THE THEME OF TRANSFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN
EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS OF ENTERPRISE: A POSTSECULAR
CRITIQUE IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

The School of Philosophy, Theology, and Religion
College of Arts and Law
The University of Birmingham
December 2018

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary American evangelical theology's quest to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise through the theme of transformation is being challenged by postsecularism. Consumer capitalism's rapid growth has, first, weakened the influence of evangelicalism in American public life as institutionalized forms of Protestant Christianity have declined. Second, it has intensified individualist-materialist conceptions of spirituality that ground human relationships in self-interested market exchange. This contrasts with a prominent ethical thread in the Christian Scriptures that grounds human relationality in the triangulating force of God's intrinsic love, which checks the human tendency to instrumentalize for individual and material gain. To articulate a vision of capitalistic enterprise as a vehicle for moral and spiritual transformation, the theme of transformation needs a postsecular revision.

The research question is: How can contemporary American evangelical theology reconstruct the theme of transformation for a postsecular context that counters the individualist-materialist excesses of consumerist spirituality? Working from the field of practical theology, I argued that a postsecular renewal demands a reflexive spirituality that regularly interrogates its own practice. My two-part proposition was: Contemporary American evangelical theology could strengthen its reflexivity against the excesses of postsecular consumerist spirituality by critically: (a) engaging stakeholder theory to establish the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing; and (b) appropriating the Anabaptist tradition of *gelassenheit* to reconstruct the theme of transformation around a relational ethic of triangular love.

DEDICATION

To my wife—you show me every day a practical theology.

To my kids—may you seek, for the journey and not just the destination.

Thank you for your many sacrifices.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,

are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are two people without whose guidance this thesis would not be possible. Professor Pattison, thank you for the guidance, wisdom, and insight you have provided every step of the journey. I have cherished not only the answers you have given but even more the critical questions you have raised. The discipline of practical theology is forever enhanced by your contributions, and I count myself blessed to have been your student. Professor Gomes, thank you for taking a risk by supervising a student outside your program. Rare is the combination of humility and intelligence that you possess. You are the very model of interdisciplinary scholarship. I have been blessed with extraordinary supervisors, and I am profoundly grateful.

I have also been supported by the insights and valuable critiques from readers who agreed to review a draft of the thesis. To professors Miller, Chung, and Turpin, thank you sincerely for your time and considerations.

To all the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of the University of Birmingham, thank you. You are a remarkable community, and you have marked me indelibly.

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Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence alone. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favor.

—Adam Smith

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

—The First Epistle of John 3:16-17

Contemporary American evangelical theology has a problem. In response to the dynamic growth of the global economy, it has been on a quest to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise. The effort to show that faith and work are not meant to be isolated from each other has focused on a central theme of transformation (Miller, 2007, p. 11; Grabill, 2012). It expresses that capitalistic enterprise provides a platform for Christians to fulfill the call of God and live faithfully to the message of Jesus' death and resurrection presented in the Bible by (a) harnessing the material powers of enterprise to advance human flourishing for the common good and (b) sharing the gospel and engaging in personal conversion where opportunity allows to spread the kingdom of God (Smith, 1998, pp. 203-210).

In this traditional scheme, Christian faith is portrayed as harnessing the good of Western consumer market capitalism without being affected by its excesses. When the theme of transformation was formalized in the 20th century, this made relative sense. Evangelical Christianity still exercised significant sociopolitical influence in American public life, and market capitalism's growth was relatively stable and predictable.

However, times have changed. The phenomenon of postsecularism has challenged contemporary American evangelical theology's integrative vision that enterprise is a vehicle for moral and spiritual transformation. It has done so by extending the instrumentalizing reach of consumer market capitalism into virtually every domain of human life, including religious expression (Robinson, 2014). This poses two problems for the traditional theme of transformation. First, it has facilitated a decline in identification with institutionalized forms of Protestant Christianity, weakening the influence of evangelicalism in American public life. Second, it has facilitated a rise in less traditional forms of "implicit religion" that conceive of spirituality in more materialistic and individualistic terms. Human relationality is grounded in self-interested market exchange purposed for maximizing utility. This instrumentalized conception of spirituality runs counter to a prominent ethical thread in the Christian Scriptures. There, moral and spiritual transformation is grounded in the triangulating love of God and the regular resisting of the human tendency to seek individual and material gain at the expense of others (Eph 5:2; Jn 13:34; 15:13; Mk 8:34-35; Rom 5:8).

The theme of transformation needs a critical revision addressing the challenges of postsecularism. That is the subject of this thesis. Postsecularism has shown market capitalism to be more than merely an economic system. It is a "cultural system that wields a powerful influence on human valuing, relationship, and meaning-making" (Turpin, 2006, p. 30). Consumption moves beyond acquiring basic material necessities and "into the realm of meaning-making and valuing in a structured system" (Tanner, 2002, p. 32). Consumption practice, like religious faith, often evinces deeper and more profound longings (Miller, 2003, p. 144). It "implies a faithful dependency that orders the

self at a primary level" (Turpin, 2006, p. 40).

Late capitalism's postsecular growth has been polarizing. It has contributed to measurable increases in standards of living and life expectancy, especially among those in extreme poverty (McCloskey, 2016, pp. 5-8; Sachs, 2006, pp. 1-2). Alternatively, it has imposed "negative pecuniary externalities" in the form of rising income inequality, environmental damages, and increasing social displacement (Barrera, 2005, p. 19).

Early market capitalism was premised on the belief that the rational pursuit of self-interest (what Adam Smith called "self-love") was the best way to maximize economic benefit. For Smith, human participation in broader society would incentivize an enlightened self-interest that limited greed and the violation of others' rights (Wright, 2005). The radical prioritization of consumption in Western "cultures of enhancement" undercut this check (Latimer, 2001, pp. 162-164). The autonomized consumer is accessing an ephemeral market for goods and services for self-making that minimizes human interaction and inhibits sociality. Left unchecked, this commoditized and instrumentalizing view of the self can disintegrate individuals from the "living human web" (Miller-McLemore, 1996) and erode social well-being (Taylor, 1991; Rogers-Vaughn, 2016).

For contemporary American evangelical theology to articulate a postsecular theme of transformation, a more nuanced account of how evangelical Christian faith integrates with consumer market systems is required. Specifically, it needs to show how embodied Christian practices can reinforce the formation of thick relational collectives that are necessary for human flourishing, but that increasing instrumentality has eroded. The research question of this thesis is: How can contemporary American evangelical

theology reconstruct the theme of transformation for a postsecular context that counters the individualist-materialist excesses of consumerist spirituality?

For American evangelical faith communities, this need is urgent and opportune. It is urgent because the polarizing effects of rapid consumer capitalist growth reverberate inside American evangelical hearts and church walls. Close historical analysis showed that American evangelicalism has not evolved unaffected by postsecular consumerist spirituality—rather, it has helped create it. The Protestant-derived individualist-materialist ethic of the early 1900s nourished a post-industrial economic boom that emphasized free-market enterprise (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p. 706; Brown, 2002). Adjusting to a consumerized religious marketplace, American evangelicalism differentiated from others through consumerist-friendly efforts such as the mega-church movement and self-help gospels (Einstein, 2007).

Complex questions of faith and practice problematize the living out of scriptural, spiritual, and moral transformation within immersive postsecular consumerist narratives. Rational instrumentality is everywhere, and participation in its systems is inevitable for most evangelicals. How should the evangelical commitment to Christian love shape its participation? What does detachment from internalized material possessiveness look like in liturgical practice and ecclesial life? Where can Christian conviction in enterprise provide ways to overcome relational individualism? How do evangelical missionary efforts reflect intrinsic love?

These are tensions with which I am intimately acquainted. As a professional business executive rooted in the American evangelical tradition, I have experienced the highs and lows of the quest for integration. I helped lead the sale of a fourth-generation

family company for millions of dollars, funds of which have been used for a variety of transformative efforts including development work in Africa. At the time of this writing, I was contemplating the closure of another company that would result in the loss of jobs, serious harm to relationships, and a crisis of personal identity. In both, I have struggled to resist the inner hold of material wealth, to bear the burdens of entrepreneurial self-making, and to pursue sacrificial love in my relationships at home and church.

My lifelong involvement with American evangelicalism has both resourced and intensified these struggles. I have found the evangelical commitment to the *kerygma* of the Christian Scriptures and intimate personal faith to be clarifying and transformative. At the same time, the lack of critical reflection on how broader sociocultural norms and practices implicitly shape evangelical theological conviction has stunted my faith. Evangelical theology highly values completely integrated belief systems, but often the ambiguities of practice mean "being a self who faiths may not be as tidy as we imagine" (Turpin, 2006, pp. 46, 49). The quest for integration and spiritual transformation must extend beyond propositional assent to doctrine because the narratives of consumerist spirituality are often most alluring at affective and liturgical levels (McClure, 2007).

However, it is also opportune. The postsecular diffusion of religious expression into spheres not generally seen as religious has opened doors for public dialogue about the theological and spiritual dimensions of capitalistic enterprise. New fields of inquiry, such as organizational spirituality, are grappling with the destabilizing effects of capitalism's instrumentalizing forces. This creates opportunities for religious traditions such as evangelical Christianity to exemplify the intrinsic dimensions of human spirituality (Nieuwenhove, 2009).

How, then, can contemporary American evangelical theology achieve a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation that counters the individualist-materialist excesses of consumerist spirituality? The answer is not a non-individualist, non-materialist, non-consumerist spirituality. Rather, I contend in this thesis that it is a *reflexive* spirituality, that is, a spirituality that regularly interrogates its own practice (Stoddart and Johnson, 2008). A reflexive spirituality "nurtures not only dispositions to see but also capacities to discern" (Flanagan, 2007, p. 189).

I am positioned in this approach within the discipline of practical Christian theology, the branch of theological inquiry focused on "critical and constructive reflection on the praxis of the Christian community's life and work in its various dimensions" (Anderson, 2001, p. 32). A central focus for practical theology is strengthening theological reflexivity. Since all action is worldview-guided, critical self-awareness about the assumptions, processes, and forces shaping the formation of theological beliefs and embodied rituals are important (Pattison, 1997; Graham et al., 2005, p. 21; Lunn, 2007).

Practical theology resists the tendency in the Western tradition to bifurcate belief and practice. It argues for a strong link between religious beliefs, practices, and ethics. Christian traditions—doctrine, liturgy, spiritual practices, forms of life—are always contextually embedded and bound by practice. This was true of Jesus' earliest followers, and it is true of every community of faith since (cf. Acts 1:1-2; 1 Clement 7:2-3; 1 Cor 11:23, 15:1-3; John 21:24-25; 1 Thess 2:13). The articulation of transformative Christian faith in and to a postsecular context is, therefore, a theological imperative (Bevans, 2002, p. 3). At the same time, Christian tradition "should be prepared to engage in an open

exchange of ideas and debate with different cultural disciplines, values, images, and worldviews" (Graham et al., 2005, p. 138). Even more important now, when postsecularism has revived globalized and interconnected expressions of religion (Graham, 2013). "Theology cannot reveal all that one needs to know adequately to respond to contemporary situations and issues"; other disciplinary perspectives must be utilized (Woodward and Pattison, 2000, p. 15; van Huyssteen, 1999).

Drawing on these values, I will be arguing that contemporary American evangelical theology can achieve a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation through a *reflexive retrieval of the past* guided by *interdisciplinary engagement* (Buschart and Eilers, 2015, p. 5). The central achievement of this thesis was a constructive model for strengthening theological reflexivity. This model addressed two dimensions of theological reflexivity. First, it addressed a conceptual inconsistency in the common articulation of the theme of transformation by restoring a scripturally-faithful relational ethic of triangulating love. Second, it provided a way for individuals and congregations to critically interrogate, for the purposes of shaping faithful practice, instrumentalizing tendencies that inevitably emerge.

In summary, this thesis is a critical, constructive conversation in Christian ethics and practical theology (Browning, 1995; Pattison, 2007). The reflexive spiral starts implicitly with an understanding of my own context in American evangelicalism. I provide a description of evangelical theology and practice, then problematize this by showing the theoretical and practical limitations faced. Finally, I draw on resources from tradition to expand and develop both theology and practice. I now turn to a fuller description of the argumentation and research methodology.

Shape of the Argument and Research Methodology

Positioned within the discipline of practical theology, I argue for a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation as, first, a reflexive retrieval of the past. Streaming into the American evangelical quest for integration are Christian traditions rich with reflection on the relationships between wealth, enterprise, and triangulating love. Much of it predates the Western tradition's substantial emphasis on relational individualism (Weaver, 2002, p. 19). Mining this heritage was essential because relational individualism as an unqualified good was precisely what needed to be reevaluated.

Two figures—Augustine and Aquinas—loom in the triangular love tradition and have primarily been the focus of evangelical scholarship. However, there is a neglected third figure, the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, whom I demonstrate offered unique insights (Nieuwenhove, 2009). Eckhart emphasized the sacramental nature of triangulating love expressed through the spiritual practice of *gelassenheit* (detachment). When one yields to God's mysterious and often uncomfortable work of detachment from instrumentalizing excesses, the affections of the heart and soul are realigned back to God through the way of the cross.

Concerned by increasing individualism and materialism, the early Anabaptist communities of 15th-16th century south Germany appropriated mystical *gelassenheit* into a lived relational ethic that manifested in transformative acts. For contemporary American evangelical theology, a retrieval of early Anabaptist spirituality's mystical *gelassenheit* enabled it to counter consumerist narratives that the ever-more consumption of goods and services produces spiritual transformation.

Second, I argue that a reflexive retrieval is guided by interdisciplinary engagement. For contemporary American evangelical theology, stakeholder theory within the field of organizational management represents an ideal interdisciplinary dialogue partner. Stakeholder theory has emerged in the field of business ethics as the dominate heuristic for understanding the transformative role of enterprise in shaping human and social good. It holds that enterprise is transformative when it focuses on maximizing long-term value for all its stakeholders, not just profits for shareholders.

In trying to hold up this core framework against the forces of postsecularism, stakeholder theory faces remarkably similar issues to contemporary American evangelical theology. I show that the instrumentalizing excesses of postsecularism have pressed stakeholder theory to better capture the social dimensions of enterprise. This provides contemporary American evangelical theology an opportunity to demonstrate the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing and the crucial contributions that theological perspectives can make.

Together, my two-part proposition to answer the research question is that contemporary American evangelical theology can achieve a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation by critically: (a) engaging stakeholder theory to establish the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing; and (b) appropriating the Anabaptist tradition of *gelassenheit* to reconstruct the theme of transformation around a scripturally-faithful relational ethic of triangular love.

Having established the research question and proposition of this thesis, I lay out the specific shape of the argument presented and the practical theological research methodology utilized. The argument unfolds in two parts: In Part One (Chapters One to

Four), I elaborate the problem facing contemporary American evangelical theology. In Part Two (Chapters Five to Eight), I unpack the resolution.

This is a closer look at both parts. Part One elaborates the problem facing contemporary American evangelical theology by evaluating its essential facets. This begins in Chapter One with positioning of my own practical theological method within the diverse landscape of the discipline of practical theology. I do this, first, by detailing how the discipline links together practice, ethics, and public theology. Analyzed here are the discipline's key historical developments, core methodological framework, and the primary contemporary trajectories. Second, I show how contemporary practical theological methodology informs a strengthening of American evangelical reflexivity, specifically, how contemporary critical trajectories within the discipline can draw out the ways that evangelical spiritual practices have been affected by the diffusion of consumer capitalist ideology into non-market contexts.

In Chapter Two, I anticipate and address early objections to the objectives of reflexivity that might arise in contemporary American evangelical theology. I focus on two potential roadblocks: first, American evangelical theology's allegiance to foundationalism and second, its concern to safeguard scriptural authority.

In Chapter Three, I introduce and overview the theme of transformation. Capitalism's dynamic growth has resurfaced a long-standing theological debate in contemporary American evangelical theology about the nature of the kingdom of God and the responsibilities of Christians to transform society. I describe the current state of transformational thinking in American evangelicalism, where it comes from, and why it matters to evangelical theology and religion. By charting its development, I show that

sociohistorical variables have factored heavily, not just theological ones.

In Chapter Four, I widen the lens to analyze postsecularism as a substantial disruption in the American religious landscape in which the theme of transformation has evolved. After overviewing postsecularism, I define the nature of postsecular consumerist spirituality and then relate it to contemporary American evangelical theology. I show that as American capitalistic enterprise has become more intensely consumeristic and instrumentalizing, it has obscured the intrinsic goods of human flourishing that are necessary for spiritual transformation. This is an opportunity for contemporary American evangelical theology because it reconfigures the public sphere to allow for more meaningful dialogue about the theological and religious aspects of capitalistic enterprise, but also a dilemma because it exposes that American evangelicalism itself has contributed to the development of the materialistic and individualistic aspects of postsecular consumerist spirituality.

The problem facing a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation, then, is how to account for both. Shifting to Part Two (Chapters Five to Eight), the resolution, I propose that a postsecular renewal involves, first, an interdisciplinary engagement in the public sphere that subjects evangelical theology to critical correlation. Stakeholder theory within the field of organizational management represents an ideal interdisciplinary dialogue partner, and I introduce stakeholder theory on its own terms in Chapter Five.

I show that in trying to hold up its framework against the forces of postsecularism, stakeholder theory faces remarkably similar issues to contemporary American evangelical theology. In Chapter Six, I argue that the instrumentalizing excesses of postsecularism have pressed stakeholder theory to reconceptualize the social

dimensions of enterprise. This provides contemporary American evangelical theology an opportunity to demonstrate the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing.

In the final two chapters, I build on this layer to propose a second element to a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation: a contextualized retrieval of the Christian traditions. Streaming into the American evangelical quest for integration of faith and work is a rich heritage in the Christian traditions of grappling with the instrumentalizing tendencies of wealth and enterprise in the face of the triangulating love of God. In the late 15th century, early South German Anabaptist communities appropriated Eckhart's practice of mystical *gelassenheit* to counter what they perceived as increasing individualism and materialism. Like contemporary American evangelical theology, these Anabaptists were concerned to show how Christian faith can be transformative and they represent an ideal source of retrieval. In Chapter Seven, I show how Eckhart's mystical *gelassenheit* was appropriated by early Anabaptism. In Chapter Eight, I show how contemporary American evangelical theology can use this appropriation to construct a model for strengthening reflexivity.

The Intended Scholarly Audience and Need for the Research

Having identified the research topic as interdisciplinary, I now explicitly establish its intended scholarly audience and the research gaps filled. The thesis addressed three scholarly streams. The first and primary stream was academic Christian theology, particularly constructive practical theology. Secondarily, was stakeholder theory in the field of business ethics.

While these three major streams address quite similar questions about the

relationship between human values, theological and religious belief, and the global economy, they have never been brought into significant synthesis, not simply for the sake of comparison, but for constructive proposals. Practical theology and ethics have primarily focused on church life to the neglect of secular organizational life (Miller, 2014a). The sparse attention paid to capitalism has tended to be in the form of systemic critique, not necessarily to help capitalists and entrepreneurs think about their work. However, then, stakeholder theory and business management have not substantially dealt with action-guiding ideologies and identity, especially the experience of religious, identity-forming communities.

I elaborate the intended scholarly audiences and gaps by starting with the primary audience and moving to the secondary audience.

Primary Audience

The primary audience is academic Christian theologians, particularly constructive practical theologians. From the standpoint of the primary audience, there are four gaps I am filling: (a) the need for constructive, practical theological ethics; (b) the need for evangelical practical theologies; (c) the need for scholarly research on the theme of transformation in American evangelical theology; and (d) the need for contemporary reappraisals of early Anabaptist spirituality's use of *gelassenheit*.

First, is the need for constructive theological ethics in the discipline of practical theology. This thesis is fundamentally a work of constructive theological ethics residing in the discipline of practical theology. Though a highly pluralistic field contemporary practical theology sustains a fundamental concern for the integration of theory and practice (Osmer, 2008, p.241). Among the five main currents Heitink (1999) identifies, I

am working from the empirical-analytical current. Highlighting the relevance of social scientific research, this current desires to "make theological concepts operational . . . and seeks to link in an open manner quantitative and qualitative research" (Heitink, 1999, p.174).

In trying to operationalize the theological theme of transformation, I am specifically pursuing *constructive.* practical theology. While constructive theology has emerged primarily in systematic theology as a method for relating traditional Christian doctrines to contemporary questions of faith and ethics, there has been comparatively less effort using constructive theology in the discipline of practical theology (Jones and Lakeland, 2005).[1] This is striking given that questions of faith and ethics are at the heart of practical theology's concern for integrating theory and practice.

By pursuing a constructive, practical theology within the empirical-analytical current, I am challenging the silos imposed by the traditional theological encyclopedia by generating theological reflection that pulls from all four forms: historical, systematic, biblical/exegetical, and practical. The goal is to contribute to a more effective harmonizing of "belief" and "practice" in a specific faith tradition, namely contemporary American evangelical theology.

Second, is the need for evangelical practical theologies. As robust as the emergence of the contemporary discipline of practical theology has been, this has not spread evenly into evangelical theology. Simply, "evangelicals have never found an

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[1] Quite insightfully in my view, constructive systematic theology seeks to reframe the concept of doctrine, not as traditionally understood fixed propositional constructs, but rather theological geographies that guide Christians as they strive to make sense of the complex terrain of faith (Jones and Lakeland, 2005). Pattison (2016) comprised a rare example of constructive practical theology.

established footing within the established guilds of practical theology" (Root, 2014, p. 95). The bulk of the engagement from evangelical theologians with practical theology has come from a single individual (Ray Anderson) at a single institution (Fuller Theological Seminary).

Evangelical theology has tended to regard with suspicion post-Kantian continental philosophical and theological movements (including Schleiermacher), viewing them primarily as attacks on the normative authority of the Bible. If practical theology is going to see greater activity from evangelically-influenced scholars, it must deal with the obstacle that "evangelical practical theology has lacked constructive interdisciplinary models" (Root, 2014, p. 95). This research study utilized specific frameworks within practical theology to construct an interdisciplinary model for strengthening reflexivity within evangelical theology that advances the integration of theory and practice.

Third, is the need for scholarly research on the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. The theme of transformation is one of the primary conceptual apparatuses by which both contemporary American evangelical theologians and laypersons understand the effort to integrate religious faith and professional work. Yet, its expressions in evangelical theologies and lay evangelical faith communities have never been critically compared.

Fourth, is the need for contemporary reappraisals of early Anabaptist spirituality's use of *gelassenheit*. Some of the earliest Anabaptist communities to emerge in the Reformation were in South Germany. They are often categorized with the Rhineland mystic spirituality movement because of the appropriation of Meister Eckhart's emphasis on God's love by figures such as Thomas Müntzer and Hans Denk (Baumann, 1991).

Eckhart's theology of love is most clearly expressed in the concept of *gelasseneheit*, representing one of the most significant but under-researched articulations of triangulating love in the Christian traditions (Nieuwenhove, 2009). In light of the phenomenon of postsecular consumerist spirituality, the practice of *gelassenheit* has renewed relevance. This thesis addressed this gap by providing an analysis of Eckhart's scheme in its utilization by early Anabaptist spirituality to demonstrate its contemporary relevance to theological discussions about consumerist spirituality.

Secondary Audience

The secondary audience extends twofold: stakeholder theory in the field of business ethics and postsecular theory in the field of sociology of religion. There are two gaps I intended to fill: (a) the need for robust theological engagement with stakeholder theory and (b) the need for diagnostic comparisons between postsecular theory and stakeholder theory.

First, was the need for robust theological engagement with stakeholder theory. It has quickly emerged as the dominant heuristic in the field of business ethics for understanding the relationship of capitalistic enterprises with their broader constituencies. It calls for a shift away from prioritizing shareholder profit as the focus of an enterprise's value to its ability to profitably serve all its stakeholders (e.g., vendors, customers, employees, society, environment). This shift has opened the door for meaningful challenges to the individualist and materialist excesses of capitalistic enterprise. Oddly, while recent scholarly discussions in stakeholder theory have involved a number of interdisciplinary partners including sociology (e.g. Jones and Wicks, 1999), psychology (e.g. Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2014) and philosophy (e.g. Arnold et al., 2012), theology

has been largely absent (Miller, 2014a).

Second, is the need for diagnostic comparisons between postsecular theory and stakeholder theory. Like stakeholder theory, likewise, postsecular theory in the discipline of the sociology of religion has emerged as a dominant heuristic for understanding the implications of capitalistic enterprise for its field, displacing an entrenched one. It has overturned secularization theory's long-held consensus that the economic and social modernization of Western society would displace religion to contend that religious expression has not entirely dissipated but rather shifted.

With the scope of this thesis, stakeholder theory and postsecularism were brought together and critically analyzed as a secondary audience to fill a void in both fields of study, which have so far lacked critical comparison. I intended to show that in both theories a relational individualist ethic is operative that posits a social self and an individual self in terminal opposition and that practical theological methodology can provide a helpful reframing of these categories that offers more explanatory power.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I have established that this thesis is a critical evaluation of the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. I have shown it is necessary because of the postsecular growth of consumer market capitalism, which has weakened evangelicalism influence on American public life and intensified individualist and materialist conceptions of spirituality. As contemporary American evangelical theology seeks to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise in a postsecular context, it needs to revise the theme of transformation around a relational ethic that reflexively resists the instrumentalizing tendencies of consumerist

spirituality and recovers a scripturally-faithful triangulating ethic. Because of its focus on

the indissoluble links between theology, religious practices, ethics, and public

engagement, the discipline of practical theology is optimally aligned to address these

concerns. I now turn to a fuller unpacking of the discipline and my position within it.

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

For a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation, we must first lay some conceptual groundwork to elaborate the problem facing contemporary American evangelical theology. Having overviewed the research question and argumentation and delimited its scope in the introduction, I now move into Part One and a definition of key concepts. This begins in Chapter One with an articulation of the practical theological methodology framing my research. In Chapter Two, obstacles to evangelical theological reflexivity are analyzed. In Chapter Three, I overview the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. Finally, in Chapter Four, I analyze postsecularism as the broader sociohistorical context in which the theme of transformation has emerged.

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL METHOD WAS

EMPLOYED IN THE THESIS?

A recent edited volume with contributions from major American evangelical

"insiders" contemplates the state of the movement in light of Donald Trump's election. It

starts bluntly: "Evangelicalism in America has cracked, split on the shoals of the 2016

presidential election and its aftermath, leaving many wondering whether they want to be

in or out of the evangelical tribe" (Labberton, 2018, p. 1). The dynamic and uneven

growth of capitalistic enterprise is at the heart of this splitting. A divided vote in

American evangelicalism was symptomatic of growing racial tensions spurred by

socioeconomic disruption across the country:

> A middle-class, underemployed, white American, perhaps living in Appalachia or
> the Rust Belt, may believe failed immigration policy or enforcement has disrupted
> their "God-given right" to work, which makes it difficult to support welcoming
> the alien or stranger. An African American or Latino American living in Los
> Angeles or New York may view huge rallies of white people as excluding or
> mistreating people who look like them and hear the rallies' language about God as
> abusive and its "good news" as unrecognizable. (Labberton, 2018, p. 7)

For contemporary American evangelical theology to renew a transformational

vision of enterprise, it must confront these fractures. To do so will require a reframing of

the relationship between religious belief and practice. Historically, American evangelical

religion has emphasized individual belief systems and doctrinal propositions as the basis

for forming and sustaining communities of faith. In short, that the right theological

beliefs produce morally sound practice.

However, what the 2016 election exposed is that the complexities facing

American evangelical efforts to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise are

"more about social location than theology proper" (Labberton, 2018, p. 15). The

strengthening of theological reflexivity—taking an evaluative stance toward its own beliefs and practices—requires American evangelicalism to interrogate not just its own theological propositions, but also how they are implicitly shaped by sociopolitical-economic contexts and manifested in embodied spiritual practices.

The dynamic growth of consumer capitalism makes this no easy undertaking. One of the markings of present-day consumer capitalism is the diffusion of consumer markets and ideology into non-market contexts (including Christian churches). The reach of instrumentalizing forces extends into daily consumer life, but subtly. To draw out these forces, consumer capitalism's political and social power structures and how they shape religious practice must be analyzed.

These are questions germane to the discipline of practical theology and its distinguishing focus on the practice of Christian beliefs. In its relatively short history, the discipline of practical theology as broadened its focus of inquiry from primarily the practices of clerical ministry to how belief, tradition, and practice intersect complex human experience within the daily life of faith communities.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a fuller framing of the research project by locating myself within the diverse landscape of practical theology. I do this, first, by overviewing the discipline to show how it links together practice, ethics, and public theology. Key historical developments that created these links are highlighted, and then the contemporary state of the discipline is analyzed in terms of its core methodological framework and the four primary trajectories that express it. Second, I relate contemporary practical theological methodology to the strengthening of American evangelical reflexivity. Specifically, how the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian trajectories in

contemporary practical theology can be applied to draw out the ways that evangelical

spiritual practices have been affected by capitalism's diffusion.

I proceed, first, by elaborating how consumer capitalism's diffusion has shifted

religious expression. Then, I show how the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian

trajectories are best suited to draw out the effects of these shifts. Finally, I contend that

these practical theological trajectories affirm a strengthening of theological reflexivity

that functions not in isolation, but in interdisciplinary engagement with fields such as

management ethics undergoing similar shifts.

Before proceeding, I should briefly elaborate on how I am using the term

evangelical throughout this dissertation. The word evangelical transliterates εὐαγγέλιον,

"good news" or "gospel".[2] Historically, it designates Protestants who emerged from the

Reformation "strongly emphasizing the redeeming work of Christ, personally

appropriated, and . . . spreading the good news of that message" (Knoll, 2010, p. 2).

I generally adopt this conventional usage, although it is important to note that

evangelicalism has undergone significant demographic transition within the last century.

According to *World Christian Encyclopedia*, over 90% of evangelicals were concentrated

in Europe or North America in 1900, whereas today the number of evangelicals in

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[2] On occasion, and mostly by non-evangelicals, the term *fundamentalist* is used as a synonym for "evangelicals." I avoided the terms "fundamentalist" and "fundamentalism," not because they are historically insignificant, but because they are primarily used today in pejorative contexts. Again, the historical background is relevant here. Marsden (1990) noted that the term was "invented in American in 1920 to apply to militant evangelicals," conservatives who were "willing to take a stand and fight" (p. 1). In this sense, the term applied to more than just a certain type of evangelical but any denomination (e.g., Baptist, Methodist) that was operating on the far political right. Today, "fundamentalism" has broadened and can be applied to far-right religious adherents outside Christianity, for example Islamic fundamentalism. For a helpful comparison of fundamentalism in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, see Antoun (2008).

Europe and North American is exceeded independently by those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Barrett et al., 2001, pp. 13-14).

Thus, contemporary evangelicalism is best understood as a set of multi-faceted movements and denominations sharing common convictions.[3] A widely-cited summary of these shared convictions is Bebbington (1989). He identified four critical theological emphases of evangelicalism: personal conversion, the hermeneutical priority of the Bible, missional activism, and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

For this thesis, I focus on contemporary American evangelicalism. This is not out of a desire to narrowly define the meaning of the word "evangelical," as can be the case among conservatives in the tradition (Greggs, 2010, p. 5). Rather, it is because the diffuse and varied nature of contemporary evangelicalism means that with a topic like the global enterprise—itself diffuse and varied—there are too many varied social, economic, and political variables to speak generally. There are even substantial differences between evangelicalism in American and the U.K. (Holmes, 2007). American evangelicalism, for example, has more often been associated with conservative political ideology and entrapped in so-called "culture wars" (Bean, 2014). As I show in later chapters, this feature of contemporary American evangelicalism bears heavily on its quest for integration.

1.1 Overview of the Discipline

Throughout Western history, theology has been commonly associated with the

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[3] This is partly self-imposed. As McGrath (1999) noted, "The history of evangelicalism in the United Kingdom and the United States is frequently dominated by debates over who is in and who is out, not to mention who has the right to draw the somewhat contested boundaries in the first place" (p. 26).

supernatural, transcendent, sacred, and spiritual while practice is associated with the everyday, common, material, and embodied. Contemporary practical theology challenges this as a "function of Enlightenment dualistic thinking, which arbitrarily exalts thought and cognition as modes of knowledge and perception over more embodied kinds of knowing and being" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 57). Practice and theology belong together because practices are central to human being and knowing. They sustain life and create meaning, whether explicitly or implicitly theological. Through "inhabited action-guiding worldviews" (Pattison, 2007, p. 7), humans navigate a complex network of material and structural relationships and social practices. Thereby constituting a "living human web" (Miller-McLemore, 1996) that bear religious and theological import beyond mere religious ideas and texts.

If theology is tied to practice, then it must also be to ethics. However, ethics are conceived of more broadly than in the Eurocentric model, which has pervaded Western history. It emphasized detached moral abstraction: deducing the right ethical theory from revelatory text or doctrine for application to hypothetical cases (De La Torre, 2011, p. 337). Allegedly controlled for here were the fallacies of human subjectivity and particularity. However, a focus on practices reveals a deeper, indissoluble union between subject and object. Moral-ethical reasoning, in practical theology, is inherently a hermeneutical circle in which we:

> Have a duty to test what we claim normatively against what others live. For ethics to offer constructive insights and norms for shaping social relations and values, it has to demonstrate that it has first taken the complexity of reality and lived experience into account. Moral claims lack force if they jump too quickly into prescription without taking a full enough view of the complexity of the issues at stake. (Scharen and Vigen, 2011, p. 38)

Finally: If theology, practice, and ethics belong together, then it all plays out in

"public." Western modernization has tended to drive a wedge between public and private

domains, relegating theological and religious expression to the latter as a form of

subjectivity. Practical theology labors to show that there is only one realm of human

experience and no domain exists in a pure or isolated state. The increasingly fragmented,

disparate, and diverse nature of public life might not recognize the value of theology and

religion as a sustaining force, but sometimes the role of public theology is to "challenge

that agenda and its priorities" (Forrester, 2010, p. 80). A public-facing practical theology

seeks spaces of shared meaning across all domains, and "to do this, it cannot simply be

applied to situations; it must, at least in part, take flesh within them" (Scharen and Vigen,

2011, p. 31). This demands reflexivity; a self-aware posture helps to guard against

creating a "purportedly perfected system of theological or ethical thought" that fails to

acknowledge that "no theological statement fully conveys divine being and action. Our

understandings of revelation are never final or complete" (Scharen and Vigen, 2011, p.

33).

How did the discipline of practical theology come to link together practice, ethics,

and public engagement? I will answer this question by charting key historical

developments that have shaped the field and then analyzing its methodological core and

contemporary trajectories.

1.1.1 Key Historical Developments

Miller-McLemore (2010, p.1741) differentiates four uses of the term "practical

theology"[4]: (a) an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in the

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[4] As a term, "practical" theology is often compared and contrasted to "pastoral" theology, with North American (and largely Reformed) usage tending to emphasize the contrasts between the two and British (and largely Anglican) usage tending to downplay them (Woodward and Pattison,

everyday, (b) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice, (c) an approach to theology used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the curriculum, and (d) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to sustain these first three enterprises.

I was especially focused on the fourth usage. Woodward and Pattison (2000) offered a helpful standard definition of academic practical theology: "A place where religious beliefs and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions, and actions and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming" (Woodward and Pattison, 2000, p.7). As an academic discipline, practical theology is relatively young (Penzel, 1982, p.3). Its origins are typically identified with German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who near the end of the 18th century divided theology into three fields: philosophical theology, the root of the tree; historical theology, the stem or body; and practical theology, the crown (Schleiermacher, 2011).

Schleiermacher was an important transitional figure, contemporaneous with the birth of the modern German research university model and the Enlightenment. Practical theology for Schleiermacher was the crown of theology in that it welded together both ecclesial concern and scientific inquiry (Sleeth, 1976, p.45). He wrote:

> Without an ecclesial interest neither the feelings nor the excitations of mind and heart just mentioned will arise, and without a scientific spirit no deliberative activity—that is, none that will be guided by prescriptions—arises either but rather the sort of motivation that is disinclined toward cognition and disdains rules. (Schleiermacher, 2011, p.97)

2000, pp.1,3). Pastoral theology is an older term that stems from the discipline's origins in clerical ministry. In recent times, the terms have blended together far more than they have diverged, and their nuances are due more to preference than substance. Since practical theology has a more formal connection to and development within the academy, I use it throughout.

Practical theology is not a derivative—merely an application of dogmatic or systematic theology. It is a reflective theory of practice that was always mediated through the experience of the subject. Schleiermacher's views were shaped by his broader conception of religion and Christianity (Grab, 2005). The Enlightenment was well underway in continental Europe, and modernist intellectuals were turning their attention from theology and religion to rationalist utilitarian philosophy and ethics. Descartes had set an early tone by seeking epistemic certainty through a project of complete skepticism led by the supposed universal value of reason (Broughton, 2002). Knowledge needs a universal foundation, and the grand pursuit of the Enlightenment project should be to find one. The Cartesian scheme prioritized *episteme* or *theoria* (theoretical and propositional knowledge) as the purest form of knowledge. This was a disembodied cognition that produced practice (Ralston Saul, 1993).

Critiquing both the so-called rationalists and empiricists of early foundationalism, Immanuel Kant introduced a paradigmatic shift by asserted "knowledge emerges at the inner part of the data of the senses (the content) and the categories of the mind (the structure)" (Clark, 2003, p. 55). The mind does not simply passively receive information, as the foundationalist epistemologies central to both Descartes and Locke asserted.

A leader in the German romantic movement, Schleiermacher applied Kant's "turn to the subject" to say that religion belonged to a realm of human subjectivity beyond the realm of theoretical knowledge. He defended religion as an irreplaceable dimension of human existence, not from the standpoint of its institutional forms but from the perspective of individual human nature itself. Appropriating Aristotle, Schleiermacher characterized practical theology as a "technik" that moved past mere mechanistic action

to guiding principles "mediated through competence, freedom, and creativity" (Woggon, 1994, p. 8).

Schleiermacher's ideas set the tone in continental Europe and the broader Western tradition for the discipline's early emphasis on equipping clergy for ministerial work (Dingemans, 1996). His disciple, Carl Immanuel Nitzsch, intensified this focus by describing the research domain of practical theology as the praxis of the church, and on equal footing with the other theological disciplines.

Into the 20th century, two fundamental movements broadened the discipline's emphasis on practice from the clerical and into everyday human experience. The first was correlational theology, which evolved primarily in liberal Protestant and Catholic circles in Europe and North America. This maintained that insights from Christian revelation should be correlated with the pressing issues of human existence brought to the surface by existential and psychological analysis. Paul Tillich (1973), the movement's leading voice, wrote in his *Systematic Theology*:

> The Christian message provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence. These answers are contained in the revelatory events on which Christianity . . . Their content cannot be derived from questions that would come from an analysis of human existence. They are 'spoken' to human existence from beyond it. (p. 64)

The philosopher, herself tasked with the study of being and human finitude, posed the existential questions, for which the theologian, herself tasked with the study of Christian revelation, sought to correlate responses. Tillich was primarily talking about not strict empirical correlation but rather a posture of interpreting the general relationship between theology and human experience (Miller, 2014a, p. 6). Developing Tillich's ideas and then intensifying them, Catholic theologian David Tracy contended that for theology to remain relevant in a pluralistic world that privatizes faith, the domains of Christian

revelation and human experience needed to remain in mutual dialogue to mutually revise each other (Tracy, 1981, p.51).

The second major influence came from liberation theology, which extended correlation perspectives to second and third world contexts. Beginning in the 1960s, a wave of contextual theologies emerged that were attuned to socioeconomic structures and injustices (Cahalan and Mikoski, 2014). European theologians began to speak more frequently about political and public theology (Dingemans, 1996). German Gert Otto wrote a two-volume work called *Practical Theology* to analyze the effects of religion on society. A student of Otto's, Andrea von Heyl unpacked the implications of the Frankfurt school's reinterpretation of Freud and Marx for the field of practical theology. Asian American theology too began to call for liberation from social oppression (Phan, 2003). In 1969, American James Cone published *A black theology of liberation* that articulated liberationist tones from the American Civil Rights movement.

Perhaps most prominently, Gustavo Gutierrez called for a "theology of liberation" throughout Latin America as "a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word" (Gutierrez, 1969, p. 13). Despite gaining political independence from European colonizers a century before, South and Central America continued to be plagued by economic poverty, social inequality, and political unrest. For many Latin American theologians (particularly in the Catholic church), Marx's socioeconomic analysis held explanatory power in accounting for these struggles.

Drawing on a Hegelian model of history, Marx argued that human societies were shaped through the struggle of the classes within them. In capitalist systems, this struggle manifested as a conflict between the bourgeoisie ruling class that controlled the means of

production and the proletariat working class that enabled production by selling labor for wages. Marx's "historical materialism" contended that these internal class contradictions would eventually result in capitalism's self-destruction, as the working class developed a class consciousness that would propel political revolution and emancipation and the gaining of power to establish a communist (classless) society marked by the free association of producers.

Marxist-influenced thinkers developed a "dependency theory" to explain the realities in Latin America: "Developing counties continued to experience a disadvantageous relationship with the Industrial West, in terms of trade and other forms of neo-colonialism" (Graham et al., 2005, p. 242). Across the West, liberation theologians called for breaking free from this dependence with a "preferential option for the poor" that prioritized value-guided action (praxis) over doctrine. Progressive streams in the Catholic church began efforts in adult literacy programs, health care initiatives, and church community outreach. In the areas of economic justice, poverty, and human rights, political activism was understood as the domain of the practically-oriented theologian, not just through the efforts of Gutierrez in Peru, but Leonardo Boff in Brazil, and Jon Sobrino in Spain. Theology is a form of "talk about God" in which the social context of a believer demands practices of liberation and solidarity (Graham et al., 2005; Gutierrez, 1987).

Thus, theology "is not the rational exploration of divine revelation to increase its intelligibility" but a "rational exercise that follows upon the action of the poor and searches for an understanding of God's revelation that discloses its redemptive and liberative power" (Baum, 1999, pp. 180-182). Read through these lenses, the Bible

provided not just a typology but a mandate for such action. In the Old Testament, it was the Exodus Israelites who broke free from the social and economic oppression of Egypt and Babylon. In the New Testament, it was Jesus who overcame social sin and called his followers to break free from Rome.

Correlation and liberation influences helped spark an identifiable renaissance in practical theology starting in the 1970s throughout Europe, North America, South America, and Asia.[5] Thought centers arose at the University of Chicago, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Emory University, among others. Several thinkers set the pace for the contemporary shape of the discipline in North America: Don Browning (University of Chicago), Richard Osmer (Princeton Theological Seminary), and Charles Gerkin (Emory University). On the European front, pivotal academic institutions included Cardiff University, University of Birmingham, and Catholic University of Nijmegen (Netherlands). Among European contemporary practical theologians, Elaine Graham, John Swinton, Stephen Pattison, and J.A. van der Venn are prominent,[6] in Asia and South America, the Graduate School of Practical Theology in Icheon, Korea and Faculdade Luterana de Teologia (Brazil) and theologians such as Yoo-Kwang Hyon (South Korea), Leonardo Boff (Brazil), and Daisy Nwachuku (Nigeria) to name a few.

This renaissance strengthened the link between practical theology and public theology. Public theology in the Western tradition has traditionally focused on exploring

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[5] Particularly in the U.K., this renaissance in part involved a critique of the ways that North American correlational approaches stunted the radical implications of liberationist approaches for social ethics. See Woodward and Pattison (2000) and Stoddart (2014).

[6] Another important Dutch practical theologian, Gerben Heitinik, has written what remains the benchmark survey of the discipline's historical developments and contemporary trendlines. See his *Practical Theology: History. Theory. Action Domains* (1999).

corporate, political, economic, and social dimensions of religious belief and practice (Graham, 2014). For the bulk of the 20th century, the primary concerns of public theology were around rational and apologetic defenses of Christian doctrine, reflecting its strong base in mainstream Protestant and Reformed denominations in North American and the U.K. (Stackhouse, 1991). The influx of liberation theologies pressed for more critical and contextual approaches that extended beyond ecclesial borders. Practical theology's growing emphasis on the religious nature of practices across the private and public domains aligned well.

Greater interdisciplinary engagement also contributed to the link. For example, Browning (1995) worked from the social sciences to construct an integrative hermeneutic for moral deliberation that accounted for the emotional and social complexities of human living. For Browning, practical theological reason needs to make itself communicable to a skeptical public while at the same time raising questions about the alleged objectivity and neutrality of the social sciences.

Modern practical theology, accordingly, found a natural home in postmodernism's skepticism of rationalist modernity's knowledge claims. Post-modernity catapulted the discipline into ever-widening explorations of the integration of theory and practice in the midst of capitalism's global expanse:

> Postmodern practical theologies seek to be deeply responsive to the general Western cultural situation… Capitalism was recognized as having extended its global reach . . . and the complex dynamics of globalization became a major object of attention. Theologically informed discernment about the victors and victims of a consumer capitalism that had come to seem inevitable was recognized by the theological academy as essential work. (Beaudoin, 2014, p. 204)

Postmodernism has generally been skeptical about universalizing accounts of rationality and human nature. Postmodern practical theologies have reflected a diversity

of perspectives and research interests. Schweitzer (2004) and Osmer (2005), for example, focused on postmodern perspectives for religious education and pastoral care, Graham (2002) on theological method and feminist theology, and Althaus-Reid (2006) on LGBTQ and gender inequalities. In all, postmodernism has imprinted two features on practical theology's distinguishing focus on practice. First, that theory (theological or otherwise) is often insufficient in surfacing the full range of practices that give significance and meaning to human life. Second, human experiences are always contextually-bound and thus often best understood in their particularity or specificity.

1.1.2 Contemporary Trajectories in Practical Theology

Of all the theological fields, then, practical theology "gives the most attention to studying and engaging the present context directly. It seeks to learn from the present context, as well as to guide and even transform the present context" (Osmer, 2014, p. 67). To do so requires that theology is tied to practice and ethics in a public-facing posture that explores critical questions about human relationships and social well-being. The contemporary state of the discipline is situated in a milieu that is as globalized and wide-ranging as ever. In so far as its starting point is the "every day and ordinary," it is also a diverse field that sometimes lacks clear disciplinary boundaries (Ward, 2017).[7]

Are there any common themes across the spectrum? Having noted key historical developments that shaped the formation of the discipline, I now turn to an analysis of its methodological core and manifold trajectories. Bennett et al. (2018) helpfully outlined several theses that capture the core of contemporary practical theological methodology:

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[7] This has led to greater reengagement with historical, systematic, and mainstream theology, all of which have sought distinctive representations of the relationship between belief and practice (Lee, 2008).

(1) The theology of practical theology is instantiated within action. praxis. performance. and practice.

Human activity is contextual, normed, and capable of embodying social goods. By nature, practices are value-laden and generally oriented toward some *telos* or objective. Practical theology, then, focuses on human context and the realities of lived experience as the places where Christian discipleship and theology occur. Practical theology cannot be applied doctrinal theology because "theology does not simply end in practice, but starts there, too" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 64). Practical theologians are not simply interpreters of enshrined texts and traditions but "critical inhabitants of action-guiding world-views" (Pattison, 2007, p. 77) that interrogate and interpret how socially and relationally-embedded beliefs and values facilitate faithful practice.

Likewise, practice is theological because it bears implicit values that strengthen or impair virtue. Though the Western tradition has isolated theological activity to written and read scriptural texts—a tendency deeply influenced by the Cartesian legacy— theology is *first* performed and enacted only then written down and systematized. Orthodoxy (right believing) codified through doctrinal statements or propositions is "and inadequate way of framing theological understanding since it overlooks the necessity of divine incarnation with the particular, immediate and concrete" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 65). However, orthopraxis (right action) denotes a truer integration of theory and practice that ignites transformational change. We perform orthopraxis guided by and inhabiting theological traditions (including sacred Scriptures), but hermeneutically improvised.

(2) Practices build worlds. both symbolic and material.

Practices—contextual and relational with no exceptions—are necessary for humans to build worlds of meaning and social relations. In its primary form, theology is a

language of practice, enacted and embodied in the sacred and mundane alike. Like any language, meaning is facilitated by convention and routine. Practice is *habitus*—not by dull repetition but a dialectic of "preoccupied, active presence in the world" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 52). Practices shape character as a *phronesis prudential* (practical wisdom) governed by and perfected in a vision of excellence normed in the community (MacIntyre, 1984). They are likewise *poesis*, creatively enlivening the everyday to reveal sacred value (Walton, 2014).

(3) Religion is more than "belief."

All of this pushes religion beyond a "belief in" something, only a matter of cognition. It is a "complex system constituted by the practices of belonging, believing and behaving . . . as a form of 'lived experience'" (White et al., 1976, p. 71). Religion as cognitive belief and propositions is a paradigm largely shaped by Western Protestant and Catholic traditions that prioritize the interpretation and analysis of written texts to the neglect of the myriad of other artifacts (e.g., rituals, images, material culture) that express material and symbolic practices and rituals. To analyze Christian theology, then, is to recognize that the "church does not speak only in its sermons . . . and theological tomes" but also "in the manner of its being . . . the church *shows* its vision of things quite as much as it *states* it" (Biggar, 2011, p. 80).

(4) Practices are value-laden and revelatory—as practices build worlds. so they (and we) perform our truths.

One of the effects of postmodernism is the fragmentation of meaning. According to Bennett et al. (2018), "If notions of virtue and good cannot be metaphysically or ontologically grounded . . . they may instead be realized in and through practice, and specifically, the regular habits by which we orient ourselves toward the good and the

virtuous" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 72). Religious practices like prayer, forgiveness, and hospitality can embody wisdom and value, even if they cannot be reduced to words or instantiated in texts (Bass et al., 2016). Indeed, the scriptural texts and traditions are themselves a byproduct of practice. Theological inquiry always exists amid practices, which are performed and communicated within a complex network of instructional patterns and power structures. Part of practical theology's task is to draw out and surface the hidden presuppositions within the conduct of practice.

In contemporary practical theology, four trajectories have solidified as the most dominant ways that practical theologians go about interrogating and assessing practice. They all share postmodern skepticism toward Enlightenment-based understandings of scientific empiricism, shifting the study of practice from objective, inductive, and neutral to reflexive, dialectical, and engaged (Osmer, 2014, pp. 55-65):

a) *Hermeneutical trajectory*: Representatives include James Fowler, Don Browning, and Martina Kumlehn. This trajectory understands practical theology as ultimately a hermeneutical activity and heavily factors in developments in philosophical hermeneutics such as Gadamer and Ricoeur.

b) *Transforming praxis trajectory:* Representatives include Elaine Graham, Mary McClintock Fulkerson, and Thomas Beaudoin. This trajectory draws heavily from liberation theology and critical social/poststructural theories. It places practical theology's emphasis on contributing to individual and social transformation through the critical engagement of power structures, discourses, and everyday practices.

c) *Neo-Aristotelian trajectory:* Primarily rooted in an American context,

representatives include Craig Dykstra, Dorothy Bass, and Dianna Butler Bass. This trajectory draws heavily from reappropriations of Aristotle in contemporary moral philosophy, especially through MacIntyre. It places emphasis on fostering character in moral and religious communities through virtue-oriented practices, against modernity's overly individualistic and utilitarian frameworks that have eroded such capacities.

d) *Confessional trajectory*: Representatives include Ray Anderson, John Swinton, and Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger. This trajectory draws heavily from neo-orthodoxy as seen in Barth and Bonhoeffer. It places emphasis on supporting faith communities' performance of gospel witness through confessional forms.

1.2 My Position Within Contemporary Practical Theological Methodology

Having overviewed the discipline through its key historical developments, core methodology, and dominant trajectories, I would now like to position myself within the field for this research project's reflexive evaluation of contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise. The dynamic and uneven growth of capitalistic enterprise has challenged contemporary American evangelical theology's efforts to integrate Christian faith with capitalistic enterprise. As consumer capitalism has diffused into non-market settings, it has shifted and fragmented spirituality toward consumer-oriented practices. For American evangelicalism, this raises the need to understand better how such forces have shaped its own spiritual practices and how a reframing of the relationship between theological belief and practice might be necessary to foster materially and spiritually transformative alternatives.

I proceed, first, by elaborating how consumer capitalism's diffusion has shifted

religious expression. Then, I show how the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian

trajectories are the most suited to draw out the effects of these shifts. Finally, I contend

that these practical theological trajectories affirm a strengthening of theological

reflexivity that functions not in isolation, but in interdisciplinary engagement with fields

such as management ethics that are undergoing similar shifts.

1.2.1 Capitalism's diffusion

I understand my positioning in reference to broader developments in religion,

economics, and Western society. From the end of World War II to the early 1970s,

Western capitalism experienced a period of enormous and rapid expansion. This time saw

the rise of multinational corporations, mass communication, information technology, and

international financial markets. A core feature of this expansion has been the proliferation

of consumer market systems across global and social borders. As a result, consumer

consumption has become an ever-more personal dimension of human experience (Perez,

2003).

Later in the thesis, this phenomenon is analyzed in detail. Here, it is enough to

note that the nature of capitalism's growth has challenged the consensus view for much

of 19th and 20th century that economic and social modernization would eventually

eliminate religious expression in modern societies. That has not been the case—in many

places, religious expression has intensified (Berger, 1999). What has occurred

(particularly in the American context) has been a noticeable shift in religious

expression—away from traditional mainline Protestant Christianity and toward more

individual and material expressions of spirituality (Fuller, 2001).

Of note here is the effect that these trendlines have had on spiritual and religious

practices, particularly in American evangelicalism. As capitalism's mid-20th-century growth in America gained momentum, American evangelical fundamentalism's backing of corporate power "played a key role in creating institutions that would tie together conservative theology and free-market economics" (Logan, 2017, p. 5). Many conservative Christian business leaders understood consumer markets as a mechanism to sustain a link between their own subculture and the broader sociopolitical order (Hammond, 2011). Conservative evangelical Christian opposition to the New Deal, for example, was grounded in the belief that a literal reading of the Bible supported free-market capitalism as a sanctified economic system (Grem, 2016).

As the language of spirituality has become more common in the late Western world, so too has been the adoption of consumerism as a form of spirituality in which practitioners "make meaning, create identities, and participate in communities through acts of consumption" (Glover, 2013, p. 11). In response to the increasingly diverse religious landscape and the growing influence of market capitalism, American evangelicalism adopted and modified features and products of the consumer market to stay relevant (Moore, 1995). Churches and religious organizations ramped up the marketing of religiously-themed products and services, formed alternative institutions specifically for sports and leisure (e.g., YMCA), and focused on broadcast activities in television and radio (Logan, 2017). This commodification of religious organization also included the emergence of the megachurch movement, which integrated a "seeker-friendly" consumer market style with elements of the prosperity gospel (Marie, 2005).

A shift in American evangelical spiritual practices followed. Historically, American evangelicalism has been rooted in a conception of the Christian life as

primarily a personal relationship with God. By placing belief in Jesus as a personal

savior, the sinner is saved from God's judgment and called to share the gospel so that

non-believers can also be saved. Discipleship is fundamentally a spiritual transformation

that occurs inside a person and is expressed in moral obedience to biblical rules.

Therefore, American evangelical spiritual practices have generally focused on

individualized expressions: daily "quiet times" in personal Bible reading, prayer, sharing

one's faith, and individual church attendance (Chan, 2011). The "faith at work"

movement that emerged beginning in the 1980s largely affirmed these practices with an

emphasis on workplace evangelism, moral duty, and individual hard work and excellence

as expressions of godliness (Miller, 2003). Largely, liturgical rituals in other Christian

traditions were dismissed as secular and, in some cases, non-biblical.

Beginning in the latter 20th century, calls arose within American evangelicalism

to expand the individual focus of spirituality to include broader social concerns, including

liturgical practices represented in Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions (Chan,

2011). A large gathering of global evangelical leaders in the 1970s drafted "The

Lausanne Covenant" and affirmed that evangelism and sociopolitical involvement were

bound together. Progressive evangelicals such as Sider (1977) and Wallis (1981) called

for more evangelical involvement in serving the poor and healing racial and social-class

divides. There was a growing influence from the Charismatic Pentecostal movement

(especially by the global south) that emphasized spirituality as an experiential reality

(Jenkins, 2011). More American evangelicals began to read spiritual writers such as

Foster who explored and affirmed practices within non-Protestant and Catholic

sacramental and liturgical traditions such as Ignatian prayer (Seddon, 2004).

The "cross-fertilization" of spiritual practices has contributed to a more

ecumenically aware evangelicalism with a deepened sensitivity to the social and

relational dimensions inherent to theological practice (Chan, 2011). At the same time, the

adoption of an eclectic set of spiritual practices devoid of strong communal centers and

removed from their traditions has contributed to fragmented spiritualities (Miller-

McLemore, 2010). This is reflective of broader shifts in religion and Western society.

Wuthnow (2003) observed that the American religious landscape more generally has

moved from a spirituality of dwelling to a spirituality of seeking. If the first speaks of

being grounded in the firmness of home, tradition, and institution, the second speaks of

fluid, consumer-like identities that are forged through negotiation, searching, and

selecting. The postsecular milieu has exposed the deficiencies of both:

> Habitation spirituality encourages dependence on communities that are inherently
> undependable and fosters an idolization of particular places to the point that
> energies gravitate too much to those places rather than being deployed to the full
> round of human needs in a complex world. A spirituality of seeking in contrast is
> invariably too fluid to provide individuals with the social support they need or to
> encourage the stability and dedication required to grow spiritually and to mature
> in character. (Wuthnow, 2003, p. 16)

A spirituality focused on a reflective retrieval of wise practices presents an

alternative. According to Wuthnow (2003), "Inevitably embedded in religious

institutions," it would "require individuals to engage reflectively in a conversation with

their past, examining who they have been, how they have been shaped, and where they

are headed" (p. 16).

The data suggest that American evangelicalism is experiencing the effects of

these shifts. For the bulk of the last 30 years, affiliation with American evangelicalism

has held steady—at 40% in the 1970s compared to 41% at the turn of the century. During

this stretch (especially in the 1980s and the rise of the "religious right" and "moral

majority"), conservative evangelicalism remained a powerful political force. However, rapid changes are afoot, driven by generational turnover and a changing political order. Younger generations are leaving traditional religion faster than ever—according to the Pew Foundation, 23% of Generation X Americans (born between 1965-1980) claim no religious affiliation. That number rises to 34% of older millennials (born between 1981-1989), and to 36% of younger millennials (born between 1990 and 1996).

In the 1970s, research suggested that conservative evangelical American churches were growing faster than other denominations partly because of their comparatively more considerable emphasis on theological doctrine, which created a stickiness with members (Kelley, 1972). Now, that facet seems to be working in the opposite direction. Only 8% of young Americans identify as white evangelicals. One-third of white Americans raised in evangelical households depart the faith in adulthood, and nearly half of white evangelical Protestants under 30 say that their church should adjust traditional beliefs and practices or adopt modern beliefs and practices (Pew ResearchCenter, 2015).

Intertwined here are dramatic shifts in socioeconomic and class perspectives. A 2018 Gallup survey found that fewer than 45% of young Americans have a favorable view of capitalism, representing a 12-point decline since 2010. This has correlated with a growing racial wealth gap. A 2017 New York Times study found that for every $100 in white family wealth, black families hold just $5.04. A study in the same year by the Institute for Policy Studies showed that between 1983 and 2013, the wealth of the median black household declined 75%, and the median Latino household declined 50% (from $4,000 to $2,000). At the same time, wealth for the median white household increased 14% from $102,000 to $116,800.

These shifts raise essential questions about the future viability of American evangelicalism's effort to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise. Is evangelicalism's espousal of capitalist systems as morally and spiritually transformational in need of revision? Is so, how can evangelical faith communities rejuvenate embodied spiritual practices?

1.2.2 Practical theological assessments

In assessing these questions, two trajectories in contemporary practical theology are drawn on throughout this thesis: transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian. They are both necessary because, in complementary ways, they help surface consumer market capitalism's entanglements for spiritual practice. My purpose here was not to delve into their contributions in full detail but to capture their contours as a way of previewing them.

For surfacing the structural influences of late capitalism that can impose oppressive social dimensions within faith communities, the transforming praxis trajectory was called upon. Critiquing and building on classic Marxism, critical social theorists (including the Frankfurt school) in the mid-20th century raised concerns about the ill social effects of capitalism's rapid growth—automation of labor, wage stagnation, and economic inequalities. Adorno argued that such concentration of social control in big government and big business in "late capitalism" could devalue individual freedom to resist oppression (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). At the heart of this critique was a call for a more nuanced analysis of social forces. The present state of a society cannot be taken for granted. It needs critical lenses built on conceptions of human nature and values that can discern social inequalities and power imbalances. Among the most prominent,

Habermas' theory of communicative action contended that capitalist markets'

commodification of everyday life acts is technical rationality that colonizes deep forms of

action, experience, and social organization necessary for robust living (Osmer, 2014).

At issue here is the structural logic of capitalism. Adam Smith championed an

enlightened self-interest that would protect against greed and corruption. His argument

was developed in the context of "small businesses marked by personal relationships in

towns and villages in Eighteenth-century England," but are now applied to "giant

corporations whose revenues exceed those of small countries, as well as to large scale

structural adjustments that affect the economies of whole nations" (Rieger, 2015, p. 45).

Capitalism sees the invisible hand of the market as translating selfishness and greed into

common good. However, is this in and of itself not a form of religious idealism?

Economic globalization has a way of obscuring power differential under the guise

of the workings of consumer markets, but intensifying them at the same time. This "soft

power" is a form of top-down assertiveness that:

> Often find expressions in ways that are harder to see, for instance through lower
> paychecks, hidden prejudices that make it more difficult to get jobs or fair
> treatment before the law, and even the sort of romanticization that seeks to shape
> other people according to our fantasies. (Rieger, 2010, p. 45)

Indeed, one of the fundamental challenges to the logic of capitalism is the consensus data

that greater material prosperity "is not matched by greater happiness, but is accompanied

instead by greater social and individual distress, manifested, for example, in increasing

crime and ill-health, such as depression" (Graham, 2011, p. 247).

For much of its history, Western theology has tended "to affiliate itself with

dominant processes of globalization and the mostly economic and cultural processes that

undergird them" (Graham, 2011, p. 247). Drawing on its liberationist influences, the

transforming praxis stream of practical theology makes the point that this weakens theology's ability to offer a critique of its excesses. It also misaligns theology with a core scriptural theme—material wealth and power structures can be abused to harm others, with the vital point that the liberating God is on the side of the disenfranchised. American evangelicalism historically has accounted for socioeconomic inequalities individualistically (Emerson and Smith, 2002). The transforming praxis trajectory shows that this is an insufficient theological lens and that moral and spiritual transformation (especially in economic contexts) demands attention paid to structural forces.

There is abundant data to suggest that religion and spirituality can contribute to overall social and personal well-being as a form of spiritual, social capital (Eckersley, 2007; Swinton, 2007). Central to this contribution is religion's ability to foster strong relational collectives that connect members to each other and broader community (Putnam, 2001). Contrasted with the profoundly utilitarian and instrumental ethic underlying consumer capitalism, faith communities can serve as "outposts of intrinsicality."

However, then this demands that religion and spirituality synthesize belief and action. Drawing on Atherton (2008), Graham posited a practical theological perspective of "performative faithful capital" where "belief and practice are indivisible, something also encapsulated well in understandings of *praxis*, as value-driven, value-directed action, or of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom" (Graham, 2011, p. 227). Here, a vital link is established between communitarian ethics and virtue ethics—and between the transforming praxis trajectory and the neo-Aristotelian trajectory, the second significant trajectory that informs my positioning in the discipline of practical theology.

If the transforming praxis trajectory enables the critical analysis of the social structures and forces of capitalism's diffusion, the neo-Aristotelian trajectory enables a critical analysis of how consumer capitalism can shape conceptions of human flourishing. In part, the growth of capitalistic forces has sparked a revival in virtue ethics. In contrast to Kantian or utilitarian traditions in moral reasoning, virtue ethics has focused on the qualities that mark moral agents. Virtue-based approaches have tended to reference back to Aristotle's conception of the good life as the pursuit of happiness, or *eudaimonia* (Anscombe, 1958). For Aristotle, every person acts toward some desired end. A virtuous person is a person with proper character traits, developed and nurtured through habits in the context of a community. In the Christian intellectual tradition, both Augustine and Aquinas adopted Aristotle's basic notion into Christian theological frameworks that conceptualize the good life as fulfillment in God through the practice of the core of virtues of faith, hope, and love (and empowered by divine grace).

Spearheading a revival of virtue ethics in the 20th century was the work of moral philosopher MacIntyre. Humans are *telos*-oriented, and virtues are the means by which we strive. Practices are:

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 187)

For MacIntyre, the central problem of modernity is that it has undermined intrinsically valuable forms of life. In place of integral communities and embedded individuals creating meaning in their lives by finding place and purpose in those communities, modernity has substituted the incoherent set of possibilities for money-

making and power-wielding" (Noonan, 2014, p. 191)

Money and power are inherent to any set of practices, but the contradiction of capitalism's ideology is the instrumentalizing of them as ultimate ends and external goods, rather than as resources that "can be organized for the sake of goods internal to practices" (Knight and Blackledge, 2008, p. 44). Crucially ignored in instrumentalizing schemes, according to MacIntyre, is fundamental human finitude. Human flourishing is a relationally-bound pursuit because intrinsic goods like love and friendship are necessarily manifested in relationships. These "virtues of acknowledged dependence "enable agents to appreciate human vulnerability and to respond with appropriate forms of care" (Cobb, 2016, p. 26).

MacIntyre's work has catalyzed a variety of critical ethical approaches across disciplines (including business ethics) that assess the potentially harmful effects of consumer-oriented capitalism on human flourishing (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2014). At its individualist and materialist excesses, consumption amounts to a spirituality (attachment) with liturgical features (buying), but to deficient ends (Rittenhouse, 2013). It envisions human *telos* as acquirable through products and services, with minimal relational and social dimensions.

Contemporary practical theology's understanding of practice owes much to MacIntyre (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 64). The neo-Aristotelian trajectory as seen in MacIntyre and virtue approaches generally are necessarily corrective to the deceptions of consumerist spiritualities that human flourishing can be acquired like one acquires products and services in consumer markets. Cavanaugh (2008) pinned the unfulfilled promises of "free market" consumerism to a misconception of freedom. In free-market

ideology, freedom is defined negatively as freedom *from* (interference and external coercion), resulting in an economic model based on sheer individual want and arbitrary desire. This leaves out crucial questions about what drives consumer desires and toward what ends they are directed. Only on the surface are consumers in this system attached to "things"—in actuality, they are detached, restlessly cycling through goods and services that are offered in ephemeral markets that depersonalize sources of production.

"Human relationships fall away from the process of buying products," such that "relationships become more direct between ourselves and our things" (Cavanaugh, 2008, p. 45). Yet, in the Christian traditions, there are offerings of an alternative conception of freedom wherein genuine freedom is not freedom *from* constraint but freedom *for* human flourishing. Both Augustine and Aquinas, for example, conceived of human freedom in terms of the spiritual capacities to pursue union with God, where the ability of an agent to choose is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Right human desire guided by virtues mark the way. For Cavanaugh, this enables a twofold counterforce: first, a non-arbitrary means of critiquing injurious features of consumer markets; and second, a remedy outside the centralized power of the State, as far as faith communities can foster materially and spiritually transformative alternative practices.

1.2.3 Reflexivity and interdisciplinary necessities

As is explored throughout this thesis, the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian trajectories within practical theology offer rich ways to resource contemporary American evangelical theology's effort to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise. However, *how* they do so is just as important. To repeat a critical point made in the introduction, the answer to the individualist-materialist excesses of consumerist

spirituality is not a non-individualist, non-materialist, non-consumerist spirituality. Instead, it is a *reflexive* spirituality that nurtures capacities to discern.

This stems from pedagogical convictions within contemporary practical theology itself. Like many other disciplines that deal in human value-making, contemporary practical theology often involves complex moral reasoning and human experience. Apart from reflection on and in action, preconfigured protocols are insufficient. Experiential learning must be built in. Extending the work of influential advocates such as Schön (1983), for more than three decades practical theology has emphasized the importance of reflection (Graham et al., 2005). More recently, however, calls for a movement beyond reflection have been identified on the grounds that reflection is ultimately a reinforcement of the "binary divide of subject and object" (Canning, 2016, p. 11). The risk that reflection runs is that it becomes overly individualized and objectifies the "other." Reflexivity calls attention to the embodied multiplicities of self-in-relation to the other, hopefully as a means of deeper engagement with others (Veling, 1999).

According to Bennett et al. (2018), if:

reflection suggests looking thoughtfully at something—usually at some length, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, and with a critical eye, then being 'reflexive' suggests additionally looking thoughtfully at one's own self—at what I am like, at how I see what is outside of myself, how I affect it, or how my seeing of it affects how I present it. (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 34)

This is quite critical for contemporary American evangelical theology's relationship with capitalistic enterprise. The two do not stand apart from each other—their shared historical lineages and the subterranean ways that the values of capitalistic enterprise operate demand of American evangelicalism, a reflexive posture as much as a reflective one.

Inherent to practical theology's emphasis on reflexivity is a commitment to

interdisciplinarity. Reflexivity instills an epistemic obligation to look beyond the boundaries of one's own familiar networks toward the unfamiliar in pursuit of interdisciplinary dialogue (van Huyssteen, 1999). Bridge theories should be constructed between disciplines while at the same time respecting the integrity of reasoning strategies within each discipline. Van Huyssteen (1999, p. 421) called this a "transversal reasoning" that is not about arbitrarily opening ourselves up or closing ourselves off to other viewpoints, but rather it is about what it means to discover an epistemic space that allows for the kind of "interdisciplinary critical evaluation that includes a critical self-evaluation and optimal understanding . . . The fragile public space created in interdisciplinary dialogue is the practical theologians' ecotone, which provides for a wide reflective equilibrium" (Müller, 2011, p. 2).

Interestingly, both poststructural and neo-Aristotelian influences have found root in critical approaches to business and management ethics. Modern business management evolved in the early 20th century with particular stress on productivity and output. Frederick Taylor, an engineer by trade, provided one of the first management theories (cf. Taylor, 2012). The innovation of Taylor's system was the idea that efficiency could be enhanced by analyzing workflows (Drucker, 1974, p. 181). He challenged the prevailing assumption that an increase in the intensity of a laborer's work automatically equaled an increase in economic value. Using several time and motions studies, Taylor argued that the focus of management should be on an optimization of the workflow process. Thus, Taylor argued for a management bureaucracy in an organization that was devoted to training employees and controlling outputs (Littler, 1978, p.198).

Capitalism's rapid industrial growth had created a need for better management

systems and Taylor's ideas spread quickly. However, they did not go unchallenged. A vocal critic was Max Weber. Like Taylor, Weber espoused a bureaucratic organizational control equipped with standardized procedures and a focus on efficiency (Clegg, 1996). However, as a sociologist, Weber diverged from Taylor by warning of the social dangers of an excessive individualist-materialist emphasis, like the one manifested in the Protestant work ethic. It was an "iron cage" that reduced human workers to output figures, degrading their moral basis and autonomy (Weber, 1958, p.181). To break free from the shackles, what is needed is the "articulation of alternative moral points of view upon which to develop a new paradigm for management" (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p.707)

However, it was not until societal attitudes in the United States toward business began to change in the 1960s that critical approaches began to emerge in the business ethics guild. De George (2005) pointed out a few of the primary drivers of this shift: a growing distrust of the partnership between business and government as expressed in the military-industrial complex that played itself out in WWII, the Cold War, and Vietnam; the surging economic dominance the United States was imposing on the world stage, leading to the emergence of multinational conglomerates and wide-spread consumerism; and the awakening of the environmental consciousness in response to the rise of innovation in the chemical industry.

The increased attention paid to corporate activity prompted two critical reactions, the first being the introduction of the idea of "corporate social responsibility" by corporations as a means of combating the negativity (Cheit, 1956). Alongside this, there was the increased involvement of business schools and academic thinkers (in business

and in philosophy, theology, and sociology as well) in the theorizing about the ethical concerns in the modern corporation.

The emergence of stakeholder theory (which is analyzed in detail in later chapters) is representative of this shift. Critical ethical approaches were a direct challenge to the dominant free-market paradigm at the time, encapsulated by the "shareholder theory" set forth by Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman. He contended that the sole purpose of an enterprise was to maximize shareholder profits within legal limits. R. Edward Freeman, a philosopher by training who was teaching at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, directly challenged this perspective. The volatile growth of market capitalism, he contended, required broader ethical analysis about how an enterprise could maximize value for all its stakeholders, not just shareholders.

As stakeholder theory has dislodged shareholder theory as the dominant paradigm, both poststructural and neo-Aristotelian variations have emerged. Solomon (2002; 2003), for example, represented a strong neo-Aristotelean account. For Solomon, business ethics has suffered for some time from a false distinction of domain that economics focuses on systems (where amoral determinative causes are at play) while ethics focus on individual behavior (where moral voices are at play). This has unduly severed a narrow view of individual ethical behavior within an organization from the broader view of how businesses as organizations systematically affect societies, when in fact, they belong to and need each other. An emphasis on character, for Solomon, corrects this and:

> Fills the void between institutional behaviorism and an excessive emphasis on free will and personal autonomy that remains oblivious to context, the reality of office work, and the force of peer and corporate pressures . . . It provides a locus for responsibility without sacrificing the findings of 'management science.

(Solomon, 2003, p.44)

For Aristotle, it was important to think of the individual as a member of the larger community (the *polis*), for "what is best in us—our virtues—are in turn defined by the larger community, and there is, therefore, no ultimate split of antagonism between individual self-interest and the greater public good" (Solomon, 2002, p.73). Looked at in this way, business ethics meaningfully engages on the ground reality, shifting "the critical focus from oneself as a full-blooded person occupying a significant role in a productive organization to an abstract role-transcendent morality that necessarily finds itself empty-handed" when applied to real corporate settings (Solomon, 2002, p.74).

With its focus on theological practices as *telos*-oriented and contextually embedded, practical theology is a future-oriented discipline. Yet, "this dimension . . . is not always acknowledged in research endeavors" (van den Berg and Ganzevoort, 2014, p. 182). A reflexive interdisciplinary posture of transversal reasoning can help. In drawing parallels between developments in business ethics and practical theology for the purposes of application to contemporary American evangelical theology, I focused on innovating new links between disciplines, rather than merely describing known links. The dynamic and uneven growth of capitalistic enterprise has sparked significant reevaluation in the fields of academic business ethics and practical theology. A practical theological interdisciplinary model of what van den Berg and Ganzevoort (2014) called "designing-creative" enables the practical theologian to "not so much prepare for what may happen, but to envision what we want to see happen . . . to facilitate a transformation that fosters love, justice, healing, growth, and harmony" (pp. 181-183).

1.3 Conclusion

Where American evangelicalism evolves from the 2016 election is unclear. What is clear is "a self-contained evangelical spirituality is in danger to itself" (Chan, 2011, p. 250). According to Gillett (1993), "if a spirituality is not broader than the very essentials of evangelicalism it rarely survives well the transmission from one generation to another" (Gillett, 1993, p. 31). A starting point for this thesis was that a revisioning of the integration of Christian faith with the forces of capitalistic enterprise is crucial for the future viability of contemporary American evangelical theology. Understood through the perspective of the discipline of practical theology, this amounts to a reframing of how religious belief and practice interact to foster embodied spiritualities.

The concern of this chapter has been to shape the contours of the practical theological methodology that guided this thesis, with a central concern for the link among theology, practice, and ethics. I did this, first, by providing an overview of the discipline of practical theology, charting its critical historical developments, core methodology, and dominant contemporary trajectories. Then, I positioned myself within these trajectories, explaining that I drew particularly on the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian steams to assess capitalism's diffusion into nonmarket contexts and the effects on evangelical spiritual practice.

CHAPTER TWO: POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS TO CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN

EVANGELICAL REFLEXIVITY

Before proceeding to a substantive analysis of the theme of transformation, on the heels of last chapter's emphasis on practical theological reflexivity, I first want to take up potential initial obstacles to the exercise of reflexivity in contemporary American evangelical theology. The exercise of theological reflexivity within faith communities often encounters resistance not from without, but within. For American evangelicalism, which places a premium on integrated belief systems, exploring the ambiguities of practice might be unsettling, especially since, as McGrath observes, "there is widespread agreement within the evangelical theological community that evangelicals have not paid adequate attention to the issues of theological method" (2010, p. 15). The purpose of this chapter is to anticipate early objections to the objectives of reflexivity that might arise in contemporary American evangelical theology. I focus on two potential roadblocks: First, American evangelical theology's allegiance to foundationalism; and second, its concern to safeguard scriptural authority.

2.1 Foundationalism

Contemporary American evangelical theology has historically grounded its theological methodology in epistemic foundationalism. This is to secure an alleged objective rationality for the construction of a comprehensive Christian worldview. I argue in this chapter that such a scheme inhibits the strengthening of theological reflexivity because it underemphasizes natural human epistemic limits. Recognition of these limits is essential for the postsecular exercise of theological reflexivity (Graham, 2013). They are

also scriptural.

A brighter spotlight on the theological method requires practical theologians to thoroughly engage philosophical concepts and categories (Allen, 2012). If the theological method is defined as how thinkers think about God and related themes, then philosophical epistemology bears heavily. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy focused on account of knowledge: its defining components, its substantive conditions or sources, and its limits of justification (Moser, 2002, p. 3).

Contemporary American evangelical theological perceptions of enterprise have been formed in an epistemological environment based mainly on foundationalism, which posits a reliable account of epistemological justification (Moreland and DeWeese, 2004). The central epistemological tension in contemporary American evangelical theology has been the extent to which it requires classical foundationalism. I argue that a theological method contextualized to a postsecular study of contemporary American evangelical theology mandates an epistemology that incorporates a broader concern for non/post-foundationalist positions than has generally been the case.

In contemporary philosophy, the epistemological positions on the justification of knowledge are generally subdivided among four main options: (a) foundationalism, which understands the justification for knowledge in basic, universal, and unquestioned foundational beliefs that give rise to contingent beliefs; (b) coherentism, which understands the justification for knowledge in terms of the coherence of beliefs to one another in a system or "web of belief" (Quine and Ullian, 1970); (c) reliabilism, which understands the justification for knowledge in terms of the reliability of the belief-forming process; and (d) pragmatism, which shares and critiques each of the others and

understands the justification for knowledge in terms of the consequential goals, ends, and norms that beliefs support (Audi, 2003, pp. 206-236).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Descartes was a beginning point for modern Western philosophy. His quest for epistemic certainty sought a project of complete skepticism and was led by the supposed universal value of reason (Broughton, 2002). Even though most who followed him diverged from his version of foundationalism, Descartes was a beginning point for Enlightenment inquiry because he set in place a foundationalist agenda.

While a foundationalist agenda carried the Enlightenment project for some time, its initial cracking began soon after its inception, with Kant. It is difficult to overestimate the long-term effects of Kant on perceptions about the role of the mind in framing knowledge claims for broader Western philosophy, especially Protestant thought from which American evangelicalism was eventually derived. Critiquing both the so-called rationalist and empiricists of early foundationalism, Kant asserted "knowledge emerges at the interpart of the data of the senses (the content) and the categories of the mind (the structure)" (Clark, 2003, p. 55). In other words, the mind does not simply passively receive information, as the foundationalist epistemologies central to both Descartes and Locke asserted. Over time, Kant's "turn to the subject" became entrenched in Western philosophy and theology.

As North American Christian theology began to grapple with Kant's "turn to the subject" in the 19th century, a divide emerged between liberal and conservative theologies along epistemological lines. Trying to preserve foundationalism, liberals appealed to "universal human experience of the religious" while conservatives "devised a

foundationalist theological method that appealed to an inerrant Bible, the veracity of which was thought to be unimpeachable by the canons of human reason" (Grenz, 2000, p. 112). As American evangelical theology formally developed into the 20th century, it did so from this conservative line.

This is clear in the emphasis that modern and contemporary American evangelical theology has placed on the concept of "worldview."[8] It expresses a conceptual objective "to provide a comprehensive explanation of reality that is rooted in the Word of God" over and against modernity's secularizing forces that squeezed religious belief out of public life and reduced it to the realm of personal piety (Naugle, 2002, p. 5). Two figures factored strongly. One was 19th- and 20th-century Dutchman Abraham Kuyper. Lamenting the "storm of modernism" that had taken hold of both America and Europe, Kuyper argued that two "life systems," modernism and Christianity, were in heated battle (Kuyper, 2008, p. 11). In defense, Christian theology cannot survive with an atomistic approach but instead must demonstrate the comprehensive superiority of the Christian view of the world.

The other was Francis Schaeffer, who was enormously influential to lay audiences with his trilogy of publications emphasizing the rational order of Christianity (Schaeffer, 1998; 2001; 2007). For Schaeffer, "the Christian system is a unity of thought . . . and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence" (1998, p. 176). These reactionary sentiments have

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[8] The English word *worldview* is derived from the German word *Weltanschauung*. There is consensus that *Weltanschauung* was coined by Kant (Naugle, 2002, p. 58). The term itself played a limited role in his thinking, but because of the broader influence of his epistemology it "evolved rather quickly to refer to an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower" (Naugle, 2002, p. 58).

sustained a defense of rational totality, which by its very nature, gravitates toward a strong form of epistemic foundationalism (Henry, 1998, p. 163). Thus, North American evangelical theology, with very few exceptions, has sought to defend a theological method deeply rooted in foundationalism.[9]

However, this raises an intriguing question. Why is it that outside evangelicalism the demise of classical foundationalism has been declared as "the closest thing to a philosophical consensus in decades" (Westphal, 1992, p. 11)? The answer, of course, lies in the arrival of postmodernism. It has challenged evangelical theology's close association with the "universal rationality of the Enlightenment" (McGrath, 2010, p. 33).

Postmodernism cannot be distilled to a single movement and is "a highly complex phenomenon encompassing a variety of elements" (Grenz, 2000, p. 108). Its central challenge to foundationalism was an "incredulity toward metanarrative" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xiv; cf. Bertens, 1995). Instead of understanding reality as existing "out there" and to which human language and perception correspond, reality is constructed by social and cultural conventions particular to the speaker. "As a result, no simple, one-to-one relationship exists between language and the world. Nor can any single description provide an accurate 'map' of the world" (Grenz, 2000, p. 108). This struck at the heart of evangelical theology's comprehensive worldview project and prompted a counter-

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[9] One of the few exceptions was Bloesch (1979). There were evangelicals such as (Moreland and DeWeese, 2004) who criticized classic foundationalism as being "overly ambitious" but still wanted to preserve some soft foundationalism (pp. 81-108). To be clear, I am not trying to construct a strawman by arguing that contemporary evangelical theology largely supports classic foundationalism in order to tear the strawman down. Rather, I am acknowledging as part of my argument that even though most contemporary evangelical theologians would not want to defend classical foundationalism, there is still substantial support for what has been termed "modified" or "soft" foundationalism. See, for example, Carson (1996) who called for a "chastened foundationalism" (cf. Naselli, 2011).

reaction (Grenz, 1996).

Particularly, conservative contemporary American evangelical theology has tended to rebuff any accommodation of postmodernism, claiming that its relativist epistemology represents an attack on foundational "objective truth claims" (Groothius, 2000, p. 69; cf. Carson, 1996; Moreland, 2007).

However, I contend that contemporary American evangelical theology's reaction against the "relativism" of postmodernism ignores the contributions brought to the theological method by post/non-foundationalist epistemologies, specifically pragmatism. Unquestionably, there are extensions of postmodern ideology that undermine the basic structures of evangelical theology and indeed theism in general. For example, deconstructionist applications nihilistically eliminate any transcendent concept of the divine (e.g. Caputo, 2015). However, to dismiss the entire postmodern epistemic apparatus is to miss a fundamentally crucial theological point: as finite beings, humans have epistemic limits that prevent absolute foundationalist certainty.

A nuanced reading of postmodern epistemology shows that the philosophical lineage of pragmatism drawn from Wittgenstein through Rorty benefits evangelical theological method by providing a healthy dose of epistemic humility (Smith, 2014). This acknowledgment of the limits of human knowledge has resonance not only philosophically, but perhaps more crucial for evangelical theology, scripturally. Consider the claims of absolute certainty tucked within classical foundationalism read against the backdrop of the story of the garden in Genesis 1-3, a text usually seen by evangelical theology as systematically imperative. They appear eerily similar to the first and ultimate "sin" of humanity in Genesis 3:1-7: an absolute claim on knowledge by creatures that is

reserved only for the Creator (Smith, 2014, p. 29; Ansell, 2001, pp. 40-43; Enns, 2016, p. 104).

What are the related contributions of Wittgenstein and Rorty? First, Wittgenstein demonstrated that a classic referentialist account of language, in which words have fixed meanings that "name" objects and refer to realities outside the account, underplays contextuality (Wittgenstein, 1953). Much as Kant critiqued classic foundationalism for underemphasizing the human mind's role in shaping knowledge, Wittgenstein critiqued it for not giving an adequate account of how language and context determine meaning. Language use is practiced within a broader context of a language game or form of life that provide rules for playing. Meaning is "bound up with use, and use is relative to the conventions of a community of practitioners" (Smith, 2014, p. 46).[10]

Second, in developing Wittgenstein, Rorty critiqued Western epistemological inquiry's long-held concern for the "transaction between the 'knowing subject' and 'reality'" (Rorty, 1979, p. 9). If Wittgenstein and other pragmatists are correct that language is decidedly determinative and not merely representative, then the search for grounds of knowledge in "privileged representations" is heading in the wrong direction entirely.

For Rorty, rationality and epistemic justification are partly a matter of sociological conditioning and practices as far as they are determined by what "society lets us say" (Rorty, 1979, pp. 170, 174). Epistemology becomes a consideration of human social practices more than it is a foundational search for correspondence between internal

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[10] I agree with Millbank on this point, though not his entire project built on it. This "linguistic turn" represents a "theological turn" that returns theological methodology to a more "orthodox" Christian account (1997, pp. 84-90).

conditions of knowledge and external "reality." This demands that it be more attuned to the "contingency and particularity of human finitude, to the conditions of creaturehood" (Smith, 2014, p. 84).

At times, Rorty and Wittgenstein pushed their philosophical innovations to frontiers that are admittedly difficult to reconcile with classical Christian theism (to say nothing of contemporary evangelical theology). Wittgenstein, for example, distinguished life of faithful belief in God from any conscious reality of a deity after death, about which he remained skeptical (Wittgenstein, 1984, p. 85; cf. Hudson, 1975, pp. 160-165). Rorty embraced the religious and spiritual components of human beings only when stripped of any metaphysicality (Rorty and Vattimo, 2007, pp. 55-59; cf. Long, 2012, pp. 25-30). However, what if one approached the postmodern sentiments of Wittgenstein and Rorty with a purpose of appropriating pragmatic and coherentist insights for sound theological method?[11] Having critiqued contemporary American evangelical theology's over-reliance on classic foundationalism as a compromise of epistemic humility, I want to close this discussion by briefly highlighting an example of a post/non-foundationalist epistemology that harmonizes with central evangelical theological convictions.

The example is reformed epistemology, which emerged from the writings of America philosophers Plantinga and Wolterstorff. Its central thesis is that religious belief can be entirely rational without any appeal to evidence or argument. Classic foundationalism, according to Plantinga, fails on two fronts. First, it misses the fact that many beliefs are taken by rational humans as rational but do not share the features of

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[11] As Smith (2014) recalled, Augustine approached Plato in the manner of the Hebrews plundering Egyptian gold for the glory of God.

foundational or properly basic beliefs, such as the world has existed for more than five minutes or other persons exist. Second, it is self-referentially incoherent in that it presupposes a foundational criterion for rationality that cannot be proved by the same standard. Instead of supposed underlying foundational beliefs, warrant is conferred to religious beliefs in reformed epistemology by reliable belief-forming processes. In both critiques, reformed epistemology is surfacing a core problem for any evangelical theological method that strives for foundationalist certainty: How does one account for the role of experience in the formation of religious belief?

Contributing to the desire for epistemological certainty in contemporary American evangelical theology, I contend, is a misconstrual of the nature of experience. Going back to at least the time of John Wesley in the late 18th century, it has been common to identify four normative sources for theological and doctrinal development: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (Thorsen, 2005). This framework has generated suspicion toward the formative role of experience among some conservative evangelical theologians (Ramm, 1973, p. 13; Crisp, 2010, p. 68).

This is precisely where I want to draw attention in analyzing the contributions of a model like reformed epistemology to a theological method contextualized to 21st-century American enterprise. The positioning of experience alongside Scripture, tradition, and reason fails to identify the precise nature of experience. It is not merely a "source for theology . . . but the primary lens through which human beings access any and all scientific, moral, or theological knowledge" (Scharen and Vigen, 2011, p. 63).

In the introduction, I noted that as market capitalist societies become increasingly modernized, religious expression has not disappeared as secularization theory predicted

but rather shifted away from mainline traditional Protestant belief and toward more individualized and materialized spirituality, reflecting the market-based pull of consumerist capitalism. In a classic foundationalist model of theological methodology, it is difficult to account for this shift credibly. If theological belief is only a matter of securing universal, rational foundations, then the intensive and extensive immersions of capitalism should have no bearing on the nature of belief. There are no grounds for critiquing, for example, the capitalistic excesses of individualism and materialism. However, in an epistemological model such as reformed epistemology, this experience can be accounted for and critiqued precisely because it acknowledges that experience plays a decisive role in shaping religious belief (Alston, 1993).

A theological methodology grounded in a post/non-foundationalist epistemology scripturally-sound creaturely limits meaningfully contributes to contemporary American evangelical theology's integrative quest. It does so by providing a mechanism for interrogating how its own belief systems and faith practices have been implicitly shaped by consumerist instrumentality.

2.2 Scriptural Authority

In the previous section, I contended that a theological method contextualized to postsecularism requires an epistemology that incorporates a broader concern for non/post-foundationalist positions than has generally been the case in American evangelical theology. In this part, I explain how a post/non-foundationalist epistemology affects perhaps the most prominent theological theme associated with the evangelical theological method: the authority of Scripture.

The authority of Scripture represents one of Bebbington's (1989) four central

features of classical evangelicalism. For American evangelicalism, it has featured

prominently in disputes over the doctrine of inerrancy and postmodernism (Feinberg,

2001), even serving as a proxy for the various political and social "culture wars" that

have marked American public discourse on the Bible (Setzer and Shefferman, 2011, pp.

95-108).[12]

If a high authority of the Bible is commonly associated with American

evangelicalism, so too is the criticism that evangelical understandings of biblical

authority have often amounted to "biblicism," or the idolization of the written text

(Stackhouse Jr., 2000, p. 47; Knoll, 1986). The charge has various iterations. In critical

biblical scholarship, the term generally refers to an approach to reading the biblical texts

"literally" that ignores historical and cultural factors, metaphorical use of language, or the

premodern perspective of the ancient writers (Crook, 2011; Crapanzano, 2000). In

sociology, it has been defined "as an interpretive tradition mediated by a complex set of

sociocultural practices and textual ideologies" (Juzwik, 2014, p. 335).

Evangelical biblical scholars are generally apt to defend these criticisms as

misunderstandings of what they mean by "literal," not a wooden-literalism, but one that

seeks the plain reading of the text according to normal conventions of interpretation. For

example, Klein et al. (2004) pointed out that the contemporary evangelical emphasis on a

literal hermeneutic dates back to at least the time of the Reformation. The grammatical-

historical method arose as a contrast to what can be loosely called the allegorical

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[12] Knoll made the astute observation that while contemporary American conservative evangelical
theology has coalesced around a narrow understanding of scriptural authority, American
Christianity was itself an inheritor of a rather diverse set of models of biblical authority from 17th
century Europe (2016, pp. 125-145).

approach, which was the dominant hermeneutical approach during the first millennium of church history.[13]

A broader issue here for the theological method is not so much whether contemporary evangelical theological readings of the scriptural text amount to biblicism, but rather whether the concept of Scripture operative within contemporary evangelical theology readings is epistemically-consistent. Conservative evangelical defenses of scriptural authority often work off the assumption of a "fixed text" (Treier, 2007). The Bible is treated as an established and unchanging document that contains the contents of God's revelation, which then exercises unilateral and non-conditioned authority over Christian conduct and practice. In its reliance on a classic foundationalist epistemology that underplays the role of language in the hermeneutical process, I assert that the concept of a completely fixed text is untenable.

Contemporary American evangelical theological readings of Scripture grounded in a theoretical fixed text are seeking a universal foundation on which to rest scriptural authority, but is such a foundation possible? Already, if revelation is mediated through a historically-situated person such as Jesus of Nazareth and then witnessed to in a historically-situated set of texts such as the New Testament corpus, then an ahistorical universal foundation is untenable. Van Huyssteen wrote: "What we are calling 'revelation,' and what we are interpreting as God's revelation, shares in the ambiguities

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[13] An allegorical hermeneutic can be seen in early figures such as Philo and, at times, by the biblical writers themselves. The use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers presents, in my opinion, a serious challenge to the strong emphasis placed on a "literal" hermeneutic in conservative evangelicalism. At the very least, New Testament writers seem to stray with some frequency from a literal hermeneutic. As Hays said: "Let us not deceive ourselves about this: Paul would flunk our introductory exegesis course" (1981, p. 181).

of history and is therefore by necessity part of the limited, fallibilist form of all of our knowledge" (2010, p. 152). Moreover, pervasive oral traditions in Middle Eastern cultures during the biblical period make the concept of an original fixed-text implausible (Dunn, 2003; Ehrman, 2005).[14]

Is a theological method possible that values the evangelical priority for Scripture but also accounts for the shortcomings of a fixed-text approach and moves beyond classical foundationalism? Vanhoozer's (2000) canonical-linguistic approach represents a convincing method, and it serves as the basic model from which I operated on the question of scriptural authority. Vanhoozer applied Plantinga's account of warrant "to stretch his insight into human interpretative faculties" and the proper role of scriptural authority (Vanhoozer, 2000, p. 87). A truly biblical evangelical theology, for Vanhoozer, is one that seeks alignment with the central narrative of redemption found within Scripture more than it does with foundationalism. Following Sternberg (1985), Vanhoozer argued that such a theology encompassed the "redemptive-historical substance of the biblical text . . . and the redemptive-hermeneutical form" (2000, p. 65). Thus, two levels were present: the drama of redemption (God speaking to the reader in and through the biblical text) and the drama of reading (the subsequent response of the reader).[15]

A dramatized theology is Vanhoozer's way of countering the heavy foundationalist and propositional approaches in modern evangelical theology that tended

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[14] This is different from saying that there is not vast manuscript support for the textual transmission process that produced modern interpretations of Scripture. See Blomberg (2014);Bruce (1974); Blomberg (2014)

[15] See also Barton (1999).

to reduce revelation to doctrinal propositions (Vanhoozer, 2000, p. 69; cf. Henry, 1979, pp. 477-478). On this, Vanhoozer showed particular influence from Barth and Balthasar. Barth posited God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ as a starting point for theology, which effectually subordinated the form of God's revelation in Scripture to the God revealed in Scripture (Barth, 1978, pp. 138, 162).

Balthasar similarly argued that divine revelation is not a fixed object of examination but a movement of action by God in the world (Balthasar, 1988, pp. 25-50). By attending to Barth and Balthasar, Vanhoozer stressed, evangelical theology can see that it does not need to "choose between God as speaker and God as an actor. Nor should we choose between theology as solely propositional or solely personal" (2000, p. 73). Here, language is a form of action that can refer to both history and subjective experience, but in a way that shapes those realities as much as it portrays them (cf. Vanhoozer, 1995).

Applied to perceptions of enterprise, a keen benefit is gained by contemporary evangelical theology construing the relationship between language and scriptural authority in this way. One of the residues of economic intensification has been the tying of human identity to professional status. According to Michaelson et al. (2014), "In the human quest for meaning, work occupies a central position . . . Most adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work, which often serves as a primary source of purpose, belongingness, and identity" (Michaelson et al., 2014, p. 1).

For contemporary evangelical theology to engage this milieu in which consumer capitalism pivotally shapes human value, it must incorporate a dynamic concept of scriptural authority that does more than enlist theological propositions for cognitive

assent. Such an account terminally divorces text and action. By incorporating a canonical-linguistic account of scriptural authority that invites the reader/interpreter to partake in the narrative of revelation that emerges from the text, evangelical theology is better equipped to reflexively examine the consumer capitalistic narrative operating within enterprise, particularly those features that are determining conceptions of human value. Briggs (2010) polished the point: "Text and action are bound together, we might say, in transforming the reader . . . Such a text requires long slow perseverance with regard to reading and living, which is surely what any reader of the Bible we have before us should expect" (Briggs, 2010, p. 25).

2.3 Conclusion

The concern of this chapter has been to anticipate and assuage early objections that might arise in contemporary American evangelical theology to the objectives of strengthening theological reflexivity. In analyzing its allegiance to foundationalism and its concern for scriptural authority, I demonstrated that the core evangelical values underlying these concerns did not need to be compromised to engage the concept of reflexivity more meaningfully. Setting the stage, I now turn to a formal analysis of one of the dominant expressions of the quest for integration in contemporary American evangelical theology, the theme of transformation.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CURRENT STATE OF TRANSFORMATIONALIST

THINKING IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

In keeping with the focus of Part One of this thesis to elaborate the challenge facing contemporary American evangelical theology, I shift from a discussion of theological methodology to perceptions of capitalistic enterprise. In this chapter, I introduce the theme of transformation as a central conceptual lens for contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise. In Chapter Four, I detail postsecular consumerist spirituality as the broader context in which the contemporary articulation of the theme of transformation has emerged.

Over the last 30 years, American Protestant Christianity, including evangelicalism, has paid increased attention to how Christian faith integrates with enterprise (Miller, 2007). This is reflective of a broader cultural sensibility and interest for religion and spirituality in the workplace (Grabill, 2012, p. 203). The theme of transformation has emerged as a dominant conceptual lens for articulating integration. It expresses the notion that capitalistic enterprise provides a platform for Christians to fulfill the call of God and live faithfully to the message of Jesus' death and resurrection presented in the Bible by: (a) harnessing the material powers of enterprise to advance human flourishing for the common good and (b) sharing the gospel and engaging in personal conversion where opportunity allows to spread the kingdom of God.

This thesis amounts to a critical analysis of the theme of transformation in light of the phenomenon of postsecularism. It has challenged contemporary American evangelical theology to show how Christian faith and practice can integrate with capitalistic

enterprise and still be spiritually transformative. The first step in this analysis was to get a better understanding of what the theme of transformation is and how it developed, which is the focus of this chapter. I address three questions: (1) What is the theme of transformation? (2) Where did it come from? (3) Why is it significant for evangelical theology and religion?

The premise of this chapter is that capitalism's dynamic growth has resurfaced a long-standing debate in contemporary American evangelical theology about the nature of the kingdom of God and the responsibilities of Christians to transform society. While theological variables are essential to the debate, so too are sociohistorical ones. Both need to be assessed.

3.1 What Is the Theme of Transformation?

The theme of transformation represents a spectrum of thought, not a singular point. It codifies the consensus within American evangelicalism that Christians should be involved in utilizing the sphere of capitalistic enterprise to transform it for the sake of human flourishing and the kingdom of God. However, the literature of contemporary American evangelical theology contains two different transformational approaches: hard transformation and soft transformation. Both share reformed heritages and central theological convictions but differ in how they construe the responsibility of transformation and the role of local faith communities in the effort of transformation.

The hard transformational perspective, heavily influenced by Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism (KNC), speaks about integrating faith and work from the standpoint of God's worldwide kingdom rule in all areas of life and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility

to work toward the transformation of enterprise for the common good.[16] Alternatively, the soft transformational perspective, heavily influenced by the two kingdoms perspective (TKP), speaks about integrating faith and work from the standpoint of God's unique kingdom rule through Christ (as opposed to his general kingdom rule over humanity) and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to live faithfully in the sphere of enterprise as part of a common human kingdom (which may or may not involve transformation as part of the redemptive kingdom).[17] I give a synopsis of each perspective, then highlight their approaches to the "business as mission" (BAM) movement to illustrate their differences.

3.1.1 Hard transformation

Among contemporary American evangelicals, the influence of the hard transformation school of thought has been prolific. It prolongs a legacy that includes the prominent Dutch figures Herman Dooyeweerd and Abraham Kuyper and the French Reformer John Calvin (VanDrunen, 2010, p. 16). In hard transformation, the integration of faith and work is typically cast from the standpoint of God's worldwide kingdom rule in all areas of life. It emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to be involved in the transformation of enterprise for redemptive good.

The primary influence on hard transformation is KNC, which has tended to

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[16]McIlhenny (2009) is one of several who use KNC to designate Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism and the "TKP" to designate Two Kingdoms Perspective.

[17] Many within the TKP (e.g. VanDrunen, 2010, p. 15) have criticized Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism's use of the concept of transformation on the grounds that it is applied too broadly. However, nearly all TKP adherents would say that Christians have some level of involvement in transforming the world around them, which is why I have chosen to use the designation of "soft transformation." The TKP is also commonly called two kingdoms theology.

prioritize two theological values (Goheen and Bartholomew, 2008, p. 16). First, the

sovereign rule of God in all domains of life means that there is no distinction between

"sacred" domains and "secular" domains for Christians (Schaeffer, 1998; Moore, 2003).

Second, the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 directs Christians to pursue the redemptive

transformation of all spheres of culture through the exercise of God-endowed gifts (Lewis

and Demarest, 1996, p. 36). These theological values are sustained by a reading of the

Bible through a tripartite thematic narrative of creation, fall, and redemption.[18] In this

logic, everything has been created good, including the full range of human cultures, but

evil has also corrupted everything, so everything must be redeemed by Jesus Christ

(Plantinga, 2002). Therefore, all cultural labor is potential kingdom work, including in

capitalistic enterprise (VanDrunen, 2010, p. 19).

New Testament scholar Wright's (2008) use of the creation-fall-redemption

scheme to criticize Platonic duality has marked contemporary American evangelical

theology. For Wright, the Western theological emphasis on individual salvation and the

privatization of the realm of faith amount to a modern form of the Platonic dualism some

New Testament writers were trying to combat. This dualism places spiritual immateriality

in a higher order of reality (what might be called "heaven") and relegates material being

to a lower imperfect order (Wright, 2008, pp. 88-92; 1992, pp. 253-260). This goes

against the grain of the understanding of the kingdom of God found in the New

Testament documents, Wright contended. Jesus' resurrection from the dead comprised a

hope for his followers that bridged the present physical world and the afterlife (Wright,

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[18] Sometimes, a fourth and final element of "consummation" is added (e.g. McKnight, 2014, p. 24).

2008, p. 26). For hard transformation, this validates broad Christian redemptive cultural

engagement; not simply for the "salvation of souls" for a future heavenly state.

Applied to capitalistic enterprise, hard transformational thinking opposes any

separation between a religious self and a working-professional self:

> Many employees with strong religious convictions find themselves living in two
> separate worlds: the private world of family and church where they can express
> their faith freely and the public world where religious expression is strongly
> discouraged. (Kim et al., 2012, p. 203)

Modernism is the culprit for the sacred-secular dichotomy by promoting a

worldview in which verification, commerce, and scientific inquiry belong to public

spheres of fact and reason while faith and religious moral conduct belong to privatized

spheres. Christians are to counter this worldview with one in which "all lines of work

should integrate spiritual and sacred aspects of work as illustrated by the Protestant work

ethic and its concern for the common good, altruism, and self-sacrifice" (Kim et al.,

2012, p. 207).

3.1.2 Soft transformation

On the other end of the transformation spectrum in contemporary American

evangelical theology is soft transformation. It often speaks of integrating faith and work

from the standpoint of God's unique kingdom rule through Christ, as opposed to his

general kingdom rule over humanity. It emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to live

faithfully in enterprise as part of the common/human kingdom. Whereas hard

transformation thinking bears marked influence from KNC, soft transformation does

from TKP.

TKP has two defining features (McIlhenny, 2009). First, "natural and common

laws or norms . . . are part of the created order and inscribed on the hearts of all. Such

creational laws are distinct from special revelation in God's law to his chosen people: they do not save" (McIlhenny, 2009, p. 77). Second, these norms are how God governs the various spheres of human life, including social, political, and economic. Thus, there two distinct realms in God's universal kingdom: a civil kingdom pertaining to temporal, earthly, provisional matters, and a spiritual kingdom pertaining to heavenly matters of ultimate eschatological importance (VanDrunen, 2006, p. 26).

Soft transformation sees throughout Scripture a consistent pattern where God is covenantally-bound to a select group of people while at the same time governing over all of humanity with common principles. For example, in Genesis 3:16-19 God issues a curse to the man and woman but sustains the promise of blessing. This is a common rule of humanity alongside the creation mandate to rule creation in Genesis 1:28. Moving through the course of redemptive history, there is an interplay between specific and common covenants. For example, a common covenant with Noah governs the distribution of justice among humanity (Gen 9:6), and a specific covenant with Abram and his offspring in Genesis 12, 15, and 17 to bring redemptive blessing to humanity (VanDrunen, 2006).

As the community of Israel entered the Promised Land, they demonstrated a dual-kingdom pattern. Religious life was governed by cultic regulation but still allowed for political and economic partnership with neighboring societies (e.g., 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Sam 10:2). Likewise, after exile from the land, they maintained what religious cultic practice they could while observing the social and cultural norms of the conquering nations (e.g., Jer 29). Similarly, in the New Testament. The coming of Jesus and his death and resurrection enacted a new spiritual covenant particularized to his followers, the church

(Eph 2:11-12; Luke 22:2). Much like the exiles in Babylon, however, this spiritual

institution is to practice certain rituals while respecting the social and economic authority

in broader secular society (e.g., 1 Pet 1, 2; Romans 13).

In the TKP scheme, a natural moral law governs common society in which

everyone is under obligation by God to cultivate moral goods such as justice and equity.

Here is an important distinction from a hard transformation in the context of capitalistic

enterprise. Soft transformation argues for a moral legitimacy for enterprise that is not

dependent on whether the gospel is verbally preached or individuals are being saved.

McIlhenny (2009) illustrated:

> The job of a building engineer is to adhere to the norms of the physical universe
> and to offer a just price for his labors. His job title, which reflects what he does,
> has nothing to do with advancing the gospel or administering the sacraments.
> Indeed, all callings outside the church follow the goal of living in accordance with
> God's created order and exercising justice in some way. (p. 79)

3.1.3 Hard and soft transformation contrasted: The example of BAM

One of the best ways to illustrate the differences between hard and soft

transformation in perceptions of enterprise is with their contrasting perspectives on the

role of local churches in the effort of transformation, for example, with the concept of

BAM.[19] It has emerged primarily in the field of missiology to designate businesses with a

hybrid organizational structure (generally operating in foreign contexts). Typically, they

are small-to-medium enterprises organized as for-profit entities but are expressly

attempting to use the operation of the business as a platform for evangelistic missionary

work (Rundle, 2012, p. 66).

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[19] "Micro-enterprise development" is another term often used synonymously with BAM, though
the two are not the exact same. See Bussau and Mask (2003, pp. 7-8).

While both agree that the hybridization of ministry and enterprise has precedent in Scripture (e.g., Acts 18, 20), hard and soft transformation view the necessity of BAM differently. Working from a KNC paradigm that proposes that kingdom-specific transformation should be taking place at all levels of society, a hard transformation has tended to look favorably at BAM as a vehicle for transformation. In the words of the 2004 Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, "ultimately, churches, mission agencies, and kingdom businesses have the same purpose: to bring glory to God's name among all nations" (Tunehag et al., 2004, p. 2).

In contrast, soft transformation has challenged the underlying premises of BAM. First, that the structure of BAM reinforces a subterranean sacred-secular dualism wherein BAM is sacred and "business as business" is secular (Quatro, 2012).[20] Second, BAM distorts "God's sovereign intent for his creation" by fusing the separate domains of business—and its common mandate from God—with the domains of church—and its specific redemptive mandate from God" (Quatro, 2012, p. 81).

Table 1 summarizes the differing approaches to transformation:

3.2 Where Does the Theme of Transformation Come From?

In this overview of the theme of transformation, I defined the current state of transformational thinking in contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise as a distinction between hard and soft varieties. However, this current state did not emerge in a vacuum, and both varieties have distinct theological and sociohistorical roots. I briefly analyze these roots by looking at two critical pre-20th-century figures and

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[20] Quatro wrote: "All of God's people image Him through their professional practice in business, regardless of whether the company for which they work intentionally evangelizes/disciples/develops the nations" (2012, p. 83).

two key 20th-century figures.

Table 1

Name of Table

AKA	Hard Transformationism KNC	Soft Transformationism TKP
Key influencers	Calvin, Kuyper, Dooyeweerd	Augustine, Luther
Shared beliefs	The kingdom of God has both present and future elements and Christians are called to serve the common good in some way	The kingdom of God has both present and future elements and Christians are called to serve the common good in some way
Theological emphases	(1) God's sovereign reign over all things (2) The ongoing relevance of the "cultural mandate" (3) A creation-fall-redemptive hermeneutic	(1) The presence of common grace and natural law throughout creation (2) The division of the kingdom of God into a civil realm that pertains to all and a spiritual realm that pertains to the redeemed (3) A covenant-specific hermeneutic
Contemporary Proponents	Wright, Stackhouse, Grudem	VanDrunen, Quatro
Integration of faith and work	Emphasizes God's worldwide kingdom rule in all areas of life and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to be involved in the transformation of enterprise for redemptive good	Emphasizes God's unique kingdom rule through Christ (as opposed to his general kingdom rule over humanity) and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to live faithfully in enterprise as part of the common/human kingdom (which may or may not involve transformation as part of the redemptive kingdom)
Attitudes toward BAM (and the role of the local church in mission)	Generally supports BAM as a strategic method for combining the redemptive focus of the local church with the frontier of enterprise	Generally criticizes BAM as a reinforcement of the secular-sacred dichotomy and a mixing of the civil realm with the redemptive realm of the local church

3.2.1 Key pre-20th-century figures

Both KNC and TKP were profoundly influenced by the reformed tradition. Two pre-20th century thinkers figured prominently: Abraham Kuyper, representing a post-Reformation synthesizer; and Martin Luther, representing the classic reformation benchmark.

3.2.1.1 Abraham Kuyper

It goes without saying that Abraham Kuyper has been enormously influential on

hard transformation and KNC (VanDrunen, 2010; Heslam, 1998). Kuyper was a 19th-
and 20th-century Dutch theologian with wide-ranging social influence (Bratt, 2013). He
was the founder of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Anti-Revolutionary
Party, and the Free University of Amsterdam, as well as holding the position of prime
minister from 1901-1905. Part of Kuyper's historical significance lies "in the fact that he
represents an unusual blend of theological orthodoxy and cultural progressiveness," no
doubt strengthened by the fact that he "was remarkably successful in realizing his
political objectives" (Heslam, 1998, pp. 4-5).

Kuyper's influence on contemporary evangelical transformational thinking can
nearly be summed up in one concept that marks his work: "sphere sovereignty." The
oddity of this is that he only formally spoke on the idea once, at a speech delivered for
the founding of the Free University, and the picture he gave "was imprecise" (Bratt,
2010, p. 35; cf. Dooyeweerd, 1953). Sphere sovereignty expresses the idea that "each
human activity has its rightful place or sphere in the creation, over which its norm for
activity is sovereign, and should not be intruded upon by other spheres" (Edgell, 2012, p.
8). These "spheres" are each "animated with its own spirit" as "cogwheels" in "a great
machine . . . Spring-driven on their own axles" (Kuyper, 1998, p. 467). In a phrase often-
cited by contemporary American evangelicals (e.g. Keller, 2012, p. 212), Kuyper
famously declared "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human
existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" (Kuyper,
1998, p. 488).

Kuyper's effects on the Dutch neo-Calvinist movement and eventually on
contemporary evangelicalism are tied to Kuyper's own complex sociohistorical milieu

just as much as they are to his theology.[21] He was one of the first "significant reformed theologians to confront directly what is now called a post-Christian culture" (VanDrunen, 2010, p. 277). Therefore, it is not difficult to see why many American evangelicals confronting their own perceived post-Christian culture have drawn inspiration from Kuyper (Wolfe, 2006, p. 10). For Kuyper, the concept of sphere sovereignty strengthened this confrontation as part of a broader political philosophy of "pillarization," a way of hedging Christendom in the Netherlands against the onslaught of secularism.[22]

Social systems should be established, argued Kuyper, that recognized the common grace present in the cosmos and placed political rule not exclusively in the hands of an individual or the state, but in the intermediate pillars of universities, families, churches, and businesses (Kuyper, 1998, pp. 166-169). God remained sovereign over all spheres, but delegated responsibility to each sphere such that they exist co-autonomously alongside each other.

For many Kuyperian-influenced evangelical transformationalists, the concept of sphere sovereignty has informed the integration of faith and work, but often in disparate ways.[23] Hard transformationalists, for example, are apt to see in Kuyper's vision a common grace that is expendable to everyone but remains under the sovereignty of God a mandate to fully integrate the transformational agenda into workplace settings through

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[21] For a helpful taxonomy of Neo-Calvinism's development, see Bratt (1984).

[22] A defense of a sense of Christendom is alive in many quarters of American evangelicalism, representing yet another parallel to Kuyper (cf. Brown, 2002).

[23] Kuyper's influence on the debate between KNC and TKP is complicated by the fact "that while he certainly addressed all of the major issues touching upon the two kingdoms doctrine, he did so with a very different set of terms and concepts" (VanDrunen, 2010, p. 210). Keene (2016) offered a recent exploration of the implications of sphere sovereignty as expressed in both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd for university-centered and mission-driven transformational efforts.

intentional evangelism (cf. Keller, 2012). However, soft transformationalists point to the sphere sovereignty paradigm as a reason for rebuffing a strong transformational agenda for business. The fact that work, home, church, government, business, etc., have been established by God as distinct and sovereign spheres with their own operating norms means that a business should not be run like a church, nor should Christians feel overly burdened to intentional evangelize in workplace settings (cf Quatro, 2012).[24]

3.2.1.2 Martin Luther

Any discussion of Kuyper's impact on contemporary evangelical theological perceptions of enterprise must also involve a discussion about the Protestant Reformation. Why? Because by drawing on Kuyperian themes, both hard and soft varieties of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology make use of conceptual categories that were themselves made possible by the paradigm shifts that emerged out of Protestant Reformation. If hard transformation draws direct influence from Kuyper, then soft transformation draws direct influence from Luther. Specifically, we can identify two closely linked concepts of Luther's that shaped the theme of transformation in contemporary evangelical thought: vocation and two kingdoms.

In modern Western Christian thought, few topics have attracted as much focus as a vocation (Scholes, 2013).[25] Contemporary American engagements in evangelical

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[24] "This is not to say that God has not ordained universal norms that transcend all spheres (e.g., admonitions against the love of money, or the command to love your neighbor as yourself), but it is to say that some God-ordained norms are constrained to specific spheres (e.g., the command to care for the poor, or the command to evangelize the nations)" (Quatro, 2012, p. 84).

[25] "Vocation" comes from the Latin *vocātiō*. meaning "call, summons." Thus, the word "calling" is also closely linked to "vocation" in contemporary usage. A scriptural text that is often cited in connection with both is 1 Cor 7:17: "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him."

theology with the concept of vocation have been broad (e.g. Novak, 2013; Sherman, 2011; Goossen and Stevens, 2013; Keller, 2012; Veith, 2002). Conceptual engagements with vocation have hardly been limited to Christian theology. Weber's (1958) analysis of the Puritan Protestant understanding of vocation, for example, sparked a wealth of scholarship in fields such as sociology of religion and management studies (Roth and Schluchter, 1979).[26] While this broad discussion is multi-faceted and deeply nuanced, a central feature is that Luther introduced a turning-point in Western intellectual conceptions of the idea of vocation (Veith, 2002, pp. 119-120; Wingren, 1957).

Like much of Luther's theology, he is best understood in contrast to the medieval Roman Catholic thought of his time. About vocation, Luther sought to widen Roman Catholicism's narrow use of the term, which limited it to explicit ecclesial occupations in keeping with its understanding of bodily labor as a means of purification and development of virtue (Calhoun, 1954). Stretching back to the time of Plato and up to the time of Luther, physical labor in the Western intellectual and religious tradition was generally associated with lower forms of human nature to be performed only if necessary for survival and higher forms of contemplation and leisure of the soul (Weber, 1958, p. 56; Chamberlain, 2004, pp. 3-5).

Luther widened the concept to include everyone (not just the clergy) and all spheres (not just physical labor). For Luther, vocation is a "mask of God" that mediates the providential work of God through humans for the care of creation and distribution of gifts (Wingren, 1957, pp. 138-140; cf. Veith, 2002, pp. 120-121). For the provision of

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[26] This is to say nothing of the explosion of research interests among psychology scholars and within the workplace spirituality movement over the topic of vocation (and the closely-related topic of "calling"). See Dik and Duffy (2013).

daily bread, God provides through the vocations of farmers, millers, and bakers. For the provision of human life, God provides through the vocations of mothers and fathers, wives, and husbands. For the provision of bodily protection, God provides through the vocation of earthly government.

Critical for Luther was that every Christian enters a dualistic tension between two kingdoms (earth and heaven) with two competing powers (God and Satan, law and grace). To the degree that every Christian is called to navigate this tension by loving God and loving neighbor, Luther calls this his and her "vocation." Here we see Luther's doctrine of vocation closely linked to that of "two kingdoms" (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 5). A "vocation is the specific call to love one's neighbor which comes to us through the duties which attach to our social place or 'station' within the earthly kingdom" (Hardy, 1990, p. 46).

Luther's initial espousal of vocation lacked the emphasis on active transformation that has come to define KNC, which accounts for his more direct influence on TKP. There was indeed a "static" element to Luther's concept of calling and vocation that contemporary expressions have moved well beyond. According to Chamberlain (2004), "Lutheranism did not require a transformation of the world in a rationalized, ethical direction" (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 5; cf. Troeltsch, 1960, p. 610). Vocation was a general term that applied to the various stations of the earthly kingdom, and thus, lacked the volitional and individual emphases of later evangelical reprisals (Badcock, 1998, p. 44).

3.2.2 Key 20th-century figures

The influence of Luther and Kuyper on hard and soft transformation was mediated through two important 20th-century figures who grappled with the rising force

of capitalistic enterprise, albeit differently. First, was Walter Rauschenbusch, a foil along with the social gospel movement in early evangelical discussions. Second was H. Richard Niebuhr, whose *Christ and Culture* provided the vocabulary out of which the transformational language emerged. An analysis of each is in order.

3.2.2.1 Walter Rauschenbusch

Synonymous with the social gospel movement of the late 19th- and early 20th-century, Rauschenbusch mixed theological academic in Germany training with pastoral work in New York City. At the time of his pastorate, rapid industrialization was imposing heavy social costs on American urban life. Rauschenbusch responded by articulating a utopic understanding of the "kingdom of God" that shaped the future of mainline American Protestantism and global liberation theology. For Rauschenbusch, every act of mercy and justice was "an extension of the reign of God in humanity, an incoming of the Kingdom of God" (Rauschenbush, 1968, pp. 81-82).

Rauschenbusch argued, the Hebrew Scriptures and the example of Jesus demand rectification of the social ills imposed by industrialization. Moral transformation requires moving beyond theological-obscurity and into social and political action (Evans, 2004).

One of the great struggles for justice for a Christian moral vision was unchecked capitalism (Beckley, 1992, pp. 27-29). It has "generated a spirit of its own which is antagonistic to the spirit of Christianity; a spirit of hardness and cruelty that neutralizes the Christian spirit of love; a spirit that sets material goods above spiritual possessions" (Rauschenbush, 1917, p. 115). As a social institution, the church must take an active role in combating social evils and "align itself with those values and forces in society that were on the side of the poor, the working classes, and the unemployed" (Haight, 1988, p.

243; cf. Rauschenbush, 1907, pp. 287-342).

Rauschenbusch's transformational ethic was situated within Protestantism and shared an evangelistic origin with American evangelicalism (Hart, 2004, pp. 72-79; Bebbington, 1989, p. 211). However, for most of the 20th century, it constituted the foil against which evangelicalism cast its own transformational vision. Primarily, this was because Rauschenbusch adopted higher critical interpretive methods and rejected many metaphysical accounts of traditional Christian doctrine (Evans, 2004; Haight, 1988).[27] Many evangelicals believed that social gospel theology disposed of the authority of Scripture reduced Jesus to merely a moral teacher and abandoned historically-orthodox doctrines like substitutionary atonement and personal guilt (Weir, 2016; Lewis and Demarest, 1996, pp. 19,80).

Heightening evangelical theology's criticism of the social gospel movement was its deepening attachment to Republican political efforts, beginning in the 1970s (Brown, 2002). Whereas social gospel progressivism was increasingly identified with liberal platforms, evangelicalism was with conservative government ideology. Correspondingly, whereas progressivism tended to utilize communitarian ethical frameworks, conservative evangelicalism tended to emphasize individual moral responsibility (Miller, 2014b, pp. 35-36).

Evangelicalism's reaction against Rauschenbusch and the broader social gospel movement significantly shaped the theme of transformation in perceptions of enterprise. It intensified evangelicalism's emphasis on individual action and responsibility in

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[27] Rauschenbusch argued that his theological method was the result of "conceiving of Christian doctrine in social terms," which distinguished symbolic meaning from fundamentalist literalism (1917, p. 8).

articulating enterprise's contributions to human flourishing. For example, conservative evangelical Carl McIntire (founder of the Presbyterian church in America) vocally criticized Roosevelt's New Deal policies in the aftermath of the Depression. He argued it destroyed the American ethos of individual self-reliance, hard work, and free enterprise, which were essential to capitalism's capabilities (Martin, 2013, p. 44).

Throughout the growth of the faith at work movement, evangelicalism continued to conceptualize the relationship between the Christian gospel and secular business primarily through the lens of workplace evangelistic activity and individual ethical behavior (Miller, 2007). This meant that as evangelical theology conceived of moral and theological economic paradigms, it does so primarily highlight the moral primacy of free-market enterprise above all other systems.

3.2.2.2 H. Richard Niebuhr

Where Rauschenbusch influenced evangelical transformation as a foil, another figure exerted direct influence: H. Richard Niebuhr. Entering the theological scene about 30 years after Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr experienced conditions substantially different. The apparent promise of social gospel transformation had been undermined by a devastating world war, a deep Depression, and the threat of a second world war. Niebuhr was sympathetic to the social gospel's objectives but was convinced that it was beset by "a weak understanding of the doctrine of sin and an overestimation of human agency" (Miller, 2007, p. 27). Combining Barth's doctrine on God's absolute transcendence with Tillich's concept of being, Niebuhr emphasized a relational theological ethic that understood the human being as an entity always responding to external and internal influences (Niebuhr, 1962; Fox, 1985).

No doubt, his most prolific impact on evangelical theology continues to be his publication *Christ and Culture* (1951). It established the categories that have shaped how evangelicals "think about the relationship of Christ and church to the world and culture" (McKnight, 2014, p. 229). Originally given as a series of seminary lectures, *Christ and Culture* attempted to defend Christianity's positive cultural contributions in the aftermath of World War II, when many secular critics were calling for a reappraisal of Western public religion (Diefenthaler, 2015, p. xviii).

Niebuhr argued that belief in Christ and "loyalty to his cause involve people in the double movement from world to God and from God to world" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 23). "Culture" is a composite of "language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 32). He proposed three primary ways that Christians have related to culture: opposition (Christ against culture); agreement (Christ of culture); and synthesis (Christ above culture). Synthesis can take the form of either dualism (Christ and culture in paradox) or conversion (Christ transforming culture).

Niebuhr sought to balance the reality of God's transcendence with the relational nature of human finitude. His understanding of the kingdom of God departed from Rauschenbusch's ethnocentricism and asserted that God's sovereign rule was expressed in history, not relativized by it (Niebuhr, 1988, pp. 50-53). This rule was distinctly linked to America's Protestant Puritan legacy (Fox, 1990). Such a straightforward theological rubric and historical hermeneutic enormously influenced American evangelical readers (Cunningham, 2008; e.g. Carson, 2008; Keller, 2012).

The effect carried over to transformational perceptions of enterprise. During his

career, Niebuhr had attained significant political clout.[28] As Republican evangelicalism reached a political apex in the 1980s and 1990s, Niebuhr was cast as the ideal public theologian (Park and Reimer, 2002).[29] Conservative evangelicalism applied a "Christ transforming culture" rubric to the mounting culture wars, including over capitalism (Curry, 1994, p. 99; cf. Hunter, 1992). For the evangelical Christian trying to integrate personal faith into an increasingly secularized workplace, Niebuhr's categorization provided a lens to focus on individual morality as a means of transforming culture through enterprise (Siker, 1989).

3.3 Why Is the Theme of Transformation Significant?

An overview of the development of the theme of transformation highlights its significance in American evangelical theology and religion. It is not the only way to express integration with capitalistic enterprise. The concept of using the professional workplace and capitalistic enterprise as platforms for spiritual and moral transformation has become a common way that evangelicals articulate integration. However, not all evangelicals share this conviction, and among those who do, I have shown that there is tremendous variety in how it is expressed.

The reason that the theme of transformation is significant is the tension it highlights in contemporary American evangelical theology's quest for integration. Adopting Niebuhr's Christ-culture framework, the traditional statement of the theme of transformation portrays a dichotomized relationship between Christian faith and

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[28] While at Yale, Niebuhr was nominated to the Council of Foreign Relations and policy advisory roles with the U.S. Department of State (Curry, 1994, p. 99).

[29] This was despite that Niebuhr had little interest in conservative evangelicalism and doubted its long-term relevance in American religious life (Marsden, 1999).

capitalistic enterprise. Christian faith stands apart from capitalistic enterprise and transforms it morally and spiritually. The problem with this construal and Niebuhr's Christ-culture binary "is that Christ is already a cultural event. We have no access to a Christ who has not already been encultured" (Ward, 2005, p. 21).

A closer look at the development of the theme of transformation has shown that its framework has been shaped not just by theological forces, but social, historical, and cultural ones as well. These forces are not contextually neutral. All the key influencers on the theme of transformation were articulating theological positions that were themselves shaped by time and context. Including in their interpretation and application of scriptural texts, the readings involved an interplay of multiple hermeneutical horizons. Contemporary American evangelical theology's quest to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise must consider both how Christian faith affects the transformation of capitalistic enterprise, and how its own ability to be transformative has been affected by its entanglement with the culture of capitalism.

For example, is the theme of transformation's emphasis on individualism a result of pure theological doctrine? Does it reflect any underlying influence from sociohistorical variables that themselves need scrutinizing? The integration of Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise requires critical reflection on American evangelicalism's own situatedness. This is at the heart of a reflexive spirituality that can interrogate its own beliefs and practices.

In the last half-century, the cultural grounds that gave rise to the theme of transformation have significantly shifted. Specifically, the phenomenon of postsecularism has changed both American evangelicalism's public influence and the nature of

capitalistic enterprise's cultural force. A closer examination of the change is needed, and it is where I turn next.

3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to understand better a dominant expression of contemporary American evangelical theology's quest to integrate capitalistic enterprise and Christian faith, the theme of transformation. I have shown that the current state of transformationalist thinking in contemporary American evangelical theology can be described as a spectrum with two poles. Hard transformation emphasizes the possibility of redemptively transforming enterprise for the kingdom of God while soft transformation emphasizes the responsibility to live faithfully within enterprise to serve the common good. I have also traced these poles back through their essential theological and sociohistorical lineages, including pivotal 20th-century and pre-20th-century figures. In the next chapter, I broaden the analytical lens to analyze the postsecular shift that has taken place in American religious life that has served as the setting in which the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology has evolved.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT IS POSTSECULAR CONSUMERIST SPIRITUALITY

AND HOW DOES IT IMPACT THE THEME OF TRANSFORMATION?

Part One focused on introducing the core concepts critical to the argument of the thesis. In Chapter Three, I provided a detailed overview of the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. To close Part One, I now analyze the broader sociohistorical context in which the theme of transformation has evolved. The theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology did not develop in isolation. Quite the opposite—its emergence can only be assessed as part of more substantive disruptions in the American religious landscape enacted by the dynamic growth of capitalistic enterprise.

The traditional framing of the theme of transformation portrays Christian faith as harnessing the good of Western consumer market capitalism without being pulled down by its excesses. This corresponded to the conditions of the mid-20th century, where evangelical Christianity still exercised significant sociopolitical influence in American public life, and market capitalism's growth was relatively stable and predictable.

Times have since dramatically changed. The instrumentalizing reach of consumer market capitalism has extended into virtually every dimension of human experience, including religious expression. At the same time, a decline in identification with institutionalized forms of Protestant Christianity has weakened the influence of evangelicalism in American public life, and a rise in less traditional forms of "implicit religion" have intensified materialistic and individualistic expressions of spirituality.

This chapter analyzes this disruption, using as a central interpretive lens one of

the most forceful (if not contentious) manifestations: the phenomenon of postsecularism.

Postsecularism does not represent a single idea or concept but rather a spectrum of "concerns and possibilities" about the failures of secularization theory to adequately capture the complex relationships between religion and Western society in the latter half of the 20th century (Olson et al., 2013). Secularization paradigms theorized that religion would play a decreasingly influential role in the public domain as social and economic modernization increased. Yet, "rather than receding into the private realm as predicted under secularization theory, the meanings and expressions of lived religion—as identity, belief, practice, and cultural process—continue to be decisively public issues" (Berger, 1999, p. 2).

Defining postsecularism is notoriously difficult, and any attempt must begin with the acknowledgement that it is a contested concept.[30] While most would agree that something like postsecularism exists, debate rages about precisely what it is. Even the most general assessment—that institutional religion has declined and secular materialism has increased—is too broad to be applicable to any one context. Attempts to employ postsecularism as a sociological description of empirical trends face the challenge of taking in an enormous amount of variegated data—for example, new visibility in religious faith and practice or the prominence of non-affiliated spiritual practice.

The American context presents even more complexities. From its founding,

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[30] Postsecularization," "postsecularism," and "postsecular theory" are often used interchangeably, but have different nuances. Postsecularization generally "refers to the reemergence of religion in the public sphere, whereas postsecularism is associated with a normative position regarding the involvement of religious people, organizations, and ethics in public life" (Olson et al., 2013, p. 1422).

Christian religion has played prominently in American public life. Even though America's legacy of a "civil religion" has made it consistently more religiously affiliated than Europe; there has been a quantifiable decline in religious affiliation (Leezenberg, 2010).[31]

Weighing in on the viability of postsecularism as a sociological description of empirical trends is not the purpose of this chapter. After all, I am not a trained sociologist. Instead, my objective is to assess any significant changes in the religious landscape in the American context that bear on contemporary American evangelical theological perceptions of enterprise while at the same time clarifying my own use of the category of religion as I make these assessments, recognizing the complexities of the issues involved.

My thesis in this chapter is that postsecular trends undermine the traditional framing of the theme of transformation and by extension contemporary American evangelical theology's quest to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise. I demonstrate this by arguing the following. First, whatever else it has meant, postsecularism in the American context has facilitated a shift in religious expression: a decrease in traditional forms and an increase in non-traditional "spiritual" forms. Second, the dynamic growth of consumer capitalism has been at the heart of this shift, giving rise to a consumerist spirituality that portrays faith in increasingly individualist and materialist terms. Third, as American capitalistic enterprise has become more intensely consumeristic and instrumentalizing; it has obscured the intrinsic goods of human

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[31] The election of Donald Trump as president in 2016, which occurred after the majority of this thesis was underway, would seem to demand even more nuance given that more than 60% of self-identified evangelicals voted for Trump.

flourishing that are necessary for spiritual transformation. This is both an opportunity and

a dilemma for contemporary American evangelical theology. This provides an

opportunity because it has reconfigured the public sphere to allow for more meaningful

dialogue about the theological and religious aspects of capitalistic enterprise. However, it

is also a dilemma because it exposes that American evangelicalism itself has contributed

to the development of the materialistic and individualistic aspects of postsecular

consumerist spirituality.

4.1 What Is Postsecularism?

Fundamentally, postsecularism is an attempt to explain two statistical trends.[32]

First, there has been a decline in Americans' self-identification with mainline Protestant

Christianity (Brenner, 2011; Bass, 2013, p. 13; Jones et al., 2002).[33] Second, there has

been an increase in the degree to which people identify themselves as "spiritual but not

religious" (Ellingson, 2011, pp. 257-260; Chaves, 2011; Fuller, 2001, p. 1). Together,

these trends suggest that the general relationship between religion and contemporary

society is not on the trajectory that 19th- and 20th-century secularization theory predicted

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[32] Though there is indeed import for the entire global stage, the thrust of the shift is in societies where consumer market capitalism and political democratization are either established or on the rise, especially since the categories and terminology used to describe postsecularism, government, enterprise, and religion are derived from Western thought (Madsen, 2012, pp. 28-30). I focus my analysis on postsecularism in America.

[33] The terminology here is important and complicated. According to Christiano et al. (2008), "The range of terms that have been used to describe religion in the United States since 1960 is as broad as the subject itself" (Christiano et al., 2008, p. 85). I use the phrase "mainline Protestant Christianity" to designate all three of the generally-recognized denominations within organized American Protestant Christianity: conservative (e.g., Southern Baptist Convention), moderate (e.g., United Methodist Church), and liberal (e.g., United Church of Christ). The growth of Pentecostalism is an anomaly. It is an outgrowth of traditional mainline Protestantism, but it also shares many features of new religious movements discussed below (Robins, 2015; Jenkins, 2011).

(Habermas, 2008, p. 5).[34] Rather than diminishing as Western society has become more economically and socially modernized as secularization theory predicted some forms of religious expression are as abundant as ever, "and in some places more so" (Berger, 1999, p. 2).[35]

Assessing postsecularism, then, first requires an understanding of secularization theory. In basic form, "secularization theory anticipates the declining importance and presence of religion in individual lives, societies, and states" (Hershberger, 1969, p. 28). While secularization theory is generally referred to under one umbrella term, Casanova (1994) was right to see three distinct components: (a) the decline of religious belief; (b) the differentiation of religious and nonreligious spheres; and (c) the privatization of religious commitments. Turner (2012) further distinguished "political secularization" (the differentiation thesis, b and c) and "social secularization" (the commodification thesis, a).

Political secularization entails a legislated separation of church and state and an institutional firewall from religious entanglement, which clearly has transpired over the course of America's history. Economic and social modernization has increased the fundamental separation between church and state and lessened the influence of traditional religious authority in America. However, social secularization "refers to the everyday

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[34] The decline of secularization theory, while apparent on both sides of the Atlantic, has been more gradual in continental Europe than in America. This was not unexpected given that religion (specifically Christianity) has played a more formative role in the establishment of American society and government than among European countries. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between American and European perceptions of secularization theory, see Warner (1997).

[35] Examples include movements such as the "Iranian revolution, the moral majority, the Pentecostal explosion, the post-socialist Buddhist revival, faith-based initiatives, communal violence, the politics of the veil, the inconclusive 'Arab spring,' and of course, 9/11" (Gorski et al., 2012, p. 3).

religious experience, practice, and belief and to the penetration of that everyday world by the secular market and secular values" and it is this component of the secularization that has garnered the greatest attention (Turner, 2012, p. 141). Increasing economic and social modernization has not eliminated this form of religious expression, but rather reconfigured it. This suggests "modernity and religion are not in a zero-sum relationship, in which the emergence of the former should inexorably lead to the disappearance of the latter" (Giordan and Pace, 2012, p. 1).

Secularization theory analyzed religious faiths through an interplay of the macro-level of society and the micro-level of the individual, a legacy of Enlightenment-era scientific positivism. Durkheim (2002), for example, used the term *homo duplex* to describe a double center of gravity in each person between a lower individual state of ordinary ("profane") experience and emotions dictated by biological forces that is in tension with a higher social "sacred" state of experience and emotions dictated by society (cf. Durkheim, 1960; Janssen, 1997; Norris and Inglehart, 2012, pp. 5-8). Two basic realities exist—individuals and society—and "between them, a primal opposition and divergence of interests operates" (Smith, 2016, p. 57). In this scheme, religion was seen primarily as an abstract category of beliefs and doctrines exercised in private life and subjective experience. Its "phenomenal forms" (e.g., liturgies, rituals) were understood to be inessential (Mahmood, 2006, p. 341). Religious faith could be analyzed like any other social variable, but its influence on public life would decrease as society modernized.

In the 1960s, Berger (1967) and Luckmann (1967) initiated a paradigm shift in the study of religion. There was a turn away from "questions of systems and functions toward a concern with the social processes the engender experience, knowledge, culture,

and language" (Beckford and Demerath III, 2007, p. 4). This expanded the study of

religion beyond formal religious organizations such as churches, denominations, and

sects into "new religious movements" (Christiano et al., 2008, p. 39; Stark and

Bainbridge, 1980). In the classical tradition, religion was understood in its most natural

sense as an institutionalized worship of a deity or higher power, but this shift subsumed

religion under "a larger category of the sacred" (Demerath III, 2007, p. 70).[36]

Therefore, postsecular theory has come to refer to a diversity of interests and

approaches to reframing the classical secularization paradigm. Most current work falls

within four broad realms (Olson et al., 2013). First, are those who find materialism and

structuralism insufficient in and of themselves to fully describe reality and want to allow

for religious, spiritual, or other-worldly experience to be recognized as a legitimate form

of knowledge of the world (McLennan, 2010; Bhaskar, 2002). Second, are those such as

Taylor (2007), Berger (1999), and Connolly (2000) who advocate for normative and

ethical alternatives to secularization theory. Third, are those such as Asad (2003) who

draw on poststructuralism and postmodernism as a means of deconstructing the category

of religion itself in relation to the secular.[37] Fourth, are those who understand

postsecularism to mean the persistence of religion or spirituality in places previously

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[36] In some ways, this shift was anticipated by Durkheim (2002).

[37] Located especially within this stream are those such as Furani (2014), who questioned the
viability of the term "postsecular" even while affirming the insufficiencies of the secular
paradigm. The current usages of postsecular generally attempt to challenge Enlightenment-driven
appraisals of religion; yet, often this is done based "on a hegemonic premise whereby the secular
marks difference from the religious, to which it remains exterior" (Furani, 2014, p. 8). However,
this can become a reassertion of the very secularity it seeks to overturn, especially reaffirming a
Kantian distinction between the knowing self and knowledge. As Asad (2003) pointed out, the
secular is an ontology and an epistemology before it is, conceptually speaking, a political doctrine
(secularism), a sociological thesis, or a historical process (secularization).

assumed to be secular (Knott, 2005).

4.1.1. The category of "religion"

For the purposes of this chapter, this historical backdrop helps us see a conviction common to most all forms of postsecularism—that secularization theory's narrow definition of the category of "religion" faces significant conceptual limits (Greil and Bromley, 2003, p. 3; Pattison, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2000). Participation in mainline Protestant Christianity has declined, but this is only half the story. The emergence of phenomena such as new religious movements suggests that in other ways, religious expression is expanding across social spheres. This undermines conceptualizations of religion as predominately abstract intellectual assent and the hard boundary drawn between the public and private spheres.

In charting my own understanding of the category of religion, then, I am positioned within a broader critical movement away from "monothetic" approaches to defining religion, which seek to ascertain some universal core that explains all forms of privatized intellectual, religious assent (Saler, 1993).[38] This could be a belief in a supernatural, transcendent realm exercised through explicitly religious institutions or sacred rituals. Alternatively, it could be a sensemaking function that embraces "activities, ideologies, and structures that seem to share features in common with religion although they are not always designated as such" (Greil and Bromley, 2003, p. 4; cf. Johnstone, 2007, pp. 7-9). In both cases, religion is a thing in and of itself that can be isolated enough from its social and cultural masking to discern the essential element that makes it

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[38] Critical theory-based approaches generally prioritize the "grounding of knowledge in historical context, critique through dialectical process, and identification of future potentialities for emancipation and self-determination" (Lunn, 2007, p. 951).

religion.

The monothetic categorization of religion is largely unique to 18th- and 19th-century Western intellectual academics and was prompted by the breakdown in centralized ecclesiastical authority (Harrison, 1990; McCutheon, 1997; Dienhart, 1999; Beyer, 2016, p. 238). Evident here is that culturally-constructed definitional efforts concerning the term *religion* have involved an element of power, as all definitional efforts do (Asad, 1993). The development of a differentiated category of religion in modern Western society was not a blind, value-free, inevitable historical process. It was shaped by historically-contingent human actors exercising political and social will including, at times, coercive force.[39]

I am taking a critical approach that defines religion as primarily a tool for theory-building. The objective is not to capture an alleged universal core but to establish internal coherence within a theoretical system to account for a "family of phenomena" (Saler, 1993; cf. Bainbridge, 2003). The category of religion cannot terminally separate the social and individual dimensions from each other without seriously compromising its explanatory scope. Religious expression is shaped by the complex social, political, cultural, and historical contexts in which it operates, and our analytic categories should reflect this diversity and by the interaction between the cognitive functions of a person and his or her surrounding environment (Pargement, 1997). Cognitive schemes evolve through the course of selective interaction and "frame the way in which information is

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[39] In this case, power was exercised in favor of Western Protestant Christianity and its conceptual categories thereby resulting in the tendency to classify Eastern, poly/non-theistic Hindu and Buddhist religions as less developed and less significant (Orsi, 2005).

perceptually organized, stored, retrieved, and processed" to "make them meaningful and facilitate their processing" (McIntosh, 1995, p. 5).[40] As natural-goods-seeking persons, humans are generally teleologically-oriented around a desire for well-being, even if this *telos* is misconstrued or destructive (Smith, 2013, pp. 52-53).

These qualifications clarify the presuppositions I carried with me as I analyzed contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise. First, I acknowledge that my utilization of the concept of religion is historically situated in a specific stream of modern Western intellectual history, one that has involved the uses and abuses of power, especially within Protestant Christianity, which houses evangelical Christianity. Second, so situated, I am both accepting some features of this conceptualization and seeking to challenge others. I accept the basic framework that prevails in modern Western society that understands religion as a fundamentally differentiated domain of social life. However, I challenge that any manifestation of this framework is absolute and I hope to show that, as it always has been subject to reconstruction, contemporary trendlines were collectively known as postsecularism and demand something of a fresh reconstruction.

By drawing out some of the entanglements involved in defining the category of religion, at this juncture, I hope to demonstrate that secularization theory, in predicting that political and economic modernization would reduce religious expression, depended

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[40] These cognitive schemes are a complexity of not merely cognitive processes but also emotive and affective processes that can be described (at least partly) as precognitive and subconscious (De Houwer and Hermans, 2010). The challenging question regards the level of influence these different processes exert within the complexity. Despite a long trajectory in Western philosophical history that isolates cognition and reasoning functions from affective and emotive functions, developments in psychology of emotions and cognitive theory continue to point to the complexity with which emotive and affective functions affect the development of cognitive schemes, even as these developments raise important questions about how this interaction takes place. Space does not allow a meaningful elaboration, but for a balanced appraisal see (Sludds, 2009).

on a narrow, differentiated concept of religion. It has explanatory power when applied to forms of traditional, institutionalized religious expression, but lacks explanatory power when applied to non-institutionalized religious expression.

If secular theory pitted "secular" against "religion," postsecularism recognizes that religion "nonetheless continues to exert influence in subtle, oblique ways that escape the secular understanding" (Viswanathan, 2008, p. 480).[41] Having established that religious expression has not been entirely eliminated by the modernizing force of capitalistic enterprise but rather reconfigured, the features of postsecular religious expression can now be ascertained. If, as McGuire (2008) posited, "religion—rather than being a single entity—is made up of diverse, complex, and ever-changing mixtures of beliefs and practices, as well as relationships, experiences, and commitments," then our "analytic categories must be able to reflect this plurality" (p. 185).

4.2 The Nature of Postsecular Consumerist Spirituality

Once it is established what postsecular religious expression is, describing its basic features is a much easier task. What does seem to be an unavoidable observation about postsecular trendlines, particularly in the American context, is the proliferation of religious subjectivities, especially through conceptions of spirituality. While modern continental Europe has tended to view itself as secular for at least the past 25 years, the United States has a longer history of a self-understanding as a "Christian nation." Its founding fathers envisioned a legal separation of church and state—but, importantly,

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[41] Madsen (2012) reaffirmed the point well: Religion cannot "be separated from other forms of human life . . . Ritual and myth at least are usually deeply blended into economic and political affairs" and the "extraordinary degree of separation that we know in North America and Europe today is a relatively recent development in one part of the world" (Madsen, 2012, p. 36).

sanctioned by God. This means religious expression from the beginning was structurally-aligned with privatized expressions, and this basic sentiment has remained surprisingly resilient in American society even as so much else has changed. Thus, any strengthening of religiosity in the United States, however empirically vague, is best understood as a reemergence that still holds very tightly to a privatized conception of religion (Dias and Beaumont, 2010). Perhaps the U.S. context is best understood as "late secular" (Baird, 2000), or, as (Taylor, 2007) described it, a flexible and responsive secularism where faith is one human possibility among others. U.S. religiosity has become less active and more latent.

In this section, I argue that postsecular religious expression in the context of contemporary American evangelical theology can be summarized as a latently consumerist spirituality that, because of its involvement with consumer market capitalism, has instrumentalizing tendencies. This is a problem. When not regularly checked against, rational instrumentality can obscure the fostering of intrinsic virtues such as love, friendship, and acceptance. Such goods are necessary for human well-being but dissipate when pursued for their utility (McGilchrist, 2009; Scruton, 2000).

Spirituality in individuals and groups can be defined as "the experience and process of engaging with and managing significant relations and attachments with a variety of objects" (Pattison, 2010, p. 351).[42] The fostering of a variety of relationships and attachments is essential for human survival. Specifically, humans seek spiritual experiences in pursuit of self-improvement, transformation, and transcendence (Rinallo et

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[42] In this understanding, religious belief and practice are a part of general human behavior and a subset of the human pursuit and attachments (Pattison, 2010).

al., 2013).

The dynamic growth of consumer market capitalism has introduced a unique manifestation of spirituality: people who identify as spiritual and not religious.[43] In this context, "religion indicates communal identity and interactions, authority, and tradition," whereas "spirituality indicates individual experience, novelty, and antiauthoritarian impulse" (de Vries, 2008, p. 48; cf. Bass, 2013; Schmidt, 2005; Bender, 2012).

The substantial growth of the American middle class throughout the 20th century was pivotal to the manifestation. Economic expansion and modernization meant that more and more members of the working class were "receiving incomes that enabled them to increase their consumption" (Christiano et al., 2008, p. 143). Religion was also pulled into this consumption (Einstein, 2007; Turner, 2012). The decision-making process that people used in their religious or spiritual lives took on the preference-driven process of other consumer choices such as buying a car or choosing a neighborhood in which to live (Christiano et al., 2008, p. 40).[44] Religious expression reflects a consumer lifestyle choice: low on obligation, highly individualistic, and highly subjective (Turner, 2012, p. 138; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Iannaccone, 1992).

In other words, this was a turn away from traditional mediums of experiencing the "transcendent" (such as liturgical practice), and toward commercialized mediums, which are inherently individualistic and materialistic. Consumer capitalism is contracting the

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[43] I am not suggesting that market capitalism's rapid growth was the only contributing factor, just that it was predominate. A plethora of social, cultural, economic, and geographic forces are at work, integrated with each other and not easily separable. See Albanese (1992), Christiano et al. (2008); Luke (1987); Ruthven (1988); Albanese (1992)

[43] Part of the market pull was to increase the number of "offerings" from non-Christian religions (particularly Eastern mystical).

sacred and transcendent of traditional religion inward, and consumerist spirituality is adopting the core features of enterprise itself (Luckmann, 1990; Turner, 2012, p. 139).

Given the original design of market capitalism, this is not altogether surprising. Consumer market capitalism is structurally calculated to achieve an efficient integration of supply and demand through a mechanism of self-interest (Smith, 2003a). Utility is maximized when market actors take an instrumental approach to relating to other market actors. Capitalism's recent growth has extended the reach of instrumentality into various spheres of human experience (Scruton, 2000).

However, this has far-ranging implications because consumption is not just an economic system, but a cultural and religious one that shapes human meaning and sociality. All forms of spiritual and religious practice involve physical and individual dimensions (von Mises, 2007; Richins, 1994; Woodward, 2007; Fuller, 2001). Indeed, consumer capitalism has advanced human well-being by increasing access to material goods that raise standards of living and life expectancy, especially among those in extreme poverty (McCloskey, 2016, pp. 5-8; Sachs, 2006, pp. 1-2). However, what appears to be setting postsecular consumerist spirituality apart is the intensity with which it emphasizes the material and individual dimensions for spiritual fulfillment. When analyzed with the integrative model of religion outlined above, postsecular consumerist spirituality envisions human *telos* as ultimately a product or service that can be instrumentally acquired through capitalistic consumer markets. The autonomous consumer is accessing an ephemeral and digitized market for goods and services for self-making that minimizes human interaction.

Herein lies the problem. By emphasizing the individual and material dimensions

so strongly, this view of spirituality minimizes the relational and social dimensions that are also essential for the human pursuit of well-being, transformation, and transcendence. These social virtues, such as love, wisdom, and humility, are intrinsic in that they vanish if pursued for their utility. An attempt to grasp them by force of will "merely drives them away" (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 161). Thus, they are not acquired or experienced like consumer goods and services. They are gradually experienced and developed over long periods in the context of strong relational collectives.

Adam Smith argued that the social virtues would incentivize an enlightened self-interest in consumer exchange that limited greed and the violation of others' rights (Wright, 2005, p. 47). It appears that this check is being undercut by the nature of consumer capitalism's own dynamic growth. The radical prioritization of consumption in Western "cultures of enhancement" has generated a commoditized and instrumentalizing view of the self that can disintegrate individuals from the "living human web" (Miller-McLemore, 1996; cf. Strathern, 1996; Latimer, 2001; Rogers-Vaughn, 2016, pp. 11, 120-125). Despite the digital interconnectedness that consumer capitalism has facilitated, a range of studies have documented a continued decline in the size of people's core network of close relationships (Parigi and Hensonll, 2014). The minimization of human sociality and intrinsicality can threaten the sustaining of deep symbols necessary to narrate the meaning of our lives beyond material terms (Farley, 1996). Not surprisingly, one of the observed "negative pecuniary externalities" of late capitalism has been increasing social displacement and psychosocial disintegration (Barrera, 2005, p. 19; Alexander, 2008).

Here, we see the significance of postsecularism for contemporary American

evangelical perceptions of enterprise. Western consumerism has reconfigured the

religious and the political in late capitalism in a way that subverts the dichotomized

relationship between Christian "faith" and "enterprise." This fundamentally challenges

the traditional framing of the theme of transformation in which religious belief and

practice stand apart from capitalistic enterprise and use it as a vehicle for moral and

spiritual transformation while remaining unaffected by its excesses. Structurally, religion,

state, and market remain differentiated spheres, but "it is the market that is increasingly

shaping religious practice rather than religion shaping the market. The result is a

qualitative rather than quantitative transformation of the religious by the economic" in

which:

> The tension between religion and the world has largely disappeared, or at least the
> tension has been eroded. Because religion is submerged in the circulation of
> commodities as a lifestyle choice, the capacity of religion to change societies is
> absent . . . Religion as an agent of social change has been further compromised by
> the loss of any significant contrast between the sacred and the world. Religion has
> specialized in providing personal services and has therefore been competing with
> various secular agencies that also offer welfare, healing, comfort, and meaning. In
> this competition, religious groups have by and large taken over the methods and
> values of a range of institutions operating within what we can, for want of a more
> sophisticated term, call "the leisure industries." (Olson et al., 2013, p. 142)

A narrow definition of religion as privatized propositional assent marginalized the

relevance of theological and religious deliberation for public domains such as economics.

So too, it blunted any critical consideration of the ways that consumerist capitalistic

systems act as more than amoral mechanical operations, especially the coercive power

structures that might be implicitly at work at social relational levels. Pushing back against

this narrow definition enables critical consideration of such structures.

4.3 What Are the Implications of Postsecularism for Contemporary American Evangelical Theological Perceptions of Enterprise?

The purpose of this chapter has been to analyze the broader historical backdrop of postsecularism for the development of the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. Thus far, I have shown that postsecularism challenges a narrow understanding of religion and spirituality as privatized propositional assent. By adopting features of capitalist enterprise, postsecular consumerist spirituality has implicitly obscured the intrinsic social and relational dimensions essential for spiritual and moral fulfillment. What remains to be demonstrated is how this bears on contemporary American evangelical theology.

It might seem that contemporary American evangelical theology is well-positioned to offer a corrective to instrumentality. Historically, religion has been a source for emphasizing the intrinsic dimensions of human experience and the necessity of resisting instrumentality for spiritual and moral transformation (Nieuwenhove, 2009). Throughout the Christian traditions, the triangulating love of God has been seen as crucial. A prominent ethical thread in the Christian Scriptures calls for the habitual resisting of instrumentalizing tendencies so that intrinsic human worth can be valued and relational communities can flourish. The human tendency to seek individual and material gain at the expense of others is transformed through the triangulating love of God expressed in Jesus of Nazareth into a non-possessive love of others (Eph 5:2; Jn 13:34; 15:13 Mk 8:34-35; Rom 5:8). "By pursuing God as the ultimate concern," human desire is transformed via God so that humans can value created things—including other humans—in their own right and love others intrinsically (Nieuwenhove, 2009, p. 692).

In actuality, postsecular consumerist spirituality poses a fundamental paradox to contemporary American evangelical theology. It presents an opportunity by opening public space for dialogue about the religious, spiritual, and theological dimensions of enterprise. Alternatively, it challenges the traditional articulation of the theme of transformation in which Christian faith is portrayed as harnessing the good of Western consumer market capitalism without being affected by its instrumentalizing excesses. I briefly explore both.

4.3.1 An opportunity

The postsecular diffusion of religious expression into spheres not normally seen as religious has created space for public dialogue about the theological and spiritual dimensions of enterprise. At the popular level, this has been evidenced by media attention, such as the July 2001 cover story in Fortune entitled "God and business: The surprising quest for spiritual renewal in the workplace" and a 1999 cover story in BusinessWeek entitled "Religion in the workplace." At a scholarly level, there has been a renewed interdisciplinary interest in subjects such as organizational spirituality (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Cadge et al., 2009).

This reorientation has enabled both scholars of management and theology to point out where spirituality and organizational life intersect. Pattison (1997), for example, spells out three ways in which modern management can be seen as "substantially religious activity" (pp. 28-39): the faith assumptions of managers, the religious style and order of management, and the faith content and religious language found in management theory and practice. He also suggested several benefits to management theory and practice were it to integrate theological thinking: (a) critical awareness of the use of

language, metaphors, and myths; (b) the creative nature of faith; (c) a broad horizon for self-criticism; (d) critical understanding of transformational knowledge; (e) learning from other religious traditions.

Similarly, Greil and Bromley (2003) identified "quasi-religious corporations" as a facet of American organizational life. They have arisen in response to the hegemony of the contractually organized public sphere of social life (structured principally by the economy and the state), over the covenantally organized private sphere structured principally by the family, community, and religion. These organizations:

> Promise to reintegrate work, politics, family, community, and religion through the formation of family-businesses that are linked together into a tightly-knit social network and legitimated symbolically by appeals to nationalism and transcendent purpose. (Greil and Bromley, 2003, p. 135)

For contemporary evangelical theology, the promise of this effort is that postsecular religious expression has opened the public sphere for refreshed dialogue, even for theology. Graham wrote:

> The postsecular represents the emergence of a new kind of public square in which religion is newly resurgent, and yet its legitimacy as a form of public reason continues to be hotly contested . . . While the resurgence of religion is regarded by many as prompting a much-needed moral rejuvenation of secular society, for others this new eruption of faith continues to represent a dangerous breach of the neutrality of the public sphere. (Graham, 2013, p. xviii)

4.3.2 A challenge

While new visibility for religion and spirituality in public life presents an opportunity for contemporary American evangelical theology, it also presents a challenge. The reason is that postsecularism has shifted the conditions for public dialogue, requiring that contemporary American evangelical theology to offer a more reflexive account of how Christian faith can integrate with capitalistic enterprise for moral and spiritual transformation. Traditionally-stated, the theme of transformation

portrays Christian faith as harnessing the good of Western consumer market capitalism without being affected by its instrumentalizing excesses. When the theme of transformation was formalized in the 20th century, this made sense. Evangelical Christianity still exercised significant political and social influence in American public life. Moreover, market capitalism's growth was relatively stable and predictable.

Postsecularism has changed this. Both the decline in identification with traditional Protestant Christianity and the rise of individualist-materialist spirituality have weakened the public influence of evangelicalism. The mainstream public sphere can now be understood as post-Christian in that Christianity is no longer the majority "micro-sphere" (McCallum, 2011, pp. 175-178). Globalization and interconnection have increased the diversity of perspectives, many representing non-traditional and minority groups that are, in fact, hostile to the legacy of traditional Western Christianity. The destabilizing effects of capitalism's postsecular growth have extended the scrutiny to Protestant evangelical Christianity's ties to the instrumentalizing features of consumer capitalism.

A closer historical analysis shows that this scrutiny is warranted. There are three concerns at work. First, are the theme of transformation's imperialist and colonialist undercurrents. In the 17th and 18th centuries, American colonizers often defined their "transformational mission" in the New World in biblical terms. They were a "'chosen people,' on an errand in the 'wilderness,' creating the 'new Israel' or the 'new Jerusalem' in what was clearly 'the promised land'" (Huntington, 2005, p. 64).[45] As with the European colonization of Africa, American efforts integrated a God-sanctioned call for

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[45] For an astute overview of the relationship of the "kingdom of God" to American colonialism, see Naveh (1991).

redemptive transformation with the imposition of Western cultural forms and economic value systems on the indigenous peoples (Mbiti, 1999).

In this hermeneutic of colonization, there was an association between "whiteness" and civilized" and between "Indianness" and "uncivilized," and justification of such ideology from the Bible (Hawk and Twiss, 2014). Puritan thinkers such as John Eliot and Cotton Mather expressed similar sentiments, continuing through the 19th century when "Christian mission agencies constituted the de facto arm of the U.S. government's civilization project" (Hawk and Twiss, 2014, p. 52; cf. Segal and Stineback, 1977, pp. 31-33).[46] This hermeneutic drew from the Enlightenment-era myth of progress, a conception of "universal history as the ever-advancing development of human capacities" that has "has been fundamental to both to self-understanding of the modern West and its view of relations to the rest of the world" (McCarthy, 2009, p. 3; cf. Merrick, 2014, pp. 105-111). The myth of progress figures heavily in evangelical espousals of American exceptionalism that America is a Christian nation ordained by God (Parchami, 2009; Bloom, 2006).

Second, is the way in which American evangelicalism's emphasis on individualism and the free market fueled capitalism's modern expansion. Influentially, Weber saw a secularization of the Protestant work ethic in capitalism's early growth. Protestantism instilled in its adherents a distinct "ethic" and a sense of divine calling and election that fostered an individual mandate to hard work and to live frugally. For Weber, there was cause to be concerned about a secularized Protestant ethic so forcefully driven by a materialist-individualist "iron cage" (Weber, 1958, p. 181). It could imprison

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[46] On the use of the Bible to justify slavery in American history, see Haynes (2007).

workers in economic rationalization that degraded their moral basis and human autonomy.

The Protestant-derived individualist-materialist ethic of the early 1900s nourished a post-industrial economic boom with an emphasis on free-market capitalistic enterprise (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p. 706). As noted in Chapter One, this harmonized with American evangelical theology's emphasis on individual responsibility and self-autonomy. With the rise of the evangelical Moral Majority and the Religious Right in the late 1970s and 1980s, a distinctly consumerist political-economic platform was materializing within conservative evangelicalism (Brown, 2002). For example, evangelicals were highly supportive of President Reagan's tax-cut and deregulation initiatives, which intended to incentivize consumer spending as a means of trickling wealth down from the wealthy to the middle-class and the poor (Nesmith, 1994).

Third, is how contemporary American evangelicalism adopted the consumerist mentalities of postsecular spirituality. American evangelicalism adjusted to a consumerized religious marketplace by differentiating its "brand" from others (Einstein, 2007). An important manifestation was the "seeker-friendly" megachurch movement. It focused on constructing a Sunday church experience that appealed to the suburban middle and upper-class consumer. The continued success of megachurches is evidence that the categories of the "sacred" and "secular" are temporal and theorized. Evangelical megachurches have largely been able to sustain growth by:

> Its location on the postsuburban fringe of large cities, its fragmented, dispersed structure, and its focus on individualized spaces of intimacy such as small group meetings in homes, which help to interpret suburban life as religiously meaningful and create a sense of belonging. (Wilford, 2012, p. 33)

This "subjective turn" saw the Puritan Protestant ideals of "self-sacrifice and

moral-asceticism" give way to a "fascination with the self and with human subjectivity" (Hunter, 1987, pp. 65-71). The seeker-friendly movement paralleled the emergence of new religious movements, even adopting the "religious" versus "spiritual" terminology (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). A recent study, for example, found that almost 46% of minimally-churched adults have an evangelical theological affiliation (Barna and Kinnaman, 2016, p. 73).

What does all of this mean for contemporary evangelical perceptions of enterprise in the context of postsecular consumerist spirituality? It means that traditionally-stated, the theme of transformation has not sufficiently accounted for the critical role that perceptual lenses, worldviews, and sociohistorical contexts play in shaping theological and religious belief. For the theme of transformation to remain viable in a postsecular context, it must acknowledge, and then overcome, the instrumentalizing forces that have marred enterprise-based transformational efforts in the past, some of which are still active (McCarthy, 2009, p. 93; Merrick, 2014, p. 105; Hartz, 1955, pp. 285-286).[47] According to Wilford (2012), "Far from spelling the end of religion, personalization, fragmentation, and compartmentalization serve as the social context within which religious organizations in civil society must adapt" (p. 33).

The effects of conditioning factors on shaping theological belief is an even more critical consideration given that perceptions of enterprise entangle the perceiver in economic realities, increasingly forceful in their effect and yet decidedly conspicuous in their presence. To put it bluntly, "every member of an advanced society . . . is immersed

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[47] Anecdotally, I can report that of the dozen or so primary sources of contemporary evangelical theology consulted for this section, not one contained a discussion about imperialism/colonialism.

in its economy—sometimes more than she knows, or wishes to admit" (Schneider, 2002, p. 1), evangelicalism included.

How, then, can contemporary American evangelical theology achieve a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation that counters the individualist-materialist excesses of consumerist spirituality? The answer is not a non-individualist, non-materialist, non-consumerist spirituality. Rather, it is a *reflexive* spirituality that regularly interrogates its own practice and nurtures the capacity to discern (Stoddart and Johnson, 2008; Flanagan, 2007, p. 189). An inner discipline subjects its own perceptional lenses to self-critique and self-scrutiny (Werhane, 1999, p. 95). The conflicting or uneven implementation of theological notions across history warrants in the first place not a discarding of the categories, but the exercise of "practical public reason" (Kidwell, 2011, p. 95), or "moral discrimination that pronounces upon a preceding act or existing state of affairs to establish a new public context" (O'Donovan, 2005, p. 7; cf. Kidwell, 2011).

For American evangelicalism, this represents a significant shift in how to publicly orient evangelical Christian faith—reacting against liberal theological and philosophical movements, American evangelicalism throughout the 20th century aligned around a classical foundationalist apologetics that sought to defend the rational totality of a supposed Christian worldview (Stackhouse Jr., 2000). The traditional articulation of the theme of transformation shared in this posture, articulating the relationship between Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise as transactional and compartmentalized.

Postsecular trajectories undermine this posture. Religion is increasingly visible in public life—but in ways starkly different than before: "Religious institutions are fragile; skeptics and critics of religion continue to question its very legitimacy as a respectable

intellectual option and a legitimate influence in society; and yet, religion continues to be a significant source of social capital, and comprises the strongest single stakeholder in the voluntary sector" (Graham, 2013, p. 239).

As Graham continued, this means Christian traditions such as American evangelicalism must negotiate the "rock" of religious resurgence and the "hard place" of lingering secularism. So too, moving forward requires a mutually-informing faithfulness to Christian tradition and openness to diverse and critical conversation in the public domain. This requires a shift from classical apologetics to an "apologetics of presence." Centered on demonstrating how God's revelation through Jesus of Nazareth manifests in embodied social virtues such as love and friendship that contribute to human flourishing in ways that consumer markets cannot.

Contemporary American evangelical theology must contemplate, then, a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation from a redefined position of power and influence that is no longer at the center but at the margins, where critical reflective practical wisdom displaces doctrinal articulation as a primary means of witness. In many ways, this is a return to scriptural *evangelical* Christianity.

4.4 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to analyze the broader historical context within which the theme of transformation emerged in contemporary American evangelical theology. I did this by unpacking postsecular consumerist spirituality as a significant disruption in the American religious landscape enacted by the dynamic growth of capitalistic enterprise. It has facilitated both a decline in religious expression with regard to traditional forms of institutionalized religion and a rise with regard to a less traditional

and more individualistic and materialistic form of implicit religious expression. By blurring the division between the supposed secular nonreligious public sphere and the private religious sphere, postsecularism has opened unique public space for dialogue about the transformative dimensions of enterprise but also challenges contemporary American evangelical theology's reflexive abilities.

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

Part One has elaborated the problem facing contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise. This began in Chapter One with an articulation of the practical theological method guiding my research. In Chapter Two, potential obstacles to evangelical reflexivity were assessed. Chapter Three overviewed the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology while Chapter Four analyzed postsecularism as the broader sociohistorical context in which the theme of transformation has emerged.

Having defined the problem as the need for a critical postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation that strengthens evangelical reflexivity, in Part Two, I now elaborate a resolution. It reflects my positioning within the discipline of practical Christian theology, where strengthening theological reflexivity is a core focus. The solution must address not just doctrinal consistency, but also the ambiguities of embodied spiritual practices.

CHAPTER FIVE: WHAT IS STAKEHOLDER THEORY?

Within organizational studies, stakeholder theory has emerged as a central framework for thinking about the moral dimensions of enterprise. For a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology, it comprises an ideal dialogue partner. The place to begin is first to seek to understand stakeholder theory on its terms. That is the objective of Chapter Five.

Like the theme of transformation, the emergence of stakeholder theory in the late 20th century was not in a vacuum. Significant shifts were taking place in perceptions about the role of capitalistic enterprise in shaping human experience, prompting debates over the ways in which the financial and operational dimensions of a firm should determine its broader social functioning. Within this, stakeholder theory developed. In overviewing stakeholder theory, I first describe the stakeholder framework in relation to these debates. Then, I show how stakeholder's ethical framework has primarily depended on relational individualism, similar to the individualist model adopted by secularization theory.

5.1 The Stakeholder Framework

Stakeholder theory holds that the purpose of a firm is to maximize long-term value for all its stakeholders. A stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p.46). They are the groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist and include not just shareholders, but employees, customers, suppliers, society, government, and the environment (Freeman et al., 1983, p. 89). It emerged in the late-20th century in

response to shareholder theory, which contended that the only responsibility of a firm is to maximize shareholder profits without violating any laws.

Conceptually, stakeholder theory is an effort to address three interconnected business problems: how value is created and traded, how ethics is connected to profit, and how to help managers think about management such that the first two are addressed (Freeman et al., 2010a, p. 404). An important conviction is that these problems are more effectively addressed with integrative vocabulary that captures the complex relationships between firms and their constituencies. A business can be seen through a financial lens as an income statement and balance sheet; through an operational lens as a supply-chain or a distribution channel; through a customer lens as a product or service to be bought, and through a social/relational lens as a set of relationships among groups that have vested interest in its objectives and activities (Walsh, 2005, p. 430). How executives and managers govern the interests of its various stakeholders determines the long-term success of the enterprise.

These ideas might seem obvious because stakeholder language has become so pervasive. However, that was not always the case. Modern business management evolved in the early 20th century with stress on productivity and output. Frederick Taylor (2012), an engineer by trade, provided one of the first management theories. The innovation of Taylor's system was the idea that efficiency could be enhanced by analyzing workflows (Drucker, 1974, p. 181). He challenged the prevailing assumption that an increase in the intensity of a laborer's work automatically equaled an increase in economic value. Using several time and motion studies, Taylor argued that the focus of management should be on an optimization of the workflow process. Thus, Taylor argued for a management

bureaucracy in an organization that was devoted to training employees and controlling outputs (Littler, 1978, p.198).

Capitalism's rapid industrial growth had created a need for better management systems and Taylor's ideas spread quickly. However, they did not go unchallenged. A vocal critic was Max Weber. Like Taylor, Weber espoused a bureaucratic organizational control equipped with standardized procedures and a focus on efficiency (Clegg, 1996). However, as a sociologist, Weber diverged from Taylor by warning of the social dangers of an excessive individualist-materialist emphasis like the one manifested in the Protestant work ethic. It was an "iron cage" that reduced human workers to output figures, degrading their moral basis and autonomy (Weber, 1958, p.181). To break free from the shackles, what is needed is the "articulation of alternative moral points of view upon which to develop a new paradigm for management" (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p.707).

As an established concept, stakeholder theory is quite recent. The first use of the term was in the early 1960s by Stanford researcher Igor Ansoff describing corporate strategic planning. The long-term goals of a firm, said Ansoff, should be the result of a balancing of the various (and sometimes conflicting) claims of the firm's stakeholders (Ansoff, 1965, p.34). In this early understanding, stakeholder claims on an organization were primarily seen as one of several social factors that should be considered in the planning process. They were secondary to the long-term economic objectives of a firm, which should remain the central focus of strategic planning (Freeman et al., 2010b, p.32).

Beginning in the 1970s, the growing field of business ethics solidified stakeholder language. De George (2005) pointed out a few of the primary drivers of this shift: a

growing distrust of the partnership between business and government as expressed in the military-industrial complex that played itself out in WWII, the Cold War, and Vietnam; the surging economic dominance the United States was imposing on the world stage, leading to the emergence of multinational conglomerates and widespread consumerism; and the awakening of the environmental consciousness in response to the rise of innovation in the chemical industry.

Taylor suggested satisfying a firm's various stakeholders would become the dominant theoretical frame informing corporate strategic planning (Taylor, 1971). In 1975, Dill from the NYU School of Business published a critical article arguing that successful companies would be able to manage its dynamically changing stakeholder environment for "strategic prowess" (Dill, 1975).

By the early 1980s, the stakeholder perspective was firmly entrenched across business strategy and ethics (Ackoff, 1970; Churchman, 1968 ; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). However, it was still without a *locus classicus*. All of that would change with R. Edward Freeman and his 1984 publication, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach.*

A philosopher by training, Freeman brought a broad perspective to stakeholder theory and synthesized earlier stakeholder notions. His was the first explicit attempt to create a stakeholder management approach, going from "an intuitively appealing description of a firm's theoretically underrepresented constituencies" to a "well-elaborated method of decision making in organizations" (Phillips, 2003, pp.65-66).

Freeman's central thesis was that the "dominant story" of managerial capitalism with shareholders at the center is no longer viable in a complex global society (Bowie,

2002b). For most of the early period of the modern corporation, argued Freeman, the assumption was "businesses are to be managed solely for the benefit of shareholders. Any other benefits (or harms) that are created are incidental" (Freeman, 2008, p.1). This focus on increasing shareholder wealth warrants scrutiny given the increasingly complex capital structures within the organization of corporations that separates management from ownership.

Freeman was directly confronting the shareholder/stockholder perspective, not without its own proponents particularly among free-market economists, most notably, Nobel laureate Milton Friedman. He had written an influential *New York Times* essay in 1970 contending that maximizing shareholder profits within the legal limits was the fundamental responsibility of a firm's management. Anything that reduced shareholders' returns was a violation of this responsibility (Friedman, 1970, p.6). Friedman's reasoning was grounded in his liberal, moral, and economic philosophy, which put a high value on private property and free markets. Since "the corporation is an instrument of the stockholders who own it," it is the stockholders and their interests that have primacy and ultimate control (Friedman, 1970, p. 135).

When managers pursue corporate social responsibility initiatives that leak out shareholder value, they are violating fundamental property rights essential to the proper functioning of capitalistic enterprise. This does not give managers license for evil since their endeavors for maximum shareholder return must conform "to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom" (Friedman, 1970, p. 8).

For Freeman, the shareholder perspective served a purpose for a specific

economic climate but was now in need of revision because economic and fiduciary circumstances have altered. Quite simply, "the world has changed so that the stability and predictability required by the shareholder approach can no longer be assured" (Freeman, 2008, p.3). The majority view can no longer commit a "separation fallacy" that separates "business" decisions from "ethical" decisions (Freeman, 2008, p. 4). At any point in its operation, a business is making decisions that have multi-dimensional outcomes for its stakeholders. According to Freeman (2008), "There is no conflict between serving all your stakeholders and providing excellent returns for shareholders" (Freeman, 2008, p.8).

Freeman saw in the separation fallacy a relic of Enlightenment scientific positivism. The naive modernist-born dichotomy between the financial and operational aspects of business (its "public" and quantifiable concerns) and its ethical aspects (its "private" and qualitative concerns) is not only unrealistic but untrue.

The separation fallacy needs to be replaced by what Freeman called "the integration thesis." According to Freeman (2008), most business decisions or sentences about business have some ethical content or implicit ethical view. Most ethical decisions or sentences about ethics have some business content or implicit view about business (Freeman, 2008, p.5).

Stakeholder language provides integrative language for practitioners and theorists to reconceptualize the responsibilities of an enterprise that recognizes the humanness of organizations:

> Business is fully situated in the realm of humanity . . . human institutions populated by real live complex human beings. Stakeholders have names and faces and children . . . As such, matters of ethics are routine when one takes a managing-for-stakeholders approach. (Freeman, 2008, p.1)

As Freeman moved stakeholder theory to the forefront, many studies defended the

financial soundness of the approach. For example, a stakeholder approach helps reduce business risk and create a more stable shareholder return (Graves and Waddock, 1994), enhanced organization agility (Harrison and St John, 1996), and broader revenue streams through attractive joint ventures and partnerships (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990).

By the early 1990s, the stakeholder framework entered a period of increased diversity. Two different approaches, descriptive and normative, were materializing (Jones and Wicks, 1999; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Bowie, 2002b). The descriptive approach was based on social science and focused on developing empirical models. The normative approach was based on ethics and focused on developing normative models. While utilizing different methodologies for different objectives, both remain focused on a central question: "What kinds of stakeholder relationships are both morally sound and practicable?" (Jones and Wicks, 1999, p.216).

5.2 The Relational Individualism of the Stakeholder Framework

An overview of the emergence of stakeholder theory shows that the contemplation of the moral and relational dimensions of enterprise is central to the stakeholder framework. It upholds that capitalistic enterprise has transformative potential "to contribute to the conservation and restoration of the natural world, to the development of human capabilities and to the enhancement of the freedom of future generations" (Zsolnai, 2006, p. 37). However, this transformative potential is only realized when managerial decision-making within enterprise incorporates a broad view of a firm's stakeholders, integrating financial and operational ends with human and social ones.

Now, I want to show that the stakeholder framework has primarily adopted relational individualism to make its moral claims. In doing so, it mirrors a dichotomized

model of the "individual" and the "social" like the one operative in secularization theory. Bucholz and Rosenthal (2005) argued that it is particularly the normative strand within stakeholder theory that has been deeply influenced by relational individualism, wherein, "individuals as well as institutions are isolatable units that have well-defined boundaries, can be considered as separate from their surroundings, and are not an integral part of the community or society in which they function" (Bucholz and Rosenthal, 2005, p. 138). According to Wicks et al. (1994), "One of the assumptions of this worldview is that the 'self' is fundamentally isolatable from other selves and from its larger context" (Wicks et al., 1994, p. 479).

The conceptualization of stakeholders into individuals or groups of individuals has far-reaching implications because it takes place within a broader Western cultural, scientific framework that has historically placed a high value on self-atomizing perspectives (Schmuck and Sheldon, 2001, p. 2). This atomized framework has origins in the scientific revolution that modified the ancient Western tradition for applying moral and ethical reasoning to enterprise.

To see this, developments within contemporary stakeholder theory need to be briefly linked to their historical and philosophical lineages. In challenging the separation fallacy, Freeman and other early stakeholder proponents called for more deliberate engagement with philosophical ethics. While not a comprehensive moral theory, the stakeholder perspective attempts to better integrate theory with practice to guide actual managerial decision making (Phillips, 2003), often in areas where opposing organizational value systems, interpersonal conflict, social impact, and legal obligation are at play. Therefore, it is encroaching on the realm of philosophical ethics, which deals

"with substantive issues regarding moral values, principles, notions of well-being, and character" (Smith, 2008, p. 42). Freeman (2010b) wrote:

> Stakeholder theory represents a bridge between the normative analysis of the philosopher and the empirical/instrumental investigation of the management scholar. By being at once explicitly moral and requiring support from instrumental analysis, stakeholder theory offers a new way to think about management theory. To provide a defensible normative core, researchers need to be able to show that it is simultaneously defensible in terms of moral norms and principles as well as in terms such that enacting these norms and principles is likely to help the firm generate economic value to remain a sustainably profitable enterprise. (Freeman et al., 2010a, p. 411)

Normative contemporary stakeholder theory is marked by a variety of proposals for what should constitute a normative ethical core (Ray et al., 2014; Dienhart, 1999; Ross, 1988). My purpose here is not to enter the thick of this debate, but rather to point out that to justify their cores, the dominant proposals derive ethical philosophical lineages from post-Enlightenment relational individualism. The philosophical roots of business ethics are principle-based, in two forms: utilitarian-based ethics approaches and deontological-based approaches (Donaldson and Werhane, 2007, p. 7). Principle-based ethics "provide guidelines to help people evaluate whether acts are morally right or wrong" (Horvath, 1995, p. 500).

As a form of consequentialism (also called the teleological approach), utilitarianism evaluates an action based on the extent to which it achieves a particular result. Right action is that which maximizes the good or minimizes the bad for the greatest number of people in a community. The term was coined by 18th-century legal philosopher Jeremy Bentham but found its most notable proponent in the thought of 19th-century philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill (Burns, 2005). Connecting the principle of "utility" to ancient notions of happiness, particularly in Aristotle and Augustine, Mill argued that if on reasonable grounds it is asserted that everyone desires

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happiness or pleasure, morality is that which successfully results in the maximization of

happiness for the greatest number (Mill, 1998, p. 81). An "enlightened self-

determination" was the fundamental basis of human autonomy, expressing the idea that a

"person is a bounded individual who is able to live her life freely in accordance with her

self-chosen plan, and ideally *independently* from controlling influences" (Dove et al.,

2017, p. 152).

With its focus on outcomes, utilitarian-based approaches have been widely

adopted within business ethics in general and stakeholder theory in particular

(DesJardins, 2003; Elfstrom, 1991; Frederick, 2008). Among contemporary stakeholder

theorists, Gustafson (2013) represented a utilitarian approach. Challenging the

misconstrual that utilitarianism in business ethics is synonymous with cost-benefit, profit

maximization, and self-interest, he contended that a well-articulated utilitarian

stakeholder approach emphasizes long-term outcomes:

> A company which follows this . . . will be concerned with fair treatment of
> employees, honest habits with customers and suppliers, and just policies because
> acting with justice, fairness, and honesty will, in the end, produce the greatest
> happiness for the many—through increased productivity, a strong reputation, and
> customer loyalty all leading to a positive outcome. (Gustafson, 2013, p. 332)

Consistently throughout philosophical tradition, criticism of utilitarianism has

centered on two aspects (Donaldson and Werhane, 2007). First, as far as utilitarianism

seeks the good for the majority, it leaves open possibilities of injustice for the minority

irrespective of consequences. Second, critics have noted the difficulty in prioritizing

which "good" constitutes the maximal good. Contemporary business ethical criticism of

utility generally follows these trails. For example, Hartman (1996) and Bowie (2002a)

leveled the charge of a majority bias undermining the rights of the minority while Paine

(1994) underscored the detriment of trying to seek a meaningful definition of the

common good in a compliance-based culture that utilitarianism can tend to foster.

In contrast to utilitarianism is deontology, an alternative dominant ethical perspective that views the principles and rules guiding behavior as the focus of ethical concern, not the outcomes.[48] Generally, the deontological perspective is further divided into two forms. The first form comes through Kant. Seeking the fundamental grounds for which human actions are universally moral, Kant argued that goodness is ascribed to actions motivated by willfully free and reasoned decisions. Actions "are good because they are done for the sake of what is right and not because of the consequences they might produce" (Donaldson and Werhane, 2007, pp. 5-7).

To arrive at the context in which pure goodness is done for pure reasons, Kant posited the idea of "the categorical imperative," which consists of principles that are intrinsically good and must be adhered to by all peoples in all circumstances. In contrast to hypothetical imperatives, which are temporally employed for the attainment of specific ends, categorical imperatives denote universal duty or obligation.[49]

For Kant, the ethical person is one who acts from right intentions. The concept of the categorical imperative functioned as a sort of litmus test for universal moral truths. In deciding whether a certain action was moral, it could be asked whether a world in which everyone acted on that principle was possible. Kant pointed to many examples to illustrate his point, one of which involved commerce. He proposed for consideration a

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[48] "Deontology" comes from the Greek word δέον, meaning "obligation" or "duty."

[49] The fundamental categorical imperative for Kant was "to act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1993, p. 30). Additionally, there are at least two other maxims that qualified as categorical imperatives for Kant: treat human beings as an end and never a means, and act as if you were making laws for a kingdom in which you were both a subject and a sovereign (Kant, 1993, p. 43).

man in dire financial straits who borrowed money and promised to pay, but in actuality, had no intentions to repay. To evaluate the morality of the man's actions, Kant reasoned, it should be asked whether a universal maxim could be logically constructed from the action—that all people should borrow money with no intention to repay. In this case, it cannot, thus, the "maxim would necessarily destroy itself as soon as it was made a universal law" (Kant, 1993, p. 30).

Kantian-based approaches are numerous among contemporary stakeholder theorists, a notable one being Bowie (2002b). He saw in Kant's categorical imperatives substantial grounds for morally-sensitive business practices. One of the most prominent regards the treating of stakeholders as persons. Essential to Kant's moral conceptualizing was the existence of individual free will, with which moral agents could make deliberate decisions for moral reasons. Bowie argued:

> Since human beings have free will and thus are able to act from laws required by reason, Kant believed they have the dignity of or a value beyond price. Thus, one human being cannot use another simply to satisfy his or her own interests. (Bowie, 2002b, p. 64)

Likewise, above all, this means a business firm is a moral community sustained by and dependent on humanized employer-employee relations that challenge hierarchical constraints.

The second form of deontological ethics is known as the contractarian perspective. It is an alternative to Kantian deontology in that it reasons not from categorical imperatives that all rational individuals should be able to agree upon, but from "social contracts." This view received initial expression through Locke, who contended that universal ethical norms could be reasoned for by beginning with a state of nature in which there were no laws, states, or political conventions, and then seeking foundational

rules rational people would use to govern communities (Wolterstorff, 1996). For Locke, these rules function as protections against the violations of natural rights by governments.

A modern proponent of contract theory—one whose work has dramatically affected stakeholder theory—was John Rawls (Hsieh, 2008, p. 93). While utilizing the concept of a social contract to identify universal ethical norms, Rawls diverged from Locke's proposition of natural rights. Instead, he argued, if each person were behind a "veil of ignorance" about himself or herself—utterly devoid of a self-understandings about race, gender, age, etc., thus, incapable of self-favor—we could identify universally-applicable principles of justice by speculating about what principles to which such people would agree (Rawls, 1971).

This "justice as fairness" is grounded, first in the principle that "each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all," and second, that where social and economic inequalities do exist, "they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity and they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society" (Rawls, 2001, p. 302).

While pursuing a broader Kantian ethic, Freeman drew heavily from Rawls' conceptualization of justice as fairness, as his original stakeholder notions were formalized into normative forms (Evan and Freeman, 1993; cf. Child and Marcoux, 2015).[50] More broadly, the deontological perspective's most significant criticism has

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[50] Freeman's appropriation of Rawls has been critiqued by some on what is determined to be "differences between business organizations and states that make it inappropriate to apply Rawls's theory to business organizations" (Hsieh, 2008, p. 98; e.g. Child and Marcoux, 1999; Phillips and Margolis, 1999).

been its inability to account for the seemingly valid presence of exceptions to general rules. If there are indeed universal moral norms that are true in all circumstances, how can they be general enough to apply to all circumstances, yet, specific enough to account for exceptional circumstances (Donaldson and Werhane, 2007, p. 9)?

An overview of the dominant ethical approaches within normative stakeholder theory clarifies the vital role relational individualism has played. While there is an excellent variety within the consequentialist and deontological camps for justifying normative cores, they take as an implicit starting point the Enlightenment-derived categories of the "individual" and the "social." I say implicit because answering the question, "What is the human person?" is not a fundamental objective of normative stakeholder theory. Instead, it is characterizing the relationship between an individual person or corporation and broader society. Yet, in utilizing these categories, a *de facto* account of what it means to be human is constructed.

This paradigm posits a dichotomized relationship between the individual and society. The "theoretical individual" is framed as "presocial, atomistic, autonomous, self-subsistent, self-determining, always seeking liberty and freedom, and valorized as representing the triumph of the human agent overall external forces of constraint and repression" while "the social self," by contrast, is framed as "socially dependent, socially constituted, constructed, and determined, variable, transient, and morally illusory compared to the valorized individual" (Smith, 2016, p. 57).

In the case of stakeholder theory, there is a dichotomized relationship between the realm of atomic corporate interests (and by extension, the individuals within a single corporation) and broader social stakeholder interests (and by extension, the community of

individuals outside a single corporation).[51] Essential to this schema is the functional compartmentalizing of individual and social dimensions of reality. First, at the level of the individual, where a "private" and a "public" sphere is posited, and then at the level of the social, where domains such as "government," "education," "home," and "enterprise" are posited.

Like any attempt to capture the relationship between the individual and the social, this approach has definite explanatory appeal and excels at capturing certain elements of the flourishing human endeavor. It did not come to dominate the spectrum of Western intellectual thought for no reason. In two key areas, it has held explanatory appeal.

First, it helps explain the seemingly fundamental need for human beings to connect with other human beings (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Durkheim's original theory about the phase changes between individual and group states was based on observations of aboriginal groups that would gather together collectively throughout astrologically significant times of the year to partake in community liturgical rituals (Durkheim, 1965). While the form of participation has obviously changed in most modern societies, Ehrenreich (2006) charted the historical evolution of individuals seeking group belongingness as a significant source of joy, from ancient aboriginal practices to modern weddings.

Second, it helps explain the tangible effects that social structures and systems can

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[51] Kluver et al. (2014) differentiated between two closely related approaches to human ontology in the context of management studies. *Homo economicus*, which drew from the human ontologies of Adam Smith, David Hume, and J. S. Mill, has been adopted as foundational to neoclassical economics in its view that humans are self-interested utilitarian maximizers of their individual preferences in ways that benefit larger society. *Homo heuristicus*, which incorporates evolutionary psychology, understands human self-interest as contextually-shaped by certain heuristics developed within one's surrounding environment.

have on human beings. Durkheim posited that some social realities operate independently from any one individual's control and cannot be reduced to mere biology or physiology, but that still have a coercive effect on individuals (Durkheim, 1960, p. 13; cf. Allan, 2005, p. 105). In other words, it is not just that individuals occasionally move toward a sacred collective to satisfy the need for belongingness and then return unchanged to an individual level. There is a reciprocal effect, such that the social level imparts change on individuality.

Applied to the stakeholder framework, this dichotomized model fits the trajectories of 19th- and 20th-century developments in both Western philosophical ethics and industrial capitalism. Early forms of relational individualism in utilitarian and Kantian ethics were optimistic about the abilities of human beings to rationally predict and control their material environments. This seems to fit the circumstances of the times. Mill, for example, was writing during the robust growth period of the Industrial Revolution, when material prosperity was spreading, and questions were being raised about the role of government in protecting private property and socializing outcomes.

However, coupled with large-scale sociopolitical conflict, capitalism's continued industrial growth in the 19th and 20th centuries confronted this implicit optimism with the realities of growing income inequality, socioeconomic volatility, and world wars. Mid-20th-century business ethics, out of which stakeholder theory came, recognized a need to broaden management perspectives of the firm to deal more effectively with these social and relational disruptions. Yet, even as Freeman and others identified the separation fallacy as detrimental to the transformative potential of capitalistic enterprise, relational individualism has remained firmly entrenched (Bucholz and Rosenthal, 2005,

p. 141).

5.3 Conclusion

Capitalism's dynamic, globalized growth has heightened the need to consider together the ethical and moral dimensions of enterprise. Like American evangelical theology, stakeholder theory has emerged with a view of capitalistic enterprise as a transformative platform. Similarly, stakeholder theory believes that an integrative approach combining the financial and moral dimensions of enterprise is necessary to harness its transformative abilities. It seeks to provide firm managers with conceptual tools so that they can maximize long-term value for all stakeholders, not just short-term profits for shareholders. The purpose of this chapter has been to get a basic overview of stakeholder theory: first, by understanding the emergence of stakeholder framework as part of a broader shift away from purely mechanistic understandings of an enterprise's operations then, by seeing how this shift adopted a dichotomized model of human being that reinforces a form of Enlightenment-derived relational individualism. Are there ways in which postsecularism has challenged the framework of stakeholder theory as it has with contemporary American evangelical perceptions of enterprise? To that question, I turn.

CHAPTER SIX: HOW CAN A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDER

THEORY HELP CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

ESTABLISH THE LIMITS OF CAPITALISTIC ENTERPRISE'S CONTRIBUTIONS

TO HUMAN FLOURISHING?

In its quest to establish the transformative parameters of capitalistic enterprise,

stakeholder theory has provided a critical framework and integrative vocabulary for the

moral dimensions of enterprise. It has challenged the dichotomization of an enterprise's

financial and operational facets from its ethical and moral ones. For capitalistic enterprise

to contribute to human flourishing in a transformative way, the stakeholder framework

asserts that both sets must be factored into the exercise of managerial practical moral

reason.

However, as stakeholder theory moves into a postsecular milieu, it faces less

stable and predictable forces than it did before. The wave of corporate fraud scandals at

the turn of the millennium, followed by the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, are clear

evidence that managerial decision-making can affect a broad range of people and

"corporate objectives can be easily disrupted by the actions of unexpected groups and

individuals" (Freeman et al., 2010a, p. 403; Clement, 2005).

When it emerged in the late 20th century, stakeholder theory considered the moral

features of enterprise by drawing on the categories of the "individual" and the "social"

that have long-defined Western relational individualism. In this chapter, I show that

postsecularism has exposed the shortcomings of stakeholder theory's reliance on

relational individualism. Stakeholder theory argues that the sole pursuit of maximizing

shareholder profits is a morally narrow purpose for capitalistic enterprise and does not take into consideration other stakeholder constituencies affected by its activities. Firms are morally improved if, instead, they pursue the maximization of long-term value (well-being) for all its stakeholders.

By appealing to a common good that transcends individual stakeholder interests, the stakeholder framework is appealing to a set of intrinsic relational goods that are socially embedded (Girardi and Petito, 2014). The realization of such intrinsic goods requires moral agents such as stakeholder managers to engage in discretionary ethical decision-making that determines how conflicts in human interests are to be settled and mutual benefit optimized for people living together in groups (Hardin, 1988; Husted and Allen, 2008). For this, moral agents must factor in their inherent social embeddedness and relational interconnectedness with other moral agents (Quinn et al., 1997), especially those situated in multinational firms with complex intercultural integration.

The problem for the stakeholder framework is that Enlightenment-derived relational individualism minimizes contextuality, inhibiting moral deliberation and, therefore, the realization of common good. Whether in the form of utilitarian or consequentialist approaches, individual, relational constructs characterize moral agents as free individual consumers unconstrained by external forces and rationally equipped to achieve self-validated ends (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1429). In these instrumentalizing constructs, there is no compelling basis for pursuing intrinsic social goods such as justice, fairness, or mercy, that diminish when pursued for their utility.

Postsecularism has accentuated this problem: first, by extending the reach of capitalistic enterprise's instrumentality into previously unreached areas of human

experience, which increase the burden of self-realization through economic exchange where human worth is reduced to utility (Elliott and Lemert, 2006) and second, economic globalization has created more diffuse and unstable organizations in which the high value of individualism remains, but in a more brutal form. Contemporary capitalist enterprises, ever intensifying in structural volatility and the pursuit of short-term performance, call out for employees who can operate with temporary connections and high-degrees of career uncertainty (Sennett, 2007).

Excessive reliance on individualist categories isolates stakeholder constituents from historical contexts, which are central to being and meaning. According to Wicks et al. (1994), "Persons are fundamentally connected with each other in a web of relationships which are themselves integral to any proper understanding of 'the self'" (Wicks et al., 1994, p. 483). As "creatures-in-process," human identities are linked to social relations and historical contingencies (Johnson, 1993, p. 33; cf. Quinn et al., p. 1422). Disproportionate individualistic focus can shed the social-relational dimensions, dehumanizing the stakeholder system. Without significant recontextualization, atomized stakeholders become static, vacuous concepts with no history and context.

To promote capitalistic enterprise's transformative contributions to common social good, stakeholder theory needs to strengthen its framework for a postsecular context. This requires drawing on alternative sources of intrinsicality that can help recontextualize stakeholder constituencies and restore fundamental human sociality so that practical moral deliberation can take place. Properly positioned, religion and spirituality comprise an abundant source of intrinsicality.

On the way to a postsecular revision of its own framework, this presents an

opportunity for contemporary American evangelical theology: first, to validate the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing and second, to demonstrate how practical theological methodology can enrich the stakeholder framework. As a source of intrinsicality, practical theology's concept of reflexivity can enhance managerial moral reflection and decision-making.

Chapter Six comprises the formal assertion of Proposition 1a. I proceed by elaborating two points: first, the challenges to the stakeholder framework leveled by postsecularism and second, the contributions of practical theological methodology and corresponding implications for contemporary American evangelical theological perceptions of enterprise.

6.1 The Postsecular Challenge to Stakeholder Theory

In contending that postsecularism challenges stakeholder theory, I position myself within an alternative ethical stream in the stakeholder literature, generally referred to as virtue-based approaches (Sanford, 2015). Rather than place emphasis on either an action's consequences (consequentialism) or the act itself (deontology), virtue ethics prioritizes character as fundamental to moral-ethical deliberation (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). Rooted in Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia.* modern virtue ethics surfaced mainly as a result of British analytical philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe's essay "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958), in which she criticized the modern scholarly philosophical community for a preoccupation with "law-focused" concepts of duty and obligation (Hacker-Wright, 2010).

For virtue-based stakeholder approaches, MacIntyre (1984) has been the most influential articulator. A full analysis of MacIntyre and virtue ethics is beyond scope. For

charting the postsecular challenge to the stakeholder framework, I focus on his critique of relational individualism in the context of capitalistic enterprise.

For MacIntyre, the deontology and utilitarian ethical systems of the Enlightenment "have failed to provide a meaningful definition of 'good.' Lacking such a definition, business managers have no internal standards by which they can morally evaluate their roles or acts" (Horvath, 1995, p. 499).[52] His argument rests on two key concepts: practice and internal (intrinsic) good (Dobson, 2009). Both are necessary for the development of virtue. Practices are "complex, collaborative, socially organized, goal-oriented, sustained" activities (Hicks and Stapleford, 2007, p. 449). Building on Aristotle, MacIntyre argued that practices are teologically-directed toward some perceived good: either, external instrumental goods such as material wealth obtained for the purposes of use, or internal intrinsic goods obtained for the purpose of experience. External goods are "characteristically objects of competition in which there must be losers as well as winners" (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 190-191). Internal goods are only achieved in community through the practice itself. Virtue, then, is "an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods internal to practices and the lack of which prevents us from achieving any such goods" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 191).

By putting the focus of ethics on the rightness of individual acts apart from the character of the actor, Enlightenment-derived relational individualism shifted the traditional Western focus on the character of the person and his/or her relationship to

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[52] It is important to note that while MacIntyre believed "the tradition of the virtues is at variance with central features of the modern economic order" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 254), he was "a critic of a certain type of business, rather than . . . of business per se" (Dobson, 2009, p. 43).

society (Horvath, p. 507). The abstracting of ethical categories such as the "individual" and "rights" out of their inherent sociality and contextuality implicitly prioritize the achievement of external goods over internal intrinsic goods. It also misconstrues the *telos* of human practice as self-determining, which amounts to a veneer of rationality. Both deontological-based and utilitarian-based approaches are liable: the former by assuming that rational alone is sufficient to "motivate individuals in the face of emotional and/or social pressures to act contrary" to a sense of duty (Horvath, 1997, p. 507) and the latter by reducing all normativity to individual preferences.[53]

When engaged in the pursuit of external goods in a competitive market economy, organizations are placing effectiveness and output at the ethical base. Moral actors such as managers within firms are compartmentalized into cost-benefit, utilitarian practices, and ethical decision-making. This encourages a myopic focus on maximizing short-term corporate profits above all other considerations (MacIntyre, 1977; 1982, p. 357; 1999, p. 322).

However, of course, stakeholder theory has critiqued this "shareholder approach" as morally insufficient, arguing that virtuous organizations should focus on maximizing long-term shared value for all their stakeholders. Here, we arrive at the problem MacIntyre's analysis raises for the stakeholder approach, a problem intensified by the phenomenon of postsecularism.

By appealing to a common good that transcends individual stakeholder interests,

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[53] MacIntyre (1984) called this emotivism, "The doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically, all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character" (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 11-12).

the stakeholder framework summons organizations to the achievement of intrinsic internal goods. However, this would require that the organization and its moral agents regularly engage in community-bound practices not solely focused on the instrumental maximizing of utility. The very idea of meaningful work "moves beyond the notion of work as merely a means to the ends of economic productivity and shareholder value creation" (Michaelson et al., 2014, p. 84). It requires that they have shared collective values about how interdependent relationships are sustained and shared understandings about how the firm contributes to social well-being (Roberts, 2004, p. 18). In other words, stakeholders are motivated by more than financial compensation and moral standards rise above the level of individual preference.

Postsecularism has intensified this dilemma by resurrecting Enlightenment relational individualism in the form of neoliberalism (Possami, 2018). It can be defined as a "free market ideology based on individual liberty and limited government that connected human freedom to the actions of the rational, self-interested actor in the competitive marketplace" (Jones, 2012, p. 2). By summarizing the vast complexities of human experience under market terminology, it has ushered in an "age of authenticity" (Taylor, 2007; cf. Gauthier, 2013). More than simply a reaffirmation of the "individual" and "social" categories that have dominated Western modernization, it is a radical prioritization of the individual over the social in the pursuit of human flourishing:

> Each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority. (Taylor, 2007, p. 475)

Human agency is a:

> matter of acting to advance our self-interest by exercising reason instrumentally to choose the most efficient means toward the pursuit of ends . . . This view sees the

essence of human agency in willing to pursue certain ends rather than others, and rationality as exclusively instrumental, acting as an adjunct to the will. (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1424)

As such:

The goal of proper moral deliberation . . . is to extract ourselves from our immediate context, employ practical reason to find the correct ethical rule, and then use our will power in such a way as to act in accordance with this rule. (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1424)

However, this neglects a crucial component of moral deliberation in human agency, "the ability to take an evaluative stance toward one's own preferences and desires" (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1424; Taylor, 1989). Ethical decision-making requires taking up a moral horizon in which qualitative and not just quantitative (cost-benefit) judgments are made. It is intersubjective: "we interpret who we are with a language and a set of values that we share with our community" (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1425). These contextual discriminations that recognize fundamental human relationality are not easily merged into an instrumentalist account.

The predominance of neoliberal approaches in postsecular capitalistic settings helps explain how "the bits and pieces of evidence that we possess about morality and honesty in the typical corporation is sufficient to give us pause" (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1425). The most comprehensive survey of the ethical culture in U.S. workplaces showed that nearly 50% of workers reported observing ethical misconduct. Thirty percent admitted, "feeling pressure to compromise their company's ethical standards because of deadlines, overly aggressive objectives, concerns about the company's survival and other factors" (Verschoor, 2012, p. 14). Moreover, "employees in multinational companies in the private sector are more likely to observe misconduct and to feel pressure to compromise standards than employees of companies operating only in one country"

(Verschoor, 2016, p. 19).

Overly-individualized conceptions of enterprise also have ill effects on the individual experience in enterprise (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005). For example, "poorer interpersonal relationships, an increase in mental disorders, environmental degradation and social injustice" (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; McCarty and Shrum, 2001; Rees, 2002). Summarizing the vast mental health studies that have been performed along these lines, Layton et al. (2006) pointed out that the destabilizing forces of rapid globalization and increasing income inequality are capable of producing "traumatogenic" environments in "which individual and group physical safety, social security, and symbolic capacities all are simultaneously" challenged (p. 3).

Surveying contemporary articulations of stakeholder theory, Wicks et al. (1994) identified the idea that the "corporation is an autonomous entity which is fundamentally separate from its environment" as a core assumption of traditional stakeholder thinking (p. 479). To highlight a firm or stakeholder's role in a value chain, this core assumption can be quite helpful, but if left unrestrained it takes the firm or stakeholder out of the nexus of relations in which it is ontologically-bound.

There is undoubtedly a pointed conceptual purpose served by highlighting individual financial interests in a web of economic exchange. However, the challenge is to construe the social embeddings of a firm and its stakeholders with as much rigor as the financial. In the Western capitalist contexts that permeate stakeholder theory, there is a tendency for market efficiency to become the dominant construct through which all else is understood, even mainline efforts such as "corporate social responsibility" (Wicks et al., 1994).

As Solomon (1993) cautioned, stakeholder arguments for the social responsibilities of business often begin with the assumption of the corporation as an autonomous, independent entity, which then needs to considering its obligation to the surrounding community. However, as with individuals, corporations are integrated with "the communities that created them, and the responsibilities that they bear are not products of argument or implicit contracts but are intrinsic to their very existence as social entities" (Solomon, 1993, p. 85).

The paucity of non-financial and non-market articulation of what is meant by "community" within contemporary stakeholder theory has, in due course, left significant dissimilarity of opinion about how genuine community should represent itself in stakeholder relationships (Freeman, 2008). Dunham et al. (2006) correspondingly lamented: "Community as a stakeholder has come to represent something of a default, a sort of error term containing all sorts of interests and externalities that fail to find homes within customer, supplier, employee, or shareholder groups" (p. 38).

The relational individualism of the stakeholder framework undercuts the development of robust community by reducing all relational activity to economic exchange. Bucholz and Rosenthal (2005) explained that in the stakeholder system:

> Self-interested individuals and institutions that have separate wills and desires are constantly colliding. To minimize the collisions and reduce conflict, people and institutions may come together to establish some sort of a relationship to work out differences. But while peripheral ties may be established when antecedent individuals enter into a contract with one another or come together to more readily secure, their own individualistic goals, these bonds cannot root them in any ongoing endeavor which is more than the sum of their separate selves, separate wills, separate egoistic desires . . . This tension between the individual and the community presents a great deal of difficulty in arriving at mutually satisfactory solutions to social problems. (p.141)

6.2 The Contributions of Practical Theological Methodology

Thus far, it has been established that postsecularism has exposed the limits to which the stakeholder framework's excessive reliance on relational individualism can facilitate critical moral deliberation and the exercise of practical moral reason in instrumentalizing contexts. To respond compellingly, stakeholder theory must move beyond its dependence on purely individualistic notions and develop a more well-rounded concept of a transcending "common good," or the collective interest shared by members of the community.[54] Atomic individualist frameworks need critical reflection as to whether they provide an "adequate foundation" for analyzing "the relational nature of the corporation and society" (Bucholz and Rosenthal, 2005, p. 139). To actively sustain meaningful sociality in organizational settings, alternative sources of intrinsicality are necessary.

What remains is to show how this informs a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation for contemporary American evangelical theology. Both stakeholder theory and contemporary American evangelical theology view capitalistic enterprise as potentially transformative for human flourishing. Both have been challenged to sustain this view in light of postsecularism, which has intensified individualist and materialist conceptions of human flourishing and obscured the social and relational dimensions.

A critical engagement with stakeholder theory validates that for contemporary American evangelical theology to achieve a postsecular renewal, it must retrieve an intrinsic basis for human sociality that overcomes relational individualism. In so doing, it

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[54] The "common good" within stakeholder theory received early treatment by Argandoña (1998) but Girardi and Petito (2014) noted that it received very little response from academics, "possibly as a result of the argument being cast in fairly abstract philosophical terms" (p. 9).

can fulfill the call of a public-oriented theology and enrich the stakeholder framework, which is itself in need of critical sources of intrinsicality.

As described previously, one of the effects of postsecularism has been to open a space in the public dialogue for discussions about the spiritual and religious dimensions of enterprise. Biberman and Tischler (2008) suggested "one viable reason is that society is seeking spiritual solutions to better respond to tumultuous social and business changes and that global changes have brought a growing social, spiritual consciousness" (p. 106). Remarking on this shift, Rynes et al. (2012) observed:

> A sharpened focus on care and compassion in organizations is consistent with a paradigm shift in the social sciences that emphasizes neurological, psychological, and sociological bases of human interrelating that have other-interest as opposed to self-interest at their core. (p. 505)

A groundswell of interest in the nature of community in organizational studies like stakeholder theory is a recognition that "our understanding of the human phenomenon must reflect an adequate balance between the individual and the social dimensions" (Grenz, 1994, p. 400; cf. Helminiak, 1988, p. 37). By nature, humans are social, expressed in interdependent relationships that are more than just contracting (Hay and Menzies, 2015, p. 190). There is wide-reaching support from both normative business ethicists and organizational theorists that moral deliberation in organizations has a highly community-oriented nature and function. Donaldson and Werhane (2007), for example, stated:

> Business, like other social phenomena, is a set of *social* practices. Managers play a special role in society by virtue of their role in business organizations, and their role in these organizations requires that they cultivate the kind of organizational excellence appropriate to managers. Ethical excellence and social excellence are thus intertwined. (p. 23)

Traditionally, religion and spirituality have been critical sources of intrinsicality

for human sociality in the conceptualization of common transcending goods (Girardi and Petito, 2014). Commenting on the unique understandings of community shared by the three Abrahamic faiths (i.e., Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) that have import to stakeholder theory, Ray et al. (2014) noted that a "key insight from the Abrahamic faith traditions is that the individual firm is, indeed, part of a wider community in every place where it operates" (p. 342). Communitarian flourishing depends on the regular restoring and reconciling of relationships, which religious and spiritual traditions can help facilitate (Girardi and Petito, 2014).

Conventional stakeholder management approaches have been undergirded by a secularized, individualist-materialist emphasis (Neubert and Dyck, 2016, p. 304). Virtue-based theological models enable a turn away from conventional approaches to "radical" alternative approaches grounded in more integrative moral points of views (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005). Weber, one of the earliest management theorists, criticized the extreme focus in management theory on "maximizing productivity, efficiency, and profitability and on beating the competition" (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p. 705). Weber argued that the individualist-materialist perspective that dominated this approach imprisoned workers in an "iron cage" and challenged management theorists "to describe a non-conventional ideal-type of management that is based on a moral point-of-view that—unlike conventional management theory and practice—does not place a primary emphasis on materialism and individualism" (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p. 706; cf. Weber, 1958, pp. 180-183).

All expressions of organizational theory and management practice are already theological in the underlying anthropological presuppositions made (Miller, 2014a;

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Pattison, 1997; Biberman and Tischler, 2008). As a discipline focused on the contextualized integration of theory and practice, practical theology is ideally suited to support radical alternative management approaches (Miller, 2014a).

To close this chapter, I want to mark out two enrichments to the stakeholder framework made by specifically practical theological methodology that also advances a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology. Here, I am explicitly drawing on the transforming praxis and neo-Aristotelian trajectories within contemporary practical theology identified in Chapter One.

6.2.1 The necessities of human finitude

The first contribution that practical theological methodology can make is a reprioritization of human finitude that the stakeholder framework's relational individualism has minimized. The functional compartmentalizing of individuals and stakeholders destabilizes human relationality by not properly accounting for the vulnerabilities of human finitude. In contrast to the compartmentalizing scheme that has long-dominated Western accounts, practical theology holds "in human life, there is only one realm of experience. We love hate, work, and play everywhere. They might be expressed differently, but same impulses move us in the home or in the office" (Nicholson, 2000, p. 2; cf. Rogers-Vaughn, 2016). The emphasis and distinguishing characteristic is not the "segmentability" and atomization of the various dimensions of human experience, but rather their interconnectedness. By segmenting economic and consumptive dimensions, the stakeholder framework empties itself of the ability to identify and revise the ways in which consumer capitalistic enterprise can entrap

allegedly autonomous consumers.

Drawing on Neo-Marxist and poststructural frameworks, the transforming praxis trajectory has drawn attention to the ways in which neoliberal capitalistic conceptions of human autonomy can dehumanize. Influential to this assessment were the critical social theory approaches of the Frankfurt school, which understood political, social, and economic forces as potentially oppressive and sustained through consciousness (Held, 1980). An early voice in the Frankfurt school, Adorno advanced Marx's general criticism of capitalism as dehumanizing, but not merely because all human phenomena were socially determined. Despite the profession of individual ideology, capitalistic consumer systems can thwart individual autonomy with restrictive social, economic and, political power structures (Jarvis, 1998). For Adorno and other critical social theorists, the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries idealized a vision of human social ordering wherein rationality would free individuals from the oppressive institutional structures (including religious dogma). Yet, when left unchecked in capitalistic systems that atomized producers and consumers, reason becomes instrumentalized and enables a new kind of oppression.[55] This oppression manifests subtly, for example in the "culture industry" of consumer capitalistic contexts (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). Allegedly free consumers are atomized in a cycle of profit generation that obstructs the development of a critical consciousness and obscures the temporality and finitude of human experience (Dallmayr, 1989).

In the mid-20th century, these critiques of capitalistic structures' dehumanizing

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[55] Adorno (2002) wrote, "In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (p. 24).

tendencies were integrated with the growing liberation theology movements, which focused on fostering socially-aware and contextually-grounded praxis (Thiem, 2013). Together, they formed the basis of the transforming praxis trajectory in contemporary practical theology (Osmer, 2014; Gayarre, 1994). A central feature of this trajectory has been to challenge the compartmentalizing schemes of neoliberal relational individualism.

The increasingly globalized political, economic, and social environment indicate that human individuality and sociality is much more like a complex "living human web" (Miller-McLemore, 1996). We might be able to distinguish difference environments within this living web, but the distinguishability of sub-environments does not betray the fact that the complex entirety involves interdependence and interconnectedness at all levels. Reality is not a collection of tightly demarcated categories and inherently stable closed system. There are rather inherently fragile "open systems," where all things "are composed of innumerable, interacting open systems with differential capacities of self-organization set on different scales of time, agency, creativity, viscosity, and speed" (Connolly, 2012, p. 25).

What is the difference between the two? If independent persons and stakeholders are fundamentally distinct from their social surroundings and act as rational, self-interested consumers in a competitive marketplace, self-determined human flourishing takes place in an essentially stable environment. In such an environment, capitalistic enterprise becomes a value-free conduit through which natural-goods-seeking persons obtain *eudaimonia* primarily through individualized material consumption that operates largely separate from social relations. However, in a highly interconnected and fragile network, capitalist enterprise faces limits in its ability to facilitate human flourishing.

Resourced communities are necessary that support the very vulnerabilities of human finitude exposed by postsecular capitalism's destabilizing effects.

6.2.2 The importance of reflexivity for complex moral decision making

The second contribution that practical theological methodology can make is its account of the importance of reflexivity for complex moral decision making. Reflexivity is "the ability to take an evaluative stance toward one's own preferences and desires" (Quinn et al., 1997, p. 1424; Taylor, 1989). Ethical decision-making requires taking up intersubjective moral horizons that interrogate the behaviors and practices of the self (Klaasen, 2014), not merely in terms of consumer-oriented preferences, but also in the discerning of responsibilities.

Drawing on MacIntyre, the neo-Aristotelian trajectory within contemporary practical theology has highlighted the importance of reflexively-oriented assessments of moral practices. All practices are community-bound and carry "epistemic weight" (Dykstra, 1991). Evaluating and assessing moral practices, especially in complex decision-making environments such as consumer capitalistic contexts, demands a broader view than provided by relational individualism. Practical theology's emphasis on the role and importance of perceptual lenses can help stakeholder theory reincorporate historical context into stakeholder constituencies, which overly individualist conceptualizing has tended to isolate. If "our conceptual scheme mediates even our most basic perceptual experience," then the human mind has a great deal of impact in shaping experience and in reasoning through it (Railton, 1986, p. 172). What has often been called a "worldview" in evangelical theology (Sire, 2009) is better identified in the cognitive sciences as a "mental model" (Senge, 1990) or "sensemaking" function (Weick, 1995). The point

being that the human mind—including in acts of ethical reasoning—is unceasingly involved in the process of categorizing, reframing, filtering, and interpreting experience, data, and stimuli. Even scientists interpreting "hard data" are accessing that data through mental models, subjecting the data to interpretive and observational bias (Sørensen et al., 2012; Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

Generally-speaking, stakeholder theorists have been slow to acknowledge the role of perceptional lenses, which could partly explain the relatively sparse lack of reflection on excessive individualism as a mitigating conceptual limit (Fort, 2001). Atomized and individualized as they generally are, stakeholder entities easily lose the contextual bearings that are the very elements that ground them—and the more substantial theorizing itself—in reality, and not just theoretical apparatus. McVea and Freeman (2005) asserted that when generalizing stakeholder constituencies without reference to the unique human histories that comprise each one, uncritical stakeholder theory has so homogenized its own framework that it is difficult "for practitioners to incorporate the normative dimension within the everyday language of business decision making" (p. 63).

Postsecular contexts have attached significant social and cultural—theologians would even say religious—value to the domain of vocation and has become increasingly complex in its network of relationships (Pattison, 1997). If stakeholder theory is going to remain viable, it must have the inner discipline to subject its own perceptional lenses to reflexive self-critique and self-scrutiny (Werhane, 1999, p. 95). This is an attribute that practical theology for some time has placed a high degree of emphasis on: "The orientation to multidimensional dynamics of social context and embodiment is one of the most salient features of the discipline," such that "the insights and reflections on the

meaning of context and human experience are a conversation itself" (Cahalan and Mikoski, 2014, p. 12). Among other things, this orientation has enabled the discipline of practical theology to balance the often-abused bifurcation between theory and practice.

As previously argued, a neglect of the role of historical context brought about by atomizing conceptualization within stakeholder theory makes it difficult for stakeholder theory to offer a compelling account of authentic community because all relational activity is reduced to economic exchange. By emphasizing the role of perceptual lenses as practical theology does, stakeholder theory has better material with which to foster genuine community within stakeholder constituencies. In stakeholder theory's scheme, this heightens the responsibility of managers, who are seen as essentially having an adjudicative function (Smith, 2008, p. 82).

In line with its foundational emphases on the role of perceptional lenses and the relational nature of human beings, the discipline of practical theology stresses the balancing out of individualistic understandings of faith with corporate and social implications, particularly in view of postsecular impetuses to privatize religious expression (Breitenberg, 2003; Stackhouse, 2009).

Applied to stakeholder theory, this signifies, "firms and their managers would be enjoined from simply pursuing self-interest for its own sake, but rather would be expected to take into account the needs of the communities in which they do business" (Breitenberg, 2003, p. 63). This is a critical warning for stakeholder theory to be aware as it formulates its understandings of the nature of profit-generating enterprise in an age that defies the individual and material often at the loss of the human.

Are there any specifically Christian theological perspectives that can be

practically applied to the stakeholder framework for the purposes of guiding management decision-making? Dyck and Schroeder (2005) pointed to the Anabaptist tradition as a viable candidate for three primary reasons. First, it comprises a moral point-of-view that has historically deemphasized individualism and materialism. Going back to its beginnings as a radical movement within the early Reformation period, this was expressed through the concept of *gelassenheit*. The term was used in Anabaptist communities to convey the necessity of yielding material and individual interests to God for the strengthening of relational bonds. Second, *gelassenheit* orientation produced a decidedly non-instrumental approach to stewarding power and positions of leadership within the community. Third, contemporary North American Anabaptist entrepreneurial efforts employing these values in small-scale businesses have experienced notable financial and organizational success (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995).

From the perspective of practicing the values of *gelassenheit* within stakeholding management, managers can: (a) identify shortcomings of the conventional structures and systems (compassion); (b) approach others in a friendly and community-building manner (submission); (c) invite others to identify where loosing and binding may be appropriate (discernment); and (d) experimentally implement practices consistent with a non-conventional moral point-of-view (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005, p. 726).

6.3 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been a critical engagement with the stakeholder framework. I have argued that the dynamic growth of postsecular capitalism has exposed the shortcomings of stakeholder theory's reliance on relational individualism. The functional compartmentalization of human experience makes it difficult to capture

fundamental human sociality, thus, exposes the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing. Contemporary American evangelical theology can fill the void with methodological resources drawn from a practically-oriented theology.

For a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation, this clarifies the path forward. It shows that if contemporary American evangelical theology is going to viably integrate Christian faith with capitalistic enterprise for moral and spiritual transformation, it needs to retrieve an intrinsic basis for human sociality that overcomes relational individualism. Given, then, the applicability of the Anabaptist tradition of *gelassenheit* to the stakeholder framework as a radical moral point-of-view raises, might it also represent a specific source of retrieval? That is the focus of the remaining two chapters.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHAT IS THE ANABAPTIST CONCEPT OF *GELASSENHEIT*

AND HOW CAN IT RENEW THE THEME OF TRANSFORMATION FOR A

POSTSECULAR CONTEXT?

The theme of transformation in contemporary American theology needs a postsecular renewal. In Part One of this thesis, I showed why. In Part Two, I show how. The last two chapters focused on the first layer in this renewal (Proposition 1a), an interdisciplinary engagement with stakeholder theory that established the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing and the theological resources available to overcome relational individualism. In the final two chapters of this thesis, I focus on the second layer (Proposition 1b).

Streaming into the American evangelical quest for integration of faith and work is a rich heritage in the Christian traditions of grappling with the instrumentalizing tendencies of wealth and enterprise in the face of the triangulating love of God. Mining this heritage is essential for the theme of transformation's postsecular renewal. Two figures—Augustine and Aquinas—loom in the triangular love tradition and have primarily been the focus of evangelical scholarship. However, there is a neglected third figure, the medieval German mystic Meister Eckhart. In the late 15th century, early South German Anabaptist communities appropriated Eckhart's practice of mystical *gelassenheit* ("detachment") to counter what they perceived as increasing individualism and materialism. They operationalized the theological concept of *gelassenheit* into a distinctive spirituality that emphasized the fostering of strong relational collectives.

Early Anabaptist spirituality represents an ideal source of retrieval for

contemporary American evangelical theology. Like contemporary American evangelical theology, these Anabaptists were concerned to show how Christian faith could be transformative in instrumentalizing contexts. As with contemporary American evangelical theology, these Anabaptists were operating from the position of a political-social minority with limited cultural power. Finally, like contemporary American evangelical theology, these early Anabaptists placed a high value on the role of Scripture in shaping spiritual practice.

I make the case in three movements. First, I define in greater detail the ethic of triangulating love developed in the New Testament and the Christian traditions. Second, I overview Eckhart's mystical *gelassenheit* and its appropriation by early Anabaptist spirituality. Third, I identify the implications of this appropriation for contemporary American evangelical theology's theme of transformation.

7.1 What Is the Ethic of Triangulating Love Developed in the New Testament and Christian Tradition?

For two millennia, love has been a central theme in Christian theological ethics (Peckham, 2016).[56] The diversity of offerings in the Christian traditions about the nature of divine and human loves reflects the scriptural diversity about what love is (Oord, 2010, p. 12). No single text lays out a single definition of love. In the New Testament, emphases vary across the source traditions (e.g., Johannine, Pauline). Attempts have been many to construct a distinctly Christian account of love around the *agape* word group (ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη, ἀγάπητος), probably none more well-known or polarizing than Nygren

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[56] Among the many modern ethical theologies in the West that have prioritized the concept of love, prominent ones include Niebuhr (1992) and Tillich (1960).

(1982), whose work on the topic has focused on developing categories of love by contrasting *agape* with *eros*. While the hard distinctions he drew between word groups in the scriptural texts have been widely criticized, his categories remain influential in theological ethics (Niebuhr, 1962; Klassen, 1992; Carson, 1996, p. 32).[57]

This is to be expected, of course, given the complex nature of Scripture as a collection of various writings, authors, intentions, and traditions. Running through the theological diversity is a unifying thread that divine love and human love stand in relationship to each other. One of the clearest places that this emerges is an account recorded in both the Gospel of Matthew (22:34-40) and the Gospel of Mark (12:28-34).

While in the temple on the week of his Passion, Jesus was approached by a rabbi and asked what he considered the most important law to be.[58] His response was twofold. First, referencing the sacred *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6, Jesus said: "The most important one is . . . Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Second, referencing Leviticus 19, Jesus said: "love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." Here, Jesus is upholding the ancient Jewish ethical tradition of grounding harmonious human relationships in an obedient and loving

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[57] The linguistic ambiguity is captured itself in the phrase "the love of God" (τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ). Whether τοῦ θεοῦ functions as a subjective or objective genitive often determines its meaning in scriptural texts.

[58] Mark refers to the scribe as γραμματεύς, but Matthew uses the less conventional νομικoν (expert of the law). Throughout the passage, Matthew's version shortens Mark's narrative, a common tendency (Viljoen, 2015). The Matthean community was likely embroiled in controversies with the Pharisees, which comes through in the focus that Matthew's version places on Jesus' rebuke of Pharisaic interpretation. It "predominately limited neighborly love to fellow Jews, proselytes, or aliens within their borders," but Matthew's "Jesus taught love beyond such borders" (Viljoen, 2015, p. 11).

response to a redeeming God, who graciously and lovingly freed the people of Israel from their bondage to Egypt and now covenants with them (cf. Mittleman, 2012, pp. 8-9, 62-63).

For the triangular scheme, the central feature of note is that human love is its purest when it gives without regard for receiving from another, but only out of an appreciative response to the God who loves. The Johannine corpus heavily stresses this: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13); "A new commandment I give to you, that you love (ἀγαπᾶτε) one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). Here, "divine love, modeled in the incarnate one himself, is presented as the ground for truly Christian love" (Peckham, 2016, p. 14). In the Pauline corpus, the emphasis of triangular love is placed on God's love demonstrated in the death and resurrection of the Christ, which inspires human love for another (cf John 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 5:2).

There are two critical dimensions of love in the triangular scheme. First, love is active. In the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels, to be a believer in Jesus is to be a disciple of Jesus, and the clearest mark of discipleship is mutual and obedient love (John 14:15, 24). Meaning, love for Jesus and God (Mt 22:37; Jn 8:42) and love for fellow humans (John 15:17), including even enemies (Lk 6:35; Mt 5:44). The New Testament abounds in exhortations to nascent Christian communities to ground human relationality in deeds of unconditional love that resist instrumentalizing another for personal gain. For instance, because "God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5), Christians are to "let love be genuine" (Rom 12:9) and "owe no one anything except to love one another" (Rom 13:8) and "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the

Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. However, if

you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as

transgressors" (Col 3:12-13; Eph 5:1-2; cf Gal 5:13; James 2:8-9; 1 Thess 4:9).

Evident in several of these passages is the second dimension of love: It is

affective. The Gospels present Jesus as challenging (particularly with the Pharisees) the

idea that obedient action has spiritual value regardless of the motives of the actor. A pure

heart produces pure obedience (or "fruit," Mt 7:15-20). A corrupted heart produces

partial external conformity that seeks self-enhancement (Mk 7:20-23). Jesus called the

Pharisees "hypocrites" (ὑποκριταί) because their acts of partial obedience were "done for

people to see" (Mt 23:5-7). The Pharisees instrumentalized human relations because

"they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God"

(John 12:43).

Understood together, the active and affective dimensions of love point to the

triangulating effect that the love of God has in human relationality. The love of God

expressed in Jesus—and the human response to God's love through faith in Jesus—

checks against instrumentalizing tendencies by reorienting human relationality as a

gracious response to a redeeming God, transforming the desires of the heart in the

process so that they flow from a condition of non-possessive, triangulating love.

Two significant figures are typically identified in Western Christian theology who

develop the triangular theme. The first and earliest is Augustine. He distinguished

between enjoyment (*frui*) and use (*uti*) in love: "You have made us for yourself, and our

heart is restless until it rests in you" (Augustine, 1961, p. 43). Love is properly ordered

(*ordo amoris*) when everything in creation is loved according to its proper relationship to

God. Only when God is pursued as the ultimate enjoyment can the material world be

truly enjoyed and intrinsically valued, which is to say properly used. Apart from this

triangulating effect, humans are apt to inordinately abuse others for their own ends.[59]

Augustine was quick to point out that triangular love does not eliminate

instrumentality entirely, but rather elevates it from an exclusive form to an inclusive

form. The latter "includes the other in the sense of having the other enjoy the benefits

produced by such action," but the former "excludes the other from their ends" (O'Connor,

1983, p. 50; cf. Gregory, 2008, p. 343). O'Connor (1983) wrote:

> The neighbor in this life is always in some sense an object for us . . . A kind of
> instrumental attitude, then, is present in all temporal relationships. In charity,
> however, we treat the neighbor with a regard for his eternal destiny and include
> him in the desired end, while in cupidity he is excluded from the desired end. (p.
> 59)

Augustine saw human beings as having a teleological orientation that is heart-led

and producing certain habits (Augustine, 2003, p. 205). If one loves material things, one

will be consumed by the perishable and remain in flux. If one wishes to change these

loves and find God, he or she must be reoriented by the Spirit of God. This produces an

intersubjective eudemonism: "a social vision of using and enjoying one another in God

just as the persons of the Trinity use and enjoy one another in community of mutual love"

(Gregory, 2008, p. 343).

Another figure frequently identified is Aquinas. He posited that God's charity

reroutes human desire through himself by drawing it in as a response to God's gracious

love for humans so that it may then reengage the created order as love for other humans

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[59] Conversely, to live according to the *ordo amoris* enables humans to "participate in the very
trinitarian life and mutual love of God" (Schlabach, 1999, p. 323; cf. Cahall, 2005).

(cf. Schockenhoff, 2002, pp. 251-2). Aquinas quoted Augustine's definition of charity as "the movement of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for his own sake" (Aquinas, 1980, p. 2308). Because the objective is God, it resists idolizing its immediate object, thus, is triangulating and non-possessive.

This is important for Aquinas because the human heart and disposition have a nearly infinite appetite for happiness or fulfillment that only God can satisfy. If humans target any created object or person directly, rather than by triangulation through the love of God, "we are in danger of either idolizing them or of turning away from them in boredom" (Nieuwenhove, 2009, p. 691). In either case, the object or person is instrumentalized. For Aquinas, the unchecked desire for individual material gain represents "bad infinity" that can leave a person "wandering from one particular created thing to another in a futile quest for fulfillment in this life" (Aquinas, 1980, p. 1097). Whereas, when our desires are triangulated or mediated through God, we can properly value other objects and persons intrinsically.[60]

7.2 How Does the Anabaptist Tradition of *Gelassenheit* Develop the Theme of Triangular Love?

An overview of the central figures in the triangular love tradition helps to see how it contrasts with the instrumentality of postsecular consumerist spirituality. Clearly, it represents a helpful source of retrieval as contemporary American evangelical theology revises the theme of transformation to counter the instrumentalizing tendencies of

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[60] For Aquinas, "friendship" is the term that comes nearest to describing human relationality that is non-instrumentalized. "That which is loved with the love of friendship is loved simply and for itself . . . Because he wishes and does good by his friend, by caring and providing for him, for his sake" (Aquinas, 1980, pp. 1095-1098).

consumerist spirituality. However, knowing that what is needed is a revision that drives

at spiritual practice, how can the triangular tradition be appropriated into a lived

relational ethic?

Here, contemporary American evangelical theology is benefited by an analysis of

a third figure in the triangular tradition, the German medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart.

More than Augustine and Aquinas, Eckhart developed triangular love into a reflective

spiritual practice (Nieuwenhove, 2009). Eckhart's practical theology, embodied in the

concept of *gelassenheit* ("detachment"), was operationalized by a community of early

Anabaptists in South Germany in the late 16th century. The increasing degree to which

economic power and instrumentality were influencing the community of faith was a

significant concern for them in light of the New Testament vision of genuine love. I first

overview Eckhart's concept of *gelassenheit* and then discuss how it was appropriated by

early Anabaptist spirituality.

7.2.1 Eckhart's gelassenheit

Eckhart was born in Germany sometime in the mid-12th century. Around the age

of 18, Eckhart joined the Dominican order at nearby Erfurt, with his studies taking him to

universities of Cologne and Paris. Beginning his work as Prior in Erfurt in 1294, Eckhart

took up a Dominican chair of theology in Paris a couple of years later. He then returned

to Germany and began a decade rise in Dominican leadership, being made a provincial

for Saxony and eventually vicar-general for Bohemia. His various writings and talks

during this period attracted enough attention that he was invited back to Paris for a

second period as *magister* (an honor previously attained only by Thomas Aquinas).

By this time, Eckhart's reputation as a strong academic theologian was well-

established.[61] However, his penchant for delivering expository spiritual messages in the vernacular eventually embroiled him in controversy with the Catholic hierarchy, which was in the beginning stages of the Inquisition. Many regions of France and Germany were in disarray as the church government sought to resist the growing emergence of localized pious lay communities. Though generally supported by local Dominican authorities, Eckhart came under formal inquisitorial investigation by the archbishop of Cologne, Hermann von Virneburg, who eventually appealed to the Pope in Avignon.[62] The result of this was the issuing of a bull (*In agro dominico*) by Pope John XXII on 27 March 1329 that condemned portions of his teachings as heresy and some as suspect while refraining from calling Eckhart a heretic directly.[63]

What was the fundamental reason for Eckhart's controversial status? Earlier scholarship pinpointed the ongoing ecclesial dispute between the Franciscan and Dominican orders as central, but that has given way to the majority position that it was

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[61] "With the death of Duns Scotus in 1308, Eckhart stood without a peer in Western Europe in his grasp of philosophical and theological traditions" (Linge, 1978, p. 470).

[62] Including an initial defense by Nicholas of Strasbough, the Pope's ruling representative over the Dominican monasteries in Germany.

[63] This ambiguity toward Eckhart as a figure, in some sense, has remained with the Catholic church. Aside from a few sermons referenced in Johann Tauler's sermons, Eckhart's body of work was largely unread until the 19th century, when interest was revived with Franz Pfeiffer's publication of addition sermons in 1857 and H. S. Denifile's translation of his Latin works beginning in 1886 (cf Eckhart, 1981). The Dominican order appealed for a full rehabilitation of Eckhart's orthodoxy in 1990s and the Vatican responded by saying that this was unnecessary because he was never specifically condemned as a heretic, only portions of his teachings. Commenting on the general tensions between mystics such as Eckhart and the Catholic Church, McGinn noted:

> Such tensions are not merely accidental, the result of the bad will of heretics or the mistakes and incomprehension of authority figures, but that they also are partly the result of inherent issues, pressure points if you will, in the relation of mysticism and magisterium in the history of Christianity. (McGinn, 2004, p. 194)

his mystical understanding of the presence of God in the individual soul that garnered the most opposition (McGinn, 2005, p. 103).

Eckhart reasoned, God's presence in the individual soul meant that the human should strive for conformity to the divine will since God's will is necessarily all good: "A good man ought so to conform his will to the divine will that he should whatever God wills" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 79). This end is attained by a posture of *gelassenheit*, an intentional detached non-willing or releasement that cuts the individual off from worldly will and allows for the fostering on an "empty spirit" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 248).[64] This is necessary because people can easily lose sight of God as the Ultimate when they "place ultimate value on finite realities such as their children, spouses, possessions, social reputations, ethnic groups, or nations" (Finger, 2004, p. 94).[65]

How is *gelassenheit* accomplished? The triangulating role of God's love is

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[64] According to Eckhart:

> I usually speak of detachment and say that a man should be empty of self and all things; and secondly, that he should be reconstructed in the simple good that God is; and thirdly, that he should consider the great aristocracy which God has set up in the soul, such that by means of it man may wonderfully attain to God; and fourthly, of the purity of the divine nature. (Braybrooke, 2009, pp. 316-317)

[65] Like Augustine, Eckhart held tightly together love and being—one becomes what one loves. In a triangulating scheme, Eckhart upholds an irreducible simplicity in love:

> Correspondingly, the human being who loves perfectly ought to love equally and in the same way God in the neighbor and the self, and the neighbor and the self in God, because then she loves one and the same. Pure love of God, self, and neighbor are, hence, equivalent in Eckhart's thought. As a practical upshot of his capacious account of love, Eckhart intensifies the ethical demand to love your neighbor by refusing to sublate it to the love of God. (Radler, 2010, p. 184)

essential.[66] When one yields to God's mysterious and often uncomfortable work of detachment (*geschiedenheit*),[67] one allows God to realign the affections of the heart and soul so that they can make their way back to God through "the way of the Cross," resembling Jesus' own life, death, and resurrection (cf. Colledge and McGinn, 1988, pp. 52-55).

A "metaphysics of flow" (Radler, 2010, p. 178) characterizes Eckhart's portrayal of the intersection of divine and human loves: the abundance of Trinitarian love boils over to fill the cosmos and detachment pulls one's soul upward through the power of love into union with God. Human autonomy exercised within creation is only in appearance since no being possesses its own ontological foundation. A lived *gelassenheit* continually resists the instrumentalizing effects of material and individual indulgence and produces within the soul intrinsic values of love, mercy, and kindness to others. In this way, *gelassenheit* pushes back against the tendency to instrumentalize: "it designates the attitude of a human who no longer regards objects and events according to their usefulness, but who accepts them in their autonomy" (Schürmann, 1978, p. 16).

For Eckhart and his early followers, spiritual poverty entailed a life of material poverty (Linge, 1978). However, detachment was also a way of reengaging the material world in a healthier way, not withdrawing entirely (Forman, 1991). As a "mendicant rather than an enclosed monk, Eckhart was dedicated to a life of active service in

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[66]When speaking of love, Eckhart used a variety of terms (*amor. dilectico. caritas* in Latin and *minne* and *liebe* in German) that reflect an expansive range of meanings and that, as Radler (2010) rightly noted, resist the dualisms often attributed to him.

[67] Eckhart used both the *gelassenheit/gelassen/lassen* and *abegescheiden/Abegescheidenheit* word groups to communicate very similar ideas. Technically speaking, in Eckhart's thought *lassen* and *gelassen* denote the process while *abgescheidenheit* denotes the goal (Forman, 1991, p. 241).

preaching, teaching, and administration. Instead of glorifying the spirituality of the strictly contemplative orders, he enjoined his reader to discover God in all times and places, in all persons and things" (Kieckhefer, 1978, p. 225).

Considering the times, Eckhart's mystical asceticism is significant. The late-13th and early-14th centuries were the beginning of a wave of socioeconomic expansion that would propel continental Europe into modernity. His "was one of the earliest and deepest responses to the religious problem created by the new wealth and relative abundance that was becoming available to a growing class of people" (Linge, 1978, p. 470). This becomes all the clearer when looking at how Eckhart's *gelassenheit* was adopted by early Anabaptist spirituality.

7.2.2 Early Anabaptist spirituality

The term "Anabaptist" (from the Greek ἀναβαπτισμός; literally, "one who baptizes again") is a broad description for various movements that emerged in Europe during the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. They are rooted in the "radical" wing of the Reformation era that not only critiqued and separated from the Catholic church in company with the "magisterial Reformation" movements represented by Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli (cf. Williams, 2000), but also differed from the magisterial groups in their belief that baptism is a sacramental right that should be undergone only by professing believers (Esterp, 1975, pp. 9-13, 179).[68]

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[68] The oldest Anabaptist confession on baptism (found in the Schleitheim Confession of 1527), stated:

> Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it

Opposition to infant baptism put Anabaptists at odds with established state and local governments and elicited severe persecution from both Catholic and mainline Protestant quarters (Chadwick, 2001, pp. 351-370).[69] It also shaped a distinctive spirituality centered on *gelassenheit* (Murray, 2010, p. 171; Klaassen, 1991, p. 23).

The ethic of *gelasseneheit* first emerged as a central theme in the early South German Anabaptist movement of the late 15th and early 16th century, a movement that had close ties to the German Rhineland mystical spirituality. Appropriation of Rhineland mysticism into early Anabaptist spirituality was sparked by the German Peasants' War against noble overlords in Germany led by Thomas Müntzer. Just as God had purged his own soul of inordinate attachments, Müntzer claimed, so too was God going to purge the land of all the social inequalities that had been wrought at the hands of the wealthy on the backs of the laborers (Williams, 1996).

The failure of Müntzer's revolt did not abate the spread of Rhineland mysticism, but it did profoundly shape the ethic of nonviolence that came to characterize the Anabaptist way (Bender, 1998, p. 111). If reform was going to happen, it must be a silent opposition to ecclesial and state establishment, even if in martyrdom. Over the next three decades, the mystical approach represented in *gelassenheit* took root through two prominent figures. The first is Hans Hut (c. 1490-1527), who became a central leader of the southern German Anabaptist movement after coming under the influence of Müntzer

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[baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and testimony of the apostles. This we wish to hold simply, yet firmly and with assurance. (Wenger, 1945, p. 247)

[69] In the 16th century, likely "between 3,000 to 4,000 Anabaptist followers were burned at the stake, drowned in rivers, starved in prisons, or beheaded" (Kling, 2004, p. 163).

during the Peasant War and then being baptized by Hans Denck.

Hut emphasized the mysterious and challenging internal process of *gelassenheit*

that defines the Christian way and to which all of nature points:

> Nothing comes to fruition without suffering. The grape must be crushed, the animal must be butchered and roasted, the grain must be ground and baked. Likewise, the human being must suffer in order to become a worthy instrument of the will of God. (Liechty, 1994, p. 63)

The second significant figure of Anabaptist Rhineland mysticism was Hans

Denck (c.1495-1527). Born in Bavaria, Denck was perhaps the most intellectually gifted

of the early Anabaptists, receiving a classical education and becoming a headmaster in

Nuremberg before being influenced to join the Anabaptist movement by Müntzer

(Baumann, 1991). Denck was a particularly vocal critic of established (Catholic and

Lutheran) clergy, which in his view had lost the way to true faith by becoming consumed

with amassing political and economic gain. In his "Concerning true love," Denck showed

clear mystical influence and remarked on the centrality of the triangulating force of the

pure love of God to resist instrumentality expressed in Jesus of Nazareth:

> Love is a spiritual power. The lover desires to be united with the beloved. Where love is fulfilled, the lover does not objectify the beloved. The lover forgets himself, without shame he yearns for his beloved . . . When love is true and plays no favorites, it reaches out in desire to unite with all people (that is, without causing division and instability) . . . A person who loves God most truly and as much as possible can help his neighbor also to know and love God. Whoever wants to know true love can receive it no better than through Jesus Christ. (Liechty, 1994, pp. 111-113)

On the whole, the early Anabaptist spiritual practice of *gelassenheit* took the

mystical influence of medieval predecessors—which understood *gelassenheit* primarily

passive in nature—and added an active component:

> In medieval devotion, this word for self-surrender was invariably passive. It referred to the soul's submission before God. But in the radical reformation of

Anabaptism, it came to mean both passive yieldedness and active unyieldedness. (Augsburger, 2006, p. 88)

As the spiritual discipline of detachment was adopted into their community praxis, *gelassenheit* moved from a strictly spiritual disposition to a full-blown theological ethic for developing triangulating love expressed in *koinonia*. In the throes of persecution, the early Anabaptists came to believe that internal spiritual disposition and external obedience were not only linked in discipleship, but mutually-nourishing—true transformation started in the soul and then moved outward.[70] Internal purification from lust and greed, for instance, could not but result in specific outward and social manifestations, such as baptism and church membership. Thus, the "uprooting of attachments to creaturely goods intrinsically led to sharing those goods with others" (Finger, 2004, p. 5).[71]

The early southern German appropriation of mystical *gelassenheit* served as the basis for development by second- and third-generation Anabaptist leaders as Anabaptism spread beyond southern Germany. Menno Simons set the stage for the emphasis on *gelassenheit* within the Mennonite tradition with his devotional work *The Cross of Christ* (Simons, 1966). Among the Phillipite brethren in Moravia in the 1530s, Hans Haffner produced *Concerning the true soldier of Christ* in which he proclaimed *gelassenheit* as the distinguishing mark of Christian community.[72]

It was the utilization of the concept among the Hutterite brethren. However, that

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[70] According to Finger (2004), "Jesus' earthly journey no longer functioned chiefly as a symbol for an inner mystical process. It also provided the pattern for pursuing this process in one's concrete daily walk" (Finger, 2004, p. 5).

[72] Haffner wrote, "When we truly realize the love of God, we will be ready to give up for love's sake even what God has given us" (Friedmann, 1961, p. 253).

gave the term its association with the divestiture of material goods and individual

ambitions for the good of the broader community. Peter Reidemann (1506-1556), a

Polish-born Hutterite, regarded as a secondary founder of the Anabaptist branch,

distinguished *gelassenheit* as an expression of communal love that was triangulated in

response to God's love in Christ (Funk, 2012). He wrote:

> But brotherly love implies that we lay our lives down for each other, just as Christ did for all of us, and gave us an example to follow in his footsteps. So I should not live for myself alone, but live to serve my brothers -not seek my prosperity and betterment, but theirs, my whole life long; also, I should take care not to let my brother be grieved or weakened by my work or words. (Riedemann, 2007, p. 19)

In the Article Book, the significant doctrinal tract of the Hutterites produced in the

late 1540s in connection with Reidmann's *Account of our religion. doctrine. and faith*,

Article Three is entirely devoted to the practice of *gelassenheit*. The surrendering of

personal goods where material needs exist is case as a means of sustaining community

bonds, "We should expect the Lord's work and Cross daily, as we have surrendered unto

His discipline and have agreed to accept whatever He may send upon us with

thanksgiving, and to bear it with patience" (Van Gelder, 1955, p. 462; cf. Friedmann,

1957). In this regard, *gelassenheit* produced some of the most distinctive and visible

socioeconomic features that defined the early Anabaptist communities: the formation of

production and consumption roles, the renouncing of material excess, and the communal

ownership of hard assets.

In all, the ethical core of triangulating love expressed in early Anabaptist

spirituality through the posture of *gelassenheit* has at least three levels of resonance with

classic evangelical theology (cf. Liechty, 1994, pp. 9-11). First, early Anabaptist

spirituality stressed the priority of the human relationship with God. In their criticism of

the corruption of the clergy by political and economic power, early Anabaptist

communities emphasized the commonality of spiritual practice and relationships. Accordingly, many early Anabaptists picked up a trade upon leaving the monastery. Anabaptists perceived that reigning religious authorities had terminally separated external conformity from internal moral quality.

Second, early Anabaptist spirituality stressed the priority of radical discipleship. As a means of sourcing and retaining power, the majority of Christian clergy focused on what one needs to do to secure salvation. For early Anabaptist communities, the question of how one becomes a follower of Christ in daily life dominated, with an emphasis on fostering obedience and love. Naturally, this led to a sense of living outside the worldly order, yet, submitting to political authority whenever possible. The radical component of this understanding of discipleship was often connected in the early Anabaptist spirituality to Jesus' *kenosis* (Phil 2:7) or self-emptying, which served as a model for *gelassenheit* for any disciple of Jesus (Detweiler, 1995).

Dyck (1995) suggested that early Anabaptist writers saw in mystical expressions of *gelassenheit* as found in Eckhart a pattern of enduring suffering and martyrdom by returning to a spiritual desert, much like the wilderness experience of early church leaders. It is difficult to understate the effects that the reality of martyrdom had on Anabaptist understanding of discipleship and particularly the importance of pacifism.

Third, early Anabaptist spirituality stressed the corporate nature of the Christian life. The individual's relationship with God was activated by and experienced in the gathered assembly of believers, which represented the mysterious presence of the body of Christ. This union of believers was a primary source of sustaining and even growing the

body through the waves of endured martyrdom and persecution.[73]

7.3 What Are the Implications for the Theme of Transformation?

To close this chapter, I draw out the implications of Anabaptist spirituality's mystical *gelassenheit* for contemporary American evangelical theology's postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation. I demonstrate that it renews the hard-soft transformation spectrum with an alternative that moves beyond the reductive categories of the "individual" and the "social."

In Part One of the thesis, I described the theme of transformation as a dominant way contemporary American evangelical theology understands the relationship of Christian faith to capitalistic enterprise. Generally, it designates the call of Christians to transform enterprise by (a) positively influencing for-profit enterprise for the common good and (b) engaging in personal conversion where opportunity allows by sharing the gospel with others to spread the kingdom of God.

Within this general theme, I differentiated two varieties. Hard transformation KNC speaks about integrating faith and work from the standpoint of God's worldwide kingdom rule in all areas of life and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to be involved in the transformation of enterprise for the common good. Soft transformation TKP speaks about integrating faith and work from the standpoint of God's unique kingdom rule through Christ (as opposed to his general kingdom rule over humanity) and emphasizes the Christian's responsibility to live faithfully in enterprise as part of the

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[73] Liechty (1994) summarized well Anabaptist spirituality:

> They taught nothing but love, faith, and the need of the bearing of the cross. They showed themselves humble, patient under much suffering; they break the bread with one another as an evidence of unity and love. They helped each other faithfully. (p. 12)

common/human kingdom, which may involve transformation as part of the redemptive kingdom.

When applied to this spectrum, mystical *gelassenheit's* relational ethic of triangulating love offers a needed postsecular revision. The posture of *gelassenheit* forces contemporary American evangelical theology to ask: What should be the focus of Christian ethics in discussions about transformation in enterprise (Turner, 2015)? The hard-soft spectrum—reflecting a dichotomized paradigm that construes the conceptual categories of the "individual" and "social" as fundamentally separable—presents two basic options: the general state of society (the social) or the inner life of the believer (the individual).

However, drawing on the example of the Anabaptist communities that employed *gelassenheit*, an alternate option is present: the common life of faith communities (or "the church"). The conviction that drove *gelassenheit* practice in early Anabaptism was that "inward sanctification . . . cannot occur apart from outward actions" in a communal context and "neither can lasting individual or social change emerge apart from inward participation in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection" (Finger, 2004, p. 4).

Throughout its history, Anabaptism has been characterized by a tension between transformational and separatist poles (Loewen, 1991, pp. 106-112). On the one end, Anabaptist theology has fostered a "strong sense of the incarnational reality of the Gospel in culture" that has created a "transformational grammar" (Loewen, 1991, p. 108; cf. Harder, 2001, p. 90). On the other end, separatism has pushed back against transformationism through social separation from culture and moral deterioration in the community (Loewen, 1991).

A central concern of the early Anabaptists was the illegitimacy of institutionalized forms of ecclesiology (Stayer, 2001).[74] There was a growing sense among Anabaptists that church and state should be terminally separated, thus, broadly speaking, there was an adoption of the TKP promulgated by Luther.[75]

While affirming Luther's critique of reigning Catholic theology that "the world social order could not be Christianized," among early Anabaptists, there was a certain "abandonment of non-Christian society to its own management and a concentration on the evangelism of individuals from that non-Christian society" (Wenger, 1950, pp. 54-55). However, while "Luther believed Christians should participate in the secular kingdom if action needed to be taken . . . Anabaptists supported a more separatist view" in which voluntarily-formed, small-scale Christian communities functioned as a counter-cultural witness (Halteman, 2014, p. 2).

It was certainly true that the Anabaptists' opposition to the sacred rite of pedobaptism—which amounted to an undermining of the medieval social order in the eyes of many established local authorities (both Catholic and Protestant)—was the spark of dissent that set off a wave of Anabaptist persecution. However, for Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther, the essential "heresy" of Anabaptism was their resistance to the expansive authority of the nation-state. Anabaptists contended that a true two-kingdom theology warranted significant separation from secular society, whereas critics perceived it as an

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[74] Stayer wrote, "The sixteenth-century Anabaptists began by attacking the authority of established power structures in church and rulership" (2001, p. 70).

[75] This, of course, is a broad description of the relationship between Anabaptism and two kingdoms doctrine. For a more nuanced analysis that points out some the differences at the molecular level, see Bauman (1964).

"inability to resolve within the Christian conscience the underlying antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world" (Bauman, 1964, pp. 38-39).

The dualistic application of two kingdoms theology by the early Anabaptist communities, in which the objective was to establish free and visible fellowships patterned after the earliest churches of the New Testament, involved a separation of the "true church" from the world as a means of transforming both (Friedmann, 1973, pp. 36-56).[76] *Gelassenheit* facilitated this transformation by placing the focus on "disestablishment" of the community of faith, from which other practices flowed, "They renounced warfare and use of the sword; they refused to conform to many civic mores, including swearing by the civil oath and bringing suit in courts of law" (Kyle, 1984, p. 33).[77]

One of the New Testament models that early Anabaptists pointed to was the faith community in Ephesus. A brief look shows why. The exhortation in Ephesians 4:1 "to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called" is grounded by the author in the purpose of God to bring unity to all creation in Christ (1:3-14). How is this accomplished? Against the backdrop of political empire and military kingdom, the author of Ephesians located the mechanism of God's work in an altogether different kingdom,

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[76] Felix Mantz, an early Anabaptist leader in Zurich who was also one of the first martyrs, proclaimed that Christians should live in the "love, unity and community of all things, like the apostles in Acts 2, and necessarily avoid occupying any form of government rule" (Shenk, 1984, p. 211).

[77] Pacifism comprises another common characteristic of the Anabaptist tradition. See the widely-cited study by Bender (1955). Approaching the subject, Stayer (2001) offered a wise caution:

> Like much else in early Anabaptism, nonresistance seems to have been a series of ideas without a general consensus behind it in its Swiss origins, but it became a major focus of the movement in the Moravian emigration before 1535. (p. 72)

"the church that is his body," which will "fill all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).

Certainly striking to its original readers, this relatively meager conduit is further described in 2:11-22 as a grand temple with *both* Jews and Gentiles present because it is established on the Christ's ultimate act of triangulating love, the cross, which "reconciles us both to God in one body . . . thereby killing the hostility" (Eph 2:16-17). Nearly the entire second half of the letter becomes a mandate to fulfill the building of this body, again, not with individual or social exercises of economic power, but through the fostering of a triangulating ethic of love such that the common life of faith communities becomes a compelling force of social reordering. So, in prayer (3:14-21), in the distribution of gifts (4:1-15), in the settling of disputes (4:25-32), in moral obedience (5:1-21), and in household relationships (5:22-6:9), the guiding ethic is triangulating love: "Be imitators of God . . . and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (5:1).

These texts indicate that the exercise of active and affective triangulating love within the community of faith—in response to Jesus' own act of sacrificial love—is the primary means for building up of the transformational kingdom of God. Here, we have a thick description of a distinctly Christ-oriented and intrinsic relational ethic (Turner, 2015, p. 104). Despite the tendency in contemporary American evangelical theology to connect the effort of transformation to the kingdom of God in broad terms, the New Testament narrows the vision to focus on ecclesial relationships (McKnight, 2014). The early mystical Anabaptist emphasis on the exercise of *gelassenheit* within faith communities is a way of saying that the goal is not "in the first instance to transform a culture but to form one" (Turner, 2015, p. 155).

That the common life of faith communities should be the primary focus of the

theme of transformational in light of the American postsecular consumerist spirituality is

the case for three reasons. First, postsecular consumerist spirituality has arisen partly to

fill the void that has been left by the post-Niebuhr decline of the structural influence of

American evangelicalism on society, thus, the general effectiveness of the transformation

option. Hauerwas and Willimon (1989) posited that Niebuhr's death and the transition

soon after marked the proverbial end to the Christendom that had directly influenced

Western culture since the time of Constantine.[78]

For many in evangelicalism, Niebuhr's matrix presented in *Christ and Culture*

represented great hope for the idea that the Christian faith can and should be involved in

"transforming" culture, including enterprise:

> When Richard Niebuhr's book first appeared almost everyone in America rushed
> to locate himself among the "transformationalists" . . . It was as if the "typology"
> or clustering of Christian approaches to man's work in culture and history had
> suddenly collapsed in 1951, so universal was the conviction that, of course, the
> Christian always joins in the transformation of the world whenever it is proposed.
> (Ramsey and Hallowell, 2011, pp. 112-113)

One of the reasons Hauerwas and Willimon (1989) said Niebuhr's death marked

the beginning of the end for Christendom aspirations in America is because of the relative

failures of American Christendom political efforts since Niebuhr's time. This was

acknowledged by as influential a figure in American conservative evangelicalism as Carl

Henry, who said:

> despite all the media tumult over the Moral Majority and the high public visibility
> of its leader, its extensive solicitation of funds during a six-year political

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[78] "Christendom" can be understood as "the concept of Western civilization as having a religious
arm (the church) and a secular arm (civil government), both of which are united in their
adherence to Christian faith, which is seen as the so-called soul of Europe or the West" (Carter,
2007, p. 13).

crusade—claiming to speak for six million households—has not achieved passage of a single major piece of legislation cherished by the conservative right. (Henry, 1986, p. 394; cf. McKnight, 2014, p. 214)

More recently, this point has been leveled by Hunter (2009; 2010) and Balmer (2009), both of whom assess that American evangelical efforts to influence broader cultural currents through political and commercial power have severely weakened. Mirroring much more closely the conditions of the early church as depicted in the New Testament, American evangelicalism now principally operates at the margins of influence from a position of social weakness, not strength. Such a position demands a way of living that demonstrates the distinctiveness of its offering—in the case of consumerist spirituality, how human relationships oriented around triangulating love look different from those grounded in instrumentality.

Early Anabaptist spirituality represents a promising postsecular alternative to the polarizing choices of hard-soft transformation, and it is not difficult to see why. The rise of Protestantism in the 16th century was primarily an effort at reforming the Christian church. The mainline Reformation of Calvin and Luther represented an effort to do so utilizing the means of political authority with a desire to preserve and, in some ways, restore the Christian state in the West.

The Anabaptist radical reformation was different—an attempt to "articulate and foster a Christian spirituality which was independent of the political establishment" and suspicious of possessions of economic power by the church community (Liechty, 1994, p. xii). Whatever else it involved, the emergence of the Anabaptist tradition "represented a break with the inherited system of intermingled religious and political power" (Redekop, 2001, p. vii). For it, religious power "resided in the local fellowship of believers, the *koinonia*, a totally voluntary banding-together of fellow believers"

(Redekop, 2001, p. 185).

Second, rapid economic globalization has resulted in the loss of relational outposts that operate on a rich ethic of triangulating love. Returning to the point made in Chapter Three, the instrumentalizing tendencies of postsecular consumer spirituality are part of a broader loss of intrinsicality in the modern industrialized West that has inhibited the appreciation of dimensions of human experience that are necessary for human relational flourishing but limited in their individual economic utility. Collectively, we are "less interested in equipping, and refining thought, more interested in creating and mastering technologies that will yield measurable enhancements of material well-being— for those who create and master them, at least" (Robinson, 2015, p. 3).

Following the vision of the New Testament, local communities of Christians marked by an ethical core of triangulating love could provide one of the few places that human identities could be forged in an intimate environment that embraces human finitude and vulnerabilities rather than attempts to take advantage of them. While consumerist spirituality proposes that even moral goods such as strong character can be acquired in a short period through privatized means, the triangular tradition's approach to human relationality holds that one's interior moral life can only be advanced "by living over a protracted period of time with others who adopt similar practices and have similar goals" (Turner, 2015, p. 179).

Third, a focus on the common life of faith communities surmounts the reductive categories of the "individual" and the "social" underlying the hard-soft transformational spectrum. This neoliberal paradigm, which construes the human individual as an atomistic and rational actor fundamentally distinct from his or her social embedding, was

shown in the previous chapter to be significantly undermined in its ability to capture the complex dimensions of human experience. It contributes to a new kind of suffering imposed from the burdens of self-making.

What is emerging from the increasing interconnectedness and volatility of the postsecular global economy is rather an intricate relational ecosystem in which human experience is socially embedded in every dimension. An emphasis on the embodied norms of faith communities in shaping both the "individual" and the "social" offers a fuller model for articulating transformational thinking that can counter third-order suffering with the cultivation of strong collectives.

What does a focus on expressing triangulating love in the common life of faith communities broadly entail? It entails the carrying out of Christian community practices in a triangulating way that counters the consumerist narratives—heavily underwritten by a loss of intrinsicality—that human flourishing is achieved and sustained by the ever-greater consumption of goods and services for individual and material gain.[79] The mystical strain of *gelassenheit* suggests that this requires profound detachment. Meaning, "identifying and letting go, often painfully, of ways they have become inordinately attached to values, behaviors, persons, and things . . . at equally deep levels by healthy, non-grasping, non-possessive ways of relating to all other creatures" (Finger, 2004, pp. 4-

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[79] According to Nieuwenhove (2009):

> When we are detached we are devoid of self-centeredness and possessiveness, and this allows us to reengage with the world in a proper manner without instrumentalizing it or subjecting it to our concerns . . . Paradoxically, it is a kind of "goal" that cannot be pursued directly through our own efforts. (Nieuwenhove, 2009, pp. 693-694)

5).[80]

This undoubtedly involves three attachments identified in the Gospels as sources of hostile social division that "the love of God renders subordinate to one's devotion" to the kingdom of God (Turner, 2015, pp. 159-161): (q) 4elational bonds,[81] in that one, incorporates a universal and mysterious body of fellow followers into the familial bonds of one's life, irrespective of race, gender, or ethnicity; (b) possessions, in that one relinquishes the claim over any material goods for the higher calling of stewarding God's provisions for the care and joy of others; and (c) status, in that one seeks approval on the basis of the extent to which he or she has become a servant of God rather than the extent to which others have become servants to him or her.

In these and any other sources of consumerist attachment, what were once primary sources of competitive and hostile social division become "aspects of life provided by God because God knows them to be necessary" (Turner, 2015, p. 161). Together, these re-orderings enable followers of Jesus to respond faithfully to the fundamental call to love God and love neighbor.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have begun to establish Proposition 1b, that contemporary American evangelical theology could achieve a postsecular renewal of the theme of

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[80] The threat of inordinate attachment is not limited to material things: "Quite often, desires for security, self-worth, even love and affection lead us to grasp after not only material goods, but also persons or social position or reputation or power, and to possess them" (Finger, 2004, p. 7). We might even say that in a postsecular age, where entrepreneurial enhancement is the cultural expectation, inordinate attachment to ideals not things poses a greater liability.

[81] Turner used the term *family*, but I prefer here the term *relational bonds* on the grounds that its connotation is broader and brings under investigation not just one immediate or secondary family but other primary and secondary intimate relationships.

transformation by appropriating early Anabaptist spirituality's expression of mystical *gelassenheit.* I first defined in greater detail the ethic of triangulating love developed in the New Testament and the Christian tradition. I then overviewed Eckhart's mystical *gelassenheit* and its appropriation by early Anabaptist spirituality. To close, I drew out the implications of this appropriation for contemporary American evangelical theology's theme of transformation.

American evangelicalism stands today on the other side of capitalism's unprecedented economic development (Linge, 1978). An analysis of the vantage point of the 14th and 15th centuries brings to bear a vital theological problem: That we understand how and why early Anabaptist spirituality's "religious response to material wealth was smothered by the kinds of accommodations Western religious traditions have worked out in the modern period" (Linge, 1978, p. 477).

CHAPTER EIGHT: A *GELASSENHEIT* MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING

EVANGELICAL REFLEXIVITY

In the final two chapters of this thesis, I show how a critical appropriation by contemporary American evangelical theology of the Anabaptist theme of *gelasseneheit* enables a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation that counters the instrumentalizing excesses of postsecular consumerist spirituality. The fundamental insight of the early Anabaptist mystical spiritual practice of *gelassenheit* was that the fostering of genuine intrinsic love for God and others in one's soul manifesting in active discipleship of the ways of Jesus was possible only when the instrumentalizing tendencies of individual and material economic gain were regularly resisted by a reorienting devotion to God.

To close the last chapter, I showed how this insight renewed the hard-soft transformation spectrum with a focus on the common life of faith communities that moved past the reductive categories of the "individual" and the "social." In what ways does that insight affect actual contemporary American evangelical theological practice and how might *gelassenheit* foster a cluster of spiritual activities undergirding reflexivity?

In the introduction of the thesis, I stated that if it is successful, its central achievement would be the construction of a model for strengthening evangelical reflexivity that addresses the inevitable ambiguities of spiritual practice. A scripturally-rooted vision of transformation focused on fostering strong relational collectives in faith communities is insufficient by itself. Like any other, the actual lived beliefs and practices

of Christian faith communities do not easily integrate. Indeed, "they are mostly non-Christian practices—eating, meeting, greeting—done differently, born again, to an unpredictable effect" (Tanner, 2002, p. 230; cf. Richter, 2014, p. 207).

This has been the critique leveled against a phrase of Hauerwas often repeated by evangelicals: "The first task of the church is not to make the world more just, but to make the world the world" (Hauerwas, 2010, p. 158). But how? Any appropriation of *gelassenheit* for evangelical faith communities needs to overcome the tendency to treat Christian practices as easily distinguishing the church from the world (Pitts, 2016, p. 323). Attending to ambiguities of practice is to acknowledge that to some extent they are normal, not inherently a threat to faithful practice but potentially a means of growing in faith. Sometimes, they invite resolution, other times promotion, and still other times simply acceptance and affirmation. In no instance should their presence be denied, invalidated, or ignored. Accordingly, meaningfully attending requires not a specific skill-set, but a posture of reflexivity, more like the strengthening of a muscle integral to the functioning of the body rather than a new prepackaged tool that the body can readily pick up.

For American evangelical theology in a postsecular consumerist context, this challenge is intensified by two factors. First, the topic at hand is inherently intangible and elusive. What is being targeted for reform here is the reorientation of an inner state of spirituality through the critical reforming of daily consumer habits that are deeply rooted but often concealed![82] Any constructive model for strengthening reflexivity must be

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[82] According to Finger (2004):

capable of surfacing ambiguities to reflect upon them critically. Second, the tradition at hand (American evangelicalism) has historically favored individualistic and personal lenses over structural and abstract ones in moral reflection (Emerson and Smith, 2002; Jones, 2003).

Ironically, while American evangelicalism places the Bible as the central norm, "it is central not as theory, but as practice" (Root, 2014, p. 93). It rests on a deep commitment to experience, even though the transition from experience to new practice often skips critical reflection. Any constructive model for strengthening reflexivity must be able to bridge the two horizons of ancient scriptural texts and contemporary interpretive contexts (cf. Thiselton, 1980).

Yet, these intensifying factors are precisely why mystical *gelassenheit* offers a robust contribution for strengthening reflexivity. I will develop a constructive model that enables individuals and collectives embedded in postsecular consumerist contexts to interrogate ambiguities of practice as they imperfectly love God and neighbor. The model integrates Turpin's (2006) four-stage process for reflexive faithful consumption with mystical *gelassenheit* and primarily focuses on the areas of familial bonds, possessions, and status (Turner, 2015).

I proceed in four movements. First, I set up the model by analyzing how a *gelassenheit* epistemology can help contemporary American evangelical theology to

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We cannot attack the roots of these problems if the desires and patterns which produce them are rooted in ourselves . . . Appeals to consume do not simply impinge on people from outside, as on a blank slate, leaving them fully free to respond. They are woven through nearly everything we experience . . . If we seek to alter today's systems while we and their victims are still deeply structured by these creaturely attachments, we will, at best, produce some altered version of them. (Finger, 2004, p. 4)

reunite the cognitive and affective dimensions of theology necessary for engaging

ambiguities of practice. Second, I explain the model. Third, I demonstrate how to use the

model with two narrative examples, one drawn from Fulkerson's (2010) ethnographic

congregational study and the other from personal experience. Fourth, I briefly explore

how *gelassenheit* can support reflexive orientation with other spiritual practices.

8.1 A *Gelassenheit* Epistemology for Faithful Practice

Gelassenheit strengthens contemporary American evangelical theological

reflexivity by first revising the classic foundationalist epistemology that has inhibited it.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated how contemporary American evangelical theology has

been reliant on classic foundationalism in its attempt to secure an impenetrable

foundation upon which it can build its theological edifice. This has downplayed the

formative roles of perceptual lenses and worldviews in shaping theological belief and

creaturely epistemic limits. In the case of perceptions of enterprise, this has amounted to

the espousing of an allegiance to scriptural values (like the New Testament core of

triangulating love), all the while in practice remaining complicit with the

instrumentalizing tendencies of postsecular consumerist spirituality. By divorcing

cognitive assent from affective engagement—"theology" from "ethics," as it were—its

internal consistency and explanatory power are undermined.[83]

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[83] This point helps clarify the nature of the argument that I assert. The conviction of this thesis has been that the theme of transformation should not be entirely abandoned by contemporary American evangelical theology, but rather revised for a postsecular milieu. By pointing to the concept of *gelassenheit* as a source of contribution, my argument is not that *gelassenheit* is the only way to accomplish a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation. To make such an argument, it seems to me, would be epistemically unviable because it would require quantifying and then measuring abstract conceptual categories that do not easily lend themselves to such analysis. I argue that by employing the conceptual paradigm of *gelassenheit* gives contemporary evangelical theological perceptions of enterprise more internal coherence, thus, passing a primary criterion for truth and achieving greater clarity.

Classic foundationalist schemes discourage the self-interrogation necessary for strong reflexivity because theology is limited to abstracted beliefs and doctrines while phenomenal forms are treated as inessential (Smith, 2012, p. 162; cf. Mahmood, 2006). A brief look at Heidegger's use of *gelassenheit* shows the shortcomings of such schemes (Schürmann, 1973).

Heidegger emphasized that our relation to the world, including in theological reflection, is already a precognitive construal of the world (Smith, 2016 p. 169). Borrowing from and adapting Eckhart, Heidegger posited *gelassenheit* as a way that humans can cognitively engage their surrounding world while being affectively shaped in the process (Davis, 2007). It was a releasement toward being (Linge, 1978, p. 483). For Eckhart, this was crucial because the movement into the triangulating love of God is not just cognitive but also affective. It involves the "voluntary emptiness" of one's attempts to instrumentalize things and images for one's own purpose (Schürmann, 1973, p. 109). This requires a continual surrendering and detaching in mystery of one's mind, body, and soul to the love of God. Accordingly, for the early Anabaptists, *gelassenheit* represented the faith community's movement from lesser forms of love (merely cognitive) to higher forms (fully engaged).

Taken seriously, this inverts the traditional evangelical scheme and restores the organic connection between ethics and theology. It is also a challenge to consumerist spirituality, which separates the conscious pursuit of spiritual fulfillment through the acquisition of goods and services from the underlying distortions that such habit-shaping consumer liturgies enact on affective desires. The process of detachment found in *gelassenheit* works in the opposite direction, rewiring self-centered loves so that they

align with objectives of properly theological edicts.

No doubt, some within American evangelicalism might want to resist any appropriation of *gelassenheit* because the theologies of Eckhart, early Anabaptist spirituality and Heidegger do not qualify as "evangelical." To be sure, what I am calling for is a critical and not wholesale appropriation of such systems. However, operating below the surface of this concern is a foundationalist framework that reaffirms the contributions of a *gelassenheit* epistemology.

To make one's appropriation of any moment in theological history contingent on doctrinal symmetry alone is to suggest that the connection between theology and ethics is a straight linear line between cognitive assent and affect obedience. However, the ambiguities of practice evidenced by the grip of postsecular consumerist spirituality tell a different story. Correctly aligning one's doctrinal scheme with the ethical core of the New Testament is not difficult. I suspect that the vast majority of American evangelicals readily recognize the challenge that postsecular consumerist spirituality's excessive instrumentality poses to the genuine love of God and neighbor. The challenge is how to translate this doctrinal assent into a genuine spiritual desire that manifests in collective normed practices.

Because they are socially and contextually embedded, practices are malleable, not set forms (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 218). Religious, theological practice presents two unique challenges (Hunter, 1980, pp. 68-69). For one, they linger at the limits of human agency by contemplating ultimate questions like how to confront death. Additionally, they require paradoxical transcendence of self and not just a change of self (Hunter, 2010, p. 69; Bass et al., 2016, p. 190).

In the Aristotelian tradition, where the goal of practice is the achievement of mastery, practice is commonly portrayed as "something individuals perform to achieve technical ends in the present moment guided by theoretical principles" (Dykstra, 1991, p. 35). Contrastingly, Christian practices have a "peculiarity about them" in that the goal is not mastery but rather "the right use of gifts graciously bestowed by a loving God for the sake of the good that God intends" (Dykstra, 1991, p. 35; cf. Bloesch, 1987, p. 191).

Evangelical theology has tended to view the practice as "individualistic, technological, ahistorical, and abstract" from the standpoint of a completely integrated belief system (Richter, 2014, p. 205). However, humans often operate in a multiplicity of conflicting practices, such that "being a self who faiths may not be as tidy as we imagine" (Turpin, 2006, pp. 46, 49; cf. Forrester, 2005).[84] This is a direct challenge to the (unfulfilled) promise of postsecular consumer spirituality: unlike "products of a consumer society, simply there for the taking," discipleship and the right use of gifts takes time and work and "one must be an insider, a practitioner oneself disciplined by the practice" (Hunter, 1980, p. 67; cf. Bass et al., 2016, p. 189).

Fundamentally, I am addressing a question that has been asked going back to the time of Jesus, when he commanded his followers to be "in" the world but not "of" the world" (John 17:14-19). The influence of market capitalism and its instrumentalizing

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[84] According to Hunter (1980):

> Rather than assuming that the presence of multiple belief systems indicates hypocrisy and potential idolatry, we could assume that the believer is merely in the process of converting from one set of beliefs to another . . . Many of us judge negatively the conflicted parts of our self as incomplete rather than joining Barth in recognizing our conflict as an indication of the fullness of our engagement in transformation. (p. 67)

See also Romans 7:1-24.

effects is vast and virtually inescapable (cf. Miles, 1988). The elimination of any and all

forms of instrumentality is neither possible or warranted, but what is necessary is the

ability to surface where said instrumentalizing tendencies are bearing unintended

consequences. Fitch (2005) did an excellent job of framing the dilemma for American

evangelicals, and it is worth quoting him at length:

> This ("being in the world and not of it") has never been more important as society fragments into its multiple justices and communities. But this has also rarely been more difficult as late capitalism extends its dominion over all manifestations of North American life. Capitalism intrudes upon every living space . . . and imposes enormous . . . pressures on its inhabitants that impede this kind of community. So, our congregations must work incessantly, paying off larger credit card bills and mortgages on bigger homes. Capitalist competitiveness and consumerism, as well as liberal individualism, shape us into being wealth accumulators, consumers . . . There is little time for our people to be the body . . . When we do come together, we come shaped as we are out of capitalism as individuals protecting our interests. We do not come determined first by our citizenship in Christ . . . As a result, many evangelicals take on the communal characteristics of capitalism in strange ways . . . Our people walk and talk like capitalists . . . It is a shame to be poor or unsuccessful in capitalism. We do not look upon each other with 'unlimited liability' one toward another. We surprisingly get our identities more from our jobs than our life in a Christian community pursuing God's kingdom on earth. And we treat our money as our own. We live in fear that to give up our possessions will leave us alone and destitute when our time of need comes. Our embedded individualism hurts us as we hoard our money, keep private our personal finances, and die a slow death of the soul as we never learn how to truly live, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep (Rom 12:15). All of this makes practicing the justice of Christ in the local church more difficult . . . How do we eat, live, and have jobs in capitalism and yet not become driven by the emotions and desires of "consumeritis," career success and the protection of our financial security? . . . Community in capitalism is so difficult because consumerism is always making us ask, "Are we meeting your needs?" But we do not need another pseudo-community that gathers to support its members in each other's striving for self-fulfillment and career advancement . . . Instead, God calls us in Christ to a righteousness of another kind. How do we live as community *in* but not *of* capitalism? (pp. 182-183)

8.2 The *Gelassenheit* Model Explained

The epistemological opening created by *gelassenheit* opens the way for the

development of a model that strengthens contemporary American evangelical reflexivity.

It begins with what Turpin (2006) called "faithful consuming" that supports a "healthy multiplicity of the self" (Gergen, 1991). Turpin proposed a fourfold process: (a) awakening: becoming aware to the ways that one's lifestyle and choices respond to the seeming normalcy of consumerism so that their meaning systems can be interrogated; (b) repentance: acknowledging the deep embeddedness of the meaning systems within one's own beliefs and practices so that turning away from them necessitates a patient commitment and resources extending beyond any one individual in a community; (c) justification: the reimagining of alternative spiritual meaning systems that provide new sources of worship and enable deeper and stronger bonds for the community; (d) regeneration: the emergence of renewed strength for continued resistance and meaning-making within a realigned set of allegiances and symbols as faith is strengthened, belief affirmed, and love grown.

Rooting the process in the scriptural language of conversion helpfully captures both the cognitive and affective dimensions of faith. According to Turpin (2006), "It is faith rather than mere insight that is changing . . . conversion involves transformation of the love that requires heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Turpin, 2006, p. 59). Humility is required because conversion of deeply-rooted faith systems is gradual, often lifelong. It is not a linear movement through sequential stages but an iterative sorting of detours that mandates "the continual recognition of divided loyalties" (Turpin, 2006, p. 59).

Turpin's approach is ideal for contemporary American evangelical theology for two reasons. First, in keeping with the revised theme of transformation outlined above, it emphasizes strengthening reflexivity for the potential threat that consumerist spirituality poses to the ability of faith communities to provide alternative witness to consumer

cultures. Second, being based on Wesley's *via salutis* ("path of salvation"), it aligns with the evangelical priority placed on Scripture in theological reflection (Wesley, 1991; Collins, 1996).

Integrating a process for faithful consuming with a *gelassenheit* posture of mystical spirituality produces a model that accounts for a critical feature of reflexivity that Turpin largely ignores: detachment. For instrumentalizing tendencies to be resisted effectively and intrinsic love to be fostered, a turning away (detaching) from inordinate attachments and a turning to God is essential.
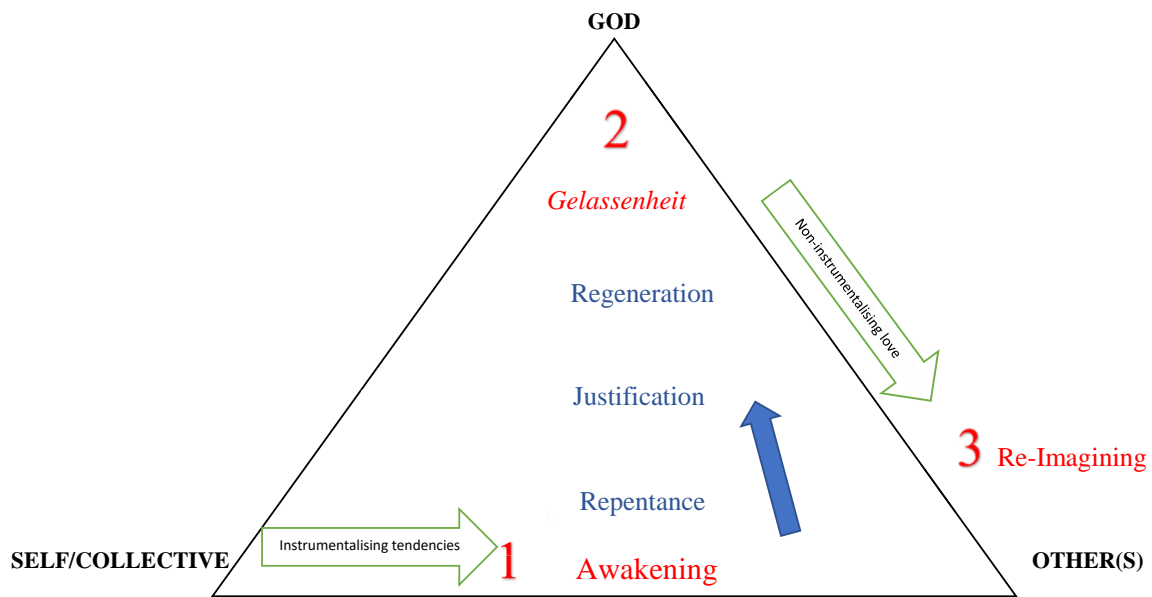
The model, then, is as follows:

Figure 1. A *gelassenheit* model for strengthening spiritual reflexivity.

8.2.1 Stage one: Awakening

The individual/collective, embedded in a consumer culture, experiences instrumentalizing tendencies in the form of enticements to utilize other(s) for individual

and/or material gain.[85]

8.2.2 Stage two: Gelassenheit

Either as part of a regular spiritual discipline routine or sudden event, the

individual/collective is awakened to the instrumentalizing tendency, initiating the process

of *gelassenheit* that involves progressing through the fourfold reflexive stages of

"awakening-repentance-justification-regeneration" as the individual/collective detaches

from the potential instrumentalizing source(s) and turns to God with inward surrender in

response to God's gracious love, uniquely expressed in the incarnation and death and

resurrection of Jesus.

8.2.3 Stage three: Reimagining

Having been reoriented by God's gracious love, the individual/collective's

instrumentalizing tendencies are triangulated into expressions of active and affective

triangulating love for the other(s).

As mentioned above, the model for strengthening contemporary American

evangelical theological reflexivity in a postsecular consumerist context needs to account

for two primary challenges in moral self-critique: the mysterious and intangible nature of

the inner spiritual realities and the interpretive use of scriptural texts in shaping and

reshaping those realities in contexts where individualistic and personal lenses are

preferred over structural and abstract ones. Two core features of this model address these

challenges.

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[85] The phrase "individual/collective" indicates that the model has application at both personal and collective levels in the context of faith communities. However, as is clear throughout the explanation and illustration of the model, an "individual" application of the model in no way implies that an individual can strengthen theological reflexivity without engaging his or her collective.

The first significant feature of the model is that it is sacramental. While postsecular consumerist spirituality has intensified the challenge, religious traditions including Christianity have long struggled over how "to hold matter and spirit together without separating or identifying them" (Rempel, 2015, p. 299; Pickstock, 1999). The term *sacrament* originated in the Latin West with Tertullian, who used it to translate the Greek *musterion* ("mystery"). From the earliest days in Christianity it generally referred "to the saving grace of God enacted in the rituals" of faith communities (Potts, 2015, p. 11). The concept has become a theological lightening rod, especially in regard to the Eucharist, but for the first millennium of the church the term was applied broadly as the visible form of invisible spiritual grace or a sign of a "sacred thing."

Applied to the task of cultivating a relational ethic of triangulating love for contemporary American evangelical theology, the sacramental dimension of the model is significant for two reasons. First, it reaffirms the importance of resisting a strict dichotomy between a purely spiritual form of love (the love of God and others) and a purely natural/material form of love (the love of self). As Browning (2002) suggested, Christian tradition's triangulating scheme of love counters this "dialectical" division with a "sacramental" ordering that acknowledges "all human relationships, like all people, as created good, potentially transformed by grace, and bearing a sacred meaning," however mysterious (p. 172).

Second, it highlights the role that narratives and story play in harmonizing theological belief with liturgical practice.[86] Part of the genius of narrative is its ability to

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[86] Commenting on the role of stories in the evolution of human meaning-making, Smith wrote, "We not only continue to be animals who make stories but also who animals who are made by our stories" (Smith, 2003b, p. 64).

simultaneously reveal and conceal. The mystery is inherent to storytelling because stories

are not meant to examine, scientifically report objectively, or itemize exhaustively.

Sacrament "helps us by way of mystery to enter into God's story, and may invite us to

know God and ourselves in transformative ways" (Ferguson, 2007, p. 249).[87] Thus,

liturgical practice emerges from certain narrative imaginations of the surrounding world

that picture what we think life is about, what constitutes the "good life" (Smith, 2016 p.

32). Imagination is both constructive and receptive and mental and physical (Green,

2007, p. 26; Bryant, 1989, p. 5).

A second core feature of the model is the thickly relational hermeneutic cultivated

by its sacramentality. The sacramental nature of the model has significant implications

for contemporary American evangelical theology's notable emphasis on the importance

of reading and interpreting Scripture in theological practice. Candler (2006) noted that

before the late Middle Ages, when Thomistic theology's "grammar of representation"

began to flatten the influence of sacramental theology, a "grammar of participation" was

the dominant premodern theological, literary procedure. It entailed an often oral

engagement with the scriptural texts as a way of sparking imaginative and meditative

liturgical ritual (Graham et al., 2005).

For contemporary American evangelical theology, which is deeply rooted in

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[87] According to Potts (2015):

> For theology, meanwhile, this creative use of the sacramental tradition should remind
> theologians that the sacraments are as important for what they present as what they intend
> to represent. From a theological perspective, the historical danger of eucharistic theology
> has typically been a failure of dialectic, too weak a stomach for paradox. When theology
> has failed richly enough to account for the sacraments, its mistake has typically been to
> look too far beyond or behind the given signs of bread and wine. (Potts, 2015, p. 15)

personalist histories, the temptation was to approach this model from the standpoint of individual pietism that portrays the reordering of love as primarily a matter of "reading one's Bible" (Pannenberg, 1983).[88] However, the move from scriptural text to embodied practice cannot be accomplished apart from relational communities. Interpretation requires a "community competent to understand, and that means a community whose ethos, worldview, and sacred symbols . . . can be tuned" to the way particular texts "worked in the time past" (Meeks, 2002, pp. 192-193; cf. Taylor, 2007, p. 171).

The model promotes an evangelical reflexivity that is *Christopraxis* and not *Biblepraxis* (Anderson, 2001). A central focus on the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ in the world, thus, God in Jesus Christ as a subject of action, not merely a source of knowledge. Given that "practices do not merely flow out from particular convictions but shape and form the Christian imagination," the Scriptures have the "productive power of re-describing reality in a way that can engage and lead our imaginations" (Buschart and Eilers, 2015, p. 222). The mystical *gelassenheit* of early Anabaptist spirituality nourishes the model with a way "to relocate and reimagine [the church's] role from the margins of society" in the face of materialistic and political empire (Wilson-Hartgrove, 2008, p. 85).

Having defined two core features of the model, I now turn to an explanation of its three main stages.

8.2.4 Stage one: Awakening

Awakening is an image used throughout Scripture to evoke an initial state lacking awareness suddenly becoming aware (Eph 5:14; Is 51:17). To awaken to postsecular

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[88] Pannenberg (1983) of course, offered once of the most well-known critiques of this historical lineage in evangelicalism.

consumerist spirituality "is to process and to pay attention to the ways in which our lifestyle and choices respond" to the seeming normalcy of instrumentalizing tendencies. Space is then opened to begin interrogating the meaning system of relational instrumentality to see how it conflicts with the New Testament ethical core of triangulating love for God and neighbor (Turpin, 2006, p. 84).

The discipline of paying attention is rare in consumer cultures that bombard persons with dehumanizing and commoditizing advertisements. It "will increase the possibility of attending to smaller, alternative narratives of meaning that one finds to be more adequately integrated with faith perspectives" (Turpin, 2006, p. 170). The realization is that an individual or collective's partaking of instrumentalizing love no longer makes adequate sense of the praxis of faith, either in the general experience of dissatisfaction or an extraordinary experience.

This opens the community to critical reflection by beginning to question the ways that the prevailing meaning system of instrumentalizing love might be challenged and reordered by a Christ-like response to the gracious love of God preeminently displayed in the death and resurrection of Jesus.[89] While awakening is a crucial part of the process of ongoing conversion in strengthening reflexivity, in and of itself, it does not produce reformation and can even lead to denial or repression.

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[89] Few contemporary theological movements have been as effective at raising critical awareness than the liberation tradition. Working this broad tradition into an educational pedagogy, Freire (2000) emphasized, "developing critical consciousness," or the ability of person's "to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus to intervene in reality" with a "social and political responsibility and prepared to avoid the danger of massification" (Freire, 2000, p. 7; Turpin, 2006, p. 87).

8.2.5 Stage two: Gelassenheit

- **Repentance**: Ongoing conversion along the spectrum of triangulating love moves from a call to awakening to the practice of repentance, a term that has a rich theological history but has been negatively affected by Western individualism. After the initial discovery of the inadequacy of an instrumentalizing tendency to sustain relational harmony, a consistent "developing awareness of our implication in the consumer system is necessary" (Turpin, 2006, p. 110). Repentance is more difficult and most effective when it surfaces "our closely guarded and cleverly concealed 'programs for happiness'" that would prove to be very disruptive if changed (Mahan, 2002, p. 97). Sacramental detachment from some of the consumerist habits we find essential to our lives "might begin to sensitize us, both to the conditions of hunger and want in which most of the world's inhabitants live and to our common conditioning as a society to expect and require consumer goods" (Miles, 1988, p. 103).

- **Justification:** Only calling the prevailing instrumentalizing meaning systems into question and repenting from them can leave faith communities "stranded without an organizing system of meaning, or without the ritual support of the practices of their earlier belief system" (Turpin, 2006, p. 137). Justification moves a community toward a renewed sense of wholeness and safety by replacing the old images of postsecular consumerist spirituality with "new images of beauty and goodness" and new objects of "worship' to sustain a changed lifestyle. This is the process of falling in love" (Turpin, 2006, p. 137). It also highlights the critical role that narratives play in shaping and reshaping theological imagination.

- **Regeneration**: Following justification, the process of regeneration provides new

life for continued resistance to instrumentalizing tendencies and continued meaning-making within the new set of allegiances and symbols to triangulating love as faith is strengthened, belief affirmed, and love grown (Turpin, 2006, p. 158).

8.2.6 Stage three: Reimagining

Constituting the gradual restoration of the image of God, reimagining is regeneration through small pedagogical communities of discipleship. They provide critical formation and support for the continued work of individual/collective transformation within the faith community and collaborative action for the transformation of the broader culture through displays of triangulating love that signify strong collectives (Turpin, 2006).

These small, realistic communities of shared imaginations are designed to tolerate the ambiguities of practice that continue to occur and it is necessary to sustain alternative imaginations of triangulating love in the face of a lack of broader "victory" of such beautiful visions over the dominant instrumentality of consumerist cultures. Such communities derive joy and celebration, not from present victory, but from the development of resilience that has hope in future victory. According to Welch (1998), "Rather than a hope for eventual victory, for a world without injustice or serious conflict," there can be a more modest hope, "a hope for resilience and for company along the way . . . Seemingly lowered expectations for social change provide staying power and effectiveness" (Welch, 1998, p. xvi).[90]

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[90] In part, the need for modest hope can be understood as a way of normalizing the unfulfilled and unrealistic idealism operating within consumerism. Smail (2005) wrote,:

> The modern consumer is in this way a pleasure-seeking idealist, dislocated from a real world, a real body, and a real society. We must believe, among other things, that the

Either as individuals or collectives, the reimaging stage of the model involves a turning back toward the other(s) in community with a renewed sense of the beauty and worth of triangulating love for sustaining relational unity. Several characteristics are necessary for such efforts to flourish and translate into long-term change (Turpin, 2006, pp. 190-21):

-Circles of grace extend radical acceptance in the face of human frailty and grant power to move forward on toward salvation.[91]

-Confessional honesty is "the practice of revealing failures to one another and to ourselves in order to find the grace to address them" so that self-deception can be avoided in the process of ongoing conversion and space can be opened for mutual subjection and accountability among the members (Turpin, 2006, p. 203).

-Rhythmic pattern of common life is meeting regularly over extended periods of time to create steady celebration and remembrance that integrate with liturgical practices "to foster individual identity formation even as they assist in generating group identity" and "provide embodied experience of new faith and imagination, social relationships, and patterns of service" (Turpin, 2006, p. 207).

-Worship and immersion in new images that embody the new objects of faith, "not the passive witnessing of images central to the new meaning system to which participants are hoping for conversion" but rather "the community vividly embodies the

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earth's resources are infinite, that mind will triumph over matter and that there's no limit to what you can achieve if you really try. (p. 55)

[91] This is not a blanket acceptance of all states and behaviors but "careful balance of recognition that it matters deeply what we do and a sense that we will never be able to perfectly live into the vocations to which we are called" (Smail, 2005, p. 196).

images that are central to the new life of imagination that the community hopes to engender, creating a passionate encounter and evoking an adoring attitude toward them" (Turpin, 2006, p. 209), offered not as dogma but as gifts that create opportunities for non-consumptive celebration (cf. Borgmann, 2003).

-Encouragement for corporate self-critique is the continued affirmation within the community that strengthening theological reflexivity remains its most important value and necessitates an openness to discoveries of brokenness and finitude (Turpin, 2006, p. 219).

8.3 The *Gelassenheit* Model in Action

Having explained the primary features of the *gelassenheit* model and elaborated on its three stages, what remains is to illustrate how the model accomplishes its purpose of strengthening contemporary American evangelical theology reflexivity. To repeat, the model focuses on three primary categories of attachments identified in the Gospels that are subject to the distortions of instrumentality resulting in hostile social division: (a) relational bonds: a universal and mysterious body of fellow followers into the familial bonds of one's life, irrespective of race, gender, or ethnicity; (b) possessions: the relinquishing of claims over any material goods for the higher calling of stewarding God's provisions for the care and joy of others; and (c) status: the seeking of approval on the basis of the extent to which one has become a servant of God rather than the extent to which others have become servants to others.

In keeping with the nature of the model itself, it is primarily through small narrative stories addressing "pivotal questions" that liturgical habits are formed and reformed, not abstract theological meta-narratives packaged in universal "solutions"

(Darragh, 2007). The identification of three primary categories is merely a heuristic mechanism and not a simplification of the many spheres and forms in which ambiguities of practice can emerge. Indeed, effective postsecular spiritual care moves beyond simplistic self-management techniques (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016).

I proceed, then, by analyzing two narratives through the model's scheme to surface and critically reflect upon pivotal questions about potential sources of ambiguities of practice. This analysis is not intended to be exhaustive but rather illustrative. The first is drawn from a congregational study, and one drawn from my own personal experience. To maximize the relevance to contemporary American evangelical theology, the two narratives, and the analysis are centered on one shortcoming of the traditional theme of transformation identified in Chapter Three: colonialist and imperialist undertones.

There, I established that the transformationalist theme within contemporary evangelical theology has roots in Western imperialism and colonialism in which civilization, whiteness, and Christianity were often associated with economic progress and development. This meant that as Western Europeans and American explorers colonized the continent of Africa and portions of North America, they spoke of "transforming" the indigenous people groups in terms of a divinely-commissioned project of civilizing out their paganism and "coloredness."

In these early transformationalist efforts, preaching the gospel to the groups of indigenous people, converting them to Christianity, and civilizing them to Western modes of culture and economic practice were all one and the same. Contemporary American evangelical articulations of the theme of transformation rarely acknowledge these colonialist and imperialist undercurrents.

In the most exhaustive study of its kind, Emerson and Smith (2002) demonstrated that while well-intended white conservative American evangelicals have become increasingly involved in broad efforts to "transform" those in poverty through economic development programs (often at the congregational level); these efforts have primarily deepened racial divides because of a lack of due awareness to the social-structural forces that contribute to poverty.

Given the role of self/collective awareness, I apply the *gelassenheit* model to the example of colonialist and imperialist undertones to show how it can enhance theological reflexivity by drawing attention to practices emerging from instrumentalizing tendencies in need of reorientation. My method was to evaluate two narratives through the model's three-stage scheme to identify for contemporary American evangelical theology pivotal questions raised by potential ambiguities of practice in the areas of relational bonds, possessions, and/or status. With each narrative, I first establish the setting, then employ the model's analysis, and finally identify key pivotal questions for further reflection.

8.3.1 Narrative One: Fulkerson's Congregational Study

8.3.1.1 Setting

Practical theologian Fulkerson's *Places of Redemption* (2010) is an exploration of the contradiction between widely affirmed beliefs in American Christianity about racial inclusiveness and equal opportunity and the fact that most local churches remain racially homogeneous and do not include people with disabilities. To understand the problem better, Fulkerson explored through a participant-observer ethnographic congregational study the practices of an interracial and disability-friendly United Methodist church called Good Samaritan located in a suburb of Durham, North Carolina. While an analysis

of the complete gamut of Fulkerson's study was beyond our purposes here, an examination of the highlights of Good Samaritan's "conversion story" through the scheme of the model of mystical *gelassenheit* clearly illustrates its three stages and core features.

8.3.1.2 Model Analysis

Stage one was awareness. The critical moment of awareness for Good Samaritan congregation came in July 1998, when the 10 remaining members of the dying white congregation—situated in a racially transitional neighborhood near Durham—met for a Bible study in the home of its pastor, Dan Weaver. The subject of the study that evening was the account about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 in which Philip, a disciple of Jesus, encounters a culturally-different political leader and engages him in an intimate conversation about the Hebrew Scriptures that results in the eunuch's conversion. The group was captivated by the Bible story, particularly its vivid descriptions of the Christian gospel and the interaction between different cultures. They immediately became aware of the insufficiency of their understanding and approach to living out the Christian gospel as insulated, middle-class white Americans located in a racially transitional context. The group decided to reimagine the purpose of their church in light of its own cultural surroundings and intentionally seek people who were different. This initially involved focusing on racial (white and black) and social (rich and poor) divisions.

Stage two was *gelassenheit*. Repentance refers to having become aware of the insufficiency of their current spiritual meaning systems and aware that they were operating on an inadequate conception of scriptural love, the group was motivated to turn

away from their current meaning system and seek an alternative. Justification refers to deciding not merely to turn away from old meaning systems but to pursue alternative ones, the group was energized to reevaluate the purposes of their church and its underlying instrumental approach, which had previously sought unchallenged homogeneity and comfort. The group resolved to intentionally seek people who were different, initially focusing on racial (white and black) and social (rich and poor) divisions that were tearing at the relational fabric of the surrounding community. Regeneration refers to a renewed sense of purpose and hope, the congregation decided to rename its church to "Good Samaritan" as a symbol and marker of its new life and focus. Within a short period of having broadened its relationships with more people from racially and economically diverse backgrounds, it also decided to intentionally pursue relationship building with people of physical and mental disabilities after seeing a group of students playing football and discovering that their organization (called New Hope) had previously visited other churches in the area but had felt unwelcomed. Good Samaritan quickly implemented bi-monthly Thursday evening worship services designed specifically for people with disabilities.

Stage three was reimagining. As the Good Samaritan congregation grew, it maintained a focus on cultivating small, highly-relational collectives that supported the ongoing internal and external transformation of the faith community. Most of the congregation remained fairly uneducated in theological dogma, but a continual pattern of reading the Scriptures and then talking reflectively about their meaning and application to their own lives helped strengthen relational unity in the congregation, even as the ambiguities of practice in many ways only intensified as the community became more

diverse.

8.3.1.3 Pivotal questions

Emerging from this congregational narrative are some key pivotal questions that contemporary American evangelical faith communities could dwell upon to surface and reflect on ambiguities of practice that could potentially source relational division in their own context.

Relational bonds

- What changes in socialization habits would an average suburban evangelical community need to make to build more socioeconomically diverse relational bonds? If the Good Samaritan United Methodist congregation eventually dissolved because of the strains placed on its community by its diverse makeup, would that undermine the validity of their reenvisioned purpose as church?

Possessions

- Would it be wise for an evangelical community to purposely downsize its physical building to create more financial margin in its budget to support outreach to the poor? What are the most significant tangible assets that American evangelical families could divest themselves of to contribute to less homogenous congregations?

Status

- How might Good Samaritan's story be different if they had decided to verify their convictions emerging from their group Bible study in Acts 8 with two other similar evangelical churches in the surrounding area? In what ways can their accommodations to serve the disability community serve as a model for other American evangelical congregations to follow?

8.3.2 Narrative two: A personal experience

8.3.2.1 Setting

A second narrative illustration of the *gelassenheit* model comes from my own experience as a white Christian participating in a largely white evangelical conservative congregation in an upper-middle-class American city. The setting of this case study was a discussion that took place within the "small group" that myself and my family attended for the previous two years at this congregation. Because of the nature of the growth of the small group, it had become too large to be feasibly carried forward as a single group. Thus, the leader of the small group proposed that the group permanently divide into smaller units.

At the meeting to discuss the procedures for dividing the group, the leader praised the group for our apparent success at "transforming" our community with the "Gospel" as evidenced by the fact that we had grown large enough in size to need to segment. In presenting a method for dividing, the leader proposed that the best way would be to arrange ourselves geographically so that we could focus our groups' efforts on "loving our neighbors" as Scripture commands.

At the time, I responded favorably to the proposal and generally agreed with the reasoning. However, later, I was reading a commentary on 1 Corinthians that prompted me to reflect on the reason for my immediate affirmation. The author of the commentary noted that when contrasted with the highly stratified common meal in the ancient world, where "it was sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat" in the dining room and the rest to eat in the courtyard, the taking of the Lord's Supper by multiple social classes within the Corinthian congregation amounts to a radical

alternative (Fee, 1987, pp. 533-534). The *gelassenheit* model offers a way to process this disruptive experience in a manner that strengthens theological reflexivity for the fostering of triangulating love.

8.3.2.2 Stage one: awakening

My experience reading about the Lord's supper in Corinth served as an awakening event that suddenly made me realize that underneath my affirmation of the decision to divide our small group around geographical lines was a meaning system that sought to surround myself and my family with people of similar socioeconomic status, since I lived in a mostly white middle-class geographic area. I now begin to reflect critically on how my prevailing meaning system (that I would be better off maintaining my current homogenous group status) was challenged by the experience of the early Corinthian community.

8.3.2.3 Stage two: Gelassenheit

Repentance was in response to this surfacing of my closely guarded and cleverly concealed programs for happiness (Mahan, 2002, p. 97). I began an inward devotional turn to God that acknowledged my shortcomings and asked for forgiveness for my instrumentalizing of the situation to fit my own individual and material happiness apart from its effect on any broader community. This act of repentance opened me to reflect on ways that I might detach from my allegiance to and faith in the comforts of homogenous socioeconomic groups and reengage the love of God expressed through the Christ-event, which the Lord's supper commemorates. This took on the form of a personal symbolic recapitulation of the Eucharist liturgy.

Justification refers to imagining the gathering of a multi-ethnic and diverse

socioeconomic group in first-century Corinth to celebrate the love of God expressed in the death and resurrection of Jesus produced in me new images of beauty and goodness that replaced the old images of what constituted good community that had previously been shaping my beliefs below the surface: images that were filled with people of the same race and social-class as myself.

Regeneration is being reminded that the commemoration of the Lord's Supper is a celebration of regenerating life that only God can provide. I began to reflect on how our small group might better resemble small pedagogical communities of discipleship that provide formative support and collaborative action as we seek to pursue more genuinely diverse fellowship in our broader community.

8.3.2.4 Stage three: Reimagining

Reoriented in the process of *gelassenheit*, my instrumentalizing tendencies in the situation regard how my small group segments have been triangulated by a critical reflection on the love of God. I now have a more genuine desire to express triangulating love in my faith community that is actively and affective in tune with the New Testament vision of a fellowship that radically crosses socioeconomic lines. As a result, I have asked our small group to reconsider how we can segment in a way that encourages and challenges us to proactively pursue socioeconomic diversity, especially in the form of identifying and addressing the structural reasons why lower-class non-white people are virtually nonexistent in our fellowship.

8.3.2.5 Pivotal questions

Emerging from this personal narrative are some key pivotal questions that contemporary American evangelical faith communities could dwell upon to surface and

reflect on ambiguities of practice that could potentially source relational division in their own context.

> *Relational bonds*:

- What is the difference between legitimate and illegitimate concerns for immediate family well-being in discerning one's participation in a local evangelical congregation?

- Is it okay for evangelical churches to only reflect the demographic makeup of their context or should they seek to go beyond that standard?

> *Possessions:*

- What types of changes in household giving patterns would be necessary for contemporary American evangelicals to contribute to the lessening of income inequality, which is a primary source of congregational homogeneity?

> *Status*

- How might a more racially diverse small group might enhance and/or impair my own sense of personal value?

8.4 *Gelassenheit* Spiritual Practices

The purpose of this chapter was to apply the insights of *gelassenheit* to construct a model for strengthening evangelical reflexivity that nourishes spiritual practices. Having defined and explained the model, I want to close by exploring and developing *gelassenheit* as a revitalizer of ancient Christian spiritual practices in immersive consumerist contexts. A common conception of Christian spiritual practices is that they confront consumerist ideology by lessening the desire to consume, to move one away from material things (which ultimately do not satisfy) and toward an immaterial God

(which ultimately satisfies). Through a practical theological lens, this assessment is insufficient on two fronts. First, desire is fundamental to human beings and, as Augustine remarked, our desires are in constant need of renewal. Second, because we are temporally-bound, spirituality involves a complex interplay between the material and immaterial. Lessening the desire to consume, then, is not the fundamental issue. Everyone must consume to live.

Consumerism itself is a spiritual disposition in that it is a way of looking at the world that shapes desire. While often associated with greed or an inordinate attachment to material things, consumerism is in fact:

> Characterized by detachment from production, producers, and products. Consumerism is a restless spirit that is never content with any particular material thing. In this sense, consumerism has some affinities with Christian asceticism, which counsels a certain detachment from material things. The difference is that, in consumerism, detachment continually moves us from one product to another, whereas in Christian life, asceticism is a means to a greater attachment to God and to other people. (Cavanaugh, 2008, p. 7)

Incessant detachment would seem to correspond to the increasingly fragmenting and isolating effects of postsecular consumerist spirituality discussed throughout this thesis.

The question, then, is how embodied Christian spiritual practices can orient consumptive desires toward the right *telos*. Cavanaugh frames it as a choice between consumeristic spirituality based in scarcity expressed in privatization and eucharistic spirituality based in abundance expressed in sharing (Cavanaugh, 2008, pp. 135-138). Consumer markets assume resource scarcity. No one has enough, so there is trade: to get something, one must relinquish something else. Goods are not held in common, and consumption of goods is essentially a private experience. In contrast, Christian eucharistic consumption does not begin with scarcity, but abundance: "Jesus said to them,

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'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry'" (John 6:35). Insatiable human desire is absorbed by the abundance of God's grace in the gift of the body and blood of Christ, which are not scarce commodities. They are inseparable from the *kenosis*, the self-emptying, of the cross. The consumer of the body and blood of Christ does not remain detached from what he or she consumes but becomes part of a larger body.

This is a helpful contrast, but more needs to be said. Whether ancient or modern, a distinguishing characteristic of Christian spiritual practices and disciplines has been to "promote virtues paradoxical to contemporary sensibilities": freedom via restraint, stability rather than mobility, receiving rather than seizing, and attachment rather than detachment (Richter, 2014, p. 209). Never has this been more difficult or urgent to achieve. Why? Because the increasingly digital nature of consumption blurs the line between material acts of consumption and the desires fueling them. Before the proliferation of internet technologies, physical spaces such as malls and shopping centers were where "consumerism roared and swelled, but inevitably, remained contained" (Bogost, 2018, p. 2). The era of digital retailing has dramatically changed this, embedding consumption into daily life. "Recent technologies have enabled the role of the *customer* to be fused with the newer role of the *user,* who inhabits an entire system rather than a specific transaction" (Austin, 2018, p. 3). Retailers are focused on reducing purchase friction and removing as many barriers to consumption as possible. For example, Amazon (one of the most profitable companies in the world) has built an entire digital ecosystem with the consumer/user at the very center. A user can instantly access millions of goods and services through his or her Amazon smartphone application,

receive free 24-hour delivery with his or her Prime account, and even make purchases through his or her voice-controlled Alexa unit or small "Dash" buttons strategically located throughout their homes.

Here, *gelassenheit* can make a significant contribution. Any cluster of spiritual activities that hopes to combat the excesses of (increasingly digital) consumption must thread together external expression and internal disposition in a way that discerningly reorients consumptive desires toward a eucharistic *telos* of abundance. Because of its emphasis on facilitating healthy detachment from material things to reattach more healthily, *gelassenheit* posturing has the capacity to fortify a number of traditional spiritual practices for a postsecular consumerist context. I close by exploring this thought through three ancient Christian practices: prayer, giving, and Sabbath.

8.4.1 Prayer

In contemporary spiritual practice, prayer is commonly associated with "asking for." Indeed, petitionary prayer (whether for oneself or others) is referenced throughout the Scriptures (e.g., 2 Chron 6:21; James 4:2; Ps 28:2; Lk 11:3). However, for much of Christian history (across Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions), contemplative prayer has been understood as a means of aligning desire and inner disposition around God.

Contemplative prayer can refer to a range of prayer practices (e.g., monastic prayer, centering prayer, the Jesus prayer, *lectio divina*) focused on the receptive dimensions of prayer as a means of experiencing the presence of God. Generally, the practices involve passive postures and extend periods of silence. The Greek *theoria* and Latin equivalent *contemplation*, which translate "contemplation" have an important

history in ancient spirituality and primarily designated "looking at" something (with the eyes or the mind). Louth (2003) wrote:

> The word *theoria* is derived from a verb meaning to look, or to see: for the Greeks, knowing was a kind of seeing, a sort of intellectual seeing. Contemplation is, then, knowledge, knowledge of reality itself, as opposed to knowing how: the kind of know-how involved in getting things done. To this contrast between the active life and contemplation there corresponds a distinction in our understanding of what it is to be human between reason conceived as puzzling things out, solving problems, calculating and making decisions—referred to by the Greek words *phronesis* and *dianoia*, or in Latin by *ratio*—and reason conceived as receptive of truth, beholding, looking—referred to by the Greek words *theoria* or *sophia* (wisdom) or *nous* (intellect), or in Latin *intellectus*. Augustine expressed this distinction by using *scientia* for the kind of knowledge attained by *ratio*, and *sapientia*, wisdom, for the kind of knowledge received by *intellectus*. Human intelligence operates at two levels: a basic level concerned with doing things, and another level concerned with simply beholding, contemplating, knowing reality. (p. 66)

Both the Hebrew and New Testament Scriptures reference forms of contemplative prayer intended to draw one beyond a realm of knowledge and words, for example, calls to "seek God's face" (1Ch 16:11, 2Ch 7:14, Ps, 24:6, Hos. 5:15) and to be still and quiet the soul (Ps 131). Prayer is often connected to a life lived in the immediacy of God's will (Jn 5:19, 12:49-50), accomplished through a surrendering to God (Is 45; Rom 12:1), aided by the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27) and modeled after the love of Christ expressed through his incarnation and passion (Phil 2). In the Gospels, Jesus prioritized the spiritual practice of prayer (Mt 7:7), connecting it to the need to avoid the busyness of life (Lk 10:42).

Not until around the sixth century were contemplative prayer practices associated with mystical and ascetic approaches to spirituality, as they are now (Johnson, 1997). For Eckhart, the purpose of prayer was to bring oneself into union with God by surrendering one's thoughts and desires and opening the heart (Eckhart, 1981). The contemplative, silent prayer practices of *gelassenheit* were central. Detachment "purifies the soul and cleanses the conscience and kindles the heart and awakens the spirit and stimulates our

longing and shows us where God is" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 292). Contrary to modern

conceptions of "lone mystics seeking highly individualized and subjective experiences,"

Eckhart understood contemplative prayer practice as a relationally-grounded, non-

dualistic integration of spirit and body that disabled the instrumentalizing of others and,

therefore, enabled more robust community (Turner, 1995, p. 185). Those possessed with

unhealthy attachments are unable to accept what is and are deprived of the freedom to

wait upon God's presence. As participation in the Eucharist demonstrates, God's

presence often comes to us in the mystery of silence practiced on display in ritual

community worship.

Gelassenheit amounts to a way of "letting things be" (Linge, 1978, p. 483) and

here we see the import of a *gelassenheit* prayer posture for consumerist contexts.

Contemplative prayer helps push back against the eschatology of acquisition operative in

consumerism in which the "gradual, immanent progress toward abundance that the

market, driven by our consumption, is always about to - but never actually does - bring

about" (Cavanaugh, 2008, p. 136). Instead, silent contemplation of and participation in

the Eucharist reshapes our desires with the reality that God has already acted in

abundance and incorporated us into a body of plenty.

Interestingly, the practices of excessive consumption have been associated with a

number of narcissistic behaviors and can impede "altruistic self-other relations"

(McDonald et al., 2007). On the contrary, a range of scientific studies have long affirmed

the social and personal health benefits that come along with prayer. Benson (1976), a

Harvard cardiologist and pioneer in mind/body medicine, demonstrated that prayer could

produce a "relaxation response" that decreases the body's metabolism and blood pressure

and slows the heart rate. A National Institutes of Health study found that over the long term, individuals who prayed daily were shown to be 40% less likely to have high blood pressure than those without. There has also been a demonstrated link between prayer and relational awareness. Newberg (2014) did a study of Franciscan nuns in contemplative prayer and found a decreased activity in the parts of the brain associated with a sense of self and increased level of dopamine associated with states of well-being and joy. Moreover, the positive effects of particularly contemplative forms of prayer appear to be more than just the result of enhanced focus and concentration. Pargement (1997) tested two groups of migraine sufferers. Both groups meditated for 20 minutes; one using a spiritual affirmation (like "God is good. God is peace. God is love") and the other a nonspiritual mantra ("Grass is green. Sand is soft.") The first group experienced fewer headaches and more tolerance of pain.

More recently, "mindfulness" has enjoyed a surge in popularity, especially in workplace contexts. It refers to a psychological state of awareness and a mode of processing information that emphasizes reflexivity: "Being aware of the 'reflective self' engaged in mentalizing, and the practice of fully experiencing the rising and falling of mental states with acceptance and without attachment and judgment" (M Davis and Hayes, 2011, p. 198). Its range of benefits includes self-control, objectivity, improved concentration, and emotional intelligence, and the ability to relate to others and one's self with kindness, acceptance, and compassion.

8.4.2 Giving

Building on contemplative prayer, a second spiritual practice that *gelassenheit* posture can revive is giving. Contained in the scriptural concept of abundance in the

Eucharist is a warning against over-spiritualizing its call to generous giving. Cavanaugh wrote:

> In the Eucharist, Christ is gift, giver, and recipient. We are neither merely active nor passive, but we participate in the divine vine life so that we are fed and simultaneously become food for others. Our temptation is to spiritualize all this talk of union, to make our connection to the hungry a mystical act of imaginative sympathy. We can thus imagine that we are already in communion with those who lack food, whether or not we meet their needs. Matthew is having none of this: he places the obligation to feed the hungry in the context of eschatological judgment. Paul, too, places neglect of the hungry in the context of judgment. At the eucharistic celebration in Corinth, which included a common meal, those who eat while others go hungry "show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing" (1 Cor. 11:22). Those who thus—in an "unworthy manner" - partake of the body and blood of Christ "eat and drink judgment against themselves" (11:27, 29). Those of us who partake in the Eucharist while ignoring the hungry may be eating and drinking our own damnation. (2008, pp. 125-129)

There might be an indictment here for a number of American Christians in the present age. While consumer capitalism has significantly advanced material well-being, it has not equally enhanced the practice of giving. On average, American Christians give 2.5% of their income to churches, and only less than 20% of any congregation tithe (NonprofitSource, 2018). Overall, religious giving is down about 50% since 1990. Paradoxically, it is the poorer who tend to be more generous. Those with a salary of less than $20,000 are 8 times more likely to give than someone who makes $75,000. Of families that make more than $75,000, only 1% give away at least 10% of their income (NonprofitSource, 2018).

In contrast, for the early Anabaptists, *gelassenheit* meant "the forsaking of all concern for personal property, thus, leading almost naturally to a complete community of goods" (Friedmann, 1961, p. 86). According to Urry (2009), "The early Anabaptists read the Bible not just as a guide to proper Christian conduct, but also to identify appropriate forms of social community" (Urry, 2009, p. 36). Ulrich Stadler, a leader of the nascent

Anabaptist movement in the 1520s, wrote, "To have all things in common, a free, untrammeled, yielding, willing heart in Christ is needed. Whosoever is thus inwardly free and resigned (*gelassen*) in the Lord is also ready to surrender all temporal possessions" (Friedmann, 1961, p. 86).

8.4.3 Sabbath

A final spiritual practice revived by a *gelassenheit* posture is Sabbath. Often associated with negative rules and restrictions "as a day of obligation (for Catholics) or a day without play (in memories of strict Protestant childhoods)," its scriptural bearing is located in themes "of creation, exodus, and resurrection will be essential if we are to discover the gifts it offers" (Bass, 2000, p. 75). Genesis 2:3 contains the first reference to Sabbath, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." The root meaning of the Hebrew words "Sabbath" and "rest" is "to cease." After having spent six days in His creative work, God ceased from His labors. Israel is instructed as part of the covenant to observe their own Sabbath rest in Ex 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:3,12, the former passage emphasizing it as a command of "remembering" and the latter as "observing." Together, they capture the most fundamental stories and beliefs of the Hebrew Scriptures, "creation and exodus, humanity in God's image and a people liberated from captivity. One emphasizes holiness, the other social justice. Sabbath crystallizes the Torah's portrait of who God is and what human beings are most fully meant to be" (Bass, 2000, p. 75).

Jesus' position on the Sabbath was ambivalent. Sabbath regulation was a key struggle between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders (e.g., Lk 6:1-11; Mk 2:23-3:; Mt 12:1-146). While there is no record of him explicitly calling for the end of the Sabbath,

he controversially declared himself its authority, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27-28). Elsewhere, he would indicate that he is Israel's ultimate Sabbath rest:

> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Mt 11:28-30)

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts his readers to "enter in" to the Sabbath rest provided by Christ (Heb 4).

Luther's associate Karlstadt differentiated between an external and spiritual Sabbath. The former was observed once per week, but the latter was to be an ongoing internal disposition that acknowledged that we are always to cease from our work apart from God and let God work through us. He called this *gelassenheit* (Rupp, 1959). Indeed, "sabbath marks the cessation of creative activity by implementing the divine *gelassenheit* or 'letting go' of creation" (Brown, 1999, p. 386).

Gelassenheit, therefore, speaks of a need for Sabbath to take root in the interior of a person as much as it manifests in external observance. This speaks quite aptly to the needs of today's consumer capitalistic context, where the fundamental struggle is one of restlessness. According to Kessler (2012), "Both employers and clients expect that everything should be done *immediately*. Mobile technology has exacerbated the situation by creating an expectation that we ought to be available at any place and at any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week" (Kessler, 2012, p. 2). The worldwide average for sleep was 8 hours in 1942, compared to 6.8 hours today. More than one-third of American adults are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis according to a study in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Sleep-

deprived people feel lonelier and less eager to engage with others, suggesting that it is "no coincidence that the past few decades have seen a marked increase in loneliness and an equally dramatic decrease in sleep duration" (Moulin and Chung, 2017, p. 300).

According to Bass (2000), consumer capitalistic forces are:

Nibbling away at the freedom of the day. Joining the assembly of Christians for the celebration of Word and Sacrament will remind us that Sabbath keeping is not about taking a day off but about being recalled to our knowledge of and gratitude for God's activity in creating the world, giving liberty to captives, and overcoming the powers of death . . . Refraining from work on a regular basis is a way of setting limits on behavior that is perilous for both human welfare and the welfare of earth itself. Overworked Americans need rest, and they need to be reminded that they do not cause the grain to grow and that their greatest fulfillment does not come through the acquisition of material things. Moreover, the planet needs a rest from human plucking and burning and buying and selling. Perhaps, as Sabbath keepers, we will come to live and know these truths more fully, and thus to bring their wisdom to the common solution of humanity's problems. (Bass, 2000, pp. 84-85)

8.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to show mystical *gelassenheit's* postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation and actual contemporary American evangelical practice. I developed a constructive model that enables individuals and collectives embedded in postsecular consumerist contexts to interrogate ambiguities of practice as they imperfectly love God and neighbor. I first set up the model by analyzing how a *gelassenheit* epistemology helps contemporary American evangelical theology reunite the cognitive and affective dimensions of theology necessary for engaging ambiguities of practice. Then, I explained the model as an integration of Turpin's (2006) fourfold process of faithful consuming with mystical *gelassenheit*. Third, I demonstrated how to use the model with two narrative examples, one drawn from Fulkerson's (2010) ethnographic congregational study and the other from personal experience. Finally, I showed how a *gelassenheit* posture could resource ancient Christian spiritual practices

for consumerists contexts.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, I want to say exactly what it has achieved, how it has done so, and to whom it matters and why. I do this by revisiting the research question and argument, summarizing the significant findings, drawing out their original contributions and value, and identifying the limitations of the study and future areas of research.

9.1 Revisiting the Research Question and Scholarly Audience

This thesis began with a simple but weighty consideration: Contemporary American evangelical theology's quest to integrate Christian faith and capitalistic enterprise through the theme of transformation is being challenged by postsecularism. The theme of transformationism has expressed the evangelical notion that capitalistic enterprise is morally and spiritually transformative in providing Christians a unique platform to harness prosperity for the common good and spread the gospel for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Traditionally-stated, the theme of transformation portrays Christian faith as harnessing the good of Western consumer market capitalism without being affected by its excesses. This reflects the sociopolitical conditions of the 20th century when it was formed. Evangelical Christianity still exercises significant influence in American public life, and market capitalism's growth is relatively stable and predictable.

Postsecularism altered these conditions. Consumer capitalism's rapid growth has weakened American evangelicalism influence as institutionalized forms of Protestant Christianity have declined. It has also intensified individualist-materialist conceptions of spirituality that ground human relationships in self-interested market exchange. This

contrasts with a prominent ethical thread in the Christian Scriptures that grounds human relationality in the triangulating force of God's intrinsic love, which checks the human tendency to instrumentalize for individual and material gain.

The research question of this thesis was: "How can contemporary American evangelical theology reconstruct the theme of transformation for a postsecular context that counters the excesses of consumerist spirituality?"

Approaching the subject, I located myself in the discipline of practical theology; especially, the empirical-analytical current that intends to make conceptual, theoretical categories operational to the lived realities of faith communities for the purposes of constructive theological ethics. My contention was that a postsecular revision resistant to consumerist spirituality would not amount to an anti-consumerist spirituality, but rather a reflexive spirituality. That is, contemporary American evangelical theology needs a spirituality that regularly interrogates its own practice.

A strong spiritual reflexivity enables evangelical faith communities to engage critically the ambiguities that inevitably emerge from immersive instrumentalizing contexts. For those within the evangelical tradition professionally engaged in capitalistic enterprise, like myself, this is vital. Abandoning consumerist contexts is rarely an option; sustaining and growing faithful practice in their midst is the goal.

Drawing on the interdisciplinary nature of practical theology, I identified two values that informed my method for strengthening evangelical reflexivity. First, was the contextuality of all Christian belief and practice. For contemporary American evangelical theology, a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation involves a reflexive retrieval of the rich Christian traditions that have grappled with the triangulating force of

God's love against instrumentalizing tendencies. Specifically, I located the early Anabaptist appropriation of German mystic Meister Eckhart's practice of *gelassenheit* as a prime source of retrieval.

Second, were the public dimensions of Christian moral reflection. For contemporary American evangelical theology, a postsecular revision of the theme of transformation involves a reflexive engagement with disciplines beyond its own that are also contemplating the moral and spiritual dimensions of capitalistic enterprise. Specifically, I located stakeholder theory in the field of business management as a prime source. It has emerged as the dominant heuristic for understanding the transformative role of enterprise in contributing to human flourishing. However, it too has come under pressure to sustain its heuristic against the polarizing effects of consumer capitalism's postsecular growth.

Accordingly, the primary audience of this thesis was identified as practical academic theologians, particularly constructive practical theologians interested in contributing to reflexive practice. The secondary audience was identified as stakeholder theory in the field of business ethics and postsecular theory in the field of sociology of religion.

9.2 Summary of Argument and Significant Findings

The significant achievement of this thesis has been the utilization of interdisciplinary and constructive practical theology to revise the theme of transformation for contemporary American evangelical theology that counters the individualist-materialist excessed of postsecular consumerist spirituality. This has come to fruition in the construction of a model for strengthening theological reflexivity in contemporary

American evangelical perceptions of enterprise that articulates a transformationalist vision resistant to the instrumentalizing tendencies of postsecular consumerist spirituality.

This model addresses two dimensions of theological reflexivity. First, is a conceptual inconsistency in the common articulation of the theme of transformation by restoring a scripturally-faithful relational ethic of triangulating love. Second, are the ambiguities of practice that invariably emerge for individuals and faith communities trying to live out such an ethic by facilitating critical reflection in the areas of relational bonds, possessions, and status that translates into concrete embodied practices.

This was accomplished in two stages. In Part One (Chapters One to Four), I elaborated the problem facing contemporary American evangelical theology. I first assessed the need in American evangelical theology for a movement away from classical foundationalist epistemologies, which have deemphasized the theological contextuality necessary for strengthening reflexivity. Then, I introduced and overviewed the theme of transformation. It was shown that capitalism's dynamic growth has resurfaced a long-standing theological debate in contemporary American evangelical theology about the nature of the kingdom of God and the responsibilities of Christians to transform society, but one in which sociohistorical variables have factored heavily into the theological ones.

Finally, I analyzed postsecularism as the broader religious and cultural backdrop in which the theme of transformation has evolved. By consumerizing spiritual practice, it has presented an opportunity by reconfiguring the public sphere to allow for more meaningful dialogue about the theological and religious aspects of capitalistic enterprise, but also, a dilemma because it exposes that American evangelicalism itself has contributed to its materialistic and individualistic dimensions. The problem facing a

postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation was defined as how to account for both.

In Part Two (Chapters Five to Seven), I shifted to an analysis of a resolution. I proposed that a postsecular renewal involves, first, an interdisciplinary engagement in the public sphere that subjects evangelical theology to critical correlation. After overviewing stakeholder theory as a dialogue partner, I showed how its struggle to capture the social dimensions of enterprise in a postsecular context provides contemporary American evangelical theology an opportunity to demonstrate the limits of capitalistic enterprise's contributions to human flourishing.

In the final two chapters, I built on this layer to propose a second element to a postsecular renewal of the theme of transformation: a contextualized retrieval of early Anabaptist spirituality's appropriation of Eckhart's practice of mystical *gelassenheit.* After positioning Eckhart's *gelassenheit* within the broader theological tradition of triangulating love, I showed how early Anabaptists applied it to counter what they perceived as increasing individualism and materialism. Finally, I drew out the implications for contemporary American evangelical theology's postsecular renewal. The hard-soft transformation spectrum was enhanced with a focus on the common life of faith communities that moves past the reductive categories of the "individual" and the "social" and provides a constructive model for strengthening reflexivity.

9.3 Original Contributions and Value

In my introduction, I identified the significant gaps in the scholarly literature that this thesis intended to fill as a critical synthesis of three broad conceptual streams: Christian theology, stakeholder theory, and postsecular theory. Each faces similar ethical

questions about the prolific expanse of market capitalism and would benefit from mutual dialogue. Thus far, the dialogue has been sparse, and my research intended to change that.

I can now identify several points of original scholarly contribution that have emerged from the thesis.

9.3.1 Primary Contributions

Original contribution number one is a viable and reproducible example of constructive, practical theology that challenges the silos of the traditional theological encyclopedia.

Since the 18th century, it has been standard in Western Christian theology to divide the discipline of theology into four subdisciplines: exegetical/biblical, systematic, historical, and practical. Focused on the intersection of theory and practice, the branch of practical theology has seen vital growth in the last quarter-century, especially in efforts to challenge the traditional encyclopedia and foster cross-discipline activity. However, one area that this has not occurred in is constructive theology, which has emerged mainly in systematic theology as a method for relating traditional Christian doctrines to contemporary questions of faith and ethics. This is striking given that questions of faith and ethics are at the heart of practical theology's concern for integrating theory and practice.

Working from the analytical-empirical current in practical theology, I have produced a constructive model for the strengthening of theological reflexivity. In so doing, I have also provided a reproducible blueprint for how practical theology can carry out its noble challenging of the silos of traditional theological encyclopedia with

constructive theological reflection that pulls from all four forms: historical, systematic, biblical/exegetical, and practical. This blueprint generates and applies practical theological frameworks sensitive to both theoretical and empirical concerns with the goal of contributing to a more effective harmonizing of "belief" and "practice."

Original contribution number two is n exercise in evangelical practical theology that utilizes practical theological methodologies without compromising evangelicalism's traditional emphasis on the Christian Scriptures and the kerygma.

As robust as the growth of contemporary practical theology has been, American evangelicalism has had very little representation within it. For its part, American evangelicalism has been suspicious of practical theology's emphasis on practice and experience in the formation of theological doctrine, viewing this emphasis as potentially undermining the hermeneutical priority of the Bible. For its part, practical theology has been suspicious of American evangelicalism's lack of critical self-reflection, viewing it as disconnected from the lived realities of faithful practice.

By utilizing practical theological methodology to strengthen reflexivity within contemporary American evangelical theology, I have pointed a viable way forward for future efforts in evangelical practical theology. My thesis addresses concerns on both sides. American evangelicalism now has an example of how practical theological frameworks can be utilized not just to honor but also advance its traditional emphasis on Scripture and kerygma. Practical theology now has an example of how American evangelicalism's respect for the hermeneutical priority of Scripture can contribute to faithful practice.

The way forward was demonstrated not just in the form of theological abstraction

but, more importantly, concrete embodied practices. These provide a means for faith communities to lean into the complexities of growing in faith in consumerist contexts, primarily in the form of pivotal questions that validate complexities rather than minimize them.

Original contribution number three is scholarly research on the contemporary American evangelical theological theme of transformation.

The theme of transformation is one of the primary conceptual apparatuses by which both contemporary American evangelical theologians and laypersons understand the effort to integrate religious faith and professional work. Yet, its expressions in evangelical theologies and lay evangelical faith communities have never been critically compared. My thesis has countered this by contributing full-orbed, mixed-method research on the theme of transformation. This has come in three robust layers. First, was a conceptual analysis of the current state of transformationalist thinking in contemporary American evangelical theology as a spectrum with hard and soft varieties at the poles. Second, was a historical-theological analysis of the roots of this spectrum, tracing its development back through 20th-century and pre-20th-century figures. Third, was a comparison of the conceptual spectrum to two rounds of focus group research with contemporary American evangelicals that saw representation from both hard and soft varieties.

Original contribution number four is demonstrating how traditional Anabaptist theological values can be summoned to offer a robust transformationalist vision for small-scale engagement.

Since its inception in the "radical" wing of the 15th- and 16th-century

Reformation movements of continental Europe, Anabaptist theology has balanced tension between separationist and transformationist poles that were distinctly apparent in its engagement with enterprise. The earliest Anabaptist communities were mainly separationist in their approach and maintained (with a few exceptions) a limited engagement with enterprise that was almost exclusively agricultural.

With the establishment of Anabaptist communities in North America, this approach continued mostly unchecked. However, beginning in the 20th century, moderating voices emerged within the Anabaptist tradition that called for greater engagement in enterprise, even to the extent of seeking to "transform" secular practices in the context of small communities. This thesis fills a gap in contemporary American Anabaptist theology by demonstrating how traditional Anabaptist theological convictions can be summoned to offer a robust transformationalist vision for small-scale engagement.

Original contribution number five is an exposition of the relatively neglected triangulating theology of love found in Eckhart's concept of *gelassenheit* that connects its utilization in early Anabaptist mysticism to contemporary postsecular spirituality.

Some of the earliest Anabaptist communities to emerge in the Reformation were in South Germany, and they are often categorized with the Rhineland mystic spirituality movement because of the appropriation of Meister Eckhart's emphasis on God's love by figures such as Thomas Müntzer and Hans Denk. Eckhart's theology of love is clearly expressed in the concept of *gelasseneheit*, representing one of the most significant but under-researched articulations of triangulating love in the Christian traditions. My thesis contributed to closing this gap by providing an analysis of Eckhart's scheme in its utilization by early Anabaptist spirituality to demonstrate its unique relevance and

applicability to contemporary efforts to resist the instrumentalizing tendencies of postsecular consumerist spirituality.

9.3.2 Secondary Contributions

Along with original contributions made to the primary audience, there are two additional original contributions made to the secondary audience.

Original contribution number seven is a resourcing of the moral framework of stakeholder theory with a robust theological account of intrinsicality.

Stakeholder theory has quickly emerged as the dominant heuristic in the field of business ethics for understanding the relationship of capitalistic enterprises with their broader constituencies. It calls for a shift away from prioritizing shareholder profit as the focus of an enterprise's value to its ability to profitably serve all its stakeholders. This shift has opened the door for meaningful challenges to the individualist and materialist excesses of capitalistic enterprise. While scholarly discussions in stakeholder theory have involved a number of interdisciplinary collaborators including sociology, psychology, and philosophy, theology has been largely absent.

This thesis contributes to this void by first bringing the two fields into comparative dialogue on the topic of the individualist and materialists excesses of postsecular consumerist spirituality. Then, showing how a practical theological framework can resource stakeholder theory's own moral framework with a robust account of intrinsicality.

Developing intrinsic goods such as character and compassion in organizational settings have become of greater focus as cultural and social understandings of organizations have shifted. Whereas the scientific era of management pictured

organizations as fined-tuned machines operating on control and efficiency, greater awareness of social complexities within organizational life has altered this picture to one of "soft machines" that require normativity and consensus (Baumann, 1991).

Out of this paradigm, normative stakeholder theory emerged with a conceptual framework that has a striking resemblance to the moral framework supporting *gelassenheit* (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005). Rather than grounding the purpose of a firm in the maximization of shareholder self-interest, stakeholder theory grounds the purpose of the firm in the well-being of its community of stakeholders. What stakeholder theory lacks in and of itself—apart from philosophical or theological resourcement—is a convincing moral imperative for such a shift in understanding. *Gelassenheit's* ethic of triangulating love can provide a robust defense of the ability to triangulate love to advance relational health in organizational settings in ways that self-interested utility cannot.

Original contribution number eight is a comparison of stakeholder theory and postsecular theory's shared conceptual framework that points to the need for a revising of the "individual" and "social" categories.

As with stakeholder theory, likewise, postsecular theory in the discipline of the sociology of religion has emerged as a dominant heuristic for understanding the implications of capitalistic enterprise for its field, displacing an entrenched one. It has overturned secularization theory's long-held consensus that the economic and social modernization of Western society would displace religions to contend that religious expression has not entirely dissipated but rather shifted. Thus far, there has been a little critical comparison of the two theories even though they have both developed against the

backdrop of the rapid growth of consumer capitalism. This thesis contributes to the closing of this gap by showing how both theories have been pressed to their explanatory limits because of their dependence on a homo-duplex framework.

9.4 Limitations of the Study and Areas for Future Research

All research studies face limitations that can affect or influence the interpretation of findings. One of the core values informing my approach to this topic has been brevity. Too much scholarly theological research has been made inaccessible to faith communities because it is not presented in concise and clear forms, practical theology included. The nature of my topic demanded that I pull from a broad range of scholarly fields, but with assertions relevant to the realities of everyday faith communities. My advisors challenged me to accomplish this in as few words as possible, and I believe that I have. During the course of my research, however, certain limitations were encountered, and areas of future research emerged that are important to highlight.

The first limitation relates to the research methodology. In critically analyzing the theme of transformation in contemporary American evangelical theology, I chose a blended research approach that combined conceptual analysis with focus groups and case studies. The qualitative components did provide tremendous texture, but the scope of applicability was narrow, and I ended up excluding that material from the final draft per the recommendations of my examiners. An opportunity for future research would be a larger-scale mixed methods study of contemporary American evangelical beliefs about transformation that could supplement qualitative research with quantitative survey research. This would enable large conclusions to be drawn about the population.

A second limitation also relating to research methodology was my position as an

"insider" to the research subject. In my introduction, I described my own theological framework as outside of traditional evangelicalism, but I also stated that my upbringing and schooling had primarily been in evangelical environments. Throughout the research process, I was careful to use as neutral language as possible in describing evangelical concepts and norms. I also sought out critical evaluation of my research from informed evangelicals and non-evangelicals to balance the perspective. However, no amount of contextualization could change my position as an insider and the effects that this might have on the analysis. An opportunity for future research would be for a non-insider to assess the theme of transformation using similar methodology to see how his or her conclusions compared to my own.

A third limitation relates to the use of the Anabaptist tradition of *gelassenheit* for the source of critical historical analysis. While the 15th- and 16th-century South German Anabaptist movement provided many parallels to contemporary American evangelical theology's interaction with a consumerist society, it was also greatly distanced by time. This limited the ability to draw direct connections between a post-industrial sociohistorical context and a pre-industrial one. An area for future research would be the building of a model of reflexivity using a more current faith community as a point of triangulation to determine if that model provides any additional sources for reflexivity.

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