

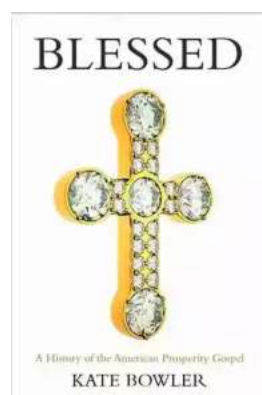
The Blessed History Of The American Prosperity Gospel

The American Prosperity Gospel has become a prominent belief system in many Christian circles across the United States. This unique theological belief centers around the idea that God wants to bless His followers with material wealth and prosperity. It has had a significant impact on American Christianity, shaping the lives of countless believers and influencing the way they approach their faith and finances.

While the origins of the Prosperity Gospel can be traced back to the late 19th century, it gained particular prominence in the United States during the mid-20th century. Influential preachers like Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, and later, Joel Osteen, played crucial roles in spreading this theology to the masses.

The Emergence of the Prosperity Gospel

The roots of the Prosperity Gospel can be found in the teachings of E. W. Kenyon, a prominent American minister in the early 20th century. Kenyon stressed the importance of the believer's words and thoughts in shaping their reality, positing that positive confessions and thoughts could attract blessings from God.



Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity

Gospel by Kate Bowler (Reprint Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 6493 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 352 pages
Lending : Enabled



Building upon Kenyon's teachings, Oral Roberts, one of the pioneers of the Prosperity Gospel movement, popularized the concept of "seed-faith" in the 1950s. According to Roberts, sowing financial seeds, or giving money to religious organizations and ministries, would result in abundant blessings and financial prosperity.

Key Distinctives of the Prosperity Gospel

The Prosperity Gospel emphasizes several key principles that set it apart from traditional Christian theology:

1. The belief that financial prosperity is a sign of God's favor and blessing.
2. The notion that Christians have the authority to claim material abundance through their faith.
3. The importance of sowing financial seeds or giving offerings to religious leaders or ministries.
4. The emphasis on positive confessions and thoughts as means to attract blessings from God.

Critiques and Controversy

The Prosperity Gospel has faced considerable critique and controversy throughout its history. Critics argue that it distorts the central message of Christianity by placing excessive focus on material wealth. They contend that it

promotes a self-centered faith that disregards the call to serve others and live sacrificially.

Furthermore, some argue that the Prosperity Gospel can lead to financial exploitation, as charismatic preachers encourage their followers to give generously in expectation of abundant returns, often without any verification or accountability for how the funds are used.

Popularity and Cultural Impact

Despite the criticisms, the Prosperity Gospel continues to attract a large following in the United States. Mega-church pastors like Joel Osteen have amassed millions of followers, who tune in weekly to hear messages of hope, faith, and financial abundance. The Prosperity Gospel has had a significant impact on American Christianity, shaping the way many believers understand and pursue their faith.

Moreover, the Prosperity Gospel has permeated beyond the confines of Christianity, influencing aspects of American culture as well. It has been intertwined with the American Dream and the pursuit of success, amplifying the message that personal wealth and possessions are signs of accomplishment and divine favor.

The Blessed History of the American Prosperity Gospel reveals its profound impact on American Christianity and culture. While it continues to draw criticism and controversy, its popularity remains undeniably strong, with millions of believers embracing its teachings. Whether one sees it as a genuine expression of faith or a distortion of biblical principles, the Prosperity Gospel has undeniably shaped the religious landscape of the United States.



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How have millions of American Christians come to measure spiritual progress in terms of their financial status and physical well-being? How has the movement variously called Word of Faith, Health and Wealth, Name It and Claim It, or simply prosperity gospel come to dominate much of our contemporary religious landscape?

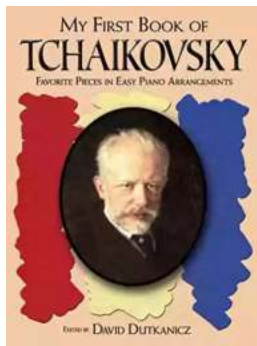
Kate Bowler's *Blessed* is the first book to fully explore the origins, unifying themes, and major figures of a burgeoning movement that now claims millions of followers in America. Bowler traces the roots of the prosperity gospel: from the touring mesmerists, metaphysical sages, pentecostal healers, business oracles, and princely prophets of the early 20th century; through mid-century positive thinkers like Norman Vincent Peale and revivalists like Oral Roberts and Kenneth Hagin; to today's hugely successful prosperity preachers. Bowler focuses on such contemporary figures as Creflo Dollar, pastor of Atlanta's 30,000-member World Changers Church International; Joel Osteen, known as "the smiling preacher," with a weekly audience of seven million; T. D. Jakes, named by Time magazine one of America's most influential new religious leaders; Joyce Meyer, evangelist

and women's empowerment guru; and many others. At almost any moment, day or night, the American public can tune in to these preachers-on TV, radio, podcasts, and in their megachurches-to hear the message that God desires to bless them with wealth and health. Bowler offers an interpretive framework for scholars and general readers alike to understand the diverse expressions of Christian abundance as a cohesive movement bound by shared understandings and common goals.



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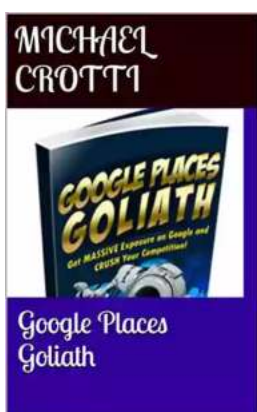
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