

Salvation and the Gospel of prosperity in Zimbabwe in view of its religious and cultural milieu

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This study grapples with the perception of salvation in the health and wealth gospel, the contestations and prospects posed to the religious and cultural environment bedevilled in Zimbabwe. The wide-ranging understanding, escalation and dynamic setting of this health and wealth gospel is explored. Emphasis of the study is centred on crucial nuances of deliverance, instant health and getting rich quickly and how these traditions grow, its transportation from Global North to Global South particularly how this gospel settled in Zimbabwe. The gap to be filled is to explore whether prosperity gospel as given by its proponents in Zimbabwe saves or enslaves in other words, is it a wholistic gospel or a piece meal, sleeping tablet gospel. A desk research methodology of utilising prevailing information obtained from printed books, articles, journals as well as newspapers is used to explore reasons favouring the relocation of the gospel of prosperity to Zimbabwe. The economic, political and religious environment shall be critically evaluated in order to expose extenuating circumstances for its survival and expansion. In conclusion, the study shows that the health and wealth evangelism flourishes better amidst awful financial, unstable and corrupt governance condition of the state. It has been discovered that it takes advantage of the African Traditional Religion(s) that correlated very well to offer the instant, and temporal answer to the predicament of Zimbabwe.

Contribution: To ongoing academic studies on prosperity gospel particularly to see that it blooms well in deplorable economic situations and takes advantage of African traditional beliefs that act as catalysts to the crisis. The study also contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), one and two aiming to terminate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for everyone by 2030.

Keywords: cultural; Gospel; milieu; prosperity; religious; salvation; Zimbabwe.

Introduction

This study looks at the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe with particular reference to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ), which is used as a case study. This is significant in this study for the reason that it provides the person who reads an understanding and interconnectedness between salvation in health and wealth gospel and salvation in African Traditional Religion, vis-a-vis the theology of John Wesley the founder of Methodism. It permits readers to distinguish the prospects and contestations modelled through the health and wealth gospel to the religious and cultural environment of the MCZ and the state precisely. The study dictates a knowledgeable scrutiny after cross-examining all crucial aspects of the study. Before delving into the conversation in depth, the article provides a definition of the term gospel of prosperity.

Defining Gospel of prosperity or health and wealth gospel

'The use of vocabulary in any area of study, specifically the field of theology, is important because it provides the reader the setting of intellectual arguments or discussion' (Masvotore 2018:130). For Chitando (1998:5), 'naming the phenomenon is crucial, for the labels we assign to ideas are indicative of our attitude'. From this one can deduce that it is true in academics, as definitions are never definite. Words got their meaning from the setting of the author. This phrase prosperity gospel has been given assorted labels by diverse researchers. It then demonstrates different comprehension of this phrase by writers who wear different lenses and define it from diverse angles, hence this word can never be an all-size fits all or an easily understood notion (Chitando 1998:5). According to Coleman (2000:28), the gospel of prosperity is, 'Christian religious doctrine, which claims the Bible teaches that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians'. While, Masvotore avers that:

The doctrine teaches that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will always cause an increase in material wealth. Prosperity theology teaches that it is part of the path of Christian dominion over society, arguing that God's promise to Israel of dominion applies to Christians today. The doctrine

emphasizes the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy. The atonement is interpreted to include removal of sickness and poverty, viewed as curses to be broken by faith. (Masvotore 2016:28, 2018:130)

Furthermore, a feminist scholar in the Methodist tradition, Withrow (2007) explains health and wealth gospel as:

A blessing from God if individuals and churches are appropriately faithful. It is a notion that has been propagated as a personal approach for gain. She further argues that prosperity gospel views the success which these churches see as the right of a Christian covering all areas. The slogan is God will meet you, in the standard phrase, at the point of your need. (p. 5)

Withrow sees the incumbents of the success and economic prosperity to be untrue to God and to the congregants because their motive is to seek glorification. Withrow's interpretations are further explored by Masvotore (2018) who sees:

Prosperity as a consumerist gospel of those individuals who are there to rob monies from the poor people for their own benefit. This can also be explained in terms of a social dilemma using pull and push factors, where the majority of people in Africa are generally poor. The economic, political and social situation, particularly in Zimbabwe, is at its lowest ebb. People are living below the poverty datum line and the political situation has created a big gulf between the rich and the poor. As a result, people are attracted by the gospel of prosperity that promises to solve their problems. As such, they are pulled into prosperity theology by circumstances beyond their control. As they get inside the prosperity enterprise, they will discover that they are continuing to be poor, and are stripped off the little they have. They continue to be pushed to the periphery or the margins of the prosperity enterprise without recognition, and getting poorer. (p. 131)

In other words, health and wealth gospel ministries are championed by lone ranger prophet and prophetesses even though there are others who are interdenominational with characteristics similar to those of mainline churches. They remain wolves in sheep clothing and questionable in operation.

Meanwhile defining terms is not always comprehensive and considering the space and time the research will look at the explanation by the Lausanne Theology Working Group (2010) from an ecumenical point of view. They view the gospel of prosperity 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. (n.p.)

This ecumenical view explicitly denied that spiritual issues should be subjected and be measured from a material point of view. Nevertheless, a scrutiny of the earlier given meanings of gospel of prosperity are far-reaching, focusing on aspects of financial, well-being and accomplishment. Furthermore:

It is not new to many Zimbabweans that there are clergy and churches that make extreme financial requirements from their members with the promise that God will in turn give them a hundred-fold back or miraculously catapult them into wealth. (Masvotore 2018:132)

This clearly demonstrates that many congregants are hoodwinked into prosperity gospel in search of promises of rewards from God in submission to the prophecy of the man and woman of God, cognisant of the fact that they are subjected to the pulls and pushing reasons that expose individuals to situations where they have no space to manoeuvre.

Research methods and design

This research employs a desk research method to gather data for this study. Hakim (1982) postulates that through desk research information is collected despite one's physical presence in the field. This information when gathered, will be examined to produce evidence that is supplementary to, or diverse from the final account. This method will be used to obtain data from books, articles and journals as well as looking for information from key meetings of the MCZ. Using already existing information saves time and financial resources needed to collect data from the field. The researcher as an insider, has opportunities to observe what transpires at different levels of the MCZ while serving as a minister of religion and a lecturer at United theological college. He has observed the phenomenon of prosperity gospel in the society at large; hence, the employment of the participant observation method. It is worth noticing that while the researcher is an insider he also utilised reflexivity in order to mitigate biases as an insider (Taylor 2011). It is through the use of reflexivity that the phenomena is allowed to express itself, and relevant information is gathered without compromising its quality. The ethical clearance letter was sought from the university to conduct this research.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of South Africa, College of Human Sciences research ethics committee (No. Rec-240816-052).

The spreading health and wealth gospel across Zimbabwe

Scholars including Gifford (1990:373–388), Verstraelen (1995), Maxwell (1998:351–373) and Togarasei (2005, 2016:1–13), have written on Zimbabwean Pentecostalism history where prosperity gospel originated. This study thus concentrates on American type Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe as proclaimed by Togarasei (2016:8), so that it connects well through the health and wealth gospel position that proliferated in the Global North particularly.

Zimbabwean Pentecostalism's origins can be traced via the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) with its landmarks initiated in South Africa in the year 1908 as alluded by Maxwell (2006:38). In 1915, it was transported to the Zimbabwean soil, and in 1943 it got formal registration and Enoch Gwanzura became the leader of AFM (Togarasei 2016:5). Quite a number of quarrels and splits were witnessed in AFM which contributed to the emergence of many clusters

of Pentecostal churches, namely Mugodhi Apostolic Church headed by Mugodhi, Pure Apostolic Faith Mission led by Moyo Madiba, while Chiumbu Isaac controlled the African Apostolic Faith Mission and other Pentecostal churches mushroomed as splinter groups. Among the splinter groups is the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God/Forward in Faith (hereafter ZAOGA/ FIF), which from the onset was regarded by Togarasei (2016:5) as a church for the elite. It was for fledgling extremists whose aim was to be prosperous (Maxwell 2006:60). In its operations, ZAOGA has a niche of prosperity element in their Mission Dei in addition to Glossolalia. Furthermore, Togarasei (2016) avers that:

ZAOGA had strong ties with the American type of Pentecostalism because its founder, the late Ezekiel Guti, received his training in the United States of America. A number of American Pentecostal stimuluses permeated Zimbabwe emphasizing on the gospel of prosperity and displaying elements such as solo ministries, broadcasting evangelism, print and electronic media crusades, billboard and multinational religious networks with an emphasis on healing and deliverance. These characters were transported to Zimbabwe through the influence of Pentecostalism when the Campus Crusade came to the country in 1979 and a number of ministries emerged. (p. 8)

Among the emerged ministries, some aborted the mission at infancy because they failed to attract many congregants needed for them to survive except:

The Rhema Bible Church that endured and raised to turn out to be one of the massive churches in Zimbabwe. It has nevertheless gone through metamorphoses of names, from Rhema Bible Church to Hear the Word Ministries in 1996, and now it is called Celebration Ministries (from 2006). Celebration Ministries has American features since the originator of the church, Tom Deuschle, graduated from Christ for the Nations International in America who later came to Zimbabwe as an unaccompanied messenger in 1979. (Togarasei 2016:9)

One can conclude that Pentecostalism traverses outside borders where it thrives well to become a movement without boundaries. Numerous fast-rising charismatic Pentecostal movements are emerging, among them is Emmanuel Makandiwa's United Family International (UFI), Walter Magaya's PHD ministries (Prophetic Healing and Deliverance), Uebert Angel's Spirit Embassy, the late Christian Oyakhilome known as Pastor Chris's Christ Embassy, Prophet Madungwe's Exile Desire of All Nations and Tavonga Vutabwashe's Heartfelt International Ministries and others with features of Pentecostalism that stress on:

The gospel of prosperity, accentuating miracles during healing and deliverance services, Glossolalia as a sign of being born again, one center of power and authority, and to a great extent, mystification of the founder of the ministry and widespread utilization of media technologies. (Togarasei 2016:9)

Be that as it may, the trace on the history of the health and wealth gospel and how it landed the Zimbabwean soil, the thrust of the article is to further explore the idea of salvation in health and wealth gospel and developing essential characteristics.

The idea of salvation in the health and wealth gospel and developing critical features

It is problematic to discover what is considered as principles and undeviating teachings of the health and wealth gospel (prosperity), partially for the reason that it is not presented as inscribed theology; instead, it is given as a rhetorical and pragmatic viewpoint in which the appeal, to a larger degree, is tangled in the dialectal use as well as the character of the protagonist thereby substituting the theological content (Young 1996:4). Additionally, the attempt is difficult as there are widespread eccentricities relating to the promoters of this teaching around its specifics. Nevertheless, some shared fundamentals are obtained from the doctrine; hence, these fundamentals become the thrust of this article, primarily concentrating on the prosperity gospel as situated in the salvation act. It is in this idea of salvation in the health and wealth gospel that important features were established, as deliberated further in the text.

One has to lead a wealthy life

On this aspect the emphasis of the health and wealth gospel proffers that it is a right for every Christian, as well as an obligation, to lead a wealthy life in all dimensions. The focus is much on monetary wealth, success and health. This teaching concludes that the reason why a church member becomes sick or poor is because one will be outside the will of God, even if the source of sickness is sin, a lack of information, challenges from the society, political cause and financial reasons or absence of adequate conviction. For Mpfu:

This is a kind of teaching that survives and ride on poverty, to desperate people, people in margins or periphery of society and it has thrived in poor nations. It gives new definition to illnesses and say every illness is caused by a curse, all those in poverty are caused by a curse, and death is a result of causality. The prosperity teaching has a political position of Capitalism that is promoted by constant proclamation of phrases such as, my God is rich, every blessed man must be rich, God blesses us with abundant riches, worship the God of abundant wealth. (Mpfu 2013:51; Gifford 1998:2; Masvotore 2018:133)

Circumstantially, the pronouncements made are in divergence with service and encourage capitalism. Furthermore, Masvotore reiterates that:

From this teaching, one can deduce that God associates only with the wealthy and the healthy; these are the only ones considered to be saved and blessed. As such, they become 31, saints and victors. They automatically become the chosen ones, the new Israel and the true children of God. It is also seen that membership of prosperity churches is drawn not only from the elite class and those belonging in the working class who are not removed from the economic and political marginality but from those who have reasonable standard of living. (Masvotore 2018:133; Mpfu 2013:51)

Richness in this scenario acts as a testimony of being faithful and having received blessings from God. The Gospel of Prosperity is a total diversion from the work ethic teachings offered by mainline churches such as Methodists, Anglican and others. This teaching becomes questionable and raises theological challenges particularly when the promises fail to materialise and the blame comes back to the congregant for a lack of faith.

Sickness and poverty

The advent of the health and wealth gospel in Zimbabwe rides on the playfield readily set by African Traditional Religion as the subject offers a spirituality that elucidates poverty and illness as profanity. An observation made by the researcher is that the clergy is believed to have the magic power that eradicates all the curses. This is mostly witnessed during healing and deliverance sessions where one could notice that there is no single word during prayer uttered by the man and woman of God attributing the healing authority to God; instead, he or she offers prayer to bless someone, instead of a prayer for God to bless someone. Furthermore, he or she offers a prayer of protection by covering someone with a spirit that rebukes anti-richness. The frequently used phrases are 'I command, I declare, I burn you by fire', etc., without mentioning the source of power who is God, Jesus or Holy Spirit. The question one may ask is:

By whose power is the protection granted? They attribute the power to be from their own making and initiation, forgetting that they have delegated authority from God who is the provider of prosperity. (Masvotore 2018:133)

This and other questions remain in the theological debates seeking answers to protect the congregants.

Give in faith in order to receive

The concept of the prosperity gospel is closely linked with the notion of sowing a seed, with emphasis on theological conception of seeding popularised, meticulously connecting celestial blessing with monetary giving to Yahweh and the ecclesiastical. Prosperity catapulted richness through orchestrating congregants to believe that as they give more, they will receive hundredfold. In Zimbabwe, some men and women of God or prophets manipulate congregants as specialised scam artistes who steal from congregants in the name of giving to God (Dube 2017). For example, a report inside a Chronicle newspaper stated (Nemukuyu 2014):

Where prophet Uebert Angel is being sued over a Bentley after Mr Ndabazinengi Shava gave the pricey Bentley Continental car, worth \$US 300 000.00, as a seeding asset, and the prophet vowed that his seed would multiply three-fold within eight months; but nothing materialized. (p. 2)

Spiritual grandiloquence swaying the thinking capacity of followers towards visualisation is used, with verbal declarations to pronounce blessings upon individuals. Faith in this case turns out to be the channel for material blessing. Consequently, humankind can possess authority that has effective transformation at the same time transporting

health and wealth by compelling Yahweh to perform, responding to believers. This act will be manipulating God to act as humanity desires instead of humanity to be granted according to Yahweh's will.

An evaluation of some biblical interpretations in the gospel of prosperity

Interpretation of some scriptures by supporters of prosperity poses extra questions than responses. The way of interpretation of some biblical texts that are seemingly for prosperity is exceedingly individual and illogical. Bible verses are quoted in abundance without attention to grammatical indicators, semantic nuances or literary and historical context. The result is a set of ideas and principles based on distortion of textual meaning. According to Hans de Wit and Gerald West, exegesis should be applied in interpreting texts, which is a systematic and analytical dialogue with the text focusing on its grammar and syntax, the meanings it may have had in its original context and its reference to its historical background (eds. De Wit & West 2009).

Biblical texts such as Joshua 1:8 that indicate God's promise to make Joshua's way prosperous and to give him good success, are interpreted out of context to mean financial prosperity yet. Another text favoured by proponents of prosperity is 3 John 2 which reads as follows:

'Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers'.

The word prospers in the text has no financial wealth connotations but it refers to go well with someone. The translation in the New International Version says, 'Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well'. The aspect of wishing for things to go well for the recipients' good health was the normal way of greeting in a personal letter in ancient times. To interpret John's wish for Gaius to mean financial and material prosperity for all Christians world over is missing the mark. John never intended that, even Gaius could not understand it from that perspective. A normal salutation is arm twisted by prosperity interpreters to have more weight than it has.

Mark 10:29–30 is another text that is also used to demonstrate the miracle multiplication of wealth as reflected by proponents of prosperity. Some have pulled phrases out of context and claim that this is a promise that Yahweh will restore hundredfold in one's life physically. As a result, people are induced to give expecting hundredfold materialistic returns, but this is not Spirit-controlled giving, but pure, good old materialism. The passage talks about believers who, because of their beliefs, are forced to give up property. As such for those who suffered losses because of their faith, there will be a measure of restoration in this life, sometimes physically, but sometimes spiritually as the

context indicates but other restorations may happen in the next life. This text does not in any way promise prosperity for those who give.

Pros and cons of the health and wealth gospel to the Zimbabwean religious and cultural milieu

Financial catastrophe, with introduction of the Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) money among other currencies in use, the turbulent partisan mayhem, disputed elections, widespread corruption, syncretism religiously, as well as the famine condition countrywide enlightens the religious cultural milieu in the country where prosperity is breeding very fast. The socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe is exceedingly multifaceted. Politically under the current President Mnangagwa, the junta seems to be in control of every sector of the government where uniformed or the military dictate the pace. It is from the analysis of the above environment that the article discusses the opportunities and challenges bedevilling the Zimbabwean milieu where prosperity thrives on.

Advantages modelled through prosperity gospel

Most importantly, in these delicate circumstances in Zimbabwe, the gospel of prosperity contributed both helpful as well as undesirable impressions countrywide particularly the ecclesia. Togarasei (2011:336) and Schliesser (2014:9) see a positive sense where the prosperity gospel has encouraged entrepreneurship that addresses African economic situation and poverty. It is this gospel component that propels followers to realise success and financial motivation. These authors gave a thumbs up to the gospel of prosperity for generating employment for the people. Togarasei (2011:335) supplementarily claimed, the gospel inculcates an optimistic focus to devotees, at the same time Mpofu (2013) in agreement avers that:

Prosperity equips a Christian to proclaim victory over sin and poverty as a sign of one's confidence in God. These words of victory spoken by believers generate in them an imagined transformation, creative imagination that goes down in their minds for a positive move in their faith. A positive attitude enables the growth of the prosperity movement, largely because of the failure of mainline churches to tap into African spirituality and failure to make the gospel message practical and relevant to the African child. (p. 52, 66)

The interaction with critical African ideas, together with added characteristics such as charm and trance, has aided the unbelievable escalation of the prosperity gospel in the Global South. It is also enticing and draws the attention of the poor to come to church looking for miracles and blessings (Mpofu 2013:67).

Disadvantages of the prosperity gospel

There is an anthropological problem in the health and wealth gospel where humanity becomes the ruler and God becomes

the servant. The gospel also ignores the warning by Jesus on the dangers of wealth. In Matthew 6:19–24 Jesus warned against wealth than perusing it. There is also a compromise of the will of God and the sovereignty of God. Hebrews 11 demonstrated that there were those who were tortured, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, put to death, being destitutes, afflicted and wondering in the deserts. Although they gained approval of their faith, they still did not receive what was promised (Heb 11:36–39). The will of God does not always include material success. Jesus told his disciples that he had nowhere to lay his head (Mt 8:20), He had to perform a miracle in order to pay two-drachma temple tax (Mt 17:24–27).

In many ways, the prosperity gospel does advance a spiritual extremism where some church goers in the family choose to separate with non-church goers. Accusation of causation of sickness emerge and family members are labelled as having caused ailments, negative spells as well as possessing tokoloshes. In this respect, family bonds and rapport with one's relatives are ruined because of extremism. This line of thinking is linked to African Traditional Religion(s) (ATR) ways of causation where demises, illness and poverty are alleged to have come from enemies particularly from the relatives. The health, wealth and success aspect in the church is seen as a peril in the manner it instigated disgruntlement and detachments to create classes among members of the church. From the researcher's observation, this gospel is packaged in a colourful and very gorgeous manner for members but apparently causing serious damages to believers. For example, the instant pronouncement: receive healing right now, hold your blessings now, demons go out right now etc. All situations and misfortunes are linked with existence of evil spirits, which inclines and resonates well with Africans. Africans are always scared of dead people. As such if one makes reference to the departed spirit, people will obey and follow. For Masvotore (2018):

When they get to the point that they are really disappointed when ailments never go, this gospel creates peace for a person, like one who has been given anesthetic drugs or sleeping tablets to suspend pain for a while. In the desire to cast out demons and remove curses from believers that are attributed to the devil or Satan as the cause, there is no consideration of the existence of social vices, since, in their rhetoric, a believer is beyond all forms of sin and evil. (p. 145)

Their concentration is on the instantaneous benefits of money-oriented and physical attractions with no desire to fix financial challenges contributing to the problems of corruption and distorted societal structures. Prosperity gospel give priority to materialistic drive at the expense of spiritual and moral aspects (Mpofu 2013:72). It has been further observed by the researcher that countless followers are deceived and are left worse-off than they were before; as they are hopeful that one day the promises will be fulfilled but with time, they discover that nothing is happening, they are left disillusioned. It also presents another quandary, where the clerics, seir or minister turn out to be a cultic person performing worship services and extremely respected by members (Mpofu 2013:86). This man and woman of God

who claims to possess protection power travels with a group of bouncers or security personnel for security. According to Masvotore (2018):

He/she turn out to be the first in command or boss where directives are created for everyone to obey without questioning, as he/she is believed to be the perfect child of God who should be revered and worshiped by mankind. Christological titles like prophet, man of God, Holy one, apostle, Papa, Mighty man/woman of God and spiritual father amongst others are fashioned for the pastor. From these titles used, one can construe a theological contestation where congregants give some titles that are a reserve for God, such as Mighty man/woman of God. It is somewhat better to say a man/woman of a Mighty God. (p. 146)

Consequently, the mere created mortal being becomes superior to Yahweh, the creator. If not closely monitored, it marks the beginning of idol and hero worshipping (Staff Writer 2016):

The danger in this honor is to make the clergy an end in himself/herself, instead of directing people to Jesus who is the final end whereas humanity is a means to an end. To date there are numerous court cases of immorality filed against those called man of God. (p. 4)

Magezi and Banda (2017) claim that:

There is a conflict of interest as to whether Christian ministry and theological education ought to follow an agenda for economic survival. The emphasis on wealth and prosperity in ministerial practices has led to the Commodification of Christian ministry where theological education and Christian ministry are used as conduits for economic profit. (p. 1)

Ministerial duties today are not viewed as divine calling for the priesthood to have a divine vocation and reject greediness and survive prudently, and endure hardships regardless of having physical possessions or not. It should be understood that ministry as a vocation includes offering service to the people who are at the margins or periphery of the society where in some cases the clergy is the one to give to them rather than being given. According to Magezi and Banda (2017:1) 'the shift has now seen the money-oriented and dazzling clergy who invest in stock markets and accumulate abundant wealth to compete for listing among the world's richest business people'. Furthermore, Heuser (2016:5) concludes that, one man and woman band ministries are developing business kingdoms under the control of seirs of profit who develop market strategies to raise money for self-glorification.

Furthermore, there are exaggerated claims for God's inspiration that is beyond the Bible. This is made for individual experiences being at par with and even overriding God's word. The belief is that the proponents of prosperity are the continuation of special and verbal revelations through their prophecies and declarations. The implication is that they share the same status with the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles as dispensers of progressively revealed truth. This poses a theological canonical problem. If indeed these are newly revealed truths from God, then they

ought to be added to the canon of Scripture and disseminated as widely as possible, as they would constitute divinely given moral imperatives at par with scripture. However, if these revelations are no more than wishful thinking of the overly zealous prophet, then people heeding them are being led into serious error.

Conclusion

The study revealed that health and wealth gospel flourished because of challenging financial, party-political and societal position of countries in Africa. Collapsing financial, partisan mayhem as well as societal turbulence drove people to seek religious personnel for answers. As discussed in the study, critical features of health and wealth gospel were explored, for instance targeting to live a prosperous life. Gospel of prosperity considers lack and illness to be a sign of being under attack of the devil irrespective of looking at root causes. Biblical verses are quoted substantiating claims made. No exegesis to the text is given and the interpretation is done out of context. Health and wealth gospel is anchored on faith as a conduit to get blessing without which one is blamed for non-receipt of prosperity. Congregants are requested to plant a seed in order for them to reap. The advantages of prosperity gospel is that it is in sync with Zimbabwean indigenisation process that gives hope to hopeless people to say one day it shall be thereby generating self-confidence and inspire hope in difficult circumstances. The study went on to give the benefits and encounters of the prosperity gospel in the context of Zimbabwe. Merits embrace the capability of this gospel to lessen poverty; a strong point that is in sync with indigenisation process of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, it generates self-confidence through a faith that inspires positive discerning and saves humankind from giving up hope, even in difficult circumstances. The disadvantages noted are that prosperity generated the extremism spirit that brought in antagonism between families, particularly those who do not go to the same prosperity ministries. The study went further to bring to light the fact that in the prosperity gospel, everything is spiritualised to make believe that poverty and sickness are instigated by a profanity irrespective of scientific reasons like financial, societal, political and even religious reasons bedeviling Zimbabwe. While there is a need to look at healthy facilities, hygiene of the society, how people in the society conduct themselves in terms of corruption, in the prosperity gospel everything is caused by curses from the devil; hence deliverance is needed. Society needs a holistic approach to religious issues for the gospel to remain true and relevant to believers.

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