

AN EVALUATION OF MATERIALISTIC HEALING GOSPEL AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY
A CASE STUDY OF WINNERS CHAPEL

N.B. TS
M. Div.
Ade 31-e

AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA.

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY.

BY

ISAAC ADEBANJO ADEGBOYE
MATRIC NO. 03/0024

JUNE, 2006

06 - 1026

ABSTRACT

Health and Wealth gospel, as it is usually called, has become what all and sundry salvage in Christendom today including even the ministers of Gospel. It has been carried to the extreme to the detriment of salvific experience of Christians and commitment to Christ the Saviour and Lord.

When we talk of being born again today, myriads of Church people and those who are "giving their lives to Christ" do not really know what that mean. They are confused about what it means. Many 'respond' to the altar calls today not because they are really making decisions for the Lord but because they are looking for every opportunity to be prayed for or ministered to so that they can be next on the line as far as healing and prospering (materially and financially) is concerned. Countless unconverted souls are 'born' into Church but not into the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

This research paper is born out of this prevalent hollow Christianity and preaching of gospel. It has been found out that messages in Pentecostal circle have been narrowed down to prosperity and healing. Repentance from sin is not so much heard from our pulpit as expected. Also, it is proven that there is decline in sound biblical teaching and that there are allegations of embezzlement and greed been leveled against the church leaders most especially among the Pentecostal circle.

Conclusion

From the analysis it is evident that over-emphasis on miracle of healing and prosperity; declined sound biblical preaching, many unbelievers and “half – baked” Christians, literal and shallow approach to Bible interpretation, self promotion and projection by the “miracle workers” are all in the church nowadays.

Quoting one of the prosperity and healing gossellers, Hagin, he said thus: ‘I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick’¹ In response to that, Steve said, “Elisha became weakened with illness until he finally died of that sickness. Shall we fault him? Can we legitimately scorn him for his lack of “faith?” Or should we rather humbly bow before the throne of the Sovereignty in heavens and confess that His ways past finding out, but that He does all things well?”²

Longing for money is the love of it. Desiring wealth is the condemnation warned of. Desire to obtain riches already has derailed one from the faith. Only ruin, destruction, and untold sorrows await those plunging along prosperity’s corridor.³

In the days gone by prosperity preacher “merely” plundered the people of God in their avarice lust to amass wealth for themselves. Today they go beyond that.

¹ Kenneth Hagin, Healing: The Father’s Provision (Word of Faith, August, 1997), 4.

² Steve Phillips, Positive Confession: Counterfeit Christianity, 57.

³ Steve, 42.

Now, they have taught their devotees to imitate them. They have invented a doctrine of covetousness, which is eagerly imbibed by aspiring millions longing to gain the same wealth as their mentors.⁴ “... that the evil in wealth lies not in the riches themselves but in the avarice that often accompanies wealth. Avarice is not a fault inherent in gold, but in the man who inherently loves gold, to the detriment of justice, which ought to be held in incomparably higher regard than gold.”⁵

What is required is a correct attitude to the possessions everybody without exception requires. Calvin writes in the institutes: We have a frenzied desire, an infinite eagerness, to pursue wealth and honour, intrigue for power, accumulate riches, and collect all those frivolities which seem conducive to luxury and splendor.⁶

The course which Christian men must follow is this: first, they must not long for, or hope for, or think of any kind of prosperity apart from the blessing of God; on it they must cast themselves, and there safely and confidently recline...⁷

Healing and any other of God’s mercies, is completely removed from the hand of man. It is not dependent upon man’s desire, effort, or claims. If we would receive healing or any blessings, we are wholly cast upon the Lord and are at His complete disposal. Whether to show mercy or not is His prerogative alone.⁸

Promises of prosperity are false. The word of God makes no such assurances, and certainly not with any price tags affixed to the blessing of heaven. The anxiously

⁴ Steve, 43.

⁵ Gonzales L. Justo, Faith and Wealth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990), 215.

⁶ Redmond Mullin. The Wealth of Christians (Exeter: Paternoster Press. 1983), 87.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Steve, Positive Confession, 58.

sought after material gain will never be realized by the gullible and disobedient masses.⁹

For the Nigerians, the emotional and experiential modes are a more agreeable way of expressing religion. A prosperity gospel, which de-emphasizes intellectual objectivity but stresses a subjective faith with a promise of prosperity, could only have been readily accepted.¹⁰

The harsh socio-economic conditions in our own part of the world are not unrelated to why a gospel that promises sure relief from these hardships is widely and enthusiastically accepted. Victims of harsh circumstances easily become victims of fake promises.¹¹

In their promise of deliverance from mundane problems, spiritual sects touch a nerve in the contemporary Nigerian mood. A society stretched on the rack of ignorance, diseases and poverty becomes easily seduced by the blandishments of functional utilitarian religion. People eagerly defer to an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent deity. But in doing this, they also expect, in fact demand a tangible quid pro quo. They expect to be shielded from witchcraft, from hunger, from sickness----¹²

Acquiring material possessions is one of the biggest sources of temptations to human beings.¹³ It is the cross, not miracles, which is the heart of the Christian faith. It is the greatest miracle, the most sensational healing.¹⁴

⁹ Steve, 49.

¹⁰ Okwori, Godliness for Gain 43

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Okey Ndibe, et al. "Hustling in God's Name. African Guardian (October 16, 1986) 15

¹³ Danny McCain. 7.

¹⁴ Michael Harper, The Healings of Jesus, 178.

Those who have devoted to and longed after prosperity, wealth and miracle are not also free from other vices like, most especially, sexual immorality and consultation with other means of power.

It is quite obvious that prosperity is not alien to the Christian faith and biblical teaching. Healing can be used of the Lord to bring about conversion or salvation of the soul of an individual. However, that would not be normative or the totality of gospel message.

Winners' chapel has unduly laid emphasis on healing and prosperity. The preaching of gospel is one sided in that denominational church,. Little emphasis is laid on salvation and eternal destiny of soul. Our churches today, especially Winners Chapel, are full of men and women who had not had conversion experience with Jesus Christ. Sound biblical teachings are scarce on our pulpits and in our churches today.

Pastors are being frequently alleged of misappropriation and embezzlement today than ever before. Averagely, 1980 was agreed to have been the time of full blown prosperity wave midwifed by Archbishop Benson Idahosa in Nigeria.

Church needs to do more in order to be the light by which our society will be illuminated and guided.

Recommendations

Here is the synthesis of the perspectives from literature and questionnaire on the expectations from the church in order to be relevant and light bearer:

The church must earnestly pray for revival in our land. There is also a need for the church, most especially the gospel ministers to go back to biblical theology and sound biblical teachings.

