


The Quest for Wealth and True Satisfaction: Reevaluating African Prosperity Theology in the Light of Ecclesiastes 5:10-20



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ABSTRACT

Prosperity theology has become a prevalent doctrine within African churches these days. Although popular among African Christians, prosperity theology raises concerns about its biblical and theological basis, as well as its overall impact on the socioeconomic and spiritual growth of its adherents. This theological tradition has, therefore, attracted much scholarly attention in recent times, and the debate over its credibility continues. As a contribution to the ongoing discourse, this paper evaluates the prosperity-theological model through the lens of Ecclesiastes 5:10-20. The paper employed a literary analysis methodology that involves a textual and expository analysis of the text in its final, canonical form. It is a literature-based research that draws data from books, journal articles, theses, and other relevant publications to explore both the theological and socio-cultural dimensions of the topic. The paper found that, although prosperity theology makes some positive contributions to the African church, it also promotes anti-biblical behaviors such as materialism, wealth accumulation, and greed. It also fails to account for the broader biblical teachings on human suffering, the limitations of human existence, and the impermanence of worldly possessions. The paper argues for reevaluating the relationship between wealth and true satisfaction, suggesting that lasting contentment cannot be found in material abundance, but in a life that acknowledges the limitations of human achievement and the sovereignty of God. The paper contributes knowledge in the areas of contextualization, biblical interpretation, and the engagement of traditional African worldviews with Christian doctrine..

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the rise of prosperity theology has significantly reshaped the religious landscape of African Christianity, particularly within Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This theological model teaches that material wealth, physical well-being, and success in life are visible proofs of divine favor and faith.¹ It promotes the idea that believers can access abundant blessings by exercising faith, sowing seeds, and proclaiming positive confessions. In today's Africa, prosperity preaching has not only flourished in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches but has also permeated traditional denominations that

¹ Stanley M. Burgess, *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (New York/London: Routledge, 2006).

once opposed such teachings. This theological outlook has reshaped the hopes, prayers, and even the ethics of many Christians in Africa.

While this message appeals to millions across the continent, especially in economically challenging settings, it often presents a truncated gospel; one that downplays the biblical themes of suffering, human limitation, and the transient nature of earthly possessions. As Richard J. Foster warns, it distorts the gospel into a message of “personal peace and affluence,” dangerously equating God’s favor with financial success.² This distortion leads to a subtle idolatry of wealth and fortifies the flawed belief that a person’s worth is measured by material gain.

As Africa seeks to provide robust and authentic theological formulations to promote both quantitative and qualitative growth of the Christian church, there is a need to scrutinize this popular teaching. For such a task, one finds Ecclesiastes suitable as it contrasts the triumphalist tone of prosperity preaching. Rooted in profound realism, Ecclesiastes reflects on the vanity of wealth, the inevitability of death, and the futility of toiling endlessly for material gain.

This paper critically evaluates the theological assumptions of prosperity preaching in the Ghanaian/African context using Ecclesiastes 5:10–20 as a theological framework. Rather than merely critiquing the prosperity gospel, the study offers a constructive theological response that affirms biblical wisdom and promotes a more faithful understanding of wealth and its stewardship.

BACKGROUND OF ECCLESIASTES

Traditionally, Ecclesiastes is attributed to *Qohelet* (1:1-2; cf. 1:12; 7:27; 12:8–10), often associated with King Solomon. In Old Testament scholarship, the term *Qohelet*—used in Ecclesiastes 1:1 to refer to the speaker of the book—is not understood as a proper personal name but rather as a title or literary persona. Derived from the Hebrew root *qhl*, meaning “to assemble” or “to gather,” *Qohelet* is often translated as “Preacher,” “Teacher,” or more literally, “Assembler” (one who calls people to assemble).³ The title likely signifies someone who addresses or gathers an assembly, reflecting a role akin to that of a sage imparting wisdom to a community. Grammatically, *Qohelet* is a feminine noun but is paired with masculine verbs, a feature that underscores its abstract and constructed nature. This has led to the identification of *Qohelet* as a rhetorical or symbolic figure rather than a historical individual.

Both early Jewish and Christian interpreters linked Solomon to *Qohelet*, citing 1:1 (“son of David, king in Jerusalem”) and 1:12 (“king over Israel in Jerusalem”) as a reference to Israel’s wisest king. The Solomonic identification likely stemmed from Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:12, the so-called “Royal Experiment,” where *Qohelet* describes lavish experiences mirroring Solomon’s grandeur (cf. 1 Kings 10).⁴ His claim of surpassing all in wisdom (1:16) further echoes Solomon (1 Kings 4:29–34), possibly encouraging attribution to him for authority’s sake.

However, most critical scholars widely reject this view based on historical criticism and linguistic analysis of the text.⁵ It is argued that David and Solomon ruled a united Israel from Jerusalem, and the term “son of David” in 1:1 need not imply Solomon specifically, especially since the name never appears elsewhere in the book. During the Reformation, Martin Luther challenged Solomonic authorship—an idea later reinforced in the 19th century. Scholars have observed that the Hebrew language used in Ecclesiastes differs significantly in vocabulary and syntax from the classical Hebrew of Solomon’s era.⁶ Instead, it closely resembles a later stage of the language, exhibiting features more akin to Mishnaic Hebrew, reflected in the Mishnah, compiled around 200 CE. This linguistic evidence suggests that Ecclesiastes was composed during a much later period than the time traditionally associated with Solomon. This led Franz Delitzsch to famously remark: “If the book of Koheleth were of old Solomonic origin, then there is no history of the Hebrew language.” Scholars who reject the Solomonic authorship see Solomon’s persona (autobiographical references) in Ecclesiastes as rhetorical,

² Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex & Power: The Spiritual Disciplines of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience* (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985).

³ Donald R. Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1983), 975–1008.

⁴ R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

⁵ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 975.

⁶ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 975.

not historical—used to critique, not celebrate, the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and wisdom. These references are considered literary devices used to validate the author’s claims, as one finds in such pseudepigraphical Wisdom of Solomon (ca. 150-50 BCE).⁷ Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Ecclesiastes stands out as a unique work within the Hebrew Bible, distinct in vocabulary, style, tone, and theological outlook from both pre-exilic and post-exilic Hebrew literature.⁸ The ongoing nature of the debate suggests that, while the argument against Solomonic authorship is widely accepted in modern scholarship, it remains ultimately inconclusive, leaving room for continued discussion and differing perspectives.

Earlier views suggested a date as late as the first century BCE. However, the discovery of *Qohelet* fragments at Qumran—particularly 4QQoh^a, dated to the mid-second century BCE—rules that out.⁹ The likely dependence of Ben Sira (c. 180 BCE) on Ecclesiastes suggests a composition before 200 BCE.¹⁰ Linguistically, the book’s use of Aramaisms and Persian loanwords indicates a postexilic origin. Most scholars thus date it to the early Hellenistic period (c. 250 BCE), citing socioeconomic context and possible philosophical parallels with Greek thought.¹¹ Others, noting the absence of Greek terms and the general nature of the parallels, propose a Persian-period date instead. The bottom line is that the date for the composition of Ecclesiastes, just like the identity of *Qohelet*, cannot be known with certainty.

Ecclesiastes reflects the experience of an Israelite king ruling in Jerusalem, but the broader context is less specific, potentially reflecting a wider intellectual and philosophical environment. The book explores themes of vanity, the meaning of life, the futility of worldly pursuits, and the importance of finding joy in God’s gifts, even in the midst of suffering and uncertainty. Ecclesiastes serves as both a self-reflection for the author and a record of wisdom for the Jewish people. The book’s existential tone, skepticism regarding traditional religious certainties, and emphasis on the transient nature of wealth, power, and knowledge makes it distinct from other biblical books. The recurring refrain “vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (1:2) highlights the book’s central theme: that earthly endeavors, including the accumulation of wealth, are ultimately futile without a God-centered life. Ecclesiastes encourages readers to adopt a theology of humility, moderation, and reverence for God amidst life’s uncertainties.

The book displays wealth of literary features that set it apart within biblical wisdom literature. One of its most notable traits is its use of rhetorical questions, paradoxes, and aphorisms to convey deep philosophical reflections. It frequently employs repetition, as seen in key refrains like “vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (1:2; 12:8). It also makes extensive use of imagery and metaphor—such as life being like chasing the wind (1:14). Structurally, Ecclesiastes is a blend of prose and poetry, with the “voice” of *Qohelet* providing a reflective, personal tone that contrasts the more didactic style of Proverbs. The book also includes narrative sections, such as the “royal experiment” in chapters 1–2 (cf. 1:12–2:11), which combine autobiographical storytelling with philosophical critique.

Building on this background, the paper now turns to a critical examination of the text with a focus on the theology of wealth.

THEOLOGY OF WEALTH IN ECCLESIASTES 5:10-20

Wealth’s Inability to Satisfy (v. 10)

Ecclesiastes 5:8–9 sets the stage for the book’s reflections on wealth by highlighting societal injustice and bureaucratic failure. In verse 8, *Qohelet* observes the oppression of the poor and the inefficacy of hierarchical systems meant to ensure justice, suggesting that such structures often contribute to the problem rather than resolve it. Verse 9 adds complexity, possibly portraying the king as reliant on the land’s productivity or as a stabilizing figure.

⁷ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 975.

⁸ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 975.

⁹ James Muilenburg, “A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 135, no. 1 (1954): 20–28.

¹⁰ C. H. H. Wriglit, *The Book of Koheleth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883); G. A. Barton, *Ecclesiastes* (ICC: Edinburgh: Clark, 1908).

¹¹ Diethelm Michel, *Qohelet* (Dannstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988).

Verse 10 is a proverb indicating that the human desire for money is insatiable. It reads: “The lover of money will not be satisfied with money; nor the lover of wealth, with gain. This also is vanity” (v.10 NRSV). In this verse, two closely related, though not identical, sayings emphasize the theme of this verse. Both begin with a participial form of the verb “to love,” referring to “the one who loves.” Each then names the object of that affection—either money or wealth. To “love money” may take various forms: an unrelenting drive to accumulate it, constant preoccupation with financial gain, elevating wealth as life’s ultimate goal, or letting it govern one’s desires and affections.¹²

The first statement makes one key point; namely, that such a person (the lover of money) will never be truly satisfied.¹³ Here, “satisfaction” means feeling that one has enough—but when “enough” keeps shifting, contentment remains out of reach.¹⁴ Charles Bridges notes that the word “satisfied” often refers to physical appetites, such as eating and drinking, but here it highlights the emptiness of craving wealth. He writes, “The appetite is created—not satisfied. The vanity of this disease is coveting what does not satisfy when we have it. Hunger is satisfied with meat, and thirst with drink. But hunger or thirst for this world’s wealth is as unsatisfied at the end, as at the beginning.”¹⁵ *Qohelet* captures a universal truth: material things, though necessary and even enjoyable, cannot ultimately satisfy the human heart. His use of vanity (Heb: *hebel*—literally “breathe” or “vapor” carries a figurative meaning of “transience”, “insubstantiality”, “emptiness” or “futility”).¹⁶ It is used here to express a deep sense of irony and wonder—that people continue to chase the security wealth that seems to promise, even though they know they will never have enough. The more one possesses, the more one desires, underscoring that human longing for material things is never fully satisfied (cf. 6:7). It is a sobering observation: only the fool fails to realize that a life devoted to pursuing money is ultimately a self-deception.¹⁷ It is not just that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10) but also that this kind of love can never deliver on its promises.

This critique of wealth critically challenges the notions of personal avarice and the societal structures that prioritize material prosperity as the ultimate measure of success. Unlike prevalent cultural narratives that align financial achievement with personal fulfillment, the text emphasizes that wealth does not provide enduring satisfaction. The repeated reference to the term “vanity” (*hebel*) strengthens the argument regarding the futility and ephemeral nature of such pursuits. Theologically, this perspective reveals a profound distortion of human desires—individuals often misplace their quest for lasting fulfillment in pursuits that are inherently transient and incapable of satisfying the authentic needs of the soul.

Wealth’s Tendency to Increase Burdens (vv. 11-12)

Verses 11 and 12 explain why money fails to satisfy. The first part of verse 11 says, “When goods increase, those who eat them increase” (NRSV). An important word in this text is “goods”, which refers to “good things” or material possessions. It likely includes the money and wealth mentioned in verse 10.¹⁸ If so, it shows that *Qohelet* does not completely dismiss material things as negative. Instead, he seems to recognize that they have value in themselves.¹⁹

The term “eat” here carries a broader meaning than simply consuming food.²⁰ In one sense, the “they” who “increase” to “eat” (consume) the increased goods likely refer to the servants employed by the wealthy. The bond between a wealthy master and his servants is mutual, as the master’s wealth relies on the labor of his workers, whose efforts contribute directly to his profit. In another sense, “they” are

¹² Graham S. Ogden and Lynell Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 169.

¹³ Carl Schultz, “Ecclesiastes,” in *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2008), 442.

¹⁴ Graham S. Ogden and Lynell Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997).

¹⁵ Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Ravenio Books, 2013).

¹⁶ John Jarick, “Ecclesiastes,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 468.

¹⁷ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

¹⁸ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

¹⁹ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

²⁰ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

activities that require spending the increased wealth. Thus, “those who eat them” could refer to either people or activities that drain or deplete our resources.

The text, therefore, implies that with every gain in material wealth comes a rise in responsibilities, dependencies, and even anxieties.²¹ The more we accumulate, the greater the demands on our resources.²² In many African cultures, where the extended family system is prevalent, this concept is readily understood. The more a person has, the more relatives and acquaintances will come to benefit from their wealth, leading to a constant drain on their resources.²³ This is particularly evident in communities where shared responsibility and communal support are expected. Even someone with a good income can find themselves struggling to maintain their wealth due to the constant financial demands placed on them by others.²⁴

Thus, money fails to satisfy because as income increases, so do expenses, leaving no lasting sense of gain or fulfillment. What initially seems like a blessing—more possessions—can quickly turn into a considerable burden. Instead of being liberated by wealth, individuals often find themselves weighed down by the need to maintain, protect, and distribute their riches. Wealth can widen one’s circle of obligations, which in turn diminishes the joy they derive from their possessions. Rather than simplifying lives, accumulating wealth frequently introduces new complexities and social pressures to the extent of even overshadowing the benefits that material gains might bring.

The second part is the rhetorical question: “and what gain has their owner but to see them with his eyes?” (NRSV) The expected answer is “none.” The word “gain” refers to “ability” or “skill” and can describe anything that brings an advantage. It extends the basic meaning of “skill” to include what one acquires through their abilities and the success one experiences in achieving certain goals. By this question, *Qohelet* challenges the idea that simply accumulating more money and material goods should be considered true success. His point is that people are left only to observe their growing wealth, without truly enjoying it. Carl Schultz maintains that “At best, the only benefit that comes to the owner is a glance at his wealth.”²⁵ Increased wealth, in this sense, becomes an illusion—lacking any real substance—because it fails to bring any meaningful improvement to one’s life. As expenses quickly escalate, having more wealth does not necessarily make us better off.

Instead of pursuing ever-increasing wealth through the growing complexity of managing it, *Qohelet* advises people to embrace a simpler life. As he states, “Sweet is the sleep of laborers, whether they eat little or much; but the surfeit of the rich will not let them sleep” (v. 12 NRSV). This assertion is another example of how wealth often fails to bring lasting satisfaction. Here, *Qohelet* contrasts the laborer with the wealthy person, concluding that the laborer has the advantage. The expression “Sweet is the sleep of a laborer” refers to a peaceful, restful sleep. Graham S. Ogden and Lynell Zogbo opine that the word “laborer” comes from a root meaning “serve,” which can also imply “slave” or “servant.”²⁶ They quote Barton as suggesting that this word could refer to an “agricultural laborer” (as seen in Proverbs 12:11), but here, *Qohelet* likely uses it more broadly.²⁷ They consider “laborer” as synonymous with “servant.” In either case, it involves a person who holds a lower social status and is poorly compensated for their hard work.²⁸ Despite these challenges, the laborer enjoys sound sleep (whether their stomach is full or empty), likely due to the exhaustion from their strenuous work. The wealthy, on the other hand, experience insomnia probably because of the fear of losing their wealth through misfortune, including the examples in 5:1-7, 8-9, experiences as those of Job (Job 1:13-19) and bad

²¹ Jerry Hamstra, “Problems with Wealth Ecclesiastes 5:10–17,” 2018, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/550dc8bde4b0f9dc83a0e10d/t/5ae28157758d461ffb62933f/1524793690005/180401pm_J.Hamstra.pdf.

²² Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

²³ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

²⁴ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 171.

²⁵ Schultz, “Ecclesiastes,” 442.

²⁶ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 173.

²⁷ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 173.

²⁸ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 173.

investments.²⁹ This is a difficult reality that must be faced, particularly by those who “love wealth” (verse 10).

This verse, therefore, advocates for simplicity. It provides a general principle, not a strict rule: individuals who embrace a simple lifestyle are typically more inclined to achieve deep and restful slumber. The laborer, unencumbered by the complications of affluence, is able to experience tranquility independent of material abundance. In contrast, the wealthy—burdened with the responsibilities of safeguarding their assets, managing investments, maintaining social status, and navigating competitive landscapes—frequently endure a restless psyche and interrupted sleep. Consequently, wealth may undermine the very tranquility it ostensibly offers. The saying also connects well with verse 11 through the theme of “much” and the idea of being “satisfied,” as mentioned earlier (in verse 10). The reality is that the burdens of managing great wealth create anxiety and distress, disrupting life in various ways, while the simplicity of honest labor offers peaceful rest at night.³⁰ True satisfaction, symbolized here by restful sleep, does not come from having many possessions.

The text presents a significant theological tension that the wise in Israel wrestled with. Deuteronomy (especially in chapters like Deut. 28) presents material wealth and prosperity as signs of obedience to God and tokens of his blessing.³¹ However, *Qohelet* challenges this view by pointing to the complexities of real life. He emphasizes that material abundance is not a reliable measure of one’s spiritual condition.³² Wealth can become a burden, introducing anxiety and unrest. Paradoxically, *Qohelet* suggests that a simpler life, with fewer possessions, may better reflect God’s blessing, offering space for rest, contentment, and spiritual clarity.³³ This emphasis on simplicity, joy, and shared experience as marks of a well-lived life provides a foundation for Christ’s wealth ethics in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 6:19-34). In *Qohelet*’s framework, contentment is not about possessing everything, but about appreciating what one already has (Eccl. 3:12–13). A fulfilled and peaceful life depends not on the amount of wealth one possesses, but on one’s acceptance of the lifestyle God provides and the recognition that all wealth comes from him.³⁴ In other words, contentment arises when a person understands that both their circumstances and their possessions are part of God’s gracious provision. Instead of being driven by the pursuit of wealth, a content person is guided by a deep awareness that true satisfaction is rooted in trust and gratitude toward God.

Wealth’s Inability to Accompany Us in Death (vv. 13-17)

The discussion of wealth continues into verses 13-17 where *Qohelet* uses a graphical case study to present an example of what he considers a grievous evil. As a final point in his warning against the over-accumulation of wealth, *Qohelet* shares a parable about “a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture” (5:13–14a, NRSV). The instability of material riches is evident in this text. Accumulated wealth may be lost through poor decisions, economic disruptions, or unforeseen calamities. Thus, what is often perceived as a reliable foundation for the future is, in reality, precarious and uncertain. This underscores the point that wealth is an untrustworthy basis for hope or provision.

The phrase “grievous evil” could be more accurately described as “sickening evil.”³⁵ It is distressing to witness someone who has labored tirelessly for wealth, only to see it vanish in an unfortunate investment. Furthermore, *Qohelet* observes, “And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand” (5:14b, NRSV). After all his effort, the man cannot pass down any wealth to his son. Thus, a person hoards wealth only to lose it one day without leaving anything for the children and, by extension,

²⁹ Schultz, “Ecclesiastes”; Tewoldemedhin Habtu, “Ecclesiastes,” in *African Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 816–17; Glenn, “Ecclesiastes”; J. Stafford Wright, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1170.

³⁰ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 989.

³¹ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 174.

³² Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 174.

³³ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 174.

³⁴ Habtu, “Ecclesiastes,” 817.

³⁵ Tremper III. Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes: NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 167.

the other family members.³⁶ The father had measured success by the wrong standards, and now he has left no legacy behind.

Qohelet then points out that death nullifies material gain (vv.15–16).³⁷ He brings into sharp focus the inevitability of death and its effect on material pursuits: “As they came from their mother's womb, so they shall go again, naked as they came; they shall take nothing for their toil, which they may carry away with their hands” (v.15 NRSV; cf. 9:2; Job 1:21). That is to say even if wealth were not lost but kept throughout life, one could not take it to their grave because no one enters this world nor leaves it with anything (Psa. 49:17). This reality provokes sorrow and frustration for those who labor without control over the future.

Given that everybody enters and leaves the world with nothing, it stands to reason that everyone ultimately gains nothing from their labor (v.16). Verse 16 culminates this meditation with a piercing rhetorical question: “What gain is there to him who toils for the wind?” (ESV) The answer, devastating in its simplicity, is none. This highlights a dominant theme of the book: apart from God, human pursuits amount to no more than grasping at the wind.

Verse 17 highlights that misplaced trust in wealth leads to anguish.³⁸ The passage closes its critique of wealth with a sobering image: “Besides, all their days they eat in darkness, in much vexation and sickness and resentment” (v.17 NRSV). This verse portrays a life consumed by gloom, anxiety, and emotional turmoil.³⁹ Far from bringing happiness, wealth can become the source of distress, whether psychosomatic or relational.⁴⁰ Earlier, *Qohelet* had noted the sleeplessness and worry that often accompany the relentless pursuit of wealth (cf. 2:22–23), as well as the social isolation of those who toil without relational purpose (4:8). Such labor, driven by envy or ambition, is not a blessing but a burden.

Wealth as a divine gift (vv. 18-20)

At the end of Ecclesiastes 5, *Qohelet* provides a rare moment of comfort. He suggests that it is good to enjoy life's simple pleasures, such as eating, drinking, and finding joy in one's work, as these are the gifts God has given humans to enjoy during their short lives (v. 18).⁴¹ The text says “This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot” (v. 18 NRSV). *Qohelet's* use of the words “see” and “good” mirrors earlier biblical references, indicating an evaluation of life that acknowledges both what is truly good and what is falsely perceived as good. *Qohelet* emphasizes that, despite the frustrations of life, believers should recognize and appreciate the good gifts that God has given them. Wealth, then, is not inherently evil or meaningless; rather, it is to be received as a divine blessing. Enjoying one's work, food, and possessions is a legitimate and faithful response to life's uncertainties (cf. 3:13). Unfortunately, enjoyment is something the miser does not know.⁴²

Qohelet urges his audience to accept God's gifts with joy, rather than being consumed by the pursuit of wealth or vexation over injustice. For those who trust in God's provision, life is marked by joy and contentment, and they will not be burdened by the passage of time. Life becomes meaningful and absorbing through faith, making it far from painful or fleeting, but instead rich with the blessings of God's grace. Each call to enjoy life rests on the truth that life is God's gift. Hence, the Christian's gratitude is best shown by embracing it fully—with its joys, sorrows, and variety.⁴³

While Ecclesiastes offers a vision of contentment grounded in divine grace, the contemporary African church landscape—particularly within prosperity theology—presents a contrasting narrative that equates divine favor with material success and physical well-being. The next section examines this issue further.

³⁶ Schultz, “Ecclesiastes,” 442; Habtu, “Ecclesiastes,” 816.

³⁷ Hamstra, Problems with Wealth Ecclesiastes 5:10-17, 5.

³⁸ Hamstra, Problems with Wealth Ecclesiastes 5:10-17, 6.

³⁹ Schultz, “Ecclesiastes,” 442.

⁴⁰ Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” 989.

⁴¹ Habtu, “Ecclesiastes,” 817.

⁴² Schultz, “Ecclesiastes,” 442.

⁴³ Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 185.

PROSPERITY THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA

The expression “prosperity theology” refers to the “Christian worldviews that emphasize an earthly life of health, wealth, and happiness as the divine, inalienable right of all who have faith in God and live in obedience to his commands.”⁴⁴ This theological framework centers on the belief that God rewards faith and positive confession with material wealth, physical well-being, and general prosperity.⁴⁵ In this context, prosperity is understood to comprise both physical and spiritual well-being. It includes access to abundant resources—such as money, property, employment opportunities, and family growth—as well as the perceived ability to harness divine power to overcome life’s challenges. Longevity, fruitfulness, and success in various aspects of life are also seen as signs of prosperity.⁴⁶ This view agrees with Basilius M. Kasera’s opinion that “prosperity” denotes “literal wealth, success, and honor” or an upward movement “in something desirable: the state of succeeding or flourishing, particularly in a financial context.”⁴⁷ C J P Nelus Niemandt describes the prosperity gospel as the spiritualisation of material wealth and the celebration of excess and consumerism.⁴⁸ He further views it as a new form of colonisation, marked by its emphasis on material blessings. This version of Pentecostalism is characterized by familiar phrases such as sowing and reaping and naming and claiming, which aim to shape reality through faith.

In light of this perspective, prosperity theology views Christ’s suffering and death as securing complete provision for human needs, implying that believers are entitled to share in his victory over sin, illness, and lack. Furthermore, prosperity theology asserts that individuals can attain these blessings through “a positive confession of faith.”⁴⁹ In other words, all who profess faith in Christ will encounter material prosperity and good health, under the premise that these blessings can be invoked through financial contributions to church leaders and the affirmation of one’s faith. This type of teaching is primarily associated with Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity; however, it is not entirely absent from historic mainline churches.

The prosperity gospel has taken root globally in diverse cultural and regional expressions. It is evident across West and Southern Africa, North and South America, South Korea, and Europe.⁵⁰ Kenneth Hagin, often regarded as the father of prosperity preaching in America,⁵¹ was born in 1917 in McKinney, Texas. After experiencing what he believed was divine healing, he began preaching.⁵² Hagin taught that believers should not merely hope for healing and prosperity but claim them as already received. He later moved to Oklahoma and founded the Kenneth E. Hagin Evangelistic Association, launching the *Word of Faith* magazine and establishing the Word of Faith Movement.⁵³ Blending Pentecostalism with elements of New Thought, Hagin's theology emphasized two key ideas: divine healing and God’s intention to materially bless believers. His teachings significantly shaped and expanded the reach of prosperity theology.

The flourishing of prosperity theology in Africa is deeply rooted in both cultural and contextual factors. Within the African traditional religious worldview, God is perceived as the ultimate source of all blessings, including material wealth, physical health, fertility, successful harvests, and communal peace. In a context marked by widespread poverty, inequality, weak governance structures, and recurrent

⁴⁴ Burgess, *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, 393.

⁴⁵ Sunday Jide Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity: Development and Change in the Nigerian Church* (Carlisle: Langham Publishers, 2013), 166-167; Dominic Umoh, “Prosperity Gospel and the Spirit of Capitalism: The Nigerian Story,” *African Journal of Scientific Research* 12, no. 1 (2013): 654–66.

⁴⁶ Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity: Development and Change in the Nigerian Church*; Matthews A. Ojo, “The Prosperity Gospel among Neo-Pentecostals in Africa,” in *The Abandoned Gospel: Confronting Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Philip W. Barnes (AB316, 2021), 29–40.

⁴⁷ Basilius M Kasera, “The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and Its Impact among the Poor in Namibia,” *A Master’s Thesis: South African Theological Seminary, Unpublished*, 2012.

⁴⁸ C J P Nelus Niemandt, “The Prosperity Gospel, the Decolonisation of Gheology, and the Abduction of Missionary Imagination,” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 203–19.

⁴⁹ Paul Gifford, “The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: Expecting Miracles,” *Christian Century* 124, no. 14 (2007): 20–24.

⁵⁰ Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Dan McConnell, *The Promise of Health and Wealth* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990). Other major proponents include Fred Price, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, John Avanzini, Charles Capps and Benny Hinn.

⁵² Debra J. Mumford, *Exploring Prosperity Preaching: Biblical Health, Wealth, and Wisdom* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012).

⁵³ Mumford, *Exploring Prosperity Preaching: Biblical Health, Wealth, and Wisdom*, 365-379.

natural and human-induced crises, many Ghanaian Christians turn to divine intervention as a means of securing material well-being. As a result, the message of prosperity theology, with its promise of success and abundance, finds fertile ground. James Kwateng-Yeboah has noted that prosperity preachers in Ghana often emphasize spiritual causality as a reason for socio-economic challenges. Issues such as poverty are frequently attributed to supernatural forces—witchcraft, demonic activity, and generational curses—while systemic problems such as institutional failure, corruption, crime, and ineffective parenting are relatively downplayed.⁵⁴

Prosperity theology has four main emphases: namely, material prosperity, seed sowing, faith healing, and the positive confession of faith. For the sake of this paper, only the first two tenets will be considered. According to proponents of the prosperity gospel, God wants every Christian to be financially successful and that God has blessed the faithful with material prosperity, especially financial assets like personal and professional success.⁵⁵ Pastor David O. Oyedepo, for instance, contends that it is never God's will that a believer should be poor. He reasons as follows: "Why ... do you think that your lack excites God? Which father is excited to see his children begging all around? Have you ever heard somebody give a testimony, saying, 'I thank God, two of my sons are beggars?'"⁵⁶ Based on this, he declares, "Your children's children will never beg! I want you to know that the prosperity God has planned for you has nothing to do with your profession, your career, or your family background."⁵⁷ Prosperity preachers view poverty as contrary to God's will, equating it with a spiritual affliction.⁵⁸ Believers who remain poor are seen as living outside God's intention. Poverty is often attributed to supernatural forces—witches, demons, and generational curses—rather than primarily to social or economic issues like laziness, corruption, or systemic failure.⁵⁹ As such, breaking free from poverty requires spiritual empowerment.

Proponents of prosperity theology appeal to various biblical texts to support their teachings. Abraham's wealth (Gen. 13:2), Isaac's prosperity (Gen. 26:12-14), and Solomon's riches (1 Kings 10) are often cited as examples of God blessing the faithful. It is argued, for example, that God's promise to make Abram rich (Gen. 12:1-3) which was fulfilled (13:2), is available to anyone who, by faith, is Abraham's descendant (Gal. 3:13-14, 29); hence, one cannot operate under the blessing of Abraham and be poor.⁶⁰ Nicholas Duncan-Williams, for example, argues that God never intended for us or anybody else in humanity to be ill, afraid, feeling inferior, losing, or failing.⁶¹ God never intended for humanity to be ill, afraid, feeling inferior, losing, or failing. Referring to Genesis 1:29-30, he adds that God's word is a tree of life that brings wealth, dignity, advancement, and joy. In addition, he establishes a link between material achievement and the *imago Dei* (1:26).⁶² Other passages from which prosperity preachers derive their teachings include John 10:10 (where Jesus promises abundant life), 2 Corinthians 8:9 (Paul's assertion that Jesus became poor to provide his followers with riches) and 3 John 2 (where John prays for physical wellbeing for Gaius even as he was well spiritually).

The seed-sowing principle is another key aspect of prosperity theology. Prosperity preachers maintain that believers can access God's blessings by engaging in an act of faith—typically through the sowing of "faith seeds," often financial gifts—directed toward a spiritual leader, who in turn mediates divine insight regarding the believer's future success and breakthrough.⁶³ According to prosperity

⁵⁴ James Kwateng-Yeboah and Pamela Holmes, "A Re-Appraisal of the Prosperity Gospel in African Neo-Pentecostalism: The Potency of 'Multiple Modernities' Paradigm," *Unpublished Master's Thesis: Queen's University*, 2017.

⁵⁵ Castor Michael Goliama, "The Gospel of Prosperity in African Pentecostalism: A Theological and Pastoral Challenge to the Catholic Church—With Reference to the Archdiocese of Songea, Tanzania," *University of Vienna*, 2013.

⁵⁶ David O. Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity* (Ikeja: Dominion Publishers, 1997).

⁵⁷ Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity*.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Copeland, *Laws of Prosperity* (Texas: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 2012).

⁵⁹ Lovemore Togarasei, "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal," *Exchange* 40, no. 4 (2011): 336–50; Kwateng-Yeboah and Holmes, "A Re-Appraisal of the Prosperity Gospel in African Neo-Pentecostalism: The Potency of 'Multiple Modernities' Paradigm."

⁶⁰ Mensah Otabil, *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia: A Biblical Revelation on God's Purpose for the Black Race* (Accra: Altar International, 1992).24.

⁶¹ Nicholas Duncan-Williams, *You Are Destined to Succeed* (Accra: Action Faith, 1990).58,102.

⁶² Duncan-Williams, *You are Destined to Succeed*, 58, 102.

⁶³ Don Enahimion Okosun, "Poverty, Illiteracy Cum Prosperity Theology: A Quantitative Study," *International Journal of Social Sciences (IJSS)* 8, no. 1 (2018): 83–92.

teachers, the act of giving money or other gifts to church leaders sows seeds in their ministry, which will later be reaped in a manifold.⁶⁴ Based on this belief, followers of prosperity teachings are motivated to donate substantial sums of money to their churches, expecting to receive multiple times their donation in return. Giving to the church or a church leader, therefore, becomes a means to economic empowerment. People can give to the church and expect their miraculous wealth the following day. It is in this light that Oyedepo argues that the only way to obtain “enduring wealth, as every other means of acquiring riches is time-tagged,” is to give sacrificially to the church.⁶⁵ Paul’s sowing and reaping metaphors of 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (cf. Luke 6:38) are considered to support the seed-sowing principle.⁶⁶ Proponents of this theology also seek support from Jesus’ promise of a hundred-fold reward to his followers (Mark 10:29-30). The mathematical formula for the human-divine transaction is made explicit in Gloria Copeland’s assertion that: “You can give \$1 for the Gospel’s sake and \$100 belongs to you; give \$10 and receive \$1000; give \$1000 and receive \$100,000 Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you a lifetime of cars. In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”⁶⁷ The hundred-fold principle in the “sowing and reaping” business encourages a lot of believers to give to their churches.

Tithing is another form of giving that is considered to attract prosperity. That tithing gives one access to heaven is underlined in Enoch E. Adeboye’s assertion that: “Anyone who does not give the required amount in tithes will not enter heaven. You have been told by some that you won't receive blessings from God if you do not pay your tithes. This is accurate, but on a more serious note: If you do not provide your tithes, you will not enter heaven.”⁶⁸ The salvific significance of tithing is a huge encouragement for people to tithe faithfully. Dag Heward-Mills contends, “[n]ot paying your tithes separates you from [the] most basic principle of sowing and reaping. When you do not pay your tithes, you harm your finances because you take away the foundations of your prosperity.”⁶⁹ He further argues that without paying the tithe, labor will be fruitless.⁷⁰ With such teaching, believers are highly motivated to give to the church. This approach, however, tends to shift the focus of Christian giving from selfless worship and stewardship to calculated investment strategies aimed at personal gain. Consequently, the act of giving is often stripped of its spiritual depth and transformed into a transactional exchange, where faith is measured by financial return rather than trust in God's sovereign provision.

REEVALUATING PROSPERITY THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF ECCLESIASTES 5:10-20

Prosperity-preaching churches in Africa play an increasingly influential role in driving grassroots socio-economic transformation. Through microfinance initiatives, infrastructure development, and the provision of essential services, such as access to clean water, these churches help alleviate poverty and generate employment within local communities. Moreover, by organizing entrepreneurship seminars, mentorship programs, and offering seed capital or financial support to young business owners, they foster a culture of innovation and economic self-reliance. These initiatives not only improve livelihoods but also contribute to the long-term development of the community. Such practical expressions of faith resonate with the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 5:18–19, which affirms the dignity of honest labor and the joy of enjoying the fruits of one’s work as a divine gift. Furthermore, such churches support education and health through donations to institutions, scholarship schemes, and free medical services, exemplified by Ghana’s International Central Gospel Church’s Central Aid and Pastor Mensah Otabil’s scholarship program.⁷¹ Despite these positive aspects, prosperity theology falls short of sound doctrine if considered in the light of Ecclesiastes 5:10-20.

⁶⁴ K. O. Maura, K. Mbugua, and J. Piper, *Gaining the World and Losing the Soul: How the Prosperity Gospel Distorts the Good News* (Nairobi: English Press, 2012), 9.

⁶⁵ David Oyedepo, *Possessing Your Possession* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2007), 76.

⁶⁶ Dag Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians Become Rich* (Wellington: Lux Verbi BM, 2009), 1.

⁶⁷ Cited in Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99; see also Peter Cotterell, *Prosperity Theology* (Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Leicester, 1993), 17.

⁶⁸ Enoch A. Adeboye, *Behold He Cometh* (Lagos: Christ the Redeemer’s Ministries, 2003), 44.

⁶⁹ Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become poor and How Tithing Christians Become Rich*, 1.

⁷⁰ Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become poor and How Tithing Christians Become Rich*, 1.

⁷¹ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity, New Edition: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*. 115-116

However, while these churches undeniably contribute to community development and social well-being, their theological foundation—prosperity theology—raises significant concerns when examined through the lens of Scripture, particularly Ecclesiastes 5:10–20. Ecclesiastes 5:10–20 gives a theological counterpoint to prosperity theology by exposing the illusion that wealth guarantees fulfillment, security, or divine approval. Prosperity theology promotes greed and the accumulation of wealth by portraying material wealth as a key indicator of human worth and a sign of God’s blessings. Originally formulated in a Western context, prosperity theology promotes individualism and opposes the African communal sense of life.⁷² The text opens with a profound observation: “The lover of money will not be satisfied with money; nor the lover of wealth, with gain. This also is vanity” (Eccl. 5:10 NRSV). This verse directly confronts the prosperity message that equates financial gain with spiritual blessing. *Qohelet*’s words depict the pursuit of wealth not as a mark of faith, but as a source of unending dissatisfaction. Rather than affirming that riches satisfy the soul, Ecclesiastes warns that the desire for more only multiplies restlessness.

This restlessness is not merely emotional—it manifests physically and socially. “The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep” (5:12). Contrary to the assumption that riches bring peace, the text reveals that abundance can breed anxiety. In Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic settings, believers are often taught that financial prosperity is a sign of divine favor; yet Ecclesiastes presents a sobering paradox: the more one has, the less restful life becomes. Instead of bringing joy, wealth becomes a source of worry and even harm.

The text continues: “I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, or wealth lost through some misfortune” (5:13–14). Here, *Qohelet* highlights the transient and unstable nature of riches. Far from being a secure foundation for life, wealth can be hoarded destructively or vanish unexpectedly. The message is clear: material possessions are inherently unstable. This contradicts the prosperity theology assumption that material increase reflects God’s ongoing favor. Ecclesiastes insists that even if riches are accumulated, they provide no guarantee of lasting benefit, for “everyone comes naked from their mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart” (5:15). Riches cannot be carried beyond the grave, and no one can secure a lasting legacy through wealth alone.

Furthermore, the futility of wealth-centered living is underscored in 5:17. This grim picture exposes the spiritual and emotional cost of pursuing riches without contentment. The theology of Ecclesiastes thus rejects the transactional mindset that characterizes much of prosperity preaching. The text moves away from a system in which divine favor is bought with offerings or seed sowing and instead emphasizes that wealth, when granted, is a gift from God to be enjoyed modestly and gratefully. “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor... this is a gift of God” (5:18–19).

Prosperity theology teaches that financial success is a sign of divine favor and that God wills every believer to be materially rich. Proponents like Oyedepo and Otabil argue that poverty is incompatible with the will of God and that the Abrahamic blessing ensures wealth for believers. However, Ecclesiastes presents a more nuanced and sobering view of wealth. While it acknowledges that wealth is a gift from God (5:18–20), it also warns that wealth cannot ultimately satisfy human desires (Eccl. 5:10) and may come with anxiety and sleeplessness (2:22–23). The book emphasizes that true contentment comes from accepting one’s lot in life and enjoying God’s daily gifts, not from the pursuit of endless riches (3:12–13). Thus, Ecclesiastes contradicts the idea that material wealth is always a mark of divine approval or spiritual maturity.

Furthermore, Ecclesiastes emphasizes the futility of striving for wealth as an end in itself, noting that wealth is transient and cannot prevent death or secure legacy (2:18–21; 9:2). This contrasts with prosperity teachings that suggest material riches are a lasting sign of divine blessing and personal success. In Ecclesiastes, both the rich and the poor die alike, and wealth can easily be lost or left to those who do not value it (5:13–14). Therefore, the book challenges prosperity theology’s elevation of wealth as a central goal of the Christian life.

Further still, in light of 5:10–20, which warns against the insatiable pursuit of wealth and emphasizes the futility of riches that fail to satisfy or bring lasting joy, the promises of prosperity

⁷² Goliama, *The Gospel of Prosperity in African Pentecostalism*, 336.

theology appear deeply flawed. Often, such promises are driven by self-interest. Businesspeople are promised success, not necessarily for their own well-being, but so that prophets and church leaders can benefit from their gains through seed-sowing practices. Many of these individuals make impulsive financial decisions based on prophetic assurances, expecting miraculous returns that never materialize. In reality, they give away their limited resources, clinging to promises of a hundred-fold return, only to be disappointed. This turns the supposed "gift of God" into a transaction—used to enrich the prophets rather than build up the faithful. Such leaders act more as merchants of hope than servants of Christ. Consequently, the wealth gap between clergy and congregants grows. As the poor continue to sow financial "seeds" in faith, their own economic situations remain unchanged. Kwateng-Yeboah captures this imbalance vividly in his report about a certain church: "Comparatively, while the prophet seems enriched by receiving money from believers as seed sowing, the majority of the church members experience an insignificant change in their economic conditions."⁷³

Prosperity theology, which equates wealth with divine favor, contradicts the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 5:10–20. *Qohelet* observes that the love of money is never satisfied and that wealth, while appearing to offer security, often increases anxiety and ends in futility. Yet prosperity preachers insist that poverty is a curse and that wealth is a sure sign of God's blessing. This leads to psychological suffering for the poor, who view their condition as spiritual failure. It also promotes unethical means of acquiring wealth, as the emphasis is on results rather than integrity. Instead of encouraging diligence, prosperity teaching fosters a get-rich-quick attitude—one reason behind rising cases of fraud, ritual killings, and gambling among Ghanaian youth. Furthermore, like the vain pursuit described in Ecclesiastes, prosperity preaching fails to address the structural causes of Africa's underdevelopment, such as corruption and institutional failure. In his article, Atiemo compares the mega revival meetings that go on in Ghana to clouds that gather without giving rain.⁷⁴ His point is that when the church meets, it is expected that a revival will occur, whereby people will return home revived and reformed to live a victorious Christian life guided by the Holy Spirit. However, on the contrary, the more revival meetings are organized, the more evil abounds. These meetings focus on fundraising and the display of the leader's charisma and power, rather than emphasizing the word of God. There is often a lack of proper discipleship among church members in most prosperity-preaching churches. Members are, therefore, not rooted in the word of God and are easily blown by all sorts of doctrinal wind. Unless prosperity preachers deal adequately with the root causes of Ghana's underdevelopment, their message will not have an overall positive impact on Ghanaian society.

In light of these theological distortions and their socio-economic implications, it is imperative that African Christianity charts a new course—one that affirms the redemptive power of the gospel while resisting the excesses and errors of prosperity preaching. The next section makes some suggestions in this regard.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

The foregoing discourse highlights that the African Church stands at a defining moment, shaped by the prosperity gospel's mixed legacy—its tangible contributions to socio-economic development and its serious theological flaws, especially when evaluated through the lens of Ecclesiastes 5:10–20. Moving forward, African Christianity must embrace a holistic theology that integrates economic empowerment with biblical fidelity, ethical responsibility, and spiritual maturity. Churches are encouraged to shift their focus from the individualistic pursuit of wealth to a message grounded in contentment, stewardship, and the well-being of the entire community. Ecclesiastes reminds believers that wealth is not inherently evil, but it must be viewed as a gift to be enjoyed in gratitude, not idolized or used as a measure of divine approval. By reasserting communal life, mutual support, and shared responsibility—values embedded in African culture—African theology can offer a refreshing and transformative witness to the global Church.

⁷³ Kwateng-Yeboah, *A Re-appraisal of the Prosperity Gospel in African Neo-Pentecostalism*, 87.

⁷⁴ Abamfo O. Atiemo, "Crowds that bring no Rains: Religious Revivals and Corruption in Ghana." In *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* Vol. 18(5) (2016): 6-23.

To sustain this vision, churches must prioritize biblical literacy and intentional discipleship, as many distortions in prosperity preaching thrive where members are not grounded in Scripture. Sermons must go beyond motivation and delve into theological depth, helping believers wrestle honestly with issues like suffering, mortality, and the limitations of wealth. African Christianity must also reclaim its prophetic voice, speaking boldly against systemic injustices such as corruption, poverty, and inequality, and leading efforts for public accountability and social transformation. On their part, theological institutions and churches should develop alternative, biblically grounded models of economic empowerment that promote hard work, integrity, and justice over mere material success. Finally, the Church must return to the message of the Cross—a message that affirms both blessing and brokenness. Rather than alienating the poor, the gospel must provide hope and resilience in the face of life’s hardships. This balanced theology will nurture a Church that is spiritually rooted, socially engaged, and prepared to impact Africa and the world with integrity and compassion.

CONCLUSION

In light of Ecclesiastes 5:10–20, *Qohelet* offers a sobering theological critique of prosperity theology’s core assumptions. While prosperity preaching associates material wealth with divine favor and encourages extravagant expectations of financial blessings, *Qohelet* challenges this view by emphasizing the futility, anxiety, and impermanence of wealth. His reflections reveal that the pursuit of riches often leads to restlessness, sorrow, and ultimately, disappointment, especially when it is detached from a life rooted in reverence for God. In contrast to the get-rich-quick mentality and transactional faith promoted by prosperity preaching, *Qohelet* calls believers to embrace contentment, ethical living, and joyful appreciation of life’s simple gifts as divine provision. Prosperity theology, by ignoring the broader biblical themes of suffering, human limitation, and justice, contributes to psychological distress among the poor, justifies unethical means of acquiring wealth, and fails to address the root causes of underdevelopment in African societies. In effect, *Qohelet* invites the African church to recover a theology that finds true satisfaction not in abundance, but in a God-centered life marked by humility, gratitude, and faithful stewardship.

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