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An Evaluation and Analysis of the Prosperity Gospel Understanding of ‘Image of God’ With Herman Bavinck’s Reformed Theological Perspective: A Call for Constructive Dialogue

Master’s thesis for the Master of Intercultural Reformed Theology (MIRT)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to answer the following main questions. First, “what does it mean to be created in the Image of God according to Prosperity Gospel and Herman Bavinck? And what does it denote to human beings? Second, “what can the Ethiopian Evangelical Church learn from the conversion on ‘Image of God’ between the Prosperity Gospel Movement and Herman Bavinck’s organic’ view of the ‘image of God?’” By asking these questions, the researcher argued that it is the Prosperity Gospel Movement’s anthropocentric interpretations of what it means to be created in the ‘Image of God’ that leads them to believe that man has a divine ability to rule (dominion) and a divine ability to create (authority). The Movement’s lack of theological training, ignorance of historical theology, and isolation from the theological community contributed to the development of that distinctive theology. The Movement’s doctrines such as doctrines of dominion and authority, the doctrine of positive confession, the doctrine of health and prosperity, the doctrine of the covenant, and many other doctrinal teachings are related by their interpretation of the image of God. I have argued that the Prosperity Gospel doctrine of the ‘image of God’ is a central organizing framework for the four major doctrines of the Movement. The researcher pointed out that the Movement’s interpretations of the ‘image of God’ in which the central theme is man-glorifying is in contrast to Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ approaches to the ‘image of God’ which encourages humility and sacrificial living in the cause of honoring the name of Jesus Christ. By appropriating Bavinck’s ‘organic’ view of the image of God to the African context, the researcher tries to relate it to the African Traditional religious worldview of ‘Ubuntu’ as an alternative to the anthropomorphic interpretation of the ‘image of God’ by the Prosperity Movement. The main objective of this study is to correct rather than condemn the Movement based on the principle of ‘Ubuntu’ and to create a conducive environment for the constructive dialogue between the Ethiopian mainline traditional churches and the Movement.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Nowadays, Christianity in sub-Saharan African countries is highly influenced and shaped by the message of the Prosperity Gospel Movement. These countries are the areas where the people are primed and ready for any miracle to alleviate their suffering and poverty. One of the main problems we are facing as Ethiopians is the issue of poverty. I acknowledge that with poverty come many problems and inconveniences to human life. Poverty in the community easily opens the door for the expansion of Prosperity Gospel Movements. In my context, the Prosperity Gospel preachers use the people's condition of poverty, they encourage and motivate its poor followers to sow "faith seeds" which they cannot afford even for themselves and their families, but interestingly enough as Goroh observed the Movement preachers would say to those needy members of their church, "anytime you have a need, then you need a seed. Where there is no seed; no need will be met"¹ Those poor followers to get a blessing sometimes borrow and give to the so-called 'faith seed' with prescribed steps for the blessings they desire for. As the result, Africa/Ethiopia is home to some of the richest religious leaders and pastors in the context of extreme poverty.²

According to Wikipedia poverty in Africa is very serious. African nations typically fall toward the bottom of any list measuring small-size economic activity, such as income per capita or GDP per capita, despite a wealth of natural resources. In 2009, 22 of 24 nations identified as having 'Low Human Development' on the United Nations (un) Human Development Index were located in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 53 African nations, 27 have a Gross National Income per capita of us \$ 785 or less (African Development Bank 2010). In 2006, 34 of the 50 nations on the un list of least developed countries were in Africa. In many nations, GDP per capita is less than us \$ 200 per year, with the vast majority of the population living on much less. In addition, Africa's share of income has been consistently

¹ Goroh HB . *Living above tough times*. Windhoek, Namibia: (Sure Destiny Publishers, 2009), 55

² In Ethiopian in spite of deep poverty among the members, the founder and leaders of the Movement are millionaires and they have a lot of investment in their family names, to mention some- Apostle Tamirat, Prophet Eyu chufa, Prophet Erimiyas, prophet, Yonathan Akililu, Bishop Dawit Mollalign and so on. In the Africa context, the emergence of the so-called 'paparazzi pastors' and the so-called 'celebrity pastors' in South Africa is seen everywhere. Mashau T.D and Kgatle, M.S. listed the following flamboyant pastors from African context like the Nigerian pastor and Christian author David O. Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel), Nigerian pastor Temitope Balogun Joshua (TB Joshua) of The Synagogue, Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Nigerian-born pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy, South African televangelist pastor Paseka Motsoeneng (Mboro) of Incredible Happenings, South Africa-based Malawian prophet Shepherd Bushiri of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) and many others.

dropping over the past century by any measure. According to Wikipedia, in 1820, the average European worker earned about three times what the average African did.³ 300 million people are living on less than US \$ 1 per day.

In this context, the poor members are encouraged to give beyond measure for the “anointed and appointed man of God” to prosper and move out of poverty by the ‘creative’ word of ‘the anointed one. Prosperity Movement leaders show how their theology is anthropocentric in which the central theme is man-glorifying in contrast to the Christocentric worldview which encourages humility and sacrificial living in the cause of honoring the name of Jesus Christ. This is seen in their theological interpretation of the image of God. In contrast, the Dutch Reformed Theologian Herman Bavinck interpreted the image of God in an ‘Organic’ way. Nathaniel Sutanto summarizing Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ approach to the image of God said, “this emphasis on our organic make-up amplifies the value of every individual precisely because we are responsible for one another and we need each other in order fully to reflect God”⁴ Moreover, relating with Herman Bavinck’s Reformed Ethics, Sutanto by quoting Bavinck said that “ego-centricity is the root of sin, which perpetuates atomistic individualism, and the remedy of the redemptive work of the Spirit that links us back towards organic unity by renewing bonds of love for each other”

This research seeks to find the relationship between the Movement’s doctrine of the ‘image of God’ and other main doctrines of the movement. After examining the Movement’s anthropocentric interpretations of the ‘image of God’ the researcher tries to evaluate it with Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck ‘organic’ approaches of the ‘image of God.’

Next, the researcher tries to relate the concept of Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ interpretation of the ‘image of God’ with Africa’s Traditional religious worldview of ‘Ubuntu’ as an alternative to the anthropomorphic interpretation of the ‘image of God’ by Prosperity Gospel in Ethiopia/Africa. In addition to this, this thesis recognizing the good things in the Movement, and serve as a plea to both mainline Ethiopian Evangelical churches and the Prosperity Gospel Movement to come to constructive dialogue as brother and sister in Christ to work together in the Kingdom of God in Ethiopia.

³ Website Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_Africa, accessed 4 May 2022.

⁴ Gray Sutanto, "Humanity in Its Entirety" – Herman Bavinck and the Image of God, September 1, 2020, <https://www.pastortheologians.com/> accessed June 21,2022

1.2. Rationales

The Prosperity Gospel is sweeping across the sub-Saharan African countries like an irresistible strong wind blowing to every corner of Sub-Saharan African cities. The essence of their message is that God wants believers to be physically healthy, materially wealthy, and personally happy. The rapid growth of the Prosperity Gospel in the context of the extreme poverty continent is a paradox that needs further research and this phenomenon has received attention among researchers.⁵ Many theologians criticized the teaching of the Movements concluding that the Movements is a cult with distorted Christian doctrines.⁶ Others support the teaching of the Movements as “authentic Christian” with corrective doctrinal teachings.⁷ In Ethiopia’s context, the fast growth of the Prosperity Gospel-oriented churches has created a growing tension between the critics and supporters of the Movements. This is one of the reasons that prompted the researcher to do this research. This research aims to study the historical background of the Movements and evaluate their basic doctrinal teaching on the image of God in the light of Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ view of the image of God. The final purpose is to create a conducive environment for constructive dialogue with the Ethiopian Evangelical mainline churches. To do this, the African Traditional concept ‘Ubuntu’ will be proposed as the alternative to the anthropomorphic view of the Prosperity Gospel.

1.3. Hypotheses

In this thesis, in the light of the Dutch Reformed Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ Perspective of the ‘image of God’, I will challenge the Prosperity Gospel culture of greed which is characterized as an individualistic view of self-image. In addition, I want to demonstrate how the theological beliefs and main doctrinal teachings of the Prosperity Gospel movements are

⁵ Anderson, A., ‘The prosperity message in the eschatology of some new charismatic churches’, *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 15(2), 1987,72–83. Gbote, E.Z.M. & Kgatla, S.T., 2014, ‘Prosperity gospel: A missiological assessment’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2105, 10 pages

⁶Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1993); Dan McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988); Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 2006); John MacArthur, ‘Does God Promise Health and Wealth? (The Wrong Jesus Christ. The Wrong Faith. Charismatic Chaos Series, 1991), retrieved 21 January 2012, <http://www.ondctrine.com/2mac0084.htm>.

⁷ McIntyre, Joe. *E. W. Kenyon and his Message of Faith: The True Story*. (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 1997). King, Paul and Jacques Theron. ‘The ‘Classic Faith’ roots of the modern ‘Word of Faith’ movement’. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 32, no. 1 (2006): 309- 334.

interconnected with their interpretation of the doctrine “image of God” in man. As we will show, the interpretation of the ‘image of God’ in the Prosperity Gospel Movement is essential for understanding the theology and the success of the Movement. Against the background of the movement’s “cultic’ origin claim by critics, the researcher believes that Prosperity Gospel movements come from authentic Christian backgrounds and their theology on the “image of God” is not beyond correction. If the movement’s lack of open theological discussion with other mainline Evangelical communities, their lack of knowledge of historical theology, and their anthropomorphic understanding of the image of God are corrected with African ‘ubuntu’ worldviews, it will provide a conducive environment for ecumenical intention with mainline Ethiopia Evangelical Churches to learn from each other and to work together in God’s kingdom.

1.4. Research Questions

The main question I am trying to answer in this research is “What Can Ethiopia Kale Hiywot Church members learn from Conversation on the “Image of God” between Prosperity Preachers and Herman Bavinck’s ‘organic’ view of the image of God?”

Sub-Questions

1. What is the main theological framework of the PM (short!) and what is the place of the ‘image of God’ in their theological system? How does the Prosperity Gospel Movement define the ‘image of God’?”
2. What are the main theological problems raised by the interpretation of “Image of God” by the Prosperity Gospel Movement?
3. How do Reformed theologians Herman Bavinck and others define the “image of God”?
4. What are the differences and comparisons between the understanding of the ‘image of God’ in PM and Bavinck?
5. How can Ethiopian Evangelical Churches develop a constructive engagement with the Prosperity Gospel Movements for the expansion of the Gospel in the area? How can the Traditional African worldview of ‘Ubuntu’ help them to foster constructive dialogue?

1.5. Significance of Study

This research is important for Ethiopian Evangelical churches in general, and Ethiopia Kale Hiywot Church in particular in the following three ways. First, this research aims to call the Ethiopian Evangelical mainline churches and the Prosperity preachers for constructive dialogue. In order to do this the mainline Evangelical churches, need to understand the historical background and the main doctrinal teachings of the Movements. Second, in this research, the researcher argues that the doctrine of the “image of God” is the basic doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel Movement, and all other major doctrines of the movement derived from this major doctrine. Therefore, this research will provide Herman Bavinck Reformed understanding of the meaning of the ‘organic image of God’ in relation to the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel on the same topic. Third, this research will recommend some practical ways for Ethiopia’s Evangelical churches to engage with the Prosperity Gospel movement in constructive ways so that they might work together to expand the kingdom of God in Ethiopia. To do this, the researcher recommends applying the Africa Traditional worldview of ‘Ubuntu’ as an alternative to the greedy culture of the Prosperity Movement. I believe that the finding of this research will help as a tool that will be used in narrowing the hostilities gap between the mainline Evangelical churches and the Movement and building the bridge between them by bringing those two parties as brother and sisters in the body of Christ for the expansion of God’s kingdom in Ethiopia.

1.6. Limitation

It is not the aim of this thesis to discuss all doctrines of the Prosperity Gospel Movement. In this research, I focus on the Movement’s doctrine of “Image of God” as presented by the Movement and I will try to show how the main beliefs and practices of the Movement are interconnected with the doctrine of “Image of God” and evaluate them with Herman Bavinck Reformed perspectives of ‘organic’ view of the image of God. The researcher wants to understand how the main doctrinal teachings of the Movement including, the doctrine of authority and dominion, the doctrine of prosperity and wealth, the doctrine of the covenant, and the confession of the Movement only as far as they are interrelated with the understanding of the ‘image of God’

1.7. Methodology

To answer the main and sub-research questions I intend to use follow the following methods. My research is first of all located in the discipline of Systematic Theology. I will try to find

the differences between systematic theological approaches to the concept of the “image of God” in Christian church tradition and the modern Dilla Kale Hiywot Church context. It might help me to define the concept of the “image of God” systematically from the teaching of the Bible. To find out the authenticity of their theology of anthropology based on the sound biblical teaching. In this case, I am going to see how the Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck, G.C. Berkouwer, and Anthony Hoekema, as the main resource to understand the concept of the “image of God” from the Reformed perspective and the view of the modern propagator of the Prosperity preaching in Africa/Ethiopia

To have some voices from my context I am also intended to do interviews through questionnaires. To do that, the researcher developed six structured formal questionnaires and distributed them to ten randomly selected church members, leaders of the Movements, and people in the communities of both sexes.

1.8. Defining Keywords and Phrases

1.8.1. Reformed Theology

The theological position which was held by the 16th-century Protestant Reformers and developed by different Western Reformed and Evangelical theologians. It is generally considered synonymous with Calvinism and with the theology of the historic church confessions such as the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg catechism of Faith. To be Reformed means to affirm the great "Solas"⁸ of the Reformation, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, creation, respect for the Old Testament, salvation history, covenant, and doctrine of salvation by grace which is commonly represented by acrostic TULIP⁹ (five points of Calvinism).

Reformational theology can be also defined as the worldview system. When we see the historical background of the Reformational worldview, in the twentieth century it has taken a distinctive shape through the brilliant work of Dutch leaders including Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Herman Dooyeweerd, and D.H.T.Vollenhoven. From all of his contemporaries, David K. Naugle mentioned the four distinctive contributions of Kuyper to

⁸ The five “solas” of the 16th century Protestant Reformation include *sola fide*, by faith alone; *sola Scriptura*, by Scripture alone; *solus Christus*, through Christ alone; *sola gratia*, by grace alone; and *soli Deo Gloria*, glory to God alone.

⁹ Five points of Calvinism include T- total depravity, U- unconditional election, L- limited atonement, I – Irresistible grace, and P- Persistence of the saints,

the development of the Reformed Worldview¹⁰. I have summarized it in the following ways. The first is Kuyper developed the classical idea of “grace restores nature” in which the salvation brought by Jesus is cosmic in scope and focuses on the renewal of everything in creation. The second is the assertion of God’s sovereignty which has to do with “Sphere sovereignties” which focus on giving each thing its particular identity and diversity of creation and preventing the interruption of one sphere over another. The third, the affirmation of the “cultural mandate” from the beginning God intended the progressive development of creation for the benefit of man. The fourth is the concept of ‘antithesis’ the co-existence of Christianity with other competitive worldviews that have different directions. Kuyper’s approach to Christianity as a complete worldview and his contributions and influence on the creation of the Reformed worldview his colleagues and other Dutch Reformed theologian developed the ‘Kuyperian’ tradition after his name. Therefore, Reformed theology is more than theology it is a worldview system.

1.8.2. Image of God

Many theologians spent too much time attempting to define the phrase the “image of God” or “*imago Dei*” throughout Christian history. In this section, I am going to present a summary of the history of interpretation of the image and likeness of God in man throughout Christian history.

Philo refers to the image of God in his discussion of logos. Within Philo’s framework of ideas, man is not himself the image of God, but he is created ‘after’ or ‘according to it’ According to Philo, the image consists of the mind or reason, which is spoken of in terms of a divine spirit breathed by the Maker into the individual. Because Philo was influenced by Greek philosophy equates the ideal man with the logos which comes close to identifying man with the image.¹¹ Irenaeus’ view of humanity was that ‘man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God and modeled by His hands – that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, ‘Let Us make man [Gen 1:26]’¹² Irenaeus differentiates the “image of God” between unbelievers and believers. According to him,

¹⁰ Naugle K, David. *WORLDVIEW The History of a Concept*. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2002), 16-25

¹¹ De Lacey, D.R. 1979. Image and incarnation in Pauline Christology: A search for origins. (Tyndale Bulletin (TB) 30: 1979),12-15.

¹² Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 1: 463.

unbelievers who are made in God's image possess a twofold nature; body and soul whereas believers who are made in God's image and likeness have three-fold nature; body, soul, and spirit because of the internal presence of the Holy Spirit in believers. Speaking about the fall, he said at the fall man lost "true rationality" and he began to live 'irrationally, opposed the righteousness of God, giving himself to every earthly spirit and serving all lusts and through the death of Jesus Christ man restored to the image and likeness of God.

The church father Augustine defines the image of God in man from the triune God perspective. According to him, the image of God in man is found in his soul (rational and intellectual soul).¹³ For Augustin, the mind is Trinitarian in the constitution which is composed of memory, understanding, and will and at the fall the image was corrupted but through redemption through Christ God restored. Thomas Aquinas in his work, the *Summa Theologica* (Summary of Theology), identifies the image of God primarily in man's rational faculty, intellectual, or reason. He says 'It is clear, therefore, that intellectual creatures alone, properly speaking, are made [according] to God's image.'¹⁴ John Calvin sees the image of God in man primarily in man's soul. He said 'God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul.'¹⁵ John Calvin associated the image of God in man with the reasoning faculties of man.

To summarize the above-mentioned church father's description of the concept of the "image of God" all of them interpreted the image of God in man as the power of intellectual reason with different perspectives. For example, the definition given by Philo was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, but the definition given by Church fathers Irenaeus, Augustin, and Aquinas was influenced by the teaching of the New Testament. As the church father Irenaeus and Augustin who distinguish the image of God from the likeness of Luther distinguishes the image of God as "public image" which refers to universal to all men and it consists of the will and intellect whereas the "private image" is the original righteousness that has been lost at the fall which can be restored only through Christ. Luther sees the devil as the great opponent of God because he deceived our first parents and led them to sin against God in Genesis 3 and as the result, the image of God in man is corrupted. According to Calvin, the fall affected the image of God in man. The image of God was corrupted or distorted by sin but it was not destroyed.

¹³Augustine. 1988. *St Augustine: On the Holy Trinity*, 189.

¹⁴ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 33-35

¹⁵ Luther, M. 1958. *Luther's works Vol 1: Lectures on Genesis*, 65

Defining Image of God from Dutch and Reformed Theologian

Different theologians gave different explanations for the meaning of the 'image of God' in man with different faculties of man. Traditional Reformed theologians define the image of God in both a broader and a narrower sense. According to the tradition, the restricted or narrowing image consists of "the spiritual qualities with which man was created, namely true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." The comprehensive or broader sense means man is "a spiritual being, rational moral and immoral, in the body not as a material substance, but as the organ of the soul" The image in the narrower sense has been completely lost through man's sin, but the image in the broader sense not lost but has been corrupted by sin¹⁶

G. C. Berkouwer (June 8, 1903 – January 27, 1996)

Berkouwer rejected these traditional distinctions and he argued that the image of God related to man's "inescapable relatedness to God." He also rejects the thought of associating the image of God with man's intellect and reason. Hoekema eloquently summarized the position of Berkouwer in the following way, "man must always be bound to God religiously in the totality of his existence... this relatedness to God, moreover, is not something added to man but is constitutive of his being. Whoever tries to see the human person apart from this relatedness to God will always fail to see him as he really is" ¹⁷ For Berkouwer the image related with the concept of the new life in which the Christian must continually strive in God's strength to be like God in his/her daily life.

Anthony Hoekema (January 01, 1913 – October 17, 1988)

Reformed theologian Anthony Hoekema produced a well-researched book on the image of God in man. He explains biblically that man was created in the image of God and therefore man is the representative of God on earth. He said that "man is representative of God who is like God in a certain respect"¹⁸ But because of the sin of Adam, the image of God in man has been damaged but not totally lost. He said that "the image of God in man has been marred and corrupted by sin" but it can be restored through the process of sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hoekema summarized his discussion of the image of God in man in threefold relationships: to God, to others, and to nature.¹⁹

¹⁶ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 59

¹⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 58-59

¹⁸ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 113.

¹⁹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 102

John Piper (January 11, 1946 – now)

The American Reformed theologian John Piper explains clearly the concept of the image of God from both Old Testament and New Testament perspectives.²⁰ Discussing the Old Testament teaching about the ‘image of God’ the author said, in the Old Testament, the idea of the image of God appears in three texts in the Old Testament: Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1–2; and 9:6. In these texts, the English word image translates the Hebrew word *tselem*; and the English likeness translates the Hebrew *demuth*. What is the meaning of those two words? Is there a difference between the word “likeness” and “image”? The author argues that the two words used to explain the same thing that man is created differently than other creations. He said, “The double modifying phrase, ‘in our image, after our likeness,’ is in the last analysis nothing more than a phrase which aims to assert with emphasis the idea that man is to be closely patterned after his Maker.”

According to the Piper, when we study the whole New Testament, we can find the following Greek words which the writers of New Testament used, the primary word for image is *eikōn*. Secondary words are *homoiōsis* and *charaktēr*. *eikōn* appears in twenty verses throughout the New Testament. The underlying New Testament thought is the assumption that all men retain the image of God given in creation, a central Pauline teaching is that in regeneration men receive the image of God. Jesus is the image and fullness of God, and men, therefore, receive the image of God by sharing in what Christ is. After studying the image of God both in the Old and New Testament John Piper come up with the interesting conclusion that the Old Testament does not tell us the nature of the image of God. The New Testament tells us much about the new creation in Christ but does not explicitly relate this to the image of God in the Old Testament. Finally, John Piper concludes that the Bible is not as concerned as we are to discover the precise nature of man’s God-likeness.

Klaas Schilder (December 19, 1890 – March 23, 1952)

The Dutch reformed Theologian Klaas Schilder strongly opposite the tendency of defining the image of God in man just with human qualities. He said that often when people speak of this doctrine, the reason that man is God's image-bearer is that he possesses certain qualities (intellect, will, righteousness, holiness, etc.). He pointed out that people also invented the distinction between the image in its broader sense (everybody is created in God's image since

²⁰ [The Image of God by John Piper | PDF | Image Of God | Genesis Creation Narrative \(scribd.com\)](#) accessed by author July 2, 2022

they are human beings) and the image in its narrower sense (only believers, since they know what "knowledge, righteous and holiness" are).²¹ He said that such distinction based on human qualities betrays the fact that people are looking at the image as consisting primarily of human qualities.

In contrast, Klaas Schilder emphatically argues that anyone who reads Genesis chapter one carefully will come to another conclusion. In order to support his argument, he tried to explain the Heidelberg Catechism, he explains that as the image of God, mankind represents God in the world, with the task, as vicegerents, to exercise dominion over other creatures. The primary question has to do with office or calling, and only then do qualities like knowledge, righteousness, and holiness become important. These qualities are nothing but the gifts which people are called to employ in the performance of their tasks here on earth.²² For Schilder, this perspective becomes important for understanding the natures and work of our Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Against the above-mentioned understanding of the image of God in the Church father and Reformed tradition, Herman Bavinck approached the issues from a different angle. In this thesis, I am going to discuss his 'organic' approach to the image of God in which he argues that human beings are the bearer of the image of God not just as the individual but as cooperate.

My Working Definition

My working definition of the "image of God" is a combination of Herman Bavinck and Heidelberg Catechism where both approve that at the beginning man was created in the "image of God but at the fall the image of God" distorted in man and restored through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Herman Bavinck defines the "image of God" in man as an organic Trinitarian worldview on three levels. A man was created in the image of God, as an individual, as male and female in the relationship, and in humanity as a whole²³. Bavinck emphasizes that the image of God in its totality can only be seen in humankind as a whole. He said "not the individual man, and not even man and women together, but mankind as a

²¹K Schilder: December 19, 1890 - March 23, 1952 | Christian Library (christianstudylibrary.org) accessed by writer on June 13, 2022 at Theological University of Kampen

²² K Schilder: December 19, 1890 - March 23, 1952, | Christian Library (christianstudylibrary.org) accessed by researcher on June 13, 2022at Theological University of Kampen

²³Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics* (translated by John Vriend). (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006),555, <https://www.crcna.org/>

whole is the fully developed image of God”²⁴ The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord’s Day 3,4,7) summarized the ontological differences between the Triune creator (God) and creation (man) in which the Triune God is infinite, eternal, and unchanging in his being, wisdom, power, will, and goodness. And the creature (man) that comes into existence by an act of God’s sovereign will is not eternal, but temporal, not infinite, but finite, not immutable, but mutable. And the distinction between the two remains in the Creator-creature relation.²⁵ My working definition of the image of God is “human beings are created equally in the act of God’s will as a finite and dependent creature in the “image of God” for the purpose of living relationships through obedience to the Triune infinite, eternal, and unchanging God and in the fall the image of God in man distorted but not lost.”

1.8.3. Prosperity Gospel Movement/Words of Faith/ Movements

The Prosperity Gospel Movement has many names. They are called and known as “health and wealth”, “name it and claim it”, “the Movements,” “Word of Faith Movements” or prosperity gospel. The Lausanne Theology Working Group interestingly define the Prosperity Gospel, they said, “We define prosperity gospel as 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”²⁶ In relation to this the African theologian Dr.J. Kwabena Asamoah define the Prosperity Gospel as a group of the movement who distorted the preaching to satisfy their ego-centric need. He said, “preaching, interpretation, and teaching of the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ or Lord in a self-serving manner that places its emphasis on conspicuous consumerism to suggest that the possession of the material things of this world are necessary indicators of genuine Christianity and God’s approval”²⁷

The African theologian J. K Ayantayo defined and describe Prosperity Gospel as strong teaching that requires Christians to be prosperous while on earth. They emphasize material acquisition which can be manifested in the acquisition of cars, houses, fat bank accounts, cash at hand, clothing, abundance, fortune, and success in all endeavors, all of which make

²⁴ Herman Bavinck *Reformed Dogmatics 2* : p.621-622

²⁵ http://www.covenantofgrace.com/westminster_chapter7.htm accessed by author on June 15, 2022

²⁶ From the Lausanne Theology Working Group, Africa chapter at its consultations in Akropong, Ghana, 8-9 October 2008 and 1-4 September 2009 accessed in 03/03/2019

²⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah – presentation on Lausanne Movement, 2010, Cape Town, South Africa

prosperity therefore a divine favor that Christians must seek and possibly pursue with vigor.²⁸ American theologian Catherine Bowler in her doctrinal dissertation defines the Prosperity Gospel Movement from American Perspective by giving three important points, First, the movement centered on Faith. It conceived of faith as an “activator,” a power given to believers that bound and loosed spiritual forces and turned the spoken word into reality. According to Bowler, the second characteristic of the movement is they depicted faith as demonstrated in wealth and health. Thirdly the author mentioned the character of the movement as they always expected faith to be marked by victory. According to their belief, no circumstance could stop believers from living in total victory here on earth.²⁹

To summarize the above-mentioned description regarding the Prosperity Gospel, the Movement’s basic teaching can be defined in the following three points. a) That it is the will of God for His people to be healthy, wealthy, and happy at all times. To put it another way, it is never God’s will for people to suffer. b) That through the atonement, and the principles laid out in scripture, God has made it possible for us to attain a life of material prosperity, free from all forms of suffering. Many Prosperity preachers assert that the main reason Christ came was to defeat material poverty and sickness. c) That the way to actualize these things is by releasing “the force of faith” through positive confession.

1.8.4. Pentecostal/Charismatic

In the Christina Church’s history, four waves of spiritual renewal of Pentecostalism occurred. The first wave is called Pentecostalism which occurred in 1906 in Los Angeles California a revival took place at 312 Azusa Street which was led by a black holiness preacher called William J. Seymour. On that day people claimed to receive the baptism of Holy Spirit and to speak in their tongue. After fifty years of the Azusa Street revival, like Pentecostalism, Charismaticism began in California by the leader was called Dennis Bennett the Episcopalian clergyman and his congregation claimed to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. The third wave is called Neo- Charismaticism which was broke after twenty years of the second wave by C. Peter Wanger of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena in early 1980. The Toronto Blessing which began in January 1994 and the emergence of the

²⁸ J. K Ayantayo, “Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critique in David Ogungbile and Akintunde Akinade (eds) *Creativity and Change in Nigeria Christianity*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, Ltd, p. 203.

²⁹ Catherine Bowler. Dissertation” Blessed – A History of American Prosperity Gospel’ submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Religion in the Graduate School of Duke University 2010 – in 2013 printed by Oxford Printing Press, USA

Prosperity Gospel Movement is considered the crest of a fourth wave that will see global revival taking place before the end of this century.³⁰

Many of the Prosperity Gospel preachers associated themselves with Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Dr.Kwabena Asamoah defines Pentecostalism may be defined as a stream of Christianity that emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as “a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit. Charismatic generally refers to historically younger Pentecostal independent and parachurch movements, many of which function within non-Pentecostal denominations.

It is Wayne Grudem³¹ who gives an extensive description of Charismatic and Pentecostal in the following way: Pentecostal, he said, it refers to any denomination or group that traces its historical origin back to the Pentecostal revival that began in the United States in 1901 and that holds to the following doctrinal positions, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is ordinarily an event after conversion, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is made evident by the sign of speaking in tongues, and that all spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament are to be sought and used today. They believe that speaking in tongue is the “sign” that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and that this sign will be given to all who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal groups usually have their own district denominational structures, the most prominent of which is the Assemblies of God Churches,³²

On other hand, Charismatic refers to any groups or people that trace their historical origin to the charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and seek to practice all spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament which include prophecy, miraculous healing, tongues, interpretations, and distinguishing between spirits and allow differing view about whether tongues is a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. They very often refrain from forming their denomination, but they view themselves as a force for renewal within existing protestant and Catholic churches.³³

In this research, I have defined “Pentecostal” in African and Ethiopian contexts in which they represent the Indigenous church movement that operates by using the local cultural narratives

³⁰ <https://cprc.co.uk/>

³¹ Wayen Grudem, *Systematic Theology- An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 763

³² Wayen Grudem, *Systematic Theology- An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 763

³³ Wayen Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 763-764

and experiences. They are the ones who contextualize the gospel to the immediate context by appropriating the message of the gospel to the immediate need of the people.

1.8.5. Ubuntu

Ubuntu is an ancient African word meaning ‘humanity to others.’ It is often described as reminding us that ‘I am what I am because of who we all are’. Ubuntu theology is a Southern African Christian perception of the African Ubuntu philosophy that recognizes the humanity of a person through a person's relationship with other persons. It is best known through the writings of the Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu, who, drawing from his Christian faith, theologized Ubuntu by a model of forgiveness in which human dignity and identity are drawn from the image of the triune God. Human beings are called to be persons because they are created in the image of God.³⁴ Desmond Tutu says of Ubuntu "I am human because I belong, I participate, I share." In this form, Tutu's use of Ubuntu is an "I am because we are" concept that encourages the person to the responsibilities of communal good and makes one find one's good only in the communal good.³⁵

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

³⁵ Desmond Tutu . *No Future without Forgiveness*. (London: Rider, 1999), 34-36

Chapter Two

Historical background of Prosperity Gospel Movement and Their Major Doctrines

2.1. The Emergence of the Prosperity Gospel

In this section, I am going to discuss the emergence of the Property Gospel starting from the Western countries (USA) then to Africa, and then the local/Ethiopian prosperity Gospel preachers. Unfortunately, there is no written document to discuss the local leaders and their theological positions (for they directly copy the teaching of the Western and African Prosperity Gospel Preachers) but through the insight, I gathered from the interview and their teaching on satellite television.

2.1.1 Phineas Parkhurst Quimby

E. W. Kenyon is often accepted as the founder of Prosperity Gospel, but many researchers suggest that it is Phineas P. Quimby (1802 – 1866) who starts the idea of New Thought to which Kenyon was heavily influenced. McConnell and other scholars even connect the foundation of the Prosperity Gospel movement to the cultic origin by tracing back through Kenyon to the founder of the cultic New Thought philosophy whose name is called Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. Quimby is believed to be the one who influenced the founder of the Christian Science church, Mary Baker who subsequently influenced Kenyon.³⁶ Quimby popularized the idea that disease and suffering originate from incorrect thinking, positing that illness could be cured through healthy attitudes and positive thinking. Speaking about the power of positive thinking for healing he said,

“If I believe I am sick, I am sick, for my feelings are my sickness, and my sickness is my belief, and my belief is my mind. Therefore, all disease is in the mind or belief. Now as our belief or disease is made up of ideas, which are [spiritual] matter, it is necessary to know what beliefs we are in; for to cure the disease is to correct the error, and as the disease is what follows the error, destroy the cause, and the effect will cease...Your error is the cause of your sickness or trouble. Now to cure your sickness or trouble is to correct the error.”³⁷ This is exactly what the Prosperity Gospel teachers teach

³⁶Daniel McConnell. *A Different Gospel*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 25, 38

³⁷ Quimby P. *The Quimby manuscripts*. (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers.1921) 186

today everywhere. Ruben in his book explained Quimby's Mind-Cure healing ideas in a seven-element list.³⁸

2.1.2. E. W. Kenyon

One of the greatest teachers and founders of the Movement's prosperity thinking is E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948). He converted to Christianity during his adolescence and first preached in a Methodist church when he was nineteen years old. It is believed that Kenyon was influenced and incorporated the New Thought to Christianity due to the ongoing American cultural atmosphere which was characterized by the rapid expansion of the industrial revolution of the time which emphasis of anxiety, optimism, and even prosperity of the citizen. According to his biography in 1892 Kenyon joined Emerson College in Boston and in this college, he learned about the New Thought movement which later influenced his thinking about Christianity. Kenyon's message from the very beginning was the same and similar to the believer's condition of health and wealth³⁹. In one of his writings, he said clearly that,

“The believer does not need to ask the Father to heal him when he is sick, because ‘Surely he hath borne our sickness and carried our diseases; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.’ God laid our diseases on Jesus. Isaiah 53:10 states that it pleased Jehovah to make Him sick with our sicknesses so that by His stripes we are healed. If we are healed then we do not need to pray for our healing. All we need to do is rebuke the enemy in Jesus'

³⁸ Paul P. Reuben, "Chapter 4: American Transcendentalism: An Introduction." PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide. (July 13, 1998), 37. The followings are Quimby's Mind-Cure healing ideas

- 1) The omnipresent Wisdom, the warm, loving Father of us all, Creator of all the universe, whose works are good, whose substance is an invisible reality.
- 2) The real man, whose life is eternal in the invisible kingdom of God, whose senses are spiritual and function independently of matter.
- 3) The visible world, which Dr. Quimby once characterized as "the shadow of Wisdom's amusements"; that is, nature is only the outward projection or manifestation of an inward activity far more real and enduring.
- 4) Spiritual matter, or fine interpenetrating substance, directly responsive to thought and subconsciously embodying in the flesh the fears, beliefs, hopes, errors, and joys of the mind.
- 5) Disease is due to false reasoning in regard to sensations, which man unwittingly develops by impressing wrong thoughts and mental pictures upon the subconscious spiritual matter.
- 6) As disease is due to false reasoning, so health is due to knowledge of the truth. To remove disease permanently, it is necessary to know the cause, the error which led to it. "The explanation is the cure."
- 7) To know the truth about life is therefore the sovereign remedy for all ills. This truth Jesus came to declare. Jesus knew how he cured and Dr. Quimby, without taking any credit to himself as a discoverer, believed that he understood and practiced the same great truth or science.

³⁹ "Charismatic Roots." Seeking 4 Truth, Paul P. Reuben. "Chapter 4: American Transcendentalism: An Introduction." PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide. (July 13, 1998). Accessed on 22/2/2020.

Name, order him to leave our bodies, and thank the Father for perfect healing. It is all so simple.⁴⁰

Though Kenyon is the father of the Prosperity Gospel teaching, he was not known until McConnell recognized his contribution to the expansion of the movement in his research-based book called “Different Gospel”. Kenneth Hagin recognized as the founder of the movement theology. Walton for example in his book truly emphasizes the contribution of Kenyon in the following way “In fact, were it not for Daniel McConnell's A Different Gospel, which proves that the professed founder of the word of faith movement, Kenneth E. Hagin Sr., plagiarized entire sections of Kenyon's theological writings, Kenyon would have probably remained hidden in the shadow of the movement he helped to construct.”⁴¹

Though Kenyon formulated and organized the message of prosperity, during his lifetime the impact of his teaching was not influential. It is only after his death that many of his writing and preaching started to be used by different Pentecostal and charismatic preachers of the time including Kenneth Hagin.

2.1.3. **Kenneth Hagin**

According to his story, he was born prematurely in Mckinney, Texas. Was a sickly child who accepted Christianity at the age of fifteen while still, he was bedridden from his childhood sickness. By reading the Bible text Mark 11:24, he received his healing and he began to receive divine vision and visitation. When he was seventeen, he starts his ministry at Roland, Texas Baptist Church. Because of his strange experiences in Baptist Church, he was excommunicated from Southern Baptists in 1937. Right after he was excommunicated from Baptist, he joined Assemblies of God ministry in 1973 in East Texas. In 1962, Hagin founded the Kenneth E. Hagin Evangelistic Association Then in 1966 he was moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, he started the Faith Air radio program and opened Rhema Bible Church and Rhema Correspondence Bible School.⁴²

We cannot consider the history of the Prosperity Gospel without mentioning the influence and contribution of Kenneth Hagin, who not only plagiarized Kenyon’s teaching but speared

⁴⁰ Essek Kenyon, “*Things That Belong To Us,*” in *Two Kinds of Faith: Faith’s Secret Revealed*, (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing, 1989),

⁴¹ Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 97.

⁴² McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 1995:75-86

it widely through his internationally known media broadcasting. As an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God Church, his theology and teaching are based on his claimed healing and different personal visitation of God. As McConnell mentioned, Hagin claimed to have received special revelation from God for his healing ministry and he has also received eight personal visitations from Jesus Christ. During his ministry time in 1970 -1980, he is believed that influenced many other preachers of the movements including, Fred Prince, Charles Capps, Jimmy Swaggart, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Simpson, Bob Mumford, and John Wimber, and many others.⁴³

2.2. The Rise of Prosperity Gospel in Africa/Ethiopia

In this section, I will discuss the introduction of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Ethiopia with the factors that cause the expansion of the movements. I want to make it clear that the Prosperity Gospel movement of Ethiopia/Africa is different from the Prosperity Gospel of the Western world or America. The Prosperity Gospel in Ethiopia/Africa is strongly associated with the cultural narratives of the people by answering the people's everyday life questions and using the cultural elements in their worship and other activities. Many Prosperity Gospel movements in Ethiopia/Africa are associated with African Independent Churches. They preached the Western Prosperity Gospel doctrines and teaching in their context by appropriating the message to the context.

2.2.1. Factors Contributed to the Expansion of Prosperity Gospel in Africa/Ethiopia

Unlike the mission-founded mainline churches, the Prosperity Gospel movements are expanding at a very alarming rate in Africa and Ethiopia. The followings are some of the factors contributing to the expansion of the movement.

Socio- Economic Factor

One of the reasons the Prosperity Gospel churches flourish in Africa is because they attempt to answer everyday questions about poverty and pain. In Africa, people are primed and ready for any miracle to alleviate their suffering and poverty. Poverty in the community easily opens the door for the expansion of Prosperity Gospel Movements. According to Phiri, this is

⁴³ McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 1995:75-86

one of the reasons the mainline churches are losing the people⁴⁴. The African mainline churches are losing people to the Africa Pentecostal and Prosperity Gospel movement churches because those new emerging churches focus on the needs of the people. The Prosperity gospel churches preach negative preaching about the mainline churches. For example, as Banda mentioned, the Pentecostal preacher Reinhard Bonnke made a very negative statement about the mainline churches. He said, the mainline churches are “the graveyard churches” and are being “used by Satan to keep people from God”⁴⁵

Influence of Globalization

The other reason which contributes to the expansion of the Prosperity Gospel churches to Africa is because of the influence of globalization. As Bear mentioned as the result of improved transport and media distribution, the message of those prominent teachers of Prosperity Gospel in the USA has spread far and wide into the poverty-stricken heart of Africa⁴⁶. Phiri and Maxwell explain that more African owing television, religious broadcasts like TBN and God TV are gaining large audiences in Africa with Prosperity preachers like Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland, and Kenneth Hagin will get their message while they are in their home here in Africa.⁴⁷

African Traditional Religion

The similarity Prosperity gospel has with Africa Traditional Religion is another reason for the expansion of the movement in Africa. In Africa, Traditional Religion prosperity is the sign of the ancestral Spirit being pleased with them and they can be manipulated by offering sacrifices to them. On the other hand, according to Africa Traditional Religion sickness and pain are seen as the result of ancestral spirits who are not happy. As Michelin said, there is a clear similarity between the ideology of Prosperity Gospel and Africa Traditional Religion which both required animal sacrifice “to the ancestral spirit” and giving seed money to the “anointed one”⁴⁸ Phiri speaking about the similarity between ATR and Prosperity Gospel,

⁴⁴ Phiri JK . *African pentecostal spirituality: a study of the emerging African pentecostal churches in Zambia*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. 2009, 23 Available at <http://repository.up.ac.za>. 23 (accessed by author July 12,2022)

⁴⁵ Banda C. *Empowering hope? Jürgen Moltmann’s eschatological challenge to ecclesiological responses in the Zimbabwean context of poverty*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa. 2016 Available at <https://scholar.sun.ac.za>. 153 (accessed on June 12, 2022)

⁴⁶ Baer J 2014. *The soil of the prosperity gospel*. 9 marks journal, Jan–Feb, 22-25.

⁴⁷ Phiri I and Maxwell J 2007 (July). *Gospel riches: Africa’s rapid embrace of prosperity Pentecostalism provokes concern – and hope*. Christianity today, 22-29.

⁴⁸ Michelén S 2014. *Why is the prosperity gospel attractive?*. 9 marks journal, Jan–Feb, 30-33

African communities are “healing –Oriented societies”⁴⁹ and they used several rituals for healing from sickness caused by the spirits. The deliverance and exorcism theology is one of the most important ministries of the Prosperity Preacher movement which focuses on healing from sickness and disease than sin, which is very appealing to African communities.

In addition, there are also similarities between the Prosperity Gospel and African Traditional Religion in the teaching of “revelation knowledge” In ATR man is unable to reach God due to sin, therefore someone with special knowledge about God needs to intermediate between them. Those people are called ATR sangomas or traditional healers. The so-called “prophet”, “Apostle” and “the anointed one” in the Prosperity Preacher churches present themselves as the one who has special access to God and special power to exercise healing and exorcism. They are so appealing to the African communities with the same practice.

The African Worldview

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the other important factor that has contributed to the expansion of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa/Ethiopia is the worldview set up of African people in general. The Dutch interculturalist Benno van den Toren mentioned that the African worldview is characterized by “questions of illness, healing: curses and protection, questions which are generally less urgent in a modern Western and the enormous tension between the need for protection against spiritual powers and the continued existence of fear characterizing traditional Africa worldview.”⁵⁰ It is in this fertile soil that the prosperity Gospel preached messages that directly connected with their basic needs. I think the prosperity Gospel preacher found the key to opening the heart of the traditional African people. This key has been hidden from mainline mission-founded churches for years.

2.2.2. Overview Prosperity Gospel Movement in Africa and Ethiopia

The Prosperity Gospel movement is certainly alive and well organized in Africa and its dynamic effect and influence have been felt across the continent. It is a very appealing theology, which we have seen is not truly Bible-based and has managed to influence not only

⁴⁹ Phiri JK 2009. *African Pentecostal spirituality: a study of the emerging African Pentecostal churches in Zambia*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria. Pretoria, South Africa. Available at <http://repository.up.ac.za>.

⁵⁰ Van den Toren, Benno, “*Challenges and Possibilities of Inter-Religious and Cross-Cultural Apologetic Persuasion*,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2010): 61-64

the culture but it is a great challenge and treats the traditional evangelical churches with very serious damaging consequences across the continent.

Though the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel movement was birthed in North America its teaching affected the Bible-based believing Christian in the whole world including Africa. For example, in Nigeria, there are many prosperity preachers but the individual who first became most identified with this movement was a young firebrand preacher, Benson Idahosa, who would go on to become the father of the prosperity gospel in Africa. According to his teaching, Idahosa, against the trend in the society of his time, was preaching that Christians ought to have access to material wealth and live life to the full. According to the writing of Ojo regarding the influence of Idahosa, he said, Idahosa believed God created men and women for a better life than many are experiencing and He never intended that anyone should go through life imprisoned by their superstitions but He opens the door of success to every believer who will dare to step out and go after the good life.⁵¹

As Ogunilus⁵² mentioned, the prominent Africa Prosperity Gospel leaders who teach the same doctrine from the Western Prosperity teaching are including, the prominent preachers of like manner such as David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church (A.K.A Winners Chapel), E.A Adeboye of Redeemed Christian Church of God, W. F Kumuyi of Deeper Life Christian Bible Church, Ibiyeomie of Salvation Ministry, Ashimolowo of Kingsway International Christian Centre, London, and Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy Church, just to mention a few.⁵³

Lear said that the prosperity gospel has also become an export of America to the World.⁵⁴ This appealing gospel is one of the largest and most tragic exports that America takes to the Third World, especially to Africa. Though the basic doctrinal teachings are imported from the Western predominant preacher of Prosperity gospel, the African Prosperity Gospel contextualize the message in their context by appropriating the existing cultural narratives.

⁵¹M. A Ojo, *“Consonance and Dissonance in the Doctrinal Emphasis of Prosperity Among Nigerian Pentecostals,”* in *Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* 1(1), 2013, p.10

⁵² International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies article written by, Ogunlusi Clement Temitope Department of Religious Studies Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti, Nigeria, 2018

⁵³ F. B Adeleye and B.A, *The Preachers of a Different Gospel in Goka Muele Mpigi, “The Prosperity Theology impact in the contemporary Nigerian Church and Society,”* *Sky Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 5(5), October, 2017, pp. 034-043

⁵⁴ Shayna Lear L., *“The Bankrupt Theology of the Prosperity Gospel,”* (2014) Prism Magazine. Accessed February 3, 2020. 4

Positive Voice Toward the Movement

There are positive voices toward the Prosperity gospel in Africa. Lovemore Togarasei discussed the possible contribution of the Prosperity Gospel to the alleviation of poverty in Africa. Sadly, enough some people describe Africa as, ‘to think of Africa is to think of Poverty’⁵⁵ There are several causes for poverty in Africa, drought, bad governance, corruption, civil war, and ethnic conflict. There is also a big contribution from the colonizer to the poverty of Africa. Poverty is basically defined as the lack of basic needs for the survivors In Sub-Saharan Africa many people are in need of food, water, shelter, health care, and education and sub-Saharan African countries lack these basic needs. There are 300 million African people who live on less than US \$ 1 per day.

It is in this context that Prosperity Gospel found fertile soil in sub-Saharan African communities with the preaching of the Gospel of prosperity and they are the fastest-growing brand of Christianity in Africa. According to Lovemore Togarasei⁵⁶, one area that which Prosperity Gospel has contributed to poverty alleviation in Africa is through encouraging entrepreneurship. Many Prosperity Gospel churches teach the need for entrepreneurship. entrepreneurship is one way to promote sustainable development in contexts where unemployment is rampant and contributes significantly to poverty. Thus, the teachings on entrepreneurship by prosperity preachers should be welcome. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyaduh points out this point when he says, ‘African Pentecostalism has initiated a move from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism and hope.’⁵⁷ The most important contribution to poverty alleviation made by the gospel of prosperity is the positive mindset it gives to believers. As Kwabena Asamoah-Gyaduh has also argued, Pentecostalism addresses structures of oppression that consign Africa to backwardness, mediocrity, and non-achievement.⁵⁸ In addition to that, the Prosperity Gospel in Africa preached a holistic gospel by addressing all areas of individual life. Physical healing from sickness and deliverance from the possession of an evil spirit is also part of poverty alleviation according to Lovemore Togarasei

⁵⁵ A. O’Connor, *Poverty in Africa: A Geographical Approach*, (London: Belhaven 1991), 1

⁵⁶ L. Togarasei, ‘*The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal*,’ Exchange 40 (2011) 336-350.

⁵⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyaduh, ‘“Born of Water and the Spirit”: Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa,’ in: O. Kalu, (ed.), *African Christianity: An African Story*, Trenton: Africa World Press 2007, 351

⁵⁸ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyaduh, ‘“Born of Water and the Spirit”: Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa,’ in: O. Kalu, (ed.), *African Christianity: An African Story*, Trenton: Africa World Press 2007, 351

2.3. Prosperity Gospel in Ethiopia

In my context, as I am aware of it, the Christian community can be divided into three groups depending on their views on the Prosperity Gospel. The first groups are those who strongly support the Movements and their teaching. They would say that it is the will of God for all Christians to flourish in all areas of life. According to this group, prosperity preaching means having a holistic approach to man's needs including his material wellbeing. Those groups are very open to the Prosperity Gospel preachers to the point of obeying every word that comes out of the so-called "man of God." Many young people belong to this group. The second group of people is those who strongly oppose the movement's teaching and practices as the cultic demonic origin. The prosperity Gospel is a contemporary threat and danger to orthodox Christianity and therefore the church should get rid of all practices and teaching of the Prosperity gospel. The older members of mission-founded churches and key leaders in the church belong to this group. The third groups are those people with the middle view. Those are people with a positive attitude toward the Movements and are very cautious about drawing an immediate conclusion. They critically see the good and bad things in the Movements. The middle-working class people with some educational background belong to this group. As the researcher, I belong to the third middle view group. The purpose of this research is not to condemn the Movement but to correct and call them to constructive dialogue with the mainline churches.

Christianity entered Ethiopia in four different stages. Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in Africa to accept Christianity. The first stage starts from the biblical text of Acts 8: 26- 40 which narrates about the Ethiopian Officials met evangelist Philip who was led by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to meet this young man. In addition to this, Christianity entered the country in the fourth century - during the Axumite period - when the royal family became Christians - and the Christian faith gradually came to dominate the land. Following the acceptance of Christianity by the ruling elite, the Ethiopian church created a strong relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. As a result, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church received its Patriarch from Alexandria, Egypt, right up until 1959. Orthodox Christianity remained the state religion until 1974.

The second stage happened when the Roman Catholic Church missionaries entered the country with the aim of evangelization. This happened as the result of the relationship between Ethiopia and the Portuguese during the 16th century. It is believed that during this time the Portuguese tried to change the Ethiopian state religion to Catholic. This attempt

caused bloodshed as the peasants reacted angrily. As a result, Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country and were not allowed to return until the 19th century. Ethiopia had decided to follow a 'closed-door policy for 150 years from 1632 onwards.

The third stage was accompanied by the Protestant Missionaries from Europe, Canada, and America. After long resistance from the Orthodox-led officials, they manage to enter through the efforts of a spectrum of Lutheran missionaries from German and Swedish Lutheran missions in 1866. The other mission agencies joined the movements, in 1927 the German mission from Hermannsburg, and in 1940 and the 1950s missionaries from Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Canada, and the United States of America arrived. Those missionaries found two dominant Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia, these are Ethiopia Kale Hiywot Church and the Evangelical Churches of Mekan Eyesus. But from the beginning the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tried its best to restrict the influence of the missionaries among the Ethiopia community, however, their effort to remain the sole Christian Church in the country were crushed by the arrival of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) who launched their expansive work in South Ethiopia by the leadership of Dr. Lambie in 1927.

The fourth stage is characterized by the introduction and emergence of the Prosperity Gospel Movement. With the 1995 Communist Dergi regime collapse, by new government constitutional provision of freedom of worship, several neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic churches start to emerge with their message which focuses on earthly health, wealth, and happiness and the practice of planting financial "seeds" through monetary contribution to pastors. This stage is different from the above three in that the Prosperity Gospel churches originated indigenously from inside Ethiopia. Even though their background is from Pentecostal denominations, they are indigenous to Ethiopia. Like many African Independent Church (AICs) they used the local cultural ways of worship, they focus their preaching on people's everyday life challenges (needs).

The common features of Prosperity Gospel churches are their strong visibility and capacity for their words to travel far with their 24-hour TV channels that reach a large audience far beyond their own regions. Just like in other parts of Africa, Latin, and North America, as well as in Asia, there are self-appointed prosperity Gospel preachers who called themselves "prophets" and "apostles" through their attractive and motivational preaching they attract many young people to their gathering. The Prosperity Gospel movements start to fill most of the civic halls, former cinema halls, school halls, and other public places in most cities and

towns in Ethiopia. Members are usually young middle-class citizens. They make good use of public media including satellite television in advertising their services and other church activities.

In Ethiopia, while there are numerous prosperity gospel churches in different parts of the country but the source of all of those branches is the capital city, Addis Ababa. The followings are the names and lists of individuals who were selected as the preacher of Prosperity gospels by Ethiopia Mainline Meseret Kristos Church (members of Mennonite Denomination),⁵⁹ the most prominent ones are the Gospel of Kingdom International Churches led by Prophet Jeremiah Hussein, Christ Army International Church led by Eyu Chuffa, Addis Kidan church led by Yonatan Aklilu, Christ Jesus Life (CJ) Ministry led by Tamrat Tarekegn, FBI church leaders Bishop Dawit Molalign, Pastor Elshadiy Abera from South Africa, Bishop Tezer from Glorious Life International Church, Hilu Yohannes from the United State of America. The members of EKHC and other mainline churches are influenced by their attractive teaching through TV channels. All of the above-mentioned individuals have their TV channel through which they transmit a toxic message and contaminate the body of Christ. For this research, I didn't find the systematically written documents of the Ethiopia Prosperity Gospel teaching but tenants of word of faith theology, such as positive confession, little gods, faith and confession, dominion theology, and health and prosperity, have become the caricatures of the entire preaching styles.⁶⁰

The above-mentioned individuals are called the preacher of Prosperity Gospel preachers because of their teaching and preaching the following three claims are the common characteristics of Prosperity Gospel preacher has been observed. First, it is the will of God for his people to be healthy, wealthy, and happy at all times. In another word, they argue that it is never been God's will for people to suffer. Second, through the atonement, God has made it possible for us to attain a life of material prosperity, free from suffering. Third, the way to actualize these things is by releasing 'the force of faith' through positive confession.

⁵⁹ *The General Assembly of Ethiopia Meseret Kirstos Church (Member of the Menonite Denomination) in their annual leadership summit which was conducted in 2009 in Addis Ababa announced the above-mentioned individuals as the preacher of different gospel and restricted them from preaching in any of their local churches in the country*

⁶⁰ <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/>

2.4. The teaching of Prosperity Gospel on “Image of God”

Like other mainline Christian Churches, the Prosperity Gospel preachers do not have unified teaching or they do not preserve their teaching in a systematic theological form that works for all Prosperity Gospel preachers. This makes it very difficult for anyone who wants to research their standing and their foundational beliefs. Their doctrine is formulated by individual personalities and then passes down to others who follow them. And then picked up on the original teachings of the predecessor and added the new revelations, perspectives, and different interpretations of the biblical texts.

In this section, I have mainly used the writing of the Western Prosperity Gospel preachers for two reasons. First, I cannot find the written documents from the indigenous local churches of the movements. Second, based on my observation and interview their belief and practices are the same as the Western prominent preacher of Prosperity Gospel. Many of them have very close relationships with the Western prosperity preachers.

In this research, I limit my discussion to the Prosperity Gospel movement’s theology of the image of God also referred to as ‘the little gods’ teaching which is primarily constructed on the belief that man was created to be exactly like God. According to the teaching of Creflo Dollar, this likeness of man is contextualized along the lines of two arguments; the first is that man has become a living soul, ‘just like God’, and the second is that man possessed ‘dominion and authority over everything in the earth, as God did.’⁶¹ In addition to this, the Prosperity preachers teach differently about the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Because of his sin, Adam lost two main things. First, Adam’s sin was treason against God which means according to the WOF, Adam willingly by opposing God’s will transferred his authority of ownership of the earth to Satan.

Therefore, according to the Movement, the purpose of Jesus’ atonement is not just to reconcile us with God, rather Jesus died to restore man’s equality with God so that man might exercise his authority on earth as the god of this earth. Since man has restored authority to dominion and rules the earth, he has power just to speak a word and to bring whatever things into existence.⁶² Second, according to their teaching, in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned against God, he lost dominion and authority over the whole creations. And they argue that in Old Testament the restoration of dominion and authority was the central theme of the

⁶¹ Dollar, Creflo. *Not Guilty: Experience God’s gift of Acceptance and Freedom*. (New York: Faith Words Publishers, 2006) , 88-104

⁶² Dollar, Not Guilty, 28, 75-76, 92. Munroe, *Releasing your Potential*, 72

covenant between God and man and that Christ restored dominion and authority to man through his death and resurrection. Through faith and confession man lays claim to his restored dominion and authority and as a result, can speak things into existence such as health and prosperity.

The image of God in man is understood in Evangelical, Catholic, and other mainline churches that the “image” emanates from God reflecting the holy character of God through man. But the WOF understood the “image of God” in man very differently. Kenneth Hagin said “man was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God’s presence without any consciousness of inferiority⁶³ According to Hagin’s interpretation, it is no longer the character of God that shines through man, but man now possesses the character of God. The implication of this approach will lead to the understanding that since man was created to be equal with God; man would not have to submit to the will of God.

Morris Cerullo, speaking about man’s divinity said that “when standing up here, brother, you are not looking at Morris Cerullo, you are looking at God”⁶⁴. In the same way, Kenneth Copeland said, “You don’t have a God in you; you are one.”⁶⁵ Presenting himself equally with the Lord Jesus Christ he said, “When I read in the Bible where he (Jesus) says, ‘I AM,’ I just smile and say, ‘Yes, I AM, too’⁶⁶ The general premises from the above quote from WOF is that man was originally created to be god this earth.

Speaking about the similarity between man and God, Myles Munroe based on Genesis 1:26 said that, ‘The Hebrew word translated into the English word likeness means to operate like, not to look like. God’s original design for man requires that we function like God ... How does God operate? God operates by faith.⁶⁷ This implies that God himself needs faith to operate in his creation.

Moreover, the biblical account of the fall in Genesis 3:1-5 is understood by many evangelicals and by any faithful reader of the Bible as the fall of Adam and Eve due to their willful sin against God. As the result, they fall from grace and are separated from God. This is the same biblical account of Adam and Eve’s sin understood by the propagator of Prosperity Gospel preacher as if Adam and Eve lost authority and position which was given

⁶³ Hagin, Zoe, *The Kind of Life*,

⁶⁴ Kenneth Copland, *Now we are in Christ*

⁶⁵ Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Love*

⁶⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *Bilivers Voice of Victory*

⁶⁷ Munroe, *Releasing your Potential*, 72.

by God to rule and dominion on the earth.⁶⁸ This understanding of the text led them to develop another theological argument about man's deification. This understanding of man as the deified being led them to develop different theological standing of the movements. That theological position includes the development of dominion theology, in which they argue that man is deified being and equal to God. This understanding of man's equality with God led them to develop 'little god theology'.

As a consequence, the view that man was created as a god in his right influences the movement's overall doctrines and teachings. According to the movement's theology, Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden is understood as a form of treason against God which resulted in man's transferring of ownership of the earth to Satan.⁶⁹ This paper primarily focuses on the movement's understanding of the doctrine of the image of God on the basis that man stands as an equal to God.

According to the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel, the restoration of authority and dominion brought by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ led them to develop the doctrine of 'authority and dominion', 'the doctrine of the covenant', 'the doctrine of faith and confessions' and 'doctrine of prosperity and wealth'. All of those doctrines are developed and constructed on the premise that God created human beings as gods of this world with the primary aim to rule and reign. Therefore, the fall in the Garden of Eden is contextualized in terms of the loss of authority, power, and dominion.

To sum up the point, the Prosperity Gospel Movement (including the locals/Ethiopians who directly copy the teaching from the Western Prosperity preacher) argued that Adam and Eve lost their authority and dominion during the fall in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. This view of a man losing authority and dominion during the fall has a substantial impact on the way they develop their main doctrines. These main doctrines of the Movements focus on glorifying the individual in the Movements. The pastors of the Movements developed a high self-image where they demand the members to serve their interests.

⁶⁸ Myles Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom*

⁶⁹ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 2006

2.5. ‘Image of God’ As a Central Organizing Framework for the Movement’s Beliefs and Practices

In this section, I am going to discuss four doctrinal teachings which directly related to the doctrine of the “image of God” from the perspective of Prosperity Gospel teaching,

Doctrine of Authority and Dominion

The first is the theology of “authority and dominion’ it is based on the interpretation of the image of God in the biblical account of Genesis 1:26-27. The Biblical account in Genesis 1: 26-27 talks about the creation of man in the ‘image of God’ understood by Prosperity gospel preachers differently. The Prosperity Gospel understanding of the “the image of God” in man is directly related to God’s transfer of power of authority to man and physical similarity with man. Ben Hinn even though he has recanted all of those false teachings, once speaking about the image of God said, God is ‘like that of a man ... God has the likeness of fingers and hands and a face.’⁷⁰

Dollar ties this theological view of ‘god-type’ or ‘god-class’ to the divine authority by relying on Genesis 1:26: in this regard, he states: ‘We are supernaturally created and are God-natured in spirit, soul and body. And verse 26 lets us know that our likeness to the Father comes with dominion over His creation.’⁷¹ According to Dollar, the image of God in man is understood in terms of the rights and privileges imparted to man. His view is mainly focused on the aspect of authority in man. He said “Adam and Eve were already like God. They were made in His image and likeness; they were His reflection of God on the earth. They had become living souls, just like God. They had dominion and authority over everything in the earth, as God did.”⁷²

In support of this view on a man possessing divine authority and being able to create through confession, Dollar states that: “The Chumash translates Genesis 2:7 this way: God breathed into the nostrils of man, and man became another speaking spirit.” Here Dollar tries to justify the divinity of man by distorting the meaning of a word from the context. But according to Hoffman, the Hebrew scholars, the Hebrew term, nephesh, in the above-mentioned text refers not to the divinity of man but to the reality of life.⁷³

⁷⁰ Benny Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, 84

⁷¹ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 105-106

⁷² Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 88.

⁷³ J. Hoffman, *And God Said: How Translations Conceal the Bible’s Original Meaning* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010).

The belief of the Prosperity Gospel movement which says during the fall a man lost authority and position also led them to an unbiblical understanding of the mission of Christ and his sacrificial death. According to the movement's theology of Christology, Jesus' prime mission was to restore man's equality with God which was lost by Adam and Eve. The result of this restoration of authority and dominion, according to the teaching of the movement is, man as an equal being with God has the ability and power to speak words to the desired outcome and then it became a reality. In addition, due to this restoration, they claim, God put the man in his restored position as the god of the earth, and also man has the divine ability to live a healthy and wealthy life by his word of mouth.⁷⁴ In the teaching of Prosperity Gospel preachers, the fall of man is understood in the context of man's loss of the ownership of position, power, and authority and not in terms of spiritual death which is the result of eternal separation from the presence of God. During the fall of man, the authority and dominion given by God were transferred to Satan and it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the authority and dominion were restored to humanity.

Doctrine of Faith and Confession

The second key doctrine has to do with the understanding of Faith and confession. Christian faith is generally understood to be comprised of "trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching, and the redemptive work He accomplished at Calvary."⁷⁵ Prosperity Gospel teachers approach the issue differently in ways that promote their own self-interests. For example, Kenneth Copeland's book, *The Laws of Prosperity*, includes the remarkable assertion that "Faith is a spiritual force, spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function. . . . There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God's Word. Faith causes them to function."⁷⁶ The principle of 'faith' is extended by the Prosperity Gospel to the restoration theology which says by faith you have restored to your god-like position.

Creflo Dollar described the power of faith as a force that causes things to happen if properly applied. He said, "the force of faith if properly harnessed, can destroy sickness, lack, or any other negative thing that has manifested in the physical realm. Faith is the superior force, and physical things are secondary. The force of faith can make physical things respond to it.

⁷⁴ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 2006

⁷⁵ Jones, *The Bankruptcy of the Prosperity Gospel*, 5

⁷⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*, 14-15.

Physical laws must submit to the law of faith.”⁷⁷ Speaking about the creative power of words, Joyce Meyer said, “words are containers for power...they carry either creative or destructive power...what you say today is...what you’ll end up having tomorrow”. She further argued that by words spoken by a believer’s one may “keep the devil under one’s feet.”⁷⁸ According to Meyer, one must talk back to the devil and in doing so, assume authority over a negative life situation. The relation of faith and confession to the doctrine of image of God is that as the bearer of the image of God which is restored by the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians have authority and dominion to call things into existence by the confessional words of faith.

Doctrine of Covenant

The third is the doctrine of the covenant. In relation to the Prosperity Gospel theology of authority and dominion and faith, the covenant theology is also one of the central teachings which shaped the overall teaching of the movement. The concept of the covenant theology from the Prosperity Gospel perspective presented primarily on the idea that the blessings of the Old Testament as promised to Israel through the Abrahamic covenant are applicable to the Christian as the spiritual offspring of Abrahams. They argue that Galatians 3:13 connect the New Testament believers to the Old Testament covenant of Deuteronomy 28.

The basic teaching of this covenant theology is that the blessings and curses of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28 apply to the believer in a literal and physical sense. Copeland argues that since the Abrahamic covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, Christians too are entitled to this provision⁷⁹. Fred Price strongly reinforces Copeland’s position in the same way by saying that Abraham was blessed materially, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us...with cattle, gold, manservants, maidservants, camels, and asses”.⁸⁰ Speaking about the strong relationship between Galatians 3:13-14 and Deuteronomy 28: 15-68 which speaks about blessing and curse, Kenneth Hagin argues that the penalty for breaking God’s law is threefold: poverty, sickness, and spiritual death, and Jesus redeemed us from all of them⁸¹.

⁷⁷ Creflo Dollar, *The Power that Brings the World to Its Knees*. Bible Study Notes. 6 May 2009. (Creflo Dollar Ministries, 2009; retrieved 22 January 2022,

⁷⁸ Joyce Meyer. *Eight ways to keep the devil under your feet*. (New York, NY: Warner Faith. 2002), 151

⁷⁹ Kenneth Copeland. *The laws of prosperity*. (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Ministries. 1974), 51

⁸⁰ Fred Price. *Prosperity on God’s terms*. Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1990a

⁸¹ Hagin K. Redeemed from poverty, sickness, death. (Garland, TX: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1963), 1

The Prosperity Gospel theology of covenant primarily focused on the covenant that God has made to Adam in Genesis 3: 15-16 and to Abraham in Gen 12: 1-3 and Genesis 15. The covenant of Genesis 3: 15 -16 as understood by the Prosperity Gospel is the first covenant between man and God. In this covenant, according to the movement teaching, God promised to man full restoration of power, authority, ownership, and position. Myles Munroe in his writing spoke about the fulfillment of the Adamic covenant in the work of Jesus Christ as Jesus broke the power of Satan over mankind and restored the authority and dominion Adam and Eve once owned through his death Jesus restored it back to man.⁸²

During the fall Adam and Eve lost their power and authority and it was given to Satan. So according to the teaching of the prosperity Gospel, God in order to restore that power and authority to man has to find a legal way. According to Prosperity Gospel teachers, this legal way for God to function is through the covenant to Adam in Genesis 3: 15-16 and to Abraham in Genesis 15, and finally through Jesus Christ in New Testament.⁸³ So, the Prosperity Gospel believes that the Old Testament God's covenant to man to rule and dominate the world is restored through Jesus and now man has full authority to rule and dominate the world.

Doctrine of Prosperity and Health

The fourth and the most attractive and known teaching of the Prosperity Gospel movement is that they argue God promises believers material wealth. According to the movements, the fact that the believers have restored position in the New Testament through Jesus Christ, it guarantees the power to exercise authority in commanding the material blessing and health. Thus, poverty is of the devil and it is not God's will that any of His children should live in want. Kenneth Hagen speaking about the will of God for believers, said, "He [also] wants His children to eat the best, He wants them to wear the best clothing, He wants them to drive the best cars, and He wants them to have the best of everything."⁸⁴ Kenneth Copland speaking about getting a hundredfold with our money if we give to the ministry of God, said "Do you want a hundredfold return on your money? Give and let God multiply it back to you. Invest heavily in God; the returns are staggering, ... Every man who invests in the Gospel has a right to expect the staggering return of one hundredfold."⁸⁵ But in the context of the text, Jesus

⁸² Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom*,

⁸³ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 49

⁸⁴ Kenneth Hagen, Quoted by D.L. McConnell *A different Gospel* p.175

⁸⁵ Kenneth Copeland, *Laws of Prosperity*, p. 67

spoke of hundredfold referring to people who hear God's Word and act according to it that such will have a staggering spiritual harvest in bearing fruit that is in accordance with God's Word.

The health and wealth doctrine of the Prosperity Gospel movement is a result of the way in which humans are positioned within its theology. By exercising the restored authority and dominion over the work of Satan, which includes sickness, disease, and poverty, they say the believer is able to live a kingdom life here on earth which includes health and prosperity.

To summarize the relationship of the 'image of God' to the four main doctrines of the Movement, we can make the following points from above discussion. The Prosperity Gospel teaching about the "image of God" is primarily constructed on the belief that man was originally created to be exactly like God.⁸⁶ The Movement understood the image of God in man in an anthropomorphic view in which Adam and Eve are perceived as exact copies of God. The statement from Copeland revealed this fact. He said 'God and Adam looked exactly alike, and that God is a 'spirit-being with a body, complete with eyes, and eyelids, ears, nostrils, a mouth, hands and fingers, and feet.'⁸⁷ The doctrine of the image of God in the Prosperity Movement is the foundational doctrine upon which the other theology of the Movements rests. For many Christian denominations, the interpretation of Genesis 3: 1-5 is understood as a man separate and falling from the grace of God.⁸⁸ But the Prosperity Movement did not see it as separation but they see it as a loss of authority and dominion.⁸⁹ In relation to this, the Movement's understanding of the Old Testament doctrine of the covenant is as the promise of God to restore man to his dominion and authority position (doctrine of the covenant)⁹⁰. The mission of Christ is understood as the mission of restoring man to the position of dominion and authority (doctrine of dominion and authority)⁹¹ as a result of having restored identity man has the ability to speak the desire of his heart (doctrine of faith

⁸⁶ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 88.

⁸⁷ Kenneth Copeland, 'Believer's Voice of Victory', Trinity Broadcast Network (9 February 1987);

⁸⁸ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2011), 768. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 490.

⁸⁹ Myles Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom: Ancient Hope for our 21st Century World*. (Shippensburg, Pasadena: Destiny Image Publishing, 2004), 56.

⁹⁰ Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom*, 35.

⁹¹ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 90-91, 109.

and confession)⁹² including prosperity and health and everything becomes reality because of man's restored identity of divinity (doctrine of prosperity and health).⁹³

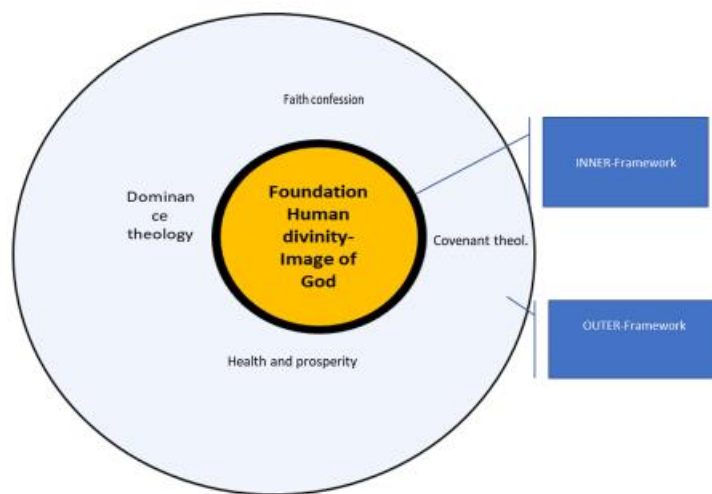


Fig. 1. The above diagram shows the foundational doctrine of the “image of God” and the relation to other major major doctrines of dominion, covenant, health and wealth and faith the Movements. The ‘Image of God’ is the foundational doctrine of the Movement that all other doctrines rests on it.

⁹² Munroe, *Releasing your Potential*, 72.

⁹³ Joyce Meyer, *Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battle in your Mind* (New York, NY: Warner Faith Publishers, 1995): 205-206, 297.

Believing	Belonging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Image of God- man's divinity/dominion and authority -Fall-man lost authority and dominion -Dominion and authority have been given o Satan -Old Testament covenant of restorative -Through Christ dominion and authority restored to man -Speak the word and create things to happen -Poverty a sickness sign of lack of fait 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -God family with dominion and authority --I am Upper-class -Authority and dominion restored through Christ -The Experience Kingdom of God -I am Blessed and anointed 'little god' -Special one
Behaving	Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Triumphalism winning through the Prosperity gospel -living Kingdom life -Commanding nature with words -Kingdom right now -Experience Financial Prosperity and health 'seed money' on my ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Success in finance and health sign of true Christian -God is on my side -No limit for my prosperity -No faith- no gain -God-type of faith -Calling the blessings and good health

Table 1 shows the BBBE analysis of a compressive summary of the Prosperity Gospel teaching on the anthropocentric interpretations of the 'image of God' and related doctrines of dominion, covenant, faith, and health, and wealthy. The table shows the 'individualistic' or man-centered interpretation of the image of God in contrast to the Bavinck's organic view of image of God which I am going to discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Herman Bavinck Reformed Theology on “Image of God”

In this section before I discuss the theological view of Bavinck, I want to do a biographical sketch of Herman Bavinck for the following reason. First, I am writing this research to my context for those who have no idea about Herman Bavinck, and my research is about the work of Bavinck on the image of God. So, I want my reader to know not only his theology but also the life and contribution of this great man. Second, this great man deserves to be mentioned in every context because there are principles that we can learn from his life and ministry experience.

3.1. Historical Background of Herman Bavinck (*December 13, 1854 – July 29, 1921*)

Herman Bavinck was an influential theologian born in the Netherlands. He was born on December 13, 1854, in Hoozevee, Holland. The Bavinck family was a part of the Seceder Church in the Netherlands meaning that they had separated from the state Reformed church. The reason for this separation was the spiritual and moral laxity amongst the mainline church as well as an obvious shift towards liberal theological positions that denied things like the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like most secession groups they were not well-liked for this move. John Bolt clearly states the situation in this way “The Christian Reformed community of the nineteenth century was a dissenting community that had separated itself from the National Church, was preoccupied with the purity of doctrine and holiness of life, insisted upon church discipline and a biblically-based polity, and occupied a marginalized position out of step with the mainstream of Dutch culture and society.”⁹⁴

His father was a minister in Hoozevee. After completing his high school education in Zwolle, he started his theological education at Kampen Theological University. After a year he joined the University of Leiden for his desire to study theology from a scientific perspective. In all of his educational carrier, Bavinck turned out to be an excellent student who won several academic prizes. Then at the age of 36, in 1891, Herman married Johanna Adriana Schippers (who was 10 years his younger) and together they had a daughter. In 1882, at the age of 28, he was appointed a professor of theology at Kampen, and taught there from 1883 until his appointment, in 1902, to the chair of Systematic Theology in the Free

⁹⁴ John Bolt, *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 26-27.

University of Amsterdam, where he succeeded the great Abraham Kuyper, then recently appointed Prime Minister of the Netherlands. During his stay at TUK, he taught Reformed dogmatics, an encyclopedia of sacred theology, ethics, and philosophy. Then on July 29, 1921, Herman Bavinck died in Amsterdam at the age of 66.

Herman Bavinck's works and Publications

Regarding his work and publication, Herman Bavinck produced the following excellent publication. In the year 1880, Bavinck successfully defended his thesis "The Ethics of Zwingli" and he was granted the doctor of theology degree (cum laude). In 1881 the "Synopsis Purais Theologia" in Latin. In 1883 he published "The Science of sacred theology." In 1888 he published "The Catholicity of Christianity and Church." In 1895, he published "The Common Grace" and in 1908 he also published "Philosophy of Revelation" In addition to his earlier dissertation and the critical edition of the Synopsis Purioris Theologiae, were the following: The Theology of Dr. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1884); The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church (1888); Eloquence, a treatise on the art of public speech (1889); Principles of Psychology (1897); The Sacrifice of Prayer (1901); and Creation or Evolution (1901). In addition to these more academic works, Bavinck also produced a great number of shorter essays and articles, serving for a period with Kuyper and Rutgers as an editor of The Clarion (De Bazuin), the denominational paper of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken der Nederland), the union denomination of the churches of the Secession of 1834 and the churches of the "Doleantie," a further secession from the Dutch Reformed Church that took place in 1886. The Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck was a brilliant scholar, yet a humble man with deep feelings and a tender heart for the Lord and His word. As a professor of theology, he had an impressive knowledge of modern philosophical and religious challenges as well as of the history of ideas, both from the perspectives of Christian and non-Christians. He is considered by many as one of the few 19th-century leading Dutch Reformed theologians whose works are still studied and discussed today.

James Eglinton summarizes the life of Herman Bavinck in this way "a dogmatician, an ethicist, an educational reformer, a pioneer, in Christian psychology, a politician, a biographer, a journalist, a Bible translator, a campaigner for women's education, and eventually, the father, father-in-law, and grandfather of heroes and martyrs in the anti-Nazi

resistance movement.”⁹⁵ Even though Bavinck is a Dutch Reformed Theologian, it is my hope that he is also an African/Ethiopian theologian who contributed a lot to the Church of Christ all over the world. The legacy of this amazing man deserves a lot of attention and his interesting biography need to be read and his theological writing studied by all conservative theologian all around the world including Ethiopia!

3.2. Discussing Herman Bavinck’s ‘Organic’ Motif

Bavinck in his 1904 work of Christian Worldview *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing* defined the sense in which he uses the term ‘organic’. In this work, Bavinck acknowledges that there are only two worldviews that exist: the theistic and the atheistic. In opposite to the theistic mechanism which was promoted by Leiden Professor Scholten and Rauwenhoff, Bavinck promotes a worldview founded on a Trinitarian doctrine of God must move towards a non-mechanical interpretation of the universe.⁹⁶ Bavinck defines his organic motif in the following ways,

‘There is a most profuse diversity [in the cosmos] and yet, in that diversity, there is also a superlative kind of unity. The foundation for both diversity and unity is in God. . . . Here is a unity that does not destroy but rather maintains diversity, and a diversity that does not come at the expense of unity, but rather unfolds it in its riches. In virtue of this unity the world can, metaphorically, be called an organism, in which all the parts are connected with each other and influence each other reciprocally.’⁹⁷

From the above definition of Bavinck about organic motif James Eglinton derived four important principles which define Bavinck’s organic motif,⁹⁸

The first principle derived by Eglinton is the created order is marked by simultaneous unity and diversity. This has a strong relationship with the Triune God. Since the universe is a general revelation of God, it must reflect his identity as three-in-one. The organic thinking begins with seeing the universe as the general revelation of God’s Trinity. Bavinck said, “The Christian mind remains unsatisfied until all of existence is referred back to the triune God, and until the confession of God’s Trinity functions at the center of our thought and life”⁹⁹ The second principle derived by Eglinton is the idea of “unity precedes diversity.” In the

⁹⁵ Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 291.

⁹⁶ James Eglinton, *Trinity, and Organism Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck’s Organic Motif*. T&T Clark International: NewYork, 2012, 67

⁹⁷ *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.435–6.

⁹⁸ James Eglinton, *Trinity, and Organism*, 67-69

⁹⁹ *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.330.

beginning, God created a single cosmos and filled it with diversity. In this principle of unity in diversity, unity always comes first because of God who is always constant and Triune. Bavinck associates this principle to ecclesiology and he said,

“In the first place, therefore, the ingathering of the elect must not be conceived of individualistically and atomistically. The elect, after all, have been given eternally to Christ, are included in the covenant, have all been born in due time from Christ as the body with all its members are all born from the head, and made partakers of all his benefits. The church is an organism, not an aggregate; the whole, in its case, precedes the parts.”¹⁰⁰

The third principle according to Eglinton is the idea of the organism’s shared life is orchestrated by a common idea. As in any healthy body, the distinctive organs complement rather than counter each other, the idea that unity in diversity is quite unlike the chaos of multiformity. The final point mentioned by Eglinton is the goal of the organism is to bring glory to the Triune God.

Hans Burger in his book entitled “Being in Christ- A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective” defined the concept of the organism as an important concept Herman Bavinck used to describe the reality of “being in Christ.”¹⁰¹ According to Burger, the concept of organism is an important concept in the neo-Calvinism theology of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Speaking about the background of organic thinking Burger said that it is originated in the nineteenth century of German theology and Philosophy.¹⁰² Herman Bavinck to develop his organism concept was influenced by theologians like Bengel, Bohme, Oetinger, and Beck. On other hand, Abraham Kuyper developed his organic thinking from the work of John Owen. Historically the idea of organic thinking developed in opposition to modernism, individualist, and mechanical thinking. The main characteristics feature of organic thinking, according to Burger, are biological metaphor, development historicity, growth, and self-organization.¹⁰³

Burger mentioned several aspects of organic thinking relevant to the concept of ‘Being in Christ.’ In organic thinking, development is determined by a fixed starting point that is nature. This idea is explained by Burger in the following two ways, Christ is the head of the organism of re-creation and in the life of a Christian, the re-creation starts with the help of the

¹⁰⁰Reforemed Dogmatics, 3.524.

¹⁰¹ Hans Burger. *Being in Christ – A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective*. Wipf & Stock Publisher: Eugene, Oregon, 2009, 132-137

¹⁰² Hans Burger. *Being in Christ*, 132

¹⁰³ Hans Burger. *Being in Christ*, 132

Holy Spirit at the time of regeneration. The implication of this regeneration is as it is a rule in organic life believer has to grow.¹⁰⁴ The other point Burger mentioned about the aspect of organic thinking to the concept of ‘being in Christ is in organism, the whole precedes the parts and unity precedes diversity. This principle has to do with “if the head determined the body and the entire body is more than the totality of the different members.”¹⁰⁵ According to Burger “this organic reality is a collective reality” In relating this with the Church Burger said “if the church constitutes together with Christ an organic whole, that is included in him, the individual believer is primarily part of a larger whole.”¹⁰⁶ The organic thinking does not deny the existence of individual but respect individuality. In relation to this Burger said, “organic thinking respects the rich diversity of creatures and does not force individual instance in a predetermined system.”¹⁰⁷ But according to Burger, this does not imply that the organic thinking does not respect individuality, instead, it acknowledges the factuality of creations.”

To summarize Bavinck’s organic motif, the ‘organic’ language is a major feature of German Idealism. But neo-Calvinistic “organic” emphasis was promoted by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Bavinck used organic motif to communicate creation’s Triune shape. As James Eglinton describes creation displays an organic ontology of diversities in unity precisely because in God there is an archetypal unity and diversity. Hans Burger argued that Herman Bavinck used the concept of organism to describe the reality of “being in Christ.” The reality of ‘being in Christ is a collective reality. But this does not imply that organic thinking does not respect individuality rather it acknowledges the plurality of creatures.

3.3. Discussing Herman Bavinck’s “Organic” view of the ‘Image of God’

As I have concluded in chapter two the Prosperity Gospel Movement developed an anthropomorphic, and individualistic definition of the “image of God’ that led the Movement leaders to develop high self-esteem and a *little-god* attitude toward themselves. In this section, I will explore how the Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck approaches the ‘image of God’ in man in a different way than other reformed theologians.

¹⁰⁴ Hans Burger. Being in Christ,134

¹⁰⁵ Hans Burger. Being in Christ, 135

¹⁰⁶ Hans Burger. Being in Christ,135

¹⁰⁷ Hans Burger. Being in Christ,136 quoting Hielema “Herman Bavinck Eschatological Understanding of Redemption, 59

As I have discussed in section 1.8.2 many theologians and philosophers associated the image of God in man with different faculties of man, some relate it with the freedom to will, rationalities, self-consciousness or even man's capacity related to God in worship. Though all of the definitions are important and reasonable all of them emphasize one thing which is seeing the image of God in man as something individual. But the Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck approaches the issues of the image of God in man in a different way. According to him, the image of God is too rich to be confined to the individual or even to the Human family. In the words of Bavinck, "the image of God can only be somewhat unfolded in its depth and riches in a humanity counting billions of members"¹⁰⁸

The Reformed theologian Nathaniel Sutanto in his article¹⁰⁹ describes how Herman Bavinck's teaching on the "organic" Image of God related to the doctrine of original sin and its consequences. Sutanto said that Bavinck's basic argument is to make a theological rationale for the doctrine of original sin. How did Adam's sin transfer to human beings? What is the theological (biblical basis)? Bavinck tried to answer these very important questions in his treatment of the 'organic' view of the image of God. To begin with, Bavinck talks about the relationship in Godhead in this way, 'In God, too, there is unity in diversity, diversity in unity. Indeed this order and this harmony is present in him absolutely. In the case of creatures, we see only a faint analogy of it.'¹¹⁰ The simple logic behind this argument according to Bavinck is that because God is a Trinitarian being, creation (including man) will display both unity and diversity as an organic whole. Sutanto said, for Bavinck, an organic unity-in-diversity in the Triune God implies a superlative organic unity-in-diversity in the bearers of his image, in the human being, and in the entire human race. Adam is the representative of all God's image-bearer people. The writer said in the conclusion, "if *Imago Dei* does not merely consider individual human beings, but the entirety of the human race as an organic unity, the objection that one could not be held responsible for the sins of another loses its force."¹¹¹ Therefore, as the author said, the transmission of original guilt on account of Adam's trespass is not a mere special ordinance by an inscrutable divine will, but an expression of humanity's organic shape.

In his magnum opus *Reformed Dogmatics*, he said that the image of God in man,

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, Herman, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2. 577.

¹⁰⁹ This is an article from the online platform article accessed by writer June 14, 2022, 'Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin', published in the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2016. at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijst.12138/abstrac>

¹¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 2, p. 331

¹¹¹ <https://www.pastortheologians.com/>

“can only be somewhat unfolded in its depth and riches in a humanity counting billions of members. Just as the traces of God (*vestigia Dei*) are spread over many, many works, in both space and time, so also the image of God can only be displayed in all its dimensions and characteristic features in humanity whose members exist both successively... and contemporaneously side by side.”¹¹²

The point raised by Herman Bavinck regarding the image of God in man has two important applications to the Prosperity Gospel movement in Ethiopia. First, Bavinck’s “organic” view of the image of God in man has directly associated with his “Trinitarian” assumption in which Bavinck argues that man is created to reflect the image of God which is characterized as ‘unity in diversity in persons of the Trinity (God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit). Gray Sutanto explains Bavinck’s idea by saying that “With this understanding, according to Bavinck, human beings are the bearer of the image of God not just as the individual but as cooperate.” In addition, Suntato said, “While we are indeed a diversity of individuals, we are united together under a federal head in Adam or in Christ. As such, part of what it means to be made in God’s image is precisely to be in ethical solidarity”¹¹³ In other words, bearing ‘organic’ image of God means that we are God’s image bearers not simply as individuals, but as a corporate and ethical unity – a single organism.

The second, against the individualistic and anthropomorphic view of Prosperity Gospel in man, Bavinck argues that the organic view of the image of God in humanity has a great application to the world to come. According to the teaching of the Bible, in the coming new heaven and earth and heaven, each people group will manifest something of the glory of God and who we are as image-bearers. Bavinck said “Tribes, peoples, and nations will make their own particular contribution to the enrichment of life in the new Jerusalem... The great diversity that exists in all sorts of ways is not destroyed in eternity but is cleansed from all that is sinful and made serviceable to fellowship with God and each other.”¹¹⁴ Until to that day when we meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in New Jerusalem, Bavinck encourages Christian to practice this “organic unity” as the bearer of the image of God.

According to Bavinck, our task here is to witness to that final day and during that day “humanity in its entirety – as one complete organism, summed up under a single head, spread out over the whole earth, as a prophet, proclaiming the truth of God, as priest dedicating itself to God, as ruler controlling the earth and the whole of creation – only it is the fully finished

¹¹²Bavinck, *Herman, Reformed Dogmatics*, 2. 577

¹¹³ <https://www.pastortheologians.com/>

¹¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4. 727

image, the most telling and striking likeness of God.”¹¹⁵ It is our duty as the born-again Christian and as the bearer of the ‘image of God’ to proclaim the goodness of God to the whole world by practicing our ‘organic unity.’ here and now.

3.4. Insight from Herman Bavinck on Main Doctrinal teachings of Prosperity Gospel Movement

In the previous section, I have argued that the Prosperity Gospel Movement doctrines such as the doctrine of dominion and authority, the doctrine of positive confession, the doctrine of health and prosperity, the doctrine of the covenant, the doctrine of faith, and many other doctrinal teachings are the natural overflow of the Movement’s understanding of the ‘image of God. In this section I will discuss each according to the Bavinck,

3.4.1. Herman Bavinck on Dominion and Authority

According to the Movement, in the Garden of Eden man was created just like God with dominion and authority. When Adam sinned against God lost dominion and authority over the whole creations and the restoration of dominion and authority was the central theme of the covenant between God and man in the Old Testament, and Christ in His death and resurrection restored dominion and authority back to the man. Now as the New Testament believes that through faith and confession man lays claim to their restored dominion and authority and as a result is able to speak things into existence such as health and prosperity. The Prosperity Gospel Preacher argued that the image’s content includes dominium as if the man was created to rule. This is what Cliflo Dollar affirmed when he says, “Adam and Eve had dominion and authority over everything in the earth” Kenneth Copeland speaking about man’s divinity he said that,

“‘God’s reason for creating Adam was his desire to reproduce himself.’ I mean a reproduction of himself. And in the garden of Eden he did just that. He was not a little like God, he was not almost like God, he was not subordinate to God even...Adam was as much like God as you can get, just the same as Jesus. Adam in the Garden of Eden was God manifested in the flesh.”¹¹⁶

Bavinck about the creation of Adam said ‘Adam...had the *posse non peccare* (able not to sin) but not yet the *non posse peccare* (not able to sin). He still lives in the possibility of sin... he

¹¹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2. 576

¹¹⁶ Hagin, Zoe, *The God-Kind of Life*, 35-41

did not yet have the perfect, unchanging love which excludes all fear”¹¹⁷ In other word Bavinck is saying man was not yet a ‘finished product’ he still needs to grow and to be tested.

The Dutch theologian Berkouwer rightly stated the point when he commented on Karl Barth’s, a Swiss Reformed theologian who is often regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian, the view of man’s dominium understood “as a consequence of the image, rather than the image itself...” I believe this view has a biblical foundation because Genesis 1:28 rules out dominium as being equal to the image because it clearly shows a man receiving a unique position by the mandate or command of God in which he gave man part rulership over the earth and everything in it. In addition to this, according to the teaching of the New Testament, believers do not obtain a divine position through Christ but becomes obedient servant that submits to the will of God (Matthew 6:9-10; 26:42; Acts 21:13-14). Therefore, the Prosperity Gospel belief which says that man is recreated in the ‘image of God’ and has the power to create or direct the desired outcome has no theological foundation.

3.4.2. Herman Bavinck on the Fall

In the teaching of the Prosperity Gospel, the fall in the Garden of Eden is understood in terms of the loss of authority, power, and dominion. In fact, the Prosperity Gospel theology teaches that it is the authority to be god that was lost when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. In contrast to this Bavinck clearly said that “man through the fall...has not become a devil who, incapable of redemption...still preserved all his human faculties capacities and power...the direction of all those powers have been changed that now instead of doing the will of God they fulfill the law of the flesh”¹¹⁸ The fall of man into sin changed everything. As a result of the fall, humanity starts directing to ward destruction rather than glorifying God. Bavinck clearly summarized the effect of the fall on humanity in the following way, “Human love, intellect, will, and freedom are not removed but redirected: from God to the creature; from seeking the true, the good, and the beautiful to considering lies as truth, pursuing evil as good, and accepting slavery as freedom”.¹¹⁹ As I have discussed above, the Prosperity Gospel movement holds the view that man was created to be like God. Herman Bavinck strongly opposes this idea of putting creatures equally with the Creator. Even though Bavinck argued that an archetypal unity-in-diversity in the Godhead implies that creation

¹¹⁷ Bavinck, Herman, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 3rd ed. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1918, 617

¹¹⁸ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 83

¹¹⁹ Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011. P.374

displays an ectypal unity-in-diversity. there is still a strict distinction between the Creator and the creature. The ontological difference that exists between the Creator and creation is clearly stated as ‘between the Infinite and the finite, between eternity and time, between being and becoming, between the All and the nothing’.¹²⁰ God is different and incomparable from the creature. In a similar way, Berkouwer stated that “the image of God is dynamic, not static the image does not consist in certain structural qualities that resemble similar qualities in God but in concretely visible sanctification”¹²¹ For Bavinck the fact that man was created in the image of God, “tells us that God is the archetype, man the ectype,” the supreme picture of his likeness within creation.

The Prosperity Gospel Movement sees the incidence of human rebellion in the Garden of Eden as an event that caused a man to lose his god nature and to have this replaced with Satan’s nature.¹²² This theology developed from the understanding that man was created to be a god with authority and dominion that could be transferred. But Reformed theologian Grudem explained the consequences of the fall as man’s moral purity have been lost and his intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding. As the result his speech no longer continually glorifies God and his relationship is often governed by selfishness rather than love. In general, we are still like God and we still represent God but the image of God in us is distorted, we are less fully like God than we were before the entrance of sin.¹²³ Moreover, the Bible in Genesis 1-3 does not speak about the divinity of man and also does not say anything about a man losing his divinity during the fall.

3.4.3. Herman Bavinck on Covenant

The Prosperity Gospel theology of covenant primarily focused on the covenant that God has made to Adam in Genesis 3: 15-16 and to Abraham in Gen 12: 1-3 and Genesis 15. The covenant of Genesis 3: 15 -16 as understood by the Prosperity Gospel is the first covenant between man and God. In this covenant, according to the movement teaching, God promised to man full restoration of power, authority, ownership, and position.¹²⁴ Myles Munroe in his writing spoke about the fulfillment of the Adamic covenant in the work of Jesus Christ as

¹²⁰ Bavinck, Herman, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 2, p. 30

¹²¹ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 83

¹²² Bowman, Robert M. “Ye Are Gods?” *Orthodox and Heretical Views on the Deification of Man*. Christian Research Journal (1987): 20.

¹²³ Wayne Grudem. *An Introduction to Biblical doctrine- Systematic Theology*, 444

¹²⁴ Fred Price. *Prosperity on God’s terms*. Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1990a

Jesus broke the power of Satan over mankind and restored the authority and dominion Adam and Eve once owned through his death Jesus restored it to man.¹²⁵

During the fall Adam and Eve lost their power and authority and it was given to Satan. So according to the teaching of the Prosperity Movement, God to restore that power and authority to man has to find a legal way. According to Movement teaching, this legal way for God to function is through the covenant to Adam in Genesis 3: 15-16 and to Abraham in Genesis 15, and finally through Jesus Christ in New Testament.¹²⁶

According to Cornelis P. Venema, Herman Bavinck treats the doctrine of the covenant primarily in two ways¹²⁷. The first is the covenant between the triune God and human beings at the time of the creation of man in God's image. For Bavinck, as Venema said the covenant is not to be regarded merely as a post-fall. Rather, the covenant is the divinely appointed instrument whereby from creation onward the triune God chooses to enjoy communion with His image-bearer. The second is where Bavinck treats the doctrine of the covenant in his handling of the doctrine of election. In contrast to the Prosperity Gospel's doctrine of the covenant which focuses on the restoration of dominion and authority, Bavinck sees the doctrine of the covenant in a broader sense starting from the creation of man not just as a restoration of dominion and authority to man after fall. According to Bavinck, as Venema argued, in the context of God's comprehensive work of recreation, the doctrine of covenant focuses on how God accomplishes his counsel of decree for the human being in the course of history before and after the fall.

3.4.4. Herman Bavinck on Prosperity and health/ Triumphalism

As we have seen earlier, the Prosperity Gospel preached that God wants everyone happy, wealthy and healthy always and that suffering is never been the will of God, it is either lack of proper faith or the result of negative confession. The Movement emphasizes that God's favor upon one's life consists in the gain of health and wealth. They want to realize an eschatological kingdom here and now by living a victorious life. But according to Sutanto, this is against to the vision of a Reformed neo-Calvinistic public theology that understands its present existence as that of an exile witnessing to a better city rather than a redemptive agent

¹²⁵ Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom*,

¹²⁶ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 49

¹²⁷ <https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/source/outlook>

bringing about the city down here on earth.¹²⁸ Sutanto elaborated this idea more from the Reformed perspective in the following ways, “to seek to be the cultural and political monopoly or to bring about the kingdom now is a misunderstanding of the Christians’ mission and place in God’s redemptive-historical plan.” In the same line, Herman Bavinck emphasizes that the future eschatological order is brought about by divine power alone. According to Bavinck the new Jerusalem’s ‘architect and builder is God himself’¹²⁹ Trying to live the full kingdom’s life now is greatly underestimating the fullness of eschatological glory. Moreover, according to the Bible, the present age is characterized as an ‘evil’ age (Gal. 1:4) and we are waiting for the manifestation of the kingdom of God through labor and pains (Rom. 8: 18-25) As Gordon Fee emphasizes, for Jesus and New Testament writers, wealth and possession not inherently wrong and have zero value in terms of successful living the Christian life. They do not count in terms of value, significance, and as a source of God’s approval.¹³⁰

3.4.5. Herman Bavinck on Salvation and Faith

In the Prosperity Gospel Movement, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is primarily understood as an act of restoring the man to his original creation position of dominion and authority which was lost due to the sin of Adam and Eve. Accordingly, the redemptive aspect of salvation, in which, man is redeemed from an eternity without God is replaced by a restoration view.¹³¹ From the perspective of the Reformed, salvation is understood as a historical redemptive of redeeming sinful humans from eternal separation to fellowship. This historical redemption of humanity starts in the council of peace (pactum salutis). It involves the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From eternity the Holy Trinity orchestrated salvation through Jesus Christ. Bavinck beautifully argued that by his active and passive obedience, Jesus Christ obtains the benefits of salvation. Herman Bavinck called the benefit we are sharing from Christ as a “mystical union”.¹³² According to him, a mystical union is Christ by the Spirit, and the Father himself by Christ incorporates all his children into most intimate fellowship with himself. This is what the New Testament called the process of growing into the likeness of the Son- Jesus Christ.

¹²⁸ Kaemingk, Matthew (ed) *Reformed Public Theology A Global Vision for Life in the World*. GrandRapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2021, 77

¹²⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 720; cf. Heb. 11:10.

¹³⁰ Gordon Fee . *The disease of the health and wealth gospel*. Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2006, 44

¹³¹ Dollar, *Not Guilty*, 88, 113, 159; Munroe, *Releasing your Potential*, 71

¹³² Hans Burger, Class lecture, MIRT 5 ‘What is at Stake’, April 2022, theological University of Kampen

In the Reformed tradition of salvation, the bedrock doctrine of the sovereignty of God is highly emphasized, with the Ordo Salutis which starts with predestination/election, evangelism, conversion/regeneration/justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. Even though Christ accomplish everything needed for our salvation, the final victory is not yet finished, and therefore, Christians are living in “already, but not” tensions.

Speaking about the tension of yet and not yet Bavinck said,

“Although Christ’s death has accomplished everything for our salvation, we are not immediately completely delivered from sin, suffering, and death and given full holiness and blessedness. On the contrary, we are exhorted, in time, to faith and repentance; have to be regenerated, justified, sanctified, and glorified; remain subject in this life to sin, suffering, and death; and only enter the kingdom of heaven through much affliction”¹³³

For the Prosperity Gospel ‘faith’ is believed to be a catalyst that even ensures our equality with God himself. Copeland interestingly said ‘You are born of God. You are a faith being. God does not do anything outside of faith. With His faith living in you, you are to operate the same way’¹³⁴ According to Prosperity Gospel teaching, words only possess power when they are spoken with the God-kind of faith. The implication of faith theology of the Movement is based on separating the biblical definition of faith which focuses on obedience and submission to the will of God to promote self-interest as God of this earth.

In contrast to the Movement, Herman Bavinck speaking about faith said that “true faith has as its object a person who is the righteousness, wisdom, holiness, and redemption given to us by God, namely Christ—in particular, Christ as He is portrayed to us in the Holy Scriptures. Apart from them, we know nothing of this Christ and may deceive ourselves with a false Christ.” Moreover, Bavinck associates the characteristics of true faith always attach to Christ, “True faith, then, does not stop at the testimony of Scripture but penetrates through them to Christ himself, joins Him, and enters into fellowship with Him”¹³⁵.

¹³³ Prof. Hans Burger, Class lecture, MIRT 5 “What is at Stake” March 2, 2022, at Theological University of Kampen

¹³⁴ Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Faith*. Fort Worth, Texas: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1983. 16-17

¹³⁵<https://cairn.edu/faith-and-love-by-herman-bavinck/>

Chapter Four

Implementing Herman Bavinck's 'Organic' view to the African Context Worldview of Ubuntu

4.1. The Correlation of Herman Bavinck's "Organic" View and the African Christian theology of "Ubuntu" as Alternatives to Prosperity Gospel Greedy Culture

In order to appropriate Herman Bavinck "organic" view of image of God to African context in meaningful way, I have selected the African worldview of 'Ubuntu.'¹³⁶ Is there any correlation between the African philosophy of "Ubuntu" and Herman Bavinck's "organic" approach of the image of God? This is the question I will discuss in this section. Herman Bavinck articulates the "organic" definition of the image of God on the level of human beings as individuals, as male and female in the relationship, and in humanity as a whole and each of these levels is characterized by organic descriptions of unity and diversity. The Reformed Theologian Nathaniel Sutanto summarizes Herman Bavinck's 'organic' approach of the image of God in the following way, "this emphasis on our organic make-up amplifies the value of every individual precisely because we are responsible for one another and we need each other in order fully to reflect God"¹³⁷ in addition, Sutanto said that "no human individual can fully express the image of God, human vocation and responsibility necessarily take on a corporate dimension. Contrary to the individualism that pervades our world today – as seen in our obsession with social media and superhero movies – imaging God will not be seen in the hero that comes out of nowhere but in the creations of bonds of love." Moreover, relating with Herman Bavinck's Reformed Ethics, Sutanto by quoting Bavinck said that "ego-centricity is the root of sin, which perpetuates atomistic individualism, and the remedy of the redemptive work of the Spirit that links us back towards organic unity by renewing bonds of love for each other"¹³⁸ This is exactly what the African Christian theology of Ubuntu promote in the Christian communities.

¹³⁶ In this thesis I have approached the concept of Ubuntu from the Christian Perspective based on the works of African theologians Mashau T.D and Kgatle, M.S., Dreyer, J.S., Hermann Mvula J. , Banda, C, and Lovemore Togarasei

¹³⁷ <https://www.pastortheologians.com/>"Humanity in Its Entirety" – Herman Bavinck and the Image of God" written by Gray Sutanto September 1, 2020 access June 20, 2022 Theological University of Kampen

¹³⁸ <https://www.pastortheologians.com/>

4.1.1. ‘Ubuntu’ As an Africa Traditional Theological Concept

The meaning of Ubuntu in African traditional religion is defined as follows, “Ubuntu represents the ‘basic values of human life or that which gives life meaning’: life in a community¹³⁹ with communal values such as peace, harmony, generosity, solidarity and humanness.¹⁴⁰ The humanity of the individual is bound up with her or his kinsmen: ‘A person is a person through another person’.¹⁴¹ In the famous expression of John Mbiti: ‘I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.’¹⁴²

African Theologian Dreyer argued by quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu that ‘Ubuntu’ has a theological concept. He said that “the South Africa Archbishop and other Africa theologians in South Africa have given rise to the idea of ‘Ubuntu theology’ - where ethical responsibility comes with a shared identity.”¹⁴³ In addition to this, Membematale connected the concept of Ubuntu with the passage from scripture Acts 4: 32-35 where the early church lived up to the concept of sharing with one another.¹⁴⁴ In associating with the book of Acts where people come together and shared everything among themselves, Mashau T.D and Kgatle, M.S. derived five principles or theological areas where “Ubuntu” can contribute to the whole.¹⁴⁵ The first principle is the theology of life, this has to do with Ubuntu’s idea of seeking to preserve life rather than to destroy it. Ubuntu believes that everyone can have a good life instead of the selected few as we can see in the Prosperity Gospel. The second principle is the principle of care, according to the authors, this theology has to do with care and concern for others. This also implies that in contrast to the Prosperity Gospel where only the pastors receive everything, Ubuntu shares the responsibility for togetherness and this togetherness in

¹³⁹ Sindima, ‘Bondedness, Moyo and Umunthu as the Elements of aChewa Spirituality: Organizing Logic and Principle of Life’, 14. See also: Chiwoza R. Bandawe, ‘Psychology Brewed in an African Pot: Indigenous Philosophies and the Quest for Relevance’, *Higher Education Policy* 18, no. 3 (2005): 289–300.

For a discussion of the meaning of ‘person’ and ‘human’ in African philosophy and ATR see: Didier Njirayamanda Kaphagawani, ‘African Conceptions of a Person: A Critical Survey’, in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 332–42.

¹⁴⁰ Jaco S. Dreyer, ‘Ubuntu: A Practical Theological Perspective’, *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19, no. 1 (15 June 2015): 204.

¹⁴¹ Mutombo Nkulu-N’Sengha, ‘Bumuntu’, in *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, eds Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2009), 143.

¹⁴² Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 108–9.

¹⁴³ Dreyer, J.S., ‘Ubuntu’, *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19(1), 2015 p. 189–209.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2015-0022>

¹⁴⁴ Membe-Matale, R.D.S. ‘Ubuntu theology’, *The Ecumenical Review* 67(2), 2015, 273–276.

¹⁴⁵ Mashau T.D & Kgatle, M.S., 2019, ‘Prosperity gospel and the culture of greed in post-colonial Africa: Constructing an alternative African Christian Theology of Ubuntu’, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), a1901.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1901>

turn empowers each individual. The third principle of Ubuntu is the emphasis on group solidarity because our true human potential can be realized in partnership with others. The fourth principle of Ubuntu is the principle of economic justice. This has to do with the importance of equality and distribution of fair share and the will to live together. The last principle of Ubuntu is the theology of hope and accompaniment. According to the authors, this theology has to do with walking with someone and joining with him or her in solidarity.

To summarize, the African theology of Ubuntu which is characterized by the principles of life, care, solidarity, economic justice, hope, and accompaniment can serve as an alternative to the Prosperity Gospel which is characterized by emphasizing on individuals' (pastor's) success but are silent about the need for poor members.

4.1.2. Herman Bavinck's 'Organic' view and Philosophy of 'Ubuntu'

In this line, I will try to show that Herman Bavinck's 'organic' definition of the 'image of God' has some correlation to the African context understanding of the "Ubuntu" worldviews. An African theologian Mvula presented the African worldview of Ubuntu in relation to the biblical concept of the 'image of God' He said that "the foundations of Umunthu, in whatever form it exists or is expressed in Africa, must be within the parameters of theological category based on the proper understanding of the nature of the imago Dei and what it means to be human."¹⁴⁶ As human being, we share the same 'image of God' and that imply we have to care for each other. Based on the philosophy of Ubuntu, humans are the 'bearers of the image of God' and they must be treated as God would have them treated. In other words, this means that oppression, exploitation, repression, and marginalization, of human being, is against the will of God who created humans and who cherishes them as his Image Bearers.

The concept of Ubuntu in Africa is cherished as the basis of human interrelatedness and interconnectedness. In connection to this view of Ubuntu, Bavinck writes about the unity of the human race in terms of both physical and ethical solidarity when he said 'Creationism preserves the organic – both physical and moral [beide physische en moreele]– unity of humanity and at the same time it respects the mystery of the individual personality.'¹⁴⁷ In other words, this holistic unity of the entire human race is what distinguishes humanity from angels, in which an ethical unity does not obtain. In addition to this, because of the teleology embedded within the creation of the human race, Bavinck argues that the image of God in

¹⁴⁶ Hermann Mvula J. *Humanities*. (Zomba), Vol. 25, No. 1, 2017

¹⁴⁷ Bavinck, Herman, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 2, p. 587;

man is too rich to be confined by the individual or by the family. Instead, Bavinck said, “[the Imago Dei] can only be somewhat unfolded in its depth and riches in a humanity counting billions of members. Just as the traces of God (vestigia Dei) are spread over many, many works, in both space and time, so also the image of God can only be displayed in all its dimensions and characteristic features in a humanity whose members exist both successively...and contemporaneously side by side.”¹⁴⁸ According to Bavinck, the holistic nature of all human race distinguish man from other creations just because man is the only bearer of the image of God.

In the following table, I have tried to compare the Africa Traditional View of “Ubuntu” about human beings and Dutch Reformed Herrman Bavinck Organic” view of the image of God in man as an alternative to Prosperity Gospel culture of individualism. In order to compare and contrast I have used the African theologians Mashau T.D and Kgatle, M.S five areas of ‘Ubuntu’s’ theology.

no	The five theological stands of ‘Ubuntu	African Traditional view of “Ubuntu” human	The implication of Herman Bavinck Organic” view of man to the African concept of ‘Ubuntu’	Remark
1	Theology of human life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Human life is precious -Keeping the precious life of man than destroying it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -head and crown of creation, no animal descent -“Man does not simply bear or have the image of God; he is the image of God. -All men equally bear the image of God- man’s life is special 	
2	Theology of care	Showing care and concern for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A holistic soteriology -Practical theology -“the whole human race is of one blood” -“Organic view” 	

¹⁴⁸ Bavinck, Herman, Reformed Dogmatics: 2, p. 577.

3	Theology of group solidarity	Partnership with others for life fulfillment= Unity in diversity	-Trinitarian view – “unity in diversity in Godhead in perfect harmony and man is created to reflect this image of God -humanity organic unity -‘Organic’ view of salvation - imago Dei as the entire, organically united human race.
4	Theology of economic justice	-Reconciliation and fair share distribution for the common good of humanity -Reconciliation in the communities is the main mission of Ubuntu with the purpose of creating fairness	- physical and ethical solidarity: -A Trinitarian theology of reconciliation for the purpose of making peace with those who rejected God. Providing fair access of life for all humanity equally through Jesus Christ -Christo praxis –
5	theology of hope and accompaniment	Living together in solidarity	- humanity’s physical and ethical solidarity: ‘ -Mystical union-through Christ and Holy Spirit all believers united

Table 2, shows the similarity and correlation of the African Traditional concept of ‘Ubuntu’s” five key life principles (as presented by Mashau T.D. and Kgatle M.S) to the Herman Bavinck ‘Organic’ view of the image of God emphasizing on the moral notion of care, solidarity and justice.

As I have tried to show in the table the correlation between the African Traditional concept of ‘Ubuntu’ that focuses on treating every human life equally because of all human beings share the same humanness (Ubuntu) and are created in the image of God. Herman Bavinck’s (Reformed) organic view of the ‘image of God’ is correlated with the five key theological stands of Ubuntu Traditional African worldview. Ubuntu and Bavinck’s ‘organic’ view of the image of God is an alternative to the Prosperity Gospel culture of greed and egocentrism.

In line with this, African theologians Mashau T.D. and Kgatle M.S. propose the African Christian theology of “Ubuntu” as an alternative to the Prosperity Gospel culture of greed which is characterized as an ego-centric individualistic view of self. Ubuntu is the African

theology of life, care, solidarity, economic justice, hope, and accompaniment. The fact that criticism of the prosperity Preacher for enriching its pastors instead of the members who make huge financial offerings is true in our context. The Prosperity Gospel pastors in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia are the richest religious leaders. Speaking about the Nigerian context and which is also relevant in Ethiopia, Umoh concludes that “religion appears to be the most lucrative business today”¹⁴⁹ The pastors of the Prosperity Gospel continue to live a materialistic lifestyle in affluent suburbs and derive the most expensive car on the market, while their members are drowning in the ‘triple unholy alliance of poverty’ as Mashau explained. This situation is more clearly explained by Umoh who said “the poor continue to hope against hope even in their hopelessness”¹⁵⁰ The researcher believes that an African theology of Ubuntu is an alternative to the prosperity gospel because it is a practical theology of life, care, solidarity, economic justice, hope, and accompaniment.

Mashau T.D. and Kgatle M.S. argued that Ubuntu is the exact copy of the early church experiences. The early church of lived up to the concept of sharing with one another. As a theological concept, Ubuntu holds humanity accountable to one another, whilst honoring the biblical command to love one’s neighbors as oneself (Luke 19:8; Mk 12:31; Mt 19:22–39). In relation to this according to Meiring, God expects humanity to advance community well-being whilst protecting the rights of the socially marginalized and the powerless. In the theology of Ubuntu, our relations within the community determine our relationship with God.¹⁵¹ With a motif of advancing the community’s well-being, the African Christian theology of Ubuntu can become an antidote to the greed culture that has dominated the Prosperity Gospel Movements in Ethiopia.

4.2. The BBBE Analysis of my Interview Respondent Based on Herman Bavinck’s Organic” Worldview

In this section, I will evaluate the traditional, local Prosperity Gospel Movement and the representative of the community assumption of the image of God will be analyzed on the level of Beliefs, Belonging, Behavior, and Experience (BBBE). This model helps to determine the worldview or story behind people’s actions. Worldview is defined by Wolter as

¹⁴⁹ Umoh, D., *Prosperity gospel and the spirit of capitalism: The Nigerian story*, African Journal of Scientific Research 12(1), 2013, 654–666.

¹⁵⁰ Umoh, D., *Prosperity gospel and the spirit of capitalism* 2013, 64-666

¹⁵¹ Meiring, A., *As below, so above: A perspective on African theology*, HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies 63(2), 2007, 733–750.

“the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things” Based on this definition one of the functions of worldview is it serves as a guide to our life. Worldviews are generally experienced and expressed during life. Worldviews have a tremendous impact on how people view the universe and themselves and even their religion.

For this research, I have selected six people from the context. Two from the traditional Gedeo religion, two from the local Prosperity Gospel follower, and two from the communities. I have asked all of them questions related to the concept of the image of God in Gedeo traditional religion and the teaching of the local Prosperity movement. It is interesting to see the follower of traditional religion and the basic principle of Ubuntu commonly observed by the researcher. Prosperity Gospel Movement advocates the idea that man has the special power on him to create and to do whatever he wants to do by using his faith

Regarding the worldview of sickness and wealth, the Gedeo traditional follower related it with the anger and happiness of the sky God, whereas the Prosperity gospel follower associated it with the will of Man. If a man wants to be rich and healthy, he has to choose for himself by word of his mouth. They strongly believe that the word that comes out of a believer's mouth change anything.

In relation to the responsibilities of man to each other, the Gedeo tradition religious follower pointed out that ‘it is our responsibility to take of each other otherwise we will disappear and die’ The prosperity Gospel believer said, our responsibility as human beings is to dominate the world and rule for the glory of God. This is our calling. The old man from the communities said, “it is required by our forefather that we have to accept to each other and we need to each other’

Related to healing and exorcism, the Gedeo traditional religion follower said that this practice has been before the introduction of Christianity through our religious leader and rituals. The Prosperity Preacher said, as a born-again and spirit-filled person we have the authority to cast out every demon and any sickness in Jesus' name. If there is sickness and extreme poverty, we believe it is from Stan and we rebuke every work of Satan. The men from the communities are in the middle position that they believe in both the traditional and Prosperity Gospel and they think the source of power for both groups is the same – that is God.

The following table shows the BBBE analysis of the Ethiopian Prosperity Gospel, Traditional religion, and Herman Bavinck’s understanding of the image of God and related doctrinal teachings. I have used the information from my interview from my context.¹⁵²

no	Analysis of BBBE Model	Ethiopian Prosperity Gospel (PM), Traditional religion (TR), and community representative (CR) View on the “image of God’ and related doctrine	Herman Bavinck (HR) ‘Organic’ view on ‘Image of God’ and related Reformed doctrines
1	Believing	PM “image’ refers to dominion” TR- “supreme God created man” TR “equality of man to each other” PM Gen. 3 man lost dominion and authority CR- “God created human being” CR- “man is a sinner” PM-“Authority and dominion to Satan” - restorative Christ ATR – “man is special”	<i>‘Image organic’</i> Trinitarian view -man is finite and God is infinite -the fall primarily separation from God -Christ restored the relationship not the dominion and authority -sin and grace affect everything - <i>pactum salutis</i> - Trinitarian covenant of redemption - <i>Ordo Salutis</i> - eternal Trinitarian decree or order of salvation -Christ redeemer (reconciliation)
2	Belonging	PM ‘god-type’ winner” TR-“belong to community, tribes, family, tradition” TR “belong either good or bad spirit” PM- “little Christ- kings” PM- “high-class – supper class” TR- belong to the same origin CR-“family relative community” CR- “either to God, Satan or other evil spirits”	-Christ restores the relationship with Father - an <i>archetypal</i> unity-in-diversity in God head- <i>ectypal</i> unity-in-diversity in man -‘already but not yet’ worldview -finite and limited creature -Being in Christ - coexistence
3	Behaving	-PM-“kingdom now’ mentality”	- <i>vestigia trinitatis</i> – signs of the Trinity

¹⁵² I have attached all my interview questions and answer in the last section of the research paper, the researcher developed six structured formal questionnaires and distributed them to ten randomly selected church members, leaders of the Movements, and people in the communities of both sexes.

		PM‘confession/speaking by Faith” -CR “following the law of god and communities” PM -restorative salvation - TR- well-being of the community -TR we are the winner together	‘organic view of the image- we responsible for others -unity-in-diversity -already but not yet - creation-sin-redemption - Being in Christ - 1Peter 2: 9-11
4	Experience	PM-churches are pastors’ private business CR- “obeying God and enjoy life” PM-no poverty and sickness TR- Responsible to each other	- Creation-Fall-Redemption - Christo praxis – practical theology in the communities – “Being in Christ” ‘Organic communities’ under God -not perfect life – 1Peter 2:11-12 already but not -faith submission to the will of God - Ordo Salutis

Table 3 shows the difference between the Prosperity Gospel, Tradition religion and Herman Bavinck on the understanding of the image of God on Believing, Belonging, Behaving and Experience level.

To summarize, the information in the table, it shows the BBBE analysis of the worldview of randomly selected people from my context in the concept of the image of God. The BBBE model helped me to see the worldview or the story behind people’s beliefs about the image of God. It is true that worldviews play a key role in people’s life because every human action is influenced or guided by their worldview. Since worldview is not just a system of thought but it is one’s way of living. In the Believing level the PG, TR and CR believe that the existence of the image of God in man but they differ on the effect of sin on the image. Belonging level PG claimed to belong to a special class or identity but TR and CR claimed that they belong to the community in one or another way. In Behaving level PG. behave as a special creature and as the winner in every area of life (individually) but the TR and CR accept that their behaviors are strongly related to the communities to which they belong. Experience level PG claimed they are winners both financially and healthy and wish to dominate the world. The TR and CR claimed that obeying God and keeping the communities’ rule is the source of their happiness. To conclude, the worldview of PG is not the same as the worldview of TR and CR in relation to the understanding of the image of God and related issues. Therefore, TR and CR worldview is closer to Herman Bavinck’s organic worldview than PG.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusions

In this work, I have tried to answer the main question of the thesis in the following ways. From the discussion of Herman Bavinck and Prosperity Gospel, the Ethiopia Evangelical church can learn that the Prosperity Gospel understanding of the ‘image of God’ as taught by some of the dominant ministers in the Movement is anthropomorphic and ego-centric in which the leaders of the Movement developed high self-esteem and a little-god attitude toward themselves. This anthropomorphic definition of the image of God is evidenced in their glorification of man as ‘god’ and their understanding of greed as faith. I have also shown that the Prosperity Gospel doctrine of the ‘image of God’ is a central organizing framework for the four major doctrines of the Movement

In opposite to this, the Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck developed an “organic” definition of the image of God in which as Nathaniel Sutanto elaborated “this emphasis on our organic make-up amplifies the value of every individual precisely because we are responsible for one another and we need each other in order fully to reflect God.” As James Eglinton describes the ‘organic motif’ of Bavinck, creation displays an organic ontology of diversities in unity precisely because in God there is an archetypal unity and diversity. In addition, Hans Burger pointed out that Herman Bavinck used the concept of organism to describe the reality of “being in Christ.” The reality of ‘being in Christ is a collective reality. Both James Eglinton and Hans Burger discussed that the organic view of Bavinck emphasis the value of the individual in our unified organic makeup. According to Bavinck, it is impossible to display the image of God with an individualistic and ego-centric lifestyle. The Dutch Reformed theologian emphasizes that the organic image of God is “not the individual man, and not even man and women together, but mankind as a whole is the fully developed image of God”¹⁵³ Herman Bavinck’s doctrine of the “organic” view of the image of God in man diminishes the individualistic attitude which dominates the Prosperity Gospel where the leaders of the movement are considered as a superhero who is obsessed with unending greed to money and fame. In relation to this, the Ethiopian Evangelical churches would understand how the African Traditional belief of Ubuntu in which human beings are seen as organic

¹⁵³ Herman Bavinck *Reformed Dogmatics* 2 : p.621-622

creatures, is directly related to Herman Bavinck's organic view of the image of God. The result of BBBE analysis of my respondents to the interview questionnaires shows that the worldview of the Traditional Religious people and the Communities Representative regarding the image of God share a similar worldview with the concept of Ubuntu. Whereas the respondents from local Prosperity Gospel hold the individualistic view regarding the image of God.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Churches should know that the lack of theological training, ignorance of historical theology, isolation from the theological community, and deficient and inconsistent hermeneutics are factors that contributed to the development of distinctive teaching in the Movement. These distinctive teachings and other ethical issues related with Movement are becoming the stumbling block for the unbeliever not to come to Christ. For this reason, the Ethiopian Evangelical churches need to take initiative to develop constructive dialogue by using Ubuntu's principles as the alternative to the Movement's culture of greed.

Finally, to know the full meaning of the image of God we must look at Christ. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called the image of God par excellence; because he is the "image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:15) As Hoekema noted that "from looking at Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, we learn that the proper functioning of the image includes being directed toward God, being directed toward the neighbor, and ruling over nature" In contrast to the Prosperity Gospel who focuses on anthropomorphic and ego-centric worldview, Jesus Christ, the true and perfect image of God said to his disciple "the Son of Man did not come to be served, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As the bearer of the perfect image of God, Jesus wholly directed his ministry to the people around Him. In Luke 19:10 he said, "The Son of Man come to seek and to save what was lost"

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. The Dilla mainline Evangelical churches Need to Know the Correlation between Herman Bavinck and African Traditional Worldview of 'Ubuntu'

The Dilla mainline churches should know that from Herman Bavinck reformed perspective 'organic' view of the image of God, the following points can be concluded, first, according to Bavinck, human beings are the bearer of the image of God not just as the individual but as cooperate, second, Bavinck's "organic" view of the image of God in man has directly associated with his "Trinitarian" assumption in which Bavinck argues that man is created to reflect the image of God which is characterized as 'unity in diversity in persons of the Trinity

(God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit). part of what it means to be made in God's image is precisely to be in ethical solidarity. In other words, bearing 'organic' image of God means that we are God's image bearers not simply as individuals, but as a corporate and ethical unity – a single organism. In relation to Herman Bavinck's 'organic' view of the image, the African philosophy of Ubuntu must be imagined and developed as an antidote to the Prosperity Gospel theology of individual affluence. As we have seen in this research, Ubuntu with its five areas of theology (theology of life, care, solidarity, economic justice, and hope and accompaniment) can help the Ethiopian Christian to be discerning against all forms of teaching that seek to exploit and abuse the poor victims.

5.2.2. The Dilla Mainline Evangelical Churches Need to Initiate the Dialogue

The call on the Dilla mainlines Evangelical churches and Prosperity Gospel Movement to embrace a constructive dialogue is critical for the following reasons. The first is from the perspective of Intercultural Reformed theocentric dialogue is always encouraged. The Dilla mainline Evangelical churches need to work toward realizing successful intercultural dialogue with the leaders and followers of the Prosperity Gospel movements.

The second is the ecclesiological reason, this has to do with that in the New Testament believers (the Church) are called to be light of the world and salt of the earth which implies their positive influence on the communities (Matt. 5: 13-14). The unbelievers are looking at the life and testimony of the Christian. The unhealthy relationship between the Movement and the mainline church and the corruption, selfishness, shameful and immoral practices weaken the testimony of the church. John MacArthur put this in the following ways,

“From the standpoint of the world, the average non-Christian that would turn that on...that is a good reason not to buy into Christianity. That is maybe the best reason. If I was a non-Christian, I would say, ‘That is so obviously a scam, that is so obviously phony, why would anybody have anything to do with that? It is so counterproductive to the proclamation of the true gospel.’”

The third has to do with socio-economic-political reasons, this has to do with the negative influence of the Prosperity Gospel on the poor young productive Ethiopian. The movement hurt the economy of the country by creating ideal, lazy young people who devote themselves to the promised miracle for shortcut blessing than hard work. As the Ethiopian government often emphasizes poverty as the deadly enemy of the country. Therefore, the government is doing everything to alleviate the poverty of the people by decreasing unemployment and

encouraging young people to run their small businesses. But the Prosperity Gospel preacher kills the motivation or the hard work from the life of youth and encourages them just to have faith and to claim the desire of their heart without the hard work.

The fourth reason for dialogue is the biblical obligation we have as the Christian (Galatians 6: 1-2, Roman 14: 10-13). Therefore, it is vital that the mainline Evangelical church need to take initiative and invite the Prosperity Movement leaders to participate in meaningful dialogue with the spirit of Christian love and brotherhood for constructive engagement rather than mere criticism (Galatians 6: 1-2, Roman 14: 10-13, Eph 4:2).

5.2.3. Develop Constructive Dialogue with the Follower of the Movement

To develop constructive dialogue with the follower of the Movement, the Ethiopian Evangelical churches should know three factors that contributed to the Movement to develop distinctive doctrines. The first factor is their isolation from the larger Christian communities. In Ethiopia's context, the leaders and followers of the Movement considered themselves as a special group and do not associate themselves with the larger Christian communities. This opens the door to developing their own distinctive doctrines. Vreeland stated this problem by saying that the 'isolation from traditional denominational structures created an opportunity for theological innovations,' The second reason is a lack of theological education and meaningful debate between the Prosperity Gospel Movements and the larger Christian community. The Movement's leaders and followers think that they have a special revelation that is not available in other Christian communities. In relation to this, Timothy Sims appeal to the Movements to exercise "a solid apologetic foundation that brings us back to the word of God, in the true Word of Faith tradition." In addition to this, William Atkinson also identifies a lack of sound hermeneutics as a contributing factor to Prosperity Gospel development to distinctive doctrines. The third factor as Andrew Perriman mentioned is also a lack of ethical bounders among the leaders of the Movements. According to Perrima, the ethical aspect is "the individual-centered ministry of the Movement and its image of 'greed and 'indifference to economic injustices which is the outcome of its 'little gods' doctrine"

Therefore, if the Dilla mainline Evangelical churches took initiative and convince the Prosperity Gospel Movement to correct the above-mentioned causes that helped them to develop distinctive theology, lack of theological training, ignorance of historical theology,

isolation from the theological community, and deficient and inconsistent hermeneutics, as a researcher, I believe there are big possibilities to develop a constructive dialogue with the mainline Evangelical churches in Ethiopia. The Dilla mainline Evangelical church communities need to view the follower of the Prosperity Gospel Movement as brothers and Sisters in Chris with some deficiency in their theological understanding of the image of God.

5.3. Additional Research

One of the important areas that need further research is to find out the correlation of the principles of Ubuntu and Herman Bavinck's view of the 'organic' view of the Image of God as an alternative view to the individual glorifying Prosperity Gospel understanding of the image of God.

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Interviews

Respondent 1: Two leaders from the Prosperity Gospel Movement in Dilla area (Age 45 and woman age 36)

Respondent 2: Two active participants of the Gedeo Traditional Religions -Fachi'e Dararo (Ages 56 and 47)

Respondent 3; Two ordinary people from the community (Age 53 and Woman 34)

Below presented Lists of transcripts of the interview questionnaires and answer in Amharic language of Ethiopia

Questionnaires for Interview

1. How is “image of God” defined in Gedeo society in general?
2. Why are people attracted to the Prosperity Gospel Preaching in Gedeo society?
3. What are the similarity and differences between the Africa Traditional religion (Gedeo traditional religion ‘Fachi’e Dararo”) and Prosperity Gospel preaching regarding man being created in the Image of God?
4. How does the Gedeo Tradition religion define Man? What is human according to Gedeo Traditional Religion?
5. How does the Prosperity Gospel Movement affect the Gedeo Kale Hiywot church and its members?
6. As the leader what is your reaction to the Prosperity Gospel?
7. What are the good things (if any) we can learn from the Prosperity Gospel?