

Nigeria: The Corrupting Influence of Prosperity Theology (i)

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Let's begin by extending our condolences to one of our consistently sincere men of God, Pastor William Folorunsho Kumuyi. This is over the recent transition of the General Superintendent of Deeper Life Church's wife. May Lady Biodun Kumuyi's soul rest in peace. Shalom!

The worshipping of mammon instead of God, an impulse which arguably could draw breath from Prosperity Theology, is something that our men of God urgently need to guard against. The likelihood of misleading their flock is what Apostle Paul warns our spiritual leaders against, when he reminds us: "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols" (1 Corinthians 8:10). What more is idol worshipping than the love of money, power and fame? A good number of our men of God, who should have known better, have mistaken the biblical idea of prosperity for earthly-prosperity. It is this confusion that accounts for why many Christians no more, in practice, heed our Lord Jesus' advice to "seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33).

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It is, therefore, the aim of this contribution to remind ourselves that there is no prosperity that matches 'Spiritual Salvation'. All other prosperity, other than 'Awakening', keeps us in perpetual bondage to worldliness. And what is this Salvation? It is the resurrection of the 'Christ in us' from burial in our lower nature of carnal mindedness. The 'Awakening', we are emphasizing here, is that inner awakening of our True Spiritual-Self, from the restrictiveness of physical consciousness, to the boundless Consciousness of the Holy Spirit.

Due to the corrupting influence of the misunderstanding of Prosperity Theology, some men of God trespass as far as even receiving fat sums or gifts from those who have acquired money from unrighteous sources. It is in response to these types of corrupt clerics that Apostle Paul warned: "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" (1 Corinthians 8:12). The Bible's disapproval of the acceptance of gifts emanating from ill gotten wealth particularly by men of God is quite clear, as obvious from Apostle Paul's warning that "a bishop must...not (be) given to filthy lucre" (Titus 1:7). God, it is said: 'standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods', and is asking the movers and shakers of our spiritual, judicial, political and economic life: "How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?" (Psalm 82:2).

Biblical quotations such as "Money answereth all things" (Ecclesiastes 10:19) are often self-servingly used by charlatan pastors to exploit Prosperity Theology. They forget that all things are the instruments of God; as such it is God indeed 'who answereth all things'. This is the kind of holistic interpretation that the holistic school of thought would make. Thus Apostle Paul taught one of his Sons in faith, Timothy, to "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). This makes sense; "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7).

It is often forgotten that the word 'prosper', in the spiritual sense, and the way it is used in the Scripture, means to excel in the totality of one's being - body, soul and Spirit. The biblical idea of prosperity is not the 'material prosperity' which many of our men of God mistake for the objective of prosperity theology. If that was not so, the Spirit of God, speaking through Zechariah, would not have questioned the already materially-rich King Joash and his people: "Why transgress the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper?" (2 Chronicles 24:20). It is not just about money, riches and other material wealth. Thus, in the Third Letter of John we are each wished "above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 1:2).

It is unChristlike for a man of God to become a copy-cat of those who are attracted to the super (materially) rich life-style. This is especially so when many of those paying [tithes](#) to the pastor's church are struggling to make a living. It is undoubtedly unwise of Pastor Enoch Adeboye to have allowed himself fall into the temptation of the mighty's private jet ownership life-style. This runs contrary to the biblical allusion to the fact that Christianity is not particularly a calling of the mighty and the noble. Isn't this why Paul said that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 2:27)?

Pastor Adeboye needs to search his conscience. For it is only then will he understand and realize what our Lord meant by the declaration "My

Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). I do hope Pastor Adeboye does not, in response to this request that he searches his conscience, invoke the usual self-flattering claim that God told him to buy such an expensive private jet airline. It is the ego that has driven Pastor Adeboye to make such an unwise decision. For Pastor Adeboye to be going for a life style that the public, even in richer countries like the USA, are criticizing is a big mistake. An insensitive one at that. Pastors must always remember Paul's warning against being self-interest driven: "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled" (Titus 1:7).

The church has played a historic role in Nigeria, being a veritable agent of education and social welfare. If pastors like Enoch Adeboye have a large reserve of funds to draw on, would it not have been better to emulate the sort of community-minded, welfarist ministry which the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCHIN) have established in Northern Nigeria? Indeed without the educational developments of these two Churches, plus that of the Roman Catholics, the ethnic minorities of the North would have been left perpetually in darkness. Their struggle for liberation from feudal oppression would not have begun. The competitive advantage in intellectual terms which the Egba and Ekiti people in the South West, and the Anambra State people in the South East, possess is as a result of extensive religious work in the various areas, and their concomitant institutions.

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