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TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING
IN CHARISMATIC AND PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN TOGO

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IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY

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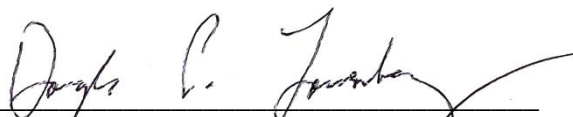
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IN PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO


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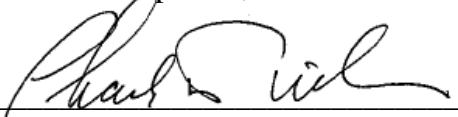
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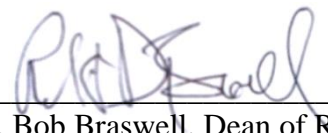
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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	xii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
DEDICATION	xiv
CHARTS.....	xvii
TABLES	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xx
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
Background to the Study.....	1
Purpose Statement.....	3
Problem Statement	4
Research Questions (RQs)	4
Basic Nature of the Empirical Phase of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	6
Limitations	6
Delimitations.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	7
Bless / Blessing	7
Contextualization	8
Pentecostal Churches	9
Charismatic Churches	9

Assumptions.....	10
Research Methodology	11
Summary.....	11
2. BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Introduction.....	13
Blessing in Old Testament Literature	14
Concept of Blessing in the Old Testament	14
Content of Blessing in the Old Testament	15
Source of Blessing in the Old Testament.....	17
Conditions and Means for Blessing in the Old Testament	21
Purpose of Blessing in the Old Testament.....	22
Blessing in New Testament Literature.....	24
Concept of Blessing in the New Testament.....	24
Content of Blessing in the New Testament.....	26
Source of Blessing in the New Testament	26
Means of Blessing in the New Testament.....	27
Purpose of Blessing in the New Testament	27
Blessing in Christian Literature	28
Concept of Blessing in Christian Literature.....	28
Source of Blessing in Christian Literature.....	38
Content of Blessing in Christian Literature	39
Conditions and Means of Blessing in Christian Literature.....	41
Purpose of Blessing in Christian Literature	42
Summary.....	43

3. SOCIAL LITERATURE REVIEW	45
Introduction.....	45
Blessing in African Traditional Religions	46
Concept of Blessing in ATRs	46
Content of Blessing in ATRs	47
Conditions and Means of Blessing in ATRs.....	48
Source of Blessing in ATRs.....	51
Purpose of Blessing in ATRs.....	52
Blessing in Some Togolese Traditional Cultures.....	53
Blessing among the <i>Adja-Ewe</i>	54
Blessing among the <i>Kabiyè</i>	55
Blessing among the <i>Moba-Gurma</i>	57
Prosperity Theology.....	58
The Concept of Prosperity	58
What Is Prosperity Theology?	59
Historical Overview of the Prosperity Teaching	62
The Root of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa	63
The Teachings of the Prosperity Gospel.....	67
Some Characteristics of the Prosperity Gospel.....	75
Summary.....	76
4. METHODOLOGY	77
Introduction.....	77
Methodological Framework.....	79
Exegetical/Hermeneutical Approach	79

Mixed Methodological Approach.....	79
Qualitative Research Method.....	81
Quantitative Research Method.....	82
Research Participants	83
Interview Participants and Sampling Strategy	83
Survey Participants and Sampling Strategy	85
Researcher as Research Participant	87
Instrumentation	87
Semi-structured Interview Guide.....	87
Questionnaire Survey Guide.....	88
Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments.....	88
Data Collection Methodology.....	91
Qualitative Data Collection.....	92
Quantitative Data Collection.....	92
Data Analysis Procedures	92
Interview Data Analysis.....	93
Questionnaire Survey Data Analysis	94
Ethical Considerations	95
Confidentiality	95
Informed Consent and Privacy.....	95
Summary	96
5. EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF BLESSING.....	96
Exegetical/Hermeneutical Approach	96
Examination of Blessing in the Old Testament	98

The Concept of בָּרַךְ <i>brk</i> in the Old Testament	98
The Concept of the Word אָשַׁר (<i>ashar, ashrê, asrê</i>)	103
The Blessing of God over the Creation.....	106
The Abrahamic Blessing (Gen. 12:1–3)	108
Jacob Wrestles with God for a Blessing (Gen. 32:22–32).....	115
The Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:22–27).....	120
The Covenantal Blessing	125
The Blessing in the Psalms and Proverbs	128
Psalm 67 and the Purpose of Material Blessing.....	132
Psalm 128.....	133
Blessing in the Prophets.....	136
Examination of Blessing in the New Testament.....	136
The Meaning of <i>εὐλογέω</i>	137
The Meaning of <i>μακάριος</i>	138
Blessing (<i>μακάριος</i>) in the Beatitudes	141
Spiritual Blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3).....	145
The Seven Beatitudes of Revelation	149
Summary	158
6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS	161
Introduction.....	161
Restatement of Research Questions.....	161
Qualitative Research Findings and Results.....	162
RQ 1. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Charismatics.....	162
Other Practices Associated with Blessing.....	170

RQ 2. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals in Togo	171
Quantitative Research Findings and Results.....	176
RQ 1. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Charismatics.....	176
RQ 2. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals.....	191
Comparative Analysis of Blessing in CC and PC.....	207
Summary	210
Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Charismatics (RQ 1.)	210
Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals (RQ 2.)	211
7. AN EVALUATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF BLESSING AMONG CHARISMATICS AND PENTECOSTALS IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE.....	213
Introduction.....	213
Contextual Theology.....	213
A Contextual Model for a Contextual Theology of Blessing	214
Critical Evaluation of the Perceptions of Blessing in the CC/PC.....	216
Elements of Conformity.....	216
Elements of Deviation.....	219
Summary	222
8. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	227
Introduction.....	227
Summary of Findings.....	227
Research Question One (RQ 1.).....	227
Research Question Two (RQ 2.).....	229
Research Question Three (RQ 3.).....	230
Research Question Four (RQ 4.).....	233

Research Question Five (RQ 5.).....	235
Research Question Six (RQ 6.).....	237
Conclusions.....	239
A Contextual Biblical Theology of Blessing	240
Definition of blessing.....	240
God’s Sovereignty Motive	242
The Relationship Motive.....	243
The Enrichment Motive	245
The Empowerment Motive	247
The Unrealized Eschatology Motive (Already, but Not Yet Motive)	248
Implications.....	250
Future Research	252
Summary.....	252
 Appendix	
A. VALIDATION COMMITTEE.....	256
B. VALIDATION COMMITTEE CONSENT FORM	257
C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	258
D. AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	259
E. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	259
F. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FORM.....	260
G. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	261
H. SAMPLE SIZE REQUIRED FOR A KNOWN POPULATION	263
I. QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY	264

J. CHURCHES SURVEYED.....	268
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	269

ABSTRACT

The present research investigated components of a contextual biblical theology of blessing consistent with Scripture which can serve to evaluate the understanding of blessing along with the prosperity teaching in charismatic and Pentecostal Churches in Togo. The study utilized the historical-grammatical exegetical approach to Scripture and social science mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative methods) with people.

The exegetical examination revealed that blessing is an endowment of power from God that enriches and empowers the recipient to successfully accomplish a divine mandate. Blessing is the spiritual possession of believers in Christ. It is also an eschatological state of happiness promised to committed, obedient, and persevering children of God. The social/field research (qualitative and quantitative), as well as the exegetical research, showed that blessing is an all-inclusive word unpacked in spiritual, material, physical, social, and psychological components. Blessing originates from God and is conditioned by covenant or faith relationship with God expressed in obedience.

The findings of the research allowed the formulation of a definition of blessing that includes five elements: God's sovereignty motive, the relationship motive, the enrichment motive, the empowerment motive, and the unrealized eschatology motive. The research also suggests four sorts of blessing: common blessing for all people, covenant blessing for God's covenant people, faith blessing for believers in Christ, and specific blessing for specific individuals. The research suggests the need for developing contextual theologies in other areas pertaining to the life of the church in Africa.

DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

To my parents, Douti and Tchandante

To my dear and lovely wife Yendoukoi Rebecca, and

To our three wonderful children, gifts from God, Grace, Aimé, and Gloria

I dedicate this study.

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CHARTS

1. Comparing Perceptions of CB and CP about Concept and Content of Blessing.....	181
2. Comparing Perceptions of CB and CP about Sources of Blessing.....	183
3. Comparing Perceptions of CB and CP about Conditions of Blessing	187
4. Comparing Perceptions of CB and CP about Purpose of Blessing.....	191
5. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Concept and Content of Blessing.....	195
6. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Sources of Blessing.....	197
7. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Conditions for Blessing.....	203
8. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Purpose of Blessing.....	206
9. Comparative Analysis: Concept and Content of Blessing in CC and PC.....	207
10. Comparative Analysis: Source of Blessing in CC and PC	208
11. Comparative Analysis: Conditions/Means of Blessing in CC and PC	209
12. Comparative Analysis: Purpose of Blessing in CC and PC.....	209

TABLES

1. Summary of the Concept of Blessing by Different Authors.....	37
2. Use of בָּרַךְ <i>brk</i>	102
3. Meaning of the Hebrew Root בָּרַךְ <i>brk</i> , “to Bless/Blessing”.....	102
4. Use and Meaning of εὐλογέω.....	138
5. Structure of the Beatitudes.....	141
6. Comparison of the Beatitudes in Matthew/Luke and in Revelation.....	151
7. Concept and Content of Blessing among Charismatics.....	162
8. Sources of Blessing among Charismatics.....	164
9. Conditions and Means of Blessing among Charismatics.....	165
10. Purpose of Blessing among Charismatics.....	167
11. Concept and Content of Blessing among Pentecostals.....	171
12. Sources of Blessing among Pentecostals.....	172
13. Conditions and Means of Blessing among Pentecostals.....	174
14. Purpose of Blessing among Pentecostals.....	175
15. Concept and Content of Blessing among CB.....	176
16. Concept and Content of Blessing among CP.....	179
17. Sources of Blessing among CB.....	181
18. Sources of Blessing among CP.....	182
19. Conditions and means for blessing among CB.....	183
20. Conditions and means for blessing among CP.....	186
21. Comparing Perceptions of CB and PB on Conditions/Mean for Blessing.....	187

22. Purpose of Blessing among CB	188
23. Purpose of Blessing among CP.....	189
24. Concept and Content of Blessing among PB	191
25. Concept and Content of Blessing among PP	194
26. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Spiritual Aspect of Blessing.....	195
27. Sources of Blessing among PB	195
28. Sources of Blessing among PP	196
29. Conditions and means for blessing among PB	198
30. Conditions and means for blessing among PP	201
31. Comparing Perceptions of PB and PP about Conditions for Blessing.....	203
32. Purpose of Blessing among PB.....	204
33. Purpose of Blessing among PP	205
34. Elements of Conformity between Perception of Blessing in CC/PC and Scripture ..	224
35. Elements of Deviation between Perception of Blessing in CC/PC and Scripture	226

ABBREVIATIONS

Dictionaries and Lexicons

DOT	Dictionary of the Old Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

Other Abbreviations

CC	Charismatic Churches
mn	Mean
mdn	Median
mde	Mode
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PC	Pentecostal Churches

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Background to the Study

A major issue confronts Christianity in Africa today. Faith in Jesus is viewed by many church adherents as a means to meeting their materialistic and anthropocentric needs and desires. This, in part, is understandable because Africans are facing real existential problems: poverty, sicknesses and diseases, unemployment, superstition and demonic activities, and socio-economic and political crises, to name a few. People are seeking hope in religion, particularly in Christianity. This context has favored the prosperity gospel that promises health and wealth in exchange for faith and practices that are questionable when viewed from a biblical perspective.

It is worth noting that the aspiration for blessing is a universal aspiration. Brown observes that adherents of all religions

have actively sought the blessing of a specific deity or spirit, believing that this blessing will make them fertile, or prosper them, protect them, deliver them, heal them, preserve them, empower them, exalt them, favor them, or, possibly, bring about all the above. The blessing is thought of as tangible, its effects perceivable and, at times, measurable. The more powerful the deity, the more important the blessing.¹

This human aspiration for blessing and prosperity coupled with the socio-economic realities of most Africans partly explains why Pentecostal and charismatic churches are

¹Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 758.

growing rapidly in Africa today. A study conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2006 and published in 2007 states that “of Africa’s 890 million people, 147 million are now ‘renewalists.’”² This movement, the report continues, “makes up more than a fourth of Nigeria's population, more than a third of South Africa's, and a whopping 56 percent of Kenya's.”³ It is estimated that in Lomé (the capital city of Togo) alone, one can number no less than 400 “revival churches” over a total population of about 1 million.⁴ To date, a total of 5,103 churches and religious denominations all over the country are registered at the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Communities of Togo, including 1,149 in Lomé alone.⁵ This explosive growth of Christianity in Africa among renewal churches has been mainly fueled by the blessing

²Isaac Phiri and Joe Maxwell. According to Phiri and Maxwell, the term “renewalists” includes both Pentecostals and charismatics. For N. A. Magnuson, “‘Renewal’ will encompass the larger movement to reform and revitalize the church, a movement that includes such diverse components as mass evangelism; efforts to promote personal witnessing; revivals (in the sense of outpourings of the Holy Spirit); the faith at work, charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal), and church growth movements; the awakening among youth; efforts for renewal that have emanated from individual congregations; and the larger evangelical renaissance.” N. A. Magnuson, “Renewal Church,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1010.

³Phiri and Maxwell.

⁴Amour Gbovi, “Le business des églises évangéliques,” *Le Magazine de l’Afrique*, Juillet-Aout 2012, 72. According to Timothy K. Beougher, “The word ‘revival’ means to wake up and live. The basic idea of revival is the returning of something to its true nature and purpose. It is a special movement of the Spirit of God in which he renews the hearts of believers. Earle Cairns defines revival as ‘the work of the Holy Spirit in restoring the people of God to a more vital spiritual life, witness, and work by prayer and the Word after repentance in crisis for their spiritual decline (1986:22).” Timothy K. Beougher, “Revival, Revivals,” ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 831.

For Ed Mathews, “The divine side of renewal is called revival. The human manifestation is labeled . . . renewal movements. . . . Renewal movements typically emerge when religions lose their vitality. . . . Spiritual renewal usually involves both borrowing and inventing a reworking of old and adding of new religious elements.” Ed Mathews, “Renewal Movements,” ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 823.

⁵Direction des Cultes du Ministère de l’Administration Territoriale, de la Décentralisation et des Collectivités Locales, May 2020.

and prosperity teaching that emphasizes health and wealth at the neglect of sin, redemption, and repentance.⁶

The researcher has served as a pastor with the Assemblies of God, Togo, for more than twenty years. He understands well the social and religious context of the church in Togo. He teaches and preaches the Word of God with a commitment to delivering biblically-sound teaching to help Christians grow to maturity. He is concerned about the veracity of the interpretation of biblical passages that speak about blessing and the truthfulness of the messages that are proclaimed to desperate people. Instead of leading Christians to maturity and equipping them for service, the “prosperity” preachers and believers seem to be preoccupied by tangible, physical blessing, and material prosperity.

As a result, Christians give priority to material blessing over obedience, holiness of life, and commitment to Christ and his mission. They give to God, not out of love for the Lord and his kingdom, but in order to be blessed and get back the hundredfold. Those who are rich think that they deserve it; the poor feel that God is unfair to them and owes them something. Prayers are centered on personal needs, rather than on personal relationship with God and on God’s mission. I feel an urgent need to help the church by contributing to a biblical understanding of the concept of blessing. I believe the course work at PAtHs and all the readings have prepared and equipped me for this task.

Purpose Statement

A major demographic shift of Christianity from the West to the South currently characterizes the global church. This growth of Christianity in Africa places a great

⁶Trevin Wax, “Book Review: Preachers of a Different Gospel (by Femi B. Adeleye),” *9Mark.Org*, last modified February 2012, <http://www.9marks.org/books/book-review-preachers-different-gospel> (accessed August 9, 2012).

responsibility upon the African church to take the gospel to other parts of the world. But in the midst of this change the question is: what is the quality of the Christianity that Africa is exporting to other nations? It is the responsibility of the church in Africa to reflect on theological and practical issues that face Christianity in Africa and address those subjects that are inconsistent with biblical revelation. The purpose of this study is to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing resulting from an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine.

Problem Statement

The word *blessing* is a biblical concept that is often used by preachers and believers in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo. The question investigated in this research is: What components of a contextual biblical theology of blessing are consistent with Scripture and can serve to evaluate the understanding of blessing along with the prosperity teaching propagated by charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo?

Research Questions (RQ)

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. RQ 1. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics in Togo?
 - A. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic pastors in Togo?

- B. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic believers in Togo?
2. RQ 2. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals in Togo?
 - A. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostal pastors in Togo?
 - B. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostal believers in Togo?
3. RQ 3. What are the factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo regarding blessing?
 - A. What are the historical factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo?
 - B. What are the socio-economic factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo?
 - C. What are the cultural factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo?
 - D. What are the theological factors influence the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo?
4. RQ 4. What are the perceptions and beliefs of blessing in biblical and Christian literature?
5. RQ 5. What does Scripture, Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT), teach about blessing?

6. RQ 6. Where is conformity to and deviation from Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of charismatic churches (CC)/Pentecostal churches (PC) regarding blessing?

Basic Nature of the Empirical Phase of the Study

A mixed-method design that utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research methods was used for this study. These methods are detailed in the section entitled Research Methodology.

Significance of the Study

For the academy, this research will contribute to the debate concerning a biblical and contextual theology of blessing. Theology must be both biblically informed and grounded, while at the same time addressing issues relevant to the cultural and social context. For the church in Togo, the research will help believers and church leaders in Pentecostal and charismatic churches to evaluate their perceptions, beliefs, and practices about material blessing. A contextually relevant biblical theology of blessing will positively impact Christian life and service among Pentecostal churches in Togo.

This research will be a tool to enrich the preaching and teaching ministries of those who desire to proclaim biblical truth that speaks to the realities of life in the African context. As any other minister of the Word, the researcher is called to build the church of Christ on sound doctrine for a qualitative growth of Christians.

Limitations

The controversial nature of the topic met with minor reluctance or hesitations from some church leaders. The success of this study depended on the willingness of

church leaders and members to answer honestly and openly the interview questions and the questionnaire survey. Some church leaders eagerly accepted to participate in the interview and responded honestly and openly to the interview questions. But others were suspicious, thinking that the research was trying to investigate their teaching and practices. Most of the questionnaire survey sheets distributed in churches were filled and collected immediately.

Delimitations

The research is limited to Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo. It targeted selected Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo. It focused on comparing and contrasting the current perceptions and beliefs of Togolese Pentecostals concerning material blessings with what the researcher exposes as the biblical teaching on blessings.

Definition of Terms

Bless/Blessing

Two Hebrew words carry the idea of blessing in the Old Testament. The first word is the verbal root of בָּרַךְ *brk* “to bless” used to mean “to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.”⁷ The second word אֲשֶׁרִי (*ashar, ashre, asre*) is rendered “fortunate, blessed is (he who), are (they who).”⁸

⁷R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2003), 1:132.

⁸William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 31.

The New Testament has two corresponding words related to “bless/blessing”: the verb *εὐλογέω*, the LXX translation of *barak*, which means “to speak well,”⁹ “to praise.”¹⁰ The second New Testament word is *μακάριος*, the LXX rendering of *asre*. It carries the idea of “blessed, fortunate, happy,”¹¹ “how happy, blessed is . . .” or “truly happy, blessed is . . .” with a particular “emphasis on a life in right relationship with God.”¹²

The word “blessing” is both a declaration of favored status,¹³ and a state of happiness, and success resulting from that declaration. The biblical meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words for blessing are given further development in the exegetical part of the study.

Contextualization

Contextualization consists in translating God’s Word in a particular cultural context. It is “presenting the unchanging truths of the gospel within the unique and changing contexts of cultures and worldviews.”¹⁴ According to Gilliland, contextualization is a tool “to enable, insofar as it is humanly possible, an understanding

⁹Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1:206.

¹⁰Lawrence O. Richards, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 130.

¹¹Colin Brown, 1:215.

¹²Michael L. Brown, “אשרי,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1:570.

¹³Audrey Barrick, “Theology Group Reflects on Impact of Prosperity Gospel,” *The Christian Post*, December 17, 2009, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/theology-group-reflects-on-impact-of-prosperity-gospel-42326/> (accessed August 9, 2012).

¹⁴Ed Stetzer, “Calling for Contextualization, Part 3: Knowing and Making Known the Gospel,” *Christianitytoday.com*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2010/july/calling-for-contextualization-part-3-knowing-and-making.html> (accessed February 14, 2015).

of what it means that Jesus Christ, the Word, is authentically experienced in each and every human situation."¹⁵ To have the greatest impact, the message of the gospel must be communicated in the thought patterns of the host culture.

Pentecostal Churches

Pentecostal Churches are churches which traditionally believe that the Holy Spirit baptism is a separate and subsequent experience to salvation, with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. The purpose for this second spiritual encounter with the Holy Spirit is to empower the believer to bear witness of the Lordship of Jesus Christ to those who have not heard the good news. The Pentecostal Movement is

a restorationist and millenarian movement highlighting the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit that emerged from the broader holiness movement beginning in 1901. Branches of modern Pentecostalism include “Classical” (denominational) Pentecostals, “Neo-Pentecostals (Charismatics), and so-called “Third Wave” evangelicals who view “signs and wonders” as essential for successful ministry (Acts 5:12).¹⁶

According to this definition, modern Pentecostal churches form a large Pentecostal movement together with renewalists and revival churches. In the context of Togo, this definition will include the Assemblies of God, the Church of Pentecost, and others.

Charismatic Churches

There are variations among scholars concerning the definition of the term *charismatic*. The term *charismatic movement* (CM) originally referred to “the occurrence

¹⁵Dean Gilliland, “Contextualization,” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 225.

¹⁶Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostal Movement,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 739–740.

of distinctively Pentecostal blessings and phenomena, experience of infilling/empowerment with the Holy Spirit (generally termed baptism in the Holy Spirit) with the spiritual gift of 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, outside a denominational and/or confessional Pentecostal framework.”¹⁷ But the term now “includes nondenominational patterns of charismatic Christianity. CM refers to all manifestations of Pentecostal-type Christianity that in some way differ from classical Pentecostalism in affiliation and/or doctrine.”¹⁸ Gill also refers to it as “the charismatic renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism” and “an extension of the Pentecostal revival.”¹⁹

Assumptions

The primary assumption of this study is that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, an authoritative norm in all matters of faith and practice. This inspired Word, when interpreted correctly,²⁰ informs people’s understanding of any biblical concept and practice. The Word of God is above culture and should be applied to every unique cultural and social context.

¹⁷P. D. Hocken, “Charismatic Movement,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 477. Some charismatics would hold that the Spirit baptism occurs at salvation. It is later that the manifestations of the Spirit occur. Speaking in tongues is not required as evidence of the Spirit baptism. Spirit baptism is neither separate nor subsequent to salvation.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Kenneth D. Gill, “Charismatic Missions,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 173.

²⁰Correct interpretation seeks to capture the original author’s intended meaning. This intended meaning is rooted in the literary and historical context of the biblical text and provides the correct and inspired meaning of the passage. Proper interpretation also considers the importance of canonical interpretation so that the meaning of the inspired author is consistent with what the Bible teaches when examining the entirety of Scripture.

Research Methodology

The research has utilized a mixed methodology approach combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The mixed methods approach “seeks convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results from the different methods.”²¹ Each research question was answered by using one or more research methods, including interviews, questionnaires, literature review (or integrative inquiry), and exegetical study.

Summary

The background of this study is the aspiration for material blessing and prosperity observed among Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in Togo today. This materialistic pursuit of blessing has been favored by the socio-economic and cultural context of the Church in Africa in general characterized by poverty, sicknesses and diseases, unemployment, superstitious beliefs and demonic activities. Taking advantage of this, some preachers of the gospel are promising blessing and material prosperity as a result of faith. As a consequence, the Word of God has been distorted and faith in Jesus is centered on blessing and prosperity.

The research, therefore, seeks to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing resulting from an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine. The researcher utilized

²¹J.C. Greene, V. J. Caracelli, and W. F. Graham, “Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed Method Evaluation Designs,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11 (3): 225–274, quoted in Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: for Small-scale Social Research Projects*, 4th ed. (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2010), 139.

a mixed methodology approach combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Blessing is a central theme in the Bible. From the beginning of biblical revelation, one can see many instances of God's blessing. God blesses Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:22, 28), he blesses the seventh day (Gen. 2:3), he blesses Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:1), and he blesses Abraham (Gen. 12), Isaac (Gen. 25:11), and Jacob (Gen. 35:9). In Genesis 12, God promised to bless, not only Abraham, but the entirety of humanity. This promise of blessing is a central focus of God's covenant relationship.¹

The Bible also reveals the extent of the practice of blessing and the value people attributed to it. The Hebrew people placed a high value on blessing, as it is demonstrated in the story of Jacob and Esau fighting for the paternal blessing (Gen. 27). Blessing "was regarded as a mark of Divine complacency and as a sure way to secure God's benevolence, peace, and protection."² This chapter is a review of the precedent biblical/theological literature about the concept of blessing in order to answer RQ 4: What are the perceptions and beliefs of blessing in the biblical and Christian literature? It will examine the perception of blessing both in OT and NT literature.

¹William E. Brown, "Blessing," in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary*, n.d., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/blessing.html> (accessed April 4, 2015).

²Patrick Morrisroe, "Blessing," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02599b.htm> (accessed April 7, 2015).

Blessing in Old Testament Literature

Blessing is one of the important themes of Old Testament theology. It occupies a central place in the Old Testament as well as in the Jewish culture and religion. Blessing occupied an essential and vital place in the Jewish religion. It was the most coveted pronouncement. Without blessing, success was impossible. Blessing was for the Jewish people what success is for the modern man.³ To understand the idea of blessing, it is necessary to examine the concept, the source, the content, the means, and the purpose of blessing in Jewish culture and writings, but also in Christian tradition.

Concept of Blessing in the Old Testament

Understanding the concept of blessing in the Old Testament and in the Jewish culture is key to understanding the biblical concept of blessing. The Hebrew concept of blessing was “power to succeed.”⁴ In the Old Testament and in the Jewish culture, blessing was conferred in the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people. God blesses his people because of his relationship with them, and there is no blessing outside this relationship. Blessings were bestowed and received in the context of the interrelationship between two people or parties. The blessing of God is for those who live in harmony with him.⁵ The blessing of Noah (Gen. 9) and the blessing of Abraham (Gen. 12) both occur in the context of a covenant relationship.

³Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 758.

⁴James McKeown, “Blessings and Curses,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 83.

⁵Ibid.

Harris makes an insightful analysis of the concept of blessing. According to him, the parallel of blessing/cursing and life/death in Deuteronomy 30:19,⁶ and elsewhere, reveals the central concept of blessing in the OT. The fall of Adam resulted in the curse of death for mankind “in all his works, in all his relationships.” Blessing is, therefore, associated with life and cursing is equated with death. Harris concludes: “From this base the understanding of God as the life giver is expanded to its ultimate expression in Jn 3:16f.; 10:10; etc.”⁷

Content of Blessing in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, blessing is generally related to concrete things such as descendants, fertility, prosperity, a good harvest, and affluence. Blessing goes together with fecundity and dynamism⁸. But blessing can also refer to more abstract concepts such as peace and happiness. The effects of blessing include fertility (of people, animals and land), prosperity, authority and dominion, security, peace, and rest.⁹ Mitchell observes that “in the patriarchal promises, blessing consists of God’s bestowal of descendants, fame, dominion over others, land, and God’s presence and protection.”¹⁰

⁶“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deut. 30:19 NIV). All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *New International Version*.

⁷Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:132.

⁸Marie José Schneider-Ballouhey, “La bénédiction, dans la religion juive et dans la religion chrétienne,” n.d., www.sfa-auvillar.com/JETE/2006_Berlin/.../JETEBerlinMijoBenediction.pdf (accessed December 15, 2016). [La bénédiction va de pair avec la fécondité et le dynamisme]

⁹McKeown, 86–87.

¹⁰Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk “to Bless” in the Old Testament*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 95 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 17–27.

After examining the Northwest Semitic¹¹ texts on blessing, Botterweck and Ringgren conclude that “according to the context of these texts, the content of the blessing is long life, descendants, prosperity, success, and power.”¹² Brown also affirms that “the nature of blessing is that of the conferring and transference of beneficial power, which produces fertility in men . . . and in livestock and lands . . . Blessing works vertically in the continued growth of succeeding generations . . . Horizontally it effects peace, security from enemies, good fortune and well-being for a tribe or group (expressed most comprehensively in the concept *sâlom*, well-being).”¹³ Blessing guarantees posterity and prosperity.

Judaism reflects an ambivalent perception toward wealth and blessing. Some traditions equated prosperity with divine blessing (see Deut. 28:1–14; Job 1:10, 42:10; Ps. 128; Prov. 10:22). But other Jewish writers also warned against wealth (Sirach 31:5–7).¹⁴ In Proverbs chapter 3, wisdom and righteousness are exalted above silver and gold. Blessing, therefore, includes both material and spiritual components.

¹¹The Northwest Semitic languages include: Akkadian, Aramaic, Phoenician-Punic, Hebrew, and Ugaritic.

¹²G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Rev. ed., trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 1:283.

¹³Colin Brown, 1:208.

¹⁴“One who loves gold will not be justified; one who pursues money will be led astray by it. Many have come to ruin because of gold, and their destruction has met them face to face. It is a stumbling block to those who are avid for it, and every fool will be taken captive by it (Sirach 31:5–7 NRSV).”

Source of Blessing in the Old Testament

God or the Deity as the Subject of “Bless”

The common belief among the Hebrew people was that the power to bless or to curse belongs to God. God is “the sole source of blessing.”¹⁵ God blessed Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28). God also blessed Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). Harris contends that “the OT sees God as the only source. As such he controls blessing and cursing (Num. 22f.) His presence confers blessing (2 Sam 6:11–20), and it is only in his name that others can confer blessing (Deut. 10:8, etc.). Indeed, God’s name, the manifestation of his personal, redemptive, covenant-keeping nature, is at the heart of all blessing.”¹⁶

In the same vein, Scharbert contends that the deity is the favorite subject of the verb “bless” in the Northwest Semitic texts. When a person is the subject, in most cases the “blessing” is a “commendation to the deity to bless someone, or merely a greeting formula.”¹⁷ Brown also notes that “in all branches of ancient Sem. outside BH (Biblical Hebrew) . . . the deity is always the giver of blessing, but never the recipient.”¹⁸ Morris Jastrow Jr. and Wilhelm Nowack also share the same view that blessing and cursing involve the Deity, or the supernatural world.¹⁹

¹⁵Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, “Blessing,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (Farmington Hill, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), 982.

¹⁶Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:132.

¹⁷Josef Scharbert, “ברך Brk; בְּרָכָה Berakhah,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 2:283.

¹⁸Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 757.

¹⁹Morris Jastrow, “Blessing and Cursing,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), 243.

People as the Subject of “Bless”

But the Hebrew people also believed that the power to bless or to curse could be indirectly invested in human intermediaries.²⁰ In the Old Testament, blessing (or cursing) was pronounced by some people called or chosen by God: Noah over his children (Gen. 9:25–28), Melchizedek over Abraham (Gen. 14:19), Isaac over Jacob (Gen. 27–28), Jacob and his children (Gen. 48–49), Aaron and his sons to the Israelites (Num. 6:22–27), Balaam (Num. 22–24), Moses to the people of Israel (Deut. 33:1ff), Joshua to Caleb (Josh. 14:13), the high-priest Eli to Elkanah and his wife (1 Sam. 2:20), etc.

The Talmud recognizes that the blessing of sages and ordinary persons are effective. It states: “Regard not lightly the blessing of an ordinary person” (Ber. 7a).²¹ Rivard contends that blessing is accessible “through the mediation of figures of authority within the Israelite society.”²² According to Walter Homolka, receiving a blessing from a famous and admired “Zaddik” or “Rebbe” was significant in early Judaism, as well as in contemporary Chassidism.²³ According to 1 Chronicles 23:13, Deuteronomy 10:8, and 21:5, one of the key function of the priest was to bless the people.

Jewish culture also placed a high value on blessing pronounced by parents upon their children. The words spoken by parents “were supposed to be fraught with power to

²⁰“Blessings and Curses,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 135.

²¹Ibid.

²²Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 28.

²³Walter Homolka, “Baruch’ and ‘Beracha’ – Blessing in Judaism,” www.whomolka.de/PDFs/baruch-en.pdf (accessed December 14, 2016).

bring good or ill, blessing or curse.”²⁴ The blessing or cursing was supposed to determine the future of the one who received it. Jewish people believed that “the father's voice was the instrument through which God spoke; and the words, once pronounced, were regarded as the declaration of the Deity.”²⁵

The importance attached to paternal blessing most clearly appears in the story of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah did all her best to secure blessing for Jacob. Although he had despised his birthright, Esau's heart-cry indicates that he also attached a great importance to the paternal blessing (Gen. 27:34–38). Kohler and Philipson note that “the paternal blessing was the most valuable heritage that parents could bequeath to children” and was “regarded as the greatest happiness that could come to children.”²⁶ They observe that the blessing bestowed by Jacob to Ephraim and Manasseh became the formula by which children were blessed by their parents in Israel (Gen. 48:20).

In the historical books, blessing was tied to the institutions of kingship and the cult which mediated God's blessing to the people.²⁷ According to Scharbert, kings could bless the people on special cultic occasions. David on the occasion of the transfer of the Ark (2 Sam. 6:18; 1 Chron. 16:2) and Salomon on the occasion of the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:14, 55; 2 Chron. 6:3) blessed the people. Hezekiah and the princes also

²⁴Kaufmann Kohler and David Philipson, “Blessing of Children,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), 242.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 243.

²⁷Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, vol. 3 of *Overtures to Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 30–32.

blessed God and the people (2 Chron. 31:8).²⁸ Blessing was also an important aspect in the prophetic era. The prophetic intercessions ensured that blessing continued for the people and “the prophecies of salvation portrayed salvation as a state of blessing.”²⁹ The common idea is that blessing could be mediated through human intermediaries.

But the question is, did they proclaim blessing in the name of God or did they implore God’s blessing in cultic prayer?³⁰ In other words, was the blessing of the priest a proclamation of blessing or a prayer for blessing? It must be noted that many of the expressions used are in the subjunctive, indicating a wish or a prayer:

1. Genesis 9:27, “May God extend the territory of Japheth.”
2. Genesis 14:19, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High.”
3. Genesis 27:28–29, “May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness . . .

May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you.”

4. Numbers 6:24–26, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

This short analysis shows that the blessing pronounced by humans was a request to God to bless, not a proclamation of blessing made independently from God. It was done “in the name of the Lord.” The priests by themselves did not have the power to

²⁸Scharbert, “ברך Brk; בְּרָכָה Berakhah.”

²⁹Mitchell, 23.

³⁰Gerhard Kittel, ed., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 758.

bless. The power of the blessing “was directly tied to the willingness and ability of the Lord to grant it.”³¹

Conditions and Means for Blessing in the Old Testament

How did people secure blessing? Was blessing unconditional, or was it conditioned on obedience? In the primeval story of creation, God blessed both the creatures (Gen. 1:22) and Adam and Eve unconditionally (Gen. 1:28). God also blessed Noah and his sons unconditionally (Gen. 9:1). But from Genesis 12, blessing was tied to obedience and faithfulness. The effectiveness of the Abrahamic blessing depended on the obedience of Abraham: “Leave your country . . . and go to the land I will show you” (Gen. 12:1). In Deuteronomy 28, the blessing was conditioned by the faithful obedience of the people of Israel: “If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands” (Deut. 28:1). The chief condition for receiving blessing in the Old Testament was, therefore, obedience to God and to the Law. The lesson for the people was that obedience brings blessing and victory over enemies; disobedience leads to curse and defeat. As Neusner and Green note, this “covenantal pattern” is the foundation of the blessings of God.³² Because obedience is an expression of faith, one can say that blessing is a promise received by faith. As Rabbi Homolka says, “A blessing promises what is received in faith from God.”³³

³¹Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 761.

³²Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 98.

³³Homolka.

On a personal basis, the blessings of the Lord depended on the righteous of the Law. Blessing was only “for those who keep God’s commandments, for the righteous.”³⁴ In Psalm 24:3–5, blessing is promised to the righteous man, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”

The Old Testament also tied blessing to the obedience to parents as stipulated in Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” But the ultimate means of blessing is God’s nature. As Harris says, God’s *hesed*, kindness, and *emet*, faithfulness, are the basis for his abundant life. He does “not have to be cajoled to give his blessing.”³⁵ His nature is to bless.

Purpose of Blessing in the Old Testament

Many promises of material blessing in the Old Testament are linked to obedience and righteous. For this reason, it has been argued that “the motive for ethical action in the OT was the desire for material prosperity and the anxiety to escape disaster.”³⁶ The charge is that people in the Old Testament were motivated to obedience and righteousness because of the promise of material blessing. This would assume that the motivation for ethical conduct was self-interest. This charge has been challenged by the book of Job.

What was the purpose of material blessings in the Old Testament? What role did blessing play in the life of Israel as a people or nation? According to Mitchell, the purpose of God in blessing the patriarchs was different from his purpose in the covenant

³⁴Kittel, 757.

³⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:132.

³⁶Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Old Testament Promise of Material Blessings and the Contemporary Believer,” *Trinity Journal* 9, no. 2 (1988): 154.

blessing. The purpose of the patriarchal blessing was to “call the patriarchs into a close relationship with himself,” and to “motivate the patriarchs to obey God.”³⁷ In the covenant blessing on the other hand, the main and ultimate purpose was to: “motivate the Israelites to continue to observe the stipulations of the covenant,” “bring himself the praise and respect of all nations,” and “establish his people as a holy people.”³⁸

Kaiser observes that material blessing in the Old Testament served at least three purposes.

1. To confirm God’s covenant promise to build a mighty nation: “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today” (Deut. 8:18). God’s covenant was to be shared with the nations.
2. To serve as testimonial and teaching tools to other nations: “The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. . . . Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you (Deut. 28:8–10).”
3. To serve as teaching tools to Israel herself that it was God, not the might of the people that was producing the wealth they had gathered (Deut. 8:17).³⁹

Another reason is that material blessings were designed to keep the people focused on God, the blesser, rather than on the blessings themselves. The people of Israel were surrounded by heathen nations who worshipped Baal the god of fertility and prosperity. In granting abundant blessing to his people, God was teaching them that prosperity does not

³⁷Mitchell, 29.

³⁸Ibid., 36.

³⁹Kaiser, Jr., 157.

come from Baal, but only from Yahweh. This would encourage their attachment and faithfulness to Yahweh. Whenever the people sinned against God and worshipped Baal, God punished them by depriving them of the blessing in order to bring them back to himself. When they did not learn the lesson in a positive way, God taught them in a negative way by bringing them curses.

In summary, blessing in the Old Testament was based on the concept of the covenant relationship of God to his people. It was mostly understood in materialistic terms as fecundity, fertility, prosperity, affluence, victory over enemies, authority and dominion. God was believed to be the sole source of blessing, although he could bestow his blessing through human intermediaries, such as priests, kings, prophets, and parents. Blessing was received through faith and obedience. The purpose of God's blessing was to confirm his covenant with his people and teach other nations that God was the one who blessed his people. But blessing is not only an Old Testament concept. The New Testament also contains many references to blessing.

Blessing in New Testament Literature

Although references are not as abundant as in the Old Testament, the New Testament is not silent on the issue of blessing. The Bible reveals both a continuity and a discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament as regard to the concept, content, source, conditions, and purpose of blessing.

Concept of Blessing in the New Testament

There is continuity and discontinuity in the concept of blessing between the Old Testament and in the New Testament. There is continuity because "there is an increase in power" and discontinuity because, "whereas the Old Testament blessing predominantly

means increase in power for success, prosperity and fertility, in the New Testament it is increase in spiritual power.”⁴⁰ Goerling argues that the meaning in the Old Testament of blessing as enrichment or empowering is still valid for the New Testament, but the sense is more often spiritualized. He further explains that

fecundity, power or abundance are viewed not according to materialistic standards but in relation to the will of God for a believer’s life. Believers are to seek first the kingdom of God with the promise that blessings will follow (Matt. 6:33). The gift of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate blessing, leading the believer to maturation, that is, into deeper communion with God and abundant life characterized by spiritual fecundity and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). What is new about blessing in the New Testament is the idea of inheriting the kingdom through the coming of Jesus. Prince sums up the New Testament concept in one grand, all-inclusive word: salvation (1990:184).⁴¹

While Goerling speaks of the redefinition and spiritualization of the concept of blessing in the New Testament, Westermann speaks of its “Christianization.”⁴² This view is shared by Lenning, who also recognizes that the New Testament concept of blessing is characterized both by continuity and discontinuity with significant Old Testament aspects, “resulting in Christological emphases.”⁴³ As Goerling puts it, “Christ is blessing personified; by accepting him, we are fully blessed (Rom. 8:32). In Christ, all values are redefined. . . . The ultimate value is not an increase in material power (fertility, prosperity), but communion with God, which might come through suffering.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰Fritz Goerling, “Baraka (as Divine Blessing) as a Bridge in Manding Languages (Especially in Jula of Côte d’Ivoire),” *Journal of Translation* 6, no. 1 (2010): 3, <http://www-01.sil.org/siljot/2010/1/928474542777/siljot2010-1-01.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2015).

⁴¹Ibid., 2–3.

⁴²Westermann, 77.

⁴³Larry G. Lenning, *Blessing in Mosque and Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1980), 80.

⁴⁴Goerling.

Content of Blessing in the New Testament

As it has been observed above, some aspects of blessing in the Old Testament are still present in the New Testament. Lenning mentions fertility, growth and maturity, and peace as aspect of the continuity of the content of blessing in the New Testament. He contends that “the New Testament significantly changes, modifies, and transforms several aspects of the concept of blessing.”⁴⁵ Lenning, therefore, disagrees with Schenk, who thinks that the concept of blessing in the Old Testament has no longer any distinctive meaning in the New Testament.⁴⁶ The New Testament contains new aspects of blessing. These blessings are purely spiritual blessing related to salvation.

Source of Blessing in the New Testament

Continuity with the Old Testament is also observed in regard to the source of blessing. As in the Old Testament, the New Testament also teaches that God is the sole source of blessing (Eph. 1:3). James 1:17 says that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.” Blessing in the New Testament is also through Christ Jesus. God has blessed us in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

But blessing in the New Testament can also be communicated through human intermediaries. For example, healing and deliverance are received through prayer offered by believers on behalf of people. But contrary to the Old Testament, blessing in the New Testament is not attached to special people as intermediaries. Any born-again Christian having a good relationship with God can be a channel of blessing to other people.

⁴⁵Lenning, 82.

⁴⁶Wolfgang Schenk, *Der Segen Im Neuen Testament* (Berlin, Germany: Evangelische Verlagansalt, 1967), 132.

It is important to note that Satan can also be a source of material prosperity. In Matthew 4:8, he promised to give Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor” if he would bow down and worship him. The kingdoms and their splendor imply wealth, power, dominion, authority, glory, and honor. In popular thinking, it is believed that some people get wealth, power, and authority from some occultist powers.

Means of Blessing in the New Testament

Blessing in the New Testament may be communicated through a variety of means: prayer; words of blessing (benedictions, greetings, and beatitudes); sacred acts (laying on of hands, participation in the Lord’s Supper, acts of anointing, ordination), generous giving; and the impartation of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ Lenning also mentions water baptism, but there is no evidence in the Bible to confirm that baptism is a means to receive blessing, except that it is a symbolic and external act of obedience to the biblical prescription.

But the chief means of blessing is faith in and obedience to God. In the New Testament, blessing is received through faith in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3) and obedience to God. Without faith and obedience, no prayer, word, or outward act can secure blessing.

Purpose of Blessing in the New Testament

It has been observed that the blessings of the Old Testament have taken on a spiritual meaning in the New Testament. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.” This means that all Old Testament promises and blessings have been accomplished in Christ “to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph. 1:6). In the Beatitudes of the Gospels and in Revelation, Jesus

⁴⁷Lenning, 87–97.

promises the kingdom to those who live a righteous life and persevere. Therefore, the purpose of God's blessing in the New Testament is twofold: first, for the believer, it is for participation in God's divine nature; participation in God's salvation; and possession of God's future and eschatological kingdom. Second, the purpose of God's blessing is "to the praise of his glorious grace."

To summarize, blessing in the New Testament reveals both continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament. Blessing in the Old Testament had mostly a materialistic connotation, whereas blessing in the New Testament is understood in more spiritual terms. God is still the source of blessing through Jesus Christ and the condition for blessing is faith obedience and faithful commitment to Christ.

Blessing in Christian Literature

Various theologians have taken interest and have investigated into the subject of blessing. This section is a brief review of their findings and views concerning blessing.

Concept of Blessing in Christian Literature

Blessing as Soul Power

Johannes Pedersen's understanding of blessing is based on his concept of the soul. He defines the soul as the total state of being of a person, or man in his total essence.⁴⁸ In Pedersen's view, "The soul is filled with a power which enables it to grow, thrive, and accomplish its work. The soul is a connected whole characterized by volition and action."⁴⁹ Pedersen then defines blessing as the power which fills the soul, a power of life

⁴⁸Johannes Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture* (London, England: Oxford, 1926), 99.

⁴⁹Mitchell, 17.

and growth.⁵⁰ Blessing denotes the success and happiness produced by the power of the soul. According to him, “Blessing comprises everything in life . . . the entire power of life, the strength underlying all progress and self-expansion.”⁵¹ He sees God’s blessing not so much as a bestowal of fertility, wealth, and the like, but as a strengthening of the person’s soul enabling him to promote fertility and acquire wealth by his own ability.⁵²

Pedersen’s notion of “soul power” is mystical. It makes blessing to be a mystical force that produces outward results or manifestations (good counsel, wisdom, insight, prosperity, success, and military victory). As Mitchell observes, Pedersen’s notion of “soul” leads to his view of “the ‘magical,’ i.e., self-fulfilling and automatic nature of blessing.”⁵³ Blessing is not “a magical power overflowing man. It is not a psychical power which makes its possessor a ‘lucky fellow’ and endows him with special ability. The blessing of Yahweh is the gracious divine gift which he dispenses in sovereign freedom, granting his favor to individuals or to a people and causing the work of their hands to succeed (Deut. 28:12, 8:9–17).”⁵⁴ The Scripture does not view blessing as a “power residing in human soul.” Blessing is not a manifestation of power from within a human soul. Rather, blessing is the manifestation of the gracious power of God resulting in material and spiritual benefits.

⁵⁰Pedersen, 182.

⁵¹Ibid., 211–212.

⁵²Ibid., 192 & 195.

⁵³Mitchell, 18.

⁵⁴Kittel, 2:756.

Blessing as Manifestations of the Soul Power

Building upon Pederson's view, Mowinckel sees outward prosperity, fertility, protection, and tranquility as manifestations of the healthy condition of the righteous person's soul. According to Mowinckel, the purpose of the cult, and religion in general, was to procure blessing for the people.⁵⁵ He argues that the most important part of the annual festivals in Israel was the blessing given by the priest. The religious acts continually renewed the blessing power for the community.⁵⁶

Blessing as a State of Prosperity, Wholeness and Security

Like Pederson and Mowinckel, Hempel also define blessing as both blessing power and its manifestations. According to him, the content of blessing is summed up in the word *salôm*, which is the state of complete prosperity, wholeness, and security.⁵⁷ Hempel described the operation of blessing in "three stages in history. In the folk religion period, blessing was magical and self-fulfilling. In the cultic period, blessing was no longer magical, but still required ceremonies and oral formulas to prompt God to bless. In the period of ethical monotheism . . . the cult was no longer able to influence God. God requited blessings and curses based on the ethical values proclaimed by the prophets."⁵⁸

Hempel's evolutionary approach of blessing in three stages has no biblical foundation. The Bible has always linked blessing to faith attachment and obedience to

⁵⁵Sigmund Mowinckel, *Segen Und Fluch in Israels Kult Und Psalmendichtung. Psalmenstudien* (V. Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1961), 130–131.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁷Johannes Hempel, "Die Israelitische Anschauungen von Segen Und Fluch Im Lichte Altorientalischer Parallelen," *Beihefte zur ZAW* 81 (1961): 58–61.

⁵⁸Mitchell, 21–22.

God and to his word, not to magical and religious formulas. Even during the period of ceremonial laws and sacrifices, God was never influenced by ceremonies and oral formulas to bless people.

Blessing as a State of Being and a Continual Activity of God

Westermann examines the concept of blessing through a historical approach. According to him, blessing in its oldest concept consisted of the power of life, fertility, and prosperity.⁵⁹ In its latest development, blessing included “God’s friendly approach to those who will receive him.”⁶⁰ Westermann recognizes that “success, the presence of God, peace and wisdom belong to the semantic field of blessing.”⁶¹ He also sees “salvation as a state of blessing.”⁶² But the main thesis of Westermann’s book is that “God blesses through his continual activity in promoting a prosperous state of being.”⁶³ For him, blessing is a state of being resulting from an act of deliverance. By deliverance, Westermann means “occasional saving acts.”⁶⁴

Blessing as Manifestations of Blessing Power

Wehmeier defines *blessing* as a power that “manifests itself in various ways, especially as the fertility of men, animals, and crops. The noun *beraka* denotes either the

⁵⁹Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, 54.

⁶⁰Ibid., 43.

⁶¹Mitchell, 23.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and Life of the Church*, 1–14.

blessing power or its manifestations.”⁶⁵ Wehmeier contends that prosperity alone is not blessing. It is the result of man’s own effort. Blessing is when people receive material goods as a gift from God.

Wehmeier’s view of blessing is close to Pederson’s, Mowinckel’s, and Hempel’s, since they also see blessing as power. Wehmeier seems to equate blessing with a subjective attitude when he talks of receiving material goods “as a gift from God.” According to him, blessing does not lie in the material goods themselves, but in the attitude of the receiver. But is the result of man’s effort not a blessing? Is it not God who blesses the efforts of men?

Blessing as Acknowledgement of Relationship

Scharbert defines blessing in terms of a relationship between the blesser and the person being blessed. According to him, the declaration of a blessing is “an acknowledgement of the solidarity that exists between the speaker and the person for whom the formula is intended.”⁶⁶ The blessing formula “implied an acknowledgement of an intimate relationship with the person named therein.”⁶⁷ Blessing does occur in a context of intimate relationship between the person pronouncing the blessing and the one receiving the blessing. However, Scharbert deals with blessing simply as an oral declaration or utterance. He does not say anything about the effects of the oral declaration.

⁶⁵Mitchell, 24.

⁶⁶Scharbert, 2:284.

⁶⁷Ibid., 285.

Blessing as a Sign of God's Favor and Relationship

The book of Mitchell is a revolutionary work in the analysis of blessing in the Old Testament. He deplored the fact that others have concentrated their study mainly on “the content of blessing rather than on the connotation and purpose of blessing.”⁶⁸ The main thesis of Mitchell’s book is that fertility, prosperity, and dominion are not the essential elements of blessing. The essential element of blessing is “the relationship between God and the person blessed.” A further review of Mitchell’s work is given below under “Purpose of Blessing.”

Blessing as Life-power

Lenning states that “blessing is a power-laden concept. The term may refer to the power inherent in spoken words, to the words themselves, or to the effects they have on the hearers.”⁶⁹ He seems to have been influenced by Pederson. According to him, blessing is “an element of vitality. It is seen in the Old Testament as a life-power which saturates the soul.”⁷⁰ It is not clear what Lenning means by “power which saturates the soul.” He shares the same view as Pederson, Mowinckel, and Hempel, who attribute to blessing a mystical power.

Blessing as Empowerment-Enrichment

Goerling notes that the Hebrew verb root *brk* (blessing) has three main functions and senses: (1) God blesses a human being (God as the agent). In this sense, it means “to

⁶⁸Mitchell, 165.

⁶⁹Lenning, 74.

⁷⁰Ibid., 75.

endow with power.” (2) A human being blesses God (a human being as the agent). In this sense, it means “to refer to God as the source of power; to praise; to thank.” (3) A human being blesses another human being. In this sense, it means “to convey to someone God’s beneficent power.”⁷¹ Quoting Murtonen, Goerling argues that “material or physical blessing is the dominant component of *brk* in the Old Testament: YHWH’s grace and blessings make every external area of life grow and prosper (Deut. 28:8–14).”⁷² According to Goerling, “The central meaning of *brk* in the Old Testament is ‘empowerment/enrichment.’”⁷³

Blessing as a Sign of Righteousness and God’s Favor

Ellul develops the concept of blessing and prosperity in relation to righteousness. In ancient Israel, it was discreetly believed that “those who are blessed from God make a fortune” and “those who make a fortune are blessed from God.”⁷⁴ This indicates that those who make a fortune also claim justification and sanctification. They believe that they enjoy God’s blessing because they are righteous. The equation may be put as follows: righteousness brings God’s favor and blessing, and blessing brings prosperity. This idea is the theological background of the book of Job. Blessing is portrayed as a sign of God’s favor and approval on the righteous. And because material blessing is

⁷¹Goerling, 2.

⁷²A. Murtonen, “The Use and Meaning of the Words *Lebarek*‘ and *Berakah*’ in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 9, no. 2 (April 1959): 158–177, quoted in Goerling, “Baraka (as Divine Blessing) as a Bridge in Manding Languages (Especially in Jula of Côte d’Ivoire).”

⁷³Goerling, 2.

⁷⁴Jacques Ellul, *L’homme et l’argent*, 2e ed. (Lausanne, Suisse: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1979), 67. [« Ceux qui sont bénis de Dieu font fortune » et « ceux qui font fortune sont bénis de Dieu. »]

considered as a sign of righteousness and God's favor, "There is scandal and protest in the pages of the Old Testament when it is attributed to a bad and unjust man . . . a trap set by Satan to man."⁷⁵ Psalm 73:3, 12; and Job 21:7 are examples of this protest.

According to Ellul, the promise of Canaan was not only the promise of a place to live in, but also the promise of the kingdom. Possessing the Promised Land was a deposit or a guarantee of the entrance into the kingdom. In the same way, material prosperity is a sign of a greater spiritual grace. Davis shares this view when he contends that material blessing does have some spiritual application: "Israel's role as witness to the world of the might and love of the Lord," he says, "depends upon the evidence of the Lord's favor to her."⁷⁶

But Ellul observes that Jesus has fulfilled this sacramental value of riches. Riches have lost their sacramental value. They were the shadow of things to come; Jesus Christ is now the reality. He is "abundance of grace, gratuity of the election, presence of the kingdom."⁷⁷ Because of this, riches are no more a sign and a blessing.

The thesis of Ellul, though pertinent, poses a question. If material riches were a sign of God's grace and a sacrament in the Old Testament, why is it that many people, although they were righteous, pious, and devout, did not enjoy abundant material blessing? Ellul calls the prosperity of the wicked "a trap set by Satan." Is it not rather a

⁷⁵Ibid., 74. [« Parce qu'elle est signe de cette réalité, qu'il y a scandale et protestation dans les pages de l'Ancien Testament lorsqu'elle est attribuée à un homme mauvais et injuste. »]

⁷⁶D. C. Davis, "Blessedness," in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney and Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 649.

⁷⁷Ellul, 88.

test of obedience to the righteous? God uses this test to teach that material wealth is not what blessing is all about.

Blessing as Covenant Relationship

Meroz defines the Hebrew word *berakah* as “blessing, present, gift, and happiness.” She observes that the word *berakah* starts with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *beth*, which also means *two*. Meroz concludes that the word *gift* (*berakah*) carries the idea of relationship, of covenant, and also of unity. For Meroz, blessing as present, material riches, or prosperity is “the manifestation of the generosity of God,” a sign of divine goodness and mercy.⁷⁸

Meroz also argues that blessing is linked to biblical peace. By comparing the biblical words *shalom* (“peace”) and *shaloh* (“be at rest” or “be in peace and prosperity”), Meroz finds that biblical peace is not only a state without war and a sign of respected covenant, but also refers to happiness of daily life—the state of man living in harmony with nature, with his neighbor, with himself and with God.⁷⁹ Peace is, therefore, blessing; and blessing is peace. Finally, Meroz also links blessing to fecundity, fruitfulness, and the

⁷⁸Christianne Meroz, *Benediction le sourire de Dieu* (Lausanne, Suisse: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1983), 15–16. [La bénédiction dans un contexte religieux évoque donc une prospérité, la générosité de Dieu pour celui qui est bon. Elle est toujours un signe de bienveillance et de miséricordes divines.]

⁷⁹Ibid., 16. [« Cette abondance qui provient du Père pour attester son amour, son alliance avec l’homme, est liée à la paix biblique. Le mot hébreu *shalom*, paix, peut être rapproché du verbe *shaloh*, qui signifie se tenir en repos, être dans la paix et la prospérité. Ainsi, la paix biblique n’est pas seulement un état de non-guerre, signe d’une alliance respectée ; elle désigne également le bien-être de la vie quotidienne, l’état de l’homme qui vit en harmonie avec la nature, avec son prochain, avec lui-même et avec Dieu. En un mot, et concrètement, elle est bénédiction. »]

ability to multiply life. Fecundity, whether of people or land, is one of the most substantial signs of God's blessing.⁸⁰

But the point that Meroz makes raises some questions. If blessing is understood in terms of material riches and prosperity resulting from God's generosity, goodness, and mercy, why are so many people not enjoying material prosperity? Is God not generous, good, and merciful with everybody? What, then, are the criteria to enjoy God's generosity, goodness, and mercy? Table 1 summarizes the various views on the concept of blessing found in Christian literature, as reported above.

Table 1. Summary of the concept of blessing by different authors

Author	Concept of Blessing	Observation
Johannes Pedersen	- Soul-power, a power of life and growth, producing success and happiness	- Spiritual with material results
Sigmund Mowinckel	- Healthy condition of the righteous' soul	- Spiritual
Johannes Hempel	- Power and its manifestations - State of complete prosperity, wholeness, and security	- Spiritual and material
Claus Westermann	- Power of life, fertility, and prosperity - God's friendly approach to those who receive him	- Spiritual and material
Gerhard Wehmeier	- Power manifesting itself in various ways, fertility of men, animals, and crops	- Spiritual with material manifestations
Josef Scharbert	- Acknowledgement of intimate relationship	- Spiritual
Christopher Wright Mitchell	- Long life, numerous progeny, wealth, and/or strength - Sign of relationship between God and the person blessed	- Spiritual and material

⁸⁰Ibid., 17. [« La fécondité, que ce soit celle de l'homme ou de la terre, est un des signes les plus substantiels de la bénédiction de Dieu. »]

Table 1, Continued.

Larry G. Lenning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Power inherent in spoken words, to the words themselves, or to the effects they have on the hearers - Element of vitality - A life-power saturating the soul 	- Spiritual with material effects
Fritz Goerling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material or physical prosperity - Empowerment/enrichment 	- Material and spiritual
Christianne Meroz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present, material riches, prosperity - Manifestation of the generosity of God - A sign of divine goodness and mercy - Peace, happiness of daily life - Harmony with nature, with neighbor, with self and with God - Fecundity, fruitfulness, the ability to multiply life 	- Mostly material

Source of Blessing in Christian Literature

Scholars have different views concerning the source of blessing. For Mitchell, blessing depends, not on a human, nor on the words themselves, but only on God's power. He gives three reasons for the power of human benedictions: "1) God is often invoked in the formula to bless; 2) the blessings rely on God's general retribution; and 3) the blessings rely on God's responsiveness to prayer. The benedictions, then, obviously depend on God's power, not on the magical power of the spoken word."⁸¹ Blessing depends on God who only has the power to bless or to withhold blessing.

Contrary to Mitchell, Lenning holds that blessing is a power that is given to man by God "to be used by him for the purpose of glorifying God and for the continuation of

⁸¹Mitchell, 175.

his existence.”⁸² If Lenning is right, this would mean that man can use the blessing power given to him as he wills, independently from God. This idea can hardly be biblically-supported. The Bible considers God as the sovereign possessor and dispenser of all blessing: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father (James 1:17).”

Content of Blessing in Christian Literature

According to Lenning, blessing “includes several ingredients. The major aspects of blessings are fertility and prosperity, shalom, holiness, and praise and thanksgiving.”⁸³ McKeown also notes that “the effect of blessing included fertility, prosperity, authority and security.”⁸⁴

Fertility and Prosperity

Fertility and prosperity refer to the material content of blessing. According to Lenning, “The basic content of blessing in the Old Testament is fertility; that is, the power to multiply. Each living part of God’s creation is given the power to reproduce.” God blessed the creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. “To be blessed,” Lenning states, “is to have a large progeny.”⁸⁵

⁸²Lenning, 75.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴McKeown, 86.

⁸⁵Lenning, 76.

Shalom (Peace and Health)

Blessing also includes *shalom*, peace. The word *shalom* means “wholeness, completeness.”⁸⁶ It carries a concern for the personal well-being, as well as the collective welfare of a city, a nation, and even the whole world. Boyd also associates *berakah* with *shalom*, “peace,” a concept that “represents an active abundance, a participation in the fullness of all God’s holy gifts: the fecundity of the earth, the joy of human relationships, the richness of health, the gifts of material plenitude, and the viable hope for a future in the presence of a liberating God.”⁸⁷

Holiness

Holiness is a part of blessing. Lenning connects the concept of blessing to the concept of holiness which he relates to *shalom*. According to him, holiness “grew in the context of war and peace.” He asserts that “the soldiers were called the ‘sanctified of Yahweh’ (Isa. 13:3) because they were blessed with the power of holiness.”⁸⁸ Holiness of the soldiers was necessary for victory in war. Other people like priests, prophets, and Nazirites were called holy men. It is true that holiness is essential for the presence of God and that the presence of God gives victory in war, but Lenning does not demonstrate how blessing and holiness relate.

⁸⁶Ibid., 77.

⁸⁷Jann Boyd, “Blessing in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Life of the Church” (presented at the National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, January 2005), 1–2, <http://www.elcic.ca/Same-Sex-Blessings/documents/boyd.pdf> (accessed April 12, 2015).

⁸⁸Lenning, 76.

Conditions and Means of Blessing in Christian Literature

Blessing is conferred through different means in the Old Testament. According to Lenning, God bestowed his blessings in two specific ways: through sacrifice and the priestly blessing.

Sacrifice

In the Old Testament, sacrifices were not just symbolic and ritual acts. Their effectiveness depended on the spirit and attitude of the worshipper. Lenning argues that through the sacrificial liturgy, the creative power of God was given to the worshippers. To them it meant renewal, revitalization, and an increase in strength and power. Because God's power, grace, and blessing were given through these rituals, they took on a sacramental nature.⁸⁹ But Lenning does not demonstrate how outward sacrifices, acts, and symbols increased strength and power to the worshippers. What rather conferred blessing was faith and obedience to God and to the prescriptions of the law.

Priestly Blessing

Blessing was also given through the priestly blessing. The Israelites believed in the power of words, particularly when they are pronounced in the name of Yahweh. Eichrodt explains that blessing pronounced by priests were more than the expression of a wish. "By laying the name of Yahweh on the people," he says, "they are in fact setting in motion an actual beneficent power."⁹⁰ The priestly blessing was to be accomplished

⁸⁹Ibid., 102.

⁹⁰Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961), 207.

through the actual blessing of the Lord. But Eichrodt rightly cautions against “those beliefs in ‘magic’ and ‘power’ which make use of the name to exert compulsion over its owner.”⁹¹ Although God allowed his people to freely use his name, he forbade them to use his name in vain (Exod. 20:7).

Purpose of Blessing in Christian Literature

The common view that emerges is that God bestowed his blessing on his people Israel as a sign of his covenant relationship. Mitchell shares the same view with Scharbert that blessing is an acknowledgement of relationship. He states,

The factor that makes a blessing a blessing is the relationship between God and the person blessed. God blesses because of his favorable attitude toward a person or group of people. A blessing is any benefit or utterance which God freely bestows in order to make known to the recipient and to others that he is favorably disposed toward the recipient. The type of benefit God actually bestows when he blesses is of secondary importance.⁹²

According to Mitchell, God blessed his people by bestowing fertility, dominion, prosperity, etc., because “these were the most valued benefits during the biblical period. These were the benefits that people needed to thrive in their culture. By bestowing these benefits, God loudly proclaimed his relationship to his people. God’s blessing is a visible sign of his favor that attracts the attention of others and makes them desire God’s blessing too.”⁹³ Ellul also argues that material riches are a sign, “a sacrament,” and “a present gift to represent a spiritual and higher gift to come.”⁹⁴ For Meroz the word *berakah* carries the

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Mitchell, 165.

⁹³Ibid., 165–166.

⁹⁴Ellul, 76.

idea of relationship, of covenant and of unity. She suggests that as a present is the visible sign of recovered unity between men, blessing is also the sign of the relationship found or re-established with God.

But the perception of the purpose of blessing as a sign of God's favor and a proclamation of God's relationship with his people hits two objections. First, if material blessing is a sign of God's favor, how does one explain it when righteous people are deprived of these benefits? Second, if material blessing denotes a favorable attitude toward the person blessed, how can one explain it when wicked people enjoy prosperity?

Summary

The literature reviewed reveals both some similarities the diversities of interpretations among scholars regarding blessing. Scholars see blessing as power of life, fertility, prosperity, success, the presence of God, peace and wisdom (Westermann); soul power (Pederson); blessing power or its manifestations (Wehmeier); manifestations of soul power (Mowinckel); life-power which saturates the soul (Lenning); and an empowerment/enrichment (Goerling). Others view blessing as an acknowledgement of relationship (Scharbert); a sign of intimate relationship with and favor of God (Mitchell); a sign of God's favor; a reward of righteousness and a sacrament representing a spiritual reality to come (Ellul); a sign of covenant relationship and unity, the manifestation of the generosity of God, peace, and fecundity (Christianne Meroz).

There is almost a unanimous consensus among the scholars concerning the content of blessing. Blessing is a bestowal of fertility, wealth, success, happiness, etc. (Pederson); outward prosperity, fertility, protection, and tranquility (Mowinckel); prosperity, wholeness and security (Hempel); fertility of human offspring, animals, and

crops (Wehmeier); success, the presence of God, peace and wisdom (Westermann); bestowal of fertility, long life, numerous progeny, wealth, and/or strength (Mitchell); fertility, prosperity, authority and security (McKeown). Concerning the source of blessing, all biblical scholars agree that the ultimate source of blessing is God, even though men can be intermediaries or channels of blessing.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section reviews existing literature on the topic of blessing and material prosperity. It answers RQ 3: What are the historical, socio-economic, cultural, and theological factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo regarding blessing? First, it discusses the general concept of blessing in traditional societies, and particularly in some African cultures. Limited literature exists concerning blessing in the social literature and in African cultures, especially in the Togolese context. This is mostly due to the fact that African preachers are from an oral tradition background. They preach but they do not write.

Secondly, this section will also examine the concept of the prosperity gospel. According to Wax, the explosive growth of Christianity in Africa during the last decades has been mainly fueled by the prosperity teaching that emphasizes health and wealth at the expense of sin, redemption, and repentance.¹ This prosperity teaching is closely linked to the concept of material blessing.

¹Trevin Wax, "Book Review: Preachers of a Different Gospel (by Femi B. Adeleye)," 9Mark.org, December 19, 2011, <http://www.9marks.org/books/book-review-preachers-different-gospel> (accessed August 9, 2012).

Blessing in African Traditional Religions

Blessing is a very important component of the religious and social life in many African cultures. Every success in life is related to blessing, just as every failure is attributed to curse. As John Mbiti notes, “The pronouncing and requesting of formal blessing play an important role in the social and religious life of African peoples.”² Blessing is used in everyday language in greetings and thanking. It is also an important part in rituals and sacrifices. The concept of blessing in the African Traditional Religions (ATR) involves the act of blessing, its source, its content, and the forms through which the blessing is transferred.

Concept of Blessing in ATRs

Blessing can be understood in two senses in ATR. First, blessing may be understood as a speech-act. In this sense, “Blessing can be an act or just an expression to convey good will or favor, frequently involving God, gods, or a supreme being.”³ As a declaration, blessing is part of religious rituals and worldly activities in every culture and belief system. Blessing in this sense includes “a wide range and many shades of meaning” in different cultures. According to Assavavirulhakarn, blessing has “three primary meanings: an act or rite of granting and receiving favor with or without divine power; the expression of human aspiration towards goodness; and praise to a supreme and powerful entity, ... be it God, gods, holy men, or revered objects.”⁴ The act of

²John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, England: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 65.

³Assavavirulhakarn, 979.

⁴Ibid., 979.

blessing forms a bond between the supreme beings and the faithful. ⁵Secondly, blessing is a state of being, and an empowerment/enrichment endowing with power for prosperity and success. As empowerment/enrichment, blessing refers to the effects it produces on the hearers. In this sense, blessing is best defined by its content.

Blessing is also viewed as restoration of good relationships with the spiritual world. For example, the Fang of Cameroon believe that wrongdoing breaks good relationships with the ancestors. The consequences of these broken relations are failure in life, because wrongdoings expose the individual to his enemies and to misfortune. Blessing is a power that restores the relationship with the ancestors, reverses the curse, and opens the way to success, material prosperity, and good health. Success in life is a sign of good relationships with the ancestors and a sign of blessing.⁶

Content of Blessing in ATRs

Blessing may be material or spiritual, but the material aspect predominate. Material blessing includes, “wealth, health, prosperity, progeny, longevity, and protection.”⁷ In the Fang culture, as mentioned earlier, blessing is both spiritual (good relationship with the ancestors) and material (success in life, material prosperity, and good health). But the spiritual aspect is not an end in itself. It is just a means to ensure material prosperity: success in life, material prosperity, good health, large families, abundant crops, prosperous business, and long life.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Paulin Nguema-Obam, *Aspects de La Religion Fang: Essai d'interpretation de La Formule de Benediction* (Paris, France: Editions Karthala, 1983), 57–59.

⁷Assavavirulhakarn, 982.

Conditions and Means of Blessing in ATRs

The act of blessing involves a whole process, including various elements.

Assavavirulhakarn notes three elements in the blessing process: the verbal element, the non-verbal, and the religious element.⁸ Nguema-Obam agrees with these elements, but adds a fourth element: the person who performs the act,⁹ the human intermediary.

The Verbal Element

Blessing is communicated through a verbal element, that is, the speech-act. It is “an act done by speaking.” “To bless” is a verbal statement that has the “quality of performing or realizing.”¹⁰ The realization or actualization of blessing depends on favorable conditions. Africans believe in the mythical power of words. This belief in the mythical power of words lies beneath the concept of blessing. According to Mbiti,

There is mystical power in words, especially those of a senior person to a junior one, in terms of age, social status or office position. The words of parents, for example, carry “power” when spoken to children: they “cause” good fortune, curse, success, peace, sorrows or blessings, especially when spoken in moments of crisis. . . . Therefore, formal “curse” and “blessing” are extremely potent; and people may travel long distances to receive formal blessings, and all are extra careful to avoid formal curses.¹¹

Mitchell points out that the notion of the power of words has been popular among many biblical scholars as well as “among many scholars in religious and anthropological fields unrelated to biblical studies.”¹²

⁸Ibid., 980.

⁹Nguema-Obam, 33.

¹⁰Assavavirulhakarn, 979.

¹¹Mbiti, 197.

¹²Mitchell, 173–174.

Words of blessing were usually “spoken on cultic or other occasions and often were accompanied by gestures or symbolic actions.”¹³ But blessing does not only depend on the speech. It also depends on the thought and attitude of the speaker. Blessing, therefore, establishes a benevolent relationship between the benefactor and the supplicant.

The Non-verbal Element

Blessing also involves a vast range of non-verbal elements: objects, places, persons, and phenomena, images of deities, saints and religious founders, geographic locations, and natural features, such as rivers, mountains, and islands are also regarded as sources of blessing.¹⁴ Blessing is obtained through participation in religious rituals and sacrifices, meritorious deeds, submission to religious laws.¹⁵ The rite of blessing “may be accompanied with spitting or sprinkling water (or other substance) upon those who are being blessed.”¹⁶

In the Yoruba culture,¹⁷ for instance, according to Mbiti, blessing is obtained through prayers and meal and drink offerings to divinities and spiritual beings. He says, “In order to invoke special blessings, human beings were formerly sacrificed. . . . Gift

¹³W. J. Harrelson, “Blessings and Cursings,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:446.

¹⁴Assavavirulhakarn, 980.

¹⁵Ibid., 982.

¹⁶Mbiti, 65.

¹⁷The Yoruba people live in the Southwestern part of Nigeria.

offerings are made to the divinities in appreciation for success, health and children.”¹⁸ Prayers among the Yoruba “are chiefly requests for material welfare, such as health, protection from dangers, prosperity, and even riches.”¹⁹ Prayer is, therefore, the means whereby material blessing and prosperity are obtained. This traditional mentality influences many Christians. Their prayers and other spiritual activities are mainly intended to obtain material rewards.

The Religious Element

The religious element is “the deep structure of blessing”²⁰ by which the blessing is performed and accomplished. Words are powerful if they originate from the gods or God. The religious element is based on the assumption that there is a transcendental power or sacred entity or entities that possess the power of blessing. This transcendental power can take different forms or concepts. In African Traditional Religions, this power takes the form of physical images representing gods, spirits, and ancestors.

The Human Intermediary

The act of blessing also involves the human intermediary. The words must be pronounced by the proper person to be a blessing. Mitchell explains that “speech acts are not based on magic, but on societal conventions. The words must be spoken in the socially accepted situation, by the proper person, and in the proper form, or else the

¹⁸Mbiti, 60.

¹⁹Ibid., 65.

²⁰Assavavirulhakarn, 980.

utterance is invalid.”²¹ This proper person may be a priest or a representative of some divinity. In many African cultures, the power to bless or curse rests with prophets, diviners, seers, and mediums because they are believed to be in direct contact with God. Their words of blessing are sought after by people, just as their words of curses are feared. Together, the religious element and the human intermediaries constitute the source of blessing.

Source of Blessing in ATRs

Blessing is based on the concept that “there is a benign power able to confer benefits upon humanity individually or collectively.”²² This supreme entity works through intermediaries, the agents performing the ritual: priests, monks, shamans, kings, and senior members of the community or family.²³ In African cultures, these agents include ancestors, traditional or fetish priests, charlatans, elders, fathers, and mothers. For instance, blessing among the Fang of Cameroon is essentially a religious act involving the ancestors. The father, the mother, the senior brother, uncles, and aunts can all be agents of blessing if they are under the protection of the ancestors.²⁴ Among the Kongo, an ethnic or linguistic group of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the “immediate paternal blessing” is the “most important spiritual prerequisite of marriage.” Through his

²¹Mitchell, 174.

²²Assavavirulhakarn, 979.

²³Ibid., 981.

²⁴Nguema-Obam, 33.

blessing, the father gives the girl his “spiritual birthright” and “expects a symbolic gauge from the groom in the form of a bride payment.”²⁵

Purpose of Blessing in ATRs

It has been observed that blessing is an essential element in ATRs. A believer or follower of ATR can travel a long distance and make any sacrifice to secure the blessing of a father, a mother, an aunt, or a fetish priest. The question that arises is: why is blessing so important in the ATRs? What is the purpose of blessing in the ATRs?

The interest of African traditional worshippers in blessing is based on at least two perceptions. The first perception is the African worldview. The African world is a world of spiritual forces, both benevolent and malevolent forces. Benevolent forces give success, prosperity, and protection. Malevolent forces seek to harm people with misfortunes, sickness, and failure. To secure protection and success, one needs blessing power. Blessing power guarantees protection against the malevolent forces and secures success with the help of benevolent forces. Just as adherents of other religions, believers in ATRs have always sought the blessing of an ancestor or deity, believing that this blessing will ensure them fertility, prosperity, protection, deliverance, healing, empowerment, promotion, and favor, or all together.²⁶

The second perception is the belief in the power of the spoken word. Africans believe that the spoken word is potent and powerful to actualize what has been uttered. As Mbiti has observed above, words spoken by parents in formal situations carry power

²⁵Newell S. Booth, ed., *African Religions: A Symposium* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1977), 33.

²⁶Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 758.

to cause good fortune as well as misfortune.²⁷ Africans believe that success or failure, victory or defeat, prosperity or poverty, mostly depend on blessing. So, the main motivation and ultimate reason for seeking blessing in ATRs is for existential purposes, to secure material prosperity, health, protection, and success.

Some aspects of blessing in traditional cultures cut across the biblical teaching. For example, blessing as a declaration; the necessity of a relationship between the benefactor and the beneficiary or the supplicant; the necessity of faith; and the content of blessing which includes wealth, health, prosperity, progeny, longevity, and protection. But many aspects and elements of blessing in traditional cultures are rather based on superstitious beliefs. For example, the magical power given to words is purely superstitious. Human words are powerful only when they are uttered under the authority of God in accordance to his words. Religious rituals, objects, places and people as medium of blessing are also based on superstitions.

Blessing in Some Togolese Traditional Cultures

Togo is a small sub-Saharan country in West Africa with a land area of roughly 57,700 square kilometers. It is bordered by Ghana to the west, Benin to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. According to the World Population Review, the population of Togo is estimated at 7,677,979 inhabitants in 2017 and consist of around forty ethnic groups.²⁸ The major ethnic groups are: the Adja-Ewé, the Kabiye, the Tem or Kotokoli, and the Moba-gurma. Apart from the Tem, who are a Muslim

²⁷Mbiti, 197.

²⁸World Population Review, "Togo Population 2017," [Worldpopulationreview.com](http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/togo-population/), <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/togo-population/> (accessed February 16, 2017).

people group, the other major ethnic groups have been reached by the Gospel and are strongly represented in Christianity in Togo.

Blessing among the Adja-Ewé

The Adja-Ewé (Aja-Evé) are a people group living in southern Togo and in Ghana along the Volta River. According to Professor N. L. Gahibor, the Adja-Ewé constitute more than 40 percent of the population in Togo and comprise many sub-groups: the Agomé, the Agoum, the Danyi, the Kpélé, the Ouatchi, the Bê, the Togo, etc.²⁹

The concept of blessing among the Ewé people of Togo is essentially materialistic. Riviere explains that requests for happiness and blessing among the Ewé do not go beyond material concerns. The Ewé priest (*bokono*) prays for three essential requests: long life (*Agbedîdî*), luck of money (*AkoeDagbé*), and luck of children (*Vidagbé*).³⁰ Spiritual things are, therefore, not given so much value. The Adja-Ewé people believe that blessing comes from God (*Mawu*), but it can be transmitted through human intermediaries: parents and priests (*bokono*).

During the interviews, some respondents also mentioned traditional practices related to blessing among the Adja-Ewe/Mina: *Situtu* (or *Esitutu* or *Atusi na ame*) and the ancestral seat. Concerning *Situtu*³¹ P1003-HINED explains,

²⁹N. L. Gayibor, *Des Origines a 1884*, vol. 1, *Histoire des Togolais* (Lomé, Togo: Presse de l'UB, 1997), 33.

³⁰Claude Riviere, *Anthropologie religieuse des Eve du Togo* (Lomé, Togo: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1981), 126.

³¹*Situtu*, or *Esitutu*, or *Atusi na ame* is a traditional blessing ceremony among the Mina and Ewe in southern Togo. During this ceremony, the one who blesses (generally father, mother, uncle, aunt, or boss) will put water in his mouth and spit it over the person being blessed, accompanied with words of blessing.

Indeed, we have *Esi tutu* in our culture. At the end of the training in a profession (masonry, carpentry, etc.), the boss pronounces words of blessing by spitting water on the recipient before giving him his certificate. Especially at my place in X, if you want to undertake something and succeed, you should go and see the elders and they will make a libation, flour mixed in water or in *Sodabi* (a local alcohol drink). They give *Sodabi* to the fetishes and then kill a rooster or a goat, asking the ancestors to be with you. It can be for a journey, studies, a construction project, etc. Water means peace, alcohol is for the ancestors and the slain animal is the price paid for the project or enterprise.³²

C2001-ADAL comments:

When the fetish priest or the paternal aunt also wants to confer blessings (in quotation marks), after asking or speaking to the ancestors, deities and others, she then takes, sometimes it is sweet drink, and she spits it on you. Or after that she takes water and spits it on you. The idea is that, the spits are a kind of seal that she puts on the words that are spoken and her words are not ordinary words. She places herself in the function of a solemn act. So, she measures the words that will come out of her mouth. When she finishes, then the spits accompany the words as if to say, “We seal what we have just said.”³³

As for the ancestral seat, C2002-LOUTE reports, “In my culture, when people want blessing, first of all we invoke the ancestors and we pour drink offering. We go to the ancestral seat and say prayers. These are practices. For example, if you apply for a job, they will tell you to make a vow at the ancestral seat.”³⁴ This practice has influenced some prosperity preachers who ask their members to make a vow so that God can bless them.

Blessing among the Kabiye

The Kabiye are one of the major people groups in Togo. They live in the Northern part (Kozah and Binah), but are also scattered in the southern parts of the country.

³²Transcription Extract. Respondent P1003-HINED.

³³Transcription Extract. Respondent C2001-ADAL.

³⁴Transcription Extract. Respondent C2002-LOUTE.

According to Padabo Kelem Tata, the Kabiye people believe in one God called *Tchaa-Esso*. He is assisted by the spirits of the ancestors (*Waignima* or *Hadetauna*). The spirits of the ancestors occupy an important place and play a great role in the Kabiye culture. They are the intermediaries between people and God. The *Waignima* provide and ensure safety, security, protection, good health, success, prosperity, good harvests, progeny, abundance of games (for hunters), and happiness in life. One must be in permanent contact with them through regular ceremonies, prayers, and visits to diviners who recommend appropriate sacrifices. Sacrifices are presented to the *Waignima* by a traditional priest (*Tchodjo*) or a sage or a council of sages. The Kabiye entrusts any project to the benevolent care of the *Waignima* to ask for guidance, protection, and blessing. The Kabiye people believe that, not only God is the possessor of everything (*Essotina*), but he is also the source of all goodness (*Essowdéuw*). Thus, he gives freely and bountifully. This is expressed in names like *Essohana*, *Essohanam*, *Essohanibè*.³⁵

During the interviews, some respondents from the Kabiye culture mentioned other practices related to blessing among the Kabiye people. Respondent P1004-SARA explains the importance of the initiation rites and burial ceremonies for blessing among the Kabiye. He said:

In my traditional culture everything happens through initiation. When you reach the mature age, a ceremony will be organized for this purpose and the maternal uncles will have to pronounce words of blessing on your life. Now if it happens that you are not initiated, all that will happen to you as misfortune is imputed to not having done the initiation and you must do it immediately. Another practice to

³⁵Padabo Kelem Tata, “Approche sociologique des causes internes du sous-développement : La politique de l’ « authenticité africaine » et paupérisation – cas des cérémonies funéraires traditionnelles des Kabiye au Togo” (Dissertation inaugurale pour l’obtention du grade de docteur en Sociologie, Université de Trêves, 2006), 141–144, https://ubt.opus.hbz-nrw.de/opus45-ubtr/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/251/file/final_THESE_TATA.pdf (accessed May 8, 2020).

be blessed is at the decease of a parent. If you do not perform a burial ceremony according to the standards, especially for a parent, all that can happen to you as misfortune or curse is also imputed to having neglected to perform the funeral ceremonies. So, you have to observe all the funeral rites to be blessed.³⁶

Respondent P2004-AGOA also speaks about the importance of performing the initiation rites and the place of maternal uncles and aunts in blessing their nephews and nieces.

In the Kabiye culture, there are ceremonies to perform: for young girls it is *Akpéma* at the age of eighteen, and the young man perform *Evala* at the age of twenty. During these ceremonies, (maternal) uncles pronounce words of blessing on their nephews or nieces. After the uncles it is the turn of the (biological) parents to do the same. It should be noted that among the Kabiye, maternal uncles and aunts have absolute power over their nephews and nieces. To have blessing in her marriage, the young girl must get married being a virgin, a sign of honor for her family who will say words of blessing (on her).³⁷

These responses show the importance of the initiation rites and ceremonies, in addition to sacrifices, as conditions and means to obtain blessing in the Kabiye culture.

Blessing among the Moba-Gurma

The Moba-Gurma people live in the upper north of Togo, bordering Burkina Faso, Ghana to the West, and Benin to the East. Historically, their origin is traced to Fada N'gurma in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). The first Assemblies of God missionaries in Togo landed among the Moba in Dapaong, which is the home town of the Moba-Gurma and the birth place of the Togo Assemblies of God. The Moba-Gurma practice traditional religions.

In the Moba culture, blessing comes from three sources: 1) God, called *Yendu*; 2) the fetish gods—who are in fact the great ancestors (*tigbann*) and deceased fathers and grand-fathers (*baa*); and 3) parents still alive (*daam*). God, as the source of blessing, is

³⁶Transcription Extract. Respondent P1004-SARA.

³⁷Transcription Extract. Respondent P2004-AGOA.

implied in personal names like *Yempaab* (gift of God), *Yendoutie* (God has given), *Yenyanm* (goodness of God), *Yencilm* (miracle or mystery of God). Great ancestors can also grant blessing. According to Koabike, the clan ancestor cares for the welfare of his people. He can transform himself into an animal or human to visit his *protégés*, eat what is offered to him, and bless good people.³⁸ Some people, pushed by personal ambition and desire for glory, will consult abandoned ancestors (to whom sacrifice is no longer offered) in order to obtain a social position. This is like getting blessing from demons or from the devil.³⁹ This practice is rather not approved in the Moba society.

These conceptions and beliefs explain why some Christians, even in charismatic and Pentecostal churches, are still bound to traditional practices. They are afraid of curses, misfortune, or even death if they fail to observe these practices. But it also explains why they are vulnerable to the prosperity teaching that prescribes unbiblical practices. Africans are scared to death when it comes to curses, and are ready to do anything to avoid them. The sure way to avoid curses is to secure blessing, by all means.

Although it also includes spiritual components, blessing in the Old Testament and in the ATRs is mostly related to material prosperity. These perceptions constitute the background to prosperity theology in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa and in Togo particularly.

³⁸Joseph Bedouma Koabike, *Religion traditionnelle chez les Moba* (Lomé, Togo: SIL, 2003), 23.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 31.

Prosperity Theology

Prosperity theology, or gospel, is a widespread teaching among Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa today. This need-oriented and materialistic theology finds adherents from all social classes: poor, middle class, and rich people. Before examining the history and teaching of its tenants it is helpful to provide a brief overview of the concept of prosperity.

The Concept of Prosperity

Prosperity is often understood in economic terms. It is having money and a good social/economic status. From a biblical point of view, prosperity can be defined as a state of obedience to God resulting in a fulfilled life that is characterized by physical and material welfare, and healthy social relationships.⁴⁰ Prosperity is not opposed to spirituality. Any faithful and hardworking believer can enjoy prosperity. A biblical example is Job. He was “blameless and upright,” “feared God and shunned evil.” And he was rich (Job 1:1–3).

In the Jewish context, prosperity was understood “in terms of the family and agricultural blessings of God.”⁴¹ But poverty was not considered as a curse, since the Law of Moses made provision for the poor (Lev. 19:9–10). During the intertestamental period, the Apocrypha and Pseud epigraphical writings warned against the danger

⁴⁰Emiola Nihinlola, “Between Prosperity and Spirituality: A Theological Examination of the Perspective of the Church in the 21st Century African Society,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 11 (2006): 30.

⁴¹Judith L. Hill, “Theology of Prosperity: A New Testament Perspective,” *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 28, no. 1 (2009): 44.

associated with material riches (Testament of Judah 19:1; Wisd. of Sol. 8:5; Sirach 31:1–2, 5–7). Seeking wisdom was better than seeking riches.

In the Greco-Roman context, the prevalent economic concept was described as a “limited goods society.”⁴² This worldview sees the quantity of wealth in the world as limited and fixed. Prosperity in the Greco-Roman culture was related to public honor, glory, and praise. Money and riches were viewed as means to gain this public renown. Inscriptions and monuments were built in honor of people who did good deeds for an individual or for the city. Poverty was considered a shame, and even the gods did not take any interest in the poor.⁴³

In traditional African society, material blessing consisted in having a large family with many wives and children. But in contemporary Africa, money and material possessions are given greater priority. This materialistic view of blessing is much similar to the perceptions held in the Greco-Roman culture. This perception of material prosperity, coupled with other factors, has contributed to the success of prosperity theology in Africa.

What Is Prosperity Theology?

The prosperity gospel is a widely spread teaching across Pentecostal and charismatic denominations. The expression “prosperity gospel” is rather a pejorative expression. It is so called by those who denounce a kind of Bible teaching mostly centered on material prosperity. This indicates the controversial nature of this trend in

⁴²Ibid., 47.

⁴³Ibid.

today's Christianity. Rotimi, Nwadiolor, and Ugwuja define it as "the gospel or message popular among Pentecostals that advocates financial blessing, good health and wealth as irrevocable plans, programs and desire of God for men."⁴⁴ For the Lausanne Committee, prosperity theology is the teaching that "believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings."⁴⁵

According to Oyedepo, one of the pioneer preachers of the prosperity gospel in Nigeria, God delights in the prosperity of his children, just as earthly fathers do for their children.

He argues:

Why then 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"? 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.⁴⁶

God is, therefore, a father who delights in the material abundance of his children. But beyond this theological argument which serves as its foundation, the phenomenon of the prosperity gospel is influenced by some historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors.

⁴⁴Nkechi C. Rotimi, Kanayo L. Nwadiolor, and Alex Amaechi Ugwuja, "Nigerian Pentecostal Churches and Their Prosperity Messages: A Safeguard against Poverty in Nigeria? 1980 – 2014," *Mgbakoigba Journal of African Studies* 5, no. 2 (June 2016), <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/mjas/article/viewFile/138807/128480> (accessed March 20, 2017).

⁴⁵Barrick.

⁴⁶David O. Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity* (Ikeja, Nigeria: Dominion Publishers, 1997), 7.

Historical Overview of the Prosperity Teaching

Prosperity theology originated from the United States of America in the 1960s and corresponds to the materialistic aspirations of a trend of Christianity in the West.⁴⁷ This doctrine is said to have developed around personalities having a Pentecostal background. Through the hopes it raises, the prosperity teaching meets the aspirations people have whose daily realities are made of suffering and misery.⁴⁸

Some names are associated with prosperity theology in the United States of America, such as: Kenneth Hagin (Rhema Bible Church; Tulsa, OK), Kenneth and Gloria Copeland (Kenneth Copeland Ministries; Fort Worth, Texas), Joel Osteen (Lakewood Church; Houston, TX), Jerry Savelle (Associate of Copeland), Charles and Frances Hunter (Hunter Ministries; Pinehurst, Texas), Charles Capps (Capps Ministries; Broken Arrow, Oklahoma), Joyce Meyer (Hand of Hope; Saint Louis, MO), and Creflor Dollar (World Changers Church International; College Park, Georgia).⁴⁹

Many other preachers in Africa and elsewhere have adopted prosperity theology. According to Bourdanne, the prosperity teaching came to Africa through English-speaking countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. Benson Idahosa is said to be the key person to have brought the prosperity doctrine to Nigeria.⁵⁰ But other personalities include Gbenga Oso (Laughter Foundation Church),

⁴⁷*La théologie de la prospérité* (Marpent, France: BLF, 2012), 7–8.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 8.

⁵⁰Daniel Bourdanne, *L'évangile de la prospérité: Une menace pour l'église africaine*, 2e ed. (Abingdon, Royaume Uni: Presses Bibliques Africaines, 2011), 32.

Chris Oyakilome (Christ Embassy), Matthew Ashimolowo (Kingsway International Christian Center), David O. Oyedepo (Living Faith Ministries, also known as Winners Chapel), etc.⁵¹ From the English-speaking countries, prosperity teaching spread across all the other countries in the sub-Saharan Africa. In the Francophone countries, many ministries and independent churches have flourished as a result of the influence of this teaching from the English-speaking countries.

The Root of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa

Many factors have favored the success of prosperity theology in Africa. Three important factors need to be mentioned: the historical context, the socio-economic context, and the cultural context.

The Historical Context

Many African Initiated Churches (AICs) have started as a reaction against Euro-American missionaries' abuses, and so have some African theologies. Bourdanne contends that one reason that has favored the spread of the prosperity gospel in Africa is the "poverty theology" advocated by western missionaries.⁵² For most western missionaries, evangelism was to be solely centered on the need for salvation. They did not take into account the holistic nature of the Scripture and human needs. J. Roswell Flower, former missionary treasurer at the Division of Foreign Missions in Springfield,

⁵¹Global News, "Nigerian Fake Pastors Who Worship Money More than God," <http://www.globalnewsnig.com/nigerian-fake-pastors-who-worship-money-more-than-god/> (accessed February 16, 2017).

⁵²Bourdanne, 35.

Missouri, advocated the priority of the preaching of the gospel over social work. He wrote,

Pentecostal missionaries have a holy calling and a profound responsibility resting upon them. Their work is peculiar in that the Holy Spirit has called them to the field in vital relationship to the second coming of our Lord. They cannot follow the methods laid down by those who have gone before them, neither can they bend their energies in building up charitable institutions, hospitals and schools as do the denominational societies. . . . The Pentecostal commission is to witness, witness, witness. . . . It is so easy to be turned aside to do work which is very good in itself, but which is short of the Pentecostal standard. Our missionaries are in danger of this thing.⁵³

This attitude toward social work and economic empowerment of believers was influenced by early Pentecostal theology. “In the early days of Pentecost,” Knutti reports, “believers felt that the return of Christ was imminent and there wasn’t time to engage in anything less than total evangelism by proclamation. People needed to be ready to meet Christ.”⁵⁴ Believers were moved by a sense of urgency to preach the gospel to the lost. Since Christ was coming soon, it was useless to engage in worldly pursuits. Social involvement would dilute the Pentecostal message and weaken the work of the Holy Spirit. As Bourdanne notes, in some cases, business people were encouraged to give up their businesses; students who wanted to pursue their education were discouraged from doing so. To be a “good Christian,” one had to “be poor and less educated.”⁵⁵ Although not all missionaries preached this “poverty theology,” it had a negative impact on Christianity later on. This historical factor has served as an argument for the prosperity preachers.

⁵³J. Roswell Flower, “The Pentecostal Commission,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, June 12, 1920, 12.

⁵⁴Peggy Johnson Knutti, *Healing Hands: Touching the Suffering through Medical Missions* (Springfield, MO: Access Group, 2010), 5.

⁵⁵Bourdanne, 35.

The Socio-economic Context

The socio-economic conditions in Africa can be summed up in one word: poverty. Poverty is a widespread phenomenon in the world, and particularly in Africa. In 2018, the World Bank reported that “in Sub-Saharan Africa, around 41 percent live below the international poverty line,” which is set at \$1.90 per person, per day.⁵⁶ Some efforts are being made in Togo to reduce poverty. A survey conducted by “Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques et Démographiques (INSEED)”⁵⁷ showed that the national poverty rate (or incidence of poverty) was estimated at 53.5 percent in 2017, compared to 55.1 percent in 2015, a drop of 1.6 percent.⁵⁸ In spite of these efforts, poverty is still a challenge for many people in Togo, particularly in rural areas. A survey by the Programme des Nations Unis pour le Developpement, (PNUD) Togo, revealed that the poverty rate is 73.4 percent in rural areas, 28.5 percent in Lomé, and 44.7 percent in other urban areas.⁵⁹ According to the United Nations, poverty goes beyond “the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-

⁵⁶The World Bank, “Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle - Frequently Asked Questions,” [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/poverty-and-shared-prosperity-2018-piecing-together-the-poverty-puzzle-frequently-asked-questions), published September 19, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/poverty-and-shared-prosperity-2018-piecing-together-the-poverty-puzzle-frequently-asked-questions> (accessed May 27, 2020).

⁵⁷National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies.

⁵⁸Institut National des Etudes Economiques et Démographiques (INSEED), “Togo Cartographie de la pauvreté 2017,” [inseed.tg](https://inseed.tg/?s=cartographie+pauvrete+2017), <https://inseed.tg/?s=cartographie+pauvrete+2017> (accessed May 27, 2020).

⁵⁹Harold Coulombe et Chata Male, *Togo profil de pauvreté 2006-2011* (Lomé, Togo: PNUD Togo, s.d.), 13, <http://www.stat-togo.org/contenu/pdf/profil-pauvrete-togo-dgscn.pdf> (accessed May 26, 2020).

making.”⁶⁰ In Togo, poverty is characterized by low purchasing power, limited access to education (particularly higher education), unemployment, poor accommodation, sicknesses and diseases, and limited access to basic social services. These factors are ferments that favor the prosperity gospel.

Folarin identifies three concerns of the prosperity gospel: sickness, demonic possession, and poverty.⁶¹ He points out that evangelical denominations have condemned traditional solutions to these existential concerns of life, but failed to offer “workable alternatives” to existential problems faced by African Christians. This failure has resulted in three possible options: fatalism (resigning to one’s fate), syncretism (Christian using traditional means to solve their problems), or commitment to the prosperity gospel.⁶²

Nihinlola,⁶³ Lugazia, and Bourdanne⁶⁴ all agree that the prosperity gospel has taken advantage of the deplorable life conditions in Africa, coupled with bad governance. This shows how theology can be influenced by the social context. Very often, theology is more affected by the society than the society is affected by theology. When theology fails to impact the society, it is affected by what goes on in the society.

⁶⁰United Nations, “Ending Poverty,” un.org, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/poverty/> (accessed May 26, 2020).

⁶¹George O. Folarin, “Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria: A Reexamination of the Concept, Impact, and Evaluation,” *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 23, no. 2 (2006): 82.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Nihinlola, 29.

⁶⁴Bourdanne, 33–34.

The Cultural Context

Another reason why the prosperity gospel is flourishing in Africa is because it shares the same concerns with ATR: material prosperity, good health, and protection. This similarity explains Africans' interest for the prosperity gospel.⁶⁵ Ngong also observes that African Christianity and theology have always been influenced by the African traditional worldview.⁶⁶

Two concepts in African religions help understand Africa Christians' interest in prosperity theology. The first concept is the African cosmology. According to Ngong, Africans believe in the unity between the spiritual realm and the physical world. The physical world is governed by spiritual beings. In this context, religion is understood as a way to ensuring peace and well-being by the warding off of malevolent spirits and the attainment of material well-being through gaining the favors of benevolent spirits.

The second concept of African religion is that it is centered on the physical and material well-being of the worshipper. When a traditional religious worshipper approaches his "god," it is not to seek a personal relationship with this being, nor does he think about eternal life. A traditional worshipper prays and sacrifices to the "gods" mainly to seek protection, well-being, and success in life. According to Riviere, in the Eve culture for example, success and happiness in life are evaluated in terms of good

⁶⁵Faith J. Lugazia, "Charismatic Movements and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania," in *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity*, ed. Mika Vahakangas and Andrew A. Kyomo (Nairobi: ACTON Publishers, 2003), 50.

⁶⁶David Tonghou Ngong, "Salvation and Materialism in African Theology," *Studies in World Christianity*, <http://www.eupublishing.com/doi/pdfplus/10.3366/E135499010900032X> (accessed July 7, 2012).

health, material prosperity, long life, and an abundant posterity.⁶⁷ This worldview has been imported into Christianity. That is why, for many African Christians, Christianity is more about success, protection, and well-being than about eternal life. This worldview has prepared the way to the flourishing of the prosperity gospel on the continent.

These three factors—the historical context, the socio-economic context, and the religious context—have combined to prepare the soil and predispose African Christians to consume the prosperity teaching. The prosperity gospel is an expression of the protests, hopes, and practices of Africans who have embraced the faith in Jesus but have not been sufficiently rooted in the Word.

The Teachings of the Prosperity Gospel

Advocates of prosperity theology basically teach that a child of God should always prosper and be well, and should not suffer from anything at all. The believer's work, business, home, and family should go well. The teachers of this theology believe that they should be models of this "truth" themselves. The prosperity gospel bases its theology on five core principles: (1) the Abrahamic covenant, (2) the atonement and substitution, (3) faith and positive confession, (4) the law of sowing and reaping, and (5) the power of prayer.

The Abrahamic Covenant

One of the core teaching of the prosperity gospel is the Abrahamic covenant and the promised blessing. The prosperity teaching argues that "prosperity is a blessing of

⁶⁷Riviere, 84.

Abraham” and poverty belongs to the curse of the Law.⁶⁸ Galatians 3:13–14 says that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law” in order that we might enjoy “the blessing given to Abraham.” According to the proponents of the prosperity gospel, the “Abrahamic inheritance is unpacked primarily in terms of material entitlements.”⁶⁹ The prosperity teaching concludes that “Since God’s covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant,” Christians should realize that prosperity is theirs now.⁷⁰ The prosperity teachers focus on the material aspects of the promise-blessing (great nation, great name, protection, and security) at the expense of the spiritual aspects (be a blessing, all peoples on earth will be blessed through you). They ignore the last part of Galatians 3:14, “so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit,” and not “so that by faith we might receive material blessings.”

The Atonement and Substitution

Another foundation of the prosperity gospel is the doctrine of atonement and substitution. Prosperity theology traces “its roots back to the Reformation and the penal substitution theory of the atonement.”⁷¹ The Bible says that Jesus “bore our sins in his body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24).” This prosperity gospel extends the idea of “substitution

⁶⁸Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1974), 50.

⁶⁹Edward K. Pousson, *Spreading the Flame: Charismatic Churches and Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992). quoted in David W. Jones, “5 Errors of the Prosperity Gospel,” *The Gospel Coalition*, June 5, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-errors-of-the-prosperity-gospel/> (accessed January 16, 2020).

⁷⁰Copeland, 51.

⁷¹David T. Williams, “Anselm and Hagin: Ontological Argument and Prosperity Cult,” *Koers* 57, no. 2 (1992): 231.

for the penalty of sin to include the results of sin in sickness and poverty. Thus, because Jesus died, health and prosperity may be claimed, but with the further assertion of immediate rather than eschatological receipt.”⁷²

Copeland asserts that since Jesus bore the curse of the law on behalf of the Christian, there is no reason for believers to live in poverty.⁷³ According to Hagin, “The curse of the law ... includes spiritual death, sickness and disease, and poverty.”⁷⁴ Through the death of Jesus, the Christian has been delivered from this curse. The prosperity teachers also misinterpret 2 Corinthians 8:9, which states that “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” The context of the passage shows that Paul was encouraging Christians in Corinth to follow the example of Christ by generously giving their riches away to the needy saints in Jerusalem.

Health and Wealth

One corollary of the atonement/substitution principle is health and wealth. The atoning death of Christ does not deliver the Christian from sin alone. It also delivers believers from the consequences of sin. Since sickness and poverty are the consequences of sin, and since Jesus bore our sins on the cross, the Christian has been delivered from sickness and poverty (Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). A Christian must, therefore, not be sick, but instead be in good health. Sickness and poverty are the consequences of lack of faith.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Copeland, 51.

⁷⁴Kenneth E. Hagin, *Biblical Keys to Financial Prosperity* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1995), 9.

Faith and Positive Confession

Faith and positive confession are at the core of the theology of prosperity and success. Faith and positive confession are seen as spiritual laws governing material prosperity. The Christian must activate the laws of prosperity by exercising faith, by positive confession, and also by sowing (giving). According to the prosperity teaching, “the Bible has promised the believers prosperity, so the believers should speak in faith about that promise.”⁷⁵ Poverty is considered as a lack of faith, and “a spiritual evil that must be confronted through positive confession.”⁷⁶

Faith is the fuel that makes the whole machine work. According to Copeland, faith is a spiritual force and power which governs the spirit world and causes the laws of prosperity to function.⁷⁷ Faith should lead to financial blessings. Proponents of the prosperity gospel believe that “faith is a supernatural force that believers use to get whatever form of personal success they want.”⁷⁸ Faith and the spoken word (*ρήμα*) (or the positive confession of God’s words) release the creative power of God. Christians should, therefore, decide what they want, believe it, confess it, and it will be done. Just by naming and claiming the desires of their heart, they can obtain whatever blessing they want.⁷⁹

⁷⁵Mwita Akiri, “The Prosperity Gospel: Its Concise Theology, Challenges and Opportunities,” *gafcon.org*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-prosperity-gospel-its-concise-theology-challenges-and-opportunities> (accessed January 17, 2020).

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Copeland, 19.

⁷⁸Dan Liroy, “The Heart of the Prosperity Gospel: Self or the Savior?” *satsonline.org*, <http://www.satsonline.org/userfiles/Liroy,Theheartoftheprosperitygospel.pdf> (accessed July 6, 2012).

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

The prosperity gospel also teaches that one possesses what one confesses. “Confession precedes possession,” say Gossett and Kenyon. “Our confession builds the road over which faith hauls its mighty cargo.”⁸⁰ Positive confession is based on the alleged power of the spoken word. The spoken word is believed to be vested with power to actualize what has been said. This belief is also present in the ATR.

This perception makes faith out to be a magical power that forces God to work independently from his will. It does not take into account the sovereignty of God. Biblical faith is not “a means to material gain,” but a means to “justification before God.”⁸¹

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

The law of sowing/giving is one of the core teachings of the prosperity gospel. It bases its argument on passages like Mark 10:29–30 which says that Jesus’ followers will receive a hundred times what they left for him. According to Jones, “The driving force behind this teaching on giving is what prosperity teacher Robert Tilton referred to as the ‘Law of Compensation’.”⁸² Copeland argues that when we give money to God, we are making a “deposit” in heaven from which we can draw whenever we need money, according to the rate of exchange which the Word of God guarantees.⁸³ He mentions four major areas Christians can make “deposits in heaven: tithing, giving to the poor, investing in the gospel, and giving as a praise to God.”⁸⁴ This Law of Compensation is

⁸⁰Don Gossett and E. W. Kenyon, *The Power of the Positive Confession of God’s Word* (Washington, DC: Don Gossett, 1977), 30 & 32.

⁸¹Jones, “5 Errors of the Prosperity Gospel.”

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Copeland, 73.

⁸⁴Ibid., 76.

not based on pure motives. It motivates people to give, not because they love God and his mission, but because they expect to get “a hundred times” in return. Giving is then a placement, “a deposit,” not an act of obedience and love for God.

The Power of Prayer

Another tool that forces God is prayer. Basing their arguments on passages like James 4:2, “You do not have, because you do not ask God,” the prosperity preachers contend that prayer is the key to obtaining whatever we want from God. But the following verse argues against this teaching: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:3).” The Bible is not against praying for personal needs (Matt. 7:7–11; Phil. 4:6). The Bible also teaches about the power of prayer and perseverance in prayer. But prayer must be based on right motives, and depends on the will and sovereignty of God.

Deliverance from Family or Generational Curses

Deliverance from generational curses is yet another important teaching of the prosperity movement, particularly in the African context. If a Christian does not prosper, does not get married, or cannot have a child, etc., it is certainly due to a family or generational curse. He or she needs to be delivered. Deliverance prayers or sessions are organized by so-called “anointed servants of God (apostles, prophets, bishops, etc.)” and people flock to obtain their deliverance. Some deliverance sessions are paid, and some practices prescribed to the “patients.” So-called “anointed men of God” use anointed oil or anointed water. Public places, shops, houses, vehicles, etc. may also be delivered.

Victory over Enemies

The belief in supernatural evil forces is deeply rooted in African traditional cultures. These evil forces are believed to be able to harm people. They are often believed to be used by enemies, witch-doctors, and wizards to make people sick, or prevent them from getting married, having children, succeeding in their studies, or getting a job. Witch doctors and wizards can also cause accidents or other kinds of misfortune. In this context, security and protection from enemies are an existential need.

Unbelievers often seek security, protection, healing, or success from traditional healers, diviners and fortune-tellers. But weak Christians find refuge in prosperity churches where preachers often call themselves “apostles,” “prophets,” or “bishops” and “claim to offer solutions to every spiritual, social and economic problem in a manner not so different from the practices of the African traditional diviners and fortune-tellers.”⁸⁵ One can hear frequent use of words and expressions like “breakthrough,” “winner” or “overcomer,” and “back to the sender.”

The Bible does recognize the existence of evil forces and spirits. But the problem with the prosperity teaching (as in ATR) is that every misfortune is attributed to evil spirits, witch-craft and wizards without discernment. There is no human responsibility or natural calamity. This leads to superstitious beliefs.

It appears that the prosperity gospel only has a physical and materialistic understanding of salvation. By insisting on the materialistic results of the atonement, the preachers of the prosperity gospel show less concern with spiritual salvation than they do with material blessing. According to them, Jesus died, not that we might be saved, but

⁸⁵Akiri.

that we might be rich. Although the prosperity preachers do not completely ignore salvation from sin, they place minimal emphasis on the spiritual growth of Christians. They seem to be more interested in deliverance from the consequences of sin (for example, sickness or poverty, rather than salvation from sin itself.

This understanding of salvation as physical deliverance and material prosperity has two dangers. The first danger is an “over-realized eschatology.” Christians stand in danger of losing the eschatological dimension of faith. The second danger is reducing the seriousness of sin. Sin is not considered as an offense to God, but as a barrier to personal blessing.⁸⁶ The prosperity gospel stands on a materialistic interpretation of Scriptures and on egocentric motivations in the practice of the Christian faith. Faith is for personal, material, and egocentric gain. Summing it all up, the prosperity gospel turns God into the servant of man, instead of man being the servant of God.

Some Characteristics of the Prosperity Gospel

From its teaching, one can deduce the following characteristics of the prosperity gospel. First, the prosperity gospel is egocentric. It is centered on human needs and on one’s well-being instead of on God. Second, the prosperity gospel is materialistic. It is focused on material and physical needs and blessing, to the neglect of the spiritual needs of people. Third, the prosperity gospel ignores the will and sovereignty of God. It gives faith a supernatural power operating independently from the will of God. Everything depends on faith. The prosperity gospel implies that God’s miraculous power and blessing can be treated as automatic, or is at the disposal of human techniques and manipulations.

⁸⁶Chigor Chike, “The Doctrine of Salvation among African Christians,” Fulcrum.org, <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page.cfm?ID=243> (accessed October 10, 2012).

God is at the service of human desires. It is all about enjoyment, privileges, and blessings, but not service. Fourth, the prosperity gospel denies suffering. A Christian should not suffer, fall sick, or be poor, because Jesus bore our suffering, sicknesses, and poverty on the cross. The prosperity gospel is a distorted gospel that has a damaging effect on Christianity in Africa in general, and in Togo in particular.

Summary

The concept of blessing and prosperity in African Christianity has been influenced mostly by historical, spiritual, religious/cultural (the African traditional worldview of religion), and socio-economic factors. Although the prosperity preachers use the Scripture to justify their claims, the prosperity gospel does not fulfill its promises. If it is true, as the prosperity preachers preach and teach, that God wants every Christian to prosper, why is it that many faithful and sincere Christians are still financially poor, sick, or even sometimes oppressed by demonic powers? Koch has examined how religious beliefs are influenced by economic conditions and the effects of the religious beliefs on financial or economic outcomes. He concludes that the prosperity gospel has not affected individuals' financial circumstances.⁸⁷

Isichei observes that "Christianity in Africa is of global significance, and the directions it takes are of importance to Christians everywhere."⁸⁸ For this reason, a sound biblical understanding of blessing is of absolute necessity for the survival of a biblical Christianity in Africa. Christians in Africa need a theology of blessing that is both

⁸⁷Bradley A. Koch, "The Prosperity Gospel and Economic Prosperity: Race, Class, Giving, and Voting" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2009), 82.

⁸⁸Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 1.

biblically grounded and takes into account the cultural, socio-economic, and spiritual context of the church in Africa. They need a contextual biblical theology of blessing and material prosperity. This need has not been addressed by the literature reviewed. The precedent literature reveals no attempt at developing a contextual biblical theology of blessing as it relates more specifically to the prosperity doctrine. Scholars have often analyzed the concept of blessing from a purely biblical point of view. There has been no attempt to develop a contextual theology of blessing in any particular cultural or religious context. In a way, one might say that the prosperity preachers have done exactly that, but mostly at the detriment of biblical teaching.

The problem with the prosperity gospel is a hermeneutical problem. Instead of applying the Word of God to the cultural and socio-economic context, the prosperity preachers apply their cultural and socio-economic context to the text. The purpose in this research is to formulate a theology of blessing that is mindful to the context, but at the same time biblically grounded. The formulation of this theology will necessitate two methodological approaches: an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of Scripture and social science research methods to investigate the perceptions and beliefs in charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing resulting from an exegetical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine. The research aimed at investigating the following question: What components of a contextual biblical theology of blessing are consistent with Scripture and can serve to evaluate the understanding of blessing along with the prosperity teaching propagated by charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo?

The research is guided by more specific questions:

1. RQ 1. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics in Togo?
 - A. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic pastors in Togo?
 - B. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic believers in Togo?
2. RQ 2. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals in Togo?

- A. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostal pastors in Togo?
- B. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostal believers in Togo?
3. RQ 3. What are the factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo regarding blessing?
 - A. What are the historical factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo?
 - B. What are the socio-economic factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo?
 - C. What are the cultural factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo?
 - D. What are the theological factors influence the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo?
4. RQ 4. What are the perceptions and beliefs of blessing in biblical and Christian literature?
5. RQ 5. What does Scripture, OT and NT, teach about blessing?
6. RQ 6. Where is conformity to, and deviation from, Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC regarding Blessing?

This chapter describes the methodological framework of the research, the data collection, and analysis procedures. It also describes the research instruments, and addresses some ethical considerations.

Methodological Framework

Two methodological approaches were used for this research. The first approach was an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts for the biblical and theological research. The second approach was social science methods for the social research. The social science research utilized mixed methods.

Exegetical/Hermeneutical Approach

The study of the biblical texts was the basis for a contextual biblical theology which is the standard by which one can evaluate the understanding of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo regarding blessing. The research utilized the historical-grammatical exegetical approach to examine key passages to determine what the Bible teaches on the subject (RQ 5) in an effort to arrive at a biblical understanding of blessing.¹

Mixed Methodological Approach

The social research utilized a mixed methodology approach to investigate RQ 1 and RQ 2 related to the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo. The approach consists in mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single research. The central premise of mixed methods research is “that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.”² Mixed method approach improves accuracy, gives a more complete picture, compensates strengths and

¹See chapter 5, section titled “Exegetical Analysis of Blessing.”

²J. W. Creswell and V. L. Clark Plano, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), quoted in Hui Bian, “Mixed Methods Research,” *core.ecu.edu*, <http://core.ecu.edu/ofe/statisticsresearch/mixed%20methods%20new.pdf> (accessed April 4, 2018).

weaknesses, helps develop the analysis, and is an aid to sampling. It “seeks convergence, corroboration, [and] correspondence of results from the different methods.”³

Creswell and Clark have identified four types of mixed methods designs: (1) the triangulation design, which aims at collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the same topic; (2) the embedded design, in which one secondary method serves to support the other, primary, method; (3) the explanatory design, where the research uses qualitative data to explain or build on the initial quantitative data; and (4) the exploratory design, a two-phase method where the researcher collects qualitative data in the first phase, and the quantitative data in the second phase.⁴ This research utilizes the exploratory design to explore beliefs and perceptions regarding blessing among charismatics and Pentecostals.

Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative data were collected in the first phase of the research, using semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research “is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of

³Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects*, 4th ed. (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2010), 139–143.

⁴J. W. Creswell and V. L. Clark Plano, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 58–88., quoted in Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Research Methods in Education* (London, England: SAGE Publications, 2011), 295–297.

particular populations.”⁵ One reason for doing qualitative research is to “understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known.”⁶

Quantitative Research Method

The quantitative research constituted the second phase of the research. The quantitative method was a questionnaire survey built upon the results from the interview data analysis. The logic of this method is that quantitative research “is inappropriate until exploratory qualitative methods have built a better foundation of understanding.”⁷ Quantitative research, like qualitative research, attempts to explain phenomena. But unlike qualitative research, quantitative research uses numerical data (numbers) to explain phenomena. It has the advantage of producing “reliable data that are usually generalizable to some larger population.”⁸ According to Punch, “Quantitative research does three main things: 1) it conceptualizes reality in terms of variables, 2) it measures these variables, and 3) it studies relationships between these variables. Thus, variables are the central concept in quantitative research.”⁹

⁵“Qualitative Research Methods Overview,’ Module 1 of Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide,” *cww.ccs.neu.edu*, <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf> (accessed November 15, 2013).

⁶A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990)., cited in Carol M. Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010). 143.

⁷Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Research Methods in Education* (London, England: SAGE Publications, 2011), 297.

⁸Ashley Crossman, “An Overview of Quantitative Research Methods: Surveys, Secondary Data, and Experiments,” *sociology.about.com*, <http://sociology.about.com/od/Research/a/Overview-Of-Quantitative-Research-Methods.htm> (accessed November 17, 2013).

⁹Punch, 211.

Research Participants

The target population in this research was Pentecostal and charismatic pastors and believers in Togo. Two sampling strategies were used to select participants for this research: one for the qualitative research and the other for the quantitative research.

Interview Participants and Sampling Strategy

Interview Participants

The research used personal face-to-face interviews. The interview participants consisted of four pastors and four believers from Pentecostal churches, and four pastors and four believers from charismatic churches, making a total of sixteen interviewees. The respondents ranged from thirty years old to seventy years old, and were selected according to their representativeness and position in their church affiliation (appendix G). They came from various cultural backgrounds and from different educational level.

Pastors who were interviewed were key opinion leaders among their church affiliation. In addition, all four charismatic pastors were founders and/or national top-leaders of their church denominations. The four Pentecostals pastors were also national leaders from among the Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost. Believers interviewed were mature Christians, both male and female, who were recommended by their pastors.

Sampling Strategy for the Interviews

The research utilized non-probability sampling for the interviews to gather data. H. Russell Bernard indicates three different circumstances where non-probability sampling is required: (1) labor-intensive, in-depth studies of a few cases; (2) large surveys when a probability sample is not possible; and (3) when collecting cultural data.

According to him, in-depth research requires informed participants, people who are chosen on purpose, and not just responsive respondents chosen randomly.¹⁰

Non-probability sampling includes purposive sampling. According to Morse, “Purposive sampling in qualitative inquiry is the deliberate seeking out of participants with particular characteristics, according to the needs of the developing analysis and emerging theory.”¹¹ The logic and power of purposeful sampling “lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.”¹² This research technique relies on the judgement of the researcher in choosing research participants he believes are well knowledgeable and experienced about a phenomenon.¹³ A type of purposive sampling is theoretical sampling in which the researcher seeks participants and collects required information as the study progresses.¹⁴

¹⁰H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5th ed. (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011), 143.

¹¹Janice M. Morse, “Purposive Sampling,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, ed. Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589.n774> (accessed March 30, 2018).

¹²M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015), quoted in S. J. Gentles et al., “Sampling in Qualitative Research: Insights from an Overview of the Methods Literature,” *The Qualitative Report* 20, no. 11 (2015): 1772–1789., <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss11/5> (accessed April 3, 2018).

¹³John Dudovskiy, “Purposive Sampling,” *researchmethodology.net*, <https://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/purposive-sampling/> (accessed April 3, 2018).

¹⁴Morse.

Survey Participants and Sampling Strategy

Questionnaire Survey Participants

The survey targeted eight different churches, four Pentecostal churches and four charismatic churches. But at the time of the survey, one pastor of a charismatic church was not available to give permission for the survey. So, the questionnaire was effectively administered in seven churches. The sampling strategy used to determine the number of people to survey was the sample size for 5 percent sampling error of precision.¹⁵ Respondents ranged from twenty years old to eighty years old, and belonged to different marital statuses, professional statuses and church positions (appendix I).

Sampling Strategy for the Surveys

The sampling strategy used to select participants was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling (also known as haphazard sampling or accidental sampling) “is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study.”¹⁶ It consists in grabbing whoever is ready and willing to answer the questions.¹⁷

Convenience sampling strategy was chosen for two reasons. First, although pastors granted permission to conduct the survey, not everybody was willing to answer

¹⁵Bernard, 140–141.

¹⁶Ilker Etikan, Sulaiman Abubakar Musa, and Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim, “Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling,” *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, No. 1 (2016): 2, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/79a2/c4a4111275b3efbfa0522284ccd0fecc556a.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2019).

¹⁷Bernard, 147.

the questions. The questionnaire included ninety-two questions, apart from the demographic information, with a total length of four pages. Not everyone was ready to take the necessary time (about thirty minutes) to complete the questionnaire. The second reason is that, not all church members have the educational level necessary to read and understand the questions in order to answer properly. Nevertheless, some church members, though less educated, filled out the questionnaire with the help of a third person.

The Sample Size

Many approaches are used to determine the sample size. These include: using a census for small populations, imitating a sample size of similar studies, using published tables, and also applying formulas to calculate a sample size.”¹⁸ The sampling strategy used to determine the number of people to survey was the sample size for 5 percent sampling error of precision (appendix H).¹⁹ The researcher also referred to the simplified formula of Taro Yamane for calculating sample sizes to determine the sample size for each church affiliated. The formula is as follows: $n = N / [1 + N (e)^2]$,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

¹⁸Ajay S. Singh and Micah B. Masuku, “Sampling Techniques and Determination of Sample Size in Applied Statistics Research: An Overview,” *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management* 2, no. 11 (November 2014): 10, <http://ijecm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/21131.pdf> (May 5, 2018).

¹⁹Bernard, 140–141.

where n represents the sample size, N the population size, and e the level of precision (or margin of error).²⁰ When applied, this formula yields the same results as the table recommended by PATHS. The whole procedure was arranged with the local pastors prior to the survey.

Researcher as Research Participant

Contemporary academic debates have focused on “the positionalities of researchers, and how these positions impact projects.”²¹ Some researchers argue that researchers cannot be separated from their data. But citing Peshkin, Peredaryenko, and Krauss argue that “subjectivity” is, in fact, advantageous and “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected.”²² Elliston contends that “a presupposition of collecting good data is that the researcher must approach the data in as unbiased a manner as possible.”²³ In addition to approaching the data “objectively,” researcher biases will be controlled by the sufficient number of people that will be interviewed.

²⁰Singh and Masuku, 15.

²¹Ryan J. Al-Natour, “The Impact of the Researcher on the Researched,” *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture* 14, no. 6 (2011), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/428> (accessed August 11, 2015).

²²Margarita S. Peredaryenko and Steven Eric Krauss, “Calibrating the Human Instrument: Understanding the Interviewing Experience of Novice Qualitative Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report* 18, no. 85 (2013): 1–17.

²³Edgar J. Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2011), 143.

Instrumentation

Appropriate research instruments were designed and used to conduct this study in order to insure reliable results. Research results depend on the choice of appropriate methods used to collect data in order to solve the research problem.²⁴ This research used qualitative and quantitative research instruments: a semi-structured interview guide and a questionnaire survey. These instruments were approved by a committee.

Semi-structured Interview Guide

This research utilized a semi-structured interview guide to investigate the current perceptions and beliefs related to blessing in charismatic and Pentecostal Churches in Togo (RQ 1 and RQ 2). Elliston defines interview as “an extension of asking questions in order to develop an appreciation for what people think about any topic that is being researched.”²⁵ The semi-structured interview guide consisted of six key questions ranking from simple to more complex. Sub-questions allowed respondents to share their experiences, beliefs, and opinions (appendix E).

Semi-structured interviews are “suited for a number of valuable tasks, particularly when more than a few of the open-ended questions require follow-up queries.”²⁶ The interview guide allowed respondents to share experiences, beliefs, and opinions on issues that came up during the interviews. The sub-questions were used when necessary to get more clarification or deeper insight.

²⁴Kevin Gary Smith, *Academic Writing and Theological Research: A Guide for Students* (Johannesburg, South Africa: South African Theological Seminary Press, 2008), 157, PDF.

²⁵Elliston, 145.

²⁶William C. Adams, “Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews,” in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 493.

Questionnaire Survey Guide

Questionnaire Survey Guide

The quantitative data were collected by administering a questionnaire survey. A questionnaire survey is a quantitative research method used in public opinion research. A questionnaire consists of written lists of clear and concise questions used to “collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis.”²⁷ Questionnaires are used to gather data about knowledge, attitudes, views, beliefs, preferences, and behaviors.

A questionnaire survey (appendix I) was used to examine the perceptions and beliefs among charismatics and Pentecostals regarding blessing (RQ 1 and RQ 2). The questionnaire was built upon the results from the interview data analysis. The questionnaire consisted of ninety-two questions classified into six sections: concept and content of blessing, sources of blessing, conditions and means to obtain blessing, and the purpose of blessing.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity and reliability are the two main psychometric characteristics to measure research instruments.²⁸ Validity “refers to asking the right questions, securing the right information and making the appropriate applications. Reliability, on the other hand, relates to consistency or the stability of the results.”²⁹

²⁷Denscombe, 155.

²⁸Punch, 247.

²⁹Elliston, 56.

*Validity*³⁰

Validity is a key issue in research methodology. It has to do with accuracy of research instruments. Validity answers the question: “Does the study indeed address the issues it claims to address?”³¹ A research instrument is valid if it allows one to collect the right information. Before going to respondents, the researcher conducted a pilot test with WAAST students. Triangulation is another strategy used to solve the issue of validity. To improve validity, the research employed quantitative and qualitative methods to triangulate the research findings and ensure a more valid construction of reality.

Reliability

Reliability deals with consistency of research instruments. It is “the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study.”³² A research instrument is reliable if it yields the same results over and over again. Questionnaire is a very reliable method of data collection because everyone in the sample answers exactly the same questions and without the researcher’s influence. The anonymity also increases the reliability of the responses.

³⁰To ensure validity of the research, the research instruments were approved by a committee consisting of five members (appendix A). The committee provided guidance in the choice and formulation of the research instruments. The instruments that were approved included the semi-structured interview guide and the questionnaire survey.

³¹Elliston, 56.

³²M. Joppe, “The Research Process,” <http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm> (accessed February 25, 1998), quoted in Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *The Qualitative Report* 8, no. 4 (December 2003): 599.

Data Collection Methodology

Data collection is a key issue in a research project because a valid study depends on the reliable collection of data.³³ The data collection must be reliable for the results to be considered valid. Appropriate research methods were used to collect data in order to answer the specific research questions.

Research Questions 1 and 2: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics (RQ 1) and Pentecostals (RQ 2) in Togo? These research questions were answered by semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys.

Research Question 3: What are the factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo regarding blessing? The historical factors (RQ 3.A), socio-economic factors (RQ 3B), cultural factors (RQ 3C), and theological factors (RQ 3D) that influence the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo were investigated through library research.

Research Question 4: What are the perceptions and beliefs of blessing in biblical and Christian literature? A library research provided an answer to this research question.

Research Question 5: What does Scripture, OT and NT, teach about blessing? This research question needed an exegetical approach to examine key passages in the Old and New Testaments related to blessing.

Research Question 6: Where is conformity to and deviation from Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC regarding blessing? A model of contextual theology were employed to evaluate the perceptions of CC/PC regarding blessing in order to identify elements of conformity and deviation from the written Word of God.

³³Elliston, 80.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data collection was based on an emic approach. The emic approach means that people's behaviors "are interpreted according to participant responses,"³⁴ or from the insider's point of view (as opposed to etic, from the outsider's point of view). In the case of this study, it means that the issue of blessing was examined from the perspective of the interviewees. Interviewees provided their own understanding, perceptions, and beliefs concerning blessing. The oral face-to-face interviews were recorded by using a Sony IC Recorder. The venues of the interviews were either the respondents' home or office, or my office at WAAST. The duration of the interviews ranged from thirty minutes to an hour and a half.

Quantitative Data Collection

The surveys were administered to pastors and members of the participants' churches following the procedure of the convenience sampling described above.³⁵ The questionnaire was distributed in the churches at the end of the services. In some churches, they were filled out and collected immediately. But in other churches, the filled forms were returned later. Permission were requested and obtained from pastors and a consent form was signed authorizing the researcher to administer the survey (appendix D).

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis is about describing and interpreting the data. Appropriate methods were utilized to analyze the collected data.

³⁴Pierce Taylor Hibbs, "The Emic and Etic, Immanent and Economic: Perspectives on Theology from Language Theory," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 2 (2018): 220.

³⁵See chapter 4, section titled "Sampling Strategy for the Surveys."

Interview Data Analysis

Researchers have identified five basic steps for analyzing qualitative data.³⁶ The first step is getting to know the data and organizing them. This means reading, re-reading, transcribing, cleaning, and labeling the data. The second step is to focus the analysis and identify the framework. The framework may be explanatory (guided by the research question), or exploratory (guided by the data).³⁷ The third step consists of organizing the data. The researcher identifies themes or patterns and organizes them into coherent and meaningful categories. The approach may be deductive (using the research question to group the data), or inductive (using emergent categories to group the data). The fourth step consists of identifying patterns and relationships within and between the categories. The researcher seeks similarities and differences in the responses and then writes a summary for each category. The last step deals with interpretation of the data.

Transcription of Oral Interview

The data gathered through the interviews was first transcribed verbatim into text format by using an application called *Transcribe*. The application was purchased at <https://transcribe.wreally.com/>. The interview audio files were uploaded on the application and it generated an automatic transcription with 70-90 percent accuracy depending on the pronunciation and accent of the interviewee. The automatic transcriptions were then read through and corrected manually.

³⁶Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner, "Analyzing Qualitative Data" (University of Wisconsin-Extension, 2003), 1.

³⁷Tilahun Nigatu, "Qualitative Data Analysis" (African Medical and Research Foundation, May 2009), <http://www.slideshare.net/tilahunigatu/qualitative-data-analysis-11895136> (accessed November 19, 2013).

The Coding

According to Charmaz, “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data.”³⁸ The transcribed interviews were coded line-by-line using a different color for each category: concept and content of blessing, sources of blessing, conditions and means of blessing, and purpose of blessing. The coding allowed the organization of data into categories in order to identify themes and patterns of ideas, concepts and behaviors.³⁹ The categories were grouped into patterns which were described and analyzed in order to understand the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo regarding blessing.

Questionnaire Survey Data Analysis

The data collected were checked for possible errors and analyzed using methods of statistical analysis: measures of central tendency. Questions were assigned codes and the responses gathered were transferred into four spreadsheets: (1) charismatic believers (CB), (2) charismatic pastors (CP), (3) Pentecostal believers (PB), and (4) Pentecostal pastors (PP). The values used to examine the beliefs and perceptions of respondents were: 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. The analysis of the descriptive statistics yielded the measures of central tendency presented in tables and graphs. The collected survey forms and the spreadsheets are all available for review.

³⁸Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London, England: SAGE Publications, 2009), 46.

³⁹Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2.

Ethical Considerations

Every research project involves ethical consideration. The Belmont Report has articulated three principles for research ethics: respect for persons, ensuring their autonomy and protecting their vulnerability; beneficence, minimizing psychological and social risks of participants; and justice, which guarantees a fair distribution of the risks and benefits resulting from the study.⁴⁰ The ethical issues in this research include confidentiality, consent, and privacy.

Confidentiality

To ensure participants' confidentiality, returned questionnaires and field notes were coded and kept confidential in a secure place. They will be destroyed after a reasonable period of time. Places, locations, and reports of data were anonymous to protect the privacy of the research participants.

Informed Consent and Privacy

Prior to each interview, an appointment was arranged with the respondent by a phone call or a home visit. The date, time, and venue were then set for the interview according to the availability of the respondent. Before starting the interview, respondents were informed about the purpose of the interview. The researcher informed and explained to the respondents their rights as research participants, including the freedom to participate or not and the right to confidentiality. An Informed Consent form was provided and signed both by the interviewer and the interviewee (appendix C). By

⁴⁰“Qualitative Research Methods Overview, Module 1 of Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide,” *ccs.neu.edu*, <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf> (accessed November 15, 2013).

signing the consent form, the respondents agreed to participate in the research and gave permission to the researcher to use the data collected.

The surveys followed the same protocol. Before the survey, an arrangement was made with the pastor and a date for the survey agreed upon. A consent form was filled out by the pastor of the church, authorizing the researcher to conduct the research. Church members were informed about the purpose of the research. The senior pastor or his assistant explained the procedure of the survey. Members willingly participated in the research.

Summary

The issue of blessing and prosperity is both a theological and a social issue. It involves the interpretation of Scripture as well as the investigation into the perceptions, beliefs, and factors associated with it. The qualitative and quantitative methods suggested in this paper aimed at investigating these perceptions, beliefs, and factors. The final goal was the formulation of a contextual biblical theology of blessing. The use of qualitative and quantitative methods allowed the researcher to achieve a greater degree of reliability of the findings.

CHAPTER 5

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF BLESSING

The purpose of this research is to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing resulting from an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo regarding blessing. This chapter focuses on examining what the Scripture says about blessing in order to answer RQ 5: What does Scripture, OT and NT, teach about blessing? The chapter will first set the methodological framework of the study. It will survey different approaches to biblical interpretation, and approaches or theories to the construction of meaning construction. It will then briefly examine the issues of authorial intent and the historical-grammatical method of exegesis that this paper advocates. The exegetical section will examine some passages on blessing in the OT and in the NT before formulating a summary.

Exegetical/Hermeneutical Approach

The exegetical approach used for this study is the historical-grammatical method. This method is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that the meaning of a biblical text is determined, not by the text itself (text-centered or semantic autonomy), nor by the reader (reader-centered or reader response criticism), but primarily by the author (author-centered or authorial intent). It assumes that the meaning of a text is “what the author consciously intended to say by his text.”¹ This

¹Robert H. Stein, *Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 20–21.

view is supported by scholars such as Hirsch, Stein, and Arp. The second assumption is that the meaning of a text is determined by the context. Context includes historical-cultural context (the world of the author) and the literary context (the world of the text)—as well as the progress of the argument and the issue of genres.

Gorman identifies three basic approaches in recent methods of exegesis: the synchronic approach (the text as it stands), the diachronic approach (the text across the time), and the existential approach (a reality beyond the text).² He advocates “an eclectic and yet integrated” approach using elements from the three approaches (synchronic, diachronic, and existential). Tate also proposes a different integrated model for biblical interpretation. He suggests interpretation as “a conversation between the world of the text and the world of the reader, a conversation informed by the world of the author.”³

This study uses an integrated historical-grammatical approach, combining the historical-cultural context (the world of the author) and the literary context (the world of the text) to determine the author’s intended meaning (authorial intent).

²Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 12–19.

³W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 5. W. Randolph Tate distinguishes between “authorial meaning” and “textual meaning.” He defines “authorial meaning” as the “object of consciousness” perceived by the author, that is, “the mental formulation of the text” by the author. “Textual meaning” on the other hand, is the cultural expression of the author’s original object of consciousness. According to Tate, this object of consciousness or mental formulation (authorial meaning) is not synonymous with the text. Tate contends that “complete authorial meaning” cannot be attained because there is no guarantee of “a one-to-one correspondence” between the author’s object of consciousness and the concrete expression of it (the text). It is not possible to enter another person’s consciousness, especially when that person is not present.

It is true that human language is limited. Sometimes, people have difficulty in expressing their mind. But we believe in verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. We believe that God inspired the biblical authors the very words that would express their conscious and intended message. The gap between authorial meaning and textual meaning might be in the interpreter’s understanding of the text, not in the author’s encoding of the text.

Examination of Blessing in the Old Testament

This section is devoted to the exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts related to blessing in the Old Testament. It will start by a brief survey of the meaning conveyed by two Hebrew words used for blessing: the verbal root בָּרַךְ (*brk*, *barakh*) and the word אִשְׂרִי (*ashar*, *ashre*, *asre*); and then it will examine some biblical passages to discover what the Old Testament teaches about the subject.

The Concept of בָּרַךְ *brk* in the Old Testament

The Hebrew root בָּרַךְ *brk* is a key to understanding the biblical concept of blessing. This section will discuss the meaning of בָּרַךְ *brk* first by examining and comparing the meaning of *brk* according to different dictionaries and lexicons.⁴ Then, it will draw some conclusions pertinent to this study.

The Hebrew root בָּרַךְ *brk* translated “to kneel,” “to bless,” “to praise,” or “to salute” and occurs 327 times as a verb and 69 times as a noun in the Old Testament—a total of 396 times.⁵ This number is close to the 398 occurrences mentioned by the TLOT (the verb בָּרַךְ *brk* together with the substantive *beraka*),⁶ while the TWOT counts 415 occurrences (including the derivatives of the root בָּרַךְ *brk*), the majority of which is translated “to bless” (214). The meaning “to kneel” only appears three times (Gen. 24:11; 2 Chron. 6:13; Ps. 95:6).⁷

The TDOT lists three meanings of the root בָּרַךְ *brk*:

⁴The following lexicons will be consulted: the NIDOTTE, the TLOT, the TWOT, the TDOT, the DOT, and the HALOT.

⁵Colin Brown, 1:757.

⁶Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 267.

⁷Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:132.

1. “To kneel” (Ps. 95:6; 2 Ch. 6:13); “to make (camels) kneel” (Gen. 24:11); and the noun *berekh*, “knee” (Isa. 45:23).
2. “To bless.” This root has five verbal forms rendered as follows: (1) in the qal, passive participle *barukh*, “blessed,” “praised;” (2) in the niphal, “to be blessed, to bless oneself” (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 28:14); (3) in the piel, “to bless, greet, praise;” (4) in the pual, “to be blessed;” (5) in the hithpael, “to bless oneself, bless one another.”
3. “Pool, water reservoir, basin” (2 Sam. 2:13, 4:12; 1 Kings 22:38; 2 Kings 18:17, 20:20; Isa. 7:3). But it is debated whether this last meaning is related to בָּרַךְ *brk*, “to kneel” or to בָּרַךְ *brk*, “to bless.”⁸

The TLOT also mentions five verbal forms for the root בָּרַךְ *brk*, “to bless”:

1. In the qal, passive participle, בָּרַךְ *brk* indicates the “state of possessing the *berâkâ*,” the “health-creating power.”
2. In the niphal, בָּרַךְ *brk* is understood in the sense of “to wish for blessing for oneself.”
3. In the piel, בָּרַךְ *brk* has “primarily a factitive and declarative-estimative” meaning: to bless, to greet, to praise.
4. In the pual, בָּרַךְ *brk* means “someone (something) has been blessed.”
5. In the hithpael, reflexive, בָּרַךְ *brk* means “to make or call oneself *bâruk*,” or “to make oneself happy through” another particularly blessed person as a model or God as the source.⁹

The Hebrew root בָּרַךְ *brk*, “to bless,” covers various meanings according to the CHALOT (A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament):

⁸Botterweck and Ringgren, 2:279–280.

⁹Jenni and Westermann, 1:268–274.

1. To bestow power for success, prosperity, fertility (Gen. 1:22, 28)
2. To declare a person endowed with power for success, prosperity, and fertility:
God blessed Abraham (Gen. 12:2), Isaac blessed Jacob (Gen. 27:28–30),
Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:19), and Israel blessed Pharaoh (Exod. 12:32)
3. To wish someone power for success, prosperity, and fertility (Gen. 24:60); also greeting on arrival (1 Sam. 13:10) and on leave-taking (2 Sam. 13:25)
4. To declare God the origin of power for success, prosperity, fertility, which is equivalent to “praise God” (Gen. 24:48; Ps. 96:2)
5. A euphemism for a curse (1 Kings 21:10, 13)
6. The passive participle, *blessed* means “filled with power, filled with *Baraka*. When God is the subject, blessed means “be praised” (1 Kings 10:9; Ps. 72:18; Gen. 24:27)¹⁰

The TWOT also renders בֵּרַךְ *brk* as “to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.”¹¹ According to the TLOT the basic meaning of בֵּרַךְ *brk* is “benevolent power, health creating power.”¹² For the TDOT, the Hebrew word *berakah* (blessing) denotes “the power coming from Yahweh that brings good fortune and prosperity to man. It can be regarded as a possession of the godly (‘your blessing’).”¹³ “Blessing” should be understood in the sense of “benedictory power” (e.g., Prov. 10:6, 11:26), words of blessing pronounced on people that release powers

¹⁰Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, 49–50.

¹¹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:132.

¹²Jenni and Westermann, 1:268.

¹³Scharbert, 2:297.

“produced by God and bringing good fortune to those who are blessed.”¹⁴ In this sense, *berakhah*, “blessing,” is not merely good wish, but benedictory words carrying a benedictory power. It is an action of God “that produces a condition of well-being.”¹⁵ The use of *brk* can be summarized as in table 2.

Table 2. Use of בָּרַךְ *brk*

Subject	Object	Meaning
God →	Persons / Things	- To bestow power for success, prosperity, and fertility (Gen. 1:22, 28)
Persons →	God	- To declare God the origin of power for success, prosperity, fertility, which is equivalent - To praise God
Persons →	Persons	- To declare a person endowed with power for success, prosperity, and fertility - To wish someone power for success, prosperity, and fertility
Persons →	Things	- to consecrate

Table 3 summarizes the active meaning of the Hebrew root *brk*, “to bless/blessing” when God is the subject.

Table 3. Meaning of the Hebrew root בָּרַךְ *brk*, “to bless/blessing”

Lexicons	Definitions of <i>brk</i> (bless/blessing)
A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (CHALOT)	- To bestow power for success, prosperity, and fertility - To declare a person endowed with, or wish someone, power for success, prosperity, and fertility
Derek A. Rivard	- “Actions of God that produces a condition of well-being”
Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)	- To bestow power for success, prosperity, and fertility
Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)	- “Power coming from Yahweh that brings good fortune and prosperity to man,” “benedictory power”
Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT)	- Benevolent power, health creating power
Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)	- To endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Rivard, *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion*, 25.

Two important ideas emerge from these definitions of blessing. The first idea relates to the nature and content of blessing. Blessing is a benevolent or benedictory power, a power that produces something good and beneficial. This power produces success, prosperity, fertility, well-being, good fortune, health; power that creates life, fertilizes, increases, etc.

The second idea connotes the source of blessing. The blessing power is not a magical power at the disposal of human beings who can manipulate it as they will. The blessing power comes from God. God is the origin of the blessing power (CHALOT); the power comes from Yahweh (TDOT); it is an action from God (Rivard). It is God who bestows power or endues with power. The people of Israel subordinated this blessing power “under the activity of Yahweh, the God of Israel. Yahweh alone is the master of this power, he alone as creator confers it on every living being, he alone remains lord of creation, he alone disposes of the power.”¹⁶ Only God can create and only he can bless what he has created so that it can flourish.

The Concept of the Word אָשַׂר (*ashar, ashre, asre*)

The word אָשַׂר is transliterated differently according to different sources: *ashre* (TWOT and TDOT), *ashre* (see TLOT; see also the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology [NIDOTTE]). The verb form *sr* is derived from the nominative form *ashre* and is translated to mean “be/consider fortunate,” “be called happy, blessed,” “to be, make, or pronounce happy, blessed,” and “to be made or pronounced happy, blessed.” The nominative form *asre* appears twenty-six times in

¹⁶Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 161.

the Psalms and is used to mean “truly happy,” “blessed,” and “how happy, blessed.” The formula “happy/blessed is” appears forty-five times in the Old Testament.¹⁷

The word *ashrê*, therefore, expresses praises or a state of happiness; a state of well-being, establishing the person “as exemplary—with a particular exhortative character.” This state can refer to the possession of children, beauty, and honor, to the discovery of wisdom, as well as to the forgiveness of sin and trust in God.¹⁸

What is the difference between *barukh* (blessed), the passive participle of *brk*, and *ashrê*? Whereas, Mowinckel sees no difference between the two terms, Kraus argues that *ashrê* is “more secular” and *barukh* is “sacral-solemn.”¹⁹ Also, “the desire for happiness” expressed by *ashrê* is different from blessing, *barukh*, because it demands that the believer do something to be *ashrê*. For example, he must: fear God (Ps. 112:1, 128:1), be blameless (119:1ff), obey the Torah (Ps. 1:1), consider the poor (Ps. 41:2), and be righteous (106:3).²⁰ According to Brown (NIDOTTE), *ashrê* “stresses a state of happiness, while *barukh*, though not excluding such a state...speaks more of being empowered or favored as the recipient of blessing from the Lord, and thus ‘blessed.’”²¹

The passive participle *barukh*, is used in the *barukh-formula* (blessed are you or blessed is/be so-and-so). This formula occurs in many patterns and plays an important role in the use of *brk*. The *barukh-formula* is used by a person in recognition for a good deed done to him or to a third party with whom he enjoys a

¹⁷Colin Brown, 1:568, 570.

¹⁸Jenni and Westermann, 1:197.

¹⁹Botterweck and Ringgren, 1:446.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Charles Brown, 763.

close relationship. The formula implies an “acknowledgment of the solidarity that exists between the speaker and the person for whom the formula is intended.”²² It is also used to “refer to a person on whom Yahweh has bestowed kindness in a special way, so that he has become successful and prosperous” (Gen. 24:31, 26:29; Isa. 65:23).²³

While *barukh* carries the idea of empowerment for success as result of an action of God, *ashrê* implies a state of happiness as a result of human righteous deeds. Harris observes that God is never the subject of *ashar* (*ashrê*). This view is also shared by the TDOT.²⁴ Three reasons explain this:

1. *Ashar* connotes envious desire and, therefore, cannot be used by God (“to be envied with desire is the man who trusts in the Lord”);
2. To be blessed (*ashar*), man has to do something positive. For example, the blessed man is the man who trusts in the Lord (Ps. 2:12, 34:8, 40:4, 84:5, 146:5; Prov. 16:20). But God can bless (*barak*) somebody even when he does not deserve it;
3. *Barak* is a benediction, *ashar* is a more of a congratulation.²⁵ The person who is *ashrê* is a person who is enjoying a felicitous or happy state. This felicitous state can be the possession of children, beauty, honor, but also the discovery of wisdom, the forgiveness of sin, trust in God, etc.²⁶

It appears from what precedes that blessing as *ashrê* is a human-centered, anthropocentric desire for happiness. This idea of blessing seems to be the popular

²²Botterweck and Ringgren, 2:284.

²³Scharbert, 2:287–289.

²⁴Botterweck and Ringgren, 1:446.

²⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:80.

²⁶Jenni and Westermann, 1:197.

understanding of blessing as it is taught by the prosperity gospel. The prosperity adherents believe that to be blessed in the sense of *ashrê*, the believer has to do something: have enough faith, pay the tithe, etc. Though these are good deeds in themselves, God is not bound and obligated to bestow his blessing.

The Blessing of God over the Creation

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It records the beginning and origin of everything. The book is often divided into two sections. Chapters 1–11 are called the primeval story. It is the part that explains the origins of the world and the existence of humanity.

Genesis 1:22 and 28 record the blessing of God over his creation. These passages read: “God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth’” (Gen. 1:22), and “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (Gen. 1:28). The Hebrew word used in both verses is בָּרַךְ with God as the subject. It has been noted that this word means “bestow power for success, prosperity, fertility.”²⁷ The pronounced blessing here goes with the words that indicate the content of the blessing: “Be fruitful,” (פָּרוּ, *pârâh*), “and increase” (וּרְבוּ, *râbâh*), “and fill” (וּמְלֵאוּ, *mâlê*), “and subdue” (וּכְבַּשׁוּ, *kâbash*), and “rule” (וּרְדוּ, *râdâh*).

The Hebrew *pârâh* has three primary meanings: “(1) the fruit of a tree (Gen 1:12); (2) the fruit of the womb, i.e. children; (3) fruit as consequences resulting from

²⁷Holladay, 49.

an action, e.g. ‘reward’.”²⁸ With reference to plants, it is the “fruit of a tree”; but with reference to human beings, it means “children.” The word *râbâh* means “be (come) great, many, much, numerous.”²⁹ The content of this blessing is fertility, multiplication in number. According to John H. Walton, “subdue,” and “rule” indicates “the functions that people will have...The first function is to ‘subdue’ the earth, the second is to ‘rule’ it.”³⁰ The Hebrew word translated by “subdue” carries the idea of bringing “something or someone under control.”³¹ The object of the verb “subdue” is the earth. Men and women have been given the power to control and govern the earth. The object of “rule” is the living creatures. It “implies domestication or some other level of use or control.”³² God’s blessing, therefore, confers power and privilege to reproduce and multiply; to control and rule. By blessing human beings, God gave them the capacity of reproductive and ruling power.

The content of blessing, therefore, includes fertility, increase, multiplication (for animals, v. 22), plus dominion and government (for human, v. 28). God’s blessing power is the same as his creative power. God said: “Let there be light, and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). In the same way, God blessed the creatures and human beings, and said: “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:22, 28) and so the creatures and human beings became fruitful and increased in number. But contrary to the power of the creative word, the blessing power involved agency and time before it became effective. God’s blessing on animals and human beings gave them an

²⁸Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 734.

²⁹Ibid., 2:828.

³⁰John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 132.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

autonomous capacity to reproduce their kinds. Once the blessing power was released, animals and human beings became capable to reproduce themselves and multiply.

God's blessing power is the "life-infusing power of the divine word." It is nothing else than the divine power embedded in God's pronouncement. God's blessing is "his formative, empowering word (often, with overtones of appointing destiny). It is not an empty pronouncement or simply an expression of wish or goodwill . . . Rather, the blessing of God has content; it actualizes and enables."³³ God's blessing bestows fertility, increase, and multiplication of plants, animals, and human beings. It "leads to a world teeming with life."³⁴ The land is fertile and productive because of the blessing. Blessing is a God-given capacity. It is an endowment of power. It "endows the animals with the power to reproduce their kind."³⁵ God's blessing is a command conferring power and capacity for fertility and reproduction. In other words, "The essence of God's blessing is the capacity to be fertile, to reproduce oneself."³⁶

The Abrahamic Blessing (Gen. 12:1–3)

Genesis 12:1–3 is the beginning of the patriarchal account. God changes his method of dealing with his creation by choosing to reveal himself to a particular person and people group through whom he would henceforth relate to all peoples on earth. In this covenant with Abraham, blessing is a key word. Fretheim comments:

Blessing becomes a key theme in the narratives that follow, used eighty-eight times in Genesis, with many indirect references. . . . Blessing stands as a gift

³³Michael L. Brown, 758.

³⁴McKeown, 86.

³⁵Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, 138.

³⁶Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 131.

of God . . . that issues in goodness and well-being in life. It involves every sphere of existence, from spiritual to more tangible expressions. Blessing manifests itself most evidently in fertility and the multiplication of life, from herds to flocks, to field and forest, to new human life; it embraces material well-being, peace, and general success in life's ventures (see the list in Deut. 28:3–15).³⁷

The Abrahamic covenant contains seven statements to Abraham: (1) I will make you into a great nation, (2) I will bless you, (3) I will make your name great, (4) you will be a blessing, (5) I will bless those who bless you, (6) whoever curses you I will curse, and (7) all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Walton identifies threefold blessings to Abraham:

1. God will bless Abraham, which means that Abraham will “come under God’s care, protection, and favor”;
2. Abraham will be a blessing, which means he will “provide care and protection to those in favor with him”;
3. Abraham will be a channel of blessing to all peoples on the earth. God will extend his blessing to other people through Abraham.³⁸

The same Hebrew word for bless, בָּרַךְ, is used five times in this passage: two times with God as the subject (“I will bless you,” “I will bless those”); once with human as the subject (“those who bless you”); once as substantive (“you will be a blessing”); and once in the passive with peoples as the subject (“all peoples on earth will be blessed”). The blessing is preceded by a command: “Leave your country . . . and go to the land I will show you.” Abraham had to leave his country and go in order

³⁷Terence E. Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:25.

³⁸Walton, 399.

to enter into the blessing. Obedience, grounded in faith that what God promised he would do, was the condition for the blessing.

In the first statement, God promised to make of Abraham a great nation (“I will make you into a great nation”). The word גדול, *gâdôl* (great) is an adjective meaning “many” in number, or great in importance.³⁹ The term גוי *gôy*, translated as “nation,” is used in different ways. It has been used to mean “a political, territorial, identified people,”⁴⁰ and a “politically organized people.”⁴¹ The plural form *gôyim*, translated “nations,” came to refer to “the non-covenant, non-believing peoples considered as national groups,” hence, “Gentiles” or “heathen.”⁴² In many passages, Israel is referred to as *goy* (Exod. 33:13; Deut. 4:6–7; Josh. 3:17, 4:1, 5:6). God is promising that Israel will become a political and territorial people, great in number and in importance.

God also promised to make the name of Abraham great (“I will make your name great”). This speaks about greatness in importance. God will make the name of Abraham great in importance, renowned. Westermann concludes that these two effects of the blessing of Abraham (“I will make you into a great nation” and “I will make your name great”) show clearly the links “between the story of the patriarchs and the history of Israel in Gen. 12–50.”⁴³

The fourth statement, “You will be a blessing (ברכה),” is central. It refers to both a content of the blessing and the purpose of the blessing. First, it implies that

³⁹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:151.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1:154.

⁴¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, IN: Fortress Press, 1995), 149.

⁴²Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:154.

⁴³Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 150.

being a source of blessing to other people is a blessing. It is a joy to be used as a source of blessing to other people. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:25: “A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” Secondly, it also means that being a blessing is actually the purpose of the blessing. Abraham is blessed so that he can be a blessing. As Hamilton observes, this statement is “a pivotal one. . . . Abraham must be more than a recipient. He is both a receptacle for the divine blessing and a transmitter of that blessing.”⁴⁴ This indicates that God’s intention is not focused on blessing Abraham as an individual, but for all mankind (“all peoples on earth”). God blesses people, not just for their personal enjoyment, but that they might be a blessing to other people.

The fifth and sixth statements (“I will bless those who bless you”; “whoever curses you I will curse”) mean that God’s attitude or relationship to other people will be determined by their attitude or relationship to Abraham.⁴⁵

The last part of the blessing, “All peoples on earth will be blessed (וּנְבָרְכֶוּ) through you,” is called by Hamilton “the grand finale,” the climax of the blessings promised to Abraham, and “Yahweh’s programmatic statement.”⁴⁶ The purpose of the covenant promise is double: relationship (make Israel his people) and redemption (device God’s plan of salvation).⁴⁷

There is a debate among scholars whether the verb in this phrase should be translated as a passive (*be blessed*) or a reflexive (*bless themselves*). According to

⁴⁴Hamilton, 373.

⁴⁵Ibid., 373.

⁴⁶Ibid., 374.

⁴⁷Walton, 400.

Hamilton, “The stem used here is the *Niphal*, which is primarily reflexive but often passive.”⁴⁸ There are four parallel passages in Genesis: two use the *Niphal* (Gen. 18:18, 28:14) and the two other use the *Hithpael*, which does not connote a passive meaning (Gen. 22:18, 26:4). Walton argues that “In the uses of the *Hithpael*, the preposition (*b^e*) following the verb ‘bless’ indicates the one whose care, protection, and favor are desired and relied on.” The *Hithpael* is, therefore, used to “express people’s attempts or desire to ingratiate themselves to God/king/Abraham’s seed.”⁴⁹

According to the TDOT, the *Hithpael* is found in other contexts where it is translated as follows: “He invokes a blessing on himself” (Deut. 29:19), “whoever invokes a blessing” (Isa. 65:16), “all nations will be blessed through him” (Ps. 72:17), and “the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory” (Jer. 4:2). The TDOT concludes that the meaning must be: “to consider oneself lucky, to believe oneself to be blessed, to pride oneself in being blessed.” The idea is that of participation in the Abrahamic blessing. It means that all the nations will be lucky, or happy; the nations “will pride themselves in participating in the blessing of Abraham.”⁵⁰

The reflexive *hithpael* implies that all people on earth will participate in the blessing promised to Abraham. They will desire the blessing, and they will seek and receive the blessing for themselves. But they will not just be passive in receiving the blessing. They will have to reach out for the blessing. They will help themselves with the blessing promised to Abraham. They will rejoice in participating in the blessing promised to Abraham.

⁴⁸Hamilton, 374.

⁴⁹Walton, 393–394.

⁵⁰Botterweck and Ringgren, 2:296.

The Abrahamic promise-blessing has two aspects: covenant relationship and redemption. By calling Abraham out of his country, people, and father's household, God was establishing a particular relationship with Abraham. This relationship was conditioned on the obedience of Abraham. In order to enter in this covenant relationship, Abraham had to obey, and by obeying, he entered into covenant relationship with God. The first and foundational blessing was the relationship, the “relational presence” of God in Abraham’s life.⁵¹ A right relationship with God is not “a part of the blessing; it is the very core . . . blessing does not have a meaning *outside* of relationship with God. Whatever else it implies (fertility, life, riches, etc.), relationship with God is always the pivot point of blessing.”⁵² Relationship with God is the essence and context of blessing.

The blessing promised to Abraham establishes or initiates a covenant, not only with Abraham, but with his descendants. But this covenant was not the end of the story. The ultimate purpose of the blessing was for Abraham to be a blessing. The blessing referred to here is more than just power for success, prosperity, and fertility in material terms. It has to do with a new relationship between God and humanity. In other words, God is promising to restore the relationship with mankind that was broken by the fall of Adam.⁵³ The promise-blessing goes “in three stages from the particular to the universal: a blessing on Abram personally, a blessing (or curse) on

⁵¹Matt Champlin, “A Biblical Theology of Blessing in Genesis,” *Themelios* 42, no. 1 (April 2017): 66.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 67.

⁵³Paul says in Galatians 3:14 that Christ “redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus.” The blessing coming through Christ Jesus is salvation and eternal life.

those with whom he interacts, a blessing on the entire human race.”⁵⁴ In the New Testament, this blessing on the human race is referring to redemption, the blessing given to Abraham coming to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:14).

God has revealed himself to Abraham so that in Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The blessing made provision for the salvation of mankind. The word *brk*, “bless,” focuses more on the success of a mission than on economic prosperity. Blessing is a guarantee for success. The blessing given to Abraham and the nation of Israel was a guarantee of the success of the mission entrusted to them to be channels of blessing. This is implied in Genesis 22:18: “And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” The promise to Abraham goes far beyond material blessing. The phrase, “all people on earth will be blessed through you” is called by Boice “the second messianic prophecy”⁵⁵ of the coming of Jesus, the first being Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” This second messianic prophecy or promise of redemption is referred to as a blessing. According to Luther, this promise of Genesis 12:3 should be written “in golden letters and should be extolled in the languages of all people” because it predicts, not only redemption, but even the incarnation of Jesus, for only the Lord Jesus Christ could have “dispensed this blessing among all nations.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation/Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 89.

⁵⁵James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, vol. 2. Genesis 12–36 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 450.

⁵⁶Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 6-14*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Daniel E. Poellot, vol. 2, Luther’s Works (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1960), 260.

The theme of life and redemption once symbolized by the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ (2:17) and then by the ark (7:23b), is now symbolized by the blessing promised to Abraham.⁵⁷ What was lost in the fall is eternal life (Gen. 3:22); what is initiated through God blessing Abraham in Genesis is the regaining of eternal life. Blessing implies life and is inseparable from it.

The promise-blessing is repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. To Isaac, the blessing includes multiplication of descendants, possession of land, and being a channel of blessing to the nations (Gen. 26:4, 24). It also implies the presence of God: “I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants.” God’s presence precedes his blessing. There is no blessing outside God; there is no blessing without a right relationship with God. To Jacob, the blessing encompasses both spiritual and material aspects: heaven’s dew, earth’s richness, dominion, protection (Gen. 27:27–29), fertility, increase in number, and possession of the land (Gen. 28:1–4).

Two ideas emerge from the above discussion. Blessing is both a privilege and a responsibility. First, it establishes and implies a covenant relationship, the privilege of being the people of God and enjoying his blessing of protection and care. Second, blessing also involves the responsibility of being a channel of blessing to other people.

Jacob Wrestles with God for a Blessing (Gen. 32:22–32)

The story of Esau and Jacob fighting each other for their father’s blessing shows the value and importance of blessing in the Hebrew culture. From the

⁵⁷John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *Genesis - Leviticus*, vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 151.

beginning, Jacob is depicted as a person in search for blessing. Already as a fetus in his mother's womb, Jacob was contesting with his brother for the birthright (Gen 25:22, 26). Jacob pursued the blessing and struggled with his brother (25, 27), with his father (27), with his father-in-law (29–31), and then with God (32). He gives the impression that the search for blessing was his *raison d'être*.⁵⁸

Genesis 32:22–32 records the story of Jacob wrestling with God for a blessing. The story took place in a context of fear. Jacob was returning from Paddam Aram. Chapter 31 closes with Jacob concluding a peace covenant and parting from Laban, his father-in-law. But he had to face another challenge: meeting with his brother Esau. As he was preparing for the encounter, fear gripped him at the idea of meeting his brother. He attempted to seek Esau's favor and appease his anger by sending him a gift, but it did not work. He was most in need and had to rely on God alone. So, he decided to resort to prayer. He reached a point where he most needed God. He decided to stay alone in the night because he needed to "encounter God alone."⁵⁹ Then a man came and "wrestled with him till daybreak (32:24)." The passage makes it clear that this was a theophany, since Jacob later said that he "saw God face to face (32:30)."

Jacob refused to let the man go unless he blessed him (32:26). What did Jacob mean by "bless me"? What was the nature and content of the blessing he was asking for? And what was the content of the angel's blessing? Jacob already had received the blessing from his father (27:27–29, 28:1–4) and the promise-blessing from God in

⁵⁸Athanasios Hatzopoulos, "The Struggle for a Blessing: Reflections on Genesis 32:24–31," *The Ecumenical Review* 48, no. 4 (1996): 509.

⁵⁹Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 445.

Genesis 28:12–15.⁶⁰ What blessing was he wrestling for? What was the content of the blessing he received from the Lord?

Jacob's situation can help shed more light on the blessing he was wrestling for. Jacob was blessed outwardly. He had material possessions and a large family. So, he was not wrestling for material blessing. But inwardly, Jacob was in a situation of "great fear and distress" (32:7) and vulnerability at the idea of meeting his brother Esau accompanied with an army. As he was about to enter into the Promised Land, he needed strength and assurance that God was going to be with him, protect him, and fulfill his promises in his life. So, he was pleading for life while he was struggling to "experience the blessing of prevailing over his enemies."⁶¹ "Save me ... from the hand of my brother Esau," he prayed (32:11). God appeared to him when he most needed him.

The blessing of Jacob took two forms: first, it came in the form of an assurance of God's favor and protection. God blessed Jacob, which means that God filled him with assurance of his presence and his protection. God filled him with power for victory, power for life, and the power to overcome all of his enemies in the Promised Land. Jacob is now "ready for the encounter ahead" because he had the blessing for the journey (journey mercies) and is now able to "face any foe, no matter how hostile," for he is convinced that God is with him.⁶² Of course, Jacob was blessed

⁶⁰"He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you (Gen. 28:12–15)."

⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, 446.

⁶²Fretheim, 1:25.

with material riches and offspring. But what was the worth of material blessings if he could not stand before his enemies? When Jacob finally met his brother Esau, who was coming to meet him with four hundred men (32:6), “Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept” (33:4). A miracle had happened because Jacob received a blessing.

But the blessing has a more spiritual meaning. It came in the form of a spiritual transformation. The man who wrestled with Jacob asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” By saying his name, Jacob (the supplanter) assumes the meaning of his name. He recognizes that he is the supplanter, an “admission of guilt.”⁶³ The man said “your name will no longer be Jacob” (32:28), literally, “It shall no more be said.”⁶⁴ The name *Jacob* (the supplanter) was changed into *Israel* (the prince who prevails with God). A name change implies a “character change,”⁶⁵ a transformed life.

Thus, Jacob was no more the same Jacob after this divine encounter. He was, henceforth, a new person. The blessing he received was a transforming power. The angel touched the socket of Jacob's hip and Jacob's hip was wrenched (32:25). The nature of the injury is not clear. Jacob went on limping because of his hip. The hip symbolizes Jacob's physical or fleshly strength, as opposed to spiritual strength. So, God broke the physical and fleshly strength of Jacob and gave him spiritual power. Henceforth, his strength would no more be in his own ability. God was now his strength. Physically, he was weak; he was broken. But spiritually, he was strong. The

⁶³Waltke and Fredricks, 446.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Walton, 606.

limping hip symbolizes physical weakness and fleshly brokenness, but spiritual strength. “The limp is the posture of the saint,” says Waltke.⁶⁶ Hatzopoulos expresses the same idea when he writes that the limping hip “denotes a broken spirit, the broken and contrite heart”⁶⁷ which is a mark of a spiritual condition that pleases God (Ps. 51:17). Paul wrote much later, “When I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:10).” The limping hip symbolizes strength in weakness.

What does it mean that Jacob struggled with God and with men and has overcome (Gen. 32:28)? A man can overcome his fellow man. But how can a man overcome God? Jacob overcame because he obtained what he desired, what he wrestled for: the blessing—the presence and protection of God, and power and victory over his enemies. He succeeded in robbing the birthright from his brother, stealing his brother’s blessing from his father, deceiving his father-in-law, and now obtaining the blessing from God.

Verse 30 is the conclusion, and an important key to the passage: “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared (Gen. 32:30).’” The New International Version translates the last part of the verse, “and yet my life was spared,” but the King James Version reads: “and my life is preserved.” The particle ו can be used in many ways: as a connector (and), an intensifier (also, even), an inclusive (with, and in addition), an explanatory (and indeed), an antithesis (but), etc. The New International Version may have been influenced by Exodus 33:20, where God says to Moses: “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live,” but the context favors the King James Version (KJV). The American Standard Version (ASV), the Darby Bible, and the Young’s Literal

⁶⁶Waltke and Fredricks, 448.

⁶⁷Hatzopoulos, 511.

Translation (YLT) all agree with the KJV. Before he met with the angel, Jacob was fearful for this life and prayed that the Lord would spare his life. Now, because he encountered God, his life was spared. He was sure to be delivered from his enemies. So, the blessing sought by Jacob was protection and security, God's presence, victory and deliverance from enemies, preservation of life, and sustenance. All these are secured by the blessing he received as he met with God face to face. His life was spared or preserved.

The Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:22–27)

The discovery of the priestly blessing, in a burial cave, in the valley of Hinnom, written on two silver amulets, dated from the late seventh century BCE, and shows how deeply the act of blessing was rooted in Israelite culture.⁶⁸ Five passages in the Pentateuch record blessing by Aaron or the priests: Leviticus 9:22; Deuteronomy 10:8, 21:5; Joshua 8:33; and 2 Chronicle 30:27. This text underlines two aspects of blessing: the source of the blessing and the content of the blessing.

The Source of the Blessing

The word *bless* is mentioned three times, once with Aaron as the subject in verse 23 (“you are to bless the Israelites”) and twice with God as the subject in verse 24 (“The Lord bless you”), and verse 27 (“I will bless them”). Who then blesses the people, Aaron or God? The Lord commanded Aaron to bless the Israelites, and he told him how he should do that. He should say: “The Lord bless you,” not “I (Aaron) bless you.” The Lord is the subject of the pairs of verbs that express the content of the

⁶⁸Thomas B. Dozeman, “The Book of Numbers: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 2:65.

blessing: the Lord bless/protect; the Lord make his face shine/be gracious, the Lord turn his face toward/give you peace.” Verse 27 concludes: “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I (the Lord) will bless them.” So, the source of the blessing is the Lord, not Aaron or the priests. The priests pronounce the blessing; the Lord accomplishes the blessing. The priest by himself did “not possess the power to bless independently of God.”⁶⁹ The priestly blessing should, therefore, be understood in a “jussive sense.”⁷⁰ The priests’ blessing is equated with prayer in 2 Chronicles 30:27: “The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.” So, the priestly blessing is a prayer for blessing; it is a request for God to bless his people. Singer warns against the danger of believing that the blessing comes from the priest:

The great danger in all blessings by priests lies in the possibility that the people may believe such blessings to have mediatorial power. This idea has always been foreign to the spirit of Judaism. The priest is not a mediator. The blessing which he utters has no magical power for good or ill. It is merely a portion of the prescribed ritual. Not the priest, but God, blesses . . . “I (God) will bless them.” These words are used so that the Israelites may not say that their welfare depends upon the blessing by the priests; God alone can bless. Furthermore, these words are used that the priests may not say, “We will bless Israel.” From God alone do blessings flow; no man has power to bestow them.⁷¹

The priest’s role is to put the name of the Lord on the Israelites; it is God’s role to bless them: “They will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them (Num.

⁶⁹Ibid., 69.

⁷⁰Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 761.

⁷¹Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, vol. 3 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), 245–246.

6:27).” The name of the Lord “represents his presence and character.”⁷² Putting the name of the Lord on his people means invoking the presence of God on his people.

The Content of the Blessing

The content of the priestly blessing is summarized in three pairs of verbs or expressions: bless/keep, make his face shine/be gracious, and turn his face toward/give peace. These words and phrases will be given a cursory explanation:

1. Bless/keep. The Hebrew word for *keep* (שמר *shâmar*) may be translated by “be careful about,” “protect,” “observe,” “watch,” “keep watch,” “stand guard.”⁷³ Also, “to keep (safe), guard, preserve.”⁷⁴ The basic meanings of the root are: (1) “to exercise great care over”; (2) pay careful attention to the obligation of a covenant, laws, statutes”; (3) “take care of,” “guard,” “keeping or tending to,” “guarding against intruders.”⁷⁵ The overall idea is that of protection, security, and care.
2. Make his face shine/be gracious. The face is “a person’s self.”⁷⁶ God’s shining presence is communicated through his shining face, guaranteeing his blessing.⁷⁷ Light represents various aspects of the covenant blessings: salvation, prosperity and peace, God’s covenant, justice and righteousness.⁷⁸ “Be gracious,” in Hebrew

⁷²Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 540.

⁷³Holladay, 377.

⁷⁴Jenni and Westermann, 1380.

⁷⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 2:939.

⁷⁶Holladay, 294.

⁷⁷Martin J. Selman, “אֵוֹר,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 325.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 1:327.

חָנַן (*chânan* or *hânan*) means “to show favor in the form of beneficial action,”⁷⁹ “graciously provide someone with something.”⁸⁰ It expresses “chiefly an interpersonal relationship,” and “implies an element of condescendence;” it describes “a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need.”⁸¹

3. Turn his face toward/give peace (פָּשַׁע). To turn one’s face or lift one’s face is a “sign of favor.”⁸² It means to “be favorably disposed toward someone.”⁸³ The two expressions, “make his face shine” and “turn his face” “are identical.” The face of God is a metaphor for his presence. When God hides his face, it means he is angry, he withdraw his presence. When he shows his face, it means he is pleased with people and his presence is back to his people. The face of God indicates his presence, his favor, his good will to bless, and the content of the blessing (peace).

The Hebrew word פָּשַׁע *shâlôm* translated by “peace” has a variety of meanings. The BDB (The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon) lists the following: (1) “completeness, soundness, welfare”; (2) “safety, soundness in body”; (3) “welfare, health, prosperity”; (4) “quiet, tranquility, contentment”; (5) “peace, friendship” in human relations and in covenant relation with God; (6) “peace from war.”⁸⁴ “Peace”

⁷⁹Gane, 540.

⁸⁰Holladay, 110.

⁸¹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1:302.

⁸²Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 670.

⁸³Holladay, 246.

⁸⁴Francis Brown, 1022–1023.

carries the idea of “completion and fulfillment”; “a state of wholeness and unity;” “prosperity, well, health, completeness”; and “absence of war.”⁸⁵

Peace is, therefore, an all-inclusive word that encompasses all aspects of life: spiritual, physical, material, social, and psychological. Peace includes “good health, security, inner harmony, wellness, material prosperity, and a long life.”⁸⁶ It means “fullness of life and wholeness in all areas of life: material, familial, societal, and religious.”⁸⁷ Peace secures and “seals all the blessings.”⁸⁸ God’s presence results in grace and peace: “the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Num. 6:26). *Shalom*, peace, is one word that summarizes and crystalizes the whole content of blessing. It applies to every aspects of human life: spiritual, physical, social, psychological, and material. Peace secures and “seals all the blessings.”⁸⁹

The content of the blessing, therefore, embraces every aspects of life: protection and security, grace, kindness and favor, peace, good health, inner peace, wellness, material prosperity, and a long life. It has been observed that verses 24–26 in Hebrew get progressively longer (3, 5, and 7 words respectively), giving the impression of “a stream of blessing that begins as a trickle but flows ever more strongly.”⁹⁰

⁸⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 2:930–931.

⁸⁶Dozeman, 69.

⁸⁷Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 153.

⁸⁸Singer, 3:246.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ashley, 151.

The Covenantal Blessing

The book of Deuteronomy contains what is known as the “Covenant Blessing” in Deuteronomy 28. The name “Deuteronomy” is the Greek translation (LXX) of the phrase “second law,” which is a misunderstanding of the phrase “a copy of this law (Deut. 17:18).”⁹¹ The setting is the plains of Moab. The old generation had died in the desert as God had said (Num. 14:22–23). The new generation was about to enter into the Promised Land. This new generation was stranger to the various prescribed ordinances and laws. Moses wanted to show them the absolute necessity of fearing, loving, and obeying God so that they could successfully conquer and inherit the land God had promised. Love, obedience, and faithful service were necessary to receive God’s favor and to be granted success in the upcoming conquest.

In chapter 27, Moses anticipates the future when the children of Israel would enter into the Promised Land. In chapter 28, the scene moves back to the present in the plain of Moab. Moses addresses an important speech to Israel in which he gives a list of blessings and curses that will be the consequences of obedience or disobedience to the law. The purpose of this speech is to show them that obedience to God brings prosperity and happiness; disobedience to God results in misfortune and ruin. The intention of Moses was that the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience would encourage the people to continue to obey God once they were in the Promised Land. The promise of blessing and cursing depends on the attitude of the people toward God and his commandments: blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. The history of Israel as a people “stands under the operation of blessing

⁹¹J. G. McConville, “Book of Deuteronomy,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 182.

and cursing.”⁹² The covenantal blessing underlines two elements concerning blessing: the condition for the blessing and the content of the blessing.

The Condition for the Blessing

The passage begins with a conditional clause, “If you fully obey” (אם שמרע (חשמע). The literal translation is “If listening you completely listen.” This stresses full obedience to the law. According to McConville, “The word ‘if’ in verses 1 and 13, may be translated ‘as long as’, or ‘because’. The point is to establish a correlation between blessing and covenant faithfulness.”⁹³ The blessing of the people depended on their covenant relationship with God. Obedience is the paramount condition for blessing. The covenantal blessing states the general principle that obedience produces blessing; disobedience leads to curse. Or, as Clements puts it, “The righteousness of the law is the key to human happiness.”⁹⁴ Blessing is tied to obedience of the law; curse is linked to disobedience. This has been verified in the history of the people of Israel. When the people feared the Lord, they enjoyed prosperity and peace; when they turned away from God, they experienced misfortune and defeat. No blessing without obedience.

⁹²Kittel, 2:757.

⁹³J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 404.

⁹⁴Ronald E. Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 2:502.

The Content of the Blessing

The section from verse 3–6 consists in “a series of short formulaic sayings beginning with ‘blessed’ (*baruk*), as a kind of pronouncement.”⁹⁵ This is similar to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–11. It contains domestic blessings (28:3–6, 8, 11): fruitfulness of people, ground, and animals. Verses 3 (“in the city ... and in the country”) and 6 (“when you come in and ... when you go out”) use merisms, a figure of speech by which something is referred to by several of its parts or by its synonyms. This conveys “comprehensiveness in typical Hebrew style (cf. Ps. 121:8).”⁹⁶ God’s favor and blessing assures success, provision, security, and victory over enemies. It touches every sphere of life: increase in human offspring, in ground, and in animals.

Verses 7–14 include national blessings: superiority over other nations, victory over enemies, being feared by other nations, rains, material and economic prosperity (you shall lend to many nations), success, holiness, etc. The promise that God will set them “high above all the nations of the earth (Deut. 28:1)” “reflects an international setting. . . . God wanted to establish them ‘as his holy people (Deut. 28:9)’, prospering them so that other nations will recognize and revere them as God’s people.”⁹⁷ The obedience and sanctification of Israel would bring blessing and prosperity. This, in turn, would bring the people on earth to see that Israel is a people and they will fear them. “Being at the top and never at the bottom” in verse 13 (literally “upward and not downward”) is a metaphor meaning progress, advancement, and development. The blessing and favor of God gives success and advancement in life.

⁹⁵McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 403.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 404.

⁹⁷Gilbrant, ed., *The Old Testament Study Bible: Deuteronomy*, 281n28:1.

The Message of Deuteronomy 28:1–14

Deuteronomy 28:1–14 emphasizes obedience more than blessings themselves. Obedience implies good relationships with God. It has to do with the spiritual condition of a person. This obedience is not to be a selfish and self-interested attitude in order to gain blessing. It must be an attitude of love and devotion to God. The emphasis is on obedience and faithfulness, not on the blessing. Moses is not so much concerned about the material blessing and prosperity of the people as he is about their spiritual relationship with God. In delivering this speech, the purpose of Moses was to motivate the people to obey God’s commandments. Moses was not preaching blessing and prosperity to the people. Rather, he was preaching obedience and faithfulness to God, the natural results of which are blessing and prosperity.

The Blessing in the Psalms and Proverbs

Before examining the concept of blessing in the Psalms and Proverbs, it is important to briefly survey the literary genre of these writings. A good understanding of a biblical text should take into account the literary genre of the text.

The Literary Genre of Psalms and Proverbs

The Bible contains different types of texts or genres. Biblical interpretation must take into account the issue of genre. Not all texts should be interpreted the same way. Psalms, together with Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, belong to the type of literary genre called “Wisdom Literature.”

The Psalms are a collection of prayers, worship, and praises, individual or collective, of God’s people. As such, they are the expression of the worshipper’s heart toward God. They describe the life and religious experience of God’s people, individually or collectively, written in poetic and metaphorical form. The Psalms,

therefore, fall in the genre of poetry. The two most common characteristics of Hebrew poetry are parallelism and imagery. Parallelism refers to “the correspondence which occurs between the phrases of a poetic line.”⁹⁸ Imagery is a literary device that suggests pictures in the mind.

Seven types of psalms can be identified: the hymn psalms, the lament psalms, the thanksgiving psalms, the psalms of remembrance, the psalms of confidence, the wisdom psalms, and the kingship psalms.⁹⁹ Wilson classifies them in three main categories: praise psalms, lament psalms, thanksgiving psalms. Other psalms include royal psalms, liturgical psalms, *Yahweh malak* psalms, Wisdom and Torah psalms, etc.¹⁰⁰

Although the psalms contain some doctrinal components and moral behavior, their primary focus is not the teaching of doctrine or moral behavior.¹⁰¹ They are not primarily “words from God to people,” but words from people “to God or about God.”¹⁰² Their function is to give “examples of how to communicate our deepest emotions and needs to God.”¹⁰³ They belong to the category of practical religion, not doctrinal theology. They are not universal promises.

⁹⁸Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 95.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁰Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms: Volume 1*, ed. Terry Muck, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 65–75.

¹⁰¹Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 205.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Scott J. Duvall and Daniel J. Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 392.

In the same way, Proverbs also provide practical wisdom and answers to many aspects of life. They are full of advice and lessons to help the readers or listeners make right choices and decisions for successful living. They are not theological treatises, but guidance for the practical life of the believer. Proverbs set a contrast between the wise and the fool: the wise is the one who fears God; the fool is the one who does not fear God. Proverbs are descriptive. They are not doctrinal prescriptions. They describe how “life usually works, not how it always works or must work.” The observations in Proverbs are not universal promises that God is “duty-bound to fulfill.”¹⁰⁴

The Concept of Blessing in Psalms and Proverbs

The Hebrew word often translated “blessed in the Psalms and Proverbs is the word אֲשֶׁרִי *ashrê, asrê* which used to mean “truly happy,” “blessed,” “how happy, blessed.”¹⁰⁵ It appears 26 times in the Psalms. One cannot read Psalms and Proverbs without realizing the close relationship between righteous living and happiness. Happiness is linked to a holy and righteous life. The opening lines of Psalm 1 read: “Blessed is the man” whose “delight is in the law of the Lord.” (Ps. 1:1–2). The passage establishes the attitude to the Law as the condition for blessing and happiness. The blessed person is the one who avoids the counsel of the wicked and delight in the Law of the Lord.

This relationship between righteous living and blessing is a recurrent theme in Psalms and Proverbs. Psalm 5:12 says: “For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.” Righteousness is the condition

¹⁰⁴Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs*, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 43.

¹⁰⁵See chapter 5, section titled “The Concept of בָּרַךְ *brk* in the Old Testament” for a discussion of the Hebrew word אֲשֶׁרִי *ashrê, asrê*.

for blessing, and favor is the content of the blessing. Blessing parallels favor. The blessing of the Lord is his favor, and the favor of the Lord is a shield of protection with which the righteous are surrounded.

Blessing is for those who: delight in the Law (Ps. 1:1), take refuge in the Lord (Ps. 2:12, 34:8), are righteous (Ps. 5:12), are generous (Ps. 37:26; Prov. 22:9), dwell in the house of the Lord (Ps. 65:4, 84:4), trust in the Lord (Ps. 84:12, 146:5; Prov. 16:20), walk with the Lord (Ps. 89:15), maintain justice (Ps. 106:3), fear the Lord (Ps. 112:1, 115:13, 128:1, 4; Prov. 28:14), walk according to the Law of the Lord (Ps. 119:1, 2), keep the ways of the Lord (Prov. 8:32, 34, 29:18), are kind to the needy (Prov. 14:21), and are faithful (Prov. 28:20). But Brown observes that this causal relationship is done in a “God-centered way. Thus, a secure, stable, and satisfied existence is not just the natural result of godly living, it also comes as a direct blessing of God, the tangible consequence of his favor.”¹⁰⁶ The twofold *asre* that introduce the Psalms forming an inclusio to Psalm 1–2 (1:1 and 2:12b) “serve as a paradigm for the usage of *asre* throughout the book (23x).”¹⁰⁷

In the book of Proverbs, the one who is *asre* is the one who “finds wisdom and lives wisely.”¹⁰⁸ This is clearly stated in Proverbs 3:13: “Blessed is (אשרי) the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.” Proverbs exalts spiritual and social values over material riches: righteousness (16:8), the fear of the Lord (15:16), love (15:17), wisdom and understanding (4:7, 8:11, 16:16), peace and quiet (17:1), integrity (19:1, 28:6), and esteem and good reputation (22:1).

¹⁰⁶Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 765.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 571.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 572.

Psalm 67 and the Purpose of Material Blessing

Psalm 67 is a key passage concerning the purpose of material blessing. This psalm is a community harvest-thanksgiving song “recited during the autumn festival.”¹⁰⁹ The opening verse is similar to the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:22–27. The Psalm considers that “earthly blessing is a matter of the living relationship with God himself as the true and supreme good.”¹¹⁰

This psalm teaches two main truths about blessing. First, it indicates that God’s blessing goes together with God’s presence and goodness: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us” (v. 1). God blesses people because of his grace and goodness and he blesses people by making his face shine upon them. As in the priestly blessing, “Make his face shine” means granting his favor and presence. The second truth is that God’s blessing is intended not only for “us” but for “all the nations,” “all the peoples,” and “all the ends of the earth.” The blessing of the Lord will ultimately result in the knowledge, praise, and fear of the Lord. God’s blessing will have a universal impact.

In this psalm, the expressions “on earth,” “nations,” “peoples,” and “ends of the earth” are mentioned at least ten times indicating a strong missiological emphasis. The blessing of the Lord is not just for the enjoyment of his people. The purpose for God’s blessing is that his “ways may be known on earth,” and his “salvation among all nations” (Ps. 67:2). The purpose is that “all the ends of the earth will fear” God

¹⁰⁹Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1962), 472.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 474.

(67:7). According to Talstra and Bosma, harvest is a sign of God’s history with his people and with the nations.¹¹¹

God’s blessing is, therefore, a sign inviting people to participate in his salvation history. By granting material blessing, God revealed himself—his mercy, his goodness, his love, and his abundant generosity—to his people Israel and to the other nations so that “all the ends of the earth will fear him” (Ps. 67:7). The blessing of the people of Israel must result in the universal blessing of “all the peoples” to “all the ends of the earth” (see Acts 1:8).

Psalm 128

Psalm 128 is one of the songs of ascent, or a pilgrim psalm. The songs of ascent were sung when the people of Israel went up to Jerusalem for the great feasts. It appears that Psalm 128 is the continuation of Psalm 127. There are literary links between Psalm 127 and 128: “happy” in 127:5 and 128:1–2; “eating/eat” in 127:2 and 128:2; and “sons/children” in 127:3–4 and 128:3, 6. Psalm 127 speaks of the way a house is built; Psalm 128 takes us inside that built house and depicts a peaceful and prosperous family sitting at a table.

The psalm begins by stating the blessedness of a God-fearing man (Ps. 128:1), and then gives details about the blessings (128:2–6). This blessedness unfolds in: (1) success in life (128:2); (2) a numerous and happy family (128:3); and (3) long life (128:6). The fear of God promotes happiness, prosperity, health, and long life.

The words ‘bless/blessed/blessings’ occur four times (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5). Two words are used for blessings in this psalm: *ashar* in the first part of the psalm (vv. 1–

¹¹¹Eep Talstra and Carl J Bosma, “Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest, and History: A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 36, no. 2 (November 2001): 313.

2) and *barak* in the second part (vv. 4–5).¹¹² *Ashar* carries the idea of advancement, success, prosperity and happiness. *Barak*, from the root *brk*, means to bestow power for success, fertility and prosperity.

Verse 1 contains a synonymic parallelism with ellipsis:

Blessed are all *who fear the Lord*

————— *who walk in his ways*

Fearing the Lord parallels *walking in his ways*. The word ‘fear’ is translated from the Hebrew word *yara* which is used to mean “to flow.” In Hebrew thought, *yara* may be understood either as what one feels when in danger or what one feels when in the presence of an awesome sight or person of great authority. These feelings flow out of the person in such as actions as shaking or bowing down in awe of one in authority.¹¹³ To fear God, therefore, means to have a profound respect and reverence for God. The fundamental meaning is “to recognize God’s sovereignty and so to entrust life and future to God. . . . It is to orient one’s whole life to God’s ways rather than one’s own ways.”¹¹⁴ The parallel *fear the Lord* and *walk in his ways* implies that to fear God is to walk in his ways. In Deuteronomy 8:6 and 10:12, *walking in God’s ways* also parallels *fearing God*. Proverbs 8:13 says that “to fear the Lord is to hate evil.”

Verse 2 contains a metaphor, “Eat the fruit of your labor.” This metaphor carries two ideas. First, it implies that the work of a God-fearing man will be

¹¹²James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: Psalms 107–150* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 3:1124.

¹¹³Jeff A. Benner, “Ancient Hebrew Words Meanings,” *Ancient-Hebrew.org*, http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/27_fear.html (accessed March 12, 2013).

¹¹⁴J. Clinton McCann, Jr, “The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 4:1201.

successful. God will bless the work of his hand so that his labor bear fruit. Secondly, it also means that the God-fearing man will enjoy (“eat”) the benefit of his work. Not only will his work bear fruit, but he will also enjoy these fruits. Enjoyment is a blessing, just as is fruitfulness. In the Scripture, “The inability to enjoy the fruit of one’s own labor was a traditional sign of God’s disfavor (see Deut. 28:33; Ps. 78:46, 109:11), as was barrenness (see Gen. 30:1–2; 1 Sam. 1:5).”¹¹⁵

Verse 3 contains two similes. First, it compares a God-fearing man’s wife to a fruitful vine (“your wife will be *like* a fruitful vine.”) Second, it likens his sons to olive shoots (“Your sons will be *like* olive shoots”). Vines and olive trees are biblical symbols of abundant life. This implies that a God’s fearing man’s wife will be fertile and give birth to many and prosperous children. In Psalm 127:5, we see that having many children is a blessing. In Exodus 23:26, God promised: “and none will miscarry or be barren in your land.” Verse 4 serves as a conclusion repeating the first verse.

What does Psalm 128 teach us? Psalm 127 states that all blessings and all success in life come from God, not just from the man’s labor and effort (“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”). Psalm 128 goes a step further. Although blessing and success come from God alone, there is a condition that must be met: the fear of the Lord (“blessed are all who fear the Lord”). Physical and material prosperity depends on our spiritual state and right relations with God. God blesses the man who is in right relationship with him.

The emphasis is put on the fear of the Lord, not on the blessing itself. It is the spiritual condition first, then the material and physical blessing. The former is the result of the latter. It is not the reason for it. We do not fear and serve God because we want blessing and prosperity. We are blessed because we fear and serve God. This is

¹¹⁵Ibid.

where the blessing and prosperity gospel deviates. It tends to be a selfish and materialistic gospel. It induces people into following God because of the blessings, not because of their love for God. Psalm 128 presents a theology of blessing as it celebrates the blessing of the Lord on human labor and family. But this theology does not work as a mathematical formula or a mechanistic system of reward.¹¹⁶

Blessing in the Prophets

The use of *brk* in the prophetic literature is limited to a total of twenty-four occurrences, ten of which are found in Isaiah.¹¹⁷ The passages in Isaiah focus on the source and condition for blessing: (1) The Lord as the source of the blessing (Isa. 19:25, 30:18, 51:2, 65:23; Jer. 31:23; Ezek. 34:26) and (2) Obedience and trust as the conditions for the blessing (Isa. 56:2; Jer. 17:7).

It is important to note that in Isaiah 44:3, the blessing of the Lord parallels the Spirit of the Lord: “I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Blessing of the Lord is understood in spiritual terms: it is the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord. As Brown notes, “The divine blessing was essential for the spiritual well-being and material prosperity of the nation.”¹¹⁸

Examination of Blessing in the New Testament

This section will first give a cursory study of the Greek words used for blessing in the NT. Then it will examine blessing (*μακάριος*) in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke and blessing (*εὐλογέω*) in Ephesians 1:3. The seven Beatitudes of the Revelation will also be reviewed.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Michael L. Brown, “ברך Brk,” 765.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 766.

The Meaning of εὐλογέω

The word group from the stem εὐλογ- is a compound word, from εὖ, “good, well,” and λογος “word.” It occurs forty-one times as a verb, εὐλογέω (to bless); eight times as an adjective, εὐλογητός (blessed, blessed one), spoken only of the triune God (Mark 14:61; Luke 1:68; Rom. 1:25, 9:5; 2 Cor 1:3, 11:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3); and sixteen times as a substantive, εὐλογία (blessing, fine speaking).¹¹⁹ The verb εὐλογέω is used to mean “to speak of something in favorable terms—to praise, to speak well of.”¹²⁰ It conveys different meanings:

1. To say something commendatory, speak well of, praise, extol; often used of men toward God (Luke 1:64, 2:28, 24:53)
2. To ask for bestowal of special favor, especially of calling down God’s gracious power, bless: 1) upon persons (Mark 10:16; Luke 6:28, 24:50f; Rom. 12:14a; Heb. 7:1), and 2) upon things to consecrate them (Mark 8:7; Luke 9:16; 1 Cor. 10:16).
3. To bestow a favor or provide with benefits, with God or Christ as the subject (Luke 1:42b; Acts 3:25, 26; Heb. 6:14; Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:9, etc.)¹²¹

When a person is subject, “to bless” may also be translated by “to pray God on behalf of” or “to ask God to do something good for.”¹²²

BDAG gives a more comprehensive meaning of εὐλογία, “praise, blessing, fine speaking.”¹²³ It is translated as:

¹¹⁹Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 79.

¹²⁰Johannes P. Louw et al., eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Society, 1989), 431.

¹²¹Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 407–408.

¹²²Louw et al., 1:442.

¹²³Balz and Schneider, 2:80.

1. Act of speaking in favorable terms, praise (Rev. 5:12, 7:12)
2. Word that are well chosen, but untrue; false eloquence, flattery (Rom 16:18)
3. Act or benefit of blessing: (1) persons to persons (James 3:10; Heb. 12:17); (2) God/Christ to persons (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 15:29; Heb. 6:7, 12:17; etc.); (3) blessing bestowed in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 10:16)
4. Generous gift, bounty (2 Cor. 9:5)¹²⁴

The use and meaning of *εὐλογέω* can be summarized as in the table 4.

Table 4. Use and meaning of *εὐλογέω*

Subject	Object	Meaning
God/Christ →	persons	To bestow favor, provide with benefits
Persons →	God	To praise
Persons →	persons	To call down God's gracious power, bless
Persons →	things	To consecrate

The Meaning of *μακάριος*

The word *μακάριος* translated by 'blessed' in the Beatitudes carries the idea of "fortunate,' 'happy,' 'in a privileged situation,' 'well-off;'"¹²⁵ "pertaining to being happy, with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances."¹²⁶ The word *μακάριος* is used in several senses:

1. Of humans, "being fortunate or happy because of circumstances" (Acts 26:2; 1 Cor. 7:40; Luke 23:29), "privileged recipient of divine favor" (James 1:25)
2. Of transcendent beings, "viewed as privileged, blessed" (1 Tim. 1:11, 6:15)

¹²⁴Danker, 408–409.

¹²⁵M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 8:176.

¹²⁶Louw et al., 1:302.

3. In a general Greek-Roman perspective, it means “one on whom fortune smiles”
4. Of things, parts of the body, and experiences, “object of special grace” (Matt. 13:16; Luke 10:23).¹²⁷

According to Keener, a better rendering of μακάριος (the Greek translation of the Hebrew *ashre*) would be, “It will go well with the one who,” “fortunate,” or “it will be well with.”¹²⁸

The word μακάριος most often occurs in the Synoptic Gospels. Of the fifty occurrences in the New Testament, thirteen are in Matthew, fifteen in Luke, and seven in Revelation.¹²⁹ Μακάριος is “first attested in Pindar and means free from daily cares and worries. In poetic language it describes the condition of the gods and those who share their happy existence.”¹³⁰ In the Greek world, μακάριος was

used to the gods who were not subject to earthly frailties or misfortunes and did not have to toil. . . . of persons who were judged in some way to share the privileged state of the gods. . . . to the dead who had transcended the griefs of this mortal life . . . ; to the rich, who were presumed to be free from care; and to the wise. The Greek blessings reveal what was valued and what was thought to make for earthly happiness: a lovely bride, excellent children, moral rectitude, wisdom, wealth, honor and fame.¹³¹

Thinkers in antiquity identified happiness with wealth (Homer); the good things of life, good wife and children, power, a life of pleasure (Euripides); fame or glory (Stobaeus); freedom from trouble or misery (Plato); virtue (Xenocrates and

¹²⁷Danker, 610–611.

¹²⁸Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 165–166.

¹²⁹Balz and Schneider, 2:376.

¹³⁰Colin L. Brown, 1:215.

¹³¹Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 78.

Aristotle); and full satisfaction.¹³² Although this idea contains some moral elements (moral rectitude and wisdom), one can note the predominant materialistic tone of the Greek concept of μακάριος: freedom from misfortunes, care, and grief; earthly enjoyments of wealth, honor, and fame. Viewed as such, it is impossible for mortals to attain happiness.

The New Testament introduced a new concept of μακάριος. In the New Testament, μακάριος is not earthly and materialistic. It is spiritual and eschatological, linked to the kingdom: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt. 5:3). Μακάριος alludes to “religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.”¹³³ This joy is not just a contentment, but an interior joy that pours out outwardly into shout of joy:¹³⁴ “Rejoice . . . and leap for joy (Luke 6:23).”

The adjective μακάριος denotes the idea of happiness, both in the Greek culture and in the NT. But the concept of μακάριος in the NT is in sharp contrast with its concept in the Greek world. Whereas μακάριος relates essentially to earthly and materialistic happiness in the Greek culture, in the NT, μακάριος refers to an inward, spiritual, and eschatological happiness promised to the children of God. The next section will examine μακάριος in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke.

¹³²Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. James D. Ernest, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 436.

¹³³Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 367.

¹³⁴Spicq, 2:438.

Blessing (μακάριος) in the Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are recorded in Matthew 5:2–12 and in Luke 6:20–23. They are pronouncements often in the third person pointing to the future eschatological happiness that awaits the children of God at the coming of the kingdom of God. The structure of the Beatitudes consists of three parts:

1. A declaration or proclamation of blessing, “blessed is/are” (μακάριος /μακάριοι)
2. A reason for the blessing or quality of the recipient, for example, “the poor in spirit” (οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι)
3. The content of the blessing, for example, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν).

Table 5. Structure of the Beatitudes

Declaration / Proclamation of Blessing	Recipient and Qualifications	Reason and Content of the Blessing
μακάριοι (Blessed are)	οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι (the poor in spirit)	ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (for theirs is the kingdom of heaven)

Some differences appear between the Matthean Beatitudes and the Lukan Beatitudes. The Lukan Beatitudes seem to focus on socioeconomic conditions—the poor, the hungry, and the weeping—these are addressed in the second person. The Matthean Beatitudes, on the other hand, are more spiritualized and ethicized—the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers—these are addressed in the third person.

The Matthean Beatitudes may be regarded as “conditional entrance requirements” in the kingdom.¹³⁵ Some aspects may be identified as conditional

¹³⁵D. E. Garland, “Blessing and Woe,” ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 79.

entrance requirements. For example, one must be “pure in heart” in order to go into the kingdom of God. But instead of conditional entrance requirements, the Matthean Beatitudes should rather be seen as an eschatological reward for those who display such spiritual qualities, a “consolation of the faithful in their present situation of despair.”¹³⁶ Scholars such as Anna Cho, Don Garlington, and Charles H. Talbert, argue that the Beatitudes are not “entrance requirement” into the kingdom. Instead, they are “promises of eschatological blessings,”¹³⁷ “the exemplars of righteousness required of the people of God,”¹³⁸ and “a portrait of disciples.”¹³⁹ Two reasons explains this: first, the content of the blessing clearly talks about reward: “great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:12). The reason for the Beatitudes is not earthly enjoyment, but the hope of future and eschatological reward: “because great is your reward in heaven” (Luke 6:23).

The second reason is that the Beatitudes are not conditional clauses, but causal clauses. Matthew 5:11 reads: “Blessed are you when people insult you” (μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς). The causal clause is introduced by the conjunction ὅταν (ὅτε ἂν), “when, whenever.” The μακάριοι are blessed, not *if* they are insulted and

¹³⁶Green, McKnight, and Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 78.

¹³⁷Anna Cho, *Christian Ethical Implications of the Presence of the Kingdom as God’s Performative Action in the Light of Speech Act Theory* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2019), 46, <https://books.google.tg/books?id=54yODwAAQBAJ&pg=PA46&lpg=PA46&dq=entrance+requirement+or+eschatological+blessing&source=bl&ots=wYSePVTY1g&sig=ACfU3U1cm--wdxJrTDohgDCnzA5HdIDHaA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwia7YLZn4ToAhWfTBUIHZFFAIkQ6AEwBXoECAsQAQ#v=onepage&q=entrance%20requirement%20or%20eschatological%20blessing&f=false> (accessed March 5, 2020).

¹³⁸Don Garlington, “‘The Salt of the Earth’ in Covenantal Perspectives,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54, no. 4 (December 2011): 730–731, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/54/54-4/JETS_54-4_715-748_Garlington.pdf (accessed November 27, 2020).

¹³⁹Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 78, https://books.google.tg/books?id=tbmoR2j0-sgC&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed November 27, 2020).

persecuted because of Jesus. Rather, they are blessed *because* they are insulted and persecuted because of Jesus. The blessing is their reward for enduring these sufferings for Jesus' sake. Brown quotes Koch:

Previously the Beatitudes were seen as a vehicle for setting out the virtues ordained by God for man, but now it is quite clear that phrases such as “poor in the spirit,” “those that mourn,” “are meek,” “hunger and thirst after righteousness” are merely different aspects of an attitude to the world nearing its close, an attitude of lasting patience and hope. It is not the virtues which are important so much as the promise of salvation conveyed by the “blessed” at the beginning as well as by the motive clause in the second half of each line.¹⁴⁰

So, the Beatitudes, rather than setting the conditions for the blessing, they promise blessing and reward to those who choose to live the kingdom life and stay faithful to the Lord even when they are persecuted, insulted, and rejected. Believers are μακάριοι (happy, blessed), because they will be comforted, inherit the kingdom of heaven, and have great reward in heaven.

This is a promise of future and eschatological happiness. This futuristic and eschatological happiness is linked to the present: “Blessed are you who *hunger now*, for you *will be satisfied*” (Luke 6:21; italics mine). Blessing is promised to those who live the kingdom life (poor in spirit, meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers...) and accept to suffer for the sake of the kingdom. These qualities are not “general human virtues,” but characteristics of “authentic disciples in the Christian community; they are “declarations about the blessedness, contrary to all appearances, of the eschatological community living in anticipation of God’s reign.”¹⁴¹ It is both a promised reward and an encouragement to bear suffering for the kingdom’s sake. Blessing-happiness is, therefore, an

¹⁴⁰Colin Brown, ed., 1:217.

¹⁴¹Boring, 178.

eschatological reality rather than a present and earthly state. It is the already but not yet reality of God's blessing.

The concept of μακάριος in the New Testament is in sharp contrast with its concept in the Greek world. Whereas, happiness in the Greek culture is related to earthly materialistic enjoyment and absence of misfortune and grief, happiness in the Sermon of the Mount is intimately linked to the idea of the kingdom of heaven. Happiness is for those who: are poor in spirit, mourn, are meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, are pure in heart, are peacemakers, are persecuted because of righteousness, are insulted and falsely accused because of Jesus, and are not scandalized by Jesus; those who are poor, who hunger now, who are hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected because of Jesus. The μακάριοι are happy, not because they have earthly and material possessions, but because the kingdom is theirs. The possession of the kingdom, not the possession of wealth, is the reason and content of their happiness.

Blessing is, therefore, a spiritual and eschatological concept. Jesus does not deny the human desire for happiness. Rather, Jesus is promising happiness; he is making an invitation to happiness: "Rejoice and be glad" (χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε), he says. But this promise for happiness will be fulfilled in the kingdom: "great is your reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12)." The happiness Jesus is calling people to is "as radical as it is paradoxical." First, it is in sharp contrast because this happiness is not physical, but spiritual; not outward, but inward; not earthly, but heavenly; not already, but not yet; and eschatological. Secondly, it is paradoxical because "the new faith implies a reversal of all human values."¹⁴² Happiness is not associated with material

¹⁴²Spicq, 2:438.

possessions and social positions: wealth, good reputation, power, etc. Happiness is for those who exhibit spiritual values and qualities. It now belongs to the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted because of righteousness, and those who are insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused. True happiness is recognizing and accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, the undisclosed Messiah and the promised happiness will be fulfilled in the kingdom to come. True happiness is for people “ready for the kingdom’s coming.”¹⁴³

Because Jesus is the manifestation of the kingdom of God (“the kingdom of God is within you,” Luke 17:21), blessing is associated with the person and ministry of Jesus. In Matthew 16:17, Jesus declared Peter “happy/blessed,” “blessed are you” (*μακάριος εἶ*), because he was granted the revelation concerning who Jesus is: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Thus, the one who is happy is the one who knows Jesus, who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Blessedness is linked to faith in Jesus and, therefore, to salvation: “blessed are those who . . . have believed (John 20:29).” In Matthew 13:16–17 (see Luke 10:23–24), Jesus said to his disciples that they are blessed to see and hear what the prophets and righteous longed to see and hear, but did not.¹⁴⁴ Again he linked happiness to his ministry which is a manifestation of the kingdom.

Spiritual Blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3)

Ephesians 1:3 says that God “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (ὁ Θεὸς ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ

¹⁴³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 166.

¹⁴⁴Green, McKnight, and Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 79.

ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ). The foundation of the Ephesian church is reported in Acts 18:19–20 and 19:1–10. Bible scholars like A. M. Hunter, F. F. Bruce, and John R. W. Stott adhere to the traditional view of Paul’s authorship of the book of Ephesians.¹⁴⁵ Paul wrote this epistle from prison in Rome probably around AD 63. The purpose of this letter was to inform, strengthen, and encourage the Ephesians by assuring them of their place within the purpose of God and urging them to live up to that purpose in Christ.¹⁴⁶

After the greetings in verses 1 and 2, Paul starts by praising and worshipping God for what he has done in Christ. This opening formula is adapted from the Greco-Roman model of letters which usually consists of an opening, a body, and a closing. The opening would include “A to B, greetings” with the identification of the writer, addressee, and expanded descriptions of both, followed by the “grace and peace” greeting. The opening greetings would usually be followed by a paragraph of introductory thanksgiving or blessing expressing gratitude to God.¹⁴⁷ Ephesians 1:3 belongs to this part. The body generally opened by “the *parakaleo* sentences (‘I urge you, my brothers,’ 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:1), the disclosure formula (‘I/we want you to know,’ Rom. 1:13; Gal. 1:11; Phil. 1:12), the joy expression (Philem. 7), the expression of astonishment (Gal. 1:6) or statement of compliance (Gal. 1:8–9),” and ended with eschatological conclusions.¹⁴⁸ The closing was adapted from the typical

¹⁴⁵John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 21.

¹⁴⁶Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 57.

¹⁴⁷Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 551.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 552.

Hellenistic letters, informing the congregations of his traveling ministry. Instead of “the customary health wish or Greek word of farewell,” Paul closed his letters with a benediction or doxology.¹⁴⁹

Paul says that God has blessed believers with every spiritual blessing in Christ. This verse underlines four important elements: (1) the source or origin of the blessing, (2) the nature and content of the blessing, (3) the place of the blessing, and (4) the condition of the blessing.

The source or origin of every blessing is God. He is the one who has blessed us (ὁ εὐλόγησας ἡμᾶς). The Bible says that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (James 1:17).” The word εὐλόγησας is an aorist active participle substantive which translates “the one having blessed.” It indicates a past action or a punctiliar action (point action) as opposed to an ongoing action. God is not going to bless us. He is not blessing us. He has already blessed us, by choosing us (Eph. 1:4), predestining us, and adopting us as his sons (Eph. 1:5).

The nature and content of the blessing is spiritual (πνευματικῆ, from πνευματικὸς), not material. Πνευματικὸς means “pertaining to, or belonging to, the Spirit.”¹⁵⁰ Spiritual blessing, therefore, means blessing that pertains or belongs to the Spirit. It is not physical or material. It is spiritual in nature and form. The rest of the passage from verses 4–14 unpacks those spiritual blessings: holiness, adoption as children of God, redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgiveness of sins, wisdom and understanding, knowledge of the mystery of his will, chosen to be for the praise of his glory, sealing with the promised Holy Spirit. The aorist participle as a

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 95.

substantive seems to emphasize that he is the one who has done all of these things for us.

The blessings that the believers have received are in the heavenly realms (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The expression “heavenly realms” is used five times in Ephesians:

1. “God . . . has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3)”
2. God raised Jesus “from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (1:20)”
3. “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (2:6)”
4. “Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God” is “made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (3:10)”
5. We struggle “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (6:12)”

The “heavenly realms,” therefore, refer to a spiritual sphere where all spiritual beings, including God, Christ, the powers of darkness, and the believer exist together. Snodgrass also identifies “heavenly realms” as: (1) the place of exaltation for Christ (1:20) and believers (2:6); (2) the place for revelation of God’s wisdom to the rulers and authorities (3:10); and (3) the place of battle between believers and evil spiritual forces (6:12).¹⁵¹ According to the conception depicted in Ephesians, the world was a plane surrounded by spheres (i.e., heavens). The lower sphere of heaven was occupied by demons and evil forces. By descending and ascending from and to heaven, Christ

¹⁵¹Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, ed. Terry Muck, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 47.

broke through the lower sphere of the heavens, liberating men from the oppression of demonic forces and subjecting them.¹⁵²

The blessings are in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, ἐν + dative of location or sphere). The group expressions ἐν Χριστῷ, ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν ᾧ appear at least nine times in this section (1–14). They allude to the redemptive work of Christ, and faith in him. They imply union or communion with Christ. There is no blessing outside of Christ. It is only in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) that God blesses all people.

The overall meaning of this passage is that God has chosen and endowed believers with every spiritual power and endowment in the heavenly realms in Christ that is needed in order for them to live up to the divine purpose in Christ. This divine purpose is that we “might be for the praise of his glory (1:12).” Blessing is not something we pursue. It is something we possess in Christ. It is something already accomplished in Christ. This is the *already* aspect of blessing. No physical or material blessing can measure against these spiritual blessings.

The Seven Beatitudes of Revelation

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. There are two opinions concerning the date of the book: an Early Date, during the reign of Nero (AD 64–70) and a Late Date, during the reign of Domitian (AD 81–96). One argument in support of the Early Date is the temple in Jerusalem which is spoken of in Revelation 11:1–2 as still standing.¹⁵³ But Osborne

¹⁵²Balz and Schneider, 2:546.

¹⁵³G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 20.

argues that there is better evidence for a date in the mid-90s under Domitian.¹⁵⁴ Two argument may support that. First John wrote this book on the Islands of Patmos where he was banished “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9).” The churches that John addressed in the Apocalypse are located in Asia Minor and there is no evidence that Nero’s persecution extended to Asia Minor. Second, earlier patristic writers, such as Irenaeus, Victorinus of Pettau, Eusebius, support a date during the reign of Domitian.¹⁵⁵

The book of Revelation relates visions and revelations given to John concerning the times of the end (Rev. 1:1). God revealed to John what was then and what would take place later (Rev 1:19), in order to encourage and prepare Christians to remain faithful in persecutions and sufferings: “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). The intention of the book was to transform the perspectives of Christians by “enabling them to assimilate Christ’s defeat of the dragon and, thereby, find victory in the struggle between ‘Roman culture and Christian conviction’.”¹⁵⁶

Revelation contains seven Beatitudes that describe blessings in times of persecution (Rev. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14). They also describe blessing promised to those who obey the words of the prophecy. Just as other NT Beatitudes, the Beatitudes in Revelation “assure the hearers of their future participation in God’s promised salvation.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 9.

¹⁵⁵Beale, 19.

¹⁵⁶Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 10.

The beatitudes in Revelation have almost the same construction as those in Matthew and Luke: a declaration of blessing (blessed is/are); a description of the recipient or a condition for the blessing (the one who reads, the dead who die in the Lord); and a content of the blessing (they will rest from their labor).

Table 6. Comparison of the Beatitudes in Matthew/Luke and in Revelation

	Beatitudes in Matthew / Luke (Matt. 5:3)	Beatitudes in Revelation (Rev. 14:13)
Declaration/Proclamation of Blessing	Blessed are	Blessed are
Reason for the Blessing / Qualification of Recipient	the poor in spirit	the dead who die in the Lord
Content of Blessing	theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	they will rest from their labor

The word used for blessed is *μακάριος/μακάριοι*, which means “happy,” “fortunate.” The eschatological pronouncement are in the third person. These blessings are promised to seven categories of persons: (1) those who read, hear, and obey the words of the prophecy (1:3); (2) the dead who die in the Lord (14:13); (3) he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him (16:15); (4) those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9); (5) those who take part in the first resurrection (20:6); (6) those who keep the words of the prophecy (22:7); and (7) those who wash their robes (22:14).

Blessing Promised to Those Who Obey the Word of the Prophecy (Rev. 1:3)

The first beatitude of the book of Revelation is addressed to “the one who reads the words of this prophecy,” and to “those who hear it.” (Rev. 1:3). According to Longman and Garland, the phrases “the one who reads” and “those who hear” (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες) refer to the early liturgy where a reader read the Scripture aloud and the congregation listened to the reading. The expression “word of this prophecy” (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας) is John’s way of referring to the entire

book of Revelation.¹⁵⁸ But it is not enough to read and hear the words of the prophecy. The one who reads and those who hear must keep what is written in it (καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα). The words ἀκούοντες and τηροῦντες are substantive present participles, reflecting a continuous action. They refer to those who continuously hear and keep the Word of God. This beatitude describes the eschatological happiness promised to those who remain in obedience to “the words of this prophecy.”

Blessing Promised to Those Who Die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13)

The second blessing reads: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες). This verse concludes the message of the three angels. The first angel urges people to fear God and give him glory. The second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon the Great. The third angel warns against the judgment of God on those who “worship the beast and his image and receive his mark on the forehead or on the hand.” Verse 12 encourages the saints to persevere in the midst of persecution and to remain faithful to Jesus. Verse 13 then promises eschatological blessing as a reward to “the dead who die in the Lord” (οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες). First, they are blessed because they die “in the Lord” (ἐν Κυρίῳ). To “die in the Lord” means “to remain faithful to the very end, to make Christ the sphere (ἐν + dative of sphere) of your life.”¹⁵⁹ This phrase refers to martyrs. The present participle ἀποθνήσκοντες (dying) emphasizes the ongoing character of the action. This death is a process that the obedient Christians experience daily—they

¹⁵⁸Alan F. Johnson, “Revelation,” in *Hebrew - Revelation*, vol. 13 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 596.

¹⁵⁹Osborne, *Revelation*, 544.

are constantly dying. It is referring to people who are being put to death because of their faith. In the midst of persecution, these obedient Christians prefer losing their lives rather than losing their faith. They are dying because they are remaining faithful to the Lord. But this blessing does not only refer to martyrs. It includes all οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες, all those who have remained faithful to the Lord until the end of their lives (the dead who die in the Lord).

The conjunction ἵνα (so that, in order that) “introduces the content of the blessing.”¹⁶⁰ This content is that “they will rest from their labor (ἀναπαύσονται ἐκ τῶν κόπων αὐτῶν).” Dying in Christ is the door through which they enter into the blessing. Verse 13 establishes a contrast with verse 11. While those “who worship the beast and his image” have “no rest day or night,” those “who die in the Lord” “will rest from their labor.” The “rest” here parallels the Sabbath’s rest spoken of in Hebrews 4:1–11. The labors (κόπων) refer to their faithful deeds and the faithful perseverance. Not only will they rest from their labor, but also they will be rewarded. The passage promises that “their deeds will follow them” (τὰ δὲ ἔργα αὐτῶν ἀκολουθεῖ μετ’ αὐτῶν). The word ἔργα here refers to their good deeds and faithfulness.

Blessing Promised to Those Who Stay Awake (Rev. 16:15)

Revelation 16 speaks about “the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth” poured out by the seven angels (Rev. 16:1). Verse 15 is a parenthesis that interrupts this narration. As evil forces gather kings of the world together for the battle of Armageddon, the Lord interrupts the narration to warn his people to be vigilant and stay awake. He warns them that he comes like a thief (ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης). The verb

¹⁶⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 768.

ἔρχομαι is a futuristic present, guaranteeing the imminence of the Lord's return.¹⁶¹ "Like a thief" refers to the suddenness and unexpectedness of Christ's coming. He will come when he is the least expected, taking people by surprise. Because of this, those who follow the Lamb must be constantly vigilant, so that their loyalty may not be diverted.¹⁶² Believers must stay alert and keep their clothes with them to avoid going "naked" and being "shamefully exposed" (ἵνα μὴ γυμνὸς περιπατῆ καὶ βλέπωσι τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην αὐτοῦ). Blessing is for those who stay awake and keep their clothes (μακάριος ὁ γρηγορῶν καὶ τηρῶν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ).

The word γρηγορῶν depicts spiritual watchfulness.¹⁶³ "Keeping their clothes" is a metaphor for keeping their spiritual commitment to Christ.¹⁶⁴ The expression "go naked" (γυμνὸς περιπατῆ) is used in the Bible to describe a state of shame, disgrace, and judgment (Isa. 20:1–4; Ezek. 23:10, 29).¹⁶⁵ The whole passage is an exhortation to watchfulness coupled with a warning. Christians are exhorted to be vigilant in keeping their commitment to Christ. If they do not, they may fall under disgrace and judgment when Christ comes. But the one who is vigilant and maintains his spiritual commitment to Christ will enjoy eternal happiness and will not be ashamed.

Blessing Promised to Those Who Are Invited to the Wedding Supper (Rev. 19:9)

This fourth beatitude is promised to "those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb" (οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι). This idea

¹⁶¹Osborne, *Revelation*, 593.

¹⁶²Longman and Garland, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 13:734.

¹⁶³Osborne, *Revelation*, 593.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 594.

of “messianic banquet” was built on Isaiah 25:6: “On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.” The wedding supper symbolizes the coming messianic kingdom.¹⁶⁶ The “common meal” ritual of the Qumran community and the Last Supper seem to have been anticipations of the messianic banquet.¹⁶⁷ Luke 13:29 also mentions people coming from east and west and north and south, and taking their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Luke 14:15 also speaks about the blessedness of the “man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” At this banquet, the church is both the bride and the invited guest (Rev. 19:7, 9).

Blessing Promised to Those Who Have Part in the First Resurrection (Rev. 20:6)

This beatitude describes the blessedness of “those who have part in the first resurrection” (ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῆ πρώτῃ). The first resurrection refers to the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14; Rev. 20:6). This first resurrection will take place before the millennium, as the martyrs will come to life and “reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).”

The content of the blessing is twofold. First, “Those who have part in the first resurrection” are excluded from the second death; “the second death has no power over them.” The first death is the physical death referred to in verse 4 in connection to “those who had been beheaded” (τῶν πεπελεκισμένων). The second death is “the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14),” which is eternal damnation and separation from God. The second content of the blessing is that “those who have part in the first resurrection”

¹⁶⁶Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, ed. Terry Muck, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 450.

¹⁶⁷Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 485.

“will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years”
(ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσουσι μετ’ αὐτοῦ χίλια ἔτη).

This refers to the millennial reign of Christ.

Blessing Promised to Those Who Keep the Words of the Prophecy (Rev. 22:7)

This sixth beatitude takes the hearer/reader back to the first beatitude, in Revelation 1:3. It reminds the hearers of the importance of obeying the word of the prophecy. This beatitudes is both a warning against the seductions of the beast and an encouragement to follow the Lamb.¹⁶⁸ The reason for this warning and encouragement is the imminent return of the Lord: “Behold, I am coming soon” (ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ). The word ταχύ means “soon, without delay, suddenly.” Because he is coming soon, without delay, believers are encouraged to obey his words. Only those who keep the words of the prophecy will enter into the blessing when he comes. This exhortation to obedience reveals the concern and ongoing demands for obedience made on the Johannine community and on the church at large¹⁶⁹ (1:3, 2:26, 3:3, 8, 10, 12:17, 14:12, 16:15, 22:9). Blessing is promised to those who are obedient to the words of the prophecy (μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας).

Blessed Promised to Those Who Wash Their Robes (Rev. 22:14)

The seventh and final beatitude of Revelation reads: “Blessed are those who wash their robes” (Μακάριοι οἱ πλυνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν¹⁷⁰). This beatitude is

¹⁶⁸John Christopher Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 669.

¹⁶⁹Smalley, 568.

¹⁷⁰“Those washing their robes’ (οἱ πλυνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν) is taken as ‘those doing his commandments’ (οἱ ποιῶντες τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ) in some textual witnesses because of similarity of either sound or appearance. . . . Though the variant occurred accidentally, it probably came to be viewed as an earlier interpretation of what it means to ‘wash robes’.” (Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1140.)

similar to the third beatitude, “Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him.” It also recalls Revelation 7:14 where it says that the saints from the great tribulation “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” In Revelation 7:14, the aorist active indicative is used (επλυναν), meaning that they washed their robes once sometime in the past. In 22:14, however, the present active participle is used (πλυνοντες), indicating a continuous action. The continuous tense implies the necessity of being continually vigilant and living a life of purity. The washing of the robes is a metaphor for living a renewed holy life.¹⁷¹

The idea of salvific meaning is supported by having the right to “the tree of life” (τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς) and going “through the gates into the city” (τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν). In Genesis 3:22, Adam and Eve were denied the right to “the tree of life” and to everlasting life because of their sin. Now, those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb have regained the “right to the tree of life.” In Revelation 2:7, the right to eat from the tree of life is promised to those who overcome. The promise of “the tree of life” is an image of the promise of eternal life.¹⁷² “The city” reminds us of the city in Hebrew 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.”

The beatitudes of Revelation focus on two aspects of blessing: the qualifications for the blessing and the nature of the blessing. First, those who are blessed are those who exhibit certain spiritual qualities. They are those who:

1. Read, hear, and take to heart the words of this prophecy (obedience) (Rev. 1:3)
2. Die in the Lord (perseverance and faithfulness) (Rev. 14:13)
3. Stay awake and keep their clothes (vigilance) (Rev. 16:15)

¹⁷¹Smalley, 573.

¹⁷²Thomas, 678.

4. Are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (heavenly bliss) (Rev. 19:9)
5. Have part in the first resurrection (righteousness, victory over death) (Rev. 20:6)
6. Keep the words of the prophecy in this book (obedience) (Rev. 22:7)
7. Wash their robes (sanctification) (Rev. 22:14)

The paramount qualities for the blessing are faithfulness, perseverance, and enduring faith in the midst of the persecution that pervades the book.

Second, the beatitudes point to future realities, the time when the saints enter into their full blessing. They focus on the eschatological blessing of the saints. It is the already, but not-yet reality of blessing. The Beatitudes do not say that the saints will be blessed. They say that they are blessed (the already). But the full enjoyment is yet to come (the not-yet). The saints are promised that they will:

1. “Rest from their labor (Rev. 14:13)”
2. “Not go naked (Rev. 16:15)”
3. “Be priests of God and of Christ and reign with him (Rev. 20:6)”
4. “Have the right to the tree of life” and “go through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14)”

Summary

This chapter investigated some Bible passages related to blessing in order to gain a biblical understanding of the concept of blessing and answer Research Question 5: What does Scripture, OT and NT, teach about blessing? Several important passages in the Old and New Testaments were examined that revealed important findings concerning blessing.

Two main concepts of blessing emerge from the OT. First, blessing is understood as an endowment of power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity resulting from an action of God. This idea is translated by the verbal root בָּרַךְ *brk*,

barakh. The blessing of God over the creation and the covenant blessing both included fertility, growth, multiplication, dominion, government, and victory over enemies. The content of the priestly blessing can be summed up in the word שָׁלוֹם *shalom*, “peace,” an all-inclusive word that encompasses all aspects of blessing: spiritual, physical, material, social, and psychological. Second, blessing is also a state of happiness; a state of well-being, a “felicitous good fortune” resulting from human righteous deeds. This is expressed by the word אֲשֶׁרֵי (*ashar, ashre, asre*). This state of happiness can refer to material, physical or spiritual aspects. Blessing comes from God, although it might be transmitted through human agencies who request blessing on behalf of the people or individuals. Blessing in the OT is mainly conditioned by covenant relationship with God, obedience to God, and righteousness of the Law. The story of Jacob illustrates blessing obtained through a struggle with God in fervent prayer. The purpose of blessing in the OT was both edification and missional: a motivation of the people to obedience (the covenant blessing) and an invitation to participate in God’s salvation history (the blessing of Abraham and Psalm 67).

The literal meaning of blessing in the NT parallels its OT meaning. Blessing in the NT is: (1) a bestowal of God’s special favor or gracious power (εὐλογέω); (2) a privileged state of happiness and wellness (μακάριος). Without denying the material and physical aspects of blessing, the NT, however, stresses the spiritual aspect of blessing. Blessing is perceived as a spiritual as reflected in Paul’s writing (Eph. 1:3) and as an eschatological reality, particularly in the beatitudes of Matthew/Luke and Revelation. The content of blessing is spiritual blessings (“every spiritual blessing”) and salvation and the possession of the kingdom expressed in different ways: overcoming the second death (Rev. 20:14); having part in the first resurrection; being priests of God and of Christ; reigning with Christ; having the right to the tree of life;

and going through the gates into the city. The source of blessing is God, the Father; the condition of blessing is faith in Christ; and the purpose of blessing is for the glory of God (Eph. 1:3). Since the NT is the fulfillment of the OT, one can say that the NT concept of blessing is the fulfillment of the OT concept of blessing.

This chapter has examined what Scripture teaches about blessing. The next chapter will investigate what charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo believe about blessing. The chapter will utilize social science research methods, namely semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires to investigate the perceptions and beliefs in charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing. The findings will inform the formulation of a contextual biblical theology of blessing.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The primary objective of this step of the research was to examine the perceptions and beliefs about blessing in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo. A mixed methodological approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods was used to collect the data. The qualitative method utilized was a semi-structured interview which targeted key leaders among charismatic and Pentecostal affiliations. The quantitative approach consisted in a questionnaire survey conducted in charismatic and Pentecostal churches which was analyzed using statistical analysis methods.

Restatement of Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions investigated at this point of the research were the following:

1. RQ 1. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics in Togo?
 - a. RQ 1.A: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic pastors in Togo?
 - b. RQ 1.B: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatic believers in Togo?
2. RQ 2. What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals in Togo?

- a. RQ 2.A: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals pastors in Togo?
- b. RQ 2.B: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals believers in Togo?

The research implemented the mixed method design explained in chapter 4. This design combined qualitative methods and quantitative methods.

Qualitative Research Findings and Results

RQ 1. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among charismatics

This research question was subdivided into two questions. The first sub-question is: What perceptions and beliefs about blessing characterize charismatic believers in Togo? The second sub-question was: What perceptions and beliefs about blessing characterize charismatic pastors in Togo? The interviews targeted four (4) charismatic believers and four (4) charismatic pastors. The interview data analysis revealed the perceptions and beliefs about the concept, the content, the source(s), the conditions, and the purpose of blessing by charismatic believers (CB) and charismatic pastors (CP) in Togo.

Concept and Content of Blessing among Charismatics

The interview data revealed that, according to CB and CP, blessing includes spiritual, material, psychological, physical, and socio-professional aspects. Table 7 shows the frequency of occurrences for each category.

Table 7. Concept and content of blessing among charismatics

Concept and Content of Blessing among Charismatics	CB (4 respondents)	CP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
<i>Spiritual Aspect</i>		
God's grace, favor, and mercy	2	4

Table 7, Continued.

Concept and Content of Blessing among Charismatics	CB (4 respondents)	CP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
Salvation, being a child of God, being born again	1	3
Answer to prayer, God's intervention in one's life	0	2
Transformation of life	1	0
Holy life	0	1
Power to prosper	1	2
<i>Material Aspect</i>		
Material and financial prosperity: money, houses	4	3
Material well-being, well-being, comfort	0	2
Satisfaction of financial and material needs	1	0
Provision, divine provision	0	1
<i>Psychological Aspect</i>		
Happiness, well-being, peace of heart, joy	2	4
<i>Physical Aspect</i>		
Good physical and mental health	4	3
Security and protection	1	0
Life, long life, longevity	2	1
<i>Socio-professional Aspect</i>		
Peace and harmony in the home, happy family	0	2
Large family, many children	1	1
Being married	0	1
Success in business	1	0
Good job, good salary	1	0
Social and professional promotion	1	0
To pray for somebody	0	1
Meet the needs of somebody	0	1
Say good words, wish good, say prophetic words	2	0

The dominant concepts raised by charismatics include the following aspects:

- (1) Spiritual: "God's grace, favor, mercy" (two occurrences for CB, and four occurrences for CP); "salvation, being a child of God, being born again" (one occurrence for CB and three occurrences for CP).
- (2) Material: material and financial prosperity: money, houses (four occurrences for CB and three occurrences for CP).
- (3) Psychological: (happiness, well-being, peace of heart, joy (two occurrences for CB

and four occurrences for CP). (4) Physical: “good physical and mental health, health in the family” (four occurrences for CB and three occurrences for CP).

Perceptions of CB on blessing are highly materialistic and physically centered (four occurrences for “Material and financial prosperity” compared to one occurrence for “salvation, being a child of God, being born again”). CP have mixed perceptions, including spiritual (four occurrences for “God’s grace, favor, and mercy” and three occurrences for “Salvation, being a child of God”), material (three occurrences for “Material and financial prosperity”) and two occurrences for “Material well-being, comfort”), and psychological (four occurrences for “Happiness, well-being, peace of heart, joy”).

Sources of Blessing among Charismatics

Table 8. Sources of blessing among charismatics

Sources of Blessing among Charismatics	CB (4 respondents)	CP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
God, Jesus-Christ	4	4
Men of God: pastors, prophets	4	4
Parents, biological parents	4	4
Elderly persons	1	0
Leaders, authorities in the community, bosses	2	0
Brethren and neighbors	1	0
Inheritance	0	1
Nature	1	0
Satan, demons and evil spirits	2	4
<i>In traditional cultures</i>		
Fetish priests, juju priests	0	1
Ancestors, idols	3	2

There are four occurrences among charismatics (both CB and CP) that the sources of blessing are: “God or Jesus Christ,” “men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.,” and “parents.” Believers also mentioned leaders, authorities, and bosses as sources of

blessing. All CB and some two (2) CP added Satan as a possible source of material possessions, with some comments. A CP gave his point of view:

I answer this way: for my part, I think we should rather try to find out if Satan and his demons really bless. And for me, the material blessings that come from Satan and his demons are in fact pseudo blessings; they are baits that the spirits use to seduce and trap people in order to keep them in darkness, being completely misled and away from God. On the other hand, the blessing that comes from God is always accompanied with grace. . . . Grace enables us to live for God, grace brings us closer to God, grace enables us to establish a relationship with God, a communion with God.¹

To the question whether Satan can bless people, another CP states his point of view:

The Bible says that it is God's blessing that enriches and he adds no sorrow to it. But everything we receive from Satan is always followed by sorrow because Satan has no free gift. So then, Satan can give money but cannot give life. And as we see today, many run after Satan to have material goods and in the end it is their life (that is lost). That is why Jesus said: "what will it serve a man to win the whole world and lose his soul?" Satan does not have blessing, but he can give money and some material goods, but they are always followed with sorrows.²

Conditions for Blessing among Charismatics

Table 9. Conditions and means of blessing among charismatics

Conditions of Blessing among Charismatic	CB (4 respondents)	CP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
Repentance, accepting Jesus, being born again	2	4
Obedience and fear of God, good relationship with God	3	4
Serving God faithfully	1	1
Grace of God, Goodness of God	0	2
Obeying and honoring parents, taking care of parents	1	0
Blessing (giving to) the man of God	1	0
Sowing, giving for the Lord's work	3	4
Paying tithe and offerings	1	2
Give a sacrificial offering	0	1
Prayer, fasting	0	2
Having faith	0	2
Love for neighbors	0	1

¹Transcription Extract. Respondent C1001-BENID.

²Transcription Extract. Respondent C1004-EKLUS.

Table 9, Continued.

Helping the poor and needy	2	2
Working hard, diligence	1	1
Positive confession / prophetic proclamations	2	3
Laying on of hands	1	0
Deliverance from ancestral and family curses and bondage	1	0
Ratifying the covenants	1	2
Prophetic acts or acts of faith	0	2
Use of holy water: sell, sprinkle, pour on the ground	2	2
Use of anointing oil	2	2
Regenerating the land	0	1
Blessing is conferred through words	2	0
Mechanism of material blessing	0	1

Three main conditions for blessing have been mentioned both by CB and CP:

(1) “repentance, accepting Jesus, being born again,” (two occurrences for CB and four occurrences for CP); (2) “obedience and fear of God, good relationship with God” (three occurrences for CB and four occurrences for CP); and (3) “sowing, giving for the Lord’s work” (three occurrences for CB and four occurrences for CP). Other conditions include : prayer and fasting, faith, helping others, positive confession or prophetic proclamations, ratifying the covenants, prophetic acts or acts of faith, use of holy water, use of anointing oil, and the mechanism of spiritual blessing.

One CP explains what he calls the “mechanism of material blessing.”

To bless people or pray for people, he says, we use three or four ways. The first way is the authority in the name of Jesus Christ, which we call “*exousia*.” The mere fact of saying “in the name of Jesus Christ,” the person is healed under the authority or with the authority of that name. The name of Jesus Christ is a very powerful name, or also blood. The second thing that God has also given us is the “*dunamis*,” that is, the Holy Spirit in us. And this is done by transfer. Since the day of Pentecost, you will see that the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost, but after that it went from person to person. You go to Samaria, it did not fall from heaven anymore. You go from Samaria to Ephesus, it did not fall from heaven. . . . This is now done by transfer. . . . The third level of gift is the power from above, “*kratos*,” that is to say the power of the throne. How do we get it? When people worship much, when they praise much, God comes to sit in the midst of praise and worship. . . . As soon as the anointing comes down to the place, you will see that it manifests itself, and then you will see that tears flow, these are signs that I see that people are ready

to receive healing. . . . This power is called the power of the throne. . . . And the last thing, in our charismatic languages, we speak of “*epiphaïso*,” the shadow of the Most High. That is, God himself decides to move.³

The four principles that C1003-DRAM calls “the mechanism of material blessing” are: (1) the authority of the name of Jesus (*exousia*), (2) the transfer of the power of the Holy Spirit (*dunamis*), (3) the power of the throne (*kratos*), and (4) the shadow of the Most High (*epiphaïso*).⁴

Purpose of Blessing among Charismatics

Table 10. Purpose of blessing among charismatics

Purpose of Blessing among Charismatics	CB (4 respondents)	CP (4 respondents)
<i>Purpose for which God blesses people</i>	Frequency of Occurrences	
Expressing of God’s love and provision	1	1
For the glory of God	3	2
Draw us closer to God	0	1
Support of God’s work: missions, evangelism, God’s servants, etc.	2	4
Be a source of blessing, help the poor, to serve others, etc.	1	3
An encouragement for serving God	0	1
As a testimony for unbelievers	1	0
<i>Purpose for which people seek blessing</i>		
For their own glory and honor	1	1
For personal enjoyment, to be happy, to live well	2	1
Dissatisfaction, people are never satisfied	0	2
<i>Purpose for which people seek blessing</i>		
Deviance	0	1

³Transcription Extract. Respondent C1003-DRAM.

⁴The Bible does teach the power and authority of the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17–18; Phil. 2:10). But the name of Jesus is not a magical formula that works independently from the will of God. It is God who manifests his power through the name of Jesus. The power is not in us; it comes from God through the name of Jesus. Concerning “the transfer of the power of the Holy Spirit,” it is true that in some cases the Holy Spirit was received by the laying on of hands: in Samaria (Acts 8:17) and in Ephesus (19:6) for examples. But at Caesarea, in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on people without the laying on of hands. The Bible talks about transfer of authority and responsibility rather than transfer of the Holy Spirit. This notion of transfer may lead (and does lead) some charismatic ministers into thinking that they have the power to confer the Holy Spirit. As for “the power of the throne” and “the shadow of the Most High,” they are nothing else than the manifestation of God’s presence and power in the midst of his people. When God manifests his presence and his power; various miracles occur. But the primary purpose of God manifesting his presence and power is not for material blessing.

The main purposes of blessing raised by charismatics are: “God’s glory” (three occurrences for CB and two occurrences for CP), “Support of God’s work” (two occurrences for CB and four occurrences for CP), and “Be a source of blessing” (three occurrences for CP).

One charismatic pastor used the theory of deviance by Robert Merton to explain why, according to him, charismatic pastors preach prosperity. He argued:

Do charismatic churches actually run after money? . . . We studied Merton's theory. I think it might help you with your thesis. They say that any organization that is born has a manifest function and a latent function. The manifest function is what is declared. What is declared in every church is to bring people to Heaven. Now a charismatic church started two or three years ago and now it has two hundred believers. The owner of the land tells you that you have to buy the land for 25 million FCFA otherwise you leave the place with two hundred believers. So, the pastor starts preaching to get money to buy the land. People who do not understand say he wants to have a nice house. So, what brought about the deviance? That is why we talk about the latent function. It is as if charismatic churches are running after money.⁵

He further explain why it appears as if charismatic pastors preach prosperity. He says:

People say it is money they're looking for, why? Togolese people take the latent function to replace the manifest function and it is a phenomenon that has been there since the beginning of the world. For example, it is said that an NGO is created to eradicate poverty, but is that true? But today in the functioning of NGOs, we have noticed that those in front of NGOs are richer and the population is still poor, right? (Laughs) Have NGOs become bad? It's just because that's the latent function. So, in sociology, we call it deviance. . . . Why does it appear as if charismatic churches preach only money today? . . . Is a church planted to get money? Personally, I don't believe it. But it is deviance . . . the way any other organization deviates from its primary function

⁵Transcription Extract. Respondent C1003-DRAM. Strain Theory was first developed by Robert Merton in the 1940s to explain the rising crime rates experienced in the USA at that time. Strain Theory has become popular with Contemporary sociologists. Karl Thompson, “Merton’s Strain Theory of Deviance,” Posted on April 16, 2016, <https://revisesociology.com/2016/04/16/mertons-strain-theory-deviance/> (accessed June 21, 2019).

It is true that some charismatic churches are struggling for survival. Most of them do not have their own land and are not big enough to be able to cope with the financial constraints (taking care of the pastor, paying the land lease, paying bills, etc.). This situation may lead pastors into preaching prosperity. But this does not explain the whole story. First, why do they not just preach the truth of the Gospel and trust God for his provision? Second, why do some pastors of big churches also preach prosperity? The real issue seems to be elsewhere.

which is the manifest function. The latent function takes the place of the manifest function. So, the independent churches are a deviation. . . . It came a moment in my pastoral life, I told myself that it is like we are talking too much about money because we needed to cover the roof. When it rained, the room would be full of water. When we come, “money,” “money.” When I go home, I’m disturbed. As soon as we finished that, I left it and said that the little we have, we’re going to use it like that. . . . It’s to avoid deviance. . . . Because at one point, we put a lot of emphasis on what? Prosperity, blessing, more than what? The Kingdom of God. So, what happened? Deviance. It is not because charismatic churches decide to preach blessing, but because there has been deviance.⁶

C1003-DRAM points out a real problem that confronts some charismatic churches. Generally, membership in charismatic churches is not high and they are facing many financial challenges: leased land or purchase of land, building of church structure, electricity bills, financial support of pastors, etc. They need money to cover all these needs and expenses. This can explain the deviance, which leads some charismatic ministers to preach prosperity and use practices that are not biblical (anointing oil, holy water, and so on) in order to get money.

Although these are real challenges, it does not explain all the race for the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel is also favored by the cultural context of the Togolese people, as C1003-DRAM himself recognizes:

So, it's pretty much the things that caused the deviance. If someone, for example, needs 500,000 CFA Francs for electricity bill, and he asks you to contribute, you refuse; contribute, you refuse. Now he takes two bottles of anointing oil and says, come and get it for 250,000 CFA Francs each bottle, has he found the 500,000 CFA Francs or not? And you know why? Where do the Togolese come from? They come from these practices. They take red oil, they take a bottle of alcohol, they take the thing from there (i.e. they have imported these practices from their cultural background). Tell, for example, the people, “come, we will teach you the word of God.” The attendance will be bad. But if you tell them, “Bring the anointing oil on Friday evening, we

⁶Transcription Extract. Respondent C1003-DRAM. C1003-DRAM is raising some important issues here. Have charismatic churches deviated from their primary purpose, preaching money and prosperity instead of preaching the kingdom of God? Are pastors behaving like NGO’s leaders, using their churches for their own benefit? If so, what causes the deviance? Is it the need for money to support the ministry, or the using of the Gospel to satisfy egocentric needs, the like of integrity, the insatiable desire for money, and the desire to be free from poverty?

will pray on it and you will anoint yourself, anoint your children, your wife, anoint your workplace,” the attendance will be good. Do you understand?⁷

So, the traditional cultural background influences the perceptions and behavior of most immature Christians regarding the prosperity teaching, and the prosperity preachers play on this string to attract people to their advantage.

Other Practices Associated with Blessing

Respondents also mentioned other practices associated with blessing in some charismatic churches. These practices include, the use of holy water (sold, sprinkled, or poured on the ground); the use of anointing oil; the use of honey and milk; the use of the holy broom; buying pieces of an anointed suit; mud from the Dead Sea and water from the Jordan River; the practice of regenerating the land; occultist practices (burying things in the church). One respondent shared the following testimony:

Yes, I have seen people use water. I myself once dismissed some organizers from my church during a seminar . . . when the guest-speaker made use of water by spraying it on the crowd. I told them, “If you will continue like this, do not come back here.” And the next day they did not come. They continued their seminar elsewhere where they sold anointing oil at different prices, ranging from ten thousand CFA Francs to fifty thousand. I have also heard about another man who took off his suit while preaching on a Sunday and put a pair of scissors next to it. He invited the crowd to come and cut a piece of it for a hundred thousand francs, fifty thousand CFA Francs . . . because the suit was anointed and that, with a piece, everyone would go home with an anointing. And by the time he came down to ten thousand CFA Francs, the suit was finished. Also, most of those who go to Israel come back with mud and water from the Dead Sea or the Jordan River. So, there are practices like these that are done in churches. Only we must be careful of these practices.⁸

While these practices are rejected in Pentecostal churches, they are used in some charismatic churches as “prophetic acts” or “acts of faith.”

⁷Transcription Extract. Respondent C1003-DRAM.

⁸Transcription Extract. Respondent P1004-SARA.

RQ 2. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals in Togo

This research question has been subdivided into two questions: what are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing characterizing PB in Togo, and the perceptions and beliefs about blessing characterizing PP in Togo?

The data analysis of the interviews revealed the perceptions and beliefs about the concept, the content, the source(s), the conditions, and the purpose of blessing by Pentecostal believers (PB) and Pentecostal pastors (PP) in Togo.

Concept and Content of Blessing among Pentecostals

Table 11. Concept and content of blessing among Pentecostals

Concept and Content of Blessing among Pentecostals	PB (4 respondents)	PP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
<i>Spiritual Aspect</i>		
God's grace, favor, mercy	1	1
Salvation, being a child of God, born again	2	4
Gift of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts	1	2
Presence of God, power of God	1	0
Spiritual growth, spiritual well-being	0	1
<i>Material Aspect</i>		
Material and financial prosperity and success, material satisfaction and happiness, material well-being, material comfort: money, houses	4	4
Financial or material provision	1	0
Natural resources	1	0
<i>Psychological Aspect</i>		
Peace, joy, happiness, well-being	4	4
Absence of suffering	1	1
<i>Physical Aspect</i>		
Good physical and mental health	3	4
Security and protection	1	0
Life, long life	2	3
<i>Socio-professional Aspect</i>		
Good interpersonal relationships	1	0
Happy family, peace and harmony in home	2	2
Large family, many children	1	3
<i>Socio-professional Aspect</i>		
Being married	0	1
Success in business,	0	2
Good job and salary, professional promotion	1	0

PB and PP hold almost the same holistic concept of blessing. Blessing includes spiritual, material/financial, psychological, socio-professional, and physical elements. But the prominent components of blessing are material, spiritual, psychological, and physical. The main spiritual concept/content of blessing is “belonging to God, being a child of God, knowing Jesus personally, peace with God, salvation, being born again” (two occurrences for PB and 100 occurrences for PP). The psychological components include “peace, joy, happiness, and well-being” (four occurrences both for PB and PP). The material aspect includes material and financial prosperity and success, material satisfaction and happiness, material well-being, material comfort (four occurrences both for PB and PP). The physical elements are “good physical and mental health,” (three occurrences for PB and four occurrences for PP) and “long life” (two occurrences for PB and three occurrences for PP).

Sources of Blessing among Pentecostals

Table 12. Sources of blessing among Pentecostals

Sources of Blessings among Pentecostal Believers	PB (4 respondents)	PP (4 respondents)
	Frequency of Occurrences	
God, Jesus-Christ	4	4
Men of God: Pastors, prophets, etc.	4	3
Parents, biological parents	4	3
Leaders, authorities in the community	1	1
Neighbors	1	0
Brothers and sisters in Christ	1	0
Satan, demons and evil spirits	0	2
<i>In traditional culture</i>	0	0
Fortune tellers, fetish priests, charlatans	1	3
Ancestors, idols	1	1

Both PB and PP agree that God is the only and ultimate source of blessing (four occurrences for both). A respondent said: “For me, there is only one source for

blessing and this only source is God (laughter). According to my understanding, it is God who blesses.”⁹ Another respondent stated:

I think the greatest source of blessing is God. I believe that if one is to be blessed in the true sense of the word, to be blessed, (it) can only come from God. It's only God who can bless. . . . There are other sources, for example, going to quacks, witchdoctors or marabouts to do things but in the end it is misfortune because the blessings that do not come from God will eventually leave you and bring misfortune. But the true source of the blessing comes from God. When God blesses you, you will receive this prosperity, this joy, this satisfaction without any counterpart of misfortune and suffering. So, the real source of blessing is God.¹⁰

But Pentecostals also believe that blessing can also be imparted through the channel of human intermediaries, such as men of God (four occurrences for PB and three occurrences for PP) and parents (four occurrences for PB and three occurrences for PP). Talking about blessing by pastors, one respondents said, “Pastors also give the blessing; they also bless. But this blessing does not emanate from them, it is in the name of God that they pronounce it, and it is he (God) who blesses.”¹¹

It is also believed that Satan, demons and evil spirits can give material possessions. According to one respondent, the difference between the blessing that comes from God and the blessing received from Satan is that there is no suffering or misfortune attached to the blessing that comes from God. But blessing received from Satan is accompanied with misfortune and problems.¹² In traditional cultures in Togo, it is believed that ancestors and fetish priests also bless their worshippers.

⁹Transcription Extract. Respondent P1001-BALK.

¹⁰Transcription Extract. Respondent P1002-HANN.

¹¹Transcription Extract. Respondent P1003-HINED.

¹²Transcription Extract. Respondent P1003-HINED.

Conditions and means for Blessing among Pentecostals

Table 13. Conditions and means of blessing among Pentecostals

Conditions and Means of Blessing among Pentecostals	PB (4 respondents)	PP (4 respondents)
	Frequency of Occurrences	
Repentance, being a child of God, being born again	1	3
Obedience and fear of God, good relationship with God	4	4
Obedying and honoring parents, taking care of parents	2	0
Serving God faithfully, being engaged in God's work	1	0
Grace of God, Goodness of God	0	1
Sowing, giving for the Lord's work	1	4
Paying tithe and offerings	2	1
Prayer, fasting	2	1
Having faith	2	0
Love neighbors (not doing bad to neighbor)	0	1
Helping others/poor, meeting the needs of others	2	0
Being kind and ready to serve old people	1	0
Working hard, diligence	0	2
Prophecy on one's life (praying for someone)	0	1
Laying on of hands	0	1
Pronouncing words of blessing	1	0

Both PB and PP described “obedience and fear of God, good relationship with God” as a condition to receive blessing (four occurrences for PB and PP respectively). Pastors also mentioned “repentance, being a child of God, being born again” (three occurrences) and “giving, sowing” (four occurrences). A respondent pastor said:

When you are a child or an obedient person, a person who loves God, a person who wants to do the work of God, you are already in the conditions in which God will bless you. . . . You will be blessed because you are in the conditions where God has promised the blessing to all who will be in these conditions. For example, you love God, you do his work—evangelism—you love to give for the work of God, not because you want to receive but because you love God, you live an authentic Christian life.¹³

¹³Transcription Extract. Respondent P1002-HANN.

Some respondents mentioned “human effort, working hard” as a condition for blessing. A respondent stated: “So we also acquire blessing through our toil. God blesses from the work we do and not from laziness. Whoever is lazy cannot expect the blessing of God.”¹⁴ Another respondent also believe that working hard is means for blessing. He states:

I spoke about God, I talked about the devil, that is to say, Satan, the evil spirits, the witch doctors. . . . So, there are these sources. Now there is also what we must not forget: human effort. God said man should work and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. When you work and God gives you the wisdom to think carefully, to plan your work well, you can succeed by working. It is a source of blessing.¹⁵

Purpose of Blessing among Pentecostals

Table 14. Purpose of blessing among Pentecostals

Purpose of Blessing among Pentecostals Believers	PB (4 respondents)	PP (4 respondents)
Frequency of Occurrences		
<i>Purpose for which God blesses people</i>		
Provide for our needs	1	0
For the glory of God	2	2
Draw us closer to God	2	1
Support of God’s work: missions, evangelism, etc.	3	3
Be a source of blessing, help the poor, to serve others	3	3
<i>Purpose for which people seek blessing</i>		
For their own glory and honor	1	3
For personal enjoyment, to be happy, to live well	0	1
Because of poverty	1	0
Dissatisfaction, people are never satisfied	0	1
As a natural aspiration	1	0

PB and PP agree to say that the purpose of God in blessing people is to “support God’s work” (three occurrences for both), to “be a source of blessing to

¹⁴Transcription Extract. Respondent P1001-BALK.

¹⁵Transcription Extract. Respondent P1002-HANN.

others” (three occurrences for both), and “for the glory of God” (two occurrences for both). The reason why people seek blessing is mainly for egocentric reasons: for their own glory and honor, for personal enjoyment, because they are never satisfied with what they have, because of poverty, and because of a natural aspiration for happiness.

Quantitative Research Findings and Results

A questionnaire survey was used to answer the same research questions as did the interviews. The analysis of the descriptive statistics yield the measures of central tendency presented in tables and graphs below with the following abbreviations: mean (mn), mode (mde), median (mdn), and standard deviation (SD). The collected survey forms and the spreadsheets are all available for review.

RQ 1. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Charismatics

Concept and Content of Blessing among Charismatics

Concept and content of blessing among CB

The analysis of the results shows the beliefs and perceptions about the concept and content of blessing among CB. The result is summarized in the table 15.

Table 15. Concept and content of blessing among CB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>				
A1	God's grace and favor	4.73	5	5	0.61
A2	Salvation, being a child of God	4.21	5	5	1.03
A3	Eternal life, heaven	4.27	5	5	1.03
A4	Enjoying the presence of God	4.39	5	5	0.88
A5	Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart	4.02	5	4	1.08
A6	Enduring persecution for Christ	2.81	1	3	1.43
A7	Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death	3.39	4	4	1.38
A8	Dying in the Lord	3.81	5	4	1.28
A9	Answer to prayer, God's intervention	4.46	5	5	0.80
A10	The Gift of the Holy Spirit	4.27	5	4	0.92
A11	Divine power	4.19	5	4	0.93
A12	Spiritual growth	4.24	4	4	0.94

Table 15, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>				
A13	Having part in the first resurrection	3.73	5	4	1.36
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>				
A14	Peace of heart, joy, happiness,	4.46	5	5	0.81
A15	Absence of suffering, well-being	3.84	4	4	1.14
A16	Enduring suffering for Christ	3.32	4	3	1.31
A17	Going through trials	2.86	2	3	1.34
	<i>Material aspect</i>				
A18	Being materially and financially poor	1.68	1	1	1.01
A19	Material and financial prosperity	4.19	5	5	1.08
A20	Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs	4.27	5	4	0.89
A21	Divine provision for needs	4.52	5	5	0.79
	<i>Physical aspect</i>				
A22	Good physical and mental health	4.48	5	5	0.75
A23	Security and protection	4.37	5	5	0.79
A24	Life, a long life	4.32	5	5	0.99
A25	Sickness may be a blessing	1.70	1	1	1.14
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A26	Peace with others	4.06	5	4	1.04
A27	Enjoying people's favor	3.80	4	4	1.11
A28	Having victory over enemies	4.05	5	4	1.09
A29	Being married, having a husband / having a wife	3.73	4	4	1.16
A30	Being unmarried / single	2.26	1	2	1.23
A31	Peace and harmony in the home	3.92	4	4	1.14
A32	Having a large family, many children	3.03	4	3	1.33
A33	Having no child	2.15	1	2	1.18
A34	Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.	4.06	5	4	1.08
A35	Living in modest conditions	3.87	4	4	1.04
A36	A good job, a good salary	4.24	5	4	0.90
A37	Social and professional promotion	4.33	5	4	2.83
A38	Blessing is only spiritual	4.08	5	4	1.05
A39	Blessing is only material	3.84	4	4	1.13
A40	Blessing is both spiritual and material	4.59	5	5	0.76

The examination of the results shows the perceptions of CB regarding the concept and content of blessing. CB expressed strong agreement for the following items: A1 – God’s grace and favor (mn 4.73, mde 5, mdn 5, and SD 0.61); A21 – Divine provision for needs (mn 4.52, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.79); and A40 – Blessing is

both spiritual and material (mn 4.59, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.76). The low standard deviation ($SD < 1$) shows that all respondents almost answered the same way. They also expressed high perception for: A2, A3, A4, A5, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12, A13, A14, A15, A19, A20, A22, A23, A24, A26, A27, A28, A29, A31, A34, A35, A36, A37, A38, and A39. In some cases, the standard deviation is inferior to one ($SD < 1$), indicating that almost all respondents expressed the same view.

CB are neutral (mn of 2.5 – 3.4) about the following items: A6 - Enduring persecution for Christ (mn of 2.81); A7- Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death (mn of 3.39); A16 - Enduring suffering for Christ (mn of 3.32); A17 - Going through trials (mn of 2.86); and A32 - Having a large family, many children (mn of 3.03). But, they express disagreement or strong disagreement for: A18 - Being materially and financially poor (mn of 1.68), A25 - Sickness may be a blessing (mn of 1.7), A30 - Being unmarried / single (mn of 2.26), and A33 - Having no child (mn of 2.15).

This analysis reveals two important aspects about the perception of CB regarding the concept and content of blessing. First, blessing include spiritual, psychological, physical, and material aspects. Second, the analysis also shows that charismatic believers reject all negative perception of blessing. They reject suffering as part of blessing. Blessing is absence of suffering. Blessing is only enjoying spiritual, psychological, physical, material and socio-professional well-being.

Concept and content of blessing among CP

Table 16 summarizes the beliefs and perceptions of CP concerning the concept and content of blessing.

Table 16. Concept and content of blessing among CP

	Concept/Content of Blessing among CP	Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>				
A1	God's grace and favor	4.83	5	5	0.38
A2	Salvation, being a child of God	4.31	5	5	1.11
A3	Eternal life, heaven	4.7	5	5	0.54
A4	Enjoying the presence of God	4.66	5	5	0.61
A5	Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart	4.55	5	5	0.74
A6	Enduring persecution for Christ	3.48	5	4	1.48
A7	Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death	4.07	5	4	1.13
A8	Dying in the Lord	4.41	5	5	0.73
A9	Answer to prayer, God's intervention	4.68	5	5	0.55
A10	The Gift of the Holy Spirit	4.46	5	5	0.79
A11	Divine power	4.45	5	5	0.79
A12	Spiritual growth	4.67	5	5	0.55
A13	Having part in the first resurrection	4.17	5	5	1.36
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>				
A14	Peace of heart, joy, happiness	4.47	5	5	0.78
A15	Absence of suffering, well-being	3.47	5	4	1.38
A16	Enduring suffering for Christ	3.79	5	4	1.37
A17	Going through trials	3.54	5	4	1.48
	<i>Material aspect</i>				
A18	Being materially/financially poor	2.17	1	2	1.42
A19	Material and financial prosperity	4.07	5	4	1.14
A20	Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs	4.20	5	4	0.96
A21	Divine provision for needs	4.70	5	5	0.53
	<i>Physical aspect</i>				
A22	Good physical and mental health	4.43	5	5	0.94
A23	Security and protection	4.40	5	5	0.97
A24	Life, a long life	4.40	5	5	0.86
A25	Sickness may be a blessing	1.74	1	1	1.29
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A26	Peace with others	4.17	5	5	1.04
A27	Enjoying people's favor	3.83	4	4	1.20
A28	Having victory over enemies	4.00	5	4	1.07
A29	Being married, having a husband / having a wife	3.76	5	4	1.3
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A30	Being unmarried / single	2.64	2	2.5	1.28
A31	Peace and harmony in the home	3.93	4	4	1.1
A32	Having a large family, many children	3.21	4	3	1.21
A33	Having no child	2.28	1	2	1.28

Table 16, Continued.

	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A34	Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.	3.83	5	4	1.20
A35	Living in modest conditions	3.75	5	4	1.11
A36	A good job, a good salary	4.03	5	4	1.05
A37	Social and professional promotion	3.93	4	4	1.07
A38	Blessing is only spiritual	4.17	5	5	1.12
A39	Blessing is only material	3.76	5	4	1.24
A40	Blessing is both spiritual and material	4.67	5	5	0.66

CP express strong agreement (mn 4.5 – 5.00) for the following items as part of the concept and content of blessing: A1, A3, A4, A5, A9, A12, A21, and A40. The standard deviation is inferior to one ($SD < 1$), implying that all the respondents answered almost the same way. They are neutral (2.5 – 3.4) about A6 – “Enduring persecution for Christ” (mn of 3.48), A30 – Being unmarried / single (mn of 2.64), and A32 – “Having a large family, many children” (mn of 3.21). They express disagreement or strong disagreement (mn of 1 – 2.4) with the following items as part of the content of blessing: A18 – “Being materially and financially poor” (mn of 2.17), A25 – “Sickness may be a blessing” (mn of 1.74), and A33 – “Having no child” (mn of 2.28).

The results show that CB and CP expressed almost the same level of agreement in their perceptions of the concept and content of blessing, except for A17 – “Going through trials.” Whereas believers are neutral (mn of 2.86) that blessing include “Going through trials,” pastors expressed agreement for it (mn of 3.54).

Chart 1. Comparing perceptions of CB and CP about concept and content of blessing

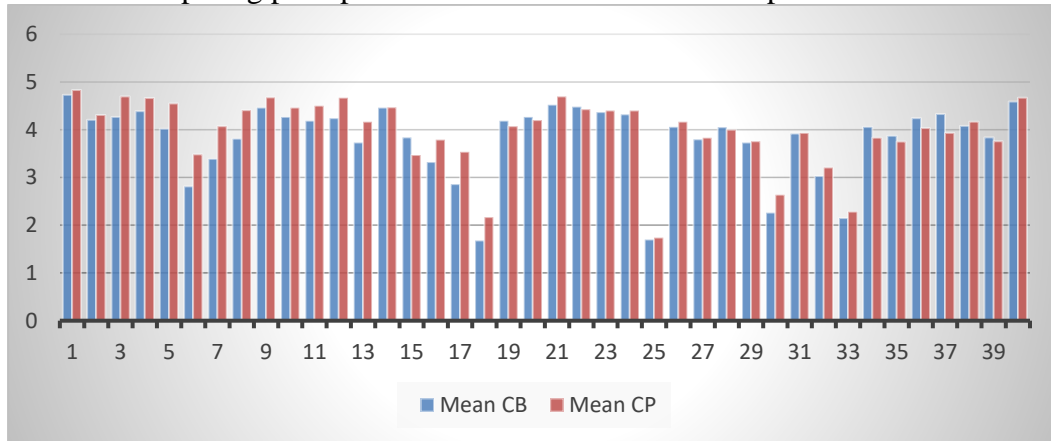


Chart 1 shows that there is no numerical difference between the mean for both CB and CP regarding their perception of the concept and content of blessing. Both groups, therefore, hold almost the same perceptions about the concept and content of blessing.

Sources of Blessing among Charismatics

Sources of blessing among CB

Table 17. Sources of blessing among CB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B1	God, Jesus Christ	4.92	5	5	0.37
B2	Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.	3.27	4	4	1.21
B3	Parents, biological parents	3.46	4	4	1.08
B4	Maternal uncles, aunts	2.89	3	3	1.06
B5	Elderly people	2.94	3	3	1.07
B6	Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss, etc.	2.76	3	3	1.13
B7	Brothers and sisters in Christ	2.83	4	3	1.14
B8	Satan, demons and evil spirits	1.29	1	1	0.69
B9	Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts	1.28	1	1	0.68
B10	The ancestors, the deities	1.29	1	1	0.68

The result above indicates that, among all the other possible source of blessing, CB expressed strong agreement only on B1 – “God, Jesus Christ” (mn 4.92, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.37). The low SD shows that all the respondents answered the

same way. They are neutral about B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, and B7. But they expressed strong disagreement for B8 (Satan, demons, and evil spirits); B9 (fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts); and B10 (ancestors and deities). CB completely reject traditional cultural beliefs concerning the sources of blessing.

For CB, therefore, God or Jesus Christ is the only source of blessing.

However, by being neutral about B2 – men of God, B3 – parents, B4 – maternal uncles, aunts,¹ and B5 – elderly people, B6 – leaders and authorities in the community, they indicate that they believe these entities may also confer blessing.

Sources of blessing among charismatic pastors (CP)

Table 18. Sources of blessing among CP

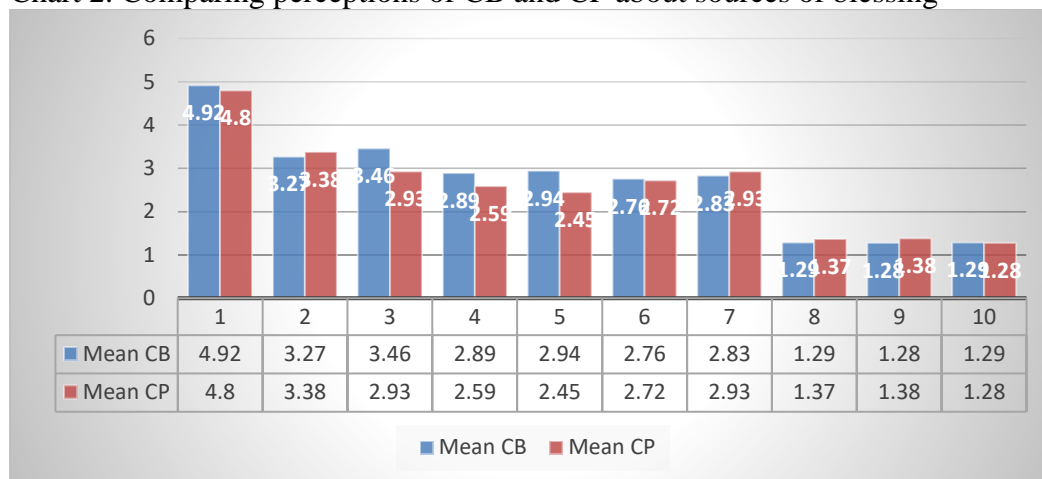
		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B1	God, Jesus Christ	4.80	5	5	0.76
B2	Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.	3.38	4	4	1.21
B3	Parents, biological parents	2.93	4	3	1.17
B4	Maternal uncles, aunts	2.59	2	3	1.15
B5	Elderly people	2.45	2	2	1.09
B6	Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss, etc.	2.72	4	3	1.16
B7	Brothers and sisters in Christ	2.93	4	3	1.30
B8	Satan, demons and evil spirits	1.37	1	1	0.61
B9	Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts	1.38	1	1	0.62
B10	The ancestors, the deities	1.28	1	1	0.53

The results show that CP also express strong agreement that “God, Jesus Christ” is the only source of blessing: mn 4.8, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.76. CP also believe that B2 – men of God; B3 – parents; B4 – maternal uncles and aunts; B5 – elderly

¹The belief that maternal uncles and aunts confer blessing is purely an influence of the traditional cultural background. Many cultures in Togo believe that the words pronounced by maternal uncles and aunts are powerful for blessing or cursing.

people, B6 – leaders and authorities; and B7 – brothers and sisters in Christ are possible sources of blessing.²

Chart 2. Comparing perceptions of CB and CP about sources of blessing



The comparative chart and the figures show almost no numerical difference of mean for both CB and CP regarding the source of blessing. CB and CP hold the beliefs and perceptions concerning the sources of blessing. Both groups expressed strong agreement that God is the only source of blessing. But, their neutral position for B2 – men of God, B3 – parents, B4 – maternal uncles and aunts, B5 – elderly people, B6 – leaders and authorities, and B7 – brothers and sisters in Christ implies that they do not reject human intermediaries in the conferring of blessing.

Conditions and means for blessing among CB

Table 19. Conditions and means for blessing among CB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C1	Repent, accept Jesus, be born again	4.79	5	5	0.50
C2	Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous	4.75	5	5	0.49

²The belief that B4 (maternal uncles, aunts), B5 (elderly people), and B6 (leaders and authorities) are sources of blessing is an influence of the traditional cultural background. In some Togolese cultures, maternal uncles and aunts are believed to have greater authority and power over their nephews than do the biological parents of the children. They have the power and authority to bless or curse their nephews.

Table 19, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C3	Obey and honor parents, take care of parents	4.35	4	4	0.64
C4	Be engaged in God's work	4.37	5	4	0.69
C5	Sow, give for the work of the Lord	4.37	5	4	0.75
C6	Pay tithes and give offerings	4.39	5	5	0.91
C7	Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering	3.80	5	4	1.24
C8	Fast and pray	3.82	4	4	1.04
C9	Have enough faith	4.29	5	4	1.00
C10	Love one's neighbor	4.00	4	4	0.86
C11	Help the poor, help those in need	4.07	4	4	0.76
C12	Be kind, serve elderly people	3.95	4	4	0.85
C13	Be diligent and hardworking	4.00	4	4	0.86
C14	Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations	3.75	4	4	1.03
C15	Break ancestral and family curses	4.01	4	4	0.97
C16	Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.	3.59	4	4	1.17
C17	Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands	3.13	4	3	1.20
C18	Use holy water	1.82	1	1	1.04
C19	Use anointing oil	1.89	1	1	1.12
C20	Use water from the Jordan River	1.76	1	1	1.00
C21	Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts	2.15	1	1	1.17
C22	Make sacrifices to the ancestors	1.24	1	1	0.56
C23	Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>situtu</i> , <i>Akpema</i> , <i>Evala</i> , etc.	1.19	1	1	0.44
C24	Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents	1.20	1	1	0.47
C25	Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)	1.17	1	1	0.41
C26	Make a covenant with spirits and divinities	1.17	1	1	0.43
C27	Respect taboos and prohibitions	1.27	1	1	0.61
C28	Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts	1.19	1	1	0.52
C29	Make a human sacrifice	1.17	1	1	0.49
C30	Blessing is transferred by words of blessing	2.20	1	2	1.26
C31	Blessing is purely unconditional grace from God	4.34	5	5	1.07

CB expressed strong agreement (mn of 4.5 – 5.00) with C1 – repentance (mn 4.79, mde 5, mdn 5, and SD 0.5), and C.2 – obedience to God as conditions for blessing (mn 4.75, mde 5, mdn 5, and SD 0.49). They expressed agreement (mn of 3.5 – 4.4) for C3 – obedience to parents (mn of 4.35), C4 – commitment to God’s work (mn of 4.37), C5 – sowing/giving (mn of 4.37), C8 – fasting and prayer (mn of 3.82), C9 – faith (mn of 4.29), C10 – love for neighbors (mn of 4.00), C11 – help the poor (mn of 4.07), C12 – serving elderly people (mn of 3.95), C13 – diligence at work (mn of 4.00), C14 – positive confession (mn of 3.75), C15 – breaking family curses (mn of 4.01), and C16 – ratifying covenants (mn of 3.59) as conditions or means for blessing.

CB neither agree, nor disagree (mn of 2.5 – 3.4) with C17 – “Receive blessing from a man of God” as a condition for blessing. But they express disagreement or strong disagreement (mn of 1 – 2.4 and SD < 1 in many cases) with traditional practices or practices inspired from traditional background: C18, C19, C20, C21, C22, C23, C24, C25, C26, C27, C28, C29, and C30). Such practices do exist in some independent churches in Togo as it has been mentioned by some interviewees.

The results reveals that for CB, blessing is conditioned by two main factors: (1) spiritual factors, such as C1 – “repentance” (mn of 4.79), C2 – “obedience to God” (mn of 4.75) and (2) the law of sowing/giving (“sowing/giving,” “paying tithes and offerings,” “making sacrificial giving,” and “helping the poor.” Other conditions are C8 – “fasting and praying”, C9 – “faith,” and C10 – “love for neighbor.” They also believe that blessing may be received from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer, or the laying on of hands. CB express disagreement or full disagreement with traditional practices or practices inspired from traditional background as means for blessing.

Conditions and means for blessing among CP

Table 20 summarizes the statistic results for the conditions and means for blessing among CP.

Table 20. Conditions and means for blessing among CP

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C1	Repent, accept Jesus, be born again	4.73	5	5	0.58
C2	Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous	4.80	5	5	0.55
C3	Obey and honor parents, take care of parents	4.37	4	4	0.61
C4	Be engaged in God's work	4.24	4	4	0.87
C5	Sow, give for the work of the Lord	4.53	5	5	0.82
C6	Pay tithes and give offerings	4.34	5	5	0.94
C7	Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering	3.73	4	4	1.23
C8	Fast and pray	3.57	4	4	1.22
C9	Have enough faith	4.07	4	4	0.96
C10	Love one's neighbor	3.82	4	4	1.09
C11	Help the poor, help those in need	3.93	4	4	0.94
C12	Be kind, serve elderly people	3.57	4	4	1.07
C13	Be diligent and hardworking	3.9	4	4	0.94
C14	Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations	3.61	4	4	1.13
C15	Break ancestral and family curses	3.82	4	4	1.06
C16	Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.	3.52	4	4	1.09
C17	Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands	3.69	4	4	1.07
C18	Use holy water	1.93	1	2	0.98
C19	Use anointing oil	1.97	1	2	1.07
C20	Use water from the Jordan River	1.80	1	2	0.81
C21	Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts	2.03	1	2	1.03
C22	Make sacrifices to the ancestors	1.40	1	1	0.62
C23	Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>situtu</i> , <i>Akpema</i> , <i>Evala</i> , etc.	1.23	1	1	0.57
C24	Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents	1.23	1	1	0.57
C25	Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)	1.23	1	1	0.57
C26	Make a covenant with spirits and divinities	1.23	1	1	0.57
C27	Respect taboos and prohibitions	1.27	1	1	0.58

Table 20, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C28	Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts	1.23	1	1	0.57
C29	Make a human sacrifice	1.23	1	1	0.57
C30	Blessing is transferred by words	2.33	1	2	1.35
C31	Blessing is purely unconditional grace from God	4.37	5	5	1.13

CP expressed strong agreement or agreement for C1 – “repentance” (mn of 4.73), C2 – “obedience to God” (mn of 4.80), C3 – “obey parents” (mn of 4.37), C4 – “commitment to God’s work” (mn of 4.24), and C5 – “sow, give for the work of the Lord” (mn of 4.53) as conditions for blessing. The standard deviation is inferior to 1 (SD < 1) for all these items. The same conclusion can be drawn for CP: blessing mostly depends on repentance/obedience to God, and on giving/paying tithes and offerings.

Chart 3. Comparing perceptions of CB and CP about conditions of blessing

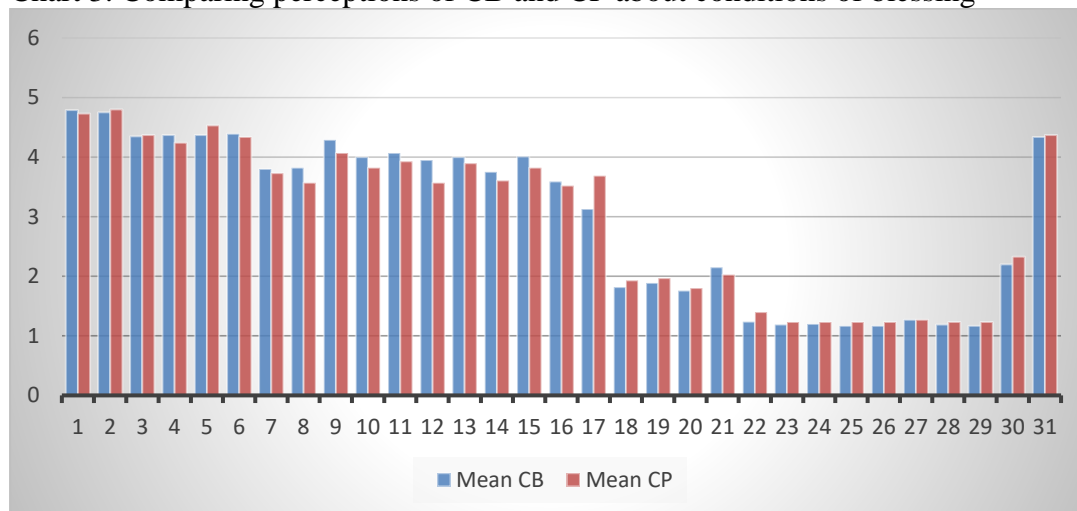


Table 21. Comparing perceptions of CB and PB on conditions/means for blessing

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11
Mean CB	4.79	4.75	4.35	4.37	4.37	4.39	3.8	3.82	4.29	4.00	4.07
Mean CP	4.73	4.80	4.37	4.24	4.53	4.34	3.73	3.57	4.07	3.82	3.93

Table 21 (cont.)

	C12	C13	C14	C15	C16	C17	C18	C19	C20	C21	C22
Mean CB	3.95	4.00	3.75	4.01	3.59	3.13	1.82	1.89	1.76	2.15	1.24
Mean CP	3.57	3.90	3.61	3.82	3.52	3.69	1.93	1.97	1.80	2.03	1.40

Table 21 (end)

	C23	C24	C25	C26	C27	C28	C29	C30	C31
Mean CB	1.19	1.20	1.17	1.17	1.27	1.19	1.17	2.20	4.34
Mean CP	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.27	1.23	1.23	2.33	4.37

The comparative chart and table show almost no numerical difference of mean between CB and CP. This means that they have the perceptions of the conditions or means for blessing. This is to be expected, since church members believe what their pastors teach them. This reveals the focus of the teaching of pastors about blessing. In addition to repentance/being born again (C1) and obedience/good relationship with God (C2), CP teach that blessing comes from sowing or giving. “Sowing” implies any kind of giving.

Purpose of Blessing among Charismatics

Purpose of blessing among CB

Table 22. Purpose of blessing among CB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
D1	Provide for our needs	4.43	5	5	0.70
D2	Glorify his name	4.75	5	5	0.48
D3	Draw us closer to God	4.37	5	5	0.80
D4	Support God's work, God's mission	4.57	5	5	0.60
D5	Be a source of blessing to others	4.51	5	5	0.70
D6	For our own happiness, for our comfort and well-being	4.31	4	4	0.71
	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>				
D7	I may be honored and respected	3.13	2	3	1.29
D8	I may live a happy and comfortable life	4.04	4	4	0.93
D9	I may come out of poverty and suffering	4.13	4	4	0.85
D10	I can support God's work, God's mission	4.53	5	5	0.68

Table 22, Continued.

	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>				
D11	It is a natural aspiration for every human being	3.64	5	4	1.22

Concerning the purpose of blessing, CB expressed strong agreement for D2 – Glorify the name of God (mn 4.75, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.48), D4 – “Support God's work, God’s mission” (mn 4.57, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.60), D5 – “Be a source of blessing to others” (mn 4.51, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.70), and D10 – “support God’s work/mission” (mn 4.53, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.68). The low standard deviation (SD < 1) indicates that almost all the respondents share the same perception. But respondents neither agree, nor disagree with D7 – “be honored and respected” (mn 3.13, mde 2, mdn 3, SD 1.29).

The responses suggest that CB are God-centered in their opinion on the purpose of blessing or in their desire for blessing. It means that they believe the purpose of blessing is to serve God and his mission. This should be expected from Christians. But they also expressed agreement for D8 – “live a happy and comfortable life” (mn 4.04, mde 4, mdn 4, and SD 0.93), and D9 – “come out of poverty and suffering” (mn 4.13, mde 4, mdn 4, and SD 0.85). This reveals that their desire for blessing also include materialistic and egocentric purposes.

Purpose of blessing among CP

Table 23. Purpose of blessing among CP

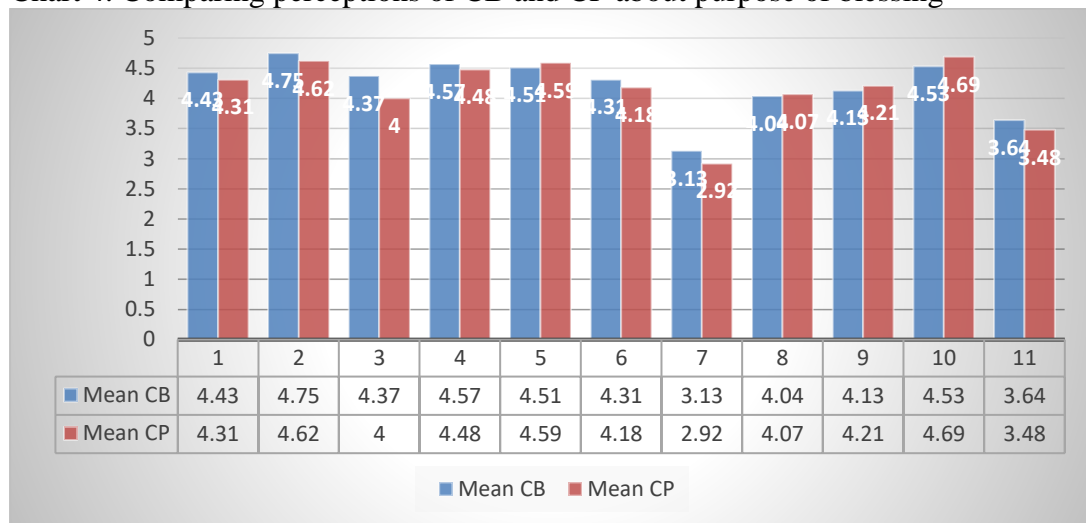
		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
D1	Provide to our needs	4.31	5	4	0.89
D2	Glorify his name	4.62	5	5	0.90
D3	Draw us closer to God	4.00	5	4	1.28
D4	Support God's work/God’s mission	4.48	5	5	0.91
D5	Be a source of blessing to others	4.59	5	5	0.57
D6	For our own happiness, for our comfort and well-being	4.18	4	4	0.72

Table 23, Continued.

	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>				
D7	I may be honored and respected	2.92	2	2.5	1.49
D8	I may live a happy and comfortable life	4.07	4	4	0.80
D9	I may come out of poverty and suffering	4.21	4	4	0.90
D10	I can support God's work, God's mission	4.69	5	5	0.60
D11	It is a natural aspiration for every human being	3.48	3	3	1.15

CP also expressed the same perceptions as the CB regarding the purpose of blessing. Respondents strongly agree with D2 – Glorify the name of God (mn 4.62, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.90), D5 – “Be a source of blessing to others” (mn 4.59, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.57), and D10 – “support God’s work/mission” (mn 4.69, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.60). The low standard deviation ($SD < 1$) shows that respondents are almost unanimous. But they neither agree, nor disagree with D7 – “be honored and respected” (mn 2.92, mde 2, mdn 2.5, SD 1.49) and D11 – “It is a natural aspiration for every human being” (mn 3.48, mde 3, mdn 3, SD 1.15). They expressed agreement for D8 – “live a happy and comfortable life” (mn 4.07, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 0.80), and D9 – “come out of poverty and suffering” (mn 4.21, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 0.90). The results imply that while CP have a God-centered opinion of the purpose of blessing, they also express a high materialistic and egocentric opinion of the purposes of blessing.

Chart 4. Comparing perceptions of CB and CP about purpose of blessing



The preceding chart and the figures show that both CB and CP are almost on equal ground as to their perception of the purpose of blessing. There is no numerical difference in the mean for both groups. While they express strong agreement for God-centeredness of the purpose of blessing, they are also highly materialistic and egocentric in their opinion of the purpose of blessing. Their responses reveal their desire to “live a happy and comfortable life” and “come out of poverty and suffering.”

RQ 2. Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals

Concept and Content of Blessing among Pentecostals

Concept and content of blessing among PB

Table 24. Concept and content of blessing among PB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>				
A1	God's grace and favor	4.72	5	5	0.53
A2	Salvation, being a child of God	4.29	5	4	0.89
A3	Eternal life, heaven	4.33	5	5	0.96
A4	Enjoying the presence of God	4.32	5	5	0.87
A5	Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart	4.02	5	4	1.07
A6	Enduring persecution for Christ	3.19	2	3	1.25
A7	Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death	3.98	5	4	1.14

Table 24, Continued.

A8	Dying in the Lord	4.17	5	4	1.01
A9	Answer to prayer, God's intervention	4.53	5	5	2.80
A10	The Gift of the Holy Spirit	4.38	5	5	0.82
A11	Divine power	4.18	5	4	0.96
A12	Spiritual growth	4.27	5	4	0.92
A13	Having part in the first resurrection	4.15	5	5	1.10
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>				
A14	Peace of heart, joy, happiness,	4.59	5	5	0.70
A15	Absence of suffering, well-being	3.64	4	4	1.25
A16	Enduring suffering for Christ	3.78	5	4	1.13
A17	Going through trials	3.43	4	4	1.30
	<i>Material aspect</i>				
A18	Being materially and financially poor	1.93	1	2	1.09
A19	Material and financial prosperity	4.03	4	4	1.03
A20	Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs	4.24	4	4	0.81
A21	Divine provision for needs	4.37	5	5	0.81
	<i>Physical aspect</i>				
A22	Good physical and mental health	4.54	5	5	0.69
A23	Security and protection	4.43	5	5	0.70
A24	Life, a long life	4.16	5	4	1.04
A25	Sickness may be a blessing	1.94	1	2	1.18
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A26	Peace with others	4.22	4	4	0.88
A27	Enjoying people's favor	3.71	4	4	0.99
A28	Having victory over enemies	4.19	5	4	0.92
A29	Being married, having a husband / having a wife	3.93	4	4	1.06
A30	Being unmarried / single	2.41	2	2	1.21
A31	Peace and harmony in the home	4.22	5	4	0.94
A32	Having a large family, many children	3.56	4	4	1.16
A33	Having no child	2.17	2	2	1.14
A34	Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.	4.14	4	4	0.96
A35	Living in modest conditions	3.49	4	4	1.06
A36	A good job, a good salary	4.10	4	4	0.87
A37	Social and professional promotion	4.09	4	4	0.85
A38	Blessing is only spiritual	4.22	5	4	0.99
A39	Blessing is only material	3.72	4	4	1.19
A40	Blessing is both spiritual and material	4.44	5	5	0.84

PB expressed strong agreement, with high mean and low standard deviation in most cases, for the following items regarding the concept and content of blessing: A1 – “God’s grace and favor” (mn 4.72, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.53); A9 – “Answer to prayer, God’s intervention” (mn 4.53, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 2.8); A14 – “Peace of heart, joy, happiness” (mn 4.59, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.70); A22 – “Good physical and mental health” (mn 4.54, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.69). They also expressed agreement for: A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A8, A10, A11, A12, A13, A15, A16, A19, A20, A21, A23, A24, A26, A27, A28, A29, A31, A32, A34, A36, A37, A38, A39, and A40 (see table 24).

PB neither agree, nor disagree that the following is part of the content of blessing: A6 – “Enduring persecution for Christ” (mn 3.19, mde 2, mdn 3, SD 1.25); A17 – “Going through trials” (mn 3.43, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.30); and A35 – “Living in modest conditions” (mn 3.49, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.06).

But, they expressed disagreement for: A18 – “Being materially and financially poor” (mn 1.93; mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.09); A25 – “Sickness may be a blessing” (mn 1.94, mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.18); A30 – “Being unmarried / single” (mn 2.41, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.21), and A33 – “Having no child” (mn 2.17, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.14).

The results imply that PB include spiritual, psychological, material, physical, and socio-professional aspects in their perception of the content of blessing. Secondly, the results also indicate that PB also reject negative aspects of blessing, such as: A18 – “Being materially and financially poor” (mn of 1.93), A25 – “Sickness may be a blessing” (mn of 1.94), A30 – “Being unmarried / single” (mn of 2.41), and A33 – “Having no child” (mn of 2.17). But Pentecostal believers agree that blessing may include A7 – “Dying for Christ” (mn 3.98, mde 5, mdn 4, SD 1.14); and A16 – “Enduring suffering for Christ” (mn 3.78, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.13).

Concept and Content of Blessing among PP

Table 25. Concept and content of blessing among PP

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>				
A1	God's grace and favor	4.84	5	5	0.37
A2	Salvation, being a child of God	4.67	5	5	0.61
A3	Eternal life, heaven	4.83	5	5	0.38
A4	Enjoying the presence of God	4.79	5	5	0.56
A5	Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart	4.56	5	5	0.73
A6	Enduring persecution for Christ	3.74	5	4	1.40
A7	Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death	4.67	5	5	0.57
A8	Dying in the Lord	4.77	5	5	0.43
A9	Answer to prayer, God's intervention	4.44	5	4	0.95
A10	The Gift of the Holy Spirit	4.67	5	5	0.52
A11	Divine power	4.63	5	5	0.58
A12	Spiritual growth	4.69	5	5	0.64
A13	Having part in the first resurrection	4.86	5	5	0.35
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>				
A14	Peace of heart, joy, happiness	4.86	5	5	0.35
A15	Absence of suffering, well-being	3.33	4	4	1.42
A16	Enduring suffering for Christ	4.25	5	4.5	0.93
A17	Going through trials	3.80	5	4	1.23
	<i>Material aspect</i>				
A18	Being materially and financially poor	1.84	1	2	1.11
A19	Material and financial prosperity	3.85	4	4	1.11
A20	Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs	4.49	5	5	0.63
A21	Divine provision for needs	4.74	5	5	0.70
	<i>Physical aspect</i>				
A22	Good physical and mental health	4.67	5	5	0.48
A23	Security and protection	4.57	5	5	0.50
A24	Life, a long life	4.31	4	4	0.77
A25	Sickness may be a blessing	2.20	1	2	1.30
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>				
A26	Peace with others	4.55	5	5	0.63
A27	Enjoying people's favor	4.03	4	4	0.95
A28	Having victory over enemies	4.19	5	4	0.97
A29	Being married, having a husband / having a wife	3.79	4	4	1.08
A30	Being unmarried / single	2.34	2	2	1.17
A31	Peace and harmony in the home	4.64	5	5	0.53
A32	Having a large family, many children	3.12	4	3.5	1.38

Table 25, Continued.

A33	Having no child	2.10	2	2	1.01
A34	Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.	3.95	4	4	1.02
A35	Living in modest conditions	3.49	4	4	1.14
A36	A good job, a good salary	4.02	4	4	1.05
A37	Social and professional promotion	3.98	4	4	1.00
A38	Blessing is only spiritual	3.90	5	4	1.23
A39	Blessing is only material	3.62	4	4	1.21
A40	Blessing is both spiritual and material	4.70	5	5	0.46

The results reveal that PP expressed strong agreement for almost all the spiritual aspects of blessing, except for A6 – “enduring persecution for Christ” which they do agree with (see table 25). They are neutral about A15 – “absence of suffering, well-being” (mn 3.33, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.42); and A32 – “having a large family, many children” (mn 3.12, mde 4, mdn 3.5, SD 1.38). PP also expressed disagreement or full disagreement for A18 – “being materially and financially poor” (mn 1.84, mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.11); A25 – “sickness may be a blessing” (mn 2.2, mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.3); A30 – “being unmarried / single” (mn 2.34, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.17); and A33 – “having no child” (mn 2.10, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.01).

The analysis reveals three findings. First, PP expressed strong agreement for almost all the spiritual aspects of blessing, compared to PB. Secondly, by being neutral about A15 – “absence of suffering, well-being” (mn 3.33, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.42), PP believe that blessing may include suffering. Thirdly, PP also reject negative perception of blessing, such as A18 – “being materially and financially poor” (mn 1.84, mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.11); A25 – “sickness may be a blessing” (mn 2.2, mde 1, mdn 2, SD 1.3); A30 – “Being unmarried / single” (mn 2.34, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.17); and A33 – “having no child” (mn 2.10, mde 2, mdn 2, SD 1.01).

Chart 5. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about concept and content of blessing

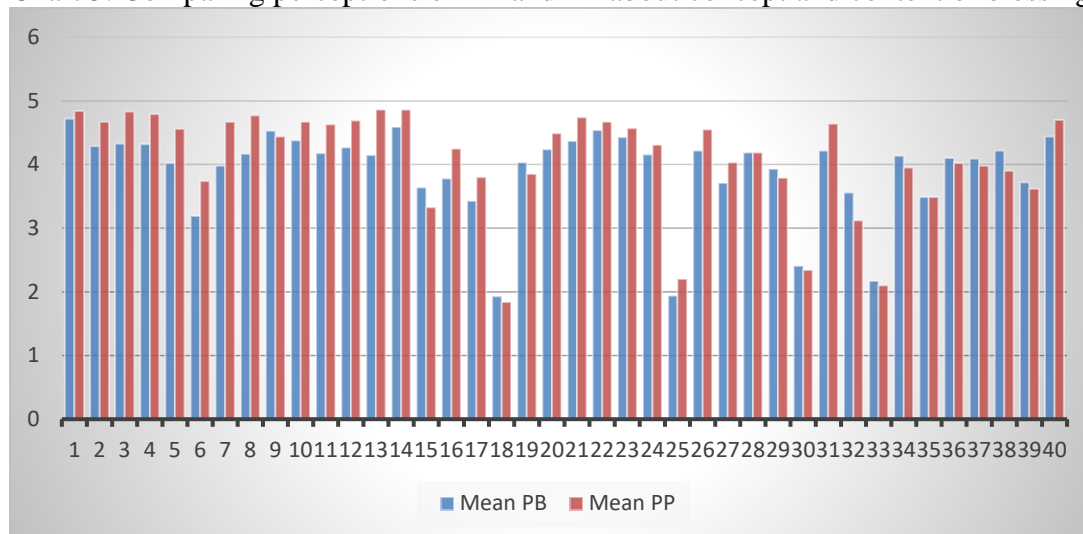


Table 26. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about spiritual aspect of blessing

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Mn PB	4.72	4.29	4.33	4.32	4.02	3.19	3.98	4.17	4.53	4.38	4.18	4.27	4.15
Mn PP	4.84	4.67	4.83	4.79	4.56	3.74	4.67	4.77	4.44	4.67	4.63	4.69	4.86

Chart 5 and table 26 show differences between PB and PP in their perceptions of the spiritual content of blessing. In most cases, PP expressed higher agreement than believers regarding the spiritual aspects of blessing. For A6 – “enduring persecution for Christ,” PB are neutral (mn of 3.19), while PP agree (mn of 3.74). For A9 – “answer to prayer,” PB expressed higher agreement than PP. PP, therefore, seem to demonstrate more spiritual maturity in their perception of the concept and content of blessing than PB.

Sources of Blessing among Pentecostals

Sources of blessing among PB

Table 27. Sources of blessing among PB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B1	God, Jesus Christ	4.90	5	5	0.40
B2	Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.	3.08	4	3	1.22
B3	Parents, biological parents	3.48	4	4	1.14
B4	Maternal uncles, aunts	2.90	4	3	1.08
B5	Elderly people	2.92	4	3	1.13

Table 27, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B6	Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss, etc.	2.72	2	3	1.13
B7	Brothers and sisters in Christ	2.90	4	3	1.17
B8	Satan, demons and evil spirits	1.35	1	1	0.64
B9	Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts	1.35	1	1	0.61
B10	The ancestors, the deities	1.47	1	1	0.81

PB expressed strong agreement for God or Jesus as a source of blessing (mn 4.90, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.4). The low standard deviation shows that all the respondents fully agreed to this item. PB neither agree, nor disagree with B2 – “Men of God,” B3 – “Parents,” B4 – “Maternal uncles, aunts,” B5 – “Elderly people,” B6 – “Leaders and authorities in the community,” and B7 – “Brothers and sisters in Christ” as shown in table 27. But PB expressed very full disagreement with B8, B9, and B10 as sources of blessing.

For PB, therefore, God or Jesus-Christ is the only source of blessing. However, by expressing a neutral position for B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, and B7, they indicate, as do their charismatic believers, that these entities may also confer blessing. PB strongly rejected or strongly disagreed with traditional beliefs regarding the source of blessing: Satan and demons, fetish priests, and ancestors.

Sources of blessing among PP

Table 28. Sources of blessing among PP

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B1	God, Jesus Christ	4.95	5	5	0.21
B2	Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.	3.16	4	4	1.23
B3	Parents, biological parents	3.40	4	4	1.25
B4	Maternal uncles, aunts	2.73	2	3	1.16
B5	Elderly people	2.70	2	2.5	1.26
B6	Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss, etc.	2.88	2	3	1.19
B7	Brothers and sisters in Christ	2.88	4	3	1.21
B8	Satan, demons and evil spirits	1.47	1	1	0.98

Table 28, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
B9	Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts	1.45	1	1	0.99
B10	The ancestors, the deities	1.49	1	1	0.98

PP have the same perceptions about the sources of blessing as PB. They also expressed strong agreement for B1 – “God, Jesus Christ” as source of blessing (mn 4.95, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.21). They neither agree nor deny with B2 – “men of God,” B3 – “parents,” B4 – “maternal uncles, aunts,” B5 – “elderly people,” B6 – “leaders and authorities in the community,” and B7 – “brothers and sisters in Christ.” But Pentecostal pastors also strongly disagree with traditional beliefs concerning the source of blessing as expressed in B8, B9, and B10 in table 28.

Chart 6. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about sources of blessing



The comparative chart shows very little difference in the beliefs and perceptions between PB and PP concerning the sources of blessing (no numerical difference in mean). Both groups strongly agree that God is the only source of blessing. But neither group rejects human channels in blessing.

Conditions and Means for Blessing among Pentecostals

Conditions and means for blessing among PB

Table 29. Conditions and means for blessing among PB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C1	Repent, accept Jesus, be born again	4.66	5	5	0.64
C2	Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous	4.73	5	5	0.51
C3	Obey and honor parents, take care of parents	4.44	4	4	0.61
C4	Be engaged in God's work	4.47	5	5	0.60
C5	Sow, give for the work of the Lord	4.58	5	5	0.54
C6	Pay tithes and give offerings	4.60	5	5	0.58
C7	Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering	3.89	4	4	1.11
C8	Fast and pray	3.96	4	4	0.96
C9	Have enough faith	4.35	4	4	2.29
C10	Love one's neighbor	4.12	4	4	0.81
C11	Help the poor, help those in need	4.23	4	4	0.66
C12	Be kind, serve elderly people	4.03	4	4	0.79
C13	Be diligent and hardworking	3.93	4	4	0.85
C14	Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations	3.58	4	4	1.03
C15	Break ancestral and family curses	3.89	4	4	0.95
C16	Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.	3.61	4	4	1.05
C17	Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands	3.39	4	4	1.09
C18	Use holy water	1.82	1	2	0.89
C19	Use anointing oil	1.87	2	2	0.90
C20	Use water from the Jordan River	1.79	1	2	0.89
C21	Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts	2.23	2	2	1.08
C22	Make sacrifices to the ancestors	1.38	1	1	0.63
C23	Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>Situtu</i> , <i>Akpema</i> , <i>Evala</i> , etc.	1.36	1	1	0.60
C24	Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents	1.39	1	1	0.67
C25	Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)	1.28	1	1	0.51
C26	Make a covenant with spirits and divinities	1.28	1	1	0.52
C27	Respect taboos and prohibitions	1.45	1	1	0.70
C28	Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts	1.23	1	1	0.44

Table 29, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C29	Make a human sacrifice	1.26	1	1	0.53
C30	Blessing is transferred by words of blessing	2.52	1	2	1.25
C31	Blessing is purely unconditional grace from God	4.41	5	5	0.93

PB expressed strong agreement (high mean and low standard deviation) for C1 – “repentance” (mn 4.66, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.64); C.2 – “obedience to God” (mn 4.73, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.51); C5 – “sow, give for the work of the Lord” (mn 4.58, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.54); and C6 – “pay tithes and give offerings” (mn 4.6, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.58) as conditions for blessing. Most of the respondents also strongly agreed with C4 – “be engaged in God’s work” (mn 4.47, mde 5, mdn 5, and SD 0.60). PB expressed agreement for C3 – “obedience to parents,” C8 – “fasting and prayer,” C9 – “faith,” C10 – “love for neighbors,” C12 – “serving elderly people,” C13 – “diligence at work,” C14 – “positive confession,” C15 – “breaking family curses,” and C16 – “ratifying covenants.” Pentecostal believers neither agree, nor deny C17 – “Receive blessing from a man of God.” They do, however, disagree or strongly disagree with traditional practices or practices inspired from traditional background: C18 – “use holy water,” C19 – “use anointing oil,” C20 – “use water from the Jordan River,” C21 – “receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts,” C22 – “make sacrifices to the ancestors,” C23 – “perform traditional ceremonies and rites,” C24 – “perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents,” C25 – “go to the ancestral seat (Togbui zikpe),” C26 – “make a covenant with spirits and divinities,” C27 – “respect taboos and prohibitions,” C28 – “go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts,” and C29 – “make a human sacrifice.”

PB underlined two main categories of conditions for blessing: (1) spiritual conditions (repentance and obedience to God) and (2) the law of sowing/giving (giving for the God's mission, paying tithes and offerings, and so on).

Conditions and means for blessing among PP

Table 30. Conditions and means for blessing among PP

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C1	Repent, accept Jesus, be born again	4.72	5	5	0.70
C2	Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous	4.88	5	5	0.32
C3	Obey and honor parents, take care of parents	4.53	5	5	0.74
C4	Be engaged in God's work	4.58	5	5	0.54
C5	Sow, give for the work of the Lord	4.63	5	5	0.54
C6	Pay tithes and give offerings	4.58	5	5	0.76
C7	Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering	3.65	4	4	1.23
C8	Fast and pray	3.61	4	4	1.20
C9	Have enough faith	4.31	4	4	0.64
C10	Love one's neighbor	4.02	4	4	0.87
C11	Help the poor, help those in need	4.27	4	4	0.81
C12	Be kind, serve elderly people	3.98	4	4	0.95
C13	Be diligent and hardworking	4.07	4	4	1.00
C14	Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations	3.12	4	4	1.31
C15	Break ancestral and family curses	3.38	4	4	1.32
C16	Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.	2.95	3	3	1.24
C17	Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands	3.07	3	3	1.22
C18	Use holy water	1.40	1	1	0.76
C19	Use anointing oil	1.44	1	1	0.80
C20	Use water from the Jordan River	1.31	1	1	0.72
C21	Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts	1.65	1	1	0.92
C22	Make sacrifices to the ancestors	1.40	1	1	0.98
C23	Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>Situtu, Akpema, Evala</i> , etc.	1.26	1	1	0.69
C24	Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents	1.26	1	1	0.69
C25	Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)	1.28	1	1	0.70

Table 30, Continued.

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
C26	Make a covenant with spirits and divinities	1.28	1	1	0.70
C27	Respect taboos and prohibitions	1.28	1	1	0.70
C28	Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts	1.26	1	1	0.69
C29	Make a human sacrifice	1.19	1	1	0.66
C30	Blessing is transferred by words of blessing	2.00	1	1	1.27
C31	Blessing is purely unconditional grace from God	4.77	5	5	0.43

PP expressed strong agreement for the same items as the PB (high mean and low standard deviation): C1 – “repent, accept Jesus, be born again” (mn 4.72, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.7); C2 – “obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous,” (mn 4.88, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.32); C3 – “obey and honor parents, take care of parents” (mn 4.53, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.74); C4 – “be engaged in God’s work (mn 4.58, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.54); C5 – “sow, give for the work of the Lord” (mn 4.63, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.54); and C6 – “pay tithes and give offerings” (mn 4.58, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.76).

They are neutral (neither agree, nor disagree) for C14 – “make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations” (mn of 3.12); C15 – “Break ancestral and family curses,” (mn of 3.38); C16 – “ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.” (mn of 2.95); and C17 – “receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands” (mn of 3.07).

PP disagree or strongly disagree with almost the other same items as believers: C18 – “use holy water,” C19 – “use anointing oil,” C20 – “use water from the Jordan River,” C21 – “receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts,” C22 – “make sacrifices to the ancestors,” C23 – “perform traditional ceremonies and rites,” C24 – “perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents,” C25 – “go to the ancestral seat

(Togbui zikpe),” C26 – “make a covenant with spirits and divinities,” C27 – “respect taboos and prohibitions,” C28 – “go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts,” and C29 – “make a human sacrifice.”

The results indicates that for PP, blessing mostly depends on “repentance/obedience to God,” “giving/paying tithes and offerings,” and “being engaged in God’s work.” However, they expressed neutral perception about positive confession (C14), breaking family curses (C15), and ratifying covenants (C16). This indicates that they are also, but less, influenced by the prosperity teaching than the PB.

Chart 7. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about conditions for blessing

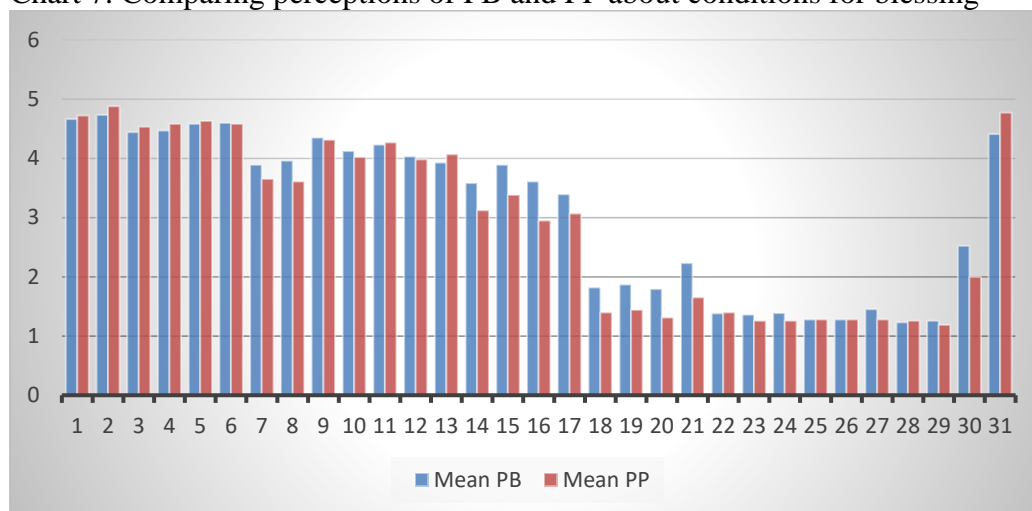


Table 31. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about conditions for blessing

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12
Mean PB	4.66	4.73	4.44	4.47	4.58	4.60	3.89	3.96	4.35	4.12	4.23	4.03
Mean PP	4.72	4.88	4.53	4.58	4.63	4.58	3.65	3.61	4.31	4.02	4.27	3.98

Table 31. (cont.)

	C13	C14	C15	C16	C17	C18	C19	C20	C21	C22	C23	C24
Mean PB	3.93	3.58	3.89	3.61	3.39	1.82	1.87	1.79	2.23	1.38	1.36	1.39
Mean PP	4.07	3.12	3.38	2.95	3.07	1.40	1.44	1.31	1.65	1.40	1.26	1.26

Table 31. (end)

	C25	C26	C27	C28	C29	C30	C31
Mean PB	1.28	1.28	1.45	1.23	1.26	2.52	4.41
Mean PP	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.26	1.19	2.00	4.77

Chart 7 and table 31 show little difference between the perceptions of PP and PB regarding the conditions for blessing (no numerical difference in mean). In addition to repentance (C1), obedience to God (C2), sowing/giving (C5), and paying tithes and offerings (C6), PP also have a very high perception for C4 – “Be engaged in God’s work” – as a condition for blessing. Both groups, however, are influenced by the prosperity teaching.

Purpose of Blessing among Pentecostals

Purpose of blessing among PB

Table 32. Purpose of blessing among PB

		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
D1	Provide to our needs	4.22	4	4	0.78
D2	Glorify his name	4.71	5	5	0.60
D3	Draw us closer to God	4.15	5	4	0.93
D4	Support God's work / mission	4.61	5	5	0.56
D5	Be a source of blessing to others	4.56	5	5	0.62
D6	For our own happiness, for our comfort and well-being	4.20	4	4	0.74
	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>				
D7	I may be honored and respected	3.01	2	3	1.23
D8	I may live a happy and comfortable life	3.93	4	4	0.92
D9	I may come out of poverty and suffering	3.94	4	4	0.88
D10	I can support God’s work/mission	4.59	5	5	0.65
D11	It is a natural aspiration for every human being	3.50	4	4	1.09

PB expressed strong agreement (high mean and low standard deviation) for D2 – “glorify the name of God” (mn 4.71, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.60), D4 – “support God's

work, God’s mission” (mn 4.61, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.56), D5 – “be a source of blessing to others” (mn 4.56, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.62), and D10 – “support God’s work/mission” (mn 4.59, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.65). This implies a God-centered perception of the purpose of blessing or desire for blessing.

But PB also expressed agreement for D8 – “live a happy and comfortable life” (mn 3.93, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 0.92), and D9 – “come out of poverty and suffering” (mn 3.94, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 0.88). This indicates that their perception of blessing also includes materialistic and egocentric purposes. They recognize that the desire for blessing is a natural aspiration for every human being.

Purpose of blessing among PP

Table 33. Purpose of blessing among PP

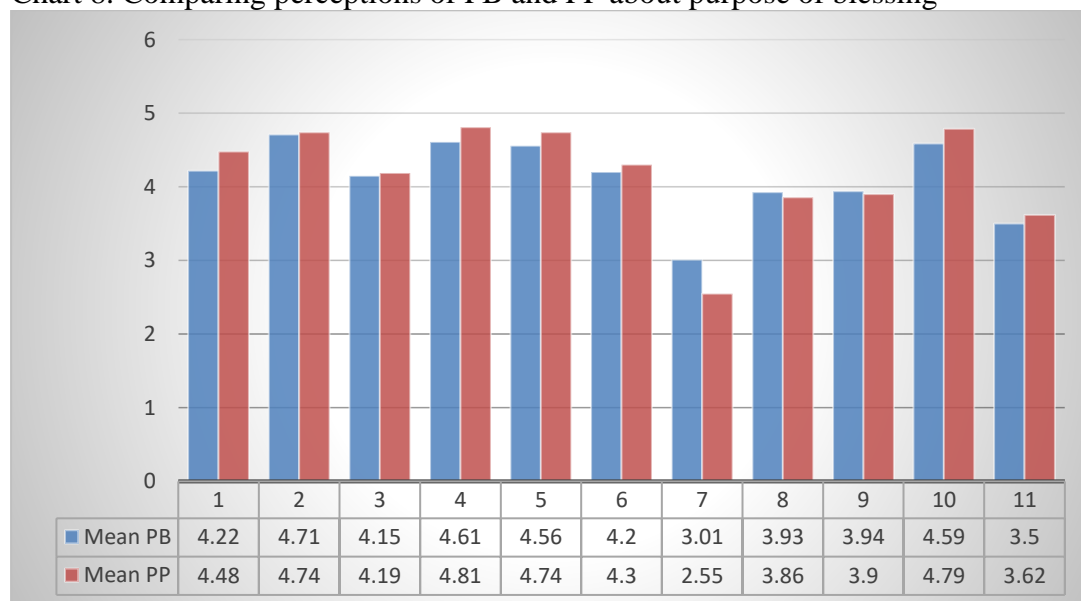
		Mn	Mde	Mdn	SD
D1	Provide to our needs	4.48	5	5	0.63
D2	Glorify his name	4.74	5	5	0.69
D3	Draw us closer to God	4.19	5	4.5	1.06
D4	Support God's work, God’s mission	4.81	5	5	0.40
D5	Be a source of blessing to others	4.74	5	5	0.44
D6	For our own happiness, for our comfort and well-being	4.30	4	4	0.79
	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>				
D7	I may be honored and respected	2.55	2	2	1.33
D8	I may live a happy and comfortable life	3.86	4	4	1.13
D9	I may come out of poverty and suffering	3.90	4	4	1.12
D10	I can support God’s work, God’s mission	4.79	5	5	0.42
D11	It is a natural aspiration for every human being	3.62	4	4	1.10

PP hold the same perceptions about the purpose of blessing as PB. They expressed strong agreement with high mean and low standard deviation for D2 – “glorify the name of God” (mn 4.74, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.69), D4 – “support God's work, God’s mission” (mn 4.81, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.40), D5 – “be a source of

blessing to others” (mn 4.74, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.44); and D10 – “support God’s work/mission” (mn 4.79, mde 5, mdn 5, SD 0.42). PP are also God-centered about the purpose of blessing. They believe that blessing should serve God’s interests.

PP also expressed agreement for D8 – “live a happy and comfortable life” (mn 3.86, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1.13), and D9 – “come out of poverty and suffering” (mn 4, mde 4, mdn 4, SD 1). In addition to being God-centered in their opinion of the purpose of blessing, PP also express a materialistic and egocentric perception of the purposes of blessing. They also recognize that the desire for blessing is a natural aspiration for every human being.

Chart 8. Comparing perceptions of PB and PP about purpose of blessing

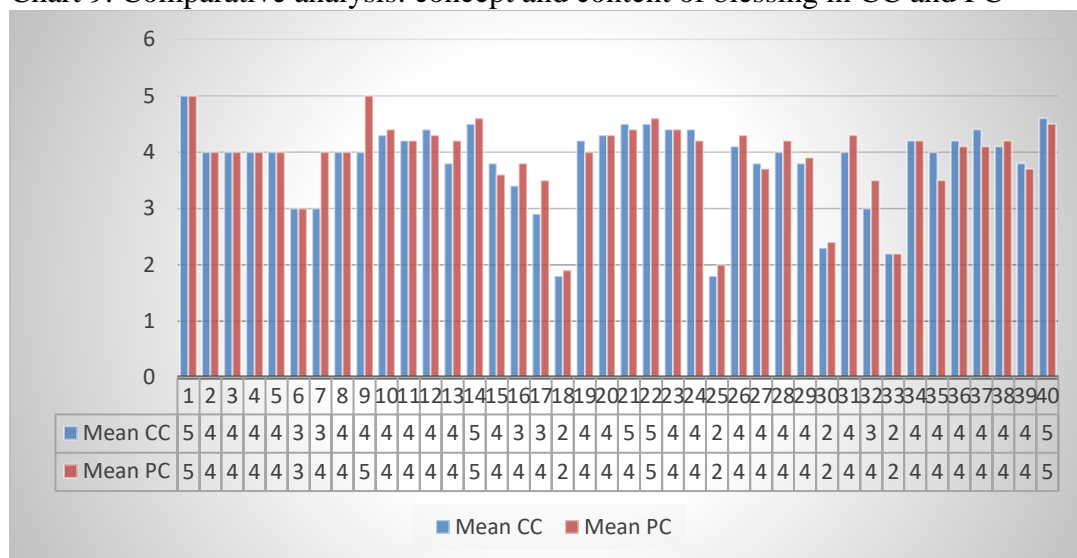


The preceding chart and figures show that both PB and PP expressed almost the same perceptions about the purpose of blessing (no numerical difference in mean). While they are God-centered in their perceptions of the purpose of blessing, they are also materialistic and egocentric. Both groups also recognize that the desire for blessing is a natural aspiration for every human being.

Comparative Analysis of Blessing in CC and PC

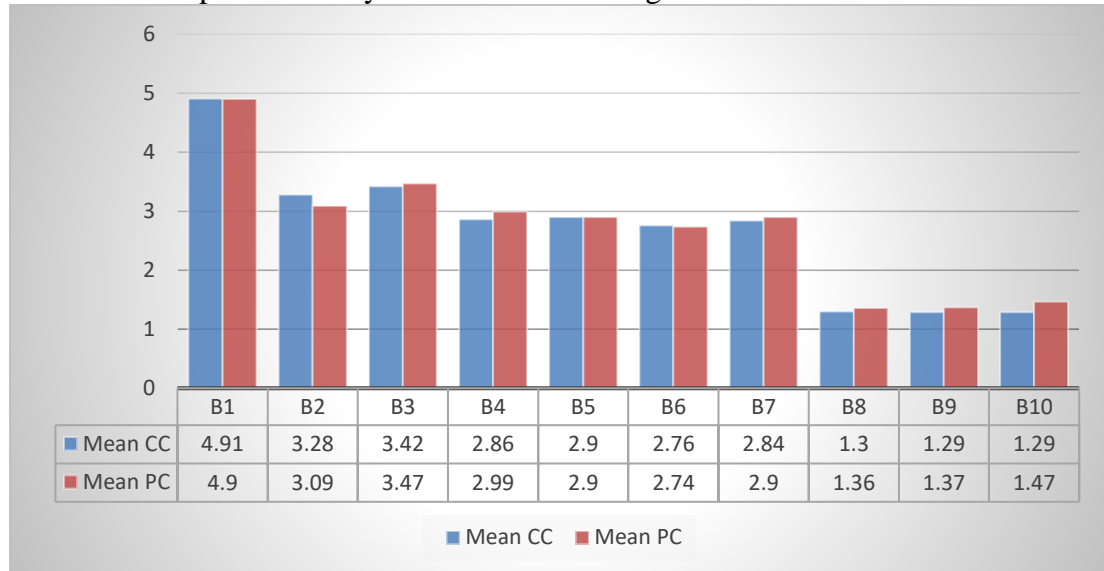
A comparative analysis highlights statistical similarities and differences between CC and PC regarding their perceptions of blessing. For most cases, there appear to be little or no numerical difference in the mean for both CC and PC, implying that there is little or no difference of perception between the two groups.

Chart 9. Comparative analysis: concept and content of blessing in CC and PC



This shows almost no difference of perception between charismatics and Pentecostals regarding the concept and content of blessing. The only slight difference is about item A9 – “Answer to prayer, God's intervention” where charismatics agree while Pentecostals expressed full agreement.

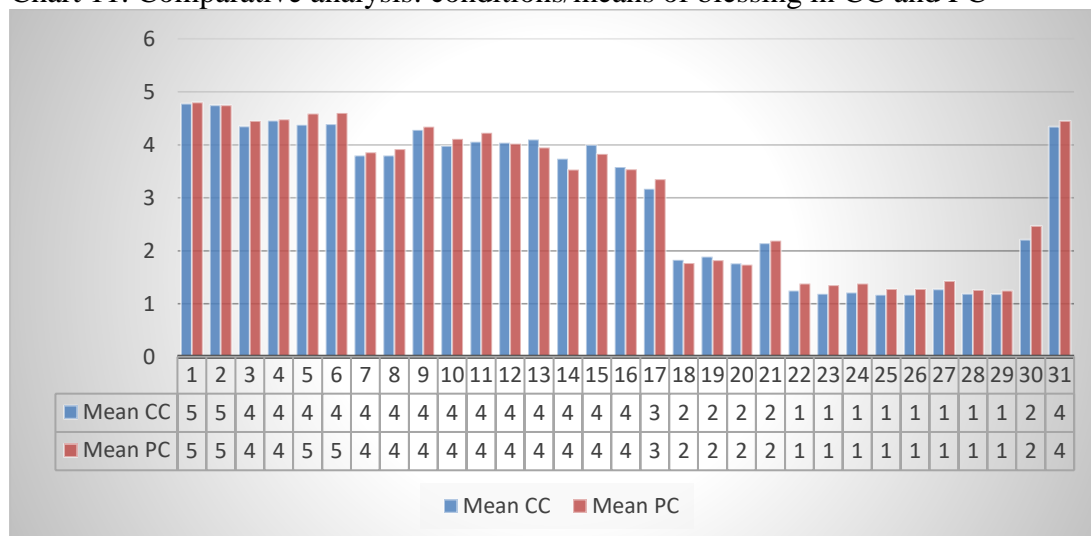
Chart 10. Comparative analysis: source of blessing in CC and PC



Regarding the source of blessing, charismatics and Pentecostals have the same views. Both groups strongly agree that God/Jesus (B1) is the ultimate source of blessing. They are neutral about B2 – “Men of God: pastors, prophets,” B3 – “Parents,” B4 – Maternal uncles, aunts,” B5 – “Elderly people,” B6 – Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss,” B7 – “Brothers and sisters in Christ.” Charismatics and Pentecostals completely disagree with items B8 – “Satan, demons and evil spirits,” and B9 – “Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts,” B10 – “The ancestors, the deities.”

Conditions/Mean of Blessing in CC and PC

Chart 11. Comparative analysis: conditions/means of blessing in CC and PC



Charismatics and Pentecostals share the same perceptions concerning the conditions and means of blessing. However, Pentecostals expressed strong agreement for items C5 – “Sow, give for the work of the Lord” and C6 – “Pay tithes and give offerings” (mn of 4.59 and 4.6), whereas charismatics show agreement (mn of 4.38 and 4.39).

Purpose of Blessing in CC and PC

Chart 12. Comparative analysis: purpose of blessing in CC and PC

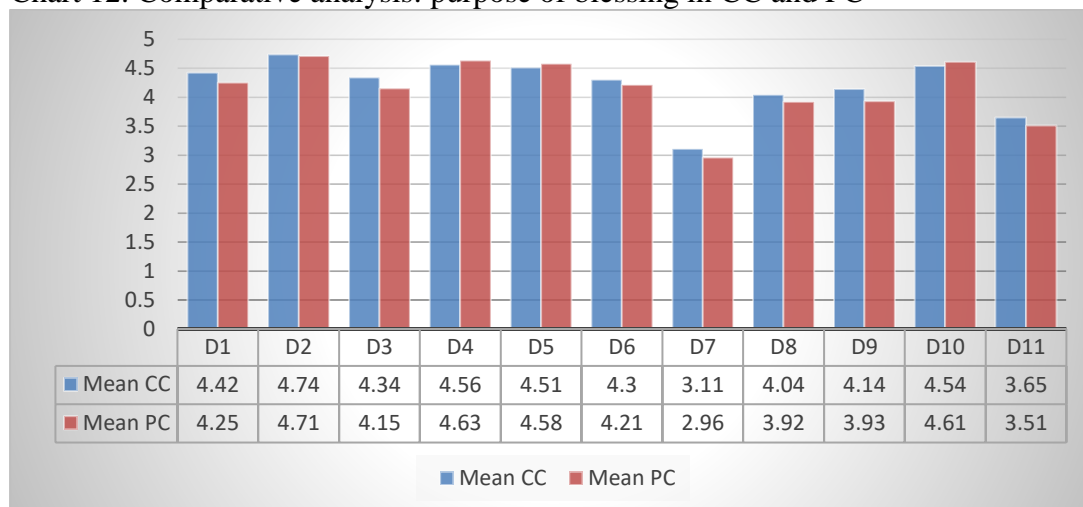


Chart 12 shows almost no difference of perception between charismatics and Pentecostals concerning the purpose of blessing. Both groups hold exactly the same view of the purpose of blessing.

Summary

This chapter examined the perceptions and beliefs in charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing. Two main research questions were investigated: (1) the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics; and (2) the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals. These questions were answered and examined by using qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method consisted in conducting semi-structured interviews. The quantitative method used was a questionnaire survey.

Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Charismatics (RQ 1.)

The interviews revealed that for charismatics, both CB and CP, blessing includes spiritual, material, physical, psychological and socio-professional components. Both the interviews and the questionnaire survey demonstrated that CB see blessing more as earthly and temporal enjoyment than spiritual and eternal. They reject all kinds of suffering in their perception of blessing.

During the interviews, charismatics, both CB and CP, mentioned three sources for blessing: God/Jesus, parents, and men of God. For some charismatics, men of God can bless people in the name of Jesus because of the anointing they have. But the survey revealed that charismatics neither agree nor disagree with men of God (B2), parents (B3), maternal uncles, aunts (B4), elderly people (B5), leaders and authorities in the community (B6), and brothers and sisters in Christ (B7), implying that these entities may also be sources of blessing.

Charismatics agree with “repentance/being a child of God,” “obedience to God,” “giving for the Lord’s work,” and “helping others/the poor” as conditions for blessing. Although some charismatics disagree with practices such as the use of holy water, the use of anointing oil, regenerating the land, etc., others call them prophetic acts or acts of faith. The surveys confirmed that for charismatics, blessing is conditioned by “repentance,” “obedience to God,” and the “law of sowing/giving.”

Charismatics believe that the purpose of blessing is for the glory of God, the support of God’s work, and being a source of blessing. The surveys revealed ambivalence regarding the perception of the purpose of blessing by charismatics. They have both God-centered and self-centered perceptions of the purpose of blessing.

Perceptions and Beliefs about Blessing among Pentecostals (RQ 2.)

Pentecostals also have a holistic perception of blessing. Blessing includes spiritual, material/financial, psychological, socio-professional, and physical components. Pentecostals reject negative perceptions of blessing: poverty, sickness, and so on.

Both PB and PP agree that God is the only and ultimate source of blessing. Pentecostals also believe that blessing may be imparted through human channels, such as men of God and parents. But, contrary to some charismatics, Pentecostals believe that men of God only request God for blessing. They are not the ones who bless. The survey confirmed the interview results that God/Jesus Christ is the source of blessing. Both groups neither agree nor deny human intermediaries as channels of blessing.

The research (interviews and surveys) revealed that for Pentecostals, obedience to God/repentance and the practice of sowing/giving are the main conditions for blessing. While PP are neutral, PB express a rather positive opinion

about positive confession and prophetic proclamations, breaking of ancestral and family curses, and ratifying the covenants.

Pentecostals, both PB and PP, believe that God blesses people for his own glory and for the purpose of supporting God's work and being a source of blessing. But they also think that people seek blessing for their own glory and honor. The surveys confirmed this perception. In addition, the surveys showed that people seek blessing because they want to escape their precarious socio-economic conditions.

The research revealed that there is no significant differences between charismatics and Pentecostals regarding their perceptions on blessing. From the data analysis, it appears that both charismatics and Pentecostals have a holistic concept of blessing. Both groups believe that God/Jesus is the main source of blessing, though they do not deny human channels. Charismatics and Pentecostals underlined two main conditions for blessing: repentance/being a child of God and obedience to God; and the law of sowing/giving. While Pentecostals totally reject practices such as the use of holy water, the use of anointing oil, regenerating the land, etc., some charismatics call them prophetic acts or acts of faith. PB express a rather positive opinion about positive confession and prophetic proclamations, breaking of ancestral and family curses, and ratifying the covenants. Charismatics and Pentecostals expressed an ambivalent perception of the purpose of blessing. Blessing is to glorify God, but it is also for the personal happiness and comfort of the believer.

CHAPTER 7

AN EVALUATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF BLESSING AMONG CHARISMATICS AND PENTECOSTALS IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to critically evaluate the perceptions of blessing in charismatic churches and Pentecostal churches in light of Scripture. This evaluation will use a model of contextual theology. The chapter will be devoted to answering RQ 6. Where is conformity to and deviation from Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC regarding blessing? The section will highlight the importance of contextual theology and survey some models of contextual theology. It will then evaluate the perceptions of CC/PC regarding blessing using a model of contextual theology in order to identify elements of conformity and deviation from the written Word of God.

Contextual Theology

Contextual theology is the attempt to express the meaning of the Christian message according to the thought, behavioral, and feeling patterns of the recipient's cultural milieu.¹ Contrary to traditional/classical theology that focuses on Scripture and Christian tradition, contextual theology recognizes the importance of human experience or context as a source for reflection on Christian faith and morals.²

¹Daniel Dei, "An Integrated Approach to Theological Contextualization in Africa," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46, no. 3 (2019): 12.

²Lourdino A. Youzon, "Towards a Contextual Theology," *Christian Conference of Asia*, <http://cca.org.hk/home/ctc/ctc94-02/1.yuzon.htm> (accessed February 29, 2018)

Context includes (1) group or personal life experiences; (2) the culture (secular or religious); (3) the “social location”; and (4) the reality of social change.³

According to Bevans, the contextualization of theology is “a theological imperative . . . (it) is part of the very nature of theology itself.”⁴ A number of reasons explain the imperative character of contextual theology: (1) Scripture itself, and Christian tradition are contextual; (2) our cultural worldview and reality influence our understanding Scripture; and (3) for the Christian faith to have the greatest impact, it must be clothed in the garments of the host culture. Christianity cannot take root in a particular context if it remains a foreign religion. It must be “appropriated” by, and transform, the host culture. This passes through a process of contextualization.

Despite the general consensus of the contextual nature of theology and the necessity for contextual theology, there are different points of view and disagreement between theologians as to the nature, purpose, and practice of contextual theology. Bevans suggests six or seven models of contextual theology: (1) the anthropological model, (2) the translation model, (3) the praxis model, (4) the synthetic model, (5) the transcendental model, (6) the countercultural model,⁵ and (7) the semiotic model.⁶

A Contextual Model for a Contextual Theology of Blessing

What model of contextual theology is best suited for a contextual theology of blessing in CC/PC in Togo? The countercultural model believes that the gospel is

³Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 5–6.

⁴*Ibid.*, 3.

⁵*Ibid.*, 37–137.

⁶Stephen B. Bevans, “Models of Contextual Theology,” *Missiology* 13, no. 2 (April 1985): 196–198.

supra-cultural. It gives supremacy and priority to Scripture in the formulation of a contextual theology. The countercultural model is not anti-cultural. It takes the context seriously, but also looks upon it with utmost suspicion.⁷ This model presupposes that theology must confront the context with the truth of the gospel, calling it to transformation.⁸ According to Bevans, “If the gospel is to truly take root within a people’s context, it needs to challenge and purify that context.”⁹ As Newbigin says, “True contextualization accords the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgement and grace.”¹⁰ Understood as such, the countercultural model is a model of critical contextualization advocated by Hiebert.

Hiebert’s critical contextualization model consists in three steps.¹¹ The first step is to exegete the culture. This step consists in describing and studying the context by “gathering and analyzing the traditional beliefs and customs associated with some question at hand.”¹² For the current study of blessing, this step was performed through the field research. Through the interviews and questionnaire survey, the researcher was able to collect important data to describe the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC related to blessing.

⁷Stephen B. Bevans, “Contextual Theology” (presented at the Study Week of the Southwest Liturgical Conference), (Chicago, IL: Catholic Theological Union, 2010), https://www.eiseverywhere.com/file.../ff735620c88c86884c33857af8c51fde_GS2.pdf (accessed July 10, 2019).

⁸Ibid.

⁹Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 117.

¹⁰Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1989), 152.

¹¹Paul G. Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July 1987): 104–112.

¹²Ibid.

The second step in critical contextualization is to exegete the Scripture by studying Scripture passages related to the issue at hand. This step was handled through the exegetical examination of some important passages in the OT and NT related to blessing.

The final step is the critical evaluation of the cultural context in light of biblical truths. Having investigated the context to discover the perceptions of CC/PC regarding blessing, and having examined the Scripture related to blessing, this step will now evaluate the perceptions of blessing in CC/PC in light of the teaching of the written Word of God.

Critical Evaluation of the Perceptions of Blessing in the CC/PC

A critical evaluation of the perceptions of blessing in the CC/PC reveals differences in the perceptions of blessing between CC/PC and the teaching of Scripture. Some perceptions held in CC/PC are conform to the teaching of Scripture, while others deviate from biblical principles.

Elements of Conformity

Concept and Content of Blessing

An evaluation of the perceptions of the concept and content of blessing in CC/PC reveals the following elements of conformity with the teaching of Scripture.

1. Spiritual aspect: A1 – God’s grace and favor; A2 – Salvation/being a child of God; A3 – Eternal life, heaven; A4 – Enjoying God’s presence; A5 – Living a righteous and holy life; being pure in the heart; A7 – Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death; A8 – Dying in the Lord; A9 – Answer to prayer, God's intervention; A10 – The gift of the Holy Spirit; A11 – Divine power; A12 – Spiritual growth; and A13 – Having part in the first resurrection

2. Psychological aspect: A14 – Peace of heart, joy, happiness; A16 – Enduring suffering for Christ; A17 – Going through trials
3. Material aspect: A20 – Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs; A21 – Divine provision for needs
4. Physical aspect: A22 – Good physical and mental health; A23 – Security and protection; A24 – Life, a long life
5. Socio-professional aspect: A26 – Peace with others; A27 – Enjoying people's favor; A28 – Having victory over enemies; A30 – Being unmarried/single; A31 – Peace and harmony in the home; A34 – Success in life: studies, business, farms; A35 – Living in modest conditions; and A40 – Blessing is both spiritual and material

The elements of conformity reveal that CC/PC have a holistic concept of blessing. Blessing embraces spiritual, psychological, material, physical, and socio-professional components. Most of these components are corroborated by scripture.

Sources of Blessing

In accordance with the perception of the CC/PC, Scripture in both the OT and NT affirms that B1 – “God/Jesus Christ” is the ultimate source of blessing. God blessed creation (Gen. 1:22); he blessed man and woman (Gen.1:28). Participants in CC/PC expressed neutrality regarding B2 – “Men of God: pastors, prophets” and B3 – “Parents” as sources of blessing. The Bible teaches that blessing may be conferred through human agencies: priests (Num. 6:22–27), prophets, kings (David blessed the people in the name of the Lord, 1 Chron. 16:2), and parents (Isaac blessed Jacob, Gen. 27:27; Jacob blessed Joseph, Gen. 48:15). But these human agents do not bless independently from God. Their role was to ask for God’s blessing on his people. The

expression often used is: “May the Lord . . .” implying that their words are a request for blessing, not a proclamation of blessing.

CC/PC are in agreement with Scripture in rejecting the following as sources of blessing: B8 – Satan, demons and evil spirits; B9 – Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts; and B10 – The ancestors, deities.

Conditions and Means for Blessing

CC/PC have expressed agreement on the following perceptions of the conditions and means of blessing. Elements of conformity in agreement regarding the conditions and means of blessing include: C1 – Repent, accept Jesus, be born again; C2 – Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous; C3 – Obey and honor parents, take care of parents; C4 – Be engaged in God’s work; C5 – Sow, give for the work of the Lord; C6 – Pay tithes and give offerings; C7 – Make a sacrificial offering; C8 – Fast and pray; C10 – Love one’s neighbor; C11 – Help the poor, help those in need; C12 – Be kind, serve elderly people; C13 – Be diligent and hardworking; C30 – Blessing is transferred by words of blessing; and C31 – Blessing is purely unconditional grace.

These actions, even though they may not clearly be stated as conditions for blessing in the Bible, are encouraged by Scripture. For example, Proverbs 19:17 says: “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.” Concerning C8 – Fast and pray, the Bible reports that Jacob received blessing through prevailing prayer (Gen. 32:24). Jabez also obtained blessing through prayer (1 Chron. 4:9–10).¹³

¹³But it is important to note that prayer does not function as magic. It does not overrule God’s will and sovereignty. It is God who answers the prayer and he may not grant our request. God did not heal Paul from his disease although he prayed persistently (2 Cor. 12:7–9). Prayer only creates favorable conditions in our lives allowing God to intervene according to his will.

CC/PC align with Scripture in rejecting the following items as conditions and means for blessing: C18 – Use holy water; C19 – Use anointing oil; C20 – Use water from the Jordan River; C21 – Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts; C22 – Make sacrifices to the ancestors; C23 – Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: *situtu, Akpema, Evala*; C24 – Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents; C25 – Go to the ancestral seat (*Togbui zikpe*); C26 – Make a covenant with spirits and divinities; C27 – Respect taboos and prohibitions; C28 – Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts; and C29 – Make a human sacrifice. These items are inspired by the traditional culture.

Purpose of Blessing

The following perceptions of the purpose of blessing are shared by both CC/PC and scripture: D1 – Provide for our needs; D2 – Glorify his name; D3 – Draw us closer to God; D4/D10 – Support God's work, God's mission; and D5 – Be a source of blessing to others. Scriptures teach that God's blessing is intended to enrich life and empower the recipient to accomplish the will of God.

Elements of Deviation

The examination also reveals many elements in the perceptions of blessing among CC/PC that deviate from the teaching of Scripture. These deviations are related to the concept and content, source, conditions and means, and purpose of blessing.

Concept and Content of Blessing

CC/PC hold that the concept and content of blessing includes the following elements: A19 – Material and financial prosperity; A29 – Being married, having a husband/wife; A36 – A good job, a good salary; and A37 – Social and professional

promotion. While Scripture does not absolutely reject these items as part of the content of blessing, it does not teach that blessing necessarily includes them.

CC/PC reject the idea that blessing may include material and financial poverty (A18), and having no child (A33). In Scripture, poverty and bareness are neither a blessing nor a curse. Jesus' parents were materially poor. The Bible also mentions many examples of couples who were without children, at least for some time (Hannah in 1 Sam. 1:2; Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1:5–7). Paul experienced poverty and abundance.¹⁴

But contrary to the perceptions in CC/CP, Scripture does teach that A6 – “Enduring persecution for Christ,” A25 – “Sickness,” and A32 – “Having a large family”¹⁵ may be aspects of blessing. CC/CP churches reject these as part of the content of blessing.

Sources of Blessing

CC/PC expressed neutrality regarding B4 – “Maternal uncles, aunts”; B5 – “Elderly people”; and B6 – “Leaders and authorities in the community” as sources of blessing. This reveals a tension among Christians between traditional beliefs and the teaching of the scripture. Traditionally, it is believed that blessing can be transferred by uncles, aunts, and leaders of the community. Scripture does not teach that blessing is communicated through these human agencies.

¹⁴“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want (Phil. 4:12).”

¹⁵CC/PC expressed neutrality for A32 – “having a large family, having many children” as part of the content of blessing. In Traditional African society, this was considered a great blessing. The neutrality expressed by Christians shows the evolution of the African urban society. In the modern African society, having a large family with many children is no more considered as blessing. Money and material possessions are more valued over large families and many children.

Conditions and Means for Blessing

Participants in CC/PC neither agreed nor rejected the following items as part of the conditions for blessing while some agree with them: C9 – “Have enough faith”; C14 – “Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations”; C15 – “Break ancestral and family curses”; C16 – “Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant”; and C17 – “Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer, or the laying on of hands.” Scripture completely rejects these items as conditions for blessing. These beliefs belong to the prosperity teaching.

Purpose of Blessing

Participants in CC/PC mostly agree that the following elements are parts of the purpose of blessing: D6 – For our own happiness, comfort and well-being; D7 – I may be honored and respected; D8 – I may live a happy and comfortable life; D9 – I may come out of poverty and suffering; and D11 – It is a natural aspiration for human being.

But Scripture does not endorse these as a purpose of God’s blessing. God does not bless people for egocentric reasons. Scripture reveals that the purpose of blessing is to enable the receiver to accomplish a divine purpose. The biblical root for blessing (*brk*) refers to an endowment of power from God to accomplish a divine purpose or mandate. God blessed the creatures so that they might reproduce themselves. He blessed Adam and Eve so that they might increase, multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it. He blessed Abraham so that he might be a source of blessing. God blesses us so that we may participate in his divine mission for salvation.

Summary

This chapter was devoted to critically evaluate the perceptions of blessing in CC/PC in light of Scripture using the critical contextualization model. The RQ (RQ 6) to be answered was: Where is conformity to, and deviation from Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC regarding blessing? The chapter identified some elements of conformity and deviation in the perceptions of CC/PC compared to Scripture (tables 36 and 37).

The evaluation revealed that CC/PC have a holistic concept of blessing. Blessing contains spiritual, psychological, material, physical, and socio-professional components, most of which are corroborated by scripture.

The evaluation showed elements of deviation between the perceptions of CC/PC and the scripture. CC/PC include the following items in their concept and content of blessing while scripture does not teach that blessing necessarily include them: prosperity (A19), marriage (A29), good job (A36), and social promotion (A37).

CC/PC reject persecution (A6), poverty (A18), sickness (A25), and bareness (A33) in their perception of the content of blessing. But Scripture teaches that they may be blessings.

Both CC/PC and Scripture agree that B1 – God, Jesus Christ is the only source of blessing. But CC/PC and Scripture reject the following items as sources of blessing: B8 – Satan, demons and evil spirits; B9 – Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts; and B10 – The ancestors, the deities. But while CC/PC are undecided over B4 – Maternal uncles, aunts; B5 – Elderly people; and B6 – Leaders in the community as sources of blessing, Scripture never teach that these items are sources or channels of blessing.

Concerning the conditions and means for blessing, Scripture agrees with the following items: repentance/salvation (C1), obedience to God (C2), obedience to parents (C3), commitment to God’s work (C4), giving (C5), tithing and offering (C6 and C7), praying (C8), loving neighbors and assisting the poor (C10 and C11), kindness and service (C12), diligence (C13), words of blessing (C30), and the grace of God (C31).

Whereas CC/PC have no overall consensus or agree with the following items, Scripture completely reject them as conditions or means for blessing: “Have enough faith” (C9); “positive confession and prophetic proclamations” (C14); “Break ancestral and family curses” (C15); “ratify the covenants (C16); and “receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands” (C17).

The following views for the purpose of blessing do not contradict Scripture:

D1 – Provide to our needs; D2 – Glorify his name; D3 – Draw us closer to God; D4/D10 – Support God's work, God’s mission; and D5 – Be a source of blessing to others. But Scripture does not endorse the following items as purpose of blessings which some CC/PC embrace: D6 – “For our own happiness, comfort and well-being”; D7 – “I may be honored and respected”; D8 – “I may live a happy and comfortable life”; D9 – “I may come out of poverty and suffering”; and D11 – “It is a natural aspiration for human being.”

Table 34 summarizes elements of conformity and deviation between perception of blessing in CC/PC and the teaching of Scripture. The following abbreviations are used:

SAG – Strongly agree
 AG – Agree
 NE – Neutral
 DI – Disagree
 SDI – Strongly disagree

Table 34. Elements of conformity between perception of blessing in CC/PC and Scripture

	Concept and Content of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>		
A1	God's grace and favor	SAG	AG
A2	Salvation, being a child of God	AG	AG
A3	Eternal life, heaven	SAG	AG
A4	Enjoying the presence of God	SAG	AG
A5	Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart	SAG	AG
A7	Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death	AG	AG
A8	Dying in the Lord	AG	AG
A9	Answer to prayer, God's intervention	SAG	AG
A10	The Gift of the Holy Spirit	AG	AG
A11	Divine power	AG	AG
A12	Spiritual growth	SAG	AG
A13	Having part in the first resurrection	AG	AG
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>		
A14	Peace of heart, joy, happiness	AG	AG
A16	Enduring suffering for Christ	AG	AG
A17	Going through trials	AG	AG
	<i>Material aspect</i>		
A20	Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs	AG	AG
A21	Divine provision for needs	SAG	AG
	<i>Physical aspect</i>		
A22	Good physical and mental health	AG	AG
A23	Security and protection	AG	AG
A24	Life, a long life	AG	AG
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>		
A26	Peace with others	AG	AG
A27	Enjoying people's favor	AG	AG
A28	Having victory over enemies	AG	AG
A30	Being unmarried / single	NE	NE
A31	Peace and harmony in the home	AG	AG
A34	Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.	AG	AG
A35	Living in modest conditions	AG	AG
A40	Blessing is both spiritual and material	SAG	AG
	Sources of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
B1	God, Jesus Christ	AG	AG
B2	Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.	NE	NE
B3	Parents, biological parents	NE	NE
B8	Satan, demons and evil spirits	DI	DI
B9	Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts	DI	DI
B10	The ancestors, the deities	DI	DI

Table 34, Continued.

	Conditions and Means for Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
C1	Repent, accept Jesus, be born again	SAG	AG
C2	Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous	SAG	AG
C3	Obey and honor parents, take care of parents	AG	AG
C4	Be engaged in God's work	AG	AG
C5	Sow, give for the work of the Lord	AG	AG
C6	Pay tithes and give offerings	AG	AG
C7	Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering	AG	AG
C8	Fast and pray	AG	AG
C10	Love one's neighbor	AG	AG
C11	Help the poor, help those in need	AG	AG
C12	Be kind, serve elderly people	AG	AG
C13	Be diligent and hardworking	AG	AG
C18	Use holy water	DI	DI
C19	Use anointing oil	DI	DI
C20	Use water from the Jordan River	DI	DI
C21	Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts	DI	DI
C22	Make sacrifices to the ancestors	SDI	DI
C23	Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>situtu, Akpema, Evala, etc.</i>	SDI	DI
C24	Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents	SDI	DI
C25	Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)	SDI	DI
C26	Make a covenant with spirits and divinities	SDI	DI
C27	Respect taboos and prohibitions	SDI	DI
C28	Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts	SDI	DI
C29	Make a human sacrifice	SDI	DI
C30	Blessing is transferred by words of blessing	DI	AG
C31	Blessing is purely unconditional grace	AG	AG
	Purpose of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
D1	Provide to our needs	AG	AG
D2	Glorify his name	SAG	AG
D3	Draw us closer to God	AG	AG
D4	Support God's work, God's mission	SAG	AG
D5	Be a source of blessing to others	SAG	AG
	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>		
D10	I can support God's work, God's mission	SAG	AG

Table 35. Elements of deviation between perception of blessing in CC/PC and Scripture

	Concept and Content of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
	<i>Spiritual aspect</i>		
A6	Enduring persecution for Christ	NE	AG
	<i>Psychological aspect</i>		
A15	Absence of suffering, well-being	NE	DI
	<i>Material aspect</i>		
A18	Being materially and financially poor	DI	NE
A19	Material and financial prosperity	AG	NE
	<i>Physical aspect</i>		
A25	Sickness may be a blessing	DI	AG
	<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>		
A29	Being married, having a husband / wife	AG	NE
A32	Having a large family, many children	NE	AG
A33	Having no child	DI	NE
A36	A good job, a good salary	AG	NE
A37	Social and professional promotion	AG	NE
A38	Blessing is only spiritual	AG	DI
A39	Blessing is only material	AG	DI
	Sources of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
B4	Maternal uncles, aunts	NE	DI
B5	Elderly people	NE	DI
B6	Leaders and authorities in the community	NE	DI
B7	Brothers and sisters in Christ	NE	DI
	Conditions and Means for Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
C9	Have enough faith	AG	DI
C14	Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations	AG	DI
C15	Break ancestral and family curses	AG	DI
C16	Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.	AG	DI
C17	Receive blessing from a man of God through prophetic word, prayer or laying on of hands	NE	DI
	Purpose of Blessing	Blessing in CC and PC	Blessing in Scripture
D6	For our own happiness, comfort and well-being	AG	DI
	<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>		
D7	I may be honored and respected	NE	DI
D8	I may live a happy and comfortable life	AG	DI
D9	I may come out of poverty and suffering	AG	DI
D11	It is a natural aspiration for human being	AG	DI

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The present research has examined the concept of blessing in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo. The purpose of this study is to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing which results from an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine. To achieve this goal, the researcher examined the issue of blessing from three sources: the Christian tradition of blessing as found in the literature; teachings about blessing as found in the Scripture through a hermeneutical-exegetical examination of key passages; and the personal, cultural experiences and perceptions of God's people examined through field research (using interviews and a questionnaire). The investigation yielded important results summarized in the section titled Summary of Findings.

Summary of Findings

Research Question One (RQ 1.)

The first research question was: What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among charismatics in Togo? The research (the interviews and the questionnaires) revealed that for both CB and CP, blessing is a holistic concept, including spiritual, material, physical, psychological, and socio-professional components. The research also revealed that charismatics (both CB and CP) reject all

kind of suffering as part of blessing. Their perception of blessing is more materialistic, earthly-centered and eudomonistic (desire for welfare and happiness) than spiritually and heavenly-oriented.

The research revealed that charismatics believe that God/Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of blessing. The interviews also mentioned parents and men of God as channels of blessing. The surveys showed that charismatics have a mixed set of views regarding human intermediaries, implying that they believe these entities may also be considered sources of blessing. For some charismatics, however, men of God can bless people in the name of Jesus because they have the anointing.

According to charismatics, blessing is conditioned by two factors: (1) obedience and good relationship with God, and (2) the law of sowing/giving. Although some charismatics disagree with the practices of using holy water and anointing oil, and regenerating the land,¹ others call them prophetic acts or acts of faith.

Both CB and CP believe that the purpose of blessing is for the glory of God, the support of God's work, and being a source of spiritual and material blessing to others. Some CP explain their focus on material blessing by Strain Theory of Deviance² due to the pressure of needs. There is an ambivalent perception as to the purpose of blessing among charismatics. They are both God-centered and self-

¹A fringe of charismatics believe that the land has been cursed because of sin, or that some places have been cursed because of bloodshed or satanic activities and, therefore, need to be redeemed or regenerated. They will go to those places and pour holy water or anointed oil and pray in order to deliver the land.

²Robert Merton Strain Theory of Deviance argues that "when individuals are faced with a gap between their goals (usually finances/money related) and their current status, strain occurs." Karl Thompson "Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance," Posted on April 16, 2016, <https://revisesociology.com/2016/04/16/mertons-strain-theory-deviance/> (accessed June 21, 2019).

centered in their perception of the purpose of blessing. The self-centered perception betrays their deep yearning for material security and happiness.

Research Question Two (RQ 2.)

What are the perceptions and beliefs about blessing among Pentecostals in Togo? The semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys revealed the following findings concerning perceptions and beliefs about blessing characterizing Pentecostals in Togo. Both PB and PP have a holistic concept of blessing. Blessing includes spiritual, material/financial, psychological, socio-professional, and physical components. Pentecostals (like the charismatics) reject negative perceptions of blessing, such as poverty, sickness, singleness, and barrenness, although PP do not deny that blessing may include suffering.

Both PB and PP believe God is the only and ultimate source of blessing. They also believe that blessing may be imparted through men of God and parents. But for Pentecostals, men of God only request God to bless; they are not the ones who actually bless.

For both PB and PP, repentance and obedience to God, and the practice of giving are primary conditions for blessing. Other conditions include: diligence at work, faith, fasting, and prayer. They were also supportive of positive confession and prophetic proclamations, breaking of ancestral and family curses, and ratifying the covenants established by God in the Bible. This perception from Pentecostals shows the influence of the prosperity even among Pentecostals, especially among PB.

Both PB and PP believers expressed both God-centeredness and self-centeredness in their perceptions of the purpose of blessing. They believe that God blesses people for his own glory, for supporting God's work, and for being a source of blessing for others. But they also believe that people seek blessing for egocentric

reasons, for their well-being. Thus, while Pentecostals are God-centered in their perception of the purpose of blessing, they are also materialistic and egocentric.

Research Question Three (RQ 3.)

What are the factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo regarding blessing? The second key finding related to the factors influencing the perceptions and beliefs about blessing in Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Those factors were historical, socio-economic, cultural and theological.

Historical Factors

The literary inquiry revealed that one factor that influences the perceptions of Christians in Africa in general and in Togo particularly is the historical background of the church in Africa. Some African Initiated Churches (AICs) and African theologies have started as a reaction against Euro-American missionaries' abuses. One of these abuses is what is called "the poverty theology"³ advocated by western missionaries. Most western missionaries did not take into account the holistic nature of the gospel. The proclamation of the gospel was centered solely on salvation. This historical factor has served as an argument to the prosperity preachers. The perceptions of some Pentecostals and charismatics are a reaction against this historical background.

Socio-economic Factors

The socio-economic factors have to do with the socio-economic context in which Christians live. Christians in Africa in general, and in Togo particularly, are

³Bourdanne, 35.

faced with real existential challenges: poverty, sicknesses and diseases, demonic possessions, witchcraft, etc. Charismatics and Pentecostals failed to offer alternatives solutions to these existential problems. As a result, people seek refuge in syncretism and commitment to the prosperity gospel.

Cultural Factors

The cultural background influences a great deal perceptions and beliefs of Christians in Togo about blessing. In African traditional cultures, blessing is mostly viewed as a state of well-being that includes wealth, health, material and financial prosperity, progeny, longevity, good fortune, security and protection, and victory over enemies. Of course, there is also the idea of empowerment and the idea of good relationships with the physical and spiritual world. But this spiritual aspect is not an end in itself. It is a means to ensure material prosperity and protection.

In the teachings and practices of the prosperity tenets, we find the four elements involved in blessing in African traditional cultures:

1. The verbal element, the speech-act or the verbal declaration; the belief in the mythical power of word.
2. The non-verbal element, which involves the use of a variety of non-verbal expressions: objects, places, images, geographic locations, and natural features such as rivers, mountains, etc.⁴ The non-verbal element also includes rituals and sacrifices, meritorious deeds, and respect of traditional customs and laws.⁵

⁴Assavavirulhakarn, 980.

⁵In African traditional cultures, blessing rituals are often performed on behalf of people seeking blessing. These rituals are often performed by diviners, fathers, or uncles and involve ritual acts, such as spitting or sprinkling water or traditional drinks over the person or onto the ground to symbolize blessing.

3. The religious or the supernatural element, based on the belief that there is a transcendental power or sacred entity/entities that possess the power of blessing. It may be the gods, the spirits, or the ancestors.
4. The human intermediaries or agents performing the rituals: priests, kings, and senior members of the community, or family, ancestors, traditional or fetish priests, charlatans, elders, fathers, and mothers, senior brothers, uncles, and aunts.

The traditional African worshipper has one main concern: the attainment of material and physical well-being through unity between the spiritual and the physical worlds. These cultural worldviews have influenced the perceptions of Christians in Africa regarding blessing and paved the way to the success of the prosperity gospel.

Theological Factors

The perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in Togo have also been influenced by the teaching of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel can be summarized in at least six core teachings:

1. The Abrahamic covenant. The prosperity teaching argues that prosperity is part of the provision of the Abrahamic covenant. Since Christians have become Abraham's spiritual children by faith, they naturally inherit the blessing promised to Abraham, especially material prosperity (great nation, great name, protection, and security).
2. The principle of atonement. Prosperity preachers argue that in dying on the cross, Jesus bore our poverty, sicknesses, and misery (Gal. 3:13). Jesus became poor so that through his poverty Christians might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). Health and material prosperity are, therefore, the privilege of every child of God.

3. Faith and positive confession. Faith and the spoken word (*rhema*), or the positive confession of God's words, release the creative power of God. Faith is believed to be a supernatural force that can be used to gain any form of blessing.
4. The law of sowing and reaping. Prosperity preachers teach that giving is sowing; it is making a deposit in heaven that will be returned a hundred times on earth. This is referred to as "the Law of Compensation." The more we give, the more we receive.
5. Deliverance from family or generational curses. Prosperity proponents in Africa teach that poverty and failure are due to a family or generational curse. Once the curse is removed by deliverance prayers prosperity and success will be released.
6. Victory over enemies. Victory over enemies is yet another prosperity teaching. Africans believe in spiritual and supernatural evil forces seeking to harm people. Security and protection are the inheritance of believers.

Research Question Four (RQ 4.)

What are the perceptions of blessing in biblical and Christian literature? The biblical and Christian literary inquiry revealed important findings concerning the perception of blessing in the literature.

The Concept and Content of Blessing

The overarching concept of blessing in the Old Testament is "power to succeed."⁶ Blessing is empowerment/enrichment. It is a power that produces fertility in human beings, in livestock, and in lands, peace, security from enemies, good fortune and well-being, prosperity, and authority and dominion.

⁶McKeown, 83.

In the New Testament, the concept of blessing is more spiritualized. Blessing is summed up in one all-inclusive word: salvation. The content of blessing in the New Testament includes inheritance of God's kingdom, forgiveness of sin and reconciliation, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3).

Source of Blessing

Both in the Old and New Testament, God is the sole source of blessing. He blessed man and the creation (Gen. 1:28), he blessed Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). But blessing can also be conferred through human intermediaries such as family heads, kings, priests, and prophets. But these people, by themselves, did not have the power to bless. They pronounced blessing in the name of God. God is the ultimate source of blessing.

Conditions and Means of Blessing

Bible scholars agree that blessing is conferred in the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people. God blesses his people because of his relationship with them. There is no blessing outside this relationship. The chief condition for receiving blessing in the Old Testament is obedience to God and the Law (Deut. 28). On a personal basis, the blessing of the Lord is for the righteous. Blessing is the reward of righteousness. There is also obedience to parents as stipulated in Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." Giving is also mentioned in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as resulting in material blessing (Prov. 11:24; Mal 3:10; 2 Cor. 9:6). In the New Testament, blessing is conditioned by repentance and faith in Christ.

Purpose of Blessing

Blessing in the OT served many purposes: to call the patriarchs into a close relationship with God; to motivate the covenant people to obey God; to bring God the praise and respect of all nations; to establish Israel as a holy people and build a mighty nation; to teach both Israel and other nations that God is the one who provided prosperity and victory, not the might of the people (Deut. 8:17). The ultimate purpose was to encourage attachment and faithfulness to Yahweh and keep the people focused on God, the blesser, rather than on the blessings themselves. In the New Testament, the purpose of blessing was participation in God's divine nature, participation in God's salvation, possession of God's future and eschatological kingdom to the praise of the glory of God.

From the biblical and social science literature reviews, various views and perceptions of blessing were noted. Authors suggest that material blessing in the OT served as a sign and a proclamation of God's covenant relationship to his people; as a visible sign of God's favor to attract the attention of other nations; and as a sign of a spiritual and higher reality.

Research Question Five (RQ 5.)

What does Scripture, both the OT and NT, teach about blessing? This research question examined the concept and content of blessing, the source of blessing, the conditions for blessing, and the purpose of blessing both in the OT and in the NT.

Concept and Content of Blessing

Two Hebrew words carry the idea of *blessing* in the Old Testament: the verbal root בָּרַךְ (*brk, barakh*) and the adjective אֲשֵׁרִי (*ashar, ashre, asre*). The primary meaning of בָּרַךְ *brk, barakh* is to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity,

longevity, protection, fertility, growth, multiplication; power to control and to govern. This meaning is reflected in the creation account, in the promise blessing to Abraham which also implied a new relationship initiated between God and humanity through Abraham, in the covenant blessing, and in the priestly blessing.

The second word, אֲשַׁרִי (*ashar, ashre, asre*), expresses a state of happiness, a state of well-being, a “felicitous good fortune” that can refer to material/physical possession, or to spiritual happiness. This state of happiness results from human righteous deeds. This concept is mostly found in the Wisdom Literature.

In the NT, two words relate to “bless/blessing.” The verb εὐλογέω conveys the idea of bestowing a favor, providing with benefits, with God or Christ as the subject. This word is used in Ephesians 1:3 and refers to “all spiritual blessings” that belong to believers in Christ.

The adjective μακάριος is translated as “‘fortunate,’ ‘happy,’ ‘in a privileged situation,’ ‘well-off’, ‘privileged recipient of divine favor.’” The word μακάριος refers to the eschatological happiness promised to the saints in the Beatitudes of Matthew/Luke and Revelation. Blessing is the “already but not yet” reality of God’s kingdom. This happiness is not physical, but spiritual; not outward, but inward; not earthly, but heavenly; already, but not yet.

The Source of Blessing

Both the OT and the NT reveal that God is the ultimate source of blessing. In the priestly blessing, the priests’ role was more a request, a prayer asking for God’s blessing. But the priestly blessing underlines the importance of human agency. For God to bless the people, the priests had to put the Lord’s name on the people. In the NT, believers are blessed in Christ by God.

The Conditions and Means of Blessing

Covenant relationship, faith, and obedience are the primary conditions for blessing in the OT. God's blessing of Abraham implied a covenant relationship with Abraham. But Abraham's blessing and the covenant blessing all depended on faith and obedience. The story of Jacob illustrates blessing obtained through a struggle with God in fervent prayer. In the Psalms and Proverbs, righteousness of the Law is the condition for blessing and happiness.

In the New Testament, blessing is "in Christ." It is promised to those who live the kingdom life and accept to suffer for the sake of the kingdom. This also implies faith and obedience.

The Purpose of the Blessing

The Old Testament reveals that the purpose of God in blessing his people was twofold. The first purpose was the edification and the identity of the people of Israel: (1) to confirm God's covenant promise to build a mighty nation (Deut. 8:18); and (2) to serve as a testimonial to other nations that they are the people of God (Deut. 28:8–10). The second reason was missiological. God blessed his people so that they would participate in his salvation history. God's purpose in blessing Abraham was that he might be a blessing. Psalm 67 also indicates that the God's blessing must result in the universal blessing of "all the peoples" to "all the ends of the earth." The blessing of God over creation was related to an assignment or a responsibility: fruitfulness, increase, multiplication, and dominion were both content and purpose.

Research Question Six (RQ 6.)

Where is conformity to and deviation from Scripture found in the perceptions and beliefs of CC/PC regarding blessing? A critical evaluation of the perceptions of

CC/PC regarding blessing revealed both aspects of conformity to scriptural teaching and deviations. Just as the Scripture teaches, CC/PC have a holistic perception of the concept and content of blessing. Blessing encompasses spiritual, psychological, material, physical, and socio-professional components, most of which are corroborated by Scripture.

The evaluation of perceptions in CC/PC showed deviations from Scripture. In CC/PC, blessing includes prosperity (A19), marriage (A29), good job (A36), and social promotion (A37). But Scripture does not necessarily include them as content of blessing. However, CC/PC reject persecution (A6), poverty (A18), sickness (A25), and barrenness (A33) in their perception of the content of blessing. However, Scripture teaches that these features may characterize people who are being blessed or favored by God. This shows that CC/PC only include earthly happiness and reject suffering in their perception of the content of blessing.

Both CC/PC and Scripture agree that God/Jesus Christ (B1) is the only source of blessing. The two parties also recognize that priests or men of God (B2) and parents (B3) can be channels of God's blessing. But they both reject African traditional beliefs as sources of blessing. The study, however, revealed an influence of cultural beliefs in CC/PC: B4 – maternal uncles, aunts; B5 – elderly people; and B6 – leaders of the community.

Concerning the conditions and means for blessing, elements of conformity between the perceptions of CC/PC and scripture include: repentance/salvation (C1), obedience to God (C2), obedience to parents (C3), commitment to God's work (C4), giving (C5), tithing and offering (C6 and C7), praying (C8), loving neighbors and assisting the poor (C10 and C11), kindness and service (C12), diligence (C13), words

of blessing (C30), the grace of God (C31). Though they do not function magically, such values may indicate God's blessing in a person's life.

While CC/PC were in agreement in their views regarding the following items, Scripture rejects them as conditions for blessing: have enough faith (C9); positive confession and prophetic proclamations (C14); break ancestral and family curses (C15); ratify the covenants (C16); and receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands (C17). These perceptions of the conditions of blessing are an influence of the prosperity teaching in CC/PC.

CC/PC and Scripture share the same positive perceptions of the purpose of blessing: D1 – provide to our needs; D2 – glorify his name; D3 – draw us closer to God; D4/D10 – support God's work, God's mission; and D5 – be a source of blessing to others. But Scripture rejects the views that God's blessing are for egocentric and materialistic purposes contrary to perceptions expressed in CC/PC.

Conclusion

The present research intended to investigate the following question: what components of a contextual biblical theology of blessing are consistent with Scripture and can serve to evaluate the understanding of blessing, including the prosperity teaching, propagated by charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo. The purpose of the study was to generate a contextual biblical theology of blessing which results from an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine.

The research revealed key findings related to the research questions that allowed for the development of a contextual biblical theology of blessing. A

comprehensive understanding of a contextual theology of blessing must take into account at least five components of blessing as developed in the next section.

A Contextual Biblical Theology of Blessing

Considering the findings from this research, the following definition of blessing is proposed. This definition is followed by five primary reasons for God's bestowal of blessing are stated.

Definition of Blessing

First, blessing can be defined as an endowment of power flowing from God's sovereign and gracious will, enriching a person living in right and good relationship with God and empowering him to successfully accomplish a divine purpose or destiny. The Hebrew root בָּרַךְ *brk*, "to bless/blessing" translates this idea.

Secondly, blessing is also the result of God's pronouncement and power. In this sense, blessing is holistic and all-inclusive. Both Scripture and the social research corroborate this view. God's manifest blessing power results in a multifaceted content or aspects, including:

1. Spiritual aspect: the knowledge of God, spiritual wisdom and understanding, a spiritual gift or endowment, and spiritual maturity
2. Psychological aspect: peace, joy, and a sound spirit
3. Material and financial aspect: material and financial prosperity
4. Physical aspect: good health, long life, a particular physical ability, and physical talent
5. Social aspect: success in life, a healthy and peaceful home and family, a social position, social promotion, special capacity for social relations, peacemaking ability, loving capacity, generosity, etc.

6. Professional aspect: professional success, a professional status, a professional ability or competence, and professional promotion
7. Eternal aspect: eternal life, eternal glory, and eternal happiness

Blessing, therefore, may include, but is not limited to, material and financial prosperity. Material and financial prosperity is a part of the content of blessing but, material and financial prosperity may or may not be a blessing. The Bible speaks of the “prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:3)” and people who store up things for themselves but are not rich toward God (Luke 12:21). This implies that material prosperity is not always a sign of divine approval or divine blessing. Kaiser observes that “it is a distinctively twentieth century obsession that fixes so singularly on the material aspects of life. The OT writers recommended that humans fix their eyes on ‘the fear of the Lord’ as the beginning point for all greatness and wealth.”⁷

Thirdly, blessing is also a state of blessedness and happiness resulting from obedience, righteousness, and faith in Christ. This is translated by the word *asher* in the OT or *makarios* in the NT. This happiness is promised to the righteous in the OT, to those who demonstrate kingdom life in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke—pure in heart, hunger and thirst for righteousness, peacemakers, etc.—to those who wash their robes and persevere to the end (Beatitudes of Revelation), and to all children of God in all times. This state of happiness is an “already, but not yet” reality. Whereas, Christians may enjoy this blessing to some extent in this world (the already), the full realization will be in the coming kingdom of God in heaven (the not yet).

From this definition and formulation of a contextual biblical theology of blessing, there appears to be five motives for God manifesting blessing upon his people: God’s sovereignty motive, the relationship motive, the enrichment motive, the

⁷Kaiser, 156.

empowerment motive, and the unrealized eschatology motive (the already, but not yet motive). These motives derive from the conclusions of both the exegetical examination and the social science research.

God's Sovereignty Motive

The comparative analysis of the source of blessing⁸ shows that both CC and PC strongly agree that B1 – God/Jesus is the ultimate source of blessing (mn of 4.91 for CC and mn of 4.90 for PC). Scripture, both OT and NT, also revealed that God is the supreme and ultimate source of blessing. Blessing is an endowment with power and this power comes from God. James made it clear in his Epistle: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (James 1:17).” Blessing originates from the sovereign and gracious will of God. It is not won by merit. It flows from God's goodness and grace.

A fringe of charismatics believe that men of God have been given power and authority to confer blessing. This view is not supported by Scripture. Although, in the OT particularly, blessing could be communicated through human channels—parents, priests, prophets, and kings—they were just channels, requesting blessing from God on behalf of the people. They did not bless independently from God. The priests prayed, but God was the one who blessed.

The field research also mentioned sowing/giving, and fasting and prayer as conditions for blessing. These actions must be devotional, expressions of faith obedience and love for God. They must not be actions intended to influence, manipulate or bribe God in order to earn something from him. They do not function magically or mathematically independently from God.

⁸See chapter 8, section titled “Research Question Five (RQ 5).”

The Relationship Motive

The second motive is the relationship motive. Both the biblical literature and the Scripture revealed that blessing occurs in the context of covenant relationship or faith-obedience to God. The blessing of Abraham depended on his obedience (Gen. 12). The covenant blessing depended on the obedience of the people of Israel: “All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God (Deut. 28:2).” In Psalms and Proverbs, blessing is promised to the righteous according to the law, that is to say, people living in obedience to the law motivated by love for God. The NT declares “blessed or happy” are those who are in a faith relationship with God by living the kingdom life. Blessing is communicated to a person living in right relationship with God. But more than that, blessing is enjoying God’s presence and personal relationship.

The field research (see page 231) demonstrated that both CC and PC strongly agree that C1 – repentance, being born again (mn of 4.78 for CC and mn of 4.80 for PC) and C2 – obedience to God, good relationship with God, and righteousness (mn of 4.75 for both CC and PC) are the main conditions for blessing. But there is also an insistence in CC and PC on “giving and sowing” as a condition for blessing. While Scripture is not against it, giving must be subordinated to obedience and right relationship with God. Giving must flow from a heart full of love and obedience to God.

The question may be raised: what about people who are living in good relationship with God, but not enjoying material and financial blessing; or people enjoying material and financial blessing, but not having a right relationship with God?

I suggest four sorts of blessing: (1) common blessing, (2) covenant blessing, (3) faith blessing, and (4) special blessing.

1. Common blessing is blessing that every human being enjoys or can enjoy, whether they are in good relationship with God or not. When God created man and woman, he blessed them and endowed them with capacity to reproduce. Every married couple can, therefore, have children. In the same way, every diligent person can prosper materially or financially. This is common blessing.
2. Covenant blessing is the blessing promised to God's people, the people of Israel, by virtue to his covenant with Abraham. The blessing in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are covenant blessings. They should be understood in a collective sense, not in an individualistic way. Kaiser rightfully notes that "it was in Israel's corporate calling to be the people of God, a holy nation, a royal priesthood that the promises made in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28 and in many psalms find their locus. Not individual, but corporate blessing."⁹ God promised material blessing to his people, but not everybody in Israel was rich. In fact, the Law of Moses made provisions for caring for the poor and needy. The Bible talks a lot about the rich and the poor. Although God promised blessing for obedience, not all God-fearing and obedient people in the OT were materially rich.
3. Faith blessing is the blessing of the children of God, those who have accepted Jesus as the Savior and Lord. They enjoy salvation and all spiritual blessings described in Ephesians 1:3, as well as the Beatitude blessings promised in Matthew, Luke, and Revelation. All blessings have been fulfilled in Christ. And eventually, the children of God will enjoy the uttermost blessing, eternal life. The greatest blessing is being a child of God, walking in right relationship with him, and inheriting the kingdom of God.

⁹Ibid., 157.

4. Special blessing is the particular blessing or endowment that God gives to individuals. He may bless somebody with a particular spiritual gift, material possessions and finances, a particular physical capacity, or a social position. God called Abraham and particularly blessed him to be source of blessing to other nations. He also blessed Joseph and promoted him to a higher position in Egypt so that he might serve God's purposes. Therefore, God does not bestow the blessing of material and financial prosperity or the blessing of promotion on just everybody. God gives these particular blessing to some people to serve the church. But it should be noted that not all material and financial prosperity is a blessing from God.

The Enrichment Motive

The research demonstrated that CC and PC strongly agree or agree that blessing contains spiritual, physical, material, psychological and socio-professional components. They perceive blessing as enrichment, but mostly as material and physical enrichment: being materially and financially rich, enjoying success and promotion, enjoying good health, security and protection, etc.

Cursing is the opposite of blessing. Cursing is a power of death, producing infertility, defeat, failure, poverty, sickness, and death. When God cursed the land in Genesis, it became infertile. It produced "thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17–18)." Balak, son of Zippor, called Balaam, son of Beor, to come and put a curse on Israel so that he might "be able to defeat them (Num. 22:4–6)." The Philistine Goliath "cursed David by his gods (1 Sam. 17:43–44)," expecting to defeat him." Jesus cursed the fig tree and it "withered (Matt. 21:19)." The covenant cursing in Deuteronomy 28 was to result in infertility, defeat, affliction, captivity, destruction, hunger and thirst, nakedness, poverty, war, diseases, and slavery.

Blessing, on the other hand, is a power of life producing life, fertility, victory, success, prosperity, good health, peace, etc. When God blessed the creation, vegetation produced various plants and trees with the capacity to reproduce their kinds (Gen. 1:12); the living creatures became fruitful, increased in number and filled the waters and the land (Gen. 1:22–24). God blessed man and he became fruitful, increased in number, filled the earth and subdued it. (Gen. 1:28). In the covenant blessing in Deuteronomy 28, blessing is associated with prosperity, fertility, abundance, and victory. Cursing, on the other hand, is linked to diminishing, infertility, poverty, and defeat. What is cursed diminishes and eventually disappears. But what is blessed increases, fills, and remains.

Blessing is a power that produces and enriches life. It produces success, prosperity, and growth. The Bible says that it is “good and pleasant . . . when brothers live together in unity . . . for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore (Ps. 133:1–3).” This implies that blessing is life. In Deuteronomy 30:19, Moses challenged the people, saying: “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” Life is equated with blessing, as curse parallels death.

Blessing enriches and enhances the life of a person, spiritually, physically, materially, and socially. Something is a blessing if it enhances and enriches one’s life. The Bible says that “the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich (Prov. 10:22, KJV).” Enrichment does not necessarily means being materially and financially rich. Life is not just breathing or enjoying material prosperity and worldly, fleshly pleasures. Life is understood as “a full, satisfying useful, integrated and enjoyable existence.”¹⁰ Life

¹⁰R. N. Gordon, “Motivation in Proverbs,” *Biblical Theology* 25, 1975, 49–56.

is knowing God and enjoying a healthy, rich, fulfilled and useful existence. True and authentic blessing must draw the recipient closer to God and bring glory to God. Only as it edifies, enhances life, and draws to God, can it be true blessing.

The Empowerment Motive

Blessing is not only enrichment; it is also empowerment. Blessing does not only enhance and enrich life. Blessing is not for selfish, individualistic, and egocentric enrichment and enjoyment, as many in charismatic and Pentecostal Churches are inclined to think. More than an enrichment of life, blessing is also an empowerment. It empowers the recipient to fulfill God's intended mandate or destiny. God's blessing enables creatures, people, households or nations, to accomplish their intended destiny.¹¹ True and authentic blessing must empower and enable the recipient to successfully accomplish a divine purpose. Philip Litle defines blessing as "God giving power to something or somebody to do that which they are designed or intended to do."¹² This empowerment may be spiritual, psychological, material, financial, physical, social, or professional.

The purpose of God's blessing is to enable one to serve for the glory of God and for the good of other people. Blessing is that which endows and equips us to participate in God's salvation history. VanGemerren rightfully contends: "That which is blessed functions and produces at the optimum level, fulfilling its divinely designated purpose."¹³ Abraham was blessed to be a source of blessing. In Psalm 67,

¹¹Sarita D. Gallagher and Steven C. Hawthorne, "Blessing as Transformation," *Faculty Publications - College of Christian Studies* (2009): 35.

¹²One for Israel, "What Is Blessing, Exactly?," *One for Israel*, n.d., <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/what-is-blessing/> (accessed May 30, 2019).

¹³VanGemerren, 1:759.

the reason why the people are requesting blessing from God is that his “ways may be known on earth,” and his “salvation among all nations (Ps. 67:2),” and that “all the ends of the earth will fear” God (Ps. 67:7). God’s blessing must result in the universal blessing of “all the peoples” to “all the ends of the earth.” Material and financial blessing must be viewed as an empowerment to accomplish God’s purpose.

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism reads: “What is the chief end of man?” And the answer is: “Man's chief end is to glorify God (1) and to enjoy him forever (2).” One commentator wrote: “God has made us for a purpose just as everything made by man is made for a purpose. Only as we fulfil the purpose for which God made us can we be happy.”¹⁴ And this purpose is to glorify God. To glorify God means to do his perfect will, please him in every aspect of our life, and fulfil his divine purposes for our lives. This is true blessing and true happiness.

The perception of the empowerment aspect of blessing in charismatic and Pentecostal Churches is hypothetical. Although most of the surveyed participants agreed that the purpose of blessing is to serve God, or that the purpose of their seeking blessing is to serve God, it is difficult (but would be interesting if possible) to evaluate the extent to which they really apply this in their lives.

The Unrealized Eschatology Motive (Already, but Not Yet Motive)¹⁵

The interviews and surveys conducted in charismatic and Pentecostal Churches revealed the importance given to material blessings and the thirst for earthly happiness. Most of the interviewed and surveyed participants rejected the possibility

¹⁴Martin Eagle, “The Westminster Shorter Catechism,” *Wsc*, n.d., <https://matt2819.com/wsc/> (accessed January 21, 2020).

¹⁵The “already and not yet” concept was first proposed by Princeton theologian Gerhardus Johannes Vos in the early 20th century. This concept was further developed by George Eldon Ladd in the 1950s. According to Ladd, the kingdom of God is both a present and future reality.

of suffering in their perception of blessing. This means that they perceive blessing mostly in terms of eudemonistic, earthly, and materialistic enjoyment (blessing here and now). Surveyed participants also agreed that blessing “is a natural aspiration for every human being,” a natural and legitimate pursuit.

The desire for blessing is an expression of the human and universal yearning for happiness. When someone is suffering, they ask themselves: why am I suffering? But when someone is happy, they do not ask themselves: why am I happy? This suggests that human beings were created to be happy. The quest for happiness is, therefore, the quest of something that mankind has lost. Ever since people lost happiness in the Garden of Eden, they are in search of it. But happiness cannot be found in material possession or in worldly leisure. It can only be found in a restored relationship with God. Material possessions are an illusory solution to the need of human beings for happiness. They do not and cannot satisfy and restore happiness.

The promise of happiness is the promise of the kingdom of God. While human beings are seeking happiness here and now, God promises happiness in his kingdom, the spiritual realm over which he rules. This kingdom of God is both a present reality in Christ (the already) and a future promise (the not yet). The kingdom is already present in Christ, but it will be fully realized when Jesus comes back. Meanwhile, Christians are living in this “already, but not yet” reality of the kingdom. This is unrealized eschatology. Christians are *makarios* in faith and in hope. They are living in a period of unrealized eschatology. To enjoy the full realization of the kingdom, they have to leave a life of faith, commitment, obedience, righteousness, and perseverance. And this may imply poverty, persecution, and suffering.

Implications

This research examined the perceptions and beliefs of Pentecostal and charismatic churches regarding blessing with the purpose of generating a contextual biblical theology of blessing which can serve to evaluate the understanding of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo regarding blessing and, more specifically, the prosperity doctrine. The findings reported in this research have many implications for the church in Togo.

The principles derived from this research can serve to examine and evaluate the prosperity gospel propagated in charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Togo. First, does the teaching take into account the sovereign will of God, or does it try to manipulate God for blessing? Secondly, do the people seeking prosperity enjoy a covenant or faith relationship with God? Do they have a right and close relationship with God through Jesus? Third, does the prosperity teaching emphasize the holistic enrichment of believers? Does it enhance, edify, and enable the person to know God better and live a better life for God? Fourth, what is the purpose of the blessing promised to believers? Is it to enable the recipient to serve the Lord better and participate in God's salvation history?

Part of the principles derived from this research could also serve to evaluate other issues related to the life of the church in Togo or in Africa in general. Two particular issues come to mind: the prophetic ministry and the healing and deliverance ministry. Many ministers in Togo today claim to have been given a prophetic ministry or a healing and deliverance ministry. Prayer centers are multiplying today in the country. One question is: are these ministries and prayer centers really enriching and empowering people for a mature spiritual life and a better commitment to God's mission? I personally believe that the purpose of a biblically grounded teaching or a

ministerial gift must be the edification of the Church and the preparation of God's people for works of service, according to Ephesians 4:11–13.

The research also suggests the need for developing contextual theologies in other areas pertaining to the life of the church in Togo and in Africa. Issues like prophetic ministry, family or generational curses, deliverance ministry, marriage, divorce and remarriage, polygamy, ministry by women, Christians and funerals, and Christian leadership in the African context merit further study.

The research demonstrated that there is no significant differences between Charismatics and Pentecostals regarding their perceptions on blessing. This shows how greatly Pentecostals have been influenced by the prosperity teaching. Pentecostals are losing their missional focus and are becoming more and more “prosperity.” This is an alarm call. An important implication of this finding is that Pentecostals need to redefine and refocus on their core traditional and missional values.

The research findings imply the importance of teaching Pentecostal and charismatic believers in Togo about true blessing and prosperity: the concept and content of blessing and prosperity, the source of blessing, the conditions for blessing, and above all, the purpose of blessing. The survey shows that believers' perceptions about blessing are not always in line with Scripture. In a context where the prosperity teaching is rampant and people rush for blessing and prosperity, Pentecostals and charismatics in Togo need to be refocused on biblical truth about blessing.

The study revealed the necessity for the church to offer workable alternatives to the prosperity gospel. The research showed that one factor of the growth of the prosperity gospel in Africa, and in Togo particularly, is poverty. In a context of superstitious beliefs, underdevelopment with a high rate of unemployment, sicknesses

and diseases coupled with the lack of sufficient and effective medical care, people are prompt to adhere to anything that promises prosperity, well-being, happiness, protection and success. What can the church do to help members get out of poverty?

Future Research

This research focused on examining beliefs and perceptions in charismatic and Pentecostal churches concerning blessing. It might be interesting and useful to conduct other researches that will check and compare the findings of this research to other churches in other countries in Africa. The church in Africa is facing many contextual issues, such as those mentioned above: prophetic ministry, healing and deliverance ministry, and leadership issues. There is an urgent need to develop biblical and contextual theologies that address such issues.

Another area for future research is the relationship between suffering and blessing. It has been observed that CC and PC reject all kind of suffering in their perception of blessing. Yet, Scripture does not always consider suffering as a curse. The research noted biblical examples of righteous people living in difficult or limited physical and socio-economic conditions (the adoptive parents of Jesus, Paul). It would, therefore, be useful to conduct a research on “the blessing of suffering,” how suffering can be a means of blessing to accomplish a divine purpose.

Summary

This chapter of the research has summarized and presented the various findings and results for each research question obtained throughout the study in order to answer the research problem. The main task of the research was to determine components of a contextual biblical theology of blessing consistent with Scripture and can serve to evaluate the perceptions and beliefs among charismatic and Pentecostal

churches in Togo regarding blessing along with the prosperity teaching. The study led to the formulation of a contextual and biblical definition of blessing that include five motives or components.

1. **God's Sovereignty Motive.** Contrary to what some charismatics believe, Scripture teaches that God is the ultimate and sovereign source of blessing. Blessing is a favor that originates from the sovereign will of God, although he may use human agencies.
2. **The Relationship Motive.** The research revealed that blessing is granted in a context of relationship characterized by obedience and righteousness toward God. The research suggests four sorts of blessing: (1) common blessing for all people, (2) covenant blessing for God's covenant people, (3) faith blessing for believers in Christ, and (4) special blessing as God determines.
3. **The Enrichment Motive.** The research showed that charismatics and Pentecostals in Togo perceive blessing primarily as enrichment. Blessing enriches life and includes spiritual, psychological, physical, psychological, material, and social components.
4. **The Empowerment Motive.** More than enrichment, Scripture emphasizes the empowerment aspect of blessing. Blessing empowers the recipient to successfully fulfill God's intended purpose or mandate.
5. **The Already, but Not Yet Motive.** This study also revealed the materialistic and earthly overtone of the perception of blessing among charismatics and Pentecostals and their quest for happiness. This quest for happiness is only satisfied in Christ (the already), but will be fulfilled in the kingdom to come (the not yet).

The principles derived from this research can serve to evaluate the perceptions and beliefs of charismatics and Pentecostals regarding blessing along with the prosperity gospel, as well as help evaluate issues such as the prophetic ministry, and the healing and deliverance ministry. The research suggests the need for developing

contextual theologies in other areas, such as the prophetic ministry, the healing and deliverance ministry, the importance of teaching believers about blessing and prosperity, and the need for the church to offer alternatives to the prosperity gospel.

The pursuit of blessing is a pursuit of happiness. This pursuit of happiness is a universal pursuit and the promise of many religions. Gordon observes that all pursuits for prosperity are “part of a search for a wholeness in life.”¹⁶ This universal and timeless pursuit for prosperity and happiness finds its fulfillment in Jesus, because Jesus is life *par excellence*. Jesus is life personified. He said: “I am the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6).” He alone can give life and fulfillment. He also said: “I have come that they (the sheep) may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10).” Life is fulfilled only in Christ, through faith and faithful attachment and commitment to him. This faithful attachment to Christ may imply suffering, trials, persecution, etc. The full realization of happiness is in the kingdom of God to come. The beatitudes, the already and not yet happiness, will only be fully accomplished when Jesus returns.

Richard Bauckham gives an insightful analysis of God’s blessing:

Blessing is a rich biblical notion that has been rather neglected in our theology. Blessing in the Bible refers to God's characteristically generous and abundant giving of all good to his creatures and his continual renewal of the abundance of created life. Blessing is God's provision for human flourishing. But it is also relational: to be blessed by God is not only to know God's good gifts but to know God himself in his generous giving. Because blessing is relational, the movement of the blessing is a movement that goes out from God and returns to him. God's blessing of people overflows in their blessing of others, and, those who experience blessing from God in turn bless God, which means that they give all that creatures really can give to God: thanksgiving and praise.¹⁷

¹⁶Gordon, 49–56.

¹⁷Richard Bauckham, “The Story of Blessing: Prevailing over Curse,” in *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs/225> (accessed January 30, 2020).

God's blessing to humans should result in humans blessing God. Do we always remember to bless God for his blessings?

APPENDIX A

VALIDATION COMMITTEE

Name	Occupation	Credentials	Contact
Dr. Chuck Wilson	Instructor and Dissertation Coordinator at PATHS	Doctor of Education (EdD)	cwilson@sagu.edu
Dr. Mary Ballenger	President, WAAST/AGGST	Doctor of Ministry (DMin)	mary.ballenger@hqmail. agmd.org
Pr. Toyi ASSIH	Lecturer; Department of Physics; University of Lomé, Togo	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	
Pr. Paboussoum PARI	Lecturer; Department of Psychology; University of Lomé, Togo	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	paripab@gmail.com paripab@yahoo.fr

APPENDIX B

VALIDATION COMMITTEE CONSENT FORM

Research ProjectTOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO**Researcher's Name and Contact: Douti Lallebili Flindja / flindouti@yahoo.fr**

Dear _____

I am embarking on a research project entitled: Toward a Contextualized Biblical Theology of Blessing in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Togo. The research problem is: What components of a contextualized biblical theology of material blessing are consistent with the inspired meaning of Scripture and can serve to examine and evaluate the perceptions, beliefs and practices in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo regarding material prosperity? The purpose of this study is to generate a contextualized biblical theology of blessing, by an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate and examine the perceptions, beliefs, and practices among Pentecostals in Togo regarding material prosperity.

This research will be published in a doctoral dissertation prepared by Flindja Douti Lallebili for Pan Africa Theological Seminary in Lomé, Togo. For any information or verification about this study, contact Dr. Douglas Lowenberg, who is acting as the supervisor for this project, at douglo1@mail.regent.edu or doug.lowenberg@agmd.org.

It is mandatory that a validation committee be formed to formulate and approve the appropriate research instruments that will aid the answering of the relevant research questions. I seek your consent to be part of this validation committee and to have your name stated in the dissertation in the appendix.

It should be noted that your individual contribution (ideas or statements) will not be revealed in the text. Only the consensus of the committee will be reported.

Name _____

Occupation _____

Qualification _____

Consent to have your name in appendix: Tick/or highlight the appropriate box

YES	NO
-----	----

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Project

TOWARD A CONTEXTUALIZED BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
THE PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO

The purpose of this study is to generate a contextualized biblical theology of blessing, by an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate and examine the perceptions, beliefs, and practices among Pentecostals in Togo regarding material prosperity.

For any information about the project, or your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Douglas Lowenberg, who is acting as the supervisor for this project, at douglo1@mail.regent.edu or doug.lowenberg@agmd.org.

I, _____, agree to participate in this project in accordance with the following conditions:

- The interview I participate in and the information I disclose will be used solely for the purposes defined by the project. Essentially, my participation poses no risks to me.
- At any time, I can refuse to answer certain questions, discuss certain topics, or even decide to stop the interview without prejudice to myself.
- To facilitate the interviewer's job, the interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- All interview data will be handled so as to protect my identity. Therefore, no names will be mentioned and the information will be coded.

Consent to use your name in the text: Tick/or highlight the appropriate box

YES	NO
-----	----

Respondent's Signature

Date

Interviewer's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
 AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
 CONSENT FORM TO PASTORS

Research Project

TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
 PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO

Researcher's Name and Contact: Douti Lallebili Flindja / flindouti@yahoo.fr

Dear Rev. _____

I am embarking on a research project entitled: "Toward a Contextualized Biblical Theology of Blessing in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Togo." The research problem is: What components of a contextualized biblical theology of material blessing are consistent with the inspired meaning of Scripture and can serve to examine and evaluate the perceptions, beliefs and practices in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Togo regarding material prosperity? The purpose of this study is to generate a contextualized biblical theology of blessing, by an exegetical/hermeneutical examination of biblical texts, which can serve to evaluate and examine the perceptions, beliefs, and practices among Pentecostals in Togo regarding material prosperity.

In the light of this, I am kindly requesting for permission to attend and observe your church services, conduct interviews and administer questionnaires to some of the members of the church as one among the four churches selected in the city of Lomé. To gain understanding into the perceptions, beliefs and behavioral practices related to the topic, I will need to use your church members as a sample group. An informed consent form has also been designed for each participant.

This research will be published in a doctoral dissertation prepared by Flindja Douti Lallebili for Pan Africa Theological Seminary in Lomé, Togo. For any information or verification about this study, contact Dr. Douglas Lowenberg, who is acting as the supervisor for this project, at douglo1@mail.regent.edu or doug.lowenberg@agmd.org.

I _____ give my consent to _____ to use the church members for the purposes of his research study in accordance with the following conditions:

- The information disclosed will be used solely for the purposes defined by the study.

- At any time, a participant has the prerogative not to answer certain questions, discuss certain topics or even decide to stop the interview without prejudice to him/her.
- To facilitate the interviewer's job, the interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- All interview data will be handled so as to protect the identity of the respondent. Therefore, no names will be mentioned. The interviewer will code the respondent.

Pastor's Name: _____ Church: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dissertation Topic:TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO

1. What is blessing according to you?
 - a. What does it mean to be blessed?
 - b. What does it mean to bless?
2. What is the content or the effect of blessing?
 - a. What does blessing include?
 - b. When do we say somebody is blessed?
3. What is/are the source(s) of blessing? Where does blessing come from?
 - a. Who has the power to bless? Who blesses whom?
 - b. How can one determine if the source of a material blessing is God or the spirits or simply by chance?
4. What are the conditions to receive a blessing or to be blessed?
 - a. What must one do to receive blessing or to be blessed?
 - b. How is blessing conferred?
 - c. What are the means to receive blessing or to be blessed?
 - d. What are the practices associated with blessing in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Togo?
 - e. What are the practices associated with blessing in your culture?
5. What is the purpose of blessing?
 - a. Why do people seek blessing?
 - b. What is the purpose of God in blessing people?
6. What is your own experience of blessing? Do you consider yourself as a blessed person? Why or why not?

APPENDIX F
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Semi-Structured Interview

TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO

Participant ID: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Interview Venue: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Ministry Title: _____

Ministry Position: _____

Name of Church: _____

Church Affiliation: _____

Educational Status: _____

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

	Ptspt ID	Church Affiliation	Church Denomination	Title and Name	Position and Contacts	Date Interviewed
1.	C1001-BENID	Charismatic	Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC)	Rev. Datevi ETEY-BENISSAN	National Pastor/ President 90 18 99 38	Aug. 6, 2018
2.	C1002-ABAF	Charismatic	Eglise Salut et Vérité	Apostle Kossi Francois ABAMA	National President 90 05 98 59	Aug. 9, 2018
3.	C1003-DRAM	Charismatic	Ministère Les Amis du Christ	Apostle Mawuena DRAH	Church Founder 90 04 11 89	Feb. 15, 2019
4.	C1004-EKLUS	Charismatic	Eglise en Mission pour le Salut (EMS)	Apostle EKLOU Samuel	Church Co-Founder	Feb. 22, 2019
5.	C2001-ADAL	Charismatic	Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC)	Ayite Laurent ADALBERT	Lay Person	June 26, 2019
6.	C2002-LOUTE	Charismatic	Eglise Salut et Vérité	Yawa Enyonam LOUYAH-TOKO	Church Member	Aug. 16, 2018
7.	C2003-SOGA	Charismatic	Ministère Les Amis du Christ	Ama Mawussi SOGBO, Epse LAKPO	Lay Person	Feb. 26, 2019
8.	C2004-AGBOK	Charismatic	Eglise en Mission pour le Salut (EMS)	Komlan AGBODENO U	Lay Person	Feb. 28, 2019
9.	P1001-BALK	Pentecostal	Church of Pentecost	Rev. Kwasivi BALO	Regional President 99 48 04 80	Aug. 14, 2018
10.	P1002-HANN	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Rev. Natani HANNANI	Senior Pastor, Executive Board Member 90 02 58 42	Aug. 15, 2018
11.	P1003-HINED	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Rev. Kossi Edgar HINE	Assistant Pastor, National Youth Director 90 01 73 64	Aug. 14, 2018

12.	P1004-SARA	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Rev. Ankou SARAM	Senior Pastor, Executive Board Member	Oct. 22, 2018
13.	P2001-AMOUK	Pentecostal	Church of Pentecost	Kokou AMOUZOU	Lay Person, Elder	Aug. 18, 2018
14.	P2002-AHOA	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Abra AHOSSEY, Epse AKAKPO	Lay Person, Deaconess	July 3, 2019
15.	P2003-AFOH	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Habib Barth AFOLABI	Lay person Evangelist	Mar. 23, 2019
16.	P2004-AGOA	Pentecostal	Assemblies of God	Afi AGOUDA, Epse GAGLOZOU	Lay Person	May 23, 2019

APPENDIX H
 SAMPLE SIZE REQUIRED FOR A KNOWN POPULATION
 RECOMMENDED SAMPLE SIZES FOR 5% SAMPLING ERROR OF
 PRECISION

Population Size	Sample Size
10	10
15	14
20	19
25	24
30	28
35	32
40	36
45	40
50	44
5	48
60	52
65	56
70	59
75	63
80	66
85	70
90	73
95	76
100	81
125	96
150	110
175	122
200	134
225	144
250	154

Population Size	Sample Size
275	163
300	172
325	180
350	187
375	194
400	201
425	207
450	212
475	218
500	222
1000	286
2000	333
3000	353
4000	364
5000	370
6000	375
7000	378
8000	381
9000	383
10,000	385
15,000	390
20,000	392
25,000	394
50,000	397
100,000	398

APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

DISSERTATION TOPIC
TOWARDS A BIBLICAL CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF BLESSING IN
PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN TOGO

PART I: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

- a. ___ Masculine b. ___ Feminine

2. What is your age?

- a. ___ 20-30 years old c. ___ 41-50 years old e. ___ 61-70 years old
b. ___ 31-40 years old d. ___ 51-60 years old f. ___ 71-80 years old

3. What is your marital status?

- a. ___ Bachelor/Not married c. ___ Married w/o children e. ___ Divorced
b. ___ Married w/ children d. ___ Widow/Widower f. ___ Remarried

4. What is your professional status?

- a. ___ Unemployed c. ___ Self-employed e. ___ Student
b. ___ Employed d. ___ Retired f. ___ Apprentice

5. What is your position in the church?

- a. ___ Pastor c. ___ Deacon / Elder e. Other _____
b. ___ Evangelist d. ___ Member

6. What is your church name and affiliation?

- Church affiliation a. ___ Pentecostal b. ___ Charismatic

Church name _____

PART II: QUESTIONNAIRE

In the following questionnaire, several statements are proposed to you in the left-hand column. Read these statements and check the box that corresponds to your personal opinion: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral or undecided (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

A- Concept and content of blessing. What is blessing according to you?

In my opinion, blessing is	5. Strongly agree	4. Agree	3. Neutral	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
<i>Spiritual aspect</i>					
1. God's grace and favor					
2. Salvation, being a child of God					
3. Eternal life, heaven					
4. Enjoying the presence of God					
5. Living a righteous and holy life, being pure in the heart					
6. Enduring persecution for Christ					
7. Dying for Christ, being faithful unto death					
8. Dying in the Lord					
9. Answer to prayer, God's intervention					
10. The Gift of the Holy Spirit					
11. Divine power					
12. Spiritual growth					
13. Having part in the first resurrection					
<i>Psychological aspect</i>					
14. Peace of heart, joy, happiness					
15. Absence of suffering, well-being					
16. Enduring suffering for Christ					
17. Going through trials					
<i>Material aspect</i>					
18. Being materially and financially poor					
19. Material and financial prosperity					
20. Having enough to satisfy your financial and material needs					
21. Divine provision for needs					
<i>Physical aspect</i>					
22. Good physical and mental health					
23. Security and protection					
24. Life, a long life					
25. Sickness may be a blessing					
<i>Socio-professional aspect</i>					
26. Peace with others					
27. Enjoying people's favor					
28. Having victory over enemies					
29. Being married, having a husband / having a wife					
30. Being unmarried / single					
31. Peace and harmony in the home					
32. Having a large family, many children					
33. Having no child					
34. Success in life: studies, business, fields, etc.					
35. Living in modest conditions					
36. A good job, a good salary					

37. Social and professional promotion					
38. Blessing is only spiritual					
39. Blessing is only material					
40. Blessing is both spiritual and material					

B- Sources of blessing. Where does blessing come from? Who has the power to bless?

In my opinion, blessing come from / The one having power to bless is	5. Strongly agree	4. Agree	3. Neutral	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
B1. God, Jesus Christ					
B2. Men of God: pastors, prophets, etc.					
B3. Parents, biological parents					
B4. Maternal uncles, aunts					
B5. Elderly people					
B6. Leaders and authorities in the community, the boss, etc.					
B7. Brothers and sisters in Christ					
B8. Satan, demons and evil spirits					
B9. Fetishist priests, charlatans, marabouts					
B10. The ancestors, the deities					

C- Conditions and means for blessing. What to do to be blessed?

In my opinion, to be blessed, one has to	5. Strongly agree	4. Agree	3. Neutral	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
C1. Repent, accept Jesus, be born again					
C2. Obey God, have a good relationship with God, be righteous					
C3. Obey and honor parents, take care of parents					
C4. Be engaged in God's work					
C5. Sow, give for the work of the Lord					
C6. Pay tithes and give offerings					
C7. Make a sacrifice, give a sacrificial offering					
C8. Fast and pray					
C9. Have enough faith					
C10. Love one's neighbor					
C11. Help the poor, help those in need					
C12. Be kind, serve elderly people					
C13. Be diligent and hardworking					
C14. Make positive confession, make prophetic proclamations					
C15. Break ancestral and family curses					
C16. Ratify the covenants established by God: seed covenant, sacrifice covenant, etc.					
C17. Receive blessing from a man of God through a prophetic word, prayer or the laying on of hands					
C18. Use holy water					
C19. Use anointing oil					
C20. Use water from the Jordan River					
C21. Receive blessing from maternal uncles or aunts					
C22. Make sacrifices to the ancestors					

In my opinion, to be blessed, one has to	5. Strongly agree	4. Agree	3. Neutral	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
C23. Perform traditional ceremonies and rites: <i>Situtu, Akpema, Evala</i> , etc.					
C24. Perform funeral ceremonies for deceased parents					
C25. Go to the ancestral seat (<i>Togbui zikpe</i>)					
C26. Make a covenant with spirits and divinities					
C27. Respect taboos and prohibitions					
C28. Go to charlatans, fetishist priests, and marabouts					
C29. Make a human sacrifice					
C30. Blessing is transferred by words of blessing					
C31. Blessing is purely unconditional grace from God					

D- Purpose of blessing. For what purpose God blesses us? For what purpose do you want God to bless you?

In my opinion, the purpose God blesses us is to	5. Strongly agree	4. Agree	3. Neutral	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
D1. Provide to our needs					
D2. Glorify his name					
D3. Draw us closer to God					
D4. Support God's work, God's mission					
D5. Be a source of blessing to others					
D6. For our own happiness, for our comfort and well-being					
<i>I want God to bless me so that</i>					
D7. I may be honored and respected					
D8. I may live a happy and comfortable life					
D9. I may come out of poverty and suffering					
D10. I can support God's work, God's mission					
D11. It is a natural aspiration for every human being					

APPENDIX J

CHURCHES SURVEYED

Church Affiliation		Name of Church surveyed	Date of Survey	Number of People Surveyed
Charismatics	1.	Eglises Bibliques de la Vie Profonde	August 2019	205
	2.	Ministère les Amis du Christ	August 2019	30
	3.	Eglise en Mission pour le Salut	September - October 2019	151
	4.	Eglise Salut et Vérité	Pastor not available for survey	
	5.	Other		14
	Total Charismatics			
Pentecostals	1.	Temple du Calvaire	August 4, 2019	133
	2.	Temple Jerusalem, Agbalepedogan	September 2019	58
	3.	Temple Jehovah-Shalom, Agoe-Centre	September 2019	56
	4.	Eglise de Pentecôte du Togo / Solidarité	August 4, 2019	111
	5.	Other		42
	Total Pentecostals			
TOTAL CHARISMATICS AND PENTECOSTALS				800

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