

## Prosperity Theology in African Migrant Churches in Switzerland

Migrants tend to reproduce well-tried religious structures and practices in a new surrounding. Therefore they build communities of faith – so called Migrant Churches. They offer not only religious networks especially for the first generation of migrants. These networks operate with opening and closing mechanisms towards the host society and they are built for different needs and special situations. Contacts with the host society are necessary to integrate on different levels. Home, work or school, and street as the classical sociological life spaces present various challenges after the arrival in a new and unknown territory. To make a decent living is difficult because of the requirements of legal regulations and formal education. Life is hard for most African Migrants in Europe, even if they integrate successfully into the new society.

Religion gets a special meaning in this context. It helps to transform economic losers into religious winners. It helps to overcome frustration, racism and hard workplace situations. It helps to interpret migration as a meaningful and successful mission despite all the obvious problems.

Contacts must be built in the new host surrounding. But at the same time they are wanted and claimed in the country of origin. Beside the emotional and familiar relations there exist very concrete hopes and expectations in the families in Africa. Whole families have inverted money and hopes into the traveller who migrated to a country where they expect milk and honey to flow. Communication is frequent and constant and the needs are impossible to satisfy.

Thus, Prosperity Theology in African Migrant Churches in Switzerland has to be understood in the light of this double context of their members: the country where they have come to and where they struggle to integrate and to lead a successful life. As many are still fighting for residence permit and without job or in low-wage jobs, they belong to the poorer, underprivileged layers of the Swiss society. Against the background of their actual society of living, prosperity therefore lies as a hope or promise in the future.

On the other hand, they have successfully left their African country of origin and made their way to Europe. Against the background of the majority of people in their home country, they are now in a privileged situation, no matter their difficult status in the Swiss society. In every contact with friends and families back home, they are seen as prosperous and be subject to numerous expectations. They are considered as the blessed ones who should bring or send prosperity back to their people.

This investigation concentrates on the Prosperity theologies of African migrant churches in Switzerland. What is the relevance and understanding of prosperity in these churches, under special consideration of the tension-filled double-context of their members? How do African Christians who are struggling for a better life in Switzerland deal with the challenges of their families in Africa. What is the role of religion in this conflict?

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