days grievous times will be on us (true preachers of the Gospel and the elect in general). For men will be self-lovers (self-centered arrogant), money-lovers (using the Gospel as a form of self-enrichment and encourage its worship), boasters, proud, blasphemers (equaling themselves to God and despising His deity), disobedient to parents, unthankful (ever wanting more by fretting over the wealth of the ungodly), unholy, without natural affection, unyielding, false accusers, without self-control, savage, despisers of good, traitors, reckless, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (seeking the materials of these world and make it appear as if they are righteous by the size of their possessions), having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it; even turn away from these.” Brackets are mine.

Scripture teaches that we should not associate with men of such caliber – it may sound harsh but that's what we are to do with all those who adulterate the truth of Scripture with doctrines of men and demons (Rom. 16: 17; I Cor. 5:11; II Thess. 3:6; I Tim 6:5; II John 1:10). Anyone who doesn't adhere to the doctrine of Christ is accursed, for only what Christ taught is the foundation upon which we as Christians build our faith.

CONCLUSION

The modern day church has lost its zest to resist false teachers and many people are spending their money to support the ministries of such heresy promoters. The early church would ban such men from coming amongst them but the modern church welcomes and rubs shoulders with them. The WoF movement is destroying the faith and testimony of Christianity with its increasing reports of scandals.

Many of those advocating these doctrines are often been accused of financial delinquencies, marital unfaithfulness, divorces, false prophecies, manipulative techniques to get money out of people, improper public conducts etc. With its media popularity many people who don't know the teachings of true Christianity think that the WoF teachings are true Christian teachings.

The truth be told, the WoF movement is a mixture of heresy and truth. It's a system that is open and receives almost all kinds of doctrines without questioning. It is a movement in which people become the masters of their own theology, separated from the general revelation of Scripture. This movement goes on falsifying the tenets of the Christian faith and is seeking to establish a politically correct Christianity but opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

APPENDIX I

BIBLICAL FAITH

There is no other explanation but to say that the failure of proper biblical studies have led to alternative interpretation of Scripture in the WOF Movement. If these men were disciplined and dedicated scholars of the truths of Scripture, their interpretation on the subject of faith would have taken a different turn – definitely towards truth rather than the current route of

error. The current trend of the teaching of faith is nothing but a hoax of immature theologians or amateurs taking on the interpretation of Scripture while rejecting the rules of interpretation. People who take the theories of human philosophies to be more important than the reality taught in Scripture.

What is faith? Is it the confessing of something until we see it happen? The WOF Movement teaches faith that springs from the will of man through the constant repetition of words – until that specific thing happens. For example, sick persons are given a bunch of Scriptures to be repeating daily often on what they consider to be numbers of perfection e.g. 3 times or seven times, or multiplications of sevens. Day and night they should ponder upon these scriptures, have them on audio etc with the hope that faith will be ignited in them for their healing to manifest. But is this practice and teaching of faith biblical, how is it different from occult practices?

Word of faith teachers teach of faith that comes from the will of man rather than as a gift from God to man. How can man out of his own will unaided by God have any faith in God? Throughout the letters of the Apostles – the teaching of faith is not in agreement with the modern doctrine of faith. The WOF movement sees faith seen as an illogical leap, or a mental assent which cannot be proven logically but true, or a hope in probabilities. Majority of the WOF Movement adherents see faith as a claiming of benefits e.g. healing, financial prosperity, long life etc – it is based on faulty interpretation of Scripture and the claims are often out of context.

The subject of faith need to be set straight – in order to help Christians from following religious chimeras and think all the time that they have the real thing. The Apostles and the Reformers taught on faith but what was the context of their teaching on faith, let us take some Scriptures concerning faith and deal with them briefly.

Romans 1:17 “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” What kind of faith is Paul referring to here? Some have taken it as ground for God to provide for their needs of healing, material prosperity etc. Is Paul saying that the righteous will have their needs met by faith or is he referring to something else? This passage of Scripture is referring to saving faith – not providence. Paul’s words will be best understood if one reads the pretext and the verses following what he said in verse 17. Other Scriptures go in support that Paul’s statement refers to saving grace e.g. John 3:36; Acts 3:21; Galatians 3:11; Philippians 3: 9; Hebrews 10:38. I could rephrase Paul saying: “For in the Gospel of Christ, God’s righteousness is revealed, which is obtainable by faith and not by works of man or by keeping the law. Those who are declared righteous by God are not righteous by any works of the flesh otherwise they will have reason to boast but by faith which is a gift of God unto them, and they will remain righteous not by their efforts but by God’s gift of saving faith.”

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This is very famous passage in the WOF Movement when teaching on their subject of faith – misplaced faith. It is often interpreted to mean that one must desire something and keep on hoping that that desire will surely materialize. Thus, pray for healing, a house, a car, a business and hope that that thing will be granted with the involvement of constant confession and “reminding God.” But is that the context of this passage – though it sounds very interesting?

Like the previous passage of Romans 1:17, the writer of Hebrews 11:1, continues to illustrate how this faith through which we are saved serves as proof of all the promises God made for the saints in His Son Jesus Christ. It is this saving faith that made the patriarchs to continue looking forward to the city whose builder is God Himself. It is the kind of faith that causes the believer to expectantly wait for the day of his full redemption, both the saints of old and the Reformers always saw faith from such a perspective rather than the modern WOF doctrine. Brian Schwertley wrote that, “When the Bible says that ‘faith is a conviction of things not seen’ (Heb. 11:1, ASV.) it is describing the fact that Christians believe in what the Bible teaches even though they have not observed the historical events, miracles, etc., which the Scriptures describe. The Christian believes in things not seen based on God’s testimony.” This kind of faith is not of the will of man but God’s gift to man and man is enabled to believe because God has revealed in His Scriptures to serve as testimony for our faith.

The Word of Faith Movement propagates a spurious kind of faith – which is based upon false hopes i.e. on things not promised to the believer by God’s Word. When we trust God for things, substance, or provision we are encouraged to ask according to the will of God – not demanding and commanding God as if He were our servant. God is under no obligation to give wealth, health, or food to anyone except by His own mercy and kindness. The Word of Faith teaching of faith is focused on a wrong object – Man! People are taught to have faith in their faith, nurture their faith through listening to tapes and reading books and making confessions – in order to receive what they asked for. Since the teaching of saving faith is already twisted what more can we expect of the teaching of trusting upon God for provision?

The Bible encourages us to make our request known to God through prayer (Phil. 4:6; Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22; I Pet. 5:7) not through confession and repeating of Scriptures and listening to tapes and reading books. This kind of confidence is formed in the true believer who acknowledges that since God has given him saving faith and rescued him from the claws of eternal death, God will surely be kind and merciful to provide his needs according to His will. The true believer always asks for God’s will do be done in each request he makes, he doesn’t demand or command because he knows that God is above all and He knows what is best for His children and that He provides.

APPENDIX II

DOES GOD HAVE FAITH?

There are those who believe that God exercised His faith in the creation of the world based on Mark 11:22; Heb. 11:3. To them are the following questions:

- 1) Do you believe that God is almighty?
- 2) Do you believe that God is perfect?
- 3) Do you believe that God is self-sufficient?
- 4) Do you believe that there is no Being greater than God?

If the answer to any of the above questions be yes, than the doctrine of God having exercised faith to create the universe is heresy. In order to exercise faith, you need to be:

- 1) Limited in might i.e. you're not almighty.
- 2) Imperfect in nature i.e. for you to rely on a perfect being.
- 3) Inadequate in ability i.e. because of lack of self-sufficiency you should rely on a self-sufficient being to bring about a certain effect.
- 4) Less in ability, nature etc i.e. there need to be a greater being upon whom you can rely for certain abilities.

Since in God there can be no lack of any kind or limitation, it is impossible to ascribe to Him as having faith. He that results people to have faith in Him cannot have faith, for faith is a quality of dependent beings. In the creation, when God spoke things into being (Genese 1), He was not exercising faith, but His omnipotence and limitless creative ability. There is none outside God greater than Him for that would make God to cease being God, therefore His ability to create should not come out of any faith of any kind but a display of His almighty power.

Mark 11:22 says: "Have faith in God" a strong Hebraic expression or metaphor which could literally be translated as *have the faith of God*, meaning have strong faith, or the strongest faith, for the Jews this was an expression of highest kind of faith we can ever exercise is that which comes from God. With this kind of strong believe believers are encouraged to see that God can cause things that seem impossible become possible. For example, to see trees wither or other miracles can only be as a result of total reliance on God's ability. However, even when we exercise the highest kind of trust in God is no guarantee that our prayers will be answered, the answering of the prayers and the limitations thereof the God's will, not the degree of our faith.

Hebrews 11:3 "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*" This passage does not indicate that God created the worlds by faith, but that we as believer, do believe that God created the worlds out of nothing i.e. that He is the first cause of all existing matter and that it was not created from some pre-existent material. It is a motivation of Christian doctrine that God caused all existing matter out of nothing formerly existing. Heb. 11:3, has nothing to do with God having faith, it is rather in reference with the believers' trust in the existence of the world as declared in the Word of God i.e. that God created the worlds (earth, moon, sun, stars, and all other planets and bodies in the universe) out of nothing.

APPENDIX III

SYNTHETIC SEEDS

(IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL)

INTRODUCTION

I never imagined that I'll one day spend so much time protecting the Gospel truth against people whom many of us would consider Christians. It is a sad sight however, for the sake of preserving the faith of our children, friends, and fellow believers, error must be pointed out even if it is found amongst those proclaiming to be Christians.

However, my criticism in this paper is not a hearsay, I came out of a church that is 100% a prosperity preaching and I've been involved in senior leadership.

The subject of the Prosperity Gospel (PG) can never be exhausted in one sermon however, whatever truth we can lay hold to warn the people of God, even one hour of doing so is worth it. We need to look at the effects of this heresy if we are going to draw fair conclusions about its unbiblical teachings. The sure way in which we can determine whether a movement is of God is to see if its teachings are representative or in line with the teaching of Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ having foreseen the terrible times in which we will live said that His disciples should:

“Beware of the false teachers – men who come to you in sheep's fleeces, but beneath that disguise they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will easily recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from brambles? Just so every good tree produces good fruit, but a poisonous tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a poisonous tree good fruit.”⁵¹

The PG besides many other heresies is one of the fast growing (numerically speaking) in propagating heretic teachings that are not found in the Word of God. The powerful influence of the media is quite clear, as many of its proponents now use personal Television networks and publishing houses to propagate their man-made doctrines. The seed they sow through their preaching is not the Word of God but their own fabrications, which appear to model after the teaching of Scripture but totally opposed to the true Gospel.

Many people are tempted to keep quiet about this doctrine's dangerous teachings because of its popular teachers and perhaps the influence they wield worldwide. Others are quiet simply because of the dominant spirit of apathy in the world where people no longer tend to criticize but permit all sorts of views to go unquestioned. Both positions are of serious compromise to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially when we know the truth but decide to keep quiet or simply agree to accept certain views just for the sake of maintaining “peace.”

As we proceed we will take time together pointing out the errors of this doctrine and how it is influencing and changing the face of Christianity worldwide. The Prosperity Gospel is sowing of heretic seeds which are producing tares rather than wheat, drawing the children of hell into the congregations of the people of God and bringing the world into the church of Christ. It is making the sinners twice sons of hell, driving the believer to the materialism that characterizes the world today, and abuses the teaching of Scripture to advance false doctrines. With the growing of the Word of Faith Movement we see the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy in his writing to Timothy that:

“...in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience.”⁵²

It is a movement that is gathering people who many of them are haters of sound Biblical doctrines and love to hear what their hearts desire. Since these people at heart may not be truly converted “the time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine,

⁵¹ Matthew 7:15-18, Weymouth's New Testament (WNT)

⁵² I Timothy 4:1-2, Modern King James Version (MKJV)

but they will heap up teachers to themselves according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths.⁵³

THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Unless the falsity of the PG is proven from Scripture many people will still continue to run after this heresy. The PG is propagating a message that is opposed to the whole teaching of God's Word. Regardless of the false biblical claims it makes, it goes about taking advantage of the poor in Africa, Asia and Latin Americas. Many are told that God want them wealthy and healthy if they can only exercise sufficient faith which is often through the giving of money and positive confessions. Instead of people learning to be sacrificial givers to God's work, they are told to bargain through their giving to God and are made promises of receiving staggering blessings (riches and health). There are both philosophical (logical) and theological (biblical doctrinal) reasons of why the PG is false:

It claims that giving results in returns of 30s, 60s and 100s: this follows from the misreading of Mark 4:8. However, commonsense will tell us that this kind of thinking is erroneous. Even non-Christians give with good intentions for humanitarian causes but they don't receive back what they gave in 100s. Giving is often out of personal gratitude to God or having identified a need, not because we want to have something in return, such giving can never be blessed by God. Why don't these preachers give away all their luxuries so they will receive staggering harvests? The Macedonian church ought to have been the richest if this is the case.

It claims that God wants every Christian rich and healthy: this poses a serious philosophic and theological problem. 1) If God wants all believers rich and healthy and not every believer is currently not rich or healthy, it would mean that those who claim to be believers but are poor and sick are in reality not Christians. 2) Since God wants every believer rich and healthy and not all who claim to be believers are rich and healthy, it would mean that they are living outside of God's demands i.e. being poor and sick is a sin. 3) Since God wants every Christian rich and healthy but they are at the moment not all rich and healthy, there is something that limits God from executing His desire towards the Christians i.e. there's something that overcomes God and frustrates His plan.

It claims that people should give with expectation: this is the claim that whenever people intend to give to God they should give with expectation or should tell God why they are giving to Him. Thus, there should be a reason attached to the giving and God should execute the desire of the giver. This also causes its own problems: 1) Giving is no longer out of gratitude for God's blessings. 2) When we seem not to have any significant need, we don't have to give because there's nothing we want in return. 3) Since the giving must be with a goal in mind, it nullifies the purpose of giving and this becomes battering and God renders the unavailable goods to the "giver."

It claims that one's gift is investment in heaven's bank: since it's an investment, the giver can always go to withdraw, actually by demanding it because it's their money they've invested. First, God is not seen as the provider of our money but that we work

⁵³ II Timothy 4:3-4, MKJV

off our tails in order to invest with Him. Second, our giving makes God the borrower i.e. He is indebted to us and must come up with solutions whenever we need them. Third, giving to God's work is a security jacket against loss of health, properties, jobs, life etc.

It claims that all silver and gold belongs to God, therefore all His children have access to the wealth of this world: This is a common misinterpretation of Haggai 2:8. They overlook the prophetic implications of this passage and read what they want into it. This passage does not promise wealth to those who put their faith in God but rather God admonishing that in the end He'll gather all the treasures unto Himself. We can see this explained better in Revelation 21:10-22. If God wanted to bestow earthly treasures upon the believer He would however, He chose to give treasures that are surpassing that which adorned the temple of Solomon. Misreading this passage of Scripture and not understanding how God intends to bless and dwell amongst the believers is the reason for giving such wrong meanings. While there are believers who have access to the wealth of the world, they are rarities amongst millions of believers who are characterized by lack of the riches of this world.

It claims that cattle on the thousand hills belong to the Lord: Ps. 50:10, is not a promise of what God will give to those who believe in Him. God is stating an argument with the Jews who thought that God depended on them and that without their sacrifices His work could not progress. God speaks to them that He is not depended upon their cattle and other animals and that if He wanted He would get all the animals in the world because they are all His. Now to reason that just because God is the owner of all in the universe is the reason that we should make claim of the earthly riches is to misinterpret the teaching of God's Word. Because this would imply that all Christians should have a portion of everything that is in the world because it all belongs to God so, it should be divided amongst them as their inheritance. I'm working with very committed missionaries and believers who don't even own a goat, people who have given up their all, in order to serve others through the preaching of the Gospel.

It claims that we're blessed with faithful Abraham: Gal. 3:8-9, can only be best understood given that the context of Paul's message is taken into consideration. If we are to literally take the interpretation of this text concerning the blessings of God through Abraham, there is no material connection but that it refers to God's spiritual blessing. The spiritual blessing is that of justification through faith and that just as God justified Abraham while he was in his heathen state, so shall He also justify many who shall place their trust in Jesus Christ (the seed of Abraham). To take this passage as meaning material blessing is to deliberately overlook the whole message of Paul concerning God's plan of justifying sinners through faith. The fact that those who now trust in Christ are blessed with spiritual blessings in this world and will inherit an eternal kingdom is more than any material blessing can compensate.

It claims that the Patriarchs were all materially blessed because of their uprightness: there is no denial to that the patriarchs were rich materially. However, that doesn't not serve as sufficient reason to make their wealth as the ground upon which believers ought to be rich. How did they become rich? Is the question. Some got rich through hard work, some through deceit (Jacob), some through inheritance, and others because they were rulers (David) etc. While God worked with the patriarchs in such a way as a means of displaying His presence with them, we see a total change in

the New Testament of how God reveals His presence in the church. The New Testament reveals to us that God has blessed us with spiritual blessings that surpass the material wealth that the patriarchs had. This blessing is God's own presence in the believers through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God's blessings are spiritual doesn't denote the denial of physical blessings, but only that the material blessings are not God's priority to the believer nor are they requirements for the believer.

All of the above mentioned claims as reasons of why Christians ought to be rich according to the PG are all false and totally removed from truthful teaching of Scripture. The Gospel is a call to death both physically and economically because of the animosity that the true Gospel brings against those who proclaim it. However, the PG is based on erroneous philosophic and theological assumptions or on irrational speculations which cannot be supported both by common sense and Scripture. This indicates to us of how dangerous this theology is. It gives false hopes to the believer and lures the unbeliever into the church with wrong intentions in mind.

ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”⁵⁴

By eschatological implications we mean, how this doctrine of prosperity that is so prevalent in our days is part and parcel of the fulfillment of Scripture concerning end times. One of the things that will dominate the last days is that people will be lovers of pleasures, riches, money, self etc and we can see how the PG is falling into this category. The writing of Paul to Timothy has a double effect or we can say has been dominant throughout the whole of Church existence. So what Satan is doing these days is to capitalize on it with a newer zeal that sounds spiritual enough to draw the attention of Christians because it is being advocated by men and women who seem to have proper ministry credentials and are popular. Let us see some of the things the PG will result in our days:

Firstly, it will go against the whole Biblical concept of contentment and encourage greed and materialism.

Secondly, it'll motivate people to live as though this world is their home and desire to amass material things for themselves.

Thirdly, it'll motivate people to live with little awareness for God's eternal kingdom as they will be so earthly minded and will have nothing to do with heaven.

⁵⁴ I Timothy 6:6-11 (KJV)

Fourthly, it will have people who are characterized by discontentment with what seem to be basic necessities of life. The discontentment is presented in such disguise that very few will see that it is an ungodly and heretic message.

Fifthly, it'll create such a craving in people to desire riches even to the point of losing moral judgment just for them to have.

Sixthly, people will covet after money but will not realize it and even when they turn away from the faith they will think that they are doing exactly what God desires for them (plundering the riches of Egypt).

Seventhly, they will not pursue after eternal things that will cause them to lead godly lives because their hearts will be so deceived to think that the spiritual things are only meant for heaven i.e. while we live on earth we must pursue the earthly and when we die our spiritual rewards will be ready for us.

Seeing that the doctrine of the PG is exactly that which the sinners would love to hear, we will see an increasing number of sinners filling the so called prosperity churches. With these will come the increasing of evil, sin and despicable wickedness. Then people will begin to wonder that these not supposed to be the houses of worship which have become no different from the world. When this begins to happen we'll begin to understand Jesus' parable of Matthew 13:24-40 of the weeds and the wheat. The PG is one of the signs of our days of how God will judge the wicked, those hypocrites, deceivers and the deceived, who in their hearts were never truly repented but used the cover of godliness as a means to gain their living.

The PG serves to promote the wrath of God with its contaminated message of preaching Another Gospel other than what was delivered to us by the inspired apostles. When the judgment of God is fully come, these people and their followers will appear before Christ but will be turned away by the Master of all creation, the Judge of all judges, and the One whose judgment is just. On that day the Master will look at them as say "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But while we await for that Day of Judgment this is what will be happening in our days:

Popularity will remove the judgment for truthfulness: in our generation the kwaito, rock, pop, reggae and movie stars have become the icons of truthfulness. This blindness has infiltrated the Christian community, where people no longer judge statements and doctrines made by "popular" preachers. Just as might makes right, today we find that if one is popular it means truth. This idolatry of superstars is increasingly blinding the judgment of many and they leave their lives to be dictated by superstars rather than Scripture.

Personal experiences will dictate the meaning of truth: seeing that many of those who advocate the PG have in a way managed to secure great wealth for themselves. Many unknowing people will use these experiences and the measuring rod for truthfulness regardless of all other forces that have contributed to their material successes.

Shallow theological doctrines will be more acceptable: since shallow theology simply goes only to the level of human curiosity it will become so popular because it will agree

with many other doctrines that are advocated by the enemies of the true Gospel. We can see an ever growing hatred for theological discussions that challenge our minds, lives, and worship as more and more people want tailor-made sermons or teachings.

Increasing negativity toward criticizing of doctrines: questioning of doctrine is something that is rapidly vanishing from the church of Christ as we've opened ourselves to hear all kinds of rubbish from the pulpits in the name of God. This is one leading attitude of our days that is hastening the increase of the PG all over the world – very few theologians are ready to face this heresy in its face and tell the world that it's a heresy.

Dear brethren, if we cannot see that the Prosperity Gospel is a sign of end-time judgment – we will leave this error to continue and wreck the faith of many believers. Not doing anything about it is a clear sign that we stand to condone the progress of evil. The judgment of God is being poured out all over the world and men and women who are haters of God are being handed over to the lust of their own hearts because they hate the knowledge of God.

The people of the world because of their deep love for the world are handed over to their lust. Thus, the cup of their wickedness is full to the degree that they can no longer pretend but that the actual intents of their hearts are being revealed. The lovers of money preach their prosperity gospel. The lovers of this life preach divine health and healing. The lovers of the things of this world are preaching materialism. The lovers of worldly power are preaching how to take over government. Surely, they want all that this world can offer and their commitment to Christ is rooted in their getting of what they need to get as much as they can get.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

The church is the body Christ consisting of believers of all nations, tongues and tribes and it is called to hold onto standards that are Christ exalting. However, while the church is in this world there are many evil forces working against it to contaminate her image. This is very evident through the spread of the PG in the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia. It is being spread in the name of Christ and that it is Christianity regardless of the shameful and immoral practices that come with it. While we know that Christ will preserve His church from being destroyed – we should not think that it means that heresies will not crawl their way through into it.

The forces of hell are loose against the church in order to weaken her testimony in the eyes of the world to which she is to witness Christ. When we look at tele-evangelists collecting money from crowds all over the world without satiation. When they proclaim a Gospel that elevates the things of this world and has little to do with Christ. When we see the increasing Biblical ignorance amongst those who follow after these teachers and don't see any error with their teachings. When we see millions of people pursuing vanity while thinking that they are in for glorious rewards in heaven. When we see people laboring for money and have made themselves slaves unto the pleasures of this world and simply live by lip confession that they believe in Christ. And the list can go on. They are indications that the church of Christ is in danger and the forces of evil are all raised against her to see nothing else but her destruction.

Those who proclaim the PG are in reality enemies of Christ. For if they knew the true Christ, they would proclaim what He requires. There are many deceivers gone amongst us, they look like one of us because they are dressed like sheep, they move like sheep, however, as time is passing by they can no longer contain the fact that they are wolves. Their true colors are being revealed fast because God need to purify His church i.e. there need to be a distinction between the sheep and the wolves, between the sheep and the goats, between good trees and the bad trees, between the children of heaven and the children of hell etc. This distinction is definitely something positive for the true church however, as long as she lives in this world the effects of these heresies are damaging to her image. Because of the negative results of the GP:

- 1) The church must take her rightful place and combat this heresy. We must make use of our pulpits, writing skills, debates, newspapers, magazines, television, internet etc to combat this heresy.
- 2) True believers must dissociate themselves (I John 1:11; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:22; Rev. 18:4) and make our positions very clear. These people should be treated like heathens because they preach what is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.
- 3) We need to take the ministry of teaching doctrine serious to raise awareness of the teachings of Scripture.
- 4) We must not be caught up in the increasing spirit of apathy and cease to point out error just in the name of political correctness.
- 5) We must invest our time in the study of Scripture because it is the source of the truth the Christian needs to know.
- 6) We must pray that God through the Holy Spirit will enable us to discern true doctrines from the false.
- 7) We should pray for true believers who are caught up in this deception that God will grant them His grace and rescue them.

The above list of things is not exhaustive but simply serving as a guide. And it is a call to the reviving of the ministry of apologetics and polemics in our seminaries and Bible schools.

CONCLUSION

Church let us wake up to the reality of the damage of the PG doctrines and if you are involved in any of its practices that you will seek repentance. The PG is a reality and is a false doctrine that is influencing the theology of many, however, it is a contaminating theology that is far removed from the true Gospel. It is not God-honoring, but completely in the forefront of promoting what is of this world. It teaches the pursuing of temporary things and minimizes the value of eternal things.

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