

# Nigeria: The Corrupting Influence of Prosperity Theology (iii)

---

Daily Independent (Lagos)

Tony Nyiam

28 April 2009

---

*Continued from yesterday.*

The renowned Justice Chukwudifu Oputa was right in once tracing the fundamental problem we face to our embracing godlessness despite our ostentatious religiosity. It is sad that some of our most visible pastors have failed to be exemplary in heeding our Lord Jesus advice which is simply to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven". The lifestyle of some of our lords spiritual is now very much like those of our lords temporal. An example of this is the employment of armed guards to protect their material possessions even more than themselves. Is it not realized that protectionism does not, in the end, protect anyone?

GA\_googleFillSlot( "AllAfrica\_Other\_Inset" );

Don't these men of God realize that they are misleading their followers to substitute the great maxim that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" with, some would say, the somehow sacrilegious understanding that: 'the fear of the armed man is the beginning of wisdom'. Why do some of our pastors ignore Paul's assurances on the subject of fear? For instance when this Apostle of Divine Wisdom assured us that: "God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of Love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

To these riches-advocating pastors, especially those who are protecting their acquisitions against thieves with armed guards, I pose the question: 'wherein lies your treasures?' I do hope it is not, as some would suspect, temporalities - which money and other materials prosperity accessories are. Warning against this sort of trust in material prosperity, the Holy Bible had this to say: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up For yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break not through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". (Matthew 6:19-21).

Prosperity theology, if one cares to take a deep look into the associated developments, will find that it goes hand in hand with the pursuit of self-interest, self-aggrandizement and often disregard for others; the accumulation of wealth without any sense of responsibility. This is why a nation of supposedly reasonable people like ours allows a group of religious charlatans disguised as pastors and preachers to take us for a ride. Indeed, because of the sort of pastoral leadership many of us have subjected ourselves to, we have invariably sold our conscience to the highest bidders amongst the political and business leaders in our organized religions.

It is no wonder some of our clerics have turned away their eyes and ears from the injustice, corruption and malpractices in our society and gone always for the money they can pocket. Selfishness, greed and inordinate ambition for power have blinded a lot of people from doing the right thing. Even when their good conscience pricks their minds, they are too sunk in the mud, because their souls have already compromised their godly principles.

Except for the likes of Archbishop Anthony Okogie and Pastor Tunde Bakare, where is our own international equivalent of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of the Republic of South Africa? By mobilizing, within Africa and internationally, the power of faith Archbishop Tutu, as recently observed by Fr Matthew Hassan Kukah, "brought apartheid to its knees". The archbishop Chaired and managed a sincere 'Truth and Peace Reconciliation' of former warring factions of South African. Archbishop Tutu's peace-making works earned him a Noble Prize. His hands-on and sincere approach to Conflict Resolution became a model that has been emulated the world over. Archbishop Tutu's understanding of the human condition, and his Christ-like sense of unconditional compassion, is something our men of God need to learn from.

We need to emulate the role and place of Catholic priests in the promotion of liberation theology in Latin America. Our men of God cannot continue to pay lip-service to the recurring dis-enfranchisement of most of our people. Our electorate's votes must be made to count. Otherwise, we would not be able to hold our politicians accountable to us.

There is too much falsehood in our mode of governance. For example, the lie that we are running a federal republican government. Our men of God should follow the example of Scottish clerics in working for the devolution of political power from Westminster, London to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Our men of God should join hands with the civic societies, and the trade unions, to fight for the restoration of fiscal

federalism to Nigeria. The consequent initiation of competition between the federating units should improve the delivery of public services.

Other issues that should be of concern to our clerics should be safety of life and property, corruption, poverty, human rights, inequalities, environmental degradation and the filth in our homes and public spaces. Is this not why cleanliness is next to godliness? The churches must play a role in making their catchment areas wholesome, which is another word for holy. This is a call for our men of God, and the churches in general, to be more active in the development of what is now dubbed 'Political Theology'. This Fr Matthew Kukah aptly defined as "a recognition of the indispensable significance of the role and place of religion in issues of governance and politics".

The rich and the poor are an inseparable pair of opposites. They go together in earthly life. Just like beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice, good and evil, positive and negative, and the whole gamut of opposites. Most of us do not bother to inquire what lessons wealth, or poverty, conveys or why they cross our paths at every turn. It is often forgotten that the duality of pleasure engendered by wealth and suffering inflicted by poverty, forms the stuff worldly life is made of. The inherent ups and downs act as the warp and woof on which the texture of worldly life is woven. When one member of a pair of these universal opposites is invited, the other simply walks in uninvited. Most times when people become materially rich they become proportionally poor in spirituality.

Thus Jesus taught: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10: 24-25). That is, most people cannot opt for one and reject the other complementary opposite.

Also, a close observation reveals, first a correlation between those in favour of Prosperity Theology and their state of insecurity, both psychological and physical. Secondly, there is a correlation between those for Prosperity Theology and their low level of faith. Fear, superstition, gullibility, ignorance, mass hysteria, animalistic tendencies, etc, go together with Prosperity Theology and Miracle Healing seekers. There is, indeed, nowhere in the world where the aforesaid is more evident and ubiquitous than on the African continent

*\*Concluded*

*\*Tony Nyiam wrote from Lagos.*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200904290193.html>