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# Consecrating Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Prosperity Gospel

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## Abstract

Neoliberalism relies on optimism. Without faith in meritocracy – unwavering belief that rewards will eventually and justly come to those who work hard enough – support for the capitalist system and belief in neoliberalism would unravel. How that optimism is perpetuated in the face persistent income inequality and exploitation within the workplace requires an examination of those cultural institutions which reinforce and reproduce optimism over practical experience. This research focuses on one particular religious institution of the US – the Prosperity Gospel – and its interactive co-evolution with neoliberalism. The Prosperity Gospel is a modern, neoliberal variation of Pentecostalism that is premised on the belief that a Biblical covenant between the individual believer and God guarantees the individual believer blessings of health and wealth, provided the believer demonstrates adequate faith. Accordingly, for those who are less adept at navigating the business world, financial success is still available for those believers who can dedicate themselves with the same frenzied ambition to the spiritual world. The Prosperity Gospel thus supports and sustains neoliberalism; the Prosperity Gospel is an institution which provides refuge to individuals from the exigencies of the market as well as a social practice which reinforces individual responsibility and fault. The Prosperity Gospel is the spiritual articulation of neoliberalism as well as a reinforcing institution.

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