



Mixology and Theology

Michael Coffey

Week Nine: French 75 and Prosperity Theology

Mixology: French 75

The French 75 most likely originated in Paris around 1920. The name French 75 comes from people saying the drink packed such a kick that it felt like being shelled with the French 75mm artillery field gun. In France the drink is called the Soixante Quinze. It is featured in the film *Casablanca*.

French 75

2 oz	gin	3 oz	champagne
3/4 oz	lemon juice	3/4 oz	simple syrup

Long spiral lemon twist

Combine gin, lemon juice, and simple syrup in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake until very cold. Strain into a champagne flute or highball glass. Top with champagne and garnish with lemon twist.

French 75 Mocktail

6 oz	club soda	2 oz	lemon juice
2 oz	simple syrup	2 dashes	orange bitters

Rosemary sprig
Long spiral lemon twist

Combine club soda, lemon juice, simple syrup, and bitters in a tall glass with ice. Add rosemary sprig. Stir gently just to mix. Add lemon twist.

Theology: Prosperity Theology

Introduction

Prosperity theology, or Prosperity Gospel, is a uniquely American distortion of the Christian Gospel. It has now become widespread beyond the United States, especially through the influence of some Pentecostal and Evangelical churches that take their cues from churches in the United States. It is a belief system that has become well-known through tele-evangelists and megachurch leaders. I would say without hesitation that it is anti-Gospel, and therefore anti-Christ, which sounds like a strong way of putting it, but why not.

Theology

The basic teachings of Prosperity Theology are:

- Health and wealth are always God's will for people of faith
- Faith is a means of attaining prosperity and is rewarded by God
- Prayer is an act that is efficacious: it produces what is spoken when it is truly believed
- Giving to ministries that promote Prosperity Gospel is a means of getting a financial reward

Prosperity Gospel has become popular among middle-class Americans as a means of affirming and attaining the American dream of material wealth. It is popular among poor Americans (and around the world) as a means of finding status and financial success which they long for an cannot attain.

Background

There are many background influences that lead to the development of the 20th century Prosperity theology in the United States.

Calvinism: Forgive me Calvinists, but there is a significant part of American Protestantism that is shaped by Calvinism, and part of that influence sets the path toward Prosperity theology. One key aspect of Calvinism is the doctrine of election and atonement, which ends up saying that God has elected from the beginning for only some of humanity to be saved, and since this is predestined, there is nothing you can do to change it. One out come of this theology is it led some people to look for signs that they were part of the elect, such as blessings from God, which may take the form of material wealth. Puritans emphasized hard work as a means of gaining God's blessing of material wealth, thereby assuring they were part of the elect.

New Thought Movement: In the mid-nineteenth century, Phineas Quimby, a New Hampshire clockmaker and mesmerist, began teaching that illness was caused by negative states of the mind, and healing can come by changing one's thinking. One of his followers was Mary Baker Eddy, who went on to start the Christian Science tradition, with similar understandings of illness and the mind, but with a more religious interpretation than Quimby. Among the teachings of the New Thought movement that followed Quimby

is the belief that *our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living*. The emphasis shifted from health and healing to creating material wealth through positive thinking.

Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth: Carnegie published his article in 1889 where he made his claim that accumulation of wealth was God's will because it allowed for great philanthropy to help those in need. While putting a responsibility on the wealthy to do philanthropy, Carnegie did not offer any critique of the labor practices of the day and the negative effects of industrialization, all of which made the accumulation of great wealth possible, and the rise in urban poverty a reality. But the result was an influential framework for viewing great wealth as God's intention.

E. W. Kenyon was a Baptist minister and part of the early Pentecostalism movement. He was influenced by the New Thought teachings. He began developing beliefs about faith and healing, the power of speech and God-language as efficacious, and the belief that people of faith can demand what they are entitled to from God. It's important to note that much of Pentecostalism was still viewed prosperity as a threat to one's spiritual life.

1950's Revivalism Post-war America quickly saw a revival movement and the development of such Prosperity Theology foundational beliefs as the "laws of faith" (ask and you will receive) and the "laws of divine reciprocity" (give and it will be given back to you). Much of the revivalism movement was rooted in faith healing, but with the rising American materialism began to emphasize attainment of material wealth. Oral Roberts began teaching Prosperity Theology in 1947, emphasizing a "blessing pact" in which believers would receive back from God seven-fold what they give to God (or, um... Oral Roberts). In 1953 faith healer A. A. Allen published *The Secret to Scriptural Financial Success*, began merchandizing items that could be used to make prayers for financial blessing effective, and taught that faith could miraculously solve financial problems. He also could miraculously turn one dollar bills into twenty dollar bills, so there's that.

Power of Positive Thinking was published in 1952 by Norman Vincent Peale. It took the concepts of New Thought and applied them to popular psychology and early prosperity beliefs.

1960's and beyond. These mostly independent ministries promoting financial blessing through prayer and giving began to grow, make use of radio and television, and find the need to raise more money to fund both lavish lifestyles and massive media ministries. Many leaders began to display more and more ostentatious living, which became their own personal witness to the truth of their claims.

Joel Osteen There are many preachers who have espoused the Prosperity Gospel over the past decades, but none more brazenly and successfully as Osteen. Osteen, however, shifts the theology away from money to blessing and happiness.

Paula White is a leading proponent of Prosperity Gospel today, and is a spiritual advisor to President Trump.

Connections to American life: Prosperity Theology is seen in other strands of American popular religion and spirituality, either in direct connection or with similar influences. Consider these in relationship with Prosperity Gospel: American civil religion; self-help movements; Herbalife, Amway, and other pyramid

schemes; *The Secret*; Oprah Winfrey as spiritual guru; Dave Ramsey, Suze Orman, and other financial self-help gurus. And finally, Trumpism is in many ways dependent on the Prosperity Gospel for its validity and appeal (along with white supremacy, but that's a different topic...) On this last point, this is worth reading:

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/10/the-prosperity-gospel-gains-a-foothold-in-u-s-politics-panel-says/>

Criticism

Some major ways to criticize Prosperity Theology from a more traditional and biblical viewpoint include:

Anti-grace: Prosperity Gospel promotes a cause and effect way of attaining God's favor, which is reduced to material wealth, rather than an emphasis on God's grace given freely in Christ. A relationship with God is reduced to a mechanical, transactional one, not a trusting relationship rooted in God's love for all.

Anti-poor: Prosperity Gospel either explicitly or implicitly views the poor as lacking in God's blessing because of their own failures. It negates the good news for the poor in the Gospels and the message of God's blessing and care for the lowly and marginalized, and God's judgment and rejection of the wealthy and powerful.

Anti-discipleship: The call to follow Jesus in the way of the cross is lacking in Prosperity Gospel. Living a life of sacrifice and meaningful suffering, following the way and teaching of Jesus, is absent.

Materialistic: The elevation of materialism as God's intention for the good life is in contrast to the biblical warning against material wealth and the call to give one's wealth to help your neighbor.

Individualistic: Prosperity Gospel is deeply rooted in American individualism and ignores the importance of community and the common good. The New Testament vision of the church as a community of mutual care and sharing so that all have enough is rejected for individual prosperity.

Manipulative and abusive practices

Self-destructive effects on believers

Lack of critical reflection on social injustice and poverty