

Prosperity Gospel: A Brief Critical Analysis

By Alberto R. Timm

Many contemporary Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers have become wealthy by promising their givers financial prosperity. Based on the blessings associated with tithes and offerings (“Bring all the tithes . . . and try Me now in this . . .” [Mal 3:10]),¹ some of these preachers assure that the generous givers can even choose in advance the kind of blessings to be requested from God. The various options include the style of house they would like to own, the brand of car they would like to drive, and even the bank account balance they would like to keep. All this, and much more, they would receive for being generous and “trying” God to fulfill His promises!

For example, Edir Macedo (1945-), founding leader of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, speaks of tithe and offerings as a worthwhile financial investment. In his book, *Vida Com Abundância* [Life with Abundance], Macedo argues,

According to the Bible, to pay tithe means to be a candidate to receive unlimited physical, spiritual, and financial blessings. When we pay tithe to God, He is *indebted* (because He promised) to fulfill His Word, rebuking the devouring spirits that disgrace the life of man, and acting in the diseases, accidents, additions, social degradations, and in all realms of human activities that cause man to suffer eternally.

When we are faithful with our tithes, in addition to be freed from such sufferings, we also began to enjoy the wholeness to the Earth, having God on our side to bless us in everything.²

In his book, *O Poder Sobrenatural da Fé* [The Supernatural Power of Faith], the same author adds:

It is clear also that those who are faithful with their tithes have the privilege to *demand* from God the fulfillment of His promise in their lives, and, *compulsorily, the Lord has to fulfill it.* [...]

Personally I consider more than *fair* the contribution, whether in tithes or offerings, because *the more we give, the more God returns to us multiplied.*³

While Macedo seeks biblical endorsement for his ideas, Kenneth E. Hagin (1917–2003), father of the Word of Faith Movement, even claims divine revelations for his own views. In his pamphlet *How God Taught Me About Prosperity*, Hagin states, “The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book. I got it directly from Heaven.”⁴

The financial ambitions of the prosperity gospel movement⁵ are well expressed by Bill Hamon in his book *Prophets and Personal Prophecy*. He argues, “the Holy Spirit has made known that now is the time for the army of the Lord to arise and possess the wealth of the world.” According to Hamon, this goal should be achieved with assistance of modern prophets, who can reveal “words concerning problems that are hindering a business, as well as new directions, activities, and goals. Many businessmen seek the prophet for confirmation before making major decisions in their endeavors.”⁶

At any rate, if the preachers of the prosperity gospel are right, then it is very easy to become rich! The believer only needs to give generous tithes and offerings to the coffers of these churches, and the

expected financial returns will be much higher than the interests paid by any other investment in the financial market! Yet if the multiplied return does not happen as promised, the fault is usually attributed to the giver—who did not exercise enough faith to receive the blessing.

Many people believe in this superficial interpretation of the blessings God promised to those who are faithful to Him (Mal 3:10). But, on the other hand, there are also those who, before trusting in human promises, prefer to carefully examine the word of God to see if things are indeed so (Acts 17:11). These usually justify their stand not only on the apostolic teaching that “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), but also on Christ’s admonitions against the false preachers who speak in the name of Christ but whose teachings are not in full agreement with God’s word (Matt 4:4; 7:20–23; see also Gal 1:8, 9; Rev 22:18, 19).

The present article provides a critical analysis of some basic postulates of the prosperity gospel in light of the Scriptures.⁷ The content of this article is divided into two main parts. The first is a brief exposition of Malachi 3:7–12, which unveils the main blessings promised to those who are faithful in paying their tithes and offerings. The second part provides a critical analysis of the prosperity gospel and its implications on a few basic teachings of the Scriptures.

Curses and Blessings in Malachi 3:7–12

The book of the prophet Malachi was written around the year 425 B.C.,⁸ a time of much spiritual decline among the Israelites who returned from the Babylonian exile and their descendants. Both the priests (Mal 1:6–2:9) and the people (2:11) were defiling the sanctuary of the Lord. There were also those who married pagan wives (2:11) and who were unfaithful to the wives of their youth (2:14, 15). Allusions are made to “sorcerers” and individuals who exploited “wage earners and widows and orphans” and who turned “away an alien” (3:5). People did not keep the divine “ordinances” (3:7), and even robbed God “in tithes and offerings” (3:8).

Curses From Unfaithfulness

Departure from God and general unfaithfulness in tithes and offerings brought about great curses to the people. The book of Malachi records the following words of God: “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation” (3:9). The curses included the devourer who consumed the fruit of the ground and the vine that failed to bear fruit in the field (3:11).

Harvests were frustrated—not because of any accidental climate change or natural soil infertility, but rather as a result of the people’s insolent disobedience to the divine commandments and ordinances (Deut 11:16, 17; 28:15–68; 1 Kgs 8:35). The disobedience of the people had reached its limit; for almost one thousand years they had been warned of the punishments they would receive for being unfaithful to their covenant with God, as recorded in Deuteronomy 11:16, 17:

Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the Lord’s anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.

Well-known were the admonishments of Deuteronomy 28:15–68, including the following:

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. [...]

And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. [...]

You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it.

You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. [...]

Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. [...]

Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.

Malachi explains that those curses were coming upon the Israelites not only because they were robbing God “in tithes and offerings” (3:8), but also because they had departed from other divine “ordinances” (3:7; cf. 1:6–3:5). Due to the magnitude of the problem, a mere restitution of tithes and offerings would not be sufficient to reverse God’s disfavor. To the scribes and Pharisees who paid a faithful “tithe of mint and anise and cummin,” Christ declared that they should also observe “the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matt 23:23; cf. Luke 11:42). As in this case, the contemporaries of Malachi also needed to rededicate their lives completely and unconditionally to God and His ordinances.

Blessings From Obedience

But if the Israelites of the time of Malachi would abandon their wrong ways and surrender themselves unconditionally to God, being also faithful in their tithes and offerings, the Lord would open “the windows of heaven” and would pour out upon them such blessing that there would “not *be room* enough to *receive it*” (3:10). Included in the blessing was the promise that the Lord would rebuke “the devourer” to no longer consume the fruit of the ground, as well as the assurance that the vine would bear its fruit at the right time (3:11). Consequently, the land of Israel would be “a delightful land” and all nations would call them “blessed” (3:12).

Such blessings reflected clearly the rewards to the covenant obedience mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:13, 14:

And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.

Similar blessings are also promised in Deuteronomy 28:1–14, including the following:

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:

Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the country. [...]

The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. [...]

The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

The books of Deuteronomy and of Malachi explain that the curses and blessings previously mentioned were the results of the negative or positive attitude of the people toward the expectations of the covenant to serve God and keep His ordinance (Mal 3:14). But one has to recognize that even the natural calamities derived from disobedience had the redemptive purpose of leading the people back to God (Amos 4:6–11; cf. Jer 18:7, 8; Rev 3:19).

Although God promised to materially bless those who would be faithful to Him (Mal 3:10–12), the evidence of God's favor cannot be limited to that realm because material prosperity seems to be more common among the wicked than among the righteous. The Israelites of the time of Malachi recognized this reality when they declared, "So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free" (Mal 3:15). And Psalm 73 addresses a similar condition:

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I *was* envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For *there are* no pangs in their death, but their strength *is* firm. [...] Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase *in* riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.

The apparent antithetical reality of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous became clear to the psalmist only when he "went into the sanctuary of God" and understood the end of the wicked (Ps 73:17). By its turn, the book of Malachi explains that such reality would be completely reversed only on "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5), when the righteous would be kept as "jewels" for the Lord (3:17, 18; 4:2, 3) and the proud and wicked would be completely destroyed, leaving of them "neither root nor branch" (4:1).

However, there are those who, even aware of the Bible teachings considered above, continue to insist that God is obliged to reward with material and financial prosperity all those who faithfully pay their tithes and offerings. So we will critically consider the prosperity gospel in light of some basic teachings of God's word.

The Prosperity Gospel and Its Implications

There are serious tensions between the prosperity gospel, as taught by many popular contemporary preachers, and some foundational doctrines of the Scriptures. There are at least five aspects on which that gospel distorts some Bible teachings.

The prosperity gospel distorts God's character. The Scriptures reveal God's love in the way He treats human beings. He is merciful and just even with those who hate Him. About the plan of salvation, we know that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) that He gave His own Son to die for us when we were still "sinners" and "enemies" of Him (Rom 5:8, 10). The same impartiality is manifested also in the way God still preserves today the required conditions for human beings to live on this planet (Gen 8:22), despite the degenerating consequences of sin (Gen 3). Christ Himself stated that God "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

One also has to recognize that, within the large framework of God's treatment of human beings, many times He has to punish the wicked and to discipline those professed Christians who allow sin to separate them from Him (Isa 59:2). But even such a punitive process is permeated by the redemptive love that seeks to lead sinners into a personal relationship with God and obedience to His will. Despite being "a consuming fire" to sin (Heb 12:29), God continues to love sinners to the point of not wanting "that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). The same Christ who always loved His enemies and offered His forgiveness even to those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34) still grants the gift of life and many other blessings to millions and millions of people who make fun of God and even blaspheme His holy name.

Ignoring God's character as revealed in the Scriptures, many preachers of the prosperity gospel are not afraid of presenting to the people a god caricatured by nepotism and financial bargains with His followers. These preachers present a god much more interested in receiving financial resources from their worshipers than in leading them to live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). They present a god willing to accept even moneylender deals such as "we will loan you such amount, under the condition that you will return it 'multiplied' to us!" As tempting as they might seem, such deals are populist distortions of the holy and blameless character of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

The prosperity gospel presents a utopian image of human existence within the context of the great cosmic conflict. Human history is a long and dramatic process that began with human beings separating themselves from God and will end with their eschatological reencounter with God. Each step in this process has been marked by a continuous conflict between the powers of good and the forces of evil. Paul referred to this conflict by stating that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Eph 6:12). And Christ declared that the agencies of evil are trying "to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt 24:24).

Satan is qualified in the Scriptures as "the father of lies" (John 8:44, RSV) and "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev 12:10), and someone who does whatever he can to denigrate God's character and bring troubles to the lives of God's children. Even being a blameless and upright person, Job was deprived of his possessions and suffered innocently—not because he sinned but rather for God's name to be glorified (Job 2). In regard to a man who was born blind, Christ explained, "neither this man nor his

parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:2, 3). And Christ Himself was born in a humble manger (Luke 2:7) and lived a humble life of suffering, deprived of material possessions (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58).

Even so, the promoters of the prosperity gospel continue preaching that those who have genuine faith and give their possessions to the coffers of the church will receive multiplied material and financial return. If this is the case, then why did God not give such generous “financial blessings” to His own Son, instead of leaving Him without a place “to lay *His* head” (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58)? Why did God allow the apostle Peter to reach a point where he had to confess that he did “not possess silver and gold” (Acts 3:6, NASB)? Why was the consecrated and dedicated apostle Paul allowed to experience such “needs” that others sometimes had to supply them (2 Cor 11:9, NASB)? Could it be possible that the god of the prosperity gospel is much more generous than the God of the apostolic church (cf. Jas 1:17)?

Some preachers of the prosperity gospel teach that disease and poverty are caused by demons that can be expelled once for all, so that a Christian can enjoy full health and material prosperity. It is true that sickness and misery were never part of God’s plan for the human race. But that kind of “exorcism” of sickness and poverty, as advocated by the prosperity preachers, undoubtedly suggests a kind of gospel without a cross (cf. Matt 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27). If things are really so easy, then why did the apostle Paul not succeed in having his “thorn in the flesh” being removed (2 Cor 12:7–10)?

The Bible states clearly that struggles with the powers of darkness will never cease for Christian while he or she is still in this world of sin and hardships (Eph 6:10–18; 1 Pet 5:8, 9). Therefore, it is quite unrealistic to say, “Accept Christ and all your problems will disappear!” Christ Himself declared that His followers would face many problems (Matt 10:34–39). And the apostle Paul also admonished that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). In reality, Christ never promised to remove all storms from our lives, but rather to be with us in the midst of those storms (cf. Matt 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25).

The prosperity gospel distorts the very essence of Christ’s teachings. The essence of true Christianity is conversion that generates self-denial and full surrender to Christ (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). In that experience, sinners, who are by nature *egocentric* beings (centralized on themselves), are transformed into *alterocentric* Christians (centralized on God and humanity). In Philippians 3:4–9, Paul speaks of the transformation of his own life:

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

The preachers of the prosperity gospel pretend to lead their listeners to an altruistic life through financial sacrifices. But such altruistic intention is completely neutralized by constant promises of material prosperity from those very same preachers. As a result of such an egocentric motivation, believers end up paying generous tithes and offerings, believing that the more they give, the greater the multiplied financial return they will receive!

In addition to such an egocentric motivation, it is worthy to highlight that the ego of the givers end up being exalted even more through public testimonies about the donations and the resulting prosperity experienced (We cannot forget that many of the testimonies broadcast by the media are about financial prosperity!). Such practices might be backed up by good intentions, but they are in direct opposition to Christ's example and teachings! In His remarks about the poor widow's offering (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4) and in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14), Christ reproved forcefully this kind of show-off "testimonies." In Matthew 6:2–4, He highlights the same principle of giving in humility:

Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

The prosperity gospel applies to the New Testament church many Old Testament promises of theocratic prosperity. To understand the matter of material prosperity in the Scriptures, one has to distinguish between the *centripetal* missionary emphasis of the Old Testament theocracy-monarchy and the *centrifugal* missionary purpose of the New Testament church.⁹ In the Old Testament, God chose Abraham and his descendants to make them a prosperous and model nation that would centripetally attract other peoples and nations to worship the true God (Gen 12:1–3; 15:13, 14; 22:16–18). Israel came close to that ideal during the prosperous kingdoms of David and Solomon (1 Kgs 4 and 10), but ended up departing from that ideal under the increasing manifestations of apostasy and idolatry that culminated in the fall of the kingdom of the North (2 Kgs 17) and the exile of the kingdom of the South (2 Kgs 25; 2 Chr 36:17–21; Jer 39, 52).

Under the New Testament, one finds Christ's church with the centrifugal mission of going out to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world (Matt 24:14; 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:45–49; Acts 1:8). This is a very challenging mission, for "the field is the world" (Matt 13:38) and "the laborers" continue to be proportionally few (Matt 9:37; Luke 10:2). Under such reality, the classic words of Christ recorded in Matthew 6:19–21 are still pertinent for us today. There we read,

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

It is true that, on one side, the preachers of prosperity gospel encourage people to detach themselves from their material possessions in favor of the church. But, on the other side, they promise the believers automatic material and financial prosperity during this life. Such promises ignore the reality of the great controversy and the fact that even the righteous may undergo suffering and deprivation, as demonstrated in the experience of Job.

The prosperity gospel distorts the whole spectrum of Christian obedience. In the book of Malachi and in Deuteronomy chapters 11 and 28, the condition to receive divine blessings is not only faithfulness in tithes and offerings (Mal 3:10–12) but also dedication of one’s life to God in full obedience to His will. Christ spoke of this same reality in Matthew 7:21–23, where He stated:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

Although Christ emphasized several times in His teachings that it is much more important to *be* than to *have*, the preachers of the prosperity gospel place, according to Caio Fábio, more emphasis on *having* than *being*.¹⁰ Not very concerned whether the believers are keeping “clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps 24:3–5), or living “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4), or even allowing the true Holy Spirit to guide them “into all truth” (John 16:13; cf. 1 John 4:1; Acts 5:32), those preachers seem to be more interested in knowing whether the believers spoke in tongues, experienced some miracles, and had their material possessions multiplied.

Unfortunately, the religion taught by many prosperity preachers is a populist marketing religion apparently aimed at increasing the number of members in order to multiply the revenues of their churches. Many of them regard speaking in tongues much more significant than taming the tongue (Jas 3:1–12; 1 Cor 14:18, 19), miraculous healings more meaningful than living in harmony with the biblical principles of health (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20), and preaching temporal prosperity much more important than leading sinners to “the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col 1:12). Those preachers are much more excited about ordering like Peter, “rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6) than admonishing like Christ, “go and sin no more” (John 8:11; see also 5:14).

Summary and Conclusions

The books of Malachi and Deuteronomy list numerous blessings and curses depending on the attitude of the people toward the covenant “to serve God” and keep “His ordinance” (Mal 3:14). Although God promised to bless His faithful children materially (Mal 3:10–12), the true evidence of divine favor cannot be limited to this realm, for material prosperity seems to be more common among the wicked than among the righteous (Mal 3:15; Ps 73:2–17).

The prosperity gospel taught by many popular preachers (1) distorts God’s character; (2) presents a utopian image of human existence within the framework of the great cosmic conflict; (3) distorts the very essence of Christ’s teachings; (4) applies to the New Testament church many Old Testament promises of theocratic prosperity; and (5) distorts the whole spectrum of Christian obedience.

Since “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10) and Christians are warned by Christ not to lay up for themselves “treasures on earth” (Matt 6:19), it is quite evident that the prosperity gospel distorts New Testament teachings about the Christian relationship with material goods. If full dedication to God always results in the blessing of “financial prosperity,” why did neither Christ nor the apostles receive such blessing? Could it be the case that neither of them fulfilled the required conditions for that to happen?

The preachers of the prosperity gospel encourage believers to give more and more generously to the church. But the motivation used to reach that goal ends up strengthening even more the egocentric tendency of the believers and the financial wellbeing of the preachers. People give huge donations—not motivated by an unselfish love for the gospel cause, but because they believe that with such donations they will receive a highly lucrative financial return (“multiplied”). This kind of egocentric prosperity incentive, preached in God’s name (cf. Matt 7:21–23), denies the very essence of Christ’s teachings (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

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¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are from the NKJV.

²Bispo Macedo, *Vida Com Abundância*, 12th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Gráfica Universal, 1996), 79, italics supplied.

³Bispo Macedo, *O Poder Sobrenatural da Fé*, 30th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Gráfica Universal, 1997), 145–147, italics supplied.

⁴Kenneth E. Hagin, *How God Taught Me About Prosperity* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1985), 1.

⁵For a comprehensive history of the American prosperity gospel, see Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a critical survey of the Brazilian wealthy and fast-growing Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, see Leonildo Silveira Campos, *Teatro, Templo e Mercado: Organização e Marketing de um Empreendimento Neopentecostal*, 2nd ed. (Petrópolis, RJ, Brazil: Vozes; São Paulo, Brazil: Simpósio Editora; São Bernardo do Campo, SP, Brazil: Unesp, 1999).

⁶Bill Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy: God’s Prophetic Voice Today: Guidelines for Receiving, Understanding, and Fulfilling God’s Personal Word to You* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1987), 124, 126.

⁷For a more detailed critical analysis of the prosperity gospel, see e.g., Gordon D. Fee, *The Disease of the Health & Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2006); David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2011). See also Bruce Shelley and Marshall Shelley, *Consumer Church: Can Evangelicals Win the World Without Losing Their Souls?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 109–121.

⁸Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. rev. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 4:1121.

⁹For a more detailed study of the subject, see e.g., Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974).

¹⁰See Caio Fábio, *A Crise de Ser e de Ter*, rev. and enl. ed. ([Rio de Janeiro]: Vinde, 1995).