

Appreciation of Prosperity Gospel's missional message and the cause to rethink its dismissive criticism

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Abstract

This study examines the missional message of the Prosperity Gospel against the mainstream definition of the gospel. It seeks to find out if there is something biblical about its proclamation to the people. In its missional message, the teaching proclaims the identity of Christ as the Saviour of mankind rescuing them from eternal destruction. The study holds this as a starting point for reformative criticism of the Prosperity Gospel, which can be made better if criticised with its potential in mind and personal freedom from traditional biases on the parts of the critics.

Keywords

prosperity gospel; mission; David Oyedepo; poverty; healing

1. Introduction

The teaching of the Prosperity Gospel (PG) has received wide criticism. Some critics might have missed out on some important content of the PG. At the same time, some may have generalised their views of the PG based on actual false preachers who identify themselves with the teaching of prosperity. Others might advance their criticism against it based on unexamined personally held beliefs and experiences influenced by traditions. This study calls for a rethink in the criticisms of the PG, recognising the centrality of Christ in its teaching and creating awareness of traditional influence.

The study holds that, like many theologies in history – Luther’s theology of salvation in particular, the PG will immensely benefit from reformative criticisms, as opposed to dismissive objections. Reformative criticism happens with (1) the awareness that PG has the potential to proclaim the identity of Christ as the Saviour of humankind and (2) self-examination against traditional biases on the part of the critics.

2. Definition of PG

Scholars view the PG in different ways. For instance, Lauterbach asserts that it is ‘the promise of abundant wealth as a sign of God’s blessing’ (2020:10). Also, Haynes notes that it is “a Christian movement that turns on the notion that it is God’s will for all believers to be rich, healthy, and successful” (2015:6). In their view of what constitutes the message of PG, Lee notes that PG “emphasizes that God will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing to the faithful Christian who consistently gives money to his local church” (2007:227–236). In the same vein, Gbote and Kgatla point out “that the basic teaching of the prosperity gospel is that God wants believers to get rich or healthy, but he cannot bless them unless they first send money known as ‘seed-faith’ to their spiritual leader or pastor who tells them about the plan” (2014:1).

Whatever way the scholars describe the PG message, there are two main components to it – health and wealth. This has led to it being referred to as the health and wealth gospel. The PG or “health and wealth” gospel proclaims that “God has met all human needs in the suffering and death of Christ and that every Christian should share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness, and poverty” (Hasu 2006:679–692).

3. Criticisms against PG

The practices and messages that come out of the PG have been criticised from theological and social perspectives. For example, from the theological perspective, Paul Gifford highlighted PG’s weakness noting that it has brought about the erosion of values that are associated with the Protestant ethic. He stresses that PG-proclaiming churches (which he calls new churches) “are not reinvigorating the Protestant ethic ... Prosperity theology represents an advanced stage of the decline of the Protestant

ethic. Members of these churches may work very hard, but this is not the message they hear incessantly preached” (1998:337).

Also, another weakness Gifford finds in the teaching of PG has to do with its attitude towards suffering. According to him, PG misses the opportunity to proclaim the gospel in ways that appeal to the reality of suffering in Africa and generally amid the people of God in all generations and places. In his own words, Gifford indicates that “It might be thought that Africa’s circumstances might give rise to a theology that ... stresses redemption through suffering. But this concept has almost been lost. Suffering has no place within the Faith Gospel” (1998:337).

Among other theological criticisms against the PG, paramount is the assertion that the gospel is lacking in accurately interpreting the scriptures. Femi Adeleye in his *Preachers of a Different Gospel* dedicated a whole chapter to PG’s misreading of the Bible (Adeleye 2011). In their article that aims “to establish that prosperity gospel is rooted in the faulty interpretation of several biblical passages”, Gbote and Kgatla conclude that, “The continual attempt to manipulate the biblical doctrine of Christ by the prosperity gospel preachers has the potential to cause ineffectiveness and inefficiency to the fundamental teaching of the church” (2014:1,10).

The more resounding criticism against the PG from the social point of view is how its preachers accumulate so much wealth at the expense of their followers. In her attempt to explain how faith contributes to poverty in Africa, Dayo Olopade notes that “The reckless “prosperity gospel,” in which pastors extract tithes in exchange for salvation, is responsible for keeping many devoted African Christians in poverty” (Olopade 2014). In his socio-economic critique of the PG Obadare holds that it is “a philosophical ally of neoliberalism”, claiming that like neoliberalism, the PG “privileges the individual or downplays the agency of the state” (Obadare 2016:6).

This is not to say that all commentators on PG always have negative things to say. However, there is hardly any writer who does not comment negatively about its practices and teaching, including writers who seem to sympathise with the message. For example, Lovemore Togarasei praises PG in saying that “the gospel is in some way contributing to poverty alleviation with potential to do more. Considering that there are multiple causes of poverty, it can be argued that the prosperity gospel’s holistic approach to life can

contribute to poverty alleviation” (2011:351). However, he also agrees that its “teaching resonates with the spirit of capitalism. No doubt, prosperity gospel has been associated with the Western economic free market. For this some people have criticized it and even see it as contributing to poverty in Africa ... *this can be true* to some extent”. (2011:345 italics added).

Also, Asamoah-Gyadu generously remarks on PG’s practices of healing and deliverance by saying, “Healing and deliverance recover for Ghanaian Christianity important dimensions of the Christian message of salvation that has everything to do with spiritual and physical well-being”. Asamoah-Gyadu’s generous remarks are because of his view that PG “takes indigenous worldviews seriously by addressing one of the central concerns of religious ritual in Africa, that is, to ward off what the Akan of Ghana express as *honhom fi*, evil spirits, from the affairs of humankind” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:166).

However, in the same line of discussion, Asamoah-Gyadu points out that PG’s teaching signifies “a theology struggling to come to terms with inevitable shortfalls in the lives of the born-again. It leaves out of the Christian equation the common experience of the saints listed in Hebrews 11 who demonstrated enduring faith in God amid the pains and uncertainties of life” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:170). Considering all the criticisms against the PG, the study set out to highlight an area worth appreciating in the PG and advocates a rethink of its dismissive criticisms.

In our appreciation of the PG, we shall focus on its missional message. By “missional message” we mean the proclamation that invites people to Christianity. We seek to determine whether there is any measure of biblical truth in how PG proclaims the gospel. Also, this paper calls attention to certain events in Christian history to advocate a rethink of dismissive criticisms of the PG.

We submit that although PG has its shortcoming that deserves criticism, it certainly communicates the most fundamental message of the gospel. In the Christian history, many doctrines have benefited from criticisms. The PG can also benefit from the criticisms of contemporary thinkers if done objectively. However, critics with a tendency to dismiss the PG’s teaching will do well to consider its missional message and evaluate their

thoughts against the historical events that may have set the ground for their objections.

4. Methodology

This study evaluates the missional message of the PG against an existing definition of “gospel” from a non-PG perspective. To define “gospel” from a non-PG perspective, we have chosen the one according to Conrad Mbewe, a Zambian Baptist pastor and author. In the book titled *Prosperity? Seeking the True Gospel*, Mbewe contributed a section titled “The True Gospel” where he set out to explain the meaning of true gospel against the backdrop that PG is a false gospel.

Our examination of the PG missional content focuses on two preachers whose materials are in printed forms – John Kimani William of Kenya and David Oyedepo of Nigeria. We did an overview of their understanding of the gospel and evaluated it based on Mbewe’s biblical definition of the same. Specificity led to the choice of the two preachers in this study. Rather than making a general statement on PG teachings, we intend to call preachers by their names, which is an attempt to spotlight the missional content of the PG and a few of its preachers.

Also, this study conducts a historical reflection on some historical events in Christian history and hypothetically infers some possible influences that thinkers need to consider in their criticisms of the PG to avoid dismissive tendencies. Special focuses were given to certain eras.

5. The prosperity preachers’ understanding of the Gospel

The PG is a form of gospel. Despite many criticisms, none deny it is a gospel; hence the name given to it. One of the literary works that seeks to condemn PG as a heresy is *Prosperity? Seeking the True Gospel*, where PG was regarded as a “false gospel”, holding that “the falsehood of the prosperity gospel is rooted in the misinterpretation of the Bible” (Maura et al 2015:15). In this book that critiques the PG, Conrad Mbewe provides a biblical understanding of the true gospel. He gives a good biblical picture of what the gospel is about. According to him, the gospel is good news, which is “our message of salvation through Christ Jesus” and what makes

this news so good is rooted in the identity of Christ, his interest, and intervention (Mbewe 2015:80).

According to Mbewe, the gospel is gospel because it communicates the identity of Christ as the Messiah, the only one in whom there is true salvation (Mbewe 2015:80–83). He further explains that the uniqueness of the gospel message is also rooted in the interest of Christ, who loves sinners so much that he does not want them to perish (Mbewe 2015:83–86). Finally, Mbewe points out that the gospel message is unique for its content that communicates the intervention of Christ rescuing humans from their eternal life in hell (Mbewe 2015:86–89).

Mbewe roots his gospel definition in 1 Timothy 1:15, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came to the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” Drawing from this text, the centrality of Mbewe’s definition of the gospel is about Christ who saves the sinner from the consequence of sin, which is hell. If we go by Mbewe’s understanding of the gospel, the gospel is gospel because it preaches the salvation of Jesus Christ to the sinners so that they do not spend eternity in hell. It is against this definition that we seek to examine the PG’s missional message – proclamations and practices aiming to bring people to Christ.

John Kimani William

John Kimani William is a Kenyan PG preacher pastoring one of the large Pentecostal churches in Kenya – Kingdom Seekers Fellowship, Nakuru. Going by the prevailing definition of PG, John Kimani William’s messages fall into the category because of his emphasis on health and wealth, which is modelled in his life and ministry. His mother, Sarah Wangui, told the story of William’s inclination to PG as a young man.

When Apostle Kimani, my oldest son and firstborn, learnt that his younger brother had a chronic disease, he decided to seek the face of God for his healing. He had been introduced to messages of divine healing by the servants of God whom he interacted with. He had faith that God would perform a healing miracle to his sibling. (William & Wangui 2022:78)

William’s fit into the prevailing definition of PG is also exemplified in his ministry, especially in his writing. He has written several books whose

contents border around prosperity. An example of such a book is *The Treasure of the Gospel: All that You Ever Needed is Packaged in the Gospel*, where he explains the biblical meaning of the gospel and the blessings in it (William 2022). Other examples are *Ingredients of Success: Know What it Takes for a Person to Realize Real Success* and *Wealth Without Wings: How to Acquire, Increase and Maintain God-Given Wealth*.

With the brief description provided above, John Kimani William certainly fits to be identified as a PG preacher. We shall proceed to examine his understanding and teaching about the gospel and how it fits into the biblical and mainstream definition of it.

In his attempt to define “gospel” William indicates that “The gospel is the fulfilment of God’s plan ... which was completed on Jesus Christ” (William 2022:4). Also, he notes that “The heart of the gospel is the declaration of what God has achieved for man through His Son Jesus Christ” (William 2022:4). Furthermore, he goes as far as boldly proclaiming the absoluteness of the gospel as the only way. He writes:

God has no other way of saving mankind apart from the gospel. He has limited the way of reaching and saving men to the gospel of His son Jesus Christ. This is why those who do not believe and accept the gospel cannot be saved since they have placed themselves beyond the reach of God’s saving grace: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn 3:17–18). (William 2022:15).

Likewise, judging by the mission statement of the church founded and led by William, it is indicated on its website that “Kingdom Seekers Fellowship, an Apostolic Church, is rooted in the timeless wisdom of Christ’s teaching found in Matthew 6:33 ‘... but seek ye first the kingdom of god and his righteousness and all other things shall be added unto you’” (Kingdon Seekers Fellowship 2024).

In his explanation of the effect of the gospel, William highlights the relationship between sin and the gospel when he writes:

The true gospel convicts people of sin, leading them to repentance and transforming every aspect of the human being: spirit, soul and body. True gospel radically changes the lives of those who believe it. Authentic bearers of this gospel also live godly lives that agree with the truth they proclaim. Their lives are the testimony of the word they have received and preached. (William 2016: 83)

In the foregoing excerpt, William alludes that the gospel aims at destroying the effect of sin in human life. In his further discussion he also notes that through the gospel human beings receive the promise of God that “are meant to help us put off the old man and put on the new man who has been enabled to share in the likeness of Jesus Christ” (William 2016: 85).

Before we analyse the content of William’s gospel proclamation, we shall also present another PG preacher and his gospel message.

David Oyedepo

When it comes to PG, David Oyedepo is a household name in Africa. His name features in the lists of PG preachers as written by different authors (Maura et al 2015:27; Mashau & Kgatle 2019:1–8). He holds that his mission as a minister of the gospel is to proclaim the word of faith. His calling into this mission was borne out of a vision he saw where, according to him, God showed him

lineup of battered, beaten, tattered, deformed, groaning for escape, he [Oyedepo] began sobbing ... In response to his question, ‘But why Lord?’ God answered, ‘But from the beginning, it was not so, and now the hour has come to liberate the whole world from all oppression of the devil through the preaching of the world (sic) of faith and I AM sending you to undertake this task’ (Living Faith Church n.d).

During his vision of divine calling, God gave him a 12-pillar mandate, (LFC n.d) paramount of which are faith, prosperity, healing and success. Oyedepo also asserts his calling to preach the gospel when he was called to embark on a mission to Africa, a time when he received a “mandate [that] ‘the harvest of Africa is overripe, rush in and preserve it from decadence.’”

Oyedepo has authored over 100 books. However, his understanding and teaching of the message of the gospel is more evident in his *Exploring the Riches of the Gospel*. Gleaned from the content of his book, below are some of his expressions that spell out the role of Christ in salvation in Oyedepo's proclamation of the gospel (Oyedepo 2004):

- “Salvation in Christ is your only way out of destruction.” Without Christ, anyone who is not born again is still in the state of perishing under Satan's reign of terror.”
- “Christ has redeemed you unto God as a priest and a king.”
- “Is Christ in you? If you[r] answer is ‘Yes’, then you have the hope of glory.”
- “[The new birth] is not forming a church, it is not preaching. It is not being a church official, it is finding and accepting Christ as the saviour of mankind.”
- “When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you are born again.”
- “You are to live a life that glorifies God. You were once with God (in Adam); you sold yourself out (in Adam), and now God has come to redeem you legally – through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

Also, in another book titled *Walking in the Newness of Life*, Oyedepo addresses the problem of sin in the life of humanity. The book delineates the “horrors” of sin, noting that “Sin is at the root of every evil, because before sin came there was no evil. At the root of every disease and frustration is sin. Sin is a spiritual heart disease, and you know that heart disease is the shortest cut to death, for “The soul that sinneth it shall die.”

6. Christ's centrality and deliverance from sin in the PG message

Examining William's understanding of the gospel as highlighted above, which informs his PG message, it is evident that he does not only proclaim Christ as the Saviour but the only Saviour, the one in whom God's work of salvation is made perfect. For him, salvation is founded on and found in nothing else other than Christ. His words are worth quoting directly here

again: “The heart of the gospel is the declaration of what God has achieved for man through His Son Jesus Christ”.

Considering the content of Oyedepo’s message as highlighted above, one will note that he has something true to say about Christ. All his statements that we quoted above regarding human salvation have something to do with Christ, who is the Saviour of mankind. In his direct statement about Christ and salvation he proclaims: “When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you are born again.”

In the biblical teaching of the gospel as rightly pointed out by Mbewe, the person of Christ is central to the gospel because of his “identity as the Saviour” (Mbewe 2015:80). More so, the message of the PG does not leave out the implication of the identity of Jesus as the Saviour, which is to deliver humanity from the bondage of sin so that they experience the eternal life.

For example, as we learnt above, in addition to his proclamation that Christ is the only Saviour, William also points out the eternal effect of the gospel by saying, “The gospel is meant to deliver man from sin and make him live in a manner that honours and glorifies God. It is intended to usher believers into everlasting life” (William 2022:17). Even though in his usual “health and wealth” tone Oyedepo indicates the nature of Christ’s salvation from sin when he notes that “The same day you were *delivered from sin*, your body too was delivered from torture and torment” (Italics added).

With all its glaring weakness and probable excesses, one prominent part of the PG that is worth appreciating is its preaching of Christ as the Saviour of humankind, a Saviour who delivers them from the power of sin. This therefore fulfils biblical features of the gospel, which Mbewe explains as follows:

The Christian message is the best news in the universe ... because of the intervention (sic) of the Saviour. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If a person must be saved, it is because he is in trouble and cannot save himself. One who needs saving is helpless and unable to change his circumstances ... [like] a team of commandos sent deep into enemy territory to rescue hostages... Jesus Christ has initiated just such an intervention ... We all need

rescuing from sin. Right at the beginning of history, our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned against God (Mbewe 2015:86).

At the basic level, PG gets its message right: Christ is preached, and his identity is proclaimed as a Saviour who delivered humanity from sin. The essence of the gospel is transformation; having received it, people experience a life change. In a tone that might suggest that the PG teachers get their message wrong regarding the gospel, Mbewe notes that the gospel “changes people – not from the outside in as false teachers claim – but from the inside out, fitting them for eternity in God’s presence” (p. 88).

We shall recall that in William’s understanding of the gospel, he notes that it “is meant to deliver man from sin and make him live in a manner that honours and glorifies God. It is intended to usher believers into *everlasting life*” (Italics added). Also, Oyedepo in his understanding states that “Salvation in Christ is your only way out of destruction. Without Christ, anyone who is not born again is still *in the state of perishing under Satan’s reign of terror*” (Italics added). Although Oyedepo rarely mentions the term “eternity” in his teachings, his caution against the state of perishing suggests this.

An overview of William and Oyedepo’s understanding of the gospel, as it informs their ministries, reveals that, though they are PG teachers, they proclaim the message that aims at eternity in God’s presence. Whoever receives Christ – however is preached (Phil 1:15 – 18) – will not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:15).

The proclamation of Christ as the Saviour of mankind is a critical potential that PG possesses and can benefit the body of Christ and the community of humanity. Recognising that the PG proclaims Christ as the Saviour of humankind might be a starting point for any critics who intend to refine its message.

7. Rethinking the dismissive criticisms against the PG

Many widely held theologies and Christian practices were once considered heresies or dismissively criticised. One example is the medieval doctrine of salvation. In the fifteenth century, religious piety and Christian belief in salvation were mechanical. Spielvogel wrote: “One manifestation of

religious piety in the fifteenth century was the almost mechanical view of the process of salvation. Collections of relics grew as more and more people sought certainty of salvation through their veneration” (Spielvogel 1999:366). Spielvogel’s statement implies that during that time, salvation by faith alone was beyond the theological imagination of the Christian majority.

It was on this note that Luther’s arguments, and that of the reformers before him, that justification is by grace alone through faith were considered obnoxious. Luther and his counterparts, upsetting the entire status quo of medieval conceptualization of salvation, were branded as heretics. For instance, Emperor Charles who presided over Luther’s defence was outraged by his audacity noting that “a single friar who goes counter to all Christianity for 1,000 years must be wrong” (Spielvogel 1999:370).

Also, Luther’s theology was not immune to queries as he was also criticised by his fellow reformers. The reformer was also being reformed. For example, about transubstantiation, Luther rejected the official doctrine of transubstantiation held by the catholic church. However, he and Zwingli a contemporary reformer differed “over how Christ was present when partaking the elements of bread and wine. Luther stressed that Christ was present with and under the elements of bread and wine. Zwingli stressed the real spiritual presence of Christ, seeing the bread and wine simply as memorials of the death of Christ” (Shaw 2016:154).

In their criticisms of the PG, thinkers must remember that “in its true spirit, ...theology is both conservative and reformatory. Religion is encompassed with mystery – that...Christianity is a scheme imperfectly understood; that beyond the regions of the known there lie immense regions of the unknown” (Stoughton 2001: 6). This might also be true of the PG.

The church would have lost the benefit of reformation given that all ended with Emperor Charles’ outrage. Protestants would uphold the mysticism of transubstantiation in the guise of consubstantiation if Zwingli did not provide his biblical understanding of the Lord’s Supper. PG certainly possesses an element that can benefit the church if allowed to thrive but under reformatory criticism. To criticise its wealth and health messages with a reformatory intention, some notable historical events must be considered, and one needs to be sure of their freedom from the biases of these events.

Christian persecution and affluence

The subject of suffering and wealth is another reason many critics fault the prosperity message. PG is believed to be anti-suffering. Yet, suffering is one of the topics the church from its onset was accustomed to. Up and till our present days, suffering is a universal phenomenon, where both the righteous and unrighteous suffer.

The church was birthed and propelled, so to say, through blood. Caiphas the high priest would prophetically say “that one man should die for the people” (NKJV Jn 18:14). The persecutors of Christ thought that his suffering and death would be the end of their perceived threat to the Judaic religious establishment. However, it only led to the birth and growth of the church. The early church believers would undergo untold suffering because of their newfound faith. Considering this, Tertullian would famously note that “the blood of the saints is the seed of the church”.

Due to all the suffering the church has gone through, a theology of suffering was developed and embraced very early on in the life of the church. It rightly seems that the church did not have the time and perhaps the need to have a theology of prosperity. Thus, when the persecution ended, it was ill-fitted to handle the times of peace and prosperity that it began to enjoy. Hastings notes the change of fortune for the church as follows:

The rapidity of the change in Christianity’s public status must have been extremely hard for both Christians and pagans to relate to. Property and exemption from tax were rained on the clergy. The gift of the Lateran palace in 313 remains especially symbolic. It had been the property of Constantine’s wife, Fausta, but now become, and remained for centuries, the Pope’s principal residence. In it, medieval councils were regularly held. From then on, the Bishop of Rome would have two homes, the Lateran and the Vatican, one reflecting his imperial inheritance, the other his apostolic one. (1999:36)

The damages that affluence brought to the church, as depicted in the history of the church, perhaps could have contributed to the extreme justification for suffering and poverty, as we see that it also gave rise to the practice of monastery.

Precipitated on the church's compromise for avarice, Christian piety and the pursuit of ascetic spirituality became a virtue that the Christian aspired for. It is in response to Christian moral failure, followed by the search for spiritual consecration, that "Christianity added another layer of spiritual meaning to poverty", whereby "poverty and generosity – the emptying of oneself and the giving of oneself – are seen to be the very qualities of God. Thus, to live in poverty, simplicity, humility, and kindness is to be godlike" (Helminiak 2020). In a way, the Christian addition of spiritual meaning to poverty underscores the evil nature of poverty. To reform the wealth teaching of the PG, it will be important to reconsider the influence that persecution and affluence had on the Christian view of poverty and suffering, especially in its view of wealth as evil.

Western philosophy and the idea of the supernatural

Another aspect of PG teaching that has attracted criticism is divine healing. The subject of divine healing is a controversial topic in the modern-day church. However, this was not the case in Jesus's ministry. The ministry of Jesus had a significant part of it dedicated to the healing ministry. Matthew summarizes the ministry of Christ as follows "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people" (Mt 4:23 NKJV). Jesus bequeathed his disciples the same ministry of preaching, teaching and healing.

The modern day reaction to divine healing varies from outright rejection to vehement scepticism. Kesley notes the evolution of thought that led to the outright rejection of healing in Christian history when he writes:

The idea gradually developed that Christians had neither the ability nor the right to heal the minds and bodies of men. It was the soul that Christianity should heal. It came to be believed that the suffering caused by illness had a real value in developing good Christian characters. According to this belief, some illness (if not all of it) is sent by God for a reason, and one of the great Christian virtues is the courageous bearing of such sickness. What God has sent for man's good the church should not presume to take away. (1970:106)

On the other hand, some do not outrightly reject the possibility of miraculous healing but are vocally sceptical about it. They believe a divine healing could occur, but one should not always expect it. And most definitely no one should claim to be able to conduct divine healing. Atkinson noting this perspective, cites an example of Dr. May, a Christian doctor, who “denies that miraculous healing which closely resemble those of Christ occur more than extremely rarely today, and argues that though God could give supernatural healing today, it is not part of his normal provision” (Atkinson 1993:30).

Again, looking at the history of the Christian church, evidence abounds to show its close interaction with the Western worldview, which could have had an impact on how healing is accepted. One of them is philosophy. The impact of Western philosophy dates to the time of Thomas Aquinas, whose theology was influenced by the Aristotelian philosophy. Aquinas resented the idea that there is “an independent reality, with power to break in upon man (sic) and change his life ... Thus, from the time Aquinas became accepted, theology has had no room for the gifts of the spirit that Paul enumerated in his first letter to the Corinthians” (Kesley 1970:107).

Like the early Western philosophy, the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment in their claim that “one should believe only what can be established by reason, operating without the aid of revelation” (Ward, 2013:173), rendered their share in the departure from the belief in the supernatural. With their emergence, faith and the belief in the supernatural began to give way to reason. Therefore, having reformative criticism of the PG will entail that thinkers free themselves from the subjectivity of the ideas that are unfavourable to the belief in the supernatural.

8. Conclusion

Examining its missional message, this study argues that PG emphasises the centrality of Christ in its gospel declaration. While we appreciate this content of PG’s missional message, we encourage further criticism of the weakness and the excesses of the gospel indicating that theology is a reformative enterprise. However, thinkers who take the dismissive approach to their criticism of PG should consider that it preaches Christ as the Saviour of humankind from sin. Also, they should be aware of the

possible historical views that may have influenced their dismissive criticism of the PG.

Some of these thinkers criticise PG because they miss out on the important content of its message. Others generalise their view based on the teaching of false preachers known for prosperity preaching. The overview of John Kimani William and David Oyedepo's teachings hints that there are PG preachers who emphasise Christ as the core of the gospel message.

PG has its shortcomings, which scholars must continue to point out. Meanwhile, as they seek to play their roles well in ensuring that PG contributes positively to the Christian community, it is important to note that it teaches the most vital message of the Gospel: Jesus is the Saviour of humankind who rescued them from eternal destruction. Also, it is important to acknowledge Christian historical influences.

The awareness of the centrality of Christ in the PG's missional message and the possible influence of traditional bias present a reason for scholars to rethink the dismissive criticisms against its teaching.

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