

The Scramble for Materialism Gospel among Pentecostal Christians of Cameroon: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

This research aims to explain materialism gospel and its impact on the lives of Christians in Cameroon. The mixed research method was used in this study. Questionnaires, interviews and participant observation were the main methods used to obtain primary data. Results from this research show that attractive messages were used to entice people to adhere to materialism gospel. Economic hardships, freedom of worship, among other appealing messages were exploited to lure people to believe in this doctrine. Christians believed that they had to pay tithes, give offerings, avoid sins and pray without ceasing to provoke God to bless them with material wealth. Christians invested in economic activities as they were sure to make profits thanks to God's blessings. Unfortunately, many materialism gospel Christians became lazy and poor as they believe that the payment of tithes, prayers and church offerings would give abundant material blessings; blessings many are still waiting for.

Keywords

Cameroon, materialism gospel, prosperity gospel preachers, Christians, Jesus Christ

Introduction

Cameroon is a highly religious country, dominated by Muslims, Christians and followers of traditional African religion. Muslim and Christian religious activities dominate the northern and southern sections of Cameroon respectively. Christianity in Cameroon started in the late 19th Century when European Christian missionaries visited Cameroon and it gained grounds when Germans colonised Cameroon (Ngoh, 1996). The early Christian activities were dominated by Roman Catholic and protestant churches. Prominent among the early protestant churches in Cameroon include the Presbyterian Church, the Basel Mission and the Baptist Church. The Christian churches promoted a new doctrine whereby people

were taught to believe in Jesus Christ, to love one-another and to promote unity among Christians (Lang, 2017). A particularity of these early churches is the fact that they all preached the message of love and promoted the act of giving or sharing (Soboyejo, 2016). This made it difficult for many Cameroonian Christians to amass material and financial wealth. This doctrine is today still kept by many Christians of these early churches who boast that the poor will easily go to heaven compared to the rich who will likely go to hell upon death. These Christians have been made to believe an extract of the Bible where Jesus Christ stated that it is easier for a poor person than for a rich person to go to heaven when he/she dies (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Matt. 19:24).

In the past three decades, Cameroon experienced a wind of change in Christendom through the rise of materialism and prosperity gospel preachers. A new wave of churches mostly from Nigeria (Adeboye, 2006) has greatly changed the mind-sets of their members as these churches promised blessings to their members in the form of material prosperity. This new doctrine was mostly preached by church leaders who themselves lived in great material affluence. They made their followers to believe that by faith in God they will receive immense material blessings. Many Christian gospel preachers have made their followers to believe they can become successful in all they do and become wealthy by having faith in Jesus Christ. These preachers simply asked their followers to believe in Christ for them to succeed in all that they do.

The spread of this materialism doctrine in Cameroon had increased the followers of these new churches as people struggled to come out of poverty by believing in the prosperity doctrine preached by their church leaders. Many Cameroonians who belonged to churches that preached materialism doctrines claimed that by believing in the doctrines preached by their church pastors, prophets, reverends and evangelists, they could say bye-bye to poverty. The worrying phenomenon about believers of prosperity gospel was their belief that they could bypass hard work and merit and depend on faith as a pre-requisites to success. This paper has as objective to explain the scramble for materialism gospel and its impact on the lives of Christians in Cameroon.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of social exchange was used to develop this research. According to Ritzer (1988), George Caspar Homans was the founder of the social exchange theory as social exchange first appeared in his publication "Social Behavior as Exchange" in the year 1958. Social exchange is a process involving two persons or groups of persons in the process of give and take. The two persons or groups of persons are both

givers and receivers. The social relationship is a costs-benefits relationship. The costs are the things that each of the partners in the relationship has to sacrifice and the benefits are the things that each of the partners receive from this exchange relationship. The relationship is maintained when the benefits outweigh the costs. In other words, social exchange is motivated by the expected rewards. Any activity in the exchange relationship that is quickly rewarded will be frequently repeated. If rewards are not anticipated, there will be no exchange. In the case where the costs outweigh the benefits, the relationship is likely to cease to exist (Homans, 1958; Auld & Case, 1997)

In line with our research, God is a person as he made man in his image. "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Gen. 1:26). Thus, the two persons in social exchange in this research are the Christian(s) on one hand and God on the other hand. The Christians and God are in a costs-benefits exchange relationship whereby the Christians give to God their prayers, fasting, goods and money; and in return they receive material blessings from God. Although material gifts from Christians in the forms of money, farm produce and other goods are given to God through the church leaders, the Christians believe that through the intermediary of the church leaders these material goods are spiritually received by God. Thus, the Christians and their God are in a form of social exchange.

The efforts that Christians put in this exchange relationship are very important as the Christians are made to know that their efforts are proportionate to the benefits they will receive from God. Homans (1958) used a dyad to show how social exchange occurred between the pair of persons. In relation to our research, this dyad is made up of the Christian on one hand and God on the other hand. The Christian is in a costs-benefits exchange relationship with God. The costs are the things the Christian is made to understand that he/she is supposed to do,

such as paying of tithes, sowing of seeds, provision of pastor's feeding, giving of all forms of offerings in the church and avoiding all forms of sins. The Christians have been made to believe that if they do not meet these costs, they will certainly be deprived of their expected benefits. The benefits are the material things Christians obtain from God.

In the social exchange theory, the exchange relationship can both be balance relationship and imbalance relationship. When the relationship is balance, there is equality of dependence and power of the persons involved in the exchange. Thus, an imbalance relationship exists when the two parties are unequally dependent on one another (Emerson, 1978). In our research, the exchange relationship between the Christians and God is mostly imbalance. The Christians have a higher dependence on God for material blessing. However, there are some Christians who believe that they have a balance relationship with God as to them God needs their worship, praises, tithes and offerings equally as they need material blessings from God. Based on whether the social exchange relationship is balance or imbalance between the Christians and God, Christians in the exchange relationship with God are made to believe that their rewards depend on the level of their exchange.

Molm (1997) explained that a party in the social exchange chain can have coercive power. This power permits one of the parties in the exchange relationship to inflict pain or withhold the reward of the other party in the exchange. In our research, Christians have been made by their gospel preachers to believe that their individual sacrifices to God determine what they will individually receive from God. Preachers have made Christians to understand that God has coercive power, by which he can reward as well as inflict punishment on the Christians. This to the preachers and Christians explains why they receive rewards from God in varying measures, with some receiving little material gifts from God that do not enable them satisfy their basic needs.

Conceptual Framework

It is important for the concepts used in this study to be developed in order to orientate general understanding of this research. Two main concepts used in this study are materialism and gospel.

1. Materialism

Materialism is the situation whereby people quest to have high quality and quantity of material possessions. It is a psychological mind-set whereby people are in the search for money and other material possessions in order to satisfy their life desires (Kasser, 2018). Many people who seek to live comfortable lives struggle to amass material property that enable them live the choice of lives they want. Duh (2015) considered materialism as a situation where much importance is placed on the accumulation of material possession. Thus, materialism is the mind-set created by people who are obsessed with the zeal of acquiring and spending wealth (Rassuli & Hollander, 1986). Any generalised phenomenon in our society affecting macro consumption whereby people are non-generous as they struggle to possess more material wealth is materialism (Bek, 1985).

2. Gospel

The word gospel refers to the word of God as preached by Jesus Christ, his disciples and apostles. In very simple words, gospel means good news (Chapell, 2011). The gospel is the good news of our final and full enjoyment of the glory of God in the face of Christ (Piper, 2005). Everything referred as the gospel relates to the teaching done by Jesus Christ and his followers. According to Martin Luther, the gospel is any message centred on Christ, revealing that Christ is the son of God who became man, was crucified and resurrected; thereby placing man above all other things (Wax, 2009).

Methodology of Research

Data in this study were collected using primary and secondary sources. Secondary data were mainly collected through libraries

and from the internet. The collection of primary data was done through fieldtrips. Fieldtrips were made to the urban centres and to rural settlements. Primary data were collected in the urban centres of Douala, Limbe, Buea, Nkongsamba, Tiko, Mbanga, and Souza. The villages of Mudeka and Missellele were also visited for the collection of primary data. In the areas visited, 30 materialism gospel denominations and 9 non-materialism gospel churches were randomly selected for the distribution of questionnaire. Four materialism gospel churches were selected from each of the seven urban centres and one materialism gospel church was selected from each of the two villages. One

non-materialism gospel church was selected from each of the nine settlements. Questionnaires were distributed to Christians and preachers of the gospel. Members of materialism gospel churches and those of non-materialism gospel churches were issued 300 questionnaires and 42 questionnaires respectively, distributed using the proportionate stratified sampling method to determine the number of respondents per church. In each church, the respondents were selected randomly. Out of the 342 questionnaires distributed, 297 were filled and returned, giving an 86.8% realisation rate. Table 1 below illustrates the distribution of questionnaires in the field.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires

Locality	Materialism gospel churches		Non-materialism gospel churches	
	<i>N° of questionnaires distributed</i>	<i>N° of questionnaires returned</i>	<i>N° of questionnaires distributed</i>	<i>N° of questionnaires returned</i>
Douala	69	61	7	7
Limbe	52	47	6	5
Buea	46	38	6	6
Nkongsamba	38	31	5	5
Tiko	35	32	4	3
Mbanga	21	17	4	4
Souza	17	14	4	3
Mudeka	11	10	3	3
Missellele	11	08	3	3
Total	300	258	42	39
Percentage	100	86	100	92.9

Source: Fieldwork data

Interviews were also used to collect primary data. Guided interviews were granted to 11

materialism gospel preachers, 16 other materialism gospel Christians and 12 non-

materialism gospel members. Participant observation was used in collecting qualitative data as the researcher participated in church services of all the 30 materialism gospel churches selected.

The cross-tabulation method was employed in the analysis of quantitative data. The tables showed the relationship among the different variables. Data were mostly transformed to arithmetic means and percentages. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and narrative analysis methods. Content analysis method examined qualitative data from which conclusions were drawn. Narrative analysis method enabled the interpretation of some narrations provided by respondents during interviews.

Results and Discussions

1. Modes of Preaching of Materialism Gospel Preachers

It was generally observed that materialism preachers preach in ways that make their followers adhere to their preaching. Their modes of preaching gave hope for a brighter future in terms of the material possession that their Christians would acquire. They made their followers to believe that for them to experience increase in their material possessions or wealth, they had to be faithful and believe in the word of God. These preachers made their followers to know that material possessions were obtained from God when the Christians offered material and spiritual asserts to God. The belief to obtain material prosperity from God was held by 97.3% of members of materialism gospel churches who claimed that they just needed to be faithful to the word of God to obtain material blessings.

Most prosperity gospel preachers were inspirational and motivational speakers. They inspired and motivated their followers to believe that with God, all things were possible. So the followers believed that their future had to be better than their present. They used phrases such as “you are the first and not the last; you will rise from grass to grace; your cries will be turned to joy; and

your disgrace will be turned to grace”. These materialism gospel preachers had talented ways of giving hopes to their followers. In each church service, they made their followers to believe that poverty was a curse and that the Christians were supposed to be rich in material possessions.

Materialism gospel preachers all made their followers to believe that in order for God to bless them with material wealth, they had to pay a tithe of their material possession in monetary form. These prosperity gospel preachers made their followers to believe that they could not rub God by not paying tithes and expected to receive material blessings. The preachers used a popular quotation from the Bible where according to them, God is warning Christians not to rub him of his tithes but to pay their complete tithes and they will be abundantly blessed in material possessions (Dickson Teacher’s Bible, 2011, Mal. 3:10). Followers of materialism gospel believed that their material blessings depended on their payment of tithes as 92.6% of these Christians paid tithes to their preachers and out of these tithe payers, 93.7% claimed that they paid their tithes so that God should bless them in material possessions.

Christians who believed in materialism gospel were convinced by their preachers to offer different types of offerings as prerequisites for material blessings. The preachers of materialism gospel made their followers to “sow seeds” in order to receive material blessings. Seed sowing was a type of offering whereby the Christians were made to believe that if they needed any material wealth from God, they could move God to provide their needs by giving a specific offering called a seed. The seeds were either sowed as personal offering to the church or to the preacher. Once the seeds were sown, the preacher had to make special requests to God for the needs of the sowers to be met by God. Okoli and Uhembe (2014) proved that Christians of materialism gospel churches had to offer and pay monetary and material goods in order to gain divine favour.

73.3% of members of materialism gospel churches sowed seeds at least once a year to provoke God to bless them in material things.

Christians of materialism gospel churches were convinced by their church preachers that they had to provoke God to make them rich in material possessions by offering the most cherished material possessions. This could be a house, a car or an entire bank saving. In many church services, materialism gospel preachers who promoted this type of offering brought some church members to give testimonies of how they offered all they had and God replenished them many folds with material blessings. These testimonies motivated other Christians to believe in this type of offering. An interview with one of the materialism gospel preachers - a pastor in a church in Douala led to the following clarification:

Seed sowing is one of the most important offerings in the church. A seed is supposed to be anything of great value which the Christian is willing to offer to God in order for the Christian to receive more blessings. I call this type of offering "Isaac offering". Referring to Abraham in the Bible who was ready to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering to God. Isaac was his only son but he was willing to offer him as a sacrifice to God. Because of this, God blessed Abraham and made him the father of all nations. Christians in my church who sowed seeds of great values have testified of the abundant blessings they have received from God.

Materialism gospel preachers all claimed to have the gift to prophesy. In their church

services, they made many prophecies that mostly related to promises of God to bless the Christians with immense material wealth. These preachers made open generalised prophecies and their followers mostly connected themselves to these prophecies by shouting "I receive". However, these Christians understood that they could not cheat God. Thus, they had to pay their tithes, offer different types of offerings, avoid sins and be steadfast in prayers for them to receive these promised material blessings.

Prosperity preachers claimed to be God's chosen representatives on earth. They claimed that whatever they declared about a Christian had to happen. They made their followers to depend on them for blessings. Many Christians did everything they could to receive the blessings of their preachers whom they called "Men of God". They offer gifts to their preachers to receive blessings; they paid visits to the houses of their preachers and did everything they could to please their church preachers in order to receive blessings from the preachers. This made the Christians always scrambling to meet the needs of the preachers and the church in order to be blessed. Of the total respondents interviewed, 32.6% of materialism gospel Christians visited the homes of their church pastors at least once a month, while 17.4% gave gifts to their pastors during these visits. These visits and gifts were motivations to receive blessings both from the pastors and from God. Materialism gospel preachers made their followers to understand that they bless as well as they curse. They claimed that Jesus Christ gave them power to bless and to curse by quoting a passage from the Bible where Jesus Christ mentioned that his followers have the power to permit and forbid on earth whatever they wanted (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Matt. 18:18).

2. Causes of Scramble for Materialism Gospel

(a) Economic hardship in Cameroon

After gaining its independence, Cameroon witnessed a steady economic growth under its first president. Tembi (2014) declared that Cameroon experienced continuous economic growth from the year 1960 to the year 1986 but suffered an economic crisis in the 1990s with a 50 percent devaluation of the CFA franc, followed by a 60 percent salary reduction. The economic crisis in Cameroon in the 1990s caused severe economic hardship in the country which has continued into the 2020s. In the year 2014, it was declared that 37.5 percent of Cameroonians, making 8 million of the 21.7 million inhabitants lived below the poverty line, with less than XAF 931 (1.6 US Dollars) per day (Cameroon Country Study, April 2019). In the early 2000s, Cameroon was classified as a highly indebted poor country by the World Bank. The severe economic hardship created a suffering population in Cameroon that yearned for any form of miracle to take them out of the deep poverty. Thus, Pentecostal church promoters took advantage of the difficult economic situation in Cameroon and started spreading materialism gospel by convincing the population that their adherence to the gospel will enable them to acquire material blessings that will see them out of poverty. Golo (2013) argued that materialism gospel was to Africa a means of liberation from poverty.

In the 1990s, despite the chronic economic hardship many people did not adhere to the materialism gospel. This was because Catholicism and Protestantism were doctrines that had a firm grip on majority of Christians who found difficulties abandoning these Christian cultures. However, the increase in the severity of the economic crisis into the 21st Century and the inability of the Cameroon government to provide economic measures to reduce the sufferings of the masses pushed many poor people to accept materialism gospel as a spiritual means of alleviating poverty (Akoko, 2007).

Materialism gospel churches preached to Cameroonians that they could become materially rich without any employment and with little or no physical effort as God always performed miracles that went against natural laws. The people were told by prosperity gospel preachers that all they needed to do was to have faith in the word of God and obey the commandments and laws of God. According to 66.7% of non-materialism gospel members interviewed, people who became members of materialism gospel churches were frustrated mainly by economic failures or hardship. Among Christians of materialism gospel churches, 37.2% respondents strongly agreed and 44.8% agreed that among the reasons for joining materialism gospel churches was to acquire material blessings.

(b) State promotion of religious organisations

The state of Cameroon has favoured the spread of materialism gospel through the ease with which people can create and operate churches in Cameroon. The state of Cameroon promotes freedom of worship and freedom of association as fundamental human rights. Akoko (2002, 2007) explained that the liberalisation of the activities of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon in the late 1980s by the state of Cameroon encouraged new churches to be established in the country. The liberalisation of the creation of churches in Cameroon was favoured by political movements in Cameroon that requested for greater human rights.

In the 1990s the state of Cameroon assured the people from north to south of their freedom of religion and worship by including a clause in the preamble of the 1996 constitution. This constitution guaranteed freedom of religion and worship and declared that no person shall be harassed on grounds of his or her religious beliefs and worship. This protection of religion and worship by the 1996 constitution further encouraged many Pentecostal churches to be created in Cameroon. Among these Pentecostal

churches were many materialism gospel churches.

According to 61.3% respondents of Catholic and Presbyterian Christians in Cameroon, most Pentecostal churches in Cameroon were materialism gospel churches that used messages of spiritual wealth to attract their followers. These Catholic and Presbyterian Christians declared that many promoters of materialism gospel had little mastery of the word of God in the Bible. Once some people were able to quote few chapters and verses of the Bible, they created prayer cells that gathered Christians in some neighbourhoods. After a short while of operating the prayer cells, these prayer cells were converted into materialism gospel churches with almost no government prohibition.

To create churches in Cameroon, the preachers just had to register their churches with the Ministry of Territorial Administration in Cameroon. This made people to create many materialism gospel churches where they easily attracted large population whom they promised God's blessings in the form of material possessions. The state of Cameroon hardly controlled what the church owners preached. Thus, many church owners promoted materialism gospel where they extorted money from their followers by promising them divine material blessings.

(c) The influence of media organs

The use of the media was one of the reasons why many people in Cameroon scrambled for materialism gospel. There has been a proliferation of gospel television stations in Cameroon. These gospel television stations were used to preach materialism gospel to the population. Every materialism gospel preacher in Cameroon struggled to create a radio or television station to advertise his/her church activities. Many materialism gospel preachers who did not own radio and television stations had created radio and television programs which were aired in many local radio and television stations. They used these local radio and television stations to preach materialism gospel.

People who did not attend their churches were still able to be attracted to this materialism gospel through the mass media. Thus, many people became members of materialism gospel churches. Close to half, that is, 42.2% respondents who are Christians of materialism gospel churches claimed that their churches used the internet, radio and televisions to transmit the gospel. A total of 20.2% of members of prosperity gospel churches claimed that the use of the internet, radio and television stations to preach materialism gospel was the main factor that attracted them to become members of their various materialism gospel churches.

(d) Supporting messages from the bible

One of the main reasons why people scrambled for materialism gospel was the religious message from the Bible. Many people believed in quotations from the Bible where God has promised to bless man with material riches (Akoko, 2007). Prosperity preachers mostly quoted these verses of the Bible to attract people to their churches. Christians were made to understand that God's promises in the Bible manifest to those who believe. They were made to believe that if they ask anything from God; they will receive what they ask.

Preachers of materialism gospel used many Bible verses to make their followers believe that they could not serve God and remain poor. In many of their church services, they made sure they increased the assurances of their followers of imminent increase in wealth from God. These preachers mostly used an area of the Bible where Christ declared that those who ask shall receive, those who seek shall find and those who knock shall have the door opened; as God in heaven shall give the best gifts to those who ask, seek and knock (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Matthew 7:7-11). These preachers mostly made their followers to believe that by giving a tithe of their wealth to God, they will become so wealthy that they won't have enough space to contain the material wealth from God (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Malachi 3:10).

(e) Luxurious lifestyles of the materialism gospel preachers

A reason for the scramble for materialism gospel was the luxurious lifestyles of most of the materialism gospel preachers. Most materialism gospel preachers lived in great affluence. They had luxury cars, lived in well-furnished houses and dressed expensively. They made people to know that all what they had as material possessions was due to God's blessings. These materialism gospel preachers preached to people that they will be blessed likewise if they become their followers.

Many materialism gospel preachers showed off their wealth as bait to people seeking material wealth. They made people to believe that they could connect themselves to the preachers and be blessed in like manner. This made many people to become members of materialism gospel churches as they desired to enjoy the luxurious lifestyles of these gospel preachers. Dei and Osei-Bonsu (2014) narrated that promoters of materialism gospel were used to making shows of opulence and exhibiting flamboyant dresses, cars and houses to attract followers.

3. Positive Effects of Materialism Gospel in Cameroon

(a) Increase in investment and economic growth

Many Christians of materialism gospel churches claimed that their membership in their churches had made them to carry out many investments. These people declared that God had promised them immense material blessings and they had no fear of investing in businesses. According to these people, they had hopes that whatever they sowed had to prosper and give them bountiful returns. They claimed that their God is good and blesses the work of their hands. It was revealed that 32.1% of Christians who were businesspersons had increased their businesses as they had faith that they could not fail in their investments. These people claimed that God had promised

them those material blessings so they had to invest more to reap more from God.

Many Christians of materialism gospel churches who had invested based on the faith in material prosperity made huge profits from their investments. It was discovered that 67.6% of materialism gospel Christians who had increased their investments made huge profits from these business investments. Most of these people had used their profits to expand their businesses, build houses in which they lived, while other houses they constructed were leased out to tenants. Materialism gospel churches were great investors. The churches made much money from the tithes and offerings. Many of these churches had constructed schools and hospitals which were operating as business ventures. Many materialism gospel churches had invested in radio and television stations. These media stations primarily promoted the gospel of these churches but many were also involved in paid advertisements which generated revenue for the churches.

(b) Increase assurance, happiness and social cohesion

One clear social positive effect of materialism gospel was the fact that it increased the level of confidence of its members. Christians of materialism gospel churches had great confidence in everything they did. This was mainly because they had been made to believe that they could do all things through Jesus Christ. Their confidence did not die even when they failed in some of their ventures. They continued to be assured of a future success as they had been made to believe that God's time is the best. Many Christians declared that for many years; they had been asking God to give them many things, especially material wealth. Even though they had not received these things from God, they remained confident that one day, God will satisfy their requests.

The high confidence portrayed by Christians of materialism gospel churches had made many of these Christians to live happy lives. Of the total interviewed, 82.4% of Christians

of materialism gospel churches strongly agreed that they were living very happy lives. Most of these Christians claimed that even if they lived in poverty or in need, they would still be happy with their lives. These Christians were happy as they believed that at God's chosen time, they will obtain all material blessings from their God. Prosperity gospel Christians were also happy because they believed that they will live eternal lives in heaven with God and Jesus Christ after they die.

A social benefit of materialism gospel churches was social cohesion among members of the same materialism gospel church. These Christians developed very strong social relationships and solidarity towards one another. They were one another's keeper; always ready to assist one another in whichever way possible. Christians of materialism gospel churches were prompt to assist other members of their churches in times of sickness, bereavement and in other social ills. They made friends among themselves and encouraged one-another in whatever they did.

4. Negative Effects of Materialism Gospel in Cameroon

(a) Laziness among many members

It is true that materialism gospel churches motivated many of their Christians through the promises of material blessings from God. However, many other Christians of these churches became so lazy and expected God to bless them even when they did nothing to generate wealth. These were Christians who believed that material blessing was a spiritual gift from God. They spent much time in the churches shouting "I receive" to every prophecy of material increase made by their gospel preachers.

Many Christians spent many hours per day praying to God to provide their material needs. Majority of these materialism gospel Christians usually fasted and prayed for many days each month when they needed anything from God. Instead of these Christians investing their time at work, they

preferred to depend on God for their material needs. This was portrayed by 83.3% of these Christians who declared that a Christian could not become wealthy without God's blessings and by 41.5% of the Christians who declared that even without human efforts God could still make them wealthy in material possessions. This category of materialism gospel Christians were mainly those who had become lazy and were waiting for God to provide their material needs by divine miracles.

(c) Business failures through limited skills

Many materialism gospel Christians had witnessed business failures because they believed that God had promised them success in all what they did. Many of these Christians declared that success in any business venture did not depend on the level of skills possessed by the businessperson but depended on the faith that the business person had in God. Many of these Christians had gone into business ventures where they had no skills but were motivated by the fact that they had divine assurance to succeed. Some of these Christians declared that they could do all things through Christ who strengthens them; a popular quotation from the Bible (Dickson Teacher's Bible, 2011, Phil. 4:13). Unfortunately many of them had failed in business ventures and still continued to fail as they continued to trust in God's miracles for business success.

(b) Poverty

One particularity of Christians of materialism gospel churches was the economic contrast among the members. Some of the members were materially wealthy while others were materially poor. The problem with the class of materially poor Christians was that most of them accepted to be poor but refused to accept the fact that they could come out of poverty by acquiring vocational and business skills; and working very hard in economic activities. These materially poor Christians believed that their payment of tithes, money and material offerings, prayers and trust in

their God were enough efforts to take them out of poverty.

In this study, 57.8% of materialism gospel Christians lived below the poverty line of less than 1.6 US Dollars per day. These poor Christians acknowledged their economic poverty but continued to trust in God for miracles that would take them out of poverty. These Christians declared that they were waiting on God's time to remove them out of poverty. Unfortunately, these Christians had been living in economic poverty for a long time. Asamoah (2013) showed that there was great inconsistency with the prosperity gospel preached and the fact that majority of their followers lived in lack of some basic necessities.

(c) Promotion of discrimination and isolation by the society

Christians of materialism gospel churches developed social cohesion among themselves. However, they tended to isolate other people who did not belong to their churches. This was seen at the micro and at the macro levels. At the micro level, children had been abandoned by their parents; people had dissociated themselves from brothers and sisters for either belonging to materialism gospel churches or for not being members of these churches. At the macro scale, many Christians of materialism gospel churches claimed that they were discriminated upon by non-believers of materialism gospel in the society.

Many non-members of materialism gospel churches declared that these materialism gospel churches and their Christians promoted discrimination and isolated people who did not share their religious beliefs. They claimed that when materialism gospel churches or their members offered employments and help of any sort, members of their churches were mostly the sole beneficiaries. People claimed that in order to be employed in business ventures such as schools and hospitals owned by materialism gospel churches, a person had to be a member of the materialism gospel church before he/she was employed. These people

claimed that non-members of the materialism gospel churches could only be employed in these church investments when the employers could not find qualified applicants among their church members. They went further and declared that when non-members of the materialism gospel churches were employed by these churches, they were expected to become members of these churches. If they failed to join, they were replaced whenever the churches had qualified church members who could take over the job opportunities.

Conclusion

From the above results of this study, it is clear that majority of Christians who scramble for materialism gospel wants to become wealthy in material possession without the necessary inputs that can guarantee access to these material possessions. These people feel that because they believe in God, they have to be materially wealthy. Some go as far as claiming that it is wrong for an atheist to be materially wealthy while believers of the gospel of Jesus Christ are materially poor. To these believers, God has a duty to make them materially wealthy even if he has to spiritually take the material wealth of atheists and give to them. This explains why many followers of materialism gospel are lazy and they hardly get involved in major economic activities that can make them materially wealthy. The preachers of materialism gospel use the gospel of material prosperity to extort money from their followers who quest for material blessings from God. These preachers make these followers to believe that there must be a social exchange between the Christians and God whereby the Christians have to pay a tithe of their incomes or harvests, give all sorts of offerings, fast for long periods and avoid committing sins. The money these preachers collect from their followers enables the preachers to live in great affluence and they make their followers to believe that they will also be richly blessed by God for the material and spiritual sacrifices they make.

Unfortunately, many followers of materialism gospel continue to live in abject material poverty but continue to trust in God as they have been made to know that God's time is not man's time, and that God's time is the best.

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