

# **An Activist-Holiness Kenneth Hagin? A Case Study of Prosperity Theology in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>**

God desires to prosper us. [...] But there are times when- [*breaks off*] number one, I believe in the power of the Word and I believe God likes to prosper us. Uh, God loves the prosperity of His people. [...] But I [...] do not [...] like... Say, some people practice, if they see a beautiful car, oh, this is mine. Lord, I claim it in the Name of Jesus, something like that.<sup>2</sup>

Prosperity theology [...] I don't have the luxury to teach that [...], I have [...] organized a cooperative [...] I'm organizing the poorest of the poor. [...] If you have] at least ten pesos, you are already part of that. [...] But if you are a big capitalist [...] it's not good for us, because you will be having the big share and then the others will not have [...] It's through the Gospel now [...] I do believe that the Gospel is powerful enough to change the course of the history of this nation.<sup>3</sup>

## **1. Introduction: Strange Bedfellows?**

Prosperity theology and holiness theology are frequently regarded as irreconcilable antitheses in Pentecostal Studies and both as opposed to “structural” approaches to poverty alleviation.<sup>4</sup> This is different in Dumaguete Philippines. Here, prosperity theology is holiness theology and it is oftentimes framed along issues that relate to the Filipino nation and society. Analyzing articulations on prosperity, this chapter will show how causes and solutions for poverty are debated among pastors and how they lead to different practices.

*Drawing on extensive field work (2009-2014) I argue that holiness theology, became a means of rationalization vis-à-vis the failures of prosperity teachings to deliver on its promises. Providing a language for articulating moral critique of both, individuals and social conditions as a whole, it leads to an alternative explanation for the failures of development in terms that include collective and structural sin. Accordingly, the confession and seed-faith principles, inherited from the Word-of-Faith-Movement are turned collective, which leads to different forms of social and political engagement as remedy for poverty.*

## **2. Looking for Prosperity: The Research Context**

With a population of 120,883, Dumaguete is the provincial capital of Negros Oriental,<sup>5</sup> which ranks eighth among the country's poorest provinces. In contrast to the latter, however, the socio-economic profile of Dumaguete is relatively high.<sup>6</sup> A center of higher education – well known for its prestigious *Silliman University* – the city is a hub for outsourcing and has a large middle-class.<sup>7</sup> While Negros is known to be a site of communist guerilla wars and *Silliman* was classified the country's fourth subversive university during Martial Law (especially due to its liberation-theology-oriented Divinity School), the city's population has espoused rather moderate positions to political issues, even during the Marcos regime.<sup>8</sup> Dumaguete's great

majority (93.2 percent) is Roman Catholic, with some 2,000 believers organized in different *Charismatic Renewal* groups.<sup>9</sup> Yet, it has a long tradition of Presbyterian and Baptist Christianity, with a total 2,100 Charismatics, and 3,500 classical and independent Pentecostals organized in more than 60 congregations. Most churches run projects that address issues of poverty and teach regularly on prosperity. *How is poverty, its causes, and remedies conceived in these churches and how did its underlying prosperity theology evolve?*

### **3. A Systematic Account of Prosperity Theology: An Activist-Holiness Kenneth Hagin?**

Although most pastors distance themselves from “it,” when asked to comment on “prosperity theology” and stress the need to be “balanced” in this regard, Kenneth Hagin is one of the most quoted preachers in sermons in Dumaguete. According to Hagin’s teachings that are well-received in Dumaguete, such as through his book *Biblical Keys to Financial Prosperity*, the cause of poverty is spiritual: Like sickness, poverty is a curse – it is the consequence of sin, which is disobedience to God and leads to separation from God. Thus, the remedy to poverty is to reverse the curse, which happens in the New Birth, where separation is turned into sonship and confers authority to command blessings. The problem is, Hagin claims, that believers do not know about their authority and do not believe that it encompasses also to physical health and financial wealth. Therefore, they have to be taught about their identity, authority and about the “keys,” which by faith release the blessing. These keys include the power of claiming health and wealth (positive confession), as well as obedience to God, especially in giving finances to the ministry (seed-faith).<sup>10</sup> The next sections will show how these aspects are appropriated and debated in Dumaguete.

#### **3.1. “Poverty is a Curse!”: The Cause**

The following sermon, by Pastor Francis Zubiri, is a good entry point into the Dumaguete prosperity discourse as it represents a middle position:

[S]hortage of cash [...] is an individual experience [...]. It is not the same as the social problem of poverty. While [...] lack of cash can be a measure of lack of wealth, [...] poverty as a social problem is a deeply embedded wound that permeates every dimension of culture and society. It includes sustained low levels of income for members of a community. It includes a lack of access to services like education, markets, health care, lack of decision making ability, and lack of communal facilities like water, sanitation, roads, transportation, and communications. Furthermore, it is a “poverty of spirit” [...]. Poverty [...] is a social problem and spiritual problem and its solution is obedience to God.

This can be best illustrated in Malachi 3:8-11, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye [...] are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, [...] and I will] pour out blessing [...].”

The factors of poverty, [...] according to many social workers ignorance, disease, apathy, dishonesty and dependency, are to be seen simply as conditions. [...] But the main factor why there is poverty is

disobedience to God's commands. [...] Dependency on God is the main solution of poverty. In order to have a successful, flourishing or thriving condition [we must ...] seek God's Kingdom and his righteousness first. Matthew 6:33 says: "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And St. Paul said to the Philippians [...]: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And there are a lot more promises of God to be claimed.<sup>11</sup>

In line with Hagin, poverty is regarded as a curse resulting from sin against God and is viewed in relation to ignorance regarding promises "to be claimed" or disobedience towards God's commandments. Yet different from Hagin's teachings, it is combined with themes championed by social justice advocates in Dumaguete, like the *Silliman Justice and Peace Center*: just salaries, equal access to education, just social distribution of wealth etc. Thus, subsumed under "poverty of spirit," sin and curse are interpreted in a way that does not limit the cause of poverty to the faith-life of the single believer. It comprises a social dimension. The function that the phrase "robbing God" takes in this sermon, is telling in this regard. On the one hand and along with Hagin, it refers to the individual's attitude of giving to the local church and represents an attempt to raise the level of offerings in Zubiri's audience. On the other hand, it serves as an "illustration" for disobedience and curse, which is explained in a way that includes explanations drawn from the analyses of "social workers." While the key tropes of Word-of-Faith-Theology are the same, and serve to mark a distinction between "spiritual" approaches to poverty and "humanist" approaches, such as *Silliman's* "liberation theology," they display subtle redefinitions that open up for viewing the "individual experience" of poverty through the lens of "social problems" dubbed as disobedience, curse and sin. Likewise, the classical reference to "God's Kingdom" becomes inclusive for social and political engagement, which are considered equally important for addressing poverty. Furthermore, Zubiri's sermon shows a broader understanding of disobedience, which opens up a space for the question of sanctification. This is in contrast to Hagin's theology, where disobedience is mainly understood in terms of "robbing God" by not sowing financial seeds and in terms of lack of naming and claiming wealth (positive confession).

While most Dumaguete pastors would agree with Zubiri's explanation, only few would typically include social and structural aspects in their sermons, let alone echo a concept of structural sin. They would explain poverty as a curse, in order to have a theological legitimization for maintaining that "God loves the prosperity of his people," and counter church members who think pastors should be poor. References to "seeking God's Kingdom" and to obedience would be framed in individual terms. Among those, the majority would frame obedience in terms of personal sanctification, understood as a work of self-discipline. With its

focus on the person, this comes closer to prosperity teachings, as found for example in Hagin's books. Yet it differs from the latter, concerning the issue of sanctification. While Hagin mentions wrong motives with regard to the use of the keys to prosperity, his focus is on ignorance and disobedience related to confession and proper giving, he does not elaborate on sanctification. According to Hagin's perception of the finished work of Christ, healing and wealth are already there, they only need to be claimed. An emphasis on self-discipline equals trying to earn salvation through good works.<sup>12</sup>

If Zubiri represents the center position, on the other side of the individual-collective spectrum there are pastors who criticize the focus on individual sin and/or sanctification found in the majority of Dumaguete pastors as an exaggerated "spiritualization" of poverty. To them, this is a "wrong mindset," which leads to an escapist attitude towards poverty and is typical for "imported conservative American Fundamentalism." Drawing from teaching materials distributed by a nationwide network, called *Intercessors for the Philippines* (IFP), such as a booklet entitled *Break the Curse*, they explain poverty as follows:

[The] Philippines is supposed to be a DOUBLY-BLESSED nation [... She is:] Firstborn of Christianity [...]. And firstborn of democracy in Asia. Yet [...] if a firstborn shows no appreciation [...God gives] His blessings to others.

The concept of "malas" (curse) and "buenas" (good fortune), is very deeply ingrained in the Filipino psyche. [...] This] is the framework by which we view our life [...] The] reference to God in [...] the nation's first Constitution [is ...] "*Supreme Legislator of the Universe*" [...] Thus, at the laying of the foundations of the Philippine Republic [...], we committed ourselves to the laws, decrees and principles of God for our blessing or cursing [...]. And we continue to do this by our frequent reference to ourselves as the "only Christian nation in Asia."

Making a conscious effort to live by them [*viz.* God's truths and principles ...] so that a country is blessed, naturally requires a [...righteous] leadership that would live by these [...] principles and govern by them, [...] so that the God we invoke [...] can deliver the blessings of justice, prosperity etc." (Caps and italics original).<sup>13</sup>

Again, poverty is seen as a curse resulting from disobedience. Yet, disobedience is understood in a collective and nationalist framework. As specific sins against God's commandments, the booklet mentions for example "The Neglect of the Poor", "The Rejection of Change by Faithlessness," "The Killing of the Innocent" and "The Thoughtless Acceptance of Globalism," which are articulated along slogans typically found among Filipino theologians with leftist leanings: "option for the poor" as a sign of God's Kingdom; the need to "side with the oppressed" and to have faith in the possibility of change of unjust power structures; and a lack of prophetic exposing of "extrajudicial killings" and power structures as a whole, by the power of the spoken word.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the subject of obedience to God (which includes financial steps of faith and positive confessions as based on spiritual authority) is not just the individual believer. Rather, it is the Philippine nation as a whole. Likewise, it is the nation that needs to

be educated about the keys to prosperity. Thus, with regard to the latter naming and claiming God's promises over the nation, which in analogy to the believer's New Birth has been born again through the advent of Christianity, stand for proper social analyses and public articulation of social injustice, and alongside with efforts for structural changes (e.g. reforms in the distribution of land, in the justice system). The booklet started to circulate in Dumaguete in the wake of the 2010 national elections, when televangelist Eddie Villanueva, the founder of one of the largest independent Pentecostal ministries in the Philippines, ran for president. Authored by Villanueva's campaign-manager it was intended to mobilize voters on the base of a political prosperity theology that linked obedience to voting for "God's anointed", while giving was linked to supporting his campaign, which aimed at restoring a sanctified and therefore prosperous nation.

These examples have sketched the spectrum and the points of debates about prosperity. All converge in understanding poverty as a curse, which serves to confute the idea that poverty is a virtue and a sign of special relationship with God. Further they converge in extending the meaning of obedience in order to include tropes discussed under the rubric of sanctification. However, they differ with regard to the question about the relation between social aspects of poverty on the one hand, and sanctification, sin and curse on the other. The following section will add nuances to this, by focusing in greater detail, how Knowing one's identity in Christ, positive confession, and seed-faith are appropriated as "remedy" to poverty.

## **3.2. Identity – Confession – Obedience: The Remedy for Poverty**

### **3.2.1. Identity and Destiny: The Power of Knowing Oneself**

Most Dumaguete pastors along with Hagin, teach that the base for the believer's prosperity is the knowledge of the believer's authority, which in turn is based on one's identity as child and heir of God. As Pastor Harold Buencamino repeats in his sermons: "ignorance about their identity keeps the Body of Christ poor. [...] Spiritual maturity is the result in growing in the knowledge of who we are in Christ."<sup>15</sup> Yet, there are some pastors, who view this as a reduction of what "identity in Christ" really means. To them it has to comprise the collective dimension of poverty as well, if the curse is not to be addressed in a "spiritualized" way. The importance of knowing one's identity in order to experience prosperity is hence also applied to the Philippine nation. The following quote about economic success variously repeated in several sermons, is an example for this position:

Philippines comes from [...] two Greek words that means lover of horses. Now when you talk about lover of horses [...] you are talking about a nation that is supposed to have a galloping progress [...] God has a

plan for you, stop looking down on yourself, because to many of the Filipinos [...] promotion comes from aboard, instead from above. It is time [to ...] get back to God [...] even economically [...]. Because this is the time that God can enable us to accomplish in one year, what will take ten years normally.

In this “revelation of the Philippines’ redemptive name,” which became popular through the seminars of Abu Bako, *Logos Rhema Foundation* founder, IFP partner and “prophetic Kingdom teacher” from Ghana, the understanding that ignorance about one’s identity keeps believers poor, is brought together with principles from dominion theologians, such as C. Peter Wagner or Cindy Jacobs.<sup>16</sup> According to them, prosperity is related to the knowledge of one’s specific destiny and calling. In addition to the keys to prosperity framed along individual terms, there is the need to understand the nation’s specific identity and claim positions in politics and in the economy based on the authority of that identity, which is revealed to prophets. Furthermore, it requires to “turn back to God,” which is understood as an ongoing process of sanctification (rather than as the one-time event of New Birth), where the believers need to confess the sins of the nation and make efforts to put God’s principle into practice when it comes to organizing politics, economics, education and all other spheres of society.

### **3.2.2. Confession: The Power of the Word**

Drawing from Hagin’s teachings, prosperity needs to be brought forth through the power of the confessed word. As Buencamino says in a sermon on releasing blessing, “Our words gives life to our faith. [...] By not speaking the words of faith, we limit God’s blessings in our lives.” Yet the condition for holding “fast to the confession of [...] hope” is living “a life that honors God and obey all His commands position us to experience His commanded blessing.” According to Buencamino, “God is limited by our capacity to receive. The problem is not on the supply, but rather on the receiving containers.”<sup>17</sup> This is understood along Hebrews 12:14: “Make every effort [...] to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

In contrast to Buencamino, pastors who, view poverty and prosperity essentially linked to the condition of the whole nation, explain this with a prophecy by Indian prophet and IFP partner Sadhu Sundar Salvaraj:

Secrets are revealed by prayers. [...] Why? To pray for the destinies or calamities.

SANCTIFY your life. [...] You can’t harvest correctly. WHY? Because of your BACKSLIDDEN church. [...] These churches keep the people in poverty. Your nation is very poor [...] because of you.

You have been given awesome call. The Holy Spirit said, “take this call seriously.” [...] If you fail in your calling, GREAT is your JUDGMENT. [...] If you FAIL [...] Philippines WILL BE CAST TO OUTER DARKNESS with weeping and gnashing of teeth. What will you do? CONTEND. Until the last days give NO REST to your body and eyes.

Many heathen will die of waters. [...] Blood will come down upon your heads [...] Cry and pray for the nation. [...] Then chariots of blessings will come upon you (caps according to emphasis in voice).<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to teachers like Hagin, pastors who espouse this prosperity theology view self-chastisement and ongoing confession of collective sins as an important condition for authoritative naming and claiming. It is through this kind of confession that intercessors acquire the right to command the invisible world, and there they are revealed what the names and claims to be uttered are. In this framework naming is connected to the revelation of redemptive names and secret sins of the nation. If these sins are not removed in word and deed (which includes reconciliation, proper dress and conduct, as well as exposing unrighteous leadership, community engagement and social justice), the Philippines' destiny of prosperity is withheld and judgments, such as natural calamities are the result. This leads to various prayer initiatives in Dumaguete, the most prominent of which are called *Dawn Watch Prayer*. Starting at 5:30 AM, these daily prayer gatherings include long phases of collective repentance and literal crying for revelation of secret sins and redemptive names. They also include spiritual warfare-prayer in which the names of strongholds to be broken that are revealed through local prophets, oftentimes have the same names as political projects and candidates, whose disaster management or corrupt leadership is "prophetically exposed" and are then claimed to be conquered. While *Dawn Watch* is organized by the pastors who tend towards the political form of prosperity theology presented in this chapter, the meetings are attended by the great majority of pastors, who emphasize collective prayer as a means to sanctification and as essential for overcoming poverty.

This paradoxical focus on (collective) holiness and self-chastisement found in Dumaguete along with the promise of wealth and prosperity, is an interesting modification of prosperity teachings as taught by teachers like Hagin and it does not go unchallenged within Dumaguete pastors. Especially when disobedience and lacking sanctification are taught to result not only in lack of prosperity, but also in the unleashing of judgment (such as the calamity-predictions in Salvaraj's message), its potential for terrorization and manipulation is deplored. The critique of *Dawn Watch* however, oftentimes operates on the same logics that informs confession-theology. Pastor Nikano, who was accused of deserting *Dawn Watch*, countered by accusing the prophetic movement and its political prosperity theology for the evoking calamities, which hamper the progress of the Philippine economy. Quoting Proverbs 18:21 ("Death and life are in the power of the tongue."), Yolanda (2013) had been caused by Salvaraj's "negative confessions," which had become a curse rather than being true predictions. Moreover, he criticized *Dawn Watch* initiators to capitalize on the fears of the people and to manipulate the latter in order to impose on them their own agenda and theology. For him *Dawn Watch* initiators

“spiritualized” issues of “deforestation and global warming,” which he viewed as another cause for the frequent calamities that affect the Philippine economy.<sup>19</sup>

While divided with regard to the question of how individual and collective holiness is to be pursued, and whether or not it can be enforced through fire-and-brimstone messages, a causal nexus between holiness and blessing is virtually undebated among Dumaguete prosperity teachers. This is where the importance to promote Christian morals comes into play. As pastor Buencamino put it in a sermon: “Living a life that honors God and obey[ing] all His commands position us to experience His commanded blessing.”<sup>20</sup> This is the base on which the majority of pastors is engaged in a partnership with the Philippine government, regardless of their positions towards social causes of poverty. In this partnership, pastors volunteer to teach moral value formation lectures for indigent people and beneficiaries of the Philippine *Conditional Cash Transfer* (CCT) program, the government’s flagship project for poverty alleviation.

### **3.2.3. Seed-Fatih: The Power of Giving**

As already mentioned, one of the central topics in Hagin’s *Keys* is obedience in giving. The power of tithes and offerings in releasing prosperity is taught almost unanimously in Dumaguete. Seed-faith-teachings serve to raise funds for political projects, such as Villanueva’s election campaign, as well as for buying new benches or renovate the pastor’s parsonage. An interesting way how seed-faith is appropriated is related to the cooperative of Pastor Neruda, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. A *Silliman* graduate, former union activist and people organizer, Neruda teaches that poverty and prosperity are linked with social structures and solidarity-action, which are spiritual entities. One of his flagship projects is the church-cooperative: members invest money into the “common pot,” which serves as capital for purchasing goods that are resold in a mom-and-pop store alongside the church. Every six months, the revenue is distributed among the cooperative members in relation to their investment. Though Neruda vehemently distances himself from “prosperity theology,” he draws on Hagin in teaching poverty as a curse that can be overcome through the Word of God, applied in terms of “organizing the people” and seed-faith, by which he mobilizes to participate in the cooperative and other church projects.

### **3.2.4. Summary**

So far, the discussion has shown how key tropes of prosperity theology as taught by teachers like Hagin, are reframed along nationalist, collective and structural lines and are viewed in a framework of sanctification. From this perspective, prosperity theology is holiness



theology and functions as a language for articulating moral critique, not just of individuals but social conditions as a whole, thus explaining the experienced lack of prosperity. Furthermore, it leads to private and political intercession, engagement in state-sponsored moral value formation lectures and other forms of engagement, such as party politics and cooperatives. This begs the question for the context of this theology. What are the conditions for its plausibility? While the last sections gave a systematic account of this specific prosperity-holiness theology, the following will investigate how it evolved.

## **4. A Genealogy of Prosperity Theology: Pentecostalism in Dumaguete (1970s-2010s)**

### **4.1. Early Pentecostalism and Generational Conflicts: Kenneth Hagin Comes to Dumaguete**

Pentecostalism in Dumaguete can be traced back to two churches, established in the early 1970s by Filipino pioneers linked to the classical Pentecostal denominations *Assemblies of God* and *Anchor Bay Evangelistic Association*.<sup>21</sup> Representing a less conventional style of evangelical worship and displaying their contacts with “modern” U.S.-American culture, they attracted quite a number of new congregants, especially from among the mainline Protestant churches, whose services were rather liturgical and intellectual. In the 1980s these Pentecostal churches experienced a revival, when some young bankers and professionals became active members of these churches and took over leadership positions, as Sunday school teachers or youth pastors.

Soon however, generational conflicts arose between the Pentecostal pastors and their younger co-workers. The latter had learned about the Manila revival of the 1970s and the mushrooming of ecumenical charismatic fellowships attended by wealthy people who met in luxury hotels, and were eager to bring “the revival” to Dumaguete.<sup>22</sup> Though the conflicts seem to be mainly about leadership-style, church management, Christian conduct and outreach, they were articulated along theological topics. The social mobility and status aspiring generation of well-educated new leaders wished to serve God from prominent positions within the Dumaguete society, rather than from a position that stressed the church’s separation from and exteriority to the world, which included a life of sacrifice and being ridiculed by the mainstream of society. This led to dissent over fellowshiping with Catholics, as well as a less restrictive stance towards wealth, dress code, and social power on the side of the second generation.

The conflicts intensified when a U.S. missionary, who had worked as personal office assistant of Hagin at *Rhema Bible Training Center* in Tulsa (Oklahoma) and *Rhema* graduate, started a ministry in Dumaguete. Introduced as the granddaughter of a U.S. State Senator and the wife of a Presbyterian U.S. Air Force captain, who organized the shipping of humanitarian goods, she soon became acquainted with the highest circles of Dumaguete society. Her ministry was characterized by a critical stance towards denominationalism (read: classical Pentecostalism), an emphasis on Healing through the power of positive confession and a remarkable popularity due to many healing reports by Dumagueteños, both Protestant and Catholic. In 1986 she rented a restaurant and started *Christian Rendezvous*, a meeting place with a library that comprised 3,000 items from *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary* to John Osteen's or Hagin's sermons recorded on preaching tapes, which drew young people from all churches, including mainline Protestants and Catholic seminarians. For the younger generation of converts, this ministry represented an approach to Christian life that fit their mindset and objectives much better, than what they came to perceive as the old-fashion style of their senior pastors. It is through this literature that a systemized teaching on prosperity, mainly drawing from materials provided by *Rhema* came to be known in Dumaguete. This fed into the aspirations of the second generation who began to regard prosperity *per se* as a blessing promised by God and obtainable through the power of the spoken word and seed-faith acts, and ended up investing more time and money in outreaches related to *Christian Rendezvous*, than in their own churches. The pastors, whose own movements appeared to have lost momentum, started to question the motives of their younger co-workers and reproached them of worldliness and of lacking sanctification. The latter in turn, accused the older generation of "traditionalism" and "lack of faith" vis-à-vis "God's new ways" of "reaching out" in order to "bless the people."

Thus, holiness became a site of contention: to the younger generation, sanctification was not "leaving the world behind" by stressing a difference wherever possible at the cost of being ridiculed, but rather an awareness of being special, understood also as calling to socio-economic preeminence "in the world." This included wealth and positions of influence among the leading elites in their socio-cultural milieus, and would in turn translate in a more powerful evangelization. Hence and as face of the same coin as "Rhema-teaching" (read: prosperity theology), "holiness-teaching" became a name for the divide between the older and the younger generation, which led many young leaders to leave their mother churches and eventually start their own ministries, such as hotel fellowships which were attended also by some Charismatic Catholics.

## **4.2. Prosperity, Politics and Sanctification: Kenneth Hagin Goes Activist**

By the 1990s, the younger generation of Pentecostal leaders had started their own activities either in connection with *Christian Rendezvous* or as para-church ministries, which soon become established churches. This led to the marginalization of Catholic Charismatics who became invisible for some years, until they reemerged as organized *Charismatic Renewal Groups* in the mid-1990s and established themselves as a discourse separated from the former. It also led to leadership conflicts among them, as they began to compete with one another given that their common adversary called “old-fashion pastors” ceased to represent a common threat. This resulted in further schisms and additional church plantings. Some twenty new churches started in this decade.

Yet there were also other factors to contribute to this church boom. First, there was a new self-consciousness among independent Pentecostals. Reports of Filipino mega-church leaders in Manila reached Dumaguete, such as the remarkable growth of the *Jesus is Lord Fellowship* founded by former Marxist Eddie Villanueva,<sup>23</sup> or similar groups who emphasized their independence from classical Pentecostalism and in 1983 organized themselves as the *Philippines for Jesus Movement* (PJM).<sup>24</sup> Spearheaded by Villanueva, PJM was a non-denominational network, whose mission was to organize prayer rallies and raise awareness for “political, economic and moral topics.”<sup>25</sup> When Fidel Ramos became the nation’s first Protestant president with Villanueva as spiritual advisor, it was clear that independent Pentecostalism had reached the upper echelons of Philippine society. Secondly, there was an unprecedented influx of independent short-term missionaries from the U.S. and Europe, coming to Dumaguete with the intention of expanding the ministries of their home churches. Most of them identified themselves as part of the Word-of-Faith-Movement with Hagin as its icon. This was, perhaps, the best way for missionaries who were not sent by any known organization to show some sort of connectedness to a trustworthy and successful ministry network, although they benefited from the resources provided by church-planting schemes such as *Discipling a Whole Nation* or *Decade of Harvest*.<sup>26</sup> Typically, independent missionaries would try to find local workers among the eager and willing assistant, youth and Sunday school pastors, who would take their offers to organize small healing crusades or charity outreaches sponsored by foreign money as a start-up to launch their own ministries.

An entrepreneur spirit fueled by the ongoing theologizing of success, prosperity, social status and an increased visibility in terms of public space, on the one side, and community engagement on the other fed into each other. Not least in order to attract new members with messages relevant to their everyday lives and dreams, Dumaguete Pentecostal sermons started to focus increasingly on promises of financial prosperity conditioned by one's amount of faith, positive confession and giving to the ministry. Wealth and status symbols became index of special blessing and anointing. Narratives of supernatural intervention in financial matters of believers resulting from "faith declarations" and "sawing" served to raise funds for projects, such as a better church building, a parsonage for the pastor, or sophisticated charity projects. While the former served as evidence for the truthfulness of one's ministry, the latter represented the means to acquire foreign sponsorship. Solicitation letters filled with faith declarations became habitual and could include words like, "in obedience to God we purchased [...]. Yet if we don't get to pay it within [...] we will not be able to keep our commitment. We declare it is God's will [...] Please don't allow the devil to shut down our ministry. Please pray and if the Lord leads you to make a donation..."<sup>27</sup>

Yet, although a large number of Pentecostal leaders and churches, experienced a slight socio-economic improvement, none of them was successful in launching a mega-church or having a "millionaire in the pew,"<sup>28</sup> not least because above-average affluent people would not stay in Dumaguete but move to Cebu or Manila. Confronted with the pressures and expectancies triggered by the preaching of prosperity and their own failure to realize a socio-economic ascension comparable to the protagonists of the testimonies reported in their sermons, most pastors tried to modify their understanding of Biblical prosperity in the early 2000s. Disillusion and financial restraint led some of them to engage in sideline businesses as multi-level marketing sellers and to a resignification of the "spiritual truth" that "God wants his people to prosper." This took place along with a reexamination of various related themes, subsumed under buzzwords like "exaggerated doctrines," "wrong motives" and the "dangers of pride and [...] materialism," "righteousness and justice for the poor," "sin" and "authentic sanctification."<sup>29</sup>

Literature provided by IFP proved to be helpful in this reexamination. The intercession arm of PJM established by Villanueva, IFP was reportedly founded in late 1986 in response to a prophecy warning that, if intercessors would not take on the struggle for the poor and fight injustice, the Philippines would be taken over by communists.<sup>30</sup> IFP's first constituency drew from young middle-class Christians with college degrees in social and economic studies, who

had studied during the heyday of anti-Marcos, anti-Western and anti-capitalist movements. Some even came from a direct communist background. They were disappointed with the failure of the left to bring change to the Philippines and with internal rifts and violence among competing leftist fractions. Yet, in their ministries and preachings they drew from socialist slogans and mobilization strategies apprehended in their college years, intertwining them with narratives coming from dominion theologies as taught by C.P. Wagner, Cindy Jacobs and John Dawson. For Dumaguete pastors, the spiritual warfare and Kingdom theology advocated by IFP suggested plausible explanations for rationalizing and theologizing the failure they had encountered in experiencing large-scale prosperity, and offered new ways to engage the given conditions with concrete actions. This included intercession, spiritual warfare and “placing Spirit-filled people in crucial positions” of national politics and economy, which later on came to be dubbed “transformational approach” or “Kingdom mindset.”<sup>31</sup> When Villanueva ran for president in 2004, pastors close to IFP organized his local election campaign. Yet, even those who opposed his candidacy could not but take hold of the names and slogans propagated by the former, although using them as headlines for their own opinion and outlook.<sup>32</sup>

In this period, thus, a further redefinition of holiness, sanctification, poverty, wealth, intercession, confession, sin and righteousness occurred, this time in dialogue with and conceptualized along collective, social and political terms present in the often-cited slogans construed around “Kingdom of God” and “transformation”. Naming and claiming became conditioned by the proper confession of moral failures, including that of the “leaders and elders” of society, who were viewed as representing the “gate keepers” for curses and blessings in the spiritual realm. Sin became a signifier for corruption and structural poverty, while holiness stood for righteous leadership and structures. It was the birth of the discourse on transformation and Kingdom theology among Pentecostals in Dumaguete, which functioned as a name for positions more or less involved in active social and/or party political projects and gave Hagin’s teachings on prosperity with which this theology was intertwined a new color. Villanueva’s election defeats (in 2004 and 2010 as presidential candidate, in 2013 as senatorial candidate) left many pastors disillusioned about the possibility of “structural change” and “Christian politics.” Many of them returned to the holiness theology with which they had been brought up in their classical Pentecostal churches. The emphasis of their prosperity teachings shifted (back) to the individual believer and personal sanctification in combination with (collective) repentance and intercession and/or engagement in moral values education seen to be essential for individual and collective prosperity.

## **5. Conclusion: Prosperity Theologies, Prosperity Theology and the Continuing History of Naming and Claiming “Hagin”**

After this systematic and genealogical account of prosperity theology in Dumaguete, the intimate relationship of apparently strange bedfellows becomes plausible. The quest for historical conditions for the possibility of a specific theology, allows ascertaining semantic shifts and redefinitions, and assessing them on their own terms. In Dumaguete, holiness theology is prosperity theology, as the latter is infused by the historically inherited holiness teachings, which morphed into a means of rationalization vis-à-vis the failures of the prosperity teachings that emerged in the 1980s to deliver on its promises. This double resignification of holiness provides the language that allows for articulating moral critique, both of individuals and social conditions as a whole. This in turn leads to an alternative explanation for the failures of development, now explained in terms of collective sin and the need for national transformation (Kingdom theology). The confession theology used in reference to the Word-of-Faith-Movement and now turned collective, offers the remedy for poverty understood as “poverty of spirit” and in some cases as social injustice, on the base of which Pentecostals offer themselves through intercession, moral value education, and other initiatives as the lynchpin for achieving individual (and national) development.

This chapter has shown the fluidity of concepts associated to the theme of this book. Articulations typically seen as indicators for prosperity theology are discourses whose boundaries are constantly contested, rather than stable entities, and whose continuity is only ensured by the fact that they are referred to by the same name. Thus, the best approach for studying prosperity theology is a meticulous historicizing of the articulations that are regarded as relevant to the subject: a genealogy that reconstructs the “history of the name[s]”<sup>33</sup> in a specific context on its own terms. By comparing the concrete meanings of these names with themselves through time and space, the nuanced resignifications of what for example appears the concept of positive confession (and on the next level of abstraction the concept of prosperity theology as such) can be unearthed. The question is not, whether the articulations studied allow for counting its proponents to a predetermined Prosperity Theology (capitalized) or not. Rather the question is: to which extend and in which specific historical situation do the articulations studied (prosperity theologies in the plural) contest and redefine what has been identified as the discourse that is responsible for the emergence of the research object (e.g. Hagin’s prosperity teachings)? And how do they continue to write its script (prosperity theology in the singular)

as they negotiate local and global discourses and quote and rearticulate voices from India, Africa and beyond?

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Maltese, University of Heidelberg. I am indebted to my colleagues in Heidelberg and especially to Jörg Haustein and Judith Bachman for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, *Odila Delaraya*, March 2014. All Interviews were conducted by the author. In order to protect the confidentiality of contacts, informants are identified by pseudonyms.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, *Stanley Neruda*, March 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Gerardo Marti, *Hollywood Faith* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 2008); Katharine L. Wiegele, *Investing in Miracles* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2005); Christl Kessler and Jürgen Rüländ, *Give Jesus a Hand!: Charismatic Christians* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila, 2008)

<sup>5</sup> National Statistics Office, *The 2010 Census of Population and Housing*, Attachment: Population Counts - Central Visayas, (April 2012); Caridad Aldecoa-Rodriguez, *Negros Oriental* (Tokyo, Japan: Toyota, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> *Highlights of the 2012 Full Year Official Poverty Statistics* (NSCB, 2013), [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2012/highlights\\_fullyear.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2012/highlights_fullyear.asp); Bram Johannes van Helvoirt, *Regions, Institutions and Development in a Global Economy* (Zeist: A-D Druk, 2009), 97–100.

<sup>7</sup> Helvoirt, *Regions*, 87–90.

<sup>8</sup> See Caridad Aldecoa-Rodriguez, *From American Rule to the Present*, *Negros Oriental* 2,3 (Tokyo, Japan: Toyota, 1989), 120–21; Everett Mendoza, *Radical and Evangelical* (Quezon City: New Day, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> City Planning Office, *Dumaguete City Socio-Economic Household Survey* (Dumaguete, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth E. Hagin, *Keys to Biblical Prosperity* (Tulsa, OK: RHEMA, 1995), 17–18.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Zubiri *Sermon*, September 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Hagin, *Keys*, 7-8

<sup>13</sup> Lyndon P. Caña, *Break the Curse*, 2nd ed., (no publisher, 2009), 2–3; 5–6; 33.

<sup>14</sup> Caña, *Break*, 6, 15, 32-47.

<sup>15</sup> Harold Buencamino, *Sermon*, September 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Philippines Prophetic Destiny 1/3*, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ayEzulGchU>. This film was co-produced by IFP and circulated in Dumaguete churches during election campaign period.

<sup>17</sup> Buencamino, *Sermon*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. “National Prayer Gathering,” accessed January 27, 2014, [http://clsfrosales.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=99:peps-notes-24th-npg](http://clsfrosales.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99:peps-notes-24th-npg) caps original.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, *Karl Nikanor*, March 2014, cf. *The 700 Club*, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikSunOYq6Wk&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikSunOYq6Wk&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>20</sup> Buencamino, *Sermon*.

<sup>21</sup> The following historical account is based on personal interviews with protagonists and eyewitnesses and other Dumaguete pastors conducted between 2009 and 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Dave Johnson, *Led by the Spirit*. (Pasig City,: ICI, 2009), 217–221.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Oscar C. Baldemor, “The Spread of Fire” (M.A. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990); Michael Wourms, *The JIL Love Story*. El Cajon, CA: Christian Services, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> On the PCEC see Averell U. Aragon, “The Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches,” in *Chapters in Philippine Church History*, ed. Anne C. Kwantes (Colorado Springs, CO: International Academic, 2002), 369–89; Floyd T. Cunningham, „Diversities Within Post-War Philippine Protestantism“. *The Mediator* 5, Nr. 1 (2003): 43–145.

Cunningham, “Diversities Within Post-War Philippine Protestantism.”

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<sup>25</sup> Wonsuk Ma, “Philippines for Jesus Movement,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, rev. and exp. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 988.

<sup>26</sup> It is notable, that Hagin is one of the five “successful healing evangelists and pastors” who Villanueva claims to have been influenced by. See “Broeddie,” *Bro. Eddie Official Website*, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.broeddie.ph/category/broeddie/>. On the church planting schemes, see Jim Montgomery, *Dawn 2000*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1989); Edith W. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Interview, *Graciano Comenio*, March 2013.

<sup>28</sup> So the title of a book by Don Ostrom, *Millionaire in the Pew* (Tulsa, OK: Insight, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Zenaida S. Badua, *Redeeming the Land* (Manila: All-Nations, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, ii–viii.

<sup>31</sup> Badua, *Redeeming the Land*.

<sup>32</sup> Villanueva’s candidacies (2004, 2010 and 2013) were all supported by Pat Robertson whose CBN Asia headquarters in Manila co-produced campaign films. In 2010 Kata Inocencio, Executive Producer of *The 700 Club Asia*, was one of *Bagong Pilipinas* senatorial candidates; Kata Innocencio, pers. comm. 2013-08-24. Other supporters were Bill Hamon, Cindy Jacobs, Abu Bako and Sadhu Sundar Salvaraj.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Bergunder, “What Is Religion? The Unexplained Subject Matter of Religious Studies,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 3 (2014): 257–73.

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