

Africa Statement
on the
Prosperity
Gospel
——— and ———
Word of Faith
Theology

Africa Statement on the Prosperity Gospel and Word of Faith Theology

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Preface

In every generation, the church of Jesus Christ faces many dangers. Some of these arise from without (Acts 20:29). However, the most dangerous of them are those which arise from within (Acts 20:30). The authors of the Bible were wise to these dangers when they warned about deceptive false teachings and dangerous false teachers. Other warnings abound calling upon the church to be vigilant and discerning in order to safeguard the precious deposit of the ‘faith that was delivered to the saints once for all’ (Jude 3 CSB). So strong are the apostolic admonitions that all those who preach another gospel are declared as ‘accursed’ (Gal 1:8 NASB).

In our day, in the twenty-first century, the church still faces many doctrinal dangers as warned about by the apostles in the New Testament. The call to be discerning and vigilant applies to us today just as much as it did to them then. Chief among these dangers are the teachings that have come to be known as the *prosperity gospel* and *word of faith theology*. These teachings are really a constellation of mutually self-reinforcing doctrines which hold, essentially, that health and wealth in this life are guaranteed to Christians as a direct consequence of the atoning work of the Son of God on the cross. These blessings of material prosperity are to be seized

by exercises of ‘faith’ that range from financial giving to speaking words of positive proclamation.

A cursory glance at local churches on the African continent reveals that this teaching has crept into many congregations and become their functional doctrine. Even churches that boast very solid statements of faith have become infiltrated by this health-and-wealth doctrine so as to undermine their very own stated beliefs. It is becoming harder and harder to trust that just because a congregation bears the name ‘Presbyterian’ that it will adhere to the doctrines set forth in the Westminster Confession. Just because a congregation bears the name ‘Anglican’ does not mean it adheres to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Just because a congregation bears the name ‘Baptist’ does not mean that it conforms to statements such as the 1689 London Baptist Confession, the New Hampshire Confession, or others like it.

Therefore, there is a need for a formal statement to help draw a clear line between those who hold to the prosperity gospel and word of faith theology and those who do not. What follows, then, are a series of affirmations and denials to that end. The goal is not to cause unnecessary division but to help clarify where different congregations and denominations truly stand with regards to this dangerous teaching. Our hope is that many will sign off on this statement and work to safeguard God’s people from this plague.

For the Triune God’s glory alone.

Articles of the Statement

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that our Heavenly Father is good and delights to give good gifts to all His children. We affirm that all good gifts including health and wealth come down to us from God with no ill intent or hidden motive. We affirm that such gifts are given to us by God by virtue of His own free grace. We affirm that He gives them to us to enjoy and that they ought to be received with meekness and gratitude.

WE DENY that our Heavenly Father has guaranteed any material blessings such as health and wealth to His children on account of their being His children and having faith. We deny that health and wealth in this life are a mark of our sonship to Him and that the lack of such blessings is a mark of failure to tap into the fullness of His design and desire for our earthly life.

(1 Sam. 2:7; Matt. 7:11; 1 Tim. 6:17; James 1:17)

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that Jesus's death on the cross secures for us all the blessings that conform to our salvation here and hereafter. We affirm that the design of the atonement is such that through repentance and faith we are united to Christ and enjoy the blessings of justification, sanctification, and future glorification. We affirm, therefore, that the salvation of our bodies and consequent reception of perfect health and wealth belong to that part of our salvation that will come in glory.

WE DENY that the atoning work of Jesus on the cross guarantees for us the blessing of health and wealth here on earth. We further deny that the wholeness envisioned in the salvation procured at the cross will be fully enjoyed by the saints in this life with little to no distinction between what belongs to this age and what will come in the age of glory.

(Rom. 4:25; 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:1–11;
Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 10:14; 1 Pet. 2:24–25; Rev. 21:1–7)

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit's intended meaning in any particular passage of Scripture can be truly discerned by means of the normal conventions of grammar with respect to the genre of the text under consideration. We further affirm that any passage's meaning adheres to the context in which it is placed, both literary and biblical-theological. We affirm, also, that proper interpretations of Scriptures ought to be more or less consonant with the way in which the true church has understood them throughout the ages.

WE DENY that Scripture should be interpreted in an arbitrary fashion based on subjective impressions or direct allegories to today. We deny that there are hidden revelations within the Scriptures that only certain 'anointed' ones can know and teach. We deny that the use of our intellect to understand the meaning of Scripture negates the work of the Spirit in illumination.

(Luke 24:26–27, 44–47; John 5:39–40; Rom. 15:4;
2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:16–17)

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that God's covenant with Israel in Scripture is a reflection of His real dealings with them in redemptive history. We affirm that in this old covenant God did most certainly guarantee material prosperity to the nation of Israel as a sign of His goodness and love to them. We also affirm that, on condition of keeping the old covenant, the people of Israel had a rightful claim to material blessings from God as spelled out in passages such as Deuteronomy 28. Israel did not, however, permanently secure such blessings.

WE DENY that Christians today stand in the same relation to God as Israel did under the old covenant. Therefore we deny that Christians today have a claim to the material blessings promised in the old covenant.

(Gen. 12:2–3; Ex. 19:4–6; Lev. 26:3–13;
Deut. 7:13–14; 28:1–2; Mal. 3:10–12)

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that under God's old covenant arrangement an Israelite who egregiously failed to uphold the terms of the covenant was liable to God's curse. We affirm that these consequences of covenant breaking would sometimes affect even future generations. We further affirm that the visiting of iniquity down through to the fourth generation was God's prerogative and involved His knowledge of their guilt before Him. We affirm that this state of affairs ended when Jesus was made a curse and consequently died on behalf of His people.

WE DENY that true Christians today can be under a curse, generational or otherwise, due to their own remaining sin or that of their unbelieving forefathers. We deny that Christians need to conduct careful investigations into their ancestral past and consequently to seek additional special deliverances from so-called 'generational bondage' beyond the deliverance that comes about when one is saved through Christ. We further deny that such special deliverances are to be procured by visiting special prayer sites, consulting special 'anointed ones,' or giving financial offerings.

(Ex. 20:5; Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 11:26–28; 30:15–20;
Jer. 32:18–19; Gal. 3:13)

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that in the Old Testament God revealed Himself to people in temporary altars, tabernacles, and temples. We affirm that these locations served as points on earth where God and man would meet. We affirm, therefore, that altars, tabernacles, and temples had a real validity in the worship of God's people. We also affirm that all these found their fulfillment in Jesus who is the final revelation of God and the meeting place between God and man. We affirm that, after Jesus, no earthly location possesses peculiar spiritual significance as a portal to access divine blessing or as an indispensable place for worship.

WE DENY that local church buildings are or should have altars which serve as points of connection to heaven. We also deny that Christians are required to 'raise up' visible or invisible altars in order to gain spiritual control of any particular territory. We deny that special deliverances are required to tear down invisible altars in order to rid families, churches, cities, or countries of spiritual evil.

(Gen. 13:4; Ex. 25:8–9; John 2:19–22; 4:21–23;
Heb. 8:1–2; 9:11–12, 24; 10:19–22)

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that suffering of various forms is a normal part of life in this fallen world. We also affirm that God positively ordains suffering for His people for His own good, loving, and wise purposes. We affirm that suffering should not be thought of as a strange thing by Christians. Nevertheless, we affirm that part of the Christian hope is the eradication of suffering in the age of glory. We affirm that, while Christians are to patiently endure and even rejoice in their suffering, they are not to seek it out or relish it.

WE DENY that suffering necessarily comes upon us as a result of our weaknesses of faith. We deny that suffering happens against God's will for our lives. We also deny that the appearance of suffering in our lives requires special deliverances that entail financial gifts to 'men of God', positive declarations, or prophetic proclamations.

(John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3–5; 8:17–18; 2 Cor. 1:3–5; Phil. 1:29, 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:12–19)

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that financial giving to one's local church is a beneficial spiritual discipline. We affirm that Christians are called by God to be generous, regular, and sacrificial in their financial giving. We affirm that in doing so they lay up their treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot reach and thieves cannot break in and steal. We also affirm that it is more blessed to give than to receive and that in the privilege of giving comes fruit and blessing from God.

WE DENY that financial giving is designed by God as a means to earn or tap into the blessings of health and wealth. We deny that Christians can buy miracles from God or that God withholds any of His graces from those who do not give certain stipulated amounts of money. We further deny that a failure to give 10% of one's income results in God's curse upon a Christian in the form of devouring forces such as unexpected bills, illnesses, or losses.

(Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 8:1–5; 9:6–11; Eph. 4:28;
1 Tim. 6:6–10, 17–19; Heb. 13:16)

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that our words are capable of causing great harm or help to others. In that sense we affirm that life and death, proverbially speaking, are in the power of the tongue. Words, therefore, have a certain power of influence. We therefore affirm that Christians should steward their words wisely by speaking truth and only saying that which will tend to the edification of others. We further affirm that in speaking to bring about good in others we are imaging God who also speaks and accomplishes His purpose through His word.

WE DENY that human words have creative power the same way that God's word does. We deny that Christians can speak matter into reality through positive declarations. We also deny that speaking words that accord with realities such as being sick or lacking money somehow attracts and permanently seals those realities.

(Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:36–37; Eph. 4:25–29; Col. 4:6;
James 1:19; 3:1–12)

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that all men and women are created in the image of God. We affirm that this bestows upon them a tremendous dignity and separates them uniquely from the rest of creation. We also affirm that, by being made in God's image, mankind can act as a co-creator with God through physical and intellectual labors in taking raw material and transforming it into beneficial products.

WE DENY that being made in the image of God makes Christians 'little gods' who have a supernatural authority and ability to create new realities out of nothing with their speech. We deny that when Scripture calls leaders and judges 'gods' that it means that they are divine beings. We deny that being created in God's image means that God was reproducing Himself in them in a manner analogous to animal or human reproduction.

(Gen. 1:26–28; 2:19; Job 38:1–42:6; Ps. 82:6–7;
Acts 20:35; 2 Thess. 3:10–12)

Article 11

WE AFFIRM that faith is a gift of God by which we trust in God and His stated promises. We affirm that faith is essential to salvation and is the open hand with which we lay hold of God's saving grace. We affirm that without faith it is impossible to please God and thus the Christian life ought to be lived in faith from beginning to end. We also affirm that God is pleased by faith and often responds favorably when His children pray and live in faith.

WE DENY that faith is a personal force which Christians are to use to manifest any reality they desire. We deny that faith is an independent agent or substance which possesses creative power or which God is decisively bound to honor. We also deny that faith shields us from suffering.

(Eph. 2:8–9; Phil. 1:29; 2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 11:6, 13)

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the mental and emotional life of the Christian is crucial to their overall spiritual health. We affirm that how a Christian thinks will play out in how they live. We affirm, therefore, that Christians have a duty to renew their minds by continually learning and meditating on God's word.

WE DENY that conjuring up positive mental images has power to attract the manifesting of such images in the material life of a Christian. We deny that visualization techniques are one of God's appointed means of bringing about health and wealth.

(Rom. 12:1–2; Eph. 4:17–24; Phil. 2:5–11;
Col. 3:12–17; 2 Pet. 1:3)

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that God has appointed elders to serve as shepherds and overseers over congregations. We affirm that this is a position of privilege and also responsibility. We affirm that God's intention is that, under the teaching and oversight of faithful shepherds, congregations would flourish spiritually and be safeguarded on their earthly pilgrimage. We affirm that, therefore, elders possess delegated authority to counsel and care for their flocks in accordance with the Scriptures.

WE DENY that any one pastor holds the spiritual destiny of any Christian. We deny that God binds an individual Christian's progress and joy in the faith to any one spiritual leader. We further deny that Christians must give unmitigated loyalty and reverence to their pastor or else suffer God's curse.

(Acts 14:23; 20:28; Eph. 4:7–12; Titus 1:5;
Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1–4)

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that God as creator has declared the purpose for which He created man and what he ought therefore to pursue, namely, glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. We therefore affirm that man most aligns with his God-given purpose when he treasures God far above anything that God has created. At the fall, mankind's desires became disordered, making us inclined to pursue the good gifts above the giver, created things above the creator.

WE DENY that the judgement of the eyes of the flesh can define what is good without reference to God's word. We deny that appealing to man's sinful and disordered desires in order to motivate him can possibly achieve any good fruit. We deny that God should ever be used as a means to any end, including health or wealth.

(Gen. 1:1; 2:16–17; Ex. 20:2–4; Isa. 43:6–7;
Rom. 1:25; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 2:1–10)

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What You Can Do

1. Sign the statement online at **www.africastatement.org/sign**
2. Share the online version of the statement with others on social media: **www.africastatement.org**
3. Point others to sound resources on the prosperity gospel, such as the ones featured under Recommended Resources.
4. Consider using this statement to vet potential partners for your church, seminary, or ministry.

Recommended Resources

John Musyimi

A Counterfeit Gospel: Discerning the Poverty of the Prosperity Gospel

Nairobi: Ekklesia Afrika, 2019

www.ekklesiaafrika.org

Ken Mbugua et al.

Prosperity? Seeking the True Gospel

Nairobi: ACTS/TGC, 2015

www.actskenya.org

Emmanuel Kwasi Amofo

Stand Up for the Gospel: Getting the Church Back on Track

Oasis International, 2022

www.oasisinternationalpublishing.com

“In every generation, the church of Jesus Christ faces many dangers. Some of these arise from without (Acts 20:29). However, the most dangerous of them are those which arise from within (Acts 20:30). . . . Our hope is that many will sign off on this statement and work to safeguard God’s people.”

— *from the Preface*

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www.africastatement.org



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