2016

The New Monastics and the Changing Face of American Evangelicalism

William A. Samson
University of Kentucky, will.samson@gmail.com
Digital Object Identifier: http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.039

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

William A. Samson, Student

Dr. Dwight Billings, Major Professor

Dr. Ana S. Liberato, Director of Graduate Studies

THE NEW MONASTICS AND THE CHANGING
FACE OF AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM

Dissertation

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

William A Samson

Lexington, Kentucky

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE NEW MONASTICS AND THE CHANGING
FACE OF AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM

American Evangelicalism is, indeed, "embattled and thriving," as Smith et. al. (1998) have suggested, thriving precisely because it has remained in an embattled state as it cyclically seeks to establish itself as a counter to the dominant culture. However, over the last 40 years American Evangelicalism has become ingrained in the dominant culture and a new group of young Evangelicals are establishing themselves as the counter to that culture and thus defining themselves against Evangelicalism itself. Employing Smith's (1998) "sub-cultural identity" theory of religious strength while drawing on interviews with movement leaders, members and published writings, the following research provides an overview of four social movements within Evangelicalism – Evangelical Environmentalism, social justice Christianity, the Emerging Church and New Monasticism – suggesting that these groups represent a social movement area seeking to draw a distinction in identity with American Evangelicalism. Then, drawing on over two hundred hours of in-depth interviews with 40 New Monastic leaders and community members, combined with analysis of the writings of New Monastic movement leaders, the research focuses in specifically on the identity-making activities of New Monasticism, examining the ways in which this movement seeks to influence beliefs, practices and conceptions of place within American Evangelicalism.

Keywords: sociology of religion, American evangelicalism, religious social movements

William A Samson

March 29, 2016

THE NEW MONASTICS AND THE CHANGING
FACE OF AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM

By

William A Samson

<u>   Dwight Billings, PhD</u>

Director of Dissertation

<u>   Ana S. Liberato</u>

Director of Graduate Studies

<u>   March 29, 2016</u>

Table of Contents

Chapter One – Introduction

American Evangelicalism is embattled. As one young Evangelical put it recently,

> Our pastors might not like it, but the world is changing, and we are changing with
> it. Unless the evangelical church in America can adapt and evolve, it might not
> survive in a postmodern world (Evans 2010).

James D. Hunter (1983) predicted thirty years ago that Evangelicalism would struggle
under the "quandary of modernity," a prediction that was echoed in 2009 when The
Christian Science Monitor suggested there was a "coming Evangelical collapse" (Spencer
2009). Despite the prognostications and attention grabbing headlines about changes to
Evangelicalism, the reality is that Evangelicalism thrives in an embattled state and has
remained in that state for the life of the movement, at least to the extent that it has been
described as a movement as a whole. When writing about American Evangelicalism,
Christian Smith and Michael Emerson chose to use the subtitle *Embattled and Thriving* to
describe modern-day Evangelicals (Smith and Emerson 1998).

What is the source of this constant state of embattlement? One answer may lie
within the very cultural DNA of American Evangelicals (AE). A quote from Smith and
Emerson (1998) illustrates this point:

> American Evangelicalism, we contend, is strong not because it is shielded against,
> but because it is – or at least perceives itself to be – embattled with forces that
> seem to oppose or threaten it. Indeed, Evangelicalism, we suggest, thrives on
> distinction, engagement, tension, conflict and threat.

Thus there is a perceived need within AE to draw a contrast with the culture (Marsden 1991, Smith and Emerson 1998, Penning and Smidt 2002). AE draws its movement strength from this contrast. Yet it is also *evangelical* in the sense that it seeks to impart conceptions of Christian truth in a way that gains adherents. This quest drives an ongoing and cyclical pursuit for accommodation within the movement, a tendency that will be explained below from a historical, cultural and social movemental perspective. By using this as a frame from which to approach AE, it will become apparent that the ongoing dialogue within the movement between accommodation and distinction is what primarily helps the movement to thrive.

If distinction from the dominant culture is deeply embedded in the cultural identity of American Evangelicalism, what happens when American Evangelicalism becomes deeply embedded in the culture? As Michael Lindsay so effectively points out, Evangelicals have, after spending much of their movement life on the outs with the dominant culture, moved well into the "halls of power" in business, government and other critical sectors of America over the past generation (Lindsay 2007). Thus a logical next question is this: *Are younger Evangelicals simply following their own patterns and turning against Evangelicalism itself?* If, as Lindsay has suggested, AE has become a dominant force within American mainstream culture then could it be true that younger evangelicals, as they seek to create distinction against the reigning culture, are creating distinction against the previous generation of Evangelicals who "now wield power in just about every segment of American society" (p. 208).

Research Question:

The following research will seek to investigate whether young Evangelicals are indeed creating a distinctive space and position against dominant culture in the United States, a culture that now includes even their own religious tradition. This study is not meant to be an exhaustive survey of Evangelicals, but instead a preliminary examination of four social movements, with primary emphasis on New Monasticism, that are seeking to shift the beliefs and practices of Evangelical Christianity in the United States. Employing Smith's "sub-cultural identity" theory of religious strength will allow this project to draw on both interviews with movement leaders and content analysis as a way of providing an analysis of the following social movements within Evangelicalism: the Evangelical Environmental Movement (EEM), the Evangelical Social Justice Movement (ESJM), the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) and New Monasticism (NM). I intend to show that these groups represent a grouping of movements or a "social movement area" (Melucci 1997) that seeks to draw a distinction in identity both with and within American Evangelicalism in terms of 1) beliefs, 2) practices and 3) conceptions of place. I will also provide an overview of major historical and cultural forces that are shaping questions of identity and belonging for younger American Evangelicals as a way of providing background to the primary research questions that will be investigated. Drawing on site visits to five communities, ethnographic analysis and over two hundred hours of in-depth interviews with 40 New Monastic leaders and community members, and combining this with an examination of the writings of New Monastic movement leaders will allow me to examine the identity-making activities of New Monasticism and

specifically explicate the ways in which this movement seeks to impact beliefs, practices and conceptions of place within American Evangelicalism.

One overarching question will be investigated by this project: *How are Evangelicals who came of age in the last thirty years reacting against the beliefs, practices, and conceptions of place of American Evangelicalism in the contemporary context?* In order to answer this overarching question, I will seek to answer three interrelated questions. First, how have historic and cultural conditions set the stage for younger Evangelicals to stand both within and against American Evangelicalism itself? Next, how can some of the manifestations of this reaction against American Evangelicalism be explained in terms of social movement theory? Finally, how does New Monasticism, as a social movement that grows out of American Evangelicalism, work to change beliefs and practices for younger American Evangelicals?

A Note on American Evangelicalism

This research will look at the ways in which younger Evangelicals are reacting to the beliefs, practices and conceptions of place within American Evangelicalism. A broader discussion of practices and conceptions of place occurs later in the work. Regarding the beliefs of Evangelicals, it can be said that all Evangelicals adhere to the following dictums:

- The authority of scripture;
- The atoning work of Christ;
- The need for conversion;
- The need for the converted to seek to convert others;

- The importance of being a distinct culture (Collins 2005).

However, it is important to note that this work is only concerned with *American* Evangelicalism; thus, the current examination is contained largely within an American context except where specifically noted. A brief explanation is due as to why this choice was made.

In terms of beliefs, and even many practices surrounding evangelization, American Evangelicals look quite similar to Evangelicals from other Western contexts around the world. However, in the course of my research I was confronted on many occasions by non-American Evangelical interviewees from England and Australia. During these confrontations I noted key differences between American Evangelicalism and that of the rest of the world, especially with regard to civic engagement.

Consider, for example, that Richard Cizik, the then head of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), was nearly fired in 2006 for encouraging Evangelicals to care about the environment. By contrast, the Evangelical Alliance of England, a group that serves the same function for Evangelicals in England as the NAE does for American Evangelicals, is deeply involved in caring for the environment, as well as a whole range of other social issues including poverty and developing world debt. (England) One new monastic member originally from Australia spoke of his complete bafflement at those events:

> "I grew up in Australia as part of an evangelical church family. I was taught the importance of social holiness and social justice. I attended gatherings to protest the deconstruction of labor unions, the decimation of indigenous communities, the exclusion of immigrants and refugees, and the failure of Governmental agencies to care for the poor. When I arrived in the United States

as a 24 year old, I was shocked to see evangelicalism exclusively associated with personal and private piety. It was a kind of Christianity I had never seen and to this day barely recognize as the faithfulness of that first century Palestinian Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. As I enter the seventeenth year of my vocation as a Christian missionary in the United States, I'm still shocked by the divide between American Evangelicalism and the Evangelicalism I experience in Australia and the United Kingdom."

Further evidence of this distinction is seen in the fact that during his lifetime John Stott, perhaps the most well-known Evangelical outside of America, was an active participant in *A Rocha*,[1] a group that describes itself as "an international Christian organization which, inspired by God's love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects." It is true that there are some well-known American Evangelicals, such as Eugene Peterson, who argue for environmental stewardship and other types of social civic engagement outside of the issues traditionally consigned to American Evangelical political engagement, namely abortion and issues of sexuality. However, I will contend in my historical and cultural analysis of American Evangelicalism that such evangelicals are the exception and not the norm. Further, I will argue that the lack of civic engagement outside of sexual issues among American Evangelicals is essential to the grievance claims of all four of the post-Evangelical movements examined in this document.

Chapter Outlines

The chapters that follow come in a straightforward and direct manner. After an introduction, the second chapter is then dedicated to theory and methods. The theoretical portion of this chapter advances the belief that religion serves to create and delineate one's identity, and that identity is often in opposition to the dominant, hegemonic frame.

---

[1] http://www.arocha.org/int-en/index.html

6

Additionally, the theoretical components introduced in Chapter Two advance a theory of place, the notion that geography and cultural location play a significant role in how we conceive of ourselves in relation to the outside world.

The Methods portion of the second chapter detail the ways in which data were gathered, recorded and coded. While more detail is provided in that chapter, the summary version of my methods are that I largely chose a qualitative approach to data analysis and relied heavily on site visits and interviews.

Chapter Three provides a positionality statement. This is an attempt to provide some autoethnographic information about me that clearly identifies my cultural link to the communities I study. This information is provided both as a means of locating me within the communities of research, but also as a way of discussing the steps I took to avoid bias.

Chapter Four describes the history and culture of AE. Social movements always have historical and cultural contexts that must be understood to interpret the broader movement. I argue in this chapter that two historical forces – therapeutism and militaristic moralism – have arisen with AE and are shaping the actions of younger evangelicals. Additionally, cultural forces such as the desire for intellectual rigor and the marketization of evangelicalism combine with historical forces to allow younger evangelicals to conceive of ways in which they can break with AE.

Chapter Five describes four social movements that, taken together, represent a broader social movement area[2] that can be described as "post-evangelical. The movements are the Evangelical Environmental Movement (EEM), the Evangelical Social Justice Movement (ESJM), the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) and New Monasticism (NM). This chapter substantiates my claim that, while New Monasticism is a numerically small movement, it is part of a larger movement away from American evangelicalism.

Chapter Six identifies the origins of New Monasticism. This chapter describes the guiding principles of New Monastic communities, called the *12 Marks of New Monasticism.* These marks are the organizing principles of New Monastic communities. Further, this chapter describes how these marks are used in the daily life of New Monastic communities.

Chapter Seven identifies New Monasticism as a Post-Evangelical Movement. This chapter will demonstrate how New Monastic communities serve as an alternative to American evangelicalism in terms of beliefs, practices and conceptions of place.

Finally, I conclude this research with a summary of finding. Additionally, I offered some thoughts on the implications of New Monasticism for the future of American evangelicalism.

---

[2] The concept of social movement areas allows the researcher to note the relationship between individual new social movements that, while existing in a diffuse set of social networks, nonetheless possess important bridging ties among movement actors, organizations and grievance (Degenne and Forsé 1999)

Chapter Two – Theory and Methods

New Monasticism is part of a much larger movement area of American Post-Evangelicals. But what are the tools that will provide a better understanding of the ways in which NM leaders and actors are working out grievances against American Evangelicalism itself? Below I provide brief overviews of theoretical tools and conclude each description with a theoretical proposition that will be used in analyzing New Monasticism.

Theory

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory is a theoretical attempt to make up for deficiencies in the existing social movement literature, largely out of the realization that the existing theories cannot explain fully or well contemporary social actions. Collective behavior theory posited that "The cause of civil violence … was the breakdown of rational control over human behavior through the spread of what one might call 'crowd mentality." (Snow, Soule et al. 2004)

This collective behavior theory, based largely on Durkheimian concepts of anomie, has at least two deficiencies with regard to explaining current social actions. First, the notion of anomie and its conception of alienation from a governing set of norms (Durkheim 1952) assumes a kind of systemic singularity not reflective of today's social movement cultures. Second, the notion that social movements reflect some kind of "contagion" (Soule 2004) is belied by the rational, organized approach many movements

9

have taken to achieve specific outcomes. Research increasingly shows movement actors must negotiate a series of norms within an increasingly interconnected and interdependent set of networks, and these characteristics do not support the collective behaviorist approach.

The relative deprivation theory of social movements assumes that "people assess their current situation against various reference groups, or past or anticipated future situations" (Buechler 2004) and act in social ways to correct inequalities, mostly in the form of economic inequalities. What this model cannot explain, however, is why certain social movement actors would work toward ends that do not benefit their pocketbooks. In other words, what relative deprivation theory cannot explain is why certain social actors with high degrees of social capital would act in ways that do not benefit their financial bottom line.

This inability is particularly acute when examining religiously-based social movements. Catholic priests who join with the poor during the South American Liberation Theology movements (Smith 1991) and urban New Monastics who hand out to perfect strangers ten thousand dollars on Wall Street (Claiborne 2006) hardly can be conceived as working toward solving theirs, or for that matter, their constituencies, relative deprivation. The relative deprivation theory does not explain the "downardly mobile" (23). And, while it may explain the motives of certain movement actors, for example, within the Liberation Theology movement, it cannot fully explain the impulses of the original movement actors who, by virtue of their education and class status, were not deprived, economically or psychologically, of resources.

New social movement theorists increasingly see weaknesses in the Durkheimian, collective action based model and in the relative deprivation theory. Another model employed to explain social movements is *resource mobilization*. Resource mobilization (RM) is sometimes spoken of within the new social movements conversation (Buechler 1997, Johnston 1997, Melucci 1997). RM is a means of explaining movements in terms of the gathering and use of capital, both financial and social, to bring about desired ends. Whereas certain earlier social movement theories saw social strain and alienation as the means by which movements were able to recruit and radicalize movement actors, resource mobilization theory sees social action arising from the rational application of resources to bring about a specific goal, usually political in nature (See (McCarthy 1977, McAdam 1982, Buechler 1995). It follows that, at least according to resource mobilization theorists, those groups with the best organized set of resources – be it financial support, organizational or political skills, etc. – is more likely to be effective in reaching its goals in the political arena.

Resource mobilization (RM) theory is a move away from Durkheim in the direction of Marx. Rather than holding to a structural-functional approach that saw collective behavior as expressing some aberration from a broad social consensus, resource mobilization employs a model of conflict-based social action. Social movements occur, according to resource mobilization theory, along established lines of social cleavage. In this sense, RM corrects the notion that large-scale actions occur in response to anomic threats brought about by rapid change in the society or its norms.

Rather than seeing movements as irrational and non-institutional, RM sees movement actions as the structured attempt to make political gains. Inequality,

exploitation, and oppression must be seen within context. As such, the existence of these qualities was necessary but not sufficient to explain the development and sustaining of a social movement. The transition from the observance of the social condition to action upon that condition, RM proponents would argue, requires the presence of resources and societal expectations about the desirability of, and possibility for, social change (Tilly 1978).

One particularly useful example of resource mobilization theory is the political process model employed by McAdam and others (McAdam 1982, Smith 1991, Smith 2003). Writing about the civil rights movement, McAdams sees social movements as demonstrating three common conditions that explain the rise of social movements: 1) political opportunity, 2) the strength of social movement organizations, and 3) the belief that social change is both necessary and possible. But the core assumption, namely that organizations act when the political opportunity presents itself, is belied by movements like the protests against the World Trade Organization in the late 1990's. These protests were ones in which the actors consciously created the political opportunity themselves and were only loosely organized in a traditional way (Tarrow 2005). This weakness provides room for a broader theory of social movements, the new social movement theory that emerged, at least initially, out of the European academy (Buechler 1997).

New social movement theories spring from some of the same questions as resource mobilization theory, but are far more concerned with certain identified weaknesses of the Marxist view of social movements as principally class-based struggles around the means and mode of economic production. This move was needed because advances brought about by the civil rights movements, workers' movements in Europe,

and various other gains of classes within organized democratic states seemingly had diminished the impact of the class struggle and raised the importance of questions about symbolic and cultural production more typical of the postindustrial age – factors which Habermas calls the "grammar of life" (Habermas 1981).

Buechler has identified four important European theorists within new social movement theory. Manuel Castells (Spain) focuses largely on urban issues by looking at the role of capital production and framing within the creation of movements focused on new urbanism of Europe. Alan Tourraine (France) seeks to conceive of the ways in which social movements will operate after "the passing of metasocial guarantees of social order" (298), or after the diminishment of governing social norms that will universally understood in various cultures around the globe. Jürgen Habermas (Germany) speaks of social movements and how they respond to the "colonization of the lifeworld" brought about by the intrusion of capitalist markets and government bureaucracies (i.e. money and power) into domains in which communicative action better serves the needs of social reproduction. Finally, Alberto Melucci (Italy) looks at social movements as facilitating "cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization" within the "postmodern world" (300). Taken together, Buechler (1997) suggests six themes that characterize new social movements:

1. Symbolic action in civil society or the cultural sphere as a major arena for collective action alongside instrumental action in the state or political sphere, (See also (Cohen 1985, Melucci, Keane et al. 1989);

2. The importance of processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of strategies for maximizing influence and power (see also (Habermas 1984, Rucht 1988);

3. The role of postmaterialist values, rather than conflicts over material resources (see also (Inglehart 1990);

4. The problematization of constructing collective identity and identifying group interests; this stands in opposition to the functional approach to problems as structurally determined (see also (Benford 1997, Johnston 1997);

5. The socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology (see also (Johnston 1997);

6. Recognition of a variety of submerged, latent and temporary networks that often undergird collective action; this stands in opposition to the structural notion of clearly defined and centralized organizations (Melucci, Keane et al. 1989).

Defining a Social Movement Area

New social movement theory provides the framework for analyzing movements as post-materialist movements with socially constructed grievances. The concept of social movement areas allows the researcher to note the relationship between individual new social movements that, while existing in a diffuse set of social networks, nonetheless possess important bridging ties among movement actors, organizations and grievance (Degenne and Forsé 1999).

Melucci defines a social movement area as:

… the network of groups or individuals sharing a conflictual culture and a collective identity. This definition includes not only "formal" organizations but also the network of "informal" relationships connecting core individuals and groups to a broader area of participants and "users" of services and cultural goods produced by the movement (Melucci, 1997: p. 264).

To illustrate a social movement area, consider any given city in America and what you might find if you researched food issues in that local context. You might talk to community gardening activists who toil alongside food educators who are, in their workshops, serving food grown on local, organic farms. Each of those organizations, formal or not, would likely have a slightly differently defined movement goal. The community gardening activist and the organizations they form may be motivated by neighborhood redevelopment, food poverty or perhaps even something as simple as aesthetics. The food educator may be the head of an organization whose stated goal is to help prevent treatable disease in adults by changing the eating habits of children. The local organic farm may be motivated by creating financially sustainable models to grow healthy food. And yet, while we could define each movement, organization or actor as having different goals, one can easily conceive of those groups existing in the same area and participating in the creation of the same or complementary cultural goods. My research indicates that the four movements I am referencing – EEM, ESJM, ECM and NM – comprise such a movement area. As such, they are more significant collectively than any of them would be on their own.

Smith's Sub-Culture Identity

The broad framework under which I will analyze these movements is Smith's
subculture theory of religious strength, which he defines as the following:

> In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which
> better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear
> distinctions from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant
> outgroups, short of becoming generally countercultural (Smith and Emerson
> 1998).

Theoretical Proposition: *New Monastic actors and leaders are, through the creation of
distinct communities of witness, very true to the American Evangelical impulse to create
distinction from the dominant culture.*

Cultural and Historical Analysis

I also will employ cultural and historical analysis as a means to study NM. I will
discuss two major historical forces and two major cultural influences shaping American
Evangelicalism. With regard to history, these forces are the militaristic moralism of the
religious right and the therapeutism of the mega-church movement. Culture will provide
a lens to understand the way in which two forces, *intellectualization* and *marketization*,
are both the "consequence of movement efforts" on the part of American Evangelicalism
and the "concerns motivating activists" (Williams 2004) on the part of the New
Monastics.

Theoretical Proposition: *That New Monasticism is the direct result of several previous generations of Evangelicals and their efforts to shape history and culture in particular ways.*

Religion as Opposition

A dominant theme in the interviews I conducted was the way in which many younger Evangelicals felt the need for counter-hegemonic discourse that spoke against the therapeutism, militaristic moralism and the lack of place many younger Evangelicals felt in the homogenous mega-churches in which they were raised. Billings (1990), and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) both speak of the ways in which religion can serve as a mobilizing force against the dominance of a social group. New Monasticism conceives of itself as a counter to the dominance of American Evangelicalism; Billings, Laclau and Mouffe provide a framework for analyzing this opposition.

Theoretical Proposition: *New Monasticism is a deliberate use of religion to counter what movement members perceive as power struggle.*

Framing and Ideology

It is Goffman (1974) who introduces the notion of framing and frame analysis as a means of explaining the ways in which human actors seek to explain their social actions. In this, Goffman conveys the notion that language, and the ways in which it is employed, not only yields significant insight into what people think, but in the ways in which language is used to motivate social change (Goffman 1974). Framing is picked up and amplified as an explanation for social movements in the works of many theorists

(Benford and Snow 2000, Benford and Snow 2000, Oliver 2000, Snow 2004). Framing, as articulated by Benford and Snow (2000), accomplishes three core tasks. These are "diagnostic framing (problem identification and attributions), prognostic framing, and motivational framing" (p. 6). By pursuing these core framing tasks, movement actors attend to the interrelated problems of "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization". Simply put, the former fosters or facilitates agreement whereas the latter fosters action, moving people from the balcony to the barricades.

Framing involves four processes: 1) frame bridging, 2) frame amplification, 3) frame extension, and 4) frame transformation (Benford and Snow 2000). Bridging involves the process of connecting "two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (Benford and Snow 2000). A practical example of this would be connecting movement actors working against mountaintop removal mining (MTR) in Appalachia with activists working on issues of job creation in that area. They have, in theory, different concerns. Frame bridging allows those movements to be connected by the common bonds they share.

Frame amplification is a concept used to describe the means by which social movements seek to strengthen the voice of a movement by connecting it to "existing cultural values, beliefs, narratives, folk wisdom and the like" (15). Continuing with the mountaintop removal mining example, MTR activists create protest songs that are based on Appalachian gospel folk songs. This illustrates the fact that amplification is largely an activity that is driven by "conscience constituents who are strikingly different from the movement beneficiaries" (Billings, 1990).

Frame extension involves widening the circle of those whom the movement

desires to see as beneficiaries of the movement activity. NM activists, for example, seek

to make the issues confronting their neighbors in distressed urban areas part of the larger

sphere of concerns for the whole of AE.

Finally, with regard to the processes of framing in social movements, frame

transformation "refers to changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating

new ones" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). These understandings and meanings bond together

to form chains of signification, or ways in which these beliefs, held together, prohibit

new beliefs and actions. Frame transformation, as discussed in in the works of Laclau and

Mouffe, can be used to break the power of, or reshape, these chains of signification.

Theoretical Proposition: *New Monastic actors and leaders employ distinct and*

significant language for the purpose of moving American Evangelicalism away from

what they perceive as its failings with regard to therapeutism and militaristic moralism.

Religion and Civic Engagement

I will draw on the work of Fred Kniss (2004) to explore the topic of civic

engagement. This allows me to discuss, in my analysis of new monasticism, the role of

"communal hermeneutics" below through the lens of what Kniss (2004) calls "centers of

moral authority." That discussion allows me to define new monasticism as unique among

the four movements that are the focus of my analysis. My analysis and interviews suggest

that Evangelical Environmentalism and Social Justice Christianity employ a literalist

hermeneutic. They read the bible and believe they should seek to follow in a direct and

literal manner. Thus, they care for the Earth or they care for the poor because the bible told them so.

By contrast, the emerging church is driven largely by a communal hermeneutic. While they still look to the bible for guidance, they also look to the community to determine moral action in the public sphere, especially in areas not explicitly addressed in the Bible. New Monasticism seems alone among the American Post-Evangelical movements in that it is seeking to incorporate both interpretive lenses – the Biblical and communal – to define its beliefs, practices and concepts of place.

Theoretical Proposition: *New Monasticism employs a communal hermeneutic for reading the biblical text and for engage in civil society.*

A Theory of Place

The final theme is, for lack of a more precise term, the idea of "placelessness," or a disconnection from physical space. Place-based thinking is an emerging field of analysis in sociology as the discipline becomes more aware of "the importance of local context in constituting social worlds" (Fine 2010). Wilson-Hartgrove (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008) addresses this issue head on in his book, *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture* when he notes that "in a culture that is characterized by unprecedented mobility and speed, I am convinced that the most important thing most of us can do to grow spiritually is to stay in the place where we are" (36). To see evidence of the importance of place in the New Monastic movement, one need only look at the first mark of New Monasticism, "relocation to the abandoned places of empire" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008). New Monastics believe that certain places need to be reclaimed and they take that

admonition seriously. Secondly, place also relates directly to context. Thus, in an interview, Wilson-Hartgrove told me about the importance of his neighborhood and what he was learning by committing to stay put in a place where he was not a member of the majority. Third, place has a strong relationship with hermeneutics and how texts are interpreted. The following quote, while from a leader in the emerging church, rather than New Monasticism, nonetheless demonstrates this point well:

> … there is a shift in the seat of authority. It isn't in the wisdom of the village leaders or the deep pockets of the factory owners or the knowledge of the corporate executives. Authority is found in the way our experiences come together and create reality. It is found in relationships. We tend to be suspicious of objectivity, uncertain if it is possible or even desirable. Authority – as much as anything else in the Inventive Age – is user generated (Pagitt 2010).

It remains to be seen whether the New Monastic lifestyle is qualitatively different than their mega-church forbearers. While many choose to live among the poor, few New Monastics are more than a phone call away from prosperity. Indeed, when many choose to grow their own food, few will struggle to pay for basic needs at the grocery store. Future research on this topic of therapeutism vis-à-vis New Monasticism should explore the question of whether or not the New Monastics are simply choosing an aesthetic that makes them distinct.

Theoretical Proposition: *New Monasticism can be viewed as a direct response to a sense of placelessness that movement members observe and feel.*

Methods

Given my background, I cannot, nor do I have any desire to, portray myself as an outside observer of American Evangelicalism, its various post-Evangelical movements or New Monasticism. I have been to the weddings of new monastic community leaders. I have attended the family gatherings of new monastic communities. I was on the organizing committee for the PAPA Fest. PAPA Fest stands for "People Against Poverty and Apathy" and was for several years an annual gathering for New Monastic members. I have camped in the new monastic area at the Wild Goose Festival, an art, music and social justice festival that draws heavily from various streams of American Post-Evangelicalism. I am at best a participant observer.

This standpoint fits well with the research approach I intend to bring to all future projects as an academic. I conceive of myself as doing *public sociology* (Burawoy 2007), a phrase Michael Burawoy offered in a 2004 speech to the American Sociological Association. He defines public sociology this way:

> "Public sociology, by contrast, strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other." (Burawoy 2004, 9)

I do not offer the concept of public sociology arrogantly, as if to say that academic theory is unimportant. If there is one thing my experience has taught me, it is that the ideas of the future must always take seriously the ideas of the past.

Any student of sociology can quickly come up with a list of theories that were taken quite seriously at the time, but are no longer held in high regard. For example, few in the academy would concur with Davis and Moore's argument that poverty has a positive structural function to play in society. Yet, when that idea was offered in 1945, when functionalist explanations tended to dominate the American sociological academy, Davis and Moore's arguments were accepted as academically sound explanations for societal inequality.

I also hope to offer my research from the perspective of what Kniss and Burns speak of as *religion qua religion* (Kniss and Burns 2004). Their idea is that standpoint is critical to understanding a social group, and, in order to more fully understand the narrative of a religious group, one must allow its participants to speak from the perspective of their own religious beliefs and practices. Thus my selection of my research question was not something I stumbled upon in doctoral coursework. Rather, my selection of New Monasticism as a research topic is drawn from, and informed by, my experience. As such, I do not claim to stand outside of the group of which I am writing.

I do, however, strive for objectivity in the selection of interview sites and subjects, as well as my interpretation of their experiences. While I have relationships with dozens of New Monastic communities, I have been able to narrow the list down to five specific communities that I believe represent the breadth of the movement. I provide explanation for the selection of these five communities in Chapter Six.

One other decision was to conduct interviews with several members of communities as opposed to conducting a more detailed ethnography in a single New

Monastic community. I chose multiple interviews for two reasons. First, except for summers, I taught full time during the 15 months in which the research and writing of this work occurred. I simply did not have the ability to travel to another location and spend a significant amount of time there. Second, I was more interested in the kind of data I would get from interviews at multiple sites as opposed to a single location. This strategy allowed me to generate a broader range of interview data. This is particularly important when comparing New Monastic communities against existing theories about religious life.

I am going to make the claim that, to the best of my ability, this research is grounded in a *rooted phronesis*. Phronesis is the Aristotlean concept of practical judgment, common sense, or prudence that Flyvbjerg promotes as a necessary component of social science research methods (Flyvbjerg 2001). Flyvbjerg offers a critique of social science in his work, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again*. After arguing that social sciences have not succeeded in providing the rigor of natural sciences, he offers the notion of phronesis,[3] the Aristotelian notion of the virtue of practical thought, as a path forward for the social sciences. This stands in contrast to episteme, a term that comes from the Greek word "to know" and is at the core of the historically defined scientific method.

This notion provides a particularly important methodological framework for the social sciences that simply are unable to make the same kind of truth claims as natural science. Phronetic social science does not discount theory and methods well accepted in

---

[3] Introducing *phronesis* as a method could seem to be in contrast to the broad and comparative methodologies used throughout the work. I contend that this practical judgment provided a framework for making research decisions like which sites to choose and which leaders to interview.

the academy. Rather, in Flyvbjerg's conception of its use, it provides an analytical tool for determining which theories and methods best apply to the research question.

Rootedness is a way of describing the importance of a deep understanding of a context when evaluating a social movement (see Tarrow 2005, 29-30), even if that movement is connected to global and diffuse networks that share movement area space. Taken together, rooted phronesis conveys the idea of the value of place and subjective knowledge in determining the appropriate academic approaches for determining one's research question, site selection, question set and data gathering.

Interviews

I gathered over two hundred hours of interview data from 40 New Monastic leaders or community members. These interviews were conducted through a combination of site visits at five New Monastic communities that occurred between August of 2007 and May of 2009. These five sites were:

1. The Simple Way, Philadelphia, PA

2. Camden House, Camden, NJ

3. Rutba House, Durham, NC

4. Englewood Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN

5. Communality, Lexington, KY

I also conducted interviews and participant observations at New Monastic events, specifically the PAPA Fest and the Family Gathering. Additionally, I conducted twenty hours of interviews with leaders from each of the other three social movements that I

define as part of American Post-Evangelicalism in order to help clarify the distinctions I wish to draw among the various movements.

One of the questions I needed to answer was this – which communities should I visit?[4] An online listing of New Monastic communities has more than 200 locations. It would be difficult and not statistically significant to try and gather data from all of these communities. A more meaningful method would be qualitative interviews at a subset of these communities. I chose the five communities I interviewed for the following reasons.

Movement actors led three of the communities I chose (The Simple Way – Shane Claiborne, Camden House – Chris Haw, Rutba House – Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove). This made their inclusion in the research obvious. Communality in Lexington, KY was chosen because it was geographically proximate for my research and because it was a community of which I had been a part and of which I had personal knowledge. Englewood Christian Church was chosen because it represents an interesting contrast to the other communities; rather than being a breakaway community with no pre-defined governing structure, it was an attempt to birth a New Monastic community within the confines of a larger, denominationally defined church.

At each site I had a minimum of two separate one-week visits. This provided me the ability to become more integrated into the daily life of these communities and to observe things I might not have seen from interviews alone. I did conduct interviews – at least two hours with each member of the five communities. But the first-hand observation

---

[4] In addition to questions about which communities to visit, I also contended with the question of visiting five communities, leading to a broader view, versus spending more in-depth time in only one community. I recognize that selecting only one community would have given me a different perspective, but I chose to visit five distinct communities in the belief they represented more of a spectrum of the movement.

of daily life in these communities – viewing daily prayer services, mealtimes, and community meetings where hard conversations were had – provided rich qualitative data to the overall picture of life in these communities.

Most of the interview data was recorded on a Marantz PMD660 recorder. I made the decision before embarking on the research to invest in a quality recorder and the decision proved wise. For example, one interview with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove was on his porch, on an urban street, in the middle of a rainstorm. I still could hear every word. For each of the recorded interviews, I also took hand notes to remind me of questions the interviewee's response raised, questions that I could revisit later when analyzing my data.

A small amount of the interview data was recorded with two other means. There were some interviews that I recorded by hand exclusively. All of those were at PAPA Fest when the batteries in my recorder ran out and there was no electricity in the middle of the field in which we were camping. Another recording method for a few hours of this research was Skype. I used Skype for follow-up interviews in which I needed to clarify certain data points but did not need to travel to the original sites for that purpose. I used Skype because the device that would attach my cell phone to the recorder was expensive and laying the recorder down next to my computer during a Skype session was free. I personally transcribed all interviews myself. I did so out of the belief that I would gain a deeper connection to the data, a connection that would not be as strong if I did not do the work of turning the interview into a transcript.

Documentary Analysis

Additionally, I conducted a fairly significant analysis of the writings of New Monasticism, and a smaller but targeted analysis of the written content of the other three movements discussed in the fifth chapter. Because of my friendship with the New Monastic leaders I was able to get copies of all their books in Microsoft Word format. This helped tremendously, as quotes did not need to be transcribed.

Question Set

The question set was developed with the goal of comparing new monastic leaders and community members to American Evangelicals in terms of beliefs, practices and conceptions of place. Although I started with a large number of questions, one was dominant for all interviews, especially with community members whose narrative I did not already know through friendship or through reading their work. That dominant question was: *What was the process that led you to be involved in this community?*

Chapter Three – Positionality Statement

I feel the need to provide a prolegomena that serves as a positionality statement (Takacs 2002), an effort to make "the personal political". (Jones 2005) I have been connected to the American Evangelical subculture my whole life to varying degrees. While it is often true that scholars in the sociology of religion write about their own religious traditions, I believe that my connectedness to this culture is an important resource as well as a topic in this study. Religious experiences in general, and my formative experiences in American Evangelicalism in particular, have profoundly shaped my *sociological imagination*, to quote C. Wright Mills.

It is also my hope that this background will give the research an insider's view. As the late Republican operative Lee Atwater, a man I once studied and prayed to become like, was famous for saying, "I know where the bodies are buried." In other words, I have a level of knowledge about American Evangelicalism that comes from having lived in the culture and having played some minor role in the creation of what that culture has become. With that experience comes a deeper level of knowledge along with a strong motivation to study a segment of society in which I have been engaged as a member.

As Jones describes in her work contained in Denzin and Lincoln's collection on qualitative research methods, "writing autoethnography is a balancing act." (Jones 2005, 764) It raises questions about what to include and what to omit from the research, specifically related to the researcher's personal experience. The question of inclusion posed a significant struggle for me as I gathered and analyzed interview data. The

benefits of me choosing this topic are clear. As someone involved in the movements I will be analyzing in this research, I had knowledge, personal relationships and a high level of access to movement actors that may not be as readily available to other researchers.

The drawbacks for this topic choice are equally obvious. The most significant danger to analyzing events one is personally close to is the bias that comes with first hand knowledge of a movement and its actors. I combatted this bias in two ways. First, I attempted, as much as possible, to let the data drive the conclusions. This led me to certain conclusions that were not as positive to the movements I was analyzing.

Second, I solicited the assistance of an outside reader who read both my data and my conclusions, seeking to ensure that bias did not find its way into my findings. This individual was a great help in validating that my conclusions were not shaded by personal knowledge of these movements and actors.

It should come as no surprise that an American Evangelical is writing about Evangelicalism. Christian Smith, one of the most noted of American Evangelical chroniclers, is himself a graduate of an Evangelical institution, Gordon College. His attendance there followed a transfer from Wheaton College, sometimes referred to as the "Harvard of Evangelicalism." James Davidson Hunter is also a graduate of Gordon College, Michael Lindsay is a graduate of Baylor University, the bastion of Baptist Evangelicalism. Interestingly enough, Lindsay has recently left his teaching position at Rice University to become the President of Gordon College.

My own childhood was rooted in fundamentalist Evangelicalism. I sometimes ask my students on the first day of class to answer three questions: "I come from a people who,?" "I come from a place where,?" and "I bring with me.?" When answering the same questions, I will usually say, "I come from a people who were conservative and Protestant. I come from a place where conservatism and Protestantism were not the norm. And I bring with me a healthy skepticism about religious claims."

In my childhood we were members of a Bible Church, which is like being a Southern Baptist from New Jersey. I was raised in suburbia, outside of New York City, in a home of conservative Evangelicals. Most of the kids in my school and neighborhood were either Jewish or Catholic. Oftentimes on the school bus, while discussing a moral or religious issue, someone would ask, "So, what are you?" By that they meant, "What kind of religious person are you?" I would always say, "I am a Christian." My brand of Christianity was all that I was taught to accept. It was to me, frankly, *the* Christianity. I was trained to believe that what I was learning in daily family devotions, Sunday School, Sunday morning church, Sunday evening Church, Wednesday evening prayer meeting and weekly youth group meetings was the right version of what Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, mainline Protestant and, lets face it, even certain Evangelicals, got wrong.

In my upbringing the Evangelical claim of exclusivism meant that we were the ones who got *it* right, with "it" being the claims to truth, the future and eternal life. We had "asked Jesus into our heart," a phrase that came out of the Great Awakenings but was not a part of the language of Christianity until at least the late 1800's. We had "Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior," a phrase that likewise is also quite new in the lexicon of Christianity, yet has been deeply constitutive of contemporary American Evangelicalism.

Those two phrases have become for much of American Evangelicalism something sociologists call "common sense," indicating the belief for the adherent that this is simply how things are and always have been. In other words, for many American Evangelicals, a highly-individualized faith is what they perceive as orthodoxy. Yet it is more historically accurate to state that the personal and therapeutic instantiation of American Evangelicalism brought about by the repeated use of such language would have been unfamiliar to Christians for most of the last two thousand years.

I also came from a home and religious culture where Evangelical belief and conservative politics were intertwined. The only time I ever saw my father cry about a national event was during Richard Nixon's impeachment. One incident from my childhood seems to highlight well the deep connection between religion and politics. The year was 1976, and I was twelve years old on an otherwise normal Sunday morning. My dad and I put on our ties. My sisters put on their dresses and make-up. We piled into the station wagon and headed out for church. But when we got to the church building something was very, very wrong. The doors had been locked with chains. On each and every entrance to the church building hung an ominous sign saying that Christian worship had been outlawed and we would no longer be able to practice our faith. I cried. My whole body shook. What we had been repeatedly told could happen had, in fact, come to pass.

As you have by now no doubt figured out, the events of that morning at Grace Bible Church in Pequannock, NJ, were a fundamentalist version of *Punk'd*, but with a moral to go along with it. Both the Sunday School lesson and the sermon that followed served to remind us that America and the American way of life were the primary reason

Christianity flourished in the world. The clearly stated message was that failure to vigilantly fight against communism, the loss of prayer in schools, the ever-more permissive morality of "the world,"[5] liberalism, the World Council of Churches, and on and on, was to risk the loss of freedom to worship and evangelize openly.

The duty to evangelize was also a key theme in my religious upbringing. While evangelization and the organizations that promoted it were, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, deeply connected to a conservative and anti-communist belief system, there also existed a strong need to work as tirelessly as feasible and to use whatever means were available to save as many souls as possible before Jesus comes back and the unsaved are left behind.

The fear of being "left behind" is something shared by almost every person I interviewed during the course of this research who was raised in American fundamentalism and/or Evangelicalism in the 1970's. Speaking for myself, I know why I was afraid: it was the movie, *A Thief in the Night*, which was shown on a huge sheet in the parking lot of our church multiple times each summer. The basic premise is this: Jesus returns and those who have been saved are taken to heaven while those who have not been saved, i.e. those who have not "asked Jesus into their hearts," or "trusted in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior," are left behind to face a time of tribulation.

---

[5] Within fundamentalism, the phrase "the world" has often been used as short-hand for those who did not hold to the same standards of morality as the church, religious tradition, evangelist or preacher employing the term. The term derives from a bible verse which states, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to *keep oneself unstained by the world*." (James 1:27, NRSV) This is another way of expressing the idea of separation. See pages 8-12 of Smith, C. and M. Emerson (1998). American evangelicalism : embattled and thriving. Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press.

In the movie a young woman wakes up to an empty house only to discover that her husband is gone permanently and Jesus has forsaken her. Those unfortunate enough to find themselves in that condition are subjected to a Stalinist-type government that forces all citizens of the now one-world political structure to prove fealty by taking on the mark of the beast. Failure to do so, as a character from the opening scene of the film finds out, is to face the guillotine. The final fate of this poor dear girl happens while Larry Norman's song, *I Wish We'd All Been Ready*, plays in the background.

Now, imagine being ten years old and having watched this movie three times in the past few months. You return from the beach and expect your mom to be at home as promised, but she is not there. Suddenly the lyrics of a song begin to play in your mind: "Life was filled with guns and war, and everyone got trampled on the floor, *I wish we'd all been ready*." You feel your neck and wonder how long one stays conscious after the drop of the blade. I conveyed that story to a group of mainline pastors once. After I was done, one Methodist minister blurted out, "Wow, that's messed up."

This is just one example of the many ways fear and embattlement are key constitutive elements of American Evangelicalism (or AE for short). In recent years, particularly in the rise up to and through its ascendancy into the halls of power, AE culture has increasingly turned away from the pragmatic approaches of the neo-Evangelicals like Billy Graham who sought to evangelize the world and toward the fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell who sought to keep themselves unstained by the world. This turning away has often been true even for individual movement actors. Take, for example, the works of Francis Schaeffer, written between 1967 and 1982. When I was in high school I consumed the entire body of Schaeffer's written work, or at least all he had

written by that time. Although I was not conscious of it then, there is a clear shift in Schaeffer's work that corresponds to a shift more generally in AE. His early topics included the environment, art and culture. His later work discussed abortion and sexuality and increasingly employed culture war language. His earlier work engaged a broad range of cultural topics and was more in keeping with the vision of people like Harold Ockenga in the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals. His later work more vitriolic and combative and was more reminiscent of the fundamentalism of the first half of the 20th Century.[6] For example, in *Pollution and the Death of Man*, written in 1970, Schaeffer identifies the ecological crisis as a deeply moral issue and one that Christianity should address.

> The simple fact is that if man is not able to solve his ecological problems, then man's resources are going to die. It is quite conceivable that man will be unable to fish the oceans as in the past, and that if the balance of the oceans is changed too much, man will even find himself without enough oxygen to breathe (Schaeffer 1970).

It is hard to imagine a major American Evangelical – Pat Robertson, Al Mohler, Tim LaHaye, etc. – not only expressing pro-environmental thoughts but also actually dedicating an entire book to the mandate of the Christian Church to care for our natural resources. By contrast, in his co-authored work *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, written just nine years after his work on pollution, Schaeffer compares Western society and its openness to abortion to Nazi Germany and Apartheid-era South Africa (See

---

[6] Frank Schaeffer, Francis Schaeffer's son, provides an excellent overview of this shift in his book, Schaeffer, F. (2007). <u>Crazy for God : how I grew up as one of the elect, helped found the Religious Right, and lived to take all (or almost all) of it back</u>. New York, Carroll & Graf.

Chapter 2 of (Schaeffer and Koop 1979). A major shift was taking place in American Evangelicalism.

This idea that American Evangelicalism should become an increasingly combative counter-balance to the secular, liberal and permissive culture was exactly what was looming on the American Evangelical horizon in the late 1970's and early 1980's. In 1982, after graduating high school, I entered the Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroon Lake, NY. Jack Wyrtzen was one of the lesser known players in fundamentalism and American Evangelicalism at this time. A former insurance salesman, he formed the Word of Life Bible Fellowship and began holding evangelistic rallies. My father was raised as a Presbyterian but converted to Evangelical Christianity at a Word of Life evangelistic rally. He later brought his then girlfriend, the woman I call "Mom," to a Word of Life rally where she also converted to the same belief system.

In 1972,[7] Wyrtzen founded the Word of Life Bible Institute as a one-year bible training school. The institute was based on the belief, quoting from their website, that "Believers are commanded to study the Word of God, accepting it as their foundation and authority."[8] Word of Life later founded a second one-year program for those who had attended its bible school but still desired more training in that type of setting. This program was called the School of Youth Ministries. I completed both programs.

From the outside and to those unfamiliar with American Evangelicalism, Word of Life looked like a fundamentalist training camp. To describe it as such would have never occurred to those of us who were participants. This is natural, I suppose: as humans, if we

---

[7] Many sources, including several obituaries of Wyrtzen, misstate this date. I know the year it started because one of my sisters was in the second class of the bible institute and she began there in 1973.
[8] http://wordoflife.edu/, accessed 10/12/2015

36

are not mindful, we tend to think those who do not act or believe like us are somehow

evil, contemptuous and scheming. We were none of those things. True, we were not

allowed to use playing cards lest we slip into gambling or some other worldly vice. True,

we were not allowed to hold hands with members of the opposite sex, nor were we

allowed to "neck" with them either, a phrase Wyrtzen used to signify heavy kissing. But,

at least at Word of Life Bible Institute from 1982 to 1984, it never seemed that we were

being trained to participate in a change in world systems. The goal was convert souls: lots

and lots of souls.

At the school we spent a significant amount of time evangelizing, especially on

weekends. As a young eighteen year old, I was given the task of traveling to open air

rallies and telling people why they should "ask Jesus into their hearts." A year later I was

asked to travel with a singing quartet and preach the good news which, in this case, was

limited to the message that the listeners needed either to "ask Jesus into their hearts" or

face eternal damnation and separation from God in the fires of hell.

Subtly and without being aware, those of us who attended Word of Life were also

being schooled on the thinking and writing of the leaders of American Evangelicalism,

even though at the time we may not have used the term *evangelical* to describe

ourselves.[9] We read a lot of Tim LaHaye. The text for our class on sexuality was *The Act*

of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love, co-written by Tim LaHaye and his wife

Beverly, the founder of the conservative group *Concerned Women for America*. We read

---

[9] I struggled with how to use the terms *fundamentalist* and *Evangelical*. In many of the circles I traveled during my college years there was still skepticism of the term Evangelical since it was seen by the fundamentalists as an admission of compromise. Jerry Falwell, for example, continued to self-describe as a fundamentalist until well into the 1980's. For a full treatment of this topic, see Marsden, G. M. (1991). Understanding fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Grand Rapids, Mich., W.B. Eerdmans.

The Unhappy Gays and *The Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, also by LaHaye. Our guest lecturers came from the elite ranks of fundamentalism, including John MacArthur and Charles Ryrie. We also listened to the preaching of Georgi Vins, the dissident Anabaptist preacher brought to the United States in a celebrated prison swap by the Carter Administration.[10] Vins spoke of the importance of America to world missions, and he infused conceptions of freedom with religious politics. Vins confirmed the belief of American Evangelical culture that the Bible had the answers to all the questions one might ask. To send that point home, Vins traveled with a Russian singing duo who provided the following lyrics:

> Believe it like it is, God said it's so,
>
> Believe it like it is and then you'll know,
>
> And if there's any doubt, just get your Bible out,
>
> And read it and believe it like it is.

After Word of Life, I went to Tennessee Temple, an independent Baptist school that was one of the last bastions of fundamentalism. The college was founded by Lee Roberson and was deeply connected to John R. Rice, the influential publisher of The Sword of the Lord. Although the school later joined the Southern Baptist Convention, it was still independent at the time, largely as a reaction to the fundamentalist fear of denominations and their liberalizing tendencies. I finished my education at Liberty University, the school founded by Jerry Falwell. Many years later I recounted to a friend that I had attended Word of Life Bible Institute, Tennessee Temple, and Liberty. He

---

[10] http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,920379,00.html

quipped back that if I had gone to Bob Jones University I would have completed the full fundamentalist tour. I told him that my wife attended Bob Jones.

My two years of bible school training happened in a fairly cloistered environment in Upstate New York. I ate with the same people that sat beside me in the large lecture hall that doubled as a Christian camp during the summer. Other than a short internship at a fast-growing independent Baptist church in Kennesaw, Georgia, my only exposure during that time to the events of the outside world was mediated through the works of Schaeffer which I read in my spare time.

It was in Chattanooga, Tennessee that my political soul awoke. The year was 1984. After two years of bible and ministry training I had recently entered college in Tennessee, majoring in *pulpit communications*. I can only speculate as to why we did not call my course of study *homiletics*, but I was schooled in both public speaking and biblical exegesis. The goal of the program was to turn out men – we were all males in the major – who could eloquently defend the conceptions of biblical truth in which we were being educated.

That also happened to be the same year Ronald Reagan was running for re-election. I never got to meet the Gipper, but when an attractive young woman invited me to a rally with then-VP George Bush, Sr., I jumped at the chance. I quickly realized how different the Deep South was from my suburban New Jersey upbringing, as well as from the sheltered world of my bible school. People at that rally were organizing for levels of change I had only read about in books or heard called for in sermons. Certainly they were committed to working for a second term for Reagan – that went without saying. But they

had a bigger agenda in mind. They used phrases like "winning America back for God," and "restoring morality to our nation." I was hooked. That fall I spent far more time than my Greek professor would have preferred volunteering for the Reagan-Bush team. I stuffed envelopes, knocked on doors and handed out flyers at public events. Reagan was overwhelmingly swept back into office, giving me hope that the grand agenda of restoring America to a Christian nation could, perhaps, be achieved.

My career direction during this time began to be shaped by my political activities. I had entered college believing I would be a preacher. As I was moving through college, however, I was coming to believe I would be a politician. This solved one particular problem for me – the fact that I did not really like *church*. I liked *the church*, the idea that a global body of people committed to a common set of beliefs had existed for 2,000 years. (I would later learn how little I knew about that group of people.) But the liturgy was uninspiring. That is not to say that I described what happened inside the church walls twice on Sunday and once on Wednesday as *liturgy*. That was a word I learned much later as meaning "the work of the people," an idea that is deeply rooted in particular religious traditions and cultures. I just called it the *church service*. And it felt like a waste of time.

The same thing happened every week – we sang, we gave, we listened to the preacher and then we sang again, repeating the verses of *Just As I Am* until the preacher felt satisfied that no one else was coming forward to ask Jesus into their hearts or to become a church member through transfer of letter. To me the church service did not seem like the place where Christians could win back the nation for God. Certainly the preacher could remind us, in the words of the old saying, not to smoke, drink, chew or go

with the girls who do. And there was plenty of talk *about* organizing and political action.

But at least the churches I attended at this particular time in the 1980's felt, to me,

constrained in ways the politicians were not. I remained at school in Tennessee for three

semesters, but could not shake the political bug. Sure, I knew how to preach and, frankly,

I was quite good at it. But was preaching, even if it was a great sermon, going to bring

about the kind of change possible in political organizing? I decided politics would be my

life.

In 1986, for financial reasons, I switched to a school so anxious to grow in

numbers it was giving away free tuition – Jerry Falwell's Liberty University.

Conservatism was in the air at Liberty. People read and talked about the works of Russell

Kirk and Ludwig Von Mises. You could wear a bow tie and a tweed blazer and be

considered cool. And, at Liberty, I found ample opportunities to engage in conservative

politics, most notably with the local Lynchburg, VA Right to Life chapter.

In the winter of 1987 I volunteered to lobby in the Virginia State Capital on

behalf of some pro-life legislation. I cannot even remember the legislation, although I

think it involved a law requiring minors to get parental consent before seeking an

abortion. On that day I met a young lawyer named Mark Earley. Mark was from the

Tidewater, Virginia, area and was getting ready to run against the Democratic President

of the Senate. He asked if I would come down to Chesapeake, Virginia to help him

organize his campaign. I jumped at the chance.

I had not yet finished college at that point. Keep in mind that I saw myself as part

of a group of people who were going to change the world and, at the time and in a way I

would now counsel my own students against, I saw schooling as getting in the way of the important work. Originally I was hired by the campaign as a summer intern. I had no idea how compelling the thrill of the electoral politics would be. I pleaded to stay on through the rest of the campaign and Earley agreed.

Winning that seat was no small task: it is easy to forget that what we now think of as the solid Republican South is a fairly recent occurrence. Consider, for example, that Pat Robertson's father was a Democratic US Senator from Virginia. In 1987, only eleven of the forty State Senators in Virginia were from the GOP. It was not until 1999 that Republicans took control of that body, the first time they had controlled it since Reconstruction.

Similarly, the seat in which Earley was running had been held by a Democrat since Reconstruction. Nevertheless, the campaign had a lot of things going for it. First, Earley was a solid, hardworking, and ethical candidate who appealed to the blue-collar ship workers from the district. Like a lot of the candidates of that generation, he came from a Democratic Party background. His father had been involved with the shipbuilder's union. He had grown up in the area and received, at least in that race, public support from some of the unions in the area, as well as some of the African-American churches.

If the campaign had a secret weapon, it was the students of Regent Law School. Regent was the law school begun by Pat Robertson in 1986. Regent was the inheritor of much of the infrastructure of Oral Roberts University law school, the same law school from which Michelle Bachmann (R-MN) graduated. In fact, according to Bachmann

herself, she was part of the group that helped move Oral Roberts University from Oklahoma to Virginia Beach, Virginia and establish Regent Law School.[11]

Each Friday the other campaign worker – a Regent law school student – and I would print out walking maps of the neighborhoods in the district. Then each Saturday droves of Regent law school students turned out to walk door to door and hand out literature. There were certain neighborhoods in that district the campaign visited three times that summer and fall. Earley won the historic race, further convincing me that politics was to be more than my job, it was to be my vocation. I felt that it was time to get serious.

In the late 1980's through the mid-1990's, Joe Gaylord, a political operative connected with Newt Gingrich, ran a training center called the American Campaign Academy. After the State Senate win Mark Earley's campaign consultant, Bob Weed, recommended me for the program. I spent the next several months learning the ins and outs of how to run a campaign. Sitting in a non-descript office building in Arlington, VA, we received training, often from guest speakers, in every aspect of campaign management, including polling, media, press relations, fundraising, volunteer organization, etc. We learned campaign skills from people that now don the evening news as conservative talking heads, including Ed Goeas, Mike Murphy and Rich Galen.

Another important aspect of the campaign school was matching political workers to campaigns. Through that process I was hired to manage a GOP primary race in Georgia. When I left campaign school in February of 1988 I got married, packed all of

---

[11] http://regentlawnews.blogspot.com/2009/11/congresswoman-michelle-bachmann-speaks.html, accessed 10/12/2015

our possessions into the one car we owned and headed out to run a U.S. congressional campaign. I became a professional campaign worker, a lesser-known version of Karl Rove or James Carville. At times I was a day-to-day manager, at other times I was an outside consultant and at times I helped campaigns by offering polling and other kinds of high-level strategic services. Between 1988 and 1994 I was involved with nearly twenty candidates in more than twenty campaigns, and – because I worked quite a bit in Virginia (a state that has odd-year elections) – there was a campaign every year.

I did not support myself solely during those years with campaign work, which was not very profitable, and so I did whatever necessary to support my young family, including some database development work, a skill I had picked up as a byproduct of managing lists of volunteers and donors. But I was becoming very skilled as a campaign professional and I was gaining a social network of like-minded people. I toiled alongside a cast of recognizable organizations, including The Christian Coalition, The Traditional Values Coalition, The Leadership Institute, National Right to Life, Concerned Woman of America, the NRA, and the Home Builders. "We" were "winning," in the sense that the people we supported were increasingly being elected to office.

I have to say that those were the best of times and the worst of times. On the one hand and through the efforts of many people, the number of elected officials who espoused conservative values was increasing. On the other hand, I was becoming deeply disillusioned with the narrative of "winning America back for God." Part of this, I suppose, is due to the fact that it is hard to be both a professional and an idealist. Karl Marx, for example, wrote comfortably from an armchair in London but never picked up a rake or a gun.

Yet there was a much greater reason for my disillusionment, and that was the candidates themselves. The first candidate for whom I worked had perhaps spoiled me. Mark Earley was, and remains, a deeply principled man whose public actions and rhetoric, to the best of my discernment, are consistent. But the broader cast of characters I found myself seeking to elect were far less ethical. A few examples include:

- One candidate was a pastor running for Congress who had been sleeping with his secretary for many years.

- Two candidates – yes, two of out of less than 20 candidates – were closeted homosexuals who were later kicked out of office for soliciting gay sex in a public place, yet were nonetheless strong anti-gay legislators.

- One candidate was a serial philanderer while concurrently being the chief sponsor for a bill to protect the "sanctity of marriage."

These are only the stories I feel comfortable mentioning. Politics, at least with respect to the campaign side of the equation, no longer seemed to me to be the place for serious change. By the time I left politics in 1994, one phrase was running through my head: *deeply immoral people cannot make the world more moral*. Do not get me wrong: I do not expect our elected officials to be perfect. Yet if my experiences had been on the political left, I suspect I would have an equal number of horror stories about climate change activists with 15,000 square foot mansions, immigration advocates who hire undocumented workers, and financial reform crusaders who own shares in those sleazy check cashing stores.

Here's the difference: the religious right were *my* people. We were supposed to be the good guys, the ones with all the answers. And it wasn't just the obvious moral failings of these candidates that shook my confidence and beliefs. I was also incensed at the financial failings of these candidates. Keep in mind that I had, in my youth, read free market economists like Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig Von Mises. Now, in the service of enacting a grand free market vision, I was helping to elect people who were perfectly willing to spend money on a whole variety of governmental programs as long it helped them get re-elected and as long as the check from the political action committee cleared.

During the political phase of my life there were times I felt like a collector for a pimp. For propriety sake I will not provide names and dates, but on more occasions than I care to recount I would pick up a check from a lobbyist at a shrimp cocktail and wine reception and then, the very next day, watch an elected official completely change their vote on an issue in favor of the direction of the lobbyist's client. And these were the people who were going to change the world? Hardly. So I kissed politics goodbye. There was no way I could trust these people to be the agents of change for the kind of world systems shift I saw as absolutely critical.

Here was the problem, at least for me: at that point I had a degree from Liberty University in General Studies with emphases in communications and biblical studies. I had eight years of training in political campaign management, but I no longer wished to be involved in politics. Although I had become deeply connected to a church tradition – my family and I had been attending Presbyterian Church of America churches, a conservative offshoot of the PCUSA – I still was not ready to imagine working in the

church. So other than asking, "Would you like fries with that," what exactly was I qualified to do at that point?

With few marketable skills, I went back to my "family"[12]: Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. A friend in the administration of the school asked me what I knew how to do. I told him that I sort of knew a little bit about computers. The next week I was the Director of Academic Computing for the entire college. I spent the next several years learning about networking technology. Along with my friend and co-worker Jim Gilliam of *The Internet is my Religion* fame[13], we wired the campus, brought the Internet to Liberty and set up the first website for the college. I spent the next two and a half years at Liberty University. I began a new career and learned new skills, but the questions did not go away: why were we on this Earth? How were we meant to shape the world? What was our role as God's co-creators in shaping the world that was to be?

In 1997 I left Liberty University when my wife and I moved to Maryland to care for her mother who was suffering from kidney disease. We returned to the Hunt Valley Church, a growing, vibrant congregation in Hunt Valley, Maryland. Part of the conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) denomination, yet styled in the Willow Creek, seeker-sensitive fashion, Hunt Valley Church was a bit of a paradox.

At this point in my life I had a good job, a good marriage and great kids. I had a church I enjoyed, even though the whole seeker-sensitive vibe seemed a bit superficial to

---

[12] I need to pause here and tell those readers who did not grow up in American fundamentalism and/or Evangelicalism something they may not know: the Evangelical Church in America is like a big, ethnic family. It's more than a social network of common interests. Within American Evangelicalism there is bickering and fighting, but if someone from the outside wants to talk trash about one of ours, well, that is just not going to happen.

[13] http://www.internetismyreligion.com/

me. My life was in a state most people would find acceptable. But I wanted to change the world, not find suburban contentment. As a result, in 1998 I took two courses at what was then called Chesapeake Seminary. Chesapeake Seminary was a satellite campus of Reformed Theological Seminary, a school at the forefront of neo-Calvinist thought. One of the courses was on missions during which we read *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* by Lesslie Newbigin.[14] One chapter of that book quite literally changed my life. In Chapter 18 of his work, Newbigin offers the thought that our congregations are "hermeneutics of the gospel" (Newbigin 1989). By that he meant that the actions of the catholic body of the church interpreted for the world the message of Jesus. He spoke of concepts like "public truth," (Newbigin 1989: p. 222), an idea completely foreign to the way I was trained to think.[15]

My education and socialization taught me that concepts like public truth and social morality were what liberals believed. Further, liberals were not concerned with evangelization, at least not the kind that led to Christian conversion, i.e. what happens when people "ask Jesus into their hearts." So this writer was really problematic for me. By the standards I had been taught, Newbigin was a liberal. Why then did he write a whole book on evangelizing people in the increasingly pluralistic West? Reading Newbigin began a time when I was asking a whole different set of questions, particularly about the role of the Christian church in the world. I was also questioning the totality of the Christian narrative and what parts of that narrative I might be missing, given that my

---

[14] A scholar of religion will note that Newbigin would not be the logical textbook choice for a neo-Calvinist school. However, despite several attempts, I was unable to reach the professor of the course to determine why that work was chosen.

[15] Newbigin was an Anglican missionary in India in the 1940's and 1950's. His work on ecumenism and the way in which Christian values should be in conversation with culture have been very influential in shaping the way many younger Evangelicals, especially those trained in more academically oriented seminaries like Princeton, Duke and Fuller, thought about culture.

self-identification as part of that narrative was, at that time, mostly defined by accedence to a narrow set of doctrinal beliefs about the bible, how to get to heaven after I die, and how to avoid being left behind in the rapture.

I call the years between 1998 and 2004 my desert years. As I will discuss in the later chapters, this is a common experience for many individuals who leave the Evangelical context, and certainly most the post-Evangelicals I interviewed in the course of this research. I found myself asking questions that I had previously assigned to the unorthodox and the troublemakers. Compounding the problem was the fact that I knew no one asking the same questions, nor was anyone in my circle reading the same texts. My social network was comprised largely of people consuming the safe, therapeutic books churned out in droves by the American Evangelical publishing complex. By contrast, I was reading people like William Stringfellow, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Stanley Hauerwas, John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg and Nicholas Wolterstorff. What was becoming of me?[16] The questions I was asking caused me to wonder if I was going to burn in hell just for thinking them. The overarching question I was asking during that time was: *If Newbigin was right, what were the implications?* If truth did not and should not stand outside of its physical embodiment, then belief, including belief in a god, could not stand outside of the social actions of the group of believers in that god.

This hit home to me with shocking lucidity in the events surrounding September 11th, 2001. At the time I was working as a technology manager for a large non-profit organization in Washington, DC. My office was at 16th and M, two blocks from the

---

[16] A scholar of American Evangelicalism will quickly realize how vast the space is between where I had been and where I was at the time. For time sake, and in keeping with this work, this whole section glosses over broad shifts in my thinking. In a future work I hope to expand on this shift.

White House. We were meant to have a conference call that morning with a vendor in the Tribeca area of New York City. The time came for them to call us and the phone did not ring. We tried to call them and the circuits were busy. "The circuits are busy in New York City?" I kept asking, demanding that the person dialing try again. We tried several more times. Then someone was running through the halls asking us to come watch the television at the reception desk in the lobby. I got there in time to watch the second tower fall. What happened next is fairly blurry. We were told there was a bombing at the Pentagon. We went up to the top of our building and could see the smoke rising, even from two miles away. Rumors were floating around that the White House was the next target and we were asked to leave the building immediately. I rushed to the Metro station. Then another false alarm was issued against the Metro station. We piled out as fast as we could.

What I remember most from that day is the eyes of the people around me. In each pair of eyes was a mix of fear, shock and despair. To this day I cannot recall that memory without weeping. As a result, I have a first–hand understanding of the fear we all faced after that day. We struggled to understand how these attacks could have happened on our shores. We all struggled to understand how best to respond. It is in moments of crisis that we tend to default to our learned responses. We allow our most basic instincts to take over and guide us. It is in those times when we most need to look to our principles, our sacred texts, and our traditions to allow the wisdom of the past to help guide us in the future.[17]

---

[17] The next three paragraphs are edited versions from a previous work, Samson, W. (2009). Enough : contentment in an age of excess. Colorado Springs, CO, David C Cook.

In response to the attacks of September 11th, the United States and her Christian President chose a response that did not turn the other cheek or walk the extra mile carrying the soldier's cloak. In our reaction to the terrorist attacks on DC, NY and Pennsylvania, the way of peace and reconciliation was not tried and found wanting; it was found difficult and untried. This was also acutely true in the invasion of Iraq. There were ample voices at the time who found the invasion of Iraq a rush to judgment, an admission of failure, and a statement of the power of fear to overcome the best in each of us. And yet the notion of God's blessing on our actions was so deeply embedded into our body politic that many never paused to wonder if they were in the right; the Church stood in step with the rest of a culture longing for retaliation.

There were also many voices of leaders from within the Church encouraging the rush to war. Jerry Falwell suggested that "God is pro-war."[18] Several leading Evangelicals suggested that the invasion of Iraq would open "exciting new doors" for proselytizing Muslims. Tim LaHaye spoke of the invasion of Iraq as "a focal point of end-time events,"[19] whose special role in the earth's final days will become clear after invasion, conquest and reconstruction. And, in the clearest statement of civil religion, Charles Stanley offered the following rationale for retaliatory strikes against foreign nations: "God battles with people who oppose him, who fight against him and his followers."[20] *His* followers. The attacks of September 11th were not on a church or temple. The terrorists did not blow up a Christian school or college. The planes were not flown into a Christian community, or a theological training school like a seminary or

---

[18] http://www.wnd.com/2004/01/23022/, accessed 10/12/2015
[19] http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html, accessed 10/12/2105
[20] http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html, accessed 10/12/2105

divinity school.[21] And yet, in the heart of a time of terror, when the nation struggled to understand how to respond to violence, a renowned preacher and the former head of the Southern Baptist Convention suggested that America, a nation, can join in with God by battling those who attack our country.

My response to the events of September 11th was when I realized how far from the shoreline of the US Evangelical church I had sailed in terms of my own personal beliefs. In the years since first reading Newbigin I had immersed myself in Christian and non-Christian writers who took issues of peace and justice seriously. Looking back now I can see that each book, each speaker, each website, were all puffs of wind sending me further out to sea.

Quite honestly, I felt like a person alone in a boat. The only thing I knew to do was to start shouting into the open air and see if anyone else was out there. So I started a blog. Why did I need a shout into the blogosphere to find people who thought like me? My interviews confirm that this severe isolation still remains the plight of so many who became part of the Emerging Church or New Monasticism. American Evangelicalism does not look kindly on those who ask questions outside the bounded set of perceived orthodoxy. And many of those asking the same questions as myself were pastors, youth pastors or otherwise employed in positions that were contingent on their continued adherence to AE perceptions of orthodoxy.

---

[21] An academic analysis of the events of September 11th would yield a discussion on civil religion, but is outside the scope of this section. When teaching the sociology religion or discussing religion in my introductory sociology classes I point out to my students that the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon are significant religious icons for American culture.

Through the blog I found a group of people asking the same questions. I came to be friends with the leaders of the Emerging Church movement, including Doug Pagitt, Tony Jones and Brian McLaren. What I found most compelling about this group of folks was that they were asking what I perceived to be serious questions. They were not, as was my impression of the megachurch, simply asking methodological questions about how we better present the story of conversion in a way that gains Christian adherents and church members. They were putting it all on the table – practices *and* beliefs – and they were doing so in a way that engaged with all manner of writers and thinkers.

It was through my friendship with Tony Jones that I began to read thinkers like Jürgen Moltmann, Colin Gunton and Miroslav Volf. I began to read works that had been major building blocks of Christian theology, including the writings of Augustine, Aquinas and Karl Barth. I often found myself reading the works of thinkers who I had never even heard of, despite having a degree in biblical studies from Liberty University, including multiple church history courses, all but one of which covered eras of or after the Protestant Reformation. I also began attending what were called *emergent cohorts*, which are theology discussions arranged by people from the Emergent Village, the main social movement organization in the Emerging Church. The cohort I attended was comprised mostly of folks from Princeton seminary and was essentially a theology pub: we met at bars, smoked cigars, drank beer and talked about deep issues related to Christianity. These cohorts served two purposes for me. First, they increased my social network of people whose identity with, and commitment to, the Christian story remained strong. Secondly and more importantly, they provided permission for me to ask deeper

questions about my beliefs and practices than my Evangelical upbringing and education had allowed me to ask.

This experience began for me a phase of my life where I began to wonder if the end game for me was to be found in the academy. Even the theologians and ethicists I was reading who were still connected to the Evangelical tradition, people like Stanley Grenz, John Franke and Christine Pohl, seemed to have freedom to ask questions that people who wrote exclusively for the church did not. Was I perhaps meant to be an academic? The answer to that question came one Sunday morning in the fall of 2003. I was teaching a Sunday School class on spiritual gifts, a Christian idea that each individual has God-given strengths in certain areas like hospitality, administration or evangelism. I started the class with an icebreaker question: "If time and money were no object, what would you do?" I then went around the class soliciting responses from each person. After allowing each person to answer I started into the lesson, at which point my wife pointed out that I had not answered the question for myself. In a moment of excited utterance, I said, "I would teach." On the car ride home from church early that afternoon the decision was made – I was going back to school and I was going to be an academic.

Later in the next year, in 2004, I was asked to be part of the "Epicenter Global Roundtable,"[22] a global gathering of the Emerging Church that would take place right before the Greenbelt Festival[23] in Cheltenham, England. Despite the grand name, the gathering was about thirty people in a room sitting on stacking chairs. Most of the attendees were from the United Kingdom, with a smattering of Americans, an Australian

---

[22] http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/epicentre/
[23] http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/

and a German. But there was one young couple with whom I felt a strong connection. Billy and Maria Kenney were from a little New Monastic community in Lexington, KY called Communality. This was the first time I had even heard the phrase *new monasticism*. They told us how they lived near the poor and were deeply involved in their neighborhood and city and how their community worshipped together. I left England being so glad *they* were doing that. The way they were living seemed cool but way too radical for a suburban guy who was ready to be post-Evangelical but not quite ready to live like a hippie.

Around this time I began to get serious about applying to seminaries and divinity schools. I narrowed my selection to two: Duke and Princeton. Duke was my top choice, as that was where Stanley Hauerwas taught and it was, at least for the theological questions I was interested in asking, the "it" school. I also decided to apply to Princeton because I thought it might be less of an adjustment for my family to move two hours north rather than six hours south. It never occurred to me that I would not be accepted at both. I was certainly not relying on my undergraduate record which had been stained by all those nights stuffing envelopes for political candidates. Instead, I was relying on the people I had come to know who were connected to Duke and Princeton, people who came and hung out at the various emergent cohorts. I thought of the people from those seminaries like I thought of my Evangelical network – they were my friends. Surely my friends would let me hang out with them. In September of 2004 I received a letter from the MDiv program at Duke telling me that I had been waitlisted.

In October of that same year my family and I traveled to the Emergent Gathering, an assemblage of like-minded people in Glorieta, NM organized by the folks from

Emergent Village. At that gathering everyone stayed in cabins with multiple rooms. A young couple named Geoff and Sherry Maddock stayed in the same cabin as my family and me. They were from the same New Monastic community in Lexington, KY (Communality) that I had learned about in England. They told us how they lived near the poor and were deeply involved in their neighborhood and city and how their community worshipped together.

We were living at the time in the Baltimore, Maryland area. Despite that, traveling thousands of miles to the East or thousands of miles to the West seemed to almost guarantee we would be confronted with people from this little tiny New Monastic community in Lexington, KY. Any good social network analyst can explain to you what was happening, but that did not change the effect these two meetings had on me. I met one other person at that same gathering who should be noted, and that was Shane Claiborne. I had learned of Shane while in England. But learning about Shane and meeting Shane are two very different things. Shane makes his own clothes. He has dreadlocks. He's a good-looking guy, but he had electrical tape holding his glasses together. Who was this guy?

It turns out he was the primary driving force behind the new monastic movement. On an early morning ride to the Albuquerque airport I picked his brain. This movement – New Monasticism – seemed to take Newbigin seriously. The members of NM seemed to realize that every part of their lives – where they lived, how they ate, how they interacted with their neighbors – all of their actions were, or were not, proclaiming the gospel. I was hooked. As with my earlier endeavors, I dove in headfirst. Before I even left Glorieta I had committed to help organize a project called the Relational Tithe. I really felt drawn to

56

this whole sphere of concerns: living in community among those in need, using your finances to help the poor and not to pay for bricks and mortar, embodying your beliefs in the real world. I wanted to be a new monastic. But how would this fit with the other call I felt on my life, the call to enter the academy? I had sworn off Duke after putting me on the waitlist, but I continued to be intrigued by this little community in Lexington, KY. I felt that at least we needed to visit it and maybe, somehow, we might decide that it made more sense to go there than to attend seminary and prepare for an academic career. So, we were going to visit Kentucky. We were leaving on a Sunday morning to go to Lexington, which as it turns out was the day before I received my rejection letter from Princeton.

We eventually ended up moving to Kentucky and became a part of Communality. The house we bought had been one of the main gathering spots for the community and a number of the members had previously lived there. We lived in a large house and we quickly got involved in showing "hospitality to the stranger," which is, as I describe further below, one of the 12 Marks of New Monasticism. A number of people lived with us, especially in the first three years of moving to Kentucky. At one time there were 11 people in house – me, my wife and our three kids, plus six people not related to us. We also hosted many out of town guests during that time. I joke that in that house we entertained anarchists from Maine and Mennonites from Missouri, and seemingly everything in between.

When we moved to Kentucky I entered Asbury Seminary, where many of the people from Communality had attended and received their degrees. I had intended to get an MDiv and then figure out the PhD question after that. I also went to Asbury believing

the folks from Communality were indicative of the entire institution. They were not. The people of Communality had received their degrees from the E. Stanley Jones School of World Missions at Asbury. They read Newbigin as a matter of course, along with other missiologists like David Bosch and Charles Kraft. That said, it is important to note that the seminary, i.e. the more theologically-oriented part of the school I attended, at least when I entered in 2005, was in the midst of an institutional debate over whether or not such a thing as "absolute truth" existed, could be defended, and was thus required for an orthodox understanding of Christian religion. That was a concept I had long since grieved about and buried. It felt to me – and I am only speaking about my own personal feelings on the subject, and *not* to the question of whether they were right – as if I was being asked to pretend that a dead aunt was alive and seated at the dinner table next to me. I was more interested in the social shape of theology. The main question I asked during that time was: *If this is who we think God is, then what kind of people ought we become?* In other words, how do we take Newbigin off the pages of the book and out into real world instantiations?

Most of the people at Asbury Seminary when I was there, in the common parlance, were there to "get their denominational ticket punched." Most were Methodists, and the majority were planning on entering the Methodist church system. The MDiv degree they sought was their equivalent of a union card. The questions they asked were very far from my own. In the spring of 2006 Geoff Maddock's brother Brad, a Master's student in the sociology program at the University of Kentucky, offered to introduce me to some folks over there. I found quickly a home, especially with Dwight Billings, whose article on religion as opposition I had read to prepare for my meeting with the school. It

turns out I had been asking, without knowing it, deeply sociological questions. It only made sense that I would switch to that area of study.

The rest of the story, at least the parts that are pertinent to this research, is the mundane stuff of doctoral work. I started course work. I learned the discipline. And I conducted the research that follows.

Chapter Four – The History and Culture of American Evangelicalism

Social movements, as I have already noted, do not arise out of nowhere. They are deeply rooted in historical events and cultural frameworks. The following chapter seeks to provide a backdrop for American Evangelicalism from those two perspectives.

A Brief Thematic History of American Evangelicalism

Who are American Evangelicals? One helpful lens for understanding Evangelicalism in the United States is provided by a brief examination of the history of the movement. Much has been written about the chronological history of Evangelicalism, with some rich accounts going back to the First Great Awakening, especially the influence of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (see (Dayton 1988, Marsden 1991, Noll 2003). Other accounts begin more recently with the great Fundamentalist debates of the early 20th century (see (Hunter 1983, Smith and Emerson 1998).

That approach can be very helpful. But most of the accounts that provide a grand arc of Evangelical history do not pay sufficient detail, I believe, to the key themes that have driven the movement. Thus, for the purpose of this discussion I will pursue a thematic historical approach that, hopefully, will yield a useful framework in which to analyze AE and to suggest what younger American Evangelicals are reacting against today, especially those involved in New Monasticism.

Therapeutism within Evangelicalism – From Charles Finney to Rick Warren

The first historical theme I explore is that of therapeutism. Specifically, this section will ask how American Evangelicalism has contributed to the merger of what Phillip Rieff calls "the psychological man" to the Evangelical message. In his *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Rieff speaks of the profound effect of therapeutism in creating a culture where each person is given "permission to live an experimental life." Further, "Psychological man, in his independence from all gods, can feel free to use all god-terms; I imagine he will be a hedger against his own bets, a user of any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use" (Rieff 1966). In other words, all religious claims will become subservient to the claim of the therapeutism. I will suggest in the following section that historical forces of American Evangelicalism have played a significant role in shaping this culture.

From at least as early as Charles Finney and onward, American Evangelicalism has preached an individualist message that orients the religious adherent toward the notion that religious beliefs and practices exist primarily for the good of the individual and for the well-being of the person. By arguing that American Evangelicalism has been oriented toward the therapeutic, I am suggesting that its message has placed such great emphasis on the felt need of the individual that it has oriented its adherents away from beliefs and practices that serve to benefit the social world. It would seem that religious therapeutism has become one of the most significant elements of all religion, whether Evangelical or not, within the American context. Smith et. al. suggests that the dominant religious framework for teenagers in America is what he calls "moralistic therapeutic deism" He describes this framework in terms of the following five beliefs:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.

2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one-self.

4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.

5. Good people go to heaven when they die (Smith and Denton 2005).

But is this move toward the therapeutic something that can be traced to American Evangelicalism itself? There seems to be some evidence for this conclusion. Consider the Second Great Awakening, especially as seen in the preaching of Charles Finney. The Great Awakenings came about at a particular time when global historical events were affecting religion. But, even more important to the American context that brought about these awakenings were significant changes, most notably economic and labor conditions shifts, for the American worker.

In the context in Rochester, NY, for instance, as documented by Johnson in *A Shopkeeper's Millenium*, the expansion of the American capitalist system, "freed wage earners from the immediate discipline exerted by older, household-centered relations of production" ((Johnson 1978). Whereas the family and close-knit worker and apprentice relationships had been the organizing element of the American economy, the expansion of a merchant class of capitalist creates a distance between the worker and the owner (41). This development led to a kind of societal and familial anomie to which the revivals responded. Johnson writes:

"Norms and conceptions of self formulated in another world become alien and oddly unreal, generating confusion and personal anxiety that are often resolved in religious ways. The religious potential of individualism and spatial and occupational mobility lies in their tendency … to atomize society and thus to deprive people of old ways of understanding themselves and their places in the world" (Johnson 1978).

The individuals affected by these changes formed the constituency for Finney's new ideas about religion. In his reaction against the deterministic Calvinism that had dominated American Christianity, Finney preached a gospel that was both empowering and freeing to the individual. "God has made man a free moral agent," (Johnson 1978) Finney preached at the Third Church in Rochester, NY. Although it was clearly not his intent, I am suggesting that the overall effect of Finney, and the shifts in American Christianity which he influenced, gave each person the "permission to live an experimental life" (Rieff 1966).

What was the effect of these revivals, particularly given their focus on the individual? One of the ways this question can be answered is to see a shift in focus from the abstract to the daily (i.e. their Christian beliefs moved from metaphysical concepts to daily lived experience) and from the corporate to the individual. Mark Noll lists several changes that provide the backdrop for the Great Awakening, including the move from orthodox doctrine to orthodox living, from an ecclesial hermeneutic defined by recognized church authorities to an individual one (which Noll calls a "democratic appropriation") for reading scripture, and from a scholastic discourse about God toward preaching as "impassioned appeals for closing with Christ" (Noll 2003).

These changes in beliefs and practices were more than just theological shifts; they represented two major sociological shifts in American Evangelicalism as well. First, religion for this group was moving from the abstract to the daily. Today we speak of religious experience in terms like "lived religion" (McGuire 2008) or "everyday religion" (Ammerman 2007). These terms help us analyze religion more as a set of "embodied practices" than as "indicators of institutional religiosity" (Bender 2007). I would suggest that this way of thinking is facilitated in large part by the move from an ecclesiastical to an individual hermeneutic that occurs during this time.

Second, religious experience during this time also shifted from the corporate to the individual (Bloom 1992). This move was, in part, a reaction against the Calvinist notion of predestination (Johnson 1978). Barton Stone, a revivalist preacher decried that belief system:

> "Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs in Christianity in the world. It is a dark mountain between heaven and earth, and is amongst the most discouraging hindrances to sinners from seeking the kingdom of God, and engenders bondage and gloominess to the saints" (Quoted in (Bloom 1992).

Accompanying this shift was also a strong pioneering spirit that was anti-institutional, or at the least, institutionally entrepreneurial. The new American settlers came largely from Europe where for centuries Catholics and Protestants had been invading each other's countries in the name of God, hardly a ringing endorsement for religious institutions. Instead, during this time there was a strong desire to return to the "primitive Church" (Bloom 1992) and away from corporate religion. The use of the term "primitive Church"

denotes a belief that if the Christian church could simply return to its original form, before the hierarchy of the church arose, then the Church would be more authentic and would attract more adherents.

These shifts – from the abstract to the daily, and from the corporate to the individual – can be best demonstrated in the preaching of Charles Finney, a man who boasted of over 500,000 conversions during his ministry and who was called the "Father of Modern Revivalism" (Hankins 2004). Finney revolutionized evangelism in an era when commitment to the institutions of Christianity was significantly diminished. He did so, at least in part, by emphasizing the importance of individual choice for conversion, i.e., conversion as a choice made by the individual, rather than as a conversion to the corporate church. To do so he borrowed "from the rhetorical techniques of populist politicians, and significantly shifted the emphasis from the truth to be communicated to the communication of that truth, thus changing the subject of preaching from message to method" ((Pasquarello 2006), 12), (Also, see (Noll 2002), 190).

Does this shift in method necessarily mean that Evangelicalism as it was coming to be practiced in America was moving toward the therapeutic world of felt needs?[24] Pasquarello suggests precisely that in the following quote:

By placing primary emphasis on human agency, voluntarism, and making a

decision for Christ, revivalists such as Finney helped along the "sanctification" of

---

[24] Although I contend in this work that American Evangelicalism facilitated an increase in therapeutism both within American Evangelicalism and among the wider culture, it should also be noted that this movement is often credited by historians as leading to an increase in equality on a variety of issues, including gender, race and class. Additionally, sociologists such as Michael Emerson have credited American Evangelicalism as leading to increase cooperation among various racial elements within American Evangelicalism.

choice which prepared the way for the pleasures of modern consumer hedonism

and redefined Christianity in terms of the marketplace of felt needs and desire

(Pasquarello 2006).

This desire to meet the felt need of the listener, and to connect the story of Evangelical

Christianity to the average person, ends up with some very particular instantiations. For

example, the phrase "ask Jesus into your heart," a concept that most Evangelical youths

are familiar with from the earliest age, comes out of the revivals of the Second Great

Awakening, as do concepts like "Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior," and having a

"personal relationship with Jesus" (see (Mohler 2009).

Research affirms that religious language has great power to shape the religious

beliefs one holds (see (Boone 1989, Harding 2000, Csordas 2002, Bielo 2009). So what is

the effect of individualizing the language of Christian conversion? In more than one

hundred years since Finney, the ideas of personal conversion that stand outside of the

corporate body of religion have greatly moved Evangelicalism toward the impulse of the

felt need of the individual. Numerous examples of this therapeutism exist within the

artifacts of Evangelicalism. Consider the following lyrics from Evangelical musician

Keith Green:

Just believe, and you'll receive, that comfort you need,
You just think about all those lonely people you know,
They've got everything they want, but they have empty souls.[25]

---

[25] *He'll Take Care of the Rest*, from the album: *For Him Who Has Ears to Hear*, Sparrow Records, 1977

66

That song was from from1977. A Christian chorus from the 1930s proclaimed similar

sentiments, and had direct connective tissue to the 1977 song:

> I'm so happy and here's the reason why;
>
> Jesus took my burden all away.
>
> Now, I'm singing as the days go by;
>
> Jesus took my burden all away.[26]

The notion of religious conversion as therapy is, in fact, deeply rooted in the

beliefs of contemporary American Evangelicalism. One significant example of the

contemporary dominance of the felt need in Evangelicalism can be observed in the

ministry of Joel Osteen. Osteen heads a congregation of 30,000, a church so large it

acquired the Compaq Center from the NBA's Houston Rockets to house its congregation.

His is a church with revenues of $55 million. He is ubiquitous throughout the Sunday

morning televangelist circuit (Leland 2005). It would also seem that Osteen, whose books

have sold in the millions, is one of the great inheritors of Finney's desire to make the

Evangelical message more palatable. In his best-selling book *Your Best Life Now*, Osteen

offers quips and maxims about the many ways his faith have helped him succeed in life,

including buying a better home and moving his ministry to the Compaq Center. In a

quintessential statement of therapeutic Evangelicalism, he states: "God wants to make

your life easier. He wants to assist you, to promote you, to give you advantages. He wants

you to have preferential treatment" (Osteen 2004).

---

[26] Words and Music by Stanton W. Gavitt, © 1936, renewal 1964 by Stanton W. Gavitt, Assigned
to Singspiration/ASCAP

Perhaps no better example of Evangelical therapeutism exists than in the writings of Rick Warren. Warren has been a leader in the megachurch and seeker-sensitive movements that have been crucial to the shifting landscape of concerns for AE over the past thirty years. The roots of this movement can be traced to the methodological unease many Baby Boomers felt as they sought to assimilate as adults into organized Christianity (Shires 2007). Like Finney before them, a new generation of Evangelical Christian clergy who came of age during the 1960's, a time of unrest, sought to find better means of marketing the gospel to an age cohort that, they believed, felt disconnected from Christianity as it had been defined.

Saddleback Church, founded by Warren in 1980, has grown to be one of the largest mega-churches in the United States, and Warren's work, *The Purpose Driven Life*, is one of the all-time bestselling books at over 30 million copies worldwide. This establishes his book as the top selling book about Christian religion of all time, out-selling classics like *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis and *Born Again* by Charles Colson. Other than the Bible itself, no Christian book has sold more copies.

The roots of therapeutic Evangelicalism can be seen throughout Warren's work. For example, in one passage he states, "Bringing enjoyment to God, living for his pleasure, is the first purpose of your life" (Warren 2003). In another passage he proclaims that "life is a temporary assignment." (47) The purpose of conversion, in Warren's view, is to make God happy while finding the happiness God has for you; all of this is only important until the real world, i.e., that which comes after this life, is realized.

In summary, a major historical theme for understanding the development of American Evangelicalism is that of individual therapeutism. It pervades the language of the movement, it is the major theme of many of the best-selling books in the tradition, and is the building block of some of the most important constitutive language for American Evangelicalism.

Militaristic Moralism – The Rise of the Religious Right

The next historical theme to explore is the rise of the Religious Right and what I am terming *militaristic moralism*. This section will seek to address a second historical element of AE against which my research suggests many younger Evangelicals in the American context are reacting.

There has always existed within Evangelicalism a concern for the moral climate of the culture, what one writer described as the need to preach "the gospel to the poor" (Dayton 1988). Evangelicals in the 19th Century were involved in a whole range of social issues, including abolition, temperance, prison reform, and even gender inequality (see (Dayton 1988, Smith and Emerson 1998, Noll 2003, Rauschenbusch, Campolo et al. 2007). In an even earlier generation of Evangelicalism, John Wesley, the great preacher and founder of the Methodist Church, preached sermons on a wide variety of moral topics that would sound familiar to contemporary audiences, including the problems of agricultural monocultures and the dangers of income inequality. In his tract, *The Danger of Riches*, Wesley expressed opposition to Christians having more wealth than they need. In one sermon he suggested that it was the responsibility of the group to censure those whose riches "exceed the bounds" (Wesley, The Danger of Riches, page 4). In yet

another sermon with regard to the role of Christianity in shaping the morality of the world, John Wesley asked, "Why has Christianity done so little in the world?" (John Wesley, Sermon 116: "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity"), bemoaning the fact that the Christian gospel had not brought about greater social changes.

During the 20th Century the notion of Christianity as a social force in bringing about positive change in society remained a significant idea in Evangelicalism throughout the globe even as it was being undermined within the American Evangelical context. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Christian martyr during the Nazi regime and a leader in the German Confessing Church, a strongly evangelical group, suggested that the concepts of individual sin and social sin could not be separated. (Bonhoeffer and Green 1998) But the divide between these two ideas was a dominant force in American Evangelicalism for much of the 20th Century.

To understand the turn AE took in moving away from social engagement it is perhaps helpful to discuss two historical phenomena: the social gospel and the Fundamentalist debates. The *social gospel* was a term popularized by a Baptist preacher named Walter Rauschenbusch (Rauschenbusch 1907, Rauschenbusch 1917). Rauschenbusch was writing at a time when AE was facing the encroachment of modernity against all the beliefs it held, as well as dealing with the encroaching effects of industrialization on America's urban centers. The consequences of industrialization were not avoidable for Rauschenbusch, who was involved with the urban poor and, in particular, the immigrant populations that had settled in the Hell's Kitchen area of New York City. He saw first-hand the deplorable conditions under which the people of that area lived and he contrasted those conditions negatively to the story of the Christian

conversion and what he had come to believe that conversion should mean in terms of social actions. "It bothered Rauschenbusch that so many, who like himself had had genuine, individual, personal conversions, still lacked any sense of social sin"(Ramsay 1986).

Rauschenbusch thus represented a kind of social engagement that had been a goal for much of American Evangelicalism in the 19th Century. The practice of this kind of religion had seen the founding of Oberlin College as an abolitionist training college and the connection of business concerns with the social concerns of the day (Collins 2005), as well as the involvement of Evangelicals in many other spheres of public life. One thing that had changed between the earlier manifestations of AE and the time of Rauschenbusch, however, was the social context *within* Evangelicalism, a movement that was increasingly moving away from social engagement. This change was due, at least in part, to the triumph of the individual and therapeutic message that had been the staple of the Great Awakenings and the revivals of the 19th Century. A religiously motivated social engagement represented an antithesis to the turn toward individualism favored by the revivalists of the nineteenth century (Marsden 1991).

Contemporary scholarship recognizes the role that religious beliefs play in determining one's social engagement. Kniss suggests that individuals' center of moral authority determines the moral projects in which they engage (see (Kniss and Numrich 2007). For a movement that had placed increasing emphasis on the individual as the center of its conversion narratives, concepts like social sins, and therefore social engagement in areas like social reform programs to help the poor, were very much of a

71

different gospel than that to which American Evangelicals of the time had been converted.

In addition to the heightening of individualism with AE, the preaching of, and desire for, a social gospel also must to be understood against the backdrop of an encroaching modernity, the threat of which has very much defined American Evangelicalism from the turn of the 20th Century through the rise of the religious right. In the Nineteenth century, Evangelicalism enjoyed an epistemological advantage as a dominant narrative for guiding public action. Science and education were not seen as threats against orthodoxy for this group, but rather as disciplines that would eventually reveal the truth of their position. Smith and Emerson note:

"Believing that all of God's truth was unified and readily knowable, evangelicals employed the dominant Baconian paradigm of scientific knowledge and the epistemology of Scottish Common Sense Realism to demonstrate that faith and science could and must go hand-in-hand" (Smith and Emerson 1998).

This dominant ideological position fell on hard times, however, as America neared the turn of the century. Theological training schools and seminaries increasingly moved toward higher criticism, a hermeneutical model that sought to understand the historical context in which books of the Bible were written and to raise questions about authorship and authenticity of biblical texts. In this context, beliefs about the divine inspiration of scripture and the supernaturalism of the Christian story struggled to survive. But if higher criticism was the first punch of a one-two combination, the second blow came from the increasing popularity of the Darwinian explanation of evolutionary

72

change. For Christians in general, and for Evangelicals in particular, Darwinism undermined the ontological surety that AE had employed in its public engagement. The motivation for societal engagement by the 19th Century Evangelicals was not a belief that their message was one of many possible options for changing the world; rather, they were involved because they fundamentally believed they were right about the accuracy of scripture in describing the world as it should be understood. Thus, evangelicals believed they could be engaged in the world because they believed they had both the correct understanding of the world and the answer for changing it. William Jennings Bryan, for example, battled against evolution because he believed that such a non-biblical understanding of the world would lead to greater degeneration in society. During the famous Scopes trial he stated, "All the ills from which America suffers can be traced to the teaching of evolution" (Taylor 2007).

Changes in education and science were challenging concepts such as the authorship of the biblical text and the explanation for the origins of the world, ideas that had been central to Evangelicalism since its inception. The confidence that had underpinned the social gospel was thus undermined as well. Evangelicals suddenly were forced to confront the fact that there were significant challenges to their ontological and epistemological certainties that had guided their involvement in the social sphere. This notion, combined with the increasingly individualistic focus of the Evangelical gospel, compelled this movement to place its greatest emphasis on the intellectual defense of the Christian belief system and away from social engagement (Smith and Emerson 1998, Marsden 2006) This defense is at the root of the Fundamentalist debates.

What were the Fundamentalist debates? Despite common usage of the term "fundamentalism" as equated with concepts like ignorance or lack of information, the fundamentalist impulse must be seen historically as a desire to defend the intellectual roots of conservative Christian concepts. Thus, in response to the liberalization of Christianity within American Christianity, a group of Evangelical scholars published *The Fundamentals (1910-1915)*. This tract contained a series of essays that defended, among other things, the inerrancy of the Bible and a literalist interpretation of the bible, with an emphasis on the miracles of Jesus and the literal, six-day understanding of the creation account as contained in Genesis (Torrey, Feinberg et al. 1990).

J. Gresham Machen was a powerful figure in the fundamentalist debates. He was trained at some of the best schools in the nation and taught at Princeton Seminary. Machen came from a Reformed tradition that tended to place more emphasis on the arts, culture and academic rigor (Marsden 2006). However, he was also concerned with the increasing attacks of modernism on the intellectual tenets of Christianity. Machen turned his attention to a vigorous intellectual defense of conservative Christianity. In 1923, he published *Christianity and Liberalism*, with the main claim of the book being that liberalism was simply not Christian in an orthodox sense. As such, liberalism would undermine the core elements of Christianity and eventually lead to the complete destruction of the religion itself. He wrote, "If a condition could be conceived in which all the preaching of the Church should be controlled by the liberalism which in many quarters has already become preponderant, then, we believe, Christianity would at last have perished from the Earth and the gospel would have sounded forth for the last time" (Marsden 2006).

The heart of Machen's argument was that Christianity would not survive the academic attacks of liberalism. But, despite the best efforts of Machen and other academics, the fundamentalist battles to beat back liberalism were not successful. Nowhere was that more evident at the time than in the Scopes Monkey Trial (1925). In attempting to argue intellectually for a literal, six-day creation narrative of the founding of the world, William Jennings Bryan instead created the impression that Christian Fundamentalism and its adherents were "ignorant, reactionary, obscurantist and intolerant" ((Smith and Emerson 1998).

Even today, self-proclaimed Fundamentalists recognize the major loss represented by the Scopes outcome. In *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, a pro-fundamentalist book published in the early 1980's by the founders of Liberty University, the authors bemoan the fact that the Scopes trial created an impression that "the sway of public opinion was with Darrow. This caused many to falsely assume that Fundamentalism was now a dying phenomenon" ((Dobson, Falwell et al. 1981).

Although the public opinion loss for Fundamentalism harmed the movement, particularly the intellectual portions of the movement represented by voices like Machen, perhaps an even greater impact was what happened within the movement as a result of that loss. Feeling that liberalism had become too deeply entrenched in both the culture and in the denominations that comprised Christianity, the Fundamentalists began to leave the mainline denominations in droves while also creating further distance between themselves and the wider culture. They preached a doctrine of *separatism*, creating a wall between themselves and the liberals they seemed unable to eject from their Churches. Quoting from Smith and Emerson, "Particularly by the 1940's, separatism became a new

fundamentalist strategy for dealing with suspect Christians and the modern world" (Smith and Emerson 1998).

Rather than stand and defend, as earlier intellectual defenders of Fundamentalism advocated, Fundamentalists went on the retreat. They separated physically from the denominations and they separated doctrinally from the liberals. Many Fundamentalists began to practice a "double-separatism," (Smith, 8) even separating from those who would not separate from the liberals and the denominations. Separation thus had at least three powerful effects for Fundamentalism and for American Evangelicalism. First, it significantly changed the ethics for the conservative side of Evangelical Christianity, placing much more emphasis on personal piety than on social reform. In the post-Scopes trial Fundamentalism, the social freedom afforded in the more liberal denominations looked to the Fundamentalists like license to sin. Drinking, smoking, even going to movies, became an easy way to mark infidelity. "The traditional values of charity, humility, patience and so on were displaced by lists of specific, behavioral rules" (Smith and Emerson 1998).

Second, separation and retreat cemented the shift away from social engagement. The battle lines had been drawn over right doctrine and belief. The social engagement that had characterized earlier generations of Evangelicals had not kept out the creeping liberalism. Liberals, Dobson would later claim, "placed Christian 'nurture' above confrontational evangelism and promoted an experience of Christianity that was not dependent upon any biblical verification" (Dobson, Falwell et al. 1981). In other words, social engagement would not bring about adherents with the correct set of beliefs to

satisfy the Fundamentalists. Rauschenbush's social gospel and Finney's abolitionist zeal would take a back seat to the defense of clear doctrinal boundaries for the faithful.

Third, Fundamentalists shifted the methods and goals of Evangelism. Whereas Finney, in an earlier time, had bragged of taking on the air of a salesman to win as many converts as possible, the Fundamentalist impulse of separatism and doctrinal purity was driven by the desire to win the argument. Fundamentalists had drawn a line in the sand in terms of personal piety and right doctrine and only those on their side of the line were truly Christian. This had a devastating effect on American Evangelicalism.

Unlike the rapid growth of American Evangelicalism during the Great Awakenings, "the factionalist, separatist, judgmental character of fundamentalism itself had become an insurmountable impediment to effectively evangelizing American society for Christ" (Smith and Emerson 1998). An interesting paradox prevailed during this time as well. Because of Finney, Stone and many of the other evangelists of the Second Great Awakening, the doctrine of Calvinism had lost its influence among American Evangelicalism. The departure from Calvinism, at least in part, grew out of a desire to evangelize. In other words, if people were free moral agents who were responsible for their eternal decisions, they would be more likely to choose to convert. However, the retreat from Calvinism combined with the inward turning of fundamentalism, created a cultural vacuum for AE. Thus were born some of the darkest days of American Evangelicalism.

From the time of the Fundamentalist debates until the end of World War II, conservative Protestantism "had evolved into a somewhat reclusive and defensive version

of itself" (Smith and Emerson 1998). Further, in the country at large there were a number of significant challenges. For example, the Great Depression shook American beliefs in the exceptionalism of the capitalist economy. World War II, which brought about the allied victories in two theaters, nevertheless also ushered in the threat of "godless Communism" and the Cold War. Reclusive fundamentalism was incapable of speaking to these larger issues. Out of the ashes of this wreckage was born a new form of American Evangelicalism that was represented by, among others, Harold Ockenga, pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, and Billy Graham, the still famous evangelist, so-called *neo-evangelicalists*. This form of Evangelicalism sought to engage the world while holding to the historical understandings of Christianity for which the Fundamentalists had fought so hard.

It is important to emphasize that the neo-evangelical turn did not represent a shift in beliefs. No one in this movement desired to embrace liberal doctrine. Rather, the neo-Evangelicals desired to recast American Evangelicalism in a more positive light, mostly through the development of new marketing methods for the Christian gospel, with particular emphasis on methods that would appeal to youth lost to the strict line of Fundamentalism (see (Hunter 1983, Smith and Emerson 1998, Shires 2007). As will become more apparent, however, the neo-evangelicalism represented by the National Association of Evangelicals and other parachurch organizations such as Campus Crusade and Christianity Today eventually helped birth a new form of fundamentalism.

Further, it is important to note that, like earlier leaders such as Barton Stone, there existed within the neo-Evangelical movement a strong desire to return to an earlier time. Billy Graham has been quoted as saying, "I did indeed want to set religion back, not just

100 years but 1,900 years, to the Book of Acts, when first century followers of Christ were accused of turning the Roman Empire upside down" (Baptist 2006). This statement is yet another example of the desire within AE to recapture a more authentic time of the Christian religion. Significantly, it also represented a major turn toward re-engagement with the world and away from the fundamentalist impulse to retreat from the broader American culture that had dominated conservative Protestantism during the first half of the 20th Century since the Scopes trial.

The most notable outcome of this turn is the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Harold Ockenga, its founder, called "upon biblically grounded Christians to create a new evangelicalism that eschewed separatism and both engaged liberals in dialogue and battled against social injustice" (Shires 2007). By itself this was an important development. Evangelicals were willing to put aside their separatist ways in order to win converts. But more importantly for understanding the organizational strength of what would later come to be called *the religious right* was the way in which the NAE "provided a platform from which to launch a number of special purpose groups that were to become increasingly important in the years to come" (Wuthnow 1988).

Sub Theme One: The United States as a Christian Nation

To understand what happens next and how these neo-Evangelicals set the stage for the rise of the religious right, it is important to examine the period between the end of World War II and the election of Ronald Reagan in terms of two sub-themes. The first of these is the idea of America as a Christian nation. The second sub-theme, to follow below, is about the politics of personal piety

Those still considering themselves fundamentalists during this time period significantly influenced the turn of non-Mainline Protestantism toward the Republican Party, beginning with the election of Dwight Eisenhower. John R. Rice, an influential fundamentalist and founder of *The Sword of the Lord*, played a key role in convincing Southern religious conservatives to move away from the Democratic Party, as did Bob Jones, Jr. and Carl McIntire. This position was due to their belief in capitalism and the notion that America was a Christian nation, one that could stand against "godless Communism" (Williams 2010). A short time after his election in 1954, Eisenhower signed into law and act of congress that added the oft-debated words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance. But it was not just fundamentalists who helped make this shift. In addition to the NAE were a number of other evangelistic groups that sprung up in the post-war period, including Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. A significant motivator for these groups, often overlooked in the history of American Evangelicalism, was the fear of communism. Henrietta Mears, the founder of the modern Sunday School movement and the most influential mentor to Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, suggested that evangelism and missions would be the "Christian answer to the growing menace of communism" (Turner 2008). Lindsay suggests this was a major motivator in the social engagement of AE that occurred after the war:

> "Partly as a result of their opposition to 'godless communism,' evangelicals rallied around the flag and a sense of America as a distinctively 'Christian' nation. This was particularly the case among the Youth for Christ leaders in the 1940's,

many of whom, like Billy Graham and Ted Engstrom, would later take the helm of large evangelical organizations" (Lindsay 2007).

The 1960's and 1970's represented some of the greatest challenges to the notion of America as a Christian nation, as well as some of the clearest demonstrations of the shift toward an American Christian identity for Evangelicals. Three landmark Supreme Court rulings, the final of which was *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, ruled against praying in schools. Responses to the complaints of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, through her lawsuit, *Murray v. Cutlett*, eliminated the reading of the Bible in schools[27]. It was also during this time that Evangelicals became more deeply ensconced in the American culture and body politic, as well as becoming more deeply committed to the vision of America as a Christian nation that could serve as a counter to the growth of communism. Williams notes that in 1971, President Nixon solicited Billy Graham to gather twenty to twenty-five Evangelicals, including Bill Bright and *Christianity Today* editors Harold Lindell and Harold O. J. Brown, to meet with Henry Kissinger on Nixon's "China policy" (Williams 2010).

One artifact that shows the increasingly intertwined nature between Evangelicals and America is the song, *Statue of Liberty*, written in 1974 by Neil Enloe. In that song, Enloe compares the Statue of Liberty with the Cross of Christ, stating, "As the statue liberates the citizen, so the cross liberates the soul." The idea that America was a Christian nation, and the sole hope against the spread of communism remained an important motivator well into the ascendancy of the religious right and the election of

---

[27] O'Hair's lawsuit became part of another lawsuit, *Abington School District v. Schempp,* one of the three suits also ruling out school prayer.

Ronald Reagan, whose "relentless use of dualistic language – good and evil, right and wrong – resonated especially with evangelicals, whose pastors often employed the same rhetoric" (Balmer 2008).

Of even greater importance to younger American Evangelicals was the fear of a world system opposed to Christianity morphed into the war on terror that became even more cogent after the September 11th attacks. In October of 2001, *Christianity Today* proclaimed that, "Religious terrorism is the communism of the 21st Century" (Galli 2001). Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, called Islam "wicked," hearkening back to the good vs. evil rhetoric that had been used to rally AE's during the Cold War (Williams 2010).

The transference of the war on communism to the war on terror, however, was happening before September 11, 2001. Of historical importance, and as a way of linking the war on terror with the war against communism, it should be noted that it was only two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall that America invaded Iraq in Operation Desert Storm. The invasion of Iraq was praised by the editors of *Christianity Today* as an example of the use of just war theory (CT, April 8, 1991). But it is not until after September 11 that the religious furor over the war on terror reached a fever pitch. In support of the invasion of Iraq, Charles Stanley, the influential pastor and former head of the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "We should offer to serve the war effort in any way possible." Tim LaHaye, co-author of the popular *Left Behind* series, saw the invasion as "a focal point of end-time events," and Jerry Falwell stated, "God is pro-war" (Marsh, NYT, 1/20/2006). In this way, the attack on America was not framed as just a national issue, but also a religious issue. As the neo-Evangelicals and fundamentalists morphed

together into the religious right, there came to be no distinction with their rhetoric between America and Christianity. As we will see later, this is one of the key issues against which a new generation of Evangelicals is reacting.

Sub Theme Two: The Politics of Personal Piety

At the same time that there was significant macrosocial action seeking to establish America as a Christian nation and her enemies as enemies of the religion, there was a second important theme within the development of the religious right -- the development of a politics of personal piety. This move should be seen as the triumph of the therapeutic message and a wholesale rejection of the social gospel. If God's primary interest was in an individual's actions, then why concern oneself with social issues, especially when those social concerns had been historically linked to the forces of liberalization?

Abortion

The fight against abortion has been profoundly significant to AE. How did this come to be such a dominant issue, not just for American Evangelicals themselves but for the organizations it spawned? The fight against abortion began within Roman Catholicism as a response to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Roe. v. Wade* (see (Williams 2010). Catholic social teaching, and in particular the *Gaudium et Spes*, issued in 1965, clearly state that life begins at conception, thus forbidding abortion even before the *Roe* decision was handed down. Catholics were the first to be politically organized on this issue, with Henry Hyde, a conservative Catholic from Illinois, being the first political leader to place any legal restrictions on the act. The Hyde Amendment in 1976 was a bill that prohibited federal funding of abortion through the Medicaid program except in the case of rape, incest or life of the mother. American Evangelicals, however, do not have a

Pope, and no one person spoke for the social issues about which they should care. As such, they were slow to join in the fight against abortion. It was not until Francis Schaeffer chimed in on the issue that it became a dominant cause for AE and its various institutions (Williams 2010). Schaeffer, who will be discussed in greater detail below, was a missionary to the counter-culture in the 1960's and 1970's. In Switzerland he and his wife Edith founded *L'Abri*, a community for young people who felt alienated by Christianity.

Schaeffer became increasingly convinced that the reason Christianity was failing the young people who were flocking to his community and, more broadly, the reason why the West was in decline, was *humanism*, which he defined as "the system whereby men and women, beginning absolutely by themselves, try rationally to build out from knowledge, having only Man as their integration point, to find all knowledge, meaning and value" (Schaeffer 1968). One of the outcomes of this humanism, Schaeffer argued, was abortion. However, Schaeffer argued, even this issue must be seen against the larger attack on the Christian worldview. He wrote:

> "Christians failed to see that abortion was really a symptom of the much larger problem and not just one bit and piece. And beyond this as the material-energy-chance humanistic world view takes over increasingly in our country, the view concerning the intrinsic value of human life will grow less and less, and the concept of compassion for which the country is in some sense known will be further gone" (Schaeffer 1981).

This concept of a clash of cultures and ideas fit well into the American Evangelical framework of embattlement. The concept also became a dominant theme in the writings of Schaeffer who, in the process, infused the issue of abortion into the AE field of social engagement. In 1976, Schaeffer created a book and video series entitled *How Should We Then Live*. The last two chapters/episodes of this work tied abortion rights into the decline of Western Culture. In 1979, along with C. Everett Koop, the former American Surgeon General, Schaeffer penned *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, the first chapter of which was entitled "The Abortion of the Human Race." In 1981, Schaeffer published *A Christian Manifesto*, in which three chapters were dedicated to civil disobedience, particularly against abortion providers. This book served as a playbook for some of the more radical anti-abortion groups like Operation Rescue (Williams 2010).

Schaeffer's strong advocacy for action on the issue of abortion was a major factor in infusing the abortion issue into the set of concerns that helped form the more politically motivated groups such as The Moral Majority and later, The Christian Coalition – groups that were deeply integrated with those organizations whose stated function was evangelization. So, while already politicized figures such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson continued to go deeper into the arena of organizing evangelicals toward conservative political action, including action against abortion, so too did pastors like D. James Kennedy and Charles Stanley, as well as movement actors like Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright, who blamed "the legalization and acceptance of abortion" on "secular humanism" (Turner 2008).

Another significant issue in the infusion of the politics of personal piety into AE was the issue of gay rights. This issue entered the public sphere in a significant way in the 1970s, perhaps most notably because of the Stonewall Riots that occurred in 1969. There is evidence that American Evangelicals were aware, of and galvanizing against, the issue in the early 1970s, when "thirty American cities, including Seattle and Los Angeles, passed gay rights ordinances" (Williams 2010). However, for American Evangelicalism, the year this issue truly became a part of the moralistic impulse of American Evangelicalism in 1977, which was the year of Anita Bryant.

Anita Bryant was a former beauty queen and the national spokewoman for the Florida Citrus Commission. In 1977 she put her reputation on the line to form a group named *Save Our Children*, whose primary aim was to defeat a Dade County, Florida law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. The *Save Our Children* organization was successful in June of that year. In the process of defeating the ordinance, two major shifts occurred. First, Bryant and her campaign became a galvanizing focus for American Evangelicalism. In support of Bryant, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell became deeply involved in the campaign to repeal the Dade County laws and, more broadly, in the fight against gay rights.

Second, however, was the fact that this campaign marked another significant point of disillusionment with President Jimmy Carter, a disillusionment that would play a big part in the wholesale shifting of AE to the Republican Party. Carter rode into power as the first "born again" President. But during the Dade County scuffle, he sought to ameliorate the tensions around the issue by inviting to the White House "two

representatives from the Gay Rights Task Force," and, two months later, "ten gay rights activists" (Williams, 148), all in the hopes of starting a conversation between those seeking rights and those seeking to see their moral vision enforced in law. Needless to say, as Falwell, Robertson, and others were moving to the right on this issue, Carter alienated himself from the religious right by seeking dialogue with gay rights activists. He further distanced himself from conservative religious leaders in 1979, when he refused to exclude homosexuals from the "White House Conference on Families" (Lindsay 2007).

Thus, the fight against gay rights became a strong rallying point for conservatives against Carter, and it has continued as a dominant issue throughout the last 30 years. In 1996 the Republican majority in Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act. In 2004, after same-sex marriage was legalized in Massachusetts, 11 states initiated ballot measures banning same-sex marriage. These measures drove Evangelical voters out in large numbers, helping to secure the re-election of George W. Bush.

In summary, a major historical theme for understanding the development of American Evangelicalism is that of militaristic moralism. It pervades the language of the movement, it is the major theme of many of the best-selling books, and is the building block of some of the most important constitutive language for American Evangelicalism.

The Cultural Milieu of American Evangelicalism

In addition to understanding the impact of the thematic history of American Evangelicalism on today's new religious movements, it is important to understand the culture affecting younger Evangelicals. Sociologists have always recognized the role that

culture plays in sociological analysis (see (Wuthnow 1987). Culture, then, can provide an important lens through which to discern movements like American Evangelicalism. AE, like all of religion, is subject to the cultural forces that shape society. Changes to religion, such as increasing pluralism (Beckford 1989, Berger 1990, Beckford 2003, Berger 2006) and the various "post-" turns in American Protestant religion (including post-conservatism, post-liberalism, postmodernism and postcolonial theologies) all affect the world of ideas in which AE engages (see (Murphy 1996, Grenz and Franke 2001, Stiver 2001, Lindbeck 2009). Broader cultural shifts such as globalization, the technological society, and the increase of innovation, (see (Postman 1993, Giddens 2000, Postman 2006, Ritzer 2008) should also be seen as affecting American Evangelicalism in significant ways, just as they would affect any other institution in the culture in which these changes are occurring.

So how should we understand the ways in which shifting culture affecting American Evangelicalism? In his work *Meaning and Moral Order*, Wuthnow suggests there are four approaches that can be employed in evaluating culture from a sociological perspective: *subjective, structural, dramaturgic* and *institutional*. Since my work is quite apart from the questions asked in the social psychological realm, I will refrain from employing the subjective model. Let me now provide a brief break down of the other three.

By *structural*, Wuthnow is suggesting an approach that "focuses on patters and relationships among cultural elements themselves" (Wuthnow 1987). Additionally, as with Mary Douglas, there is an attempt in employing this approach to establish boundaries and to ask how particular symbols are employed to define membership in a

group. In particular this approach will ask how the symbols of AE seek to demarcate the membership of AE. By *dramaturgic*, Wuthnow (1987) is suggesting an approach that focuses on the "expressive or communicative properties of culture (13). This is similar to Durkheim's work on primitive ritual" and Goffman use of the same phrase. The use of this approach will help evaluate the meaning making elements of American Evangelical culture. By employing an *institutional* approach, Wuthnow (1987) attempts to discover not just the moral order of the culture but its "actors and organizations that require resources and, in turn, influence the distribution of resources" (15). An institutionally analytical approach to AE will look at those elements that provide resource to, or require resources from, the broad set of actors that fall within AE.

These approaches are necessary, at least in part, because the changes to Evangelicalism are not happening in a cultural vacuum. I have already defined two important historical themes in the development of AE. In the following section I will outline two key cultural shifts that take place within the movement and are offered to help set a broader stage for the reader with regard to the cultural backdrop against which these changes happen. These changes will be analyzed using the three models provided by Wuthnow.

Intellectualization

The first important cultural element to pay attention to with regard to AE is what I have termed the *intellectualization* of American Evangelicalism. By this I am referring to forces that have driven Evangelicalism in the American context to become increasingly convinced of the need for a more robust academic defense of their particular religious

beliefs and epistemic framework. Some of this may be directly attributable to the now generations-old struggles that trace back to the influence of higher criticism, the ontological crisis of Darwinianism, and the subsequent debates over the fundamentals of the faith. Evangelicals have struggled since that time to defend themselves against a perception of an onslaught of the forces of modernity that seek to undermine what they perceive as truth.

From a dramaturgic perspective, there are still clearly generations-old questions of meaning being worked out, and performed, within AE. The same impulses that enlivened J. Gresham Machen, i.e. the impulse to have an academically defensible set of beliefs, is still alive and well and being sought within American Evangelicalism. That said, it is important to note that there was an attempt to add robustness to the belief structures of AE during the 1950's. One of the founding principles of Bill Bright's organization, Campus Crusade for Christ, was to combat what he saw as a "spiritually illiterate" generation (Turner 2008). *Christianity Today* was founded in 1956 in part because Billy Graham, who helped found the magazine, believed that AE needed a counterbalance to *The Christian Century*, the more academic journal of mainline Protestantism.

But American Evangelicalism did not really develop the depth and breadth of organizations committed to a rigorous academic defense of the faith until its ascendancy that begins in the late 1970's. This is due, at least in part, to the evangelical impulse, i.e., the desire to win souls (Smith and Emerson 1998). And, it was due to the notion that younger people were not resonating with Evangelicalism as it was being presented. This facilitated the increase of youth-oriented evangelistic organizations such as Young Life

(1940), Youth for Christ (1945), Campus Crusade for Christ (1951) and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (1955) (Shires 2007). AE during this time, like it had done all the way back to Finney, looked for simple arguments that could win converts. During this time Bill Bright develops the *Four Spiritual Laws*, a shorthand version that relied on a foundationalist conception of conversion. These were:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. (John 3:16, John 10:10)

2. Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23)

3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. (Romans 5:8, I Corinthians 15:3-6, John 14:6)

4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives. (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:8,9, John 3:1~8, Revelation 3:20) (Crusade)

But the world was being changed by the emerging counterculture. The American population in general was becoming more educated and looking for deeper answers than could be contained in four simple tenets. Emerging globalization and increasing communication was making people more aware of the need for a distinctly Evangelical culture that could stand in opposition to the growing secular culture encountered on college campuses (see (Hunter 1983, Smith and Emerson 1998, Shires 2007).

This made it increasingly difficult for the current AE actors to engage students in a changing world. Billy Graham, who was the original editor of *Christianity Today*,

looked too buttoned-down to engage in this new world. Quoting from Shires, "In spite of Graham's popularity in the sixties, his suit-and-tie, preacherly style and pointing finger still appeared old-fashioned to a good number of university students" (Shires 2007).

In this what we see that American Evangelicalism had to address not just basic questions of meaning, or what is true, but larger questions of the patterns of moral order, like to what cultural institutions one wishes to connect. These differences can be uncovered with a structural approach. The problem was not simply that Graham was perceived as too square for the times, but also that his image connected him to an earlier moral order, namely that time of Fundamentalist dominance. There was a perceived need for a figure that could embrace the basic truth concepts as understood by AE, but also do so in a way that gave credence to the intellectual arguments that could win over a more well-educated population. This set the stage for the influence of Francis Schaeffer.

Francis Schaeffer trained under J. Gresham Machen and Cornelius Van Til at Westminster Theological Seminary when he was well acquainted with, and deeply affected by, the fundamentalist debates. He understood, and deeply believed in, an orthodox understanding of Christian belief, and in an inerrant interpretation of scripture, in contrast to the liberalism ushered in by higher criticism. In 1955 Schaeffer and his wife Edith, already serving as missionaries in Switzerland, founded the L'Abri community. L'Abri was, to quote Lindsay, "a place where students could contemplate existential questions in an intellectually and spiritually 'safe place' as well as practice Christian living in the company of other believers" (Lindsay 2007). It is also important to note that Francis Schaeffer was a deeply aesthetic person who loved culture and art, and discussions about such matters filled the halls and fed the conversations for young

American and European students who flocked to his retreat center (Schaeffer 2007). Schaeffer was in this sense a truly new Evangelical, one who not only held to the fundamentalist, presuppositional approach to understanding Christian truth, but who also understand the new role of culture in the Evangelical dialogue.

Schaeffer came onto the American Evangelical scene in the 1960's. In 1965 he toured churches and Evangelical colleges in America, giving a series of lectures that sought to provide intellectual heft to the Evangelical belief system. He then returned for another tour in 1968 that culminated with a lecture at Harvard University. "Out of his lectures came his books *Escape from Reason* and *The God Who is There* (Shires 2007). He later published books on environmentalism (*Pollution and the Death of Man*, 1970) and created a highly influential book and film series on art, history and culture entitled *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* in 1976.

For Evangelicals who had for most of the 20th Century felt besieged by the culture and its intellectual attacks, Schaeffer provided a sense of cover for their belief systems. His work even provided important arguments for the involvement of Evangelicals in politics (*A Christian Manifesto: Christian principles for secular politics*, 1981), and for Evangelical engagement in the fight against abortion (*Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* 1983) Michael Lindsay credits Schaeffer as being one of the best examples of Evangelicals' desire to "raise the stature of the next generation of leaders" (Lindsay 2007).

But Schaeffer was not alone in the desire to train Evangelicals in the life of the mind. In 1971, the late Rev. Jerry Falwell established Liberty University, a college whose stated mission was to "train young Champions for Christ." It now boasts of being the largest Evangelical university in the world and, according to its website, has over 60 degree programs, including graduate programs in nursing, education and communications. It even has a law school and an MBA program.

During the thirty year period between 1980 and the present, a number of Evangelical institutions have been founded within AE to further the goal of increasing the academic rigor of the faith. In 1991 the Trinity Forum was founded to provide "opportunities for participation in profound reflection and candid conversation about life's most important issues" (Trinity Website). Similarly during this timeframe, Chuck Colson began both the *Centurions Program* and *The Colson Center for Christian Worldview*, both of which are driven by the impulse to "spawn more public intellectuals" (Lindsay 2007).

Also during this time there was an increasing desire to engage culture on a broader scale. The magazine *Books and Culture* was launched by Christianity Today in 1995 to be a "bimonthly review that engages the contemporary world from a Christian perspective." The year 1995 is, interestingly enough, the same year that Mark Noll published his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, a book that bemoaned the state of the Evangelical academy. However in 2007 Noll himself suggested in retrospect that he was shortsighted and did not see the growing trend toward intellectualization within American Evangelicalism (For a complete discussion of this topic, see Lindsay 2007, 94-113).

One final piece of evidence in support of this growing cultural shift within AE is the dialogue that has occurred during this time between Catholics and Evangelicals, combined with an increase in teachings of Early Christianity within Evangelical academic institutions. In 1995 Chuck Colson published, along with Richard John Neuhaus, the book *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*. The notion of these two sides of the Christian church being in conversation with each other might have seemed odd to an early 20th Century Evangelical but it has come to be accepted within the thinking of younger Evangelicals. But it is equally significant – and perhaps more so for my research – that Evangelical colleges and seminaries have begun to include deeper discussions of early Christianity in their curriculum.

It is also important to note that whether or not these organizations were in fact intellectually and academically rigorous, is for other scholars to judge. The key issue here is that AE perceived itself to need these organizations, and they were developed in response to that felt need. Thus, employing an institutional approach, the development of AE as a movement brought about specific actors and resources that would continue to fund the social movement of American Evangelicalism.

Marketization (the Evangelical Industrial complex)

A second important cultural shift within AE is the development of the Evangelical marketplace. As American Evangelicals began to pervade American culture in every sphere, there was an increasing desire to create products and services that could be branded as *Christian*, whether that meant the products were themselves explicitly Christian or the individuals providing the services claimed the Christian faith. Using

Wuthnow's structural lens of cultural analysis, there was a clear sense that the creation of an Evangelical marketplace would not only advance the evangelistic goals of AE, but would also advance its institutions (Smith and Emerson 1998). However, it is also worth noting that the entrepreneurial spirit has always been a part of American Evangelicalism, and that this spirit allowed for great innovation in creating the religious market. Quoting from Smith and Emerson,

> "…the evangelical field is structurally wide open for inventive leaders to emerge and launch new initiatives. Entrepreneurial evangelical leaders are much freer than their mainline or liberal church leaders to generate their own evangelical churches, colleges, mission boards, parachurch ministries, radio programs, publishing ventures, biblical teaching, and spiritual programs (Smith and Emerson 1998).

The AE marketplace, if it can be said to have a marked starting point, traces back to a gathering of Evangelical publishers in 1950 at a meeting in Wheaton, IL. At that meeting there were less than 25 companies represented, all book publishers, and more than half of those present were the publishing arms of denominational bodies. This included publishers like Abingdon-Cokesbury (The United Methodist Church), Ausburg (Lutheran) Christian Publications (Christian and Missionary Alliance) and Warner (Church of God-Anderson) (Fisher 2003).

It is important to note from a cultural structural perspective that the growth in this market directly affected other cultural elements within AE. LePeau and Doll (2006), for example, demonstrate how the growth in the Christian book market played in the

parachurch organization, InterVarsity Fellowship and it publication arm, InterVarsity Press. The heavy emphasis on books and the intellectualization of AE can be seen in the phase of this market that began in that meeting in 1950 and continues up to this day. The group that formed out of that first gathering came to be known as the Christian Bookseller's Association. And sell books they did.

Perhaps the best-selling book for this market and, indeed, for the overall market, was the Bible, in this case, the Bibles, i.e., the various versions that began to proliferate during the 1960's and 1970's. The *New International Version*, published by Zondervan in 1973, became the far and away bestselling version of the Bible, outstripping sales of the *King James Version* by a long shot. And, the overall shift in Bible publishing represented a clear shift into the hands of American Evangelicalism. Even the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) and its more contemporary cousin, the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), published in 1990, reflected this shift. These translations had been the mainstay of Mainline Protestantism. In fact, the World Council of Churches, a group hardly aligned with AE, published the original version of the NRSV. Yet by the mid-1990's, five of the six publishers responsible for printing or distributing the RSV and the NRSV were squarely in the Evangelical camp (i.e., Baker, Holman, Nelson, World, Zondervan) (Fisher 2003).

More recently the Bible has been transformed into multiple varieties to fit the needs of an increasingly aware and segmented market. Various translations of the Bible have sprung up to facilitate, to repeat the words of Reiff, the "user of any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use" (Rieff 1966, 26-27). In the last twenty years some of the more notable and market-segmented titles for Bibles have been the *Revolve Devotional Bible:*

The Complete Bible for Teen Girls, the *Guys Life Application Study Bible*, the *Extreme Teen Bible*, *The Message Remix 2.0: The Bible In contemporary Language*, *True Identity: The Bible for Women*, the *New Men's Devotional Bible*, the *NIV Couples' Devotional Bible*, the *Seniors' Devotional Bible* (i.e., Senior Citizens) and even the *Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible*, a Bible who Amazon product descriptions is listed incorporating "the inspirational Chicken Soup series … into the best-selling book of all-time, the Holy Bible" (Piñon Press. 2004).

Alongside the growth in Bible publishing has been a massive increase in titles published by companies within AE and overtly concerned with issues related to AE. Rick Warren, with *The Purpose Driven Life*, is the best-selling book on religion and the 39th bestselling book of any topic (Nightline 2007, Document 2011). *The Shack*, by William Young and with sales of over 15 million, was on top of the New York Times bestseller lists for several years and is the 72nd bestselling book of all time, religious or not (Document 2011). In August 2011, at the time of this writing, the number one paperback nonfiction book on the New York Times bestseller list is *Heaven is for Real*, published by Thomas Nelson, a leading AE publisher.

Sales of these books have made certain publishing houses and authors great sums of money. Christian mystery writer Frank Peretti received a $4 million advance for a multi-book deal with Crossway, while Brock and Bodie Thoene, historical fiction writers in the American Evangelical market, received a $3.5 million advance for a multi-book deal with the former AE publisher Bethany House. Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life single-handedly rose the profits for Harper Collins in 2004 (Report 2004). But none can

touch the economic success of the *Left Behind* series of books, co-authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.

Tim LaHaye and his wife, Beverly, were key players in the founding and growth of multiple organizations in the religious right, including the Moral Majority, the American Coalition for Traditional Values, the Council on National Policy and Concerned Women for America. Tim LaHaye was also well established before the writing of the *Left Behind* series as a successful author. He had a number of bestsellers, including *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Tyndale, 1966), *The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love* (Zondervan, 1976), and *The Battle for the Mind* (Revell, 1980). Along with those works, he and Beverly "co-authored *The Act of Marriage*, a Christian sex handbook that has sold more than 2.5 million copies (Fisher, 6). Likewise, Jerry Jenkins is a well-selling and prolific author in the American Evangelical marketplace with more than 175 books to his credit in his 40 year career. His bestselling works have included biographies of professional athletes such as Hank Aaron, Walter Payton, Orel Hershiser, and Nolan Ryan, and he has authored other bestsellers on a variety of Christian themes, both fiction and nonfiction. But no previous sales experience for either author could have predicted the overall value of the total *Left Behind* market. Total sales of the books alone – there are 16 – have surpassed 65 million copies. The book series has spawned graphic novels, video games, movies and Christian music albums.

Overall, the growth in the AE marketplace has had significant structural cultural effects on the development of, and advancement of, an American Evangelical culture. However, in addition to viewing the AE publishing market through a cultural structural lens, an institutional lens provides other insights into the publishing market and many

other aspects of the AE industry. The growth of the American Evangelical marketplace has also facilitated the creation of well-known authors who have then been able to parlay their social capital into the development of further organizations and movement actors. In 2006, for example, Tyndale Publishers, because of the blockbuster sales of the *Left Behind* series, were able to put further marketing dollars behind separate projects, with Randy Alcorn's work *Heaven*, a book promoting a traditionally AE explanation of the afterlife, selling nearly 300,000 copies in 2006 (Report 2006).

Shane Claiborne, the author and speaker most associated with New Monasticism, has sold hundreds of thousands of copies of his book, *Irresistible Revolution,* through the AE publisher Zondervan, which is owned by Harper Collins. Institutionally he has become a significant movement actor within AE. His writings have influenced the creation of the more than 200 New Monastic communities that have sprung in the last few years, communities that commit to lives of simplicity and vows of poverty. These communities coming together after having been influenced by Claiborne's work are committed to breaking down racial and gender barriers. But all this is not without a certain irony.

The irony, in this case, is that the owner of Claiborne's book publisher is none other than Rupert Murdoch. As the market has grown, it has not only served to benefit Evangelicals, but also becoming an entity worthy of investment by those outside of the belief system of AE. Murdoch's News Corp owns Zondervan, which published Claiborne. Murdoch also owns Fox News, as well as HarperCollins, the parent company of Zondervan. So on any given day Murdoch receives revenue from the revolutionary and left-leaning Christian writings of Shane Claiborne, the right-wing news commentary of

Bill O'Reilly and sales of the quirky, popular children's book series, *Lemony Snicket*. This is a far cry from a small gathering of Evangelical publishers in 1950 who were meeting in Wheaton, IL.

What is the economic value of the Christian market? The best estimate seems to be about $4.3 billion dollars in FY 2011,[28] according to a Hoover Business Report written for Family Christian Stores. The reason this is only an estimate is itself an interesting fact with regard to the growth of the AE market. However, unlike discrete industries, the exact value of the Christian Retail Market is difficult to gauge precisely because, as this market has expanded into a wide variety of products, it been increasingly difficult to distinguish what is Christian, and more specifically, what is Evangelical, from that which is not. When any store, whether that is a video store or a Christian book and gift store, sells a computer game, the IRS tracks that using SIC code 5734. The game could be *Call of Duty: Black Ops* or it could *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, a video game based on the LaHaye/Jenkins book series. The game could be *Praise Champion* or *RockBand* – it is still the same standard industry code.

This connects well to a theme that will come up in Chapter Four of the work. One common theme among my interviews was that American Evangelicalism had become a commodified knock-off of the general culture and this ranks among the many young persons' reasons for leaving. This is not to say that from a cultural institutional perspective the loss of distinction has meant the loss of new organizations and movement actors. As I will be discuss in Chapter Four, the last thirty years have seen a huge uptick

---

[28] http://www.hoovers.com/company-information/cs/company-profile.FC_SELLER_CORP.2771b200af0cc777.html, accessed 03/14/2013

in the development of organizations that uniquely define themselves within the American Evangelical culture, including organizations that fight poverty, work against nuclear proliferation and seek to prevent the abuses of coal mining. While Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and William Young have been on the NY Times bestseller list, lesser-publicly known names like Donald Miller, Brian McLaren and others have influenced the movement and institutions in very particular ways. Yet from a cultural perspective, a dramaturgic lens provides perhaps the most effective lens for analyzing the marketization of American Evangelicalism.

To me, the most expressive statement about the dramaturgic qualities of the AE marketplace is from a song title by Larry Norman, one of the original Christian rockers from the 1960's. The song is entitled, "Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?" In introducing this song to Creation Fest '99, Norman said, "I started writing my songs back in 1956 because the kids in my school thought Elvis Presley was doing a new kind of music, and I knew this wasn't new, this was church music." [29]

But despite Norman's protestations – he was in the last quote in fact referring to Presley's assimilation of African-American gospel, as he goes on to explain – there began in the 1960's a strong and growing presence of "Jesus music," or what would transition to be called *Contemporary Christian Music*, or CCM (Frame 1997). There was within AE a symbolic need to have music that not only spoke to the values and beliefs of the movement which was also inherently *Christian*.[30]

---

[29] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQfJoyrsccM
[30] A detailed history of this segment of the AE market is outside of the scope of this work. For more information I would refer you to the following: Beaujon, Andrew (2006). Body Piercing Saved My

Some of this was driven by the need for what Lindsay refers to as "safe" entertainment, i.e. "music that does not contain offensive lyrics, films that do not feature sex or drugs, and video games that avoid graphic violence" (Lindsay 2007). But it would seem that the need for an American Evangelical culture and a marketplace to support the development of that culture is also deeply rooted in the need for a uniquely Evangelical culture with its own cultural artifacts that are as good, or better, than those from the non-AE segments of society.

Take the restaurant chain Chick-Fil-A, for example. Quoting from an interview in Smith's work on Evangelicalism:

Chick-Fil-A is closed on Sunday, and has been very successful, and I think that makes a statement to the business world. [The priority order] is God, your family, and then your business. So, there are people who are doing things right and influencing other companies. One of the principles is putting family first" (Smith and Emerson 1998).

This is a statement that would resonate deeply with earliest fundamentalist like J. Gresham Machen. Christianity was not only as good as other world systems, he would argue, it was better. Thus, the desire to create a market for goods and services that were uniquely Christian has made significant cultural changes to the roles American Evangelicals now play in the culture. Consider for example the profitability of the film, *The Passion of the Christ*, a film and marketing franchise with revenues exceeding half a billion dollars. While it would be tempting to think this made Hollywood desperate for

---

Life: Inside the Phenomenon of Christian Rock. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press; Romanowski, William D. Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture. Brazos Press, 2001.

films about faith, there seems to be little evidence that this occurred. Rather, it set American Evangelicals off on a dizzying pace to create more films that came from within the American Evangelical culture itself.

This is not to say the value of the AE market is small or the products that come from the AE subculture have little financial value. In 2008 "*Fireproof*, a Christian-themed film straight out of "Godlywood," buried" significant competitors "as the top-grossing independent film of 2008." This film beat out the Woody Allen film, *Vicky Christina Barcelona* and Sean Penn in *Milk*.[31] This is what happens when the American Evangelical culture identifies something as its own.

American Evangelicals have their own yellow pages (e.g. *The Shepherd's Guide*, *MyChristianYP*), their own rock festivals (e.g. *Cornerstone*, *Ichthus*), their own clothing companies (e.g. *Not of this World Clothing*, *Faveur*), their own dating services (*eHarmony*, *Singles of Faith*), and so many more. These products and services have mostly sprung up in the last ten to thirty years as American Evangelicals have sought to substantiate their beliefs and their culture within the broader American society. The last thirty years have seen a massive increase in the structure, institutions and symbols of the American Evangelical marketplace. Interestingly, as we will discuss, beginning in Chapter Five, this growth may be one of the most compelling reasons younger Evangelicals are reacting against the mainstream AE movement.

---

[31] http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=7765255&page=1

Chapter Five – American Post-Evangelicalism

The present chapter starts with a broader discussion of American Evangelicalism and then presents evidence to substantiate a claim that there is a broad movement of younger American Evangelicals that can be described as *post-Evangelical*. This chapter will also examine four social movements: the Evangelical Environmental Movement (EEM), the Evangelical Social Justice Movement (ESJM), the Emerging Church Movement (ECM), and New Monasticism (NM). An examination of these four movements will allow me to provide evidence that the each of the four movements can, and should, be seen as "new social movements" (Habermas 1981). On the basis of this evidence, I will argue that all four movements share many important similarities in terms of conflictual culture and collective identity and can thus be grouped together as a *social movement area* (Melucci 1997). I will refer to that broader movement area as "American Post-Evangelicalism (AP-E)" as part of a discussion of important differences among the four movements.

The broad framework with which I will analyze these movements is Smith and Emerson's *subculture theory of religious strength*. Smith and Emerson (1998) define their theory by noting that

> In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinctions from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups, short of becoming generally countercultural (Smith and Emerson 1998).

On the basis of this concept it can be seen that boundaries, and the ongoing negotiation of them, are critical to American Evangelicals and the movements they birth. Smith and Emerson further note that for AE, clear boundaries exist around certain beliefs, including concepts such as a literal reading of the Bible, a view of humans as "created in God's image, … sinful and in need of God's redemption and restoration," and the notion that "faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation" (Smith and Emerson 1998).

As part of my analysis I will review the boundary making activities of each movement with regard to their practices. In particular I will be analyzing how the movement defines its practices vis-à-vis the perceived boundaries of practice within American Evangelicalism. Each movement will also be explored with regard to its conceptions of place. Such analysis is an emerging field of sutdy for sociology, as the discipline becomes more aware of "the importance of local context in constituting social worlds" (Fine 2010). My analysis will provide a critical tool for examining New Monasticism as a response to American Evangelicalism and the homogenous, shopping mall-like atmosphere of American megachurches. Finally, I will conclude with evidence to support the notion that all four movements, while currently a small and emerging component within AE, nonetheless comprise a significant social movement area that provides key understandings for the future of Evangelicalism.

The Evangelical Environmental Movement – *Serve God, Save the Planet*

Description

The Evangelical Environmental Movement (EEM) is a movement whose goal is to reconnect the Christian church with its historic understanding of the need to be

stewards of creation. The movement perceives this responsibility to be especially true in light of issues like global warming although, for reasons we will discuss, that issue is often downplayed in the EEM conversation. The movement is largely comprised of male leadership, with one possible exception being Katharine Hayhoe, the US climate scientist who served on the Nobel Prize winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who is both a professor in the department of geosciences at Texas Tech University and President and CEO of Atmos Research, a scientific consulting company. She is the co-author, along with her husband evangelical pastor Andrew Farley, of *A Climate for Change: global warming facts for faith-based decisions*.

The EEM is a relatively young movement. The oldest social movement organization (SMO) within the EEM is the Evangelical Environmental Network that was started by Jim Ball in 1984. The Evangelical Environmental Network was the group made famous for their "What Would Jesus Drive" campaign that was launched in 2002. The Evangelical Environmental Network believes that:

> "the Risen Lord Jesus cares about what we drive. Pollution from vehicles has a major impact on human health and the rest of God's creation. It contributes significantly to the threat of global warming. Our reliance on imported oil from unstable regions threatens peace and security. Obeying Jesus in our transportation choices is one of the great Christian obligations and opportunities of the twenty-first century."[32]

Another example of an SMO and movement actor within the EEM is the *Creation Care Study Program*, which was initiated by Chris Elisara. This program is described as

---

[32] http://www.whatwouldjesusdrive.info/intro.php

"a high-caliber academic semester abroad connecting Christian faith with the most complex, urgent global issues of the coming decades"[33]. Like so much of AP-E, this program is interwoven into the story of Chris Haw, one of the leaders of New Monasticism. In my interview with, Chris he told me it was a study semester in Belize with the CCSP that began to radically change his thinking.

Another EEM organization with a distinctively youth orientation is *Restoring Eden*, led by Peter Illyn. Illyn is an almost larger than life character, with a big frame and an eye patch. But his experience of joining the EEM, like every other movement actor among the five I interviewed for this movement, is tied up deeply in his personal journey. In his description of *Restoring Eden*, Illyn talks about a wilderness trek through the Cascade Mountains in which he was transformed by both the beauty of creation and by the need to care for it. "I went into the mountains a minister, but I came out an environmental activist"[34]. In my interview with him, Illyn spoke of the prophetic nature of his call to the EEM. In fact, this was something all the movement actors I interviewed shared. Like the ESJM and NM, the leaders of the EEM see themselves as prophets calling the church back to faithfulness.

Beliefs

Faithfulness, especially with respect to the text of scripture and to perceptions of orthodoxy, may provide the best framework to describe the belief structures of the EEM as well as the ESJM. Consider the following quote from Allen Johnson, the founder of

---

[33] http://creationcsp.org/about.html
[34] http://restoringeden.org/about/history

108

Christians for the Mountains, an American Evangelical group that fights against mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia:

> In the Book of Revelation, there's a scripture that says that God will destroy those who destroy the Earth. We're breaking a covenant with God. We're breaking a covenant with Creation and with other people and with future generations. It is a sin. Sin's not a word that is popular today, but that's what it is. S-I-N (Quoted in Moyers 2005, 6.).

EEM actors often employ the language of sin to describe the inaction of the church on the part of environmental care. Interestingly, within the movement the words *environment* or *environmental* are rarely used, while the phrase *creation care* is often employed to describe their work.

American Evangelicals, as Smith points out, are constantly navigating between accommodation and distinction. The movement actors of the EEM, a group whose social movemental goal is not converting the soul, are nonetheless *evangelical* in the sense that they knowingly employ language frames that will promote the idea of creation care. Consider the title of Matthew Sleeth's book, *Serve God, Save the Planet*. Of all the books I reviewed from this movement, one that best captured what this movement is about is this book. In other words, a work that frames care for the environment as an orthodox Christian belief and practice. The use of the term environment is avoided because, as one of my interviewees stated,

People in the church hear the word environment and they immediately think of Al Gore. They hear the word environment and they immediately think you're some commie from Hollywood, out to make their kids hug a tree and reject God.

Further evidence of this point is seen in Sleeth's 2002 book in which one of the straw man arguments he knocks down using scripture is that "tree huggers worship nature. I don't want to be involved with them" (12). The word *environment* is perceived within much of AE as belonging to those outside of the bounded set of American Evangelicalism. As such, movement actors speak of protecting the environment as creation care. Quoting from one movement actor,

If I can convince folks that God cares about his creation and they should to, well, then, it's just a matter of time till they wake up to the global warming issue. But if I lead with that issue, then folks in evangelical churches stop listening to me. They never hear the rest of the story.

This quote shows how the movement employs an orthodox and textual hermeneutic when advancing their claims. Every book I reviewed from this movement advanced one similar and basic claim: you should care for the planet because God told you to do so, and you know God told you to because it is in the Bible, which is the authority for orthodox Christian belief and practice.

In this way there are no conversations that I could find within the EEM literature, nor within my conversations with EEM leaders, that questioned American Evangelical perceptions of orthodox belief.[35] If we were to imagine the belief structures of American

---

[35] In addition to interviews with movement leaders I conducted analyses on the following works:

Evangelicalism as an ideal type, the closest to that type in terms of beliefs would be the EEM.

Practices

EEM's practices are the closest to the ideal type in terms of practices. By ideal type I am suggesting that the beliefs and practices that define Evangelicalism: a high view of, and regular reading of, scripture, as well as the belief in, and practice of evangelism. These are practices that are least foreign to participants in the EEM. But most importantly, the ideal type of an Evangelical would be those who took to heart the need for everyday practices that are Christian in orientation. This is because much of the movement is oriented toward pragmatic practices that seek to restore creation. When I examined such books as Nancy Sleeth's *Go Green, Save Green*, (Sleeth 2009) or Rebekah Simon-Peter's book *Green Church* (Simon-Peter 2010), I found that the call to change for the EEM was more likely to be in everyday practice than it is for the ECM. This is not to say the EEM has no practice-based suggestions that are large scale. The Evangelical Climate Initiative, a document signed by dozens of AE leaders, does address the need for the church to be aware of global climate change and the impact of environmental problems which are likely to confront the most poor of the planet.

Sleeth, J. M. (2006). Serve God, save the planet : a Christian call to action. White River Junction, Vt., Chelsea Green Pub. Co.
    ; Hayhoe, K. and A. Farley (2009). A climate for change : global warming facts for faith-based decisions. New York, FaithWords.
    ; Lowe, B. (2009). Green revolution : coming together to care for creation. Downers Grove, Ill., IVP Books.
    , Ball, J. (2010). Global warming and the risen lord : christian discipleship and climate change. Washington, DC, Evangelical Environmental Network.
    ; Sleeth, J. M. (2010). The gospel according to the earth : why the Good Book is a green book. New York, HarperOne.
    From the leading Christian voice for the green movement comes a primer on everything the Bible teaches about caring for the Earth.

Even though AE leaders signed it, the Evangelical Climate Initiative was a controversial document, one that almost got the head of the National Association of Evangelicals fired. The document called for Evangelicals to assert that "human-induced climate change is real" and that "Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem."[36] The document further asserted that the Church should play a key role in influencing the culture to address global climate change. Although these claims may seem acceptable to mainstream environmentalists, they represented a radical stand that is the exception within the movement..[37]

Conceptions of Place

As a third framework with which to analyze the EEM, I want to suggest that questions of place are rare in the EEM conversation. This is not to say they do not care about the ground beneath their feet: one of their movement goals, after all, is to save the planet. But with only one exception, i.e., the evangelical response to mountaintop removal mining, most of the EEM is not focused on the issue of specific issues of place or locality.

Many in the discipline of sociology are realizing "the importance of local context in constituting social worlds" We speak of this concept as the idea of *place*. Analyzing a social phenomenon through the concept of place is based on the belief that "social structures … depend on groups with collective pasts and futures that are spatially situated and that are based on personal relations" (Fine 2010). Interestingly, I found little

---

[36] http://www.npr.org/documents/2006/feb/evangelical/calltoaction.pdf
[37] For a more detailed analysis of the controversy of these stands within Evangelicalism, see Chapter 4 of Wilkinson, Katharine K. 2012. *Between God and green : how evangelicals are cultivating a middle ground on climate change*. New York: Oxford University Press.

evidence that place was a significant grievance claim for the EEM, as they are an activist group. One could find significant evidence of EEM groups that clean up streams, recycle at Christian rock festivals or turn their church lawns into gardens. Other than the fight against MTR, I found little evidence that these actions were unique to the context of the movement actors.

EEM as new social movement

One can best conceive of EEM as a new social movement. The sole focus of the campaign "What Would Jesus Drive" was to raise awareness of the link the EEM drew between gas consumption of big vehicles and the need for Christians to faithfully steward their resources. Similarly, most of the actions of the movement are driven by postmaterial values. Unlike earlier movements, such as labor and civil rights movements that were concerned with providing for the more basic material needs of individuals, the goals of the EEM movement have more to do with conflicts over ideas than conflicts over material resources.

Because of the postmaterialist orientation of the movement, the question of place becomes an interesting interpretive framework for both the EEM and the ESJM. Most of those involved with the EEM work at a safe distance away from particular environmental concerns or issues. Other than Allen Johnson, I found no EEM actors who live near places of environmental devastation. Thus the "variety of submerged, latent and temporary networks that often undergird collective action" (Melucci, Keane et al. 1989) becomes important to this broader movement area. While all but one of the EEM leaders that I interviewed lives in the safe confines of suburbia, several of the AP-E leaders

suggested to me there existed among this movement area a kind of unspoken division of labor.

Chris Haw, a leader of the New Monastic movement, is a notable exception as he lives in Camden, NJ, a place wracked by environmental destruction. Referring to him, one movement leader from AP-E said to me,

> I don't have to move to Camden. Chris (Haw) already lives there. If I moved to Camden and did what they are doing there, I wouldn't have time to be out speaking to churches about God's concern for the poor.

The Evangelical Social Justice Movement – *A Hole in our Gospel*

Description

Talking about the Evangelical Social Justice Movement is difficult, at least in part, because ESJM is itself a social movement area within a broader context of movements. ESJM represents a broad set of diffuse social movements in terms of beliefs, practices and conceptions of place. That said, I would argue that ESJM is clearly a part of the broader post-Evangelical movements I define as American Post-Evangelicalism (AP-E). This is the case in part because issues of social justice have been critical to AE in the past (see (Dayton 1988, Marsden 1991, Noll 2002, Collins 2005). In the past, American Evangelicals were involved in efforts to end slavery and improve working conditions for the poor. For reasons I will articulate in the historical analysis that follows later in this work, moral action for most of American Evangelicalism has been confined after the late 20th Century rise of the religious right, due to its focus on abortion and homosexuality. That said, there does appear to be a turn back toward social justice concerns with AE.

Consider the following from one young evangelical on an ABC News Special about American Evangelicalism from 2010:

> I think also the last couple of elections you've seen so much focus on the values voters, but yet the way the media has talked about it, it's as though there are only two values (i.e. abortion and homosexuality) that these voters care about. And I think a lot of people of faith, myself included, have just thought, well gosh, as a person who does vote based on values, there are a lot of other values that are important to me. Around poverty and justice and health care and education. We really want to see those things acknowledged in terms of being values voters as well."[38].

Here is another quote from that same interview that speaks to the breadth of ESJM:

> I think the premise of the question - What are the top three issues that we would see? - what we're seeing now, I think, is reflective of where a generation finds itself, which is not a top three issues. How can you look at the world and say "top three issues?" You've got genocide, you've got AIDS, you've got climate, you've got environmental stewardship in all its forms, resource management. We can't say "top three issues." It's not about, there are a couple of issues that define this generation. I think we're looking around and seeing a world that's screaming out in need, and the response is not a rank order. It's recognizing an abundance of gifts. So you could expand this panel by twenty people and you'd just expand

---

[38] Nicole Baker Fulgham, Teach for America, quoted on http://abcnews.go.com/US/video/face-american-evangelicalism-10744135

twenty issues where people are seeing the world in need and their Christian faith is motivating them to address it."[39]

One of the most influential ESJM movement leaders is David Batstone. Batstone heads the "Not for Sale" campaign to end human trafficking and slavery. This organization seeks be a "new generation of abolitionists"[40]. The argument made by Batstone is that advances in industrial infrastructure today hide slavery. For example, you may buy a shirt at a local big box store, and unless you think to ask the right questions, you would be completely unaware of the circumstances of that shirt's production. You may not know where and under what conditions the cotton for that shirt was picked, nor how it was sewn or assembled and by whom, or who packed it in a box on one end and unpacked it from the box on the other end. You would never know this information if you did not ask those questions. The Not for Sale campaign sees it as its job to get you to ask just those questions.

As within the EEM, many of the movement actors I interviewed within the ESJM have a prophetic sense to their work. One leader I interviewed spoke of their work as an

> awakening the church to what has always been her obligation, to care for the poor and those most in need among us. Ultimately God has got to change their hearts, but we provide the opportunity for him to do that."

Beliefs

Analyzing the beliefs of the ESJM is more difficult than those of the EEM for two reasons. First, many American Evangelicals hold to a literal, six-day view of the Genesis

---

[39] Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, Two Futures Project, ibid.
[40] http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/about/

116

creation narrative in which God instructed Adam to steward the resources of this new creation. Thus, when actors from the EEM tell evangelicals that they should care about the Earth because God commanded such, it is heard among many AE's as a statement of fact. This is because EEM actors perceive the creation care debate as an important boundary marker for much of AE. Doing so allows for EEM actors to invoke language frames from that narrative to lower the bar of entrance for American Evangelicals into the EEM sphere of concerns. The same cannot be said for many of the issues the ESJM is addressing: specifically, the social phenomenon of poverty, nuclear non-proliferation and anti-consumerism which have not been part of the traditional boundary identities within AE. Therefore, when ESJM actors invoke biblical language to make their case, they often find it harder than making the case for the care for creation. Much of this has to do with how people read the Bible. James Bielo addresses this issue in *Words upon the Word*, his ethnography of evangelical group bible study:

> Despite the claims of adherents, literalism does not constitute a hermeneutical method. That is, it is not a self-conscious or tacit means of actually reading and interpreting biblical texts. In his extensive account of Evangelical biblicism, Brian Malley (2004: 92-103) argues that literalism functions primarily as a signifier of theological and religious identity. To identify as a literalist is to claim affiliation with certain Christian traditions (conservative, born-again, Evangelical, fundamentalist) and separate oneself from others (moderate, liberal, mainline, progressive)" (Bielo 2009).

Social justice issues do not have the same boundary making potential as creation care because those issues have either not been fought for within the sphere of AE

117

political concern, or because they have been since the time of the fundamentalist debates actively framed as antithetical to what an orthodox, literal bible believing Christian should support. In the most extreme example from my research that highlights this issue, one ESJM actor told of an experience speaking at a church where he was

> …preaching from the Gospel of Luke, recounting how Jesus read from Isaiah and proclaimed that he came to bring good news to the poor and release to the captives. Before I even got done reading and got to the actual point I was trying to make, that this meant care for the poor was at the heart of Jesus' ministry and therefore should be important to us, this dude stands up and starts to walk out. He got to the back door of the church, stopped, then turned around and yelled out to me, "Keep your liberal crap to yourself," before walking out the back door.

Rather than hearing sermons from the gospels, most people attending AE churches hear sermons from the writings of St. Paul. Scot McKnight notes this dynamic in an article in Christianity Today:

> There were two annual exceptions to our Pauline focus. At Christmas, we heard a sermon on one of the narratives about Jesus' birth, and during Holy Week, we got something on Jesus' death and resurrection. We were Pauline Christians and not one bit worried about it. I learned to think and believe and live in a Pauline fashion. Everything was filtered through Paul's theology. Justification was the lens for the gospel, and "life in the Spirit," the lens for Christian living.[41]

---

[41] http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/december/9.25.html

The implication of this Pauline focus is that many AEs go through their religious life without hearing sermons from the gospels that are not about the birth or death of Christ. But it is between the birth and death of Jesus where many of the social justice oriented ideas that ESJM activists rely on lie.

This sets up an interesting paradox, as the ESJM is employing a literal reading of scripture and seeking to use that as their hermeneutic to explanation why people should be involved in social change. However, many AE adherents do not perceive the ESJM message to be connected to the text. The question then arises as to whether ESJM movement actors are still being faithful to the perceptions of AE orthodoxy? For at least for the ESJM actors, the answer is yes. Consider the following from the ABC story mentioned earlier:

> I think what we've lost is this profound truth that Christ taught, that the world should be better because followers of him live in it. That we're to be salt and light, and wherever we are, society should be better. People who aren't followers of Jesus Christ should live better lives because they live near Christians. That's a truth about the Church that I don't think many Americans would say, you know, the world's lots better because there are Christians in it. But we should be living lives that people do think that.[42]

Thus, returning to our ideal type comparative framework in terms of beliefs, the ESJM is quite close to the defined beliefs of American Evangelicals.[43] Their social

---

[42] Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, quoted on http://abcnews.go.com/US/video/face-american-evangelicalism-10744135

[43] In addition to interviews with movement leaders I conducted analyses on the following works: Stevenson, T. W. (2007). Brand Jesus : Christianity in a consumerist age. New York, Seabury Books.

movemental grievance is that there is a *Hole in our Gospel*, the book whose title I chose as the nameplate for this movement. Of all the movements I analyzed, including movements working on issues of poverty, human trafficking, war, AIDS, developing nation debt, and nuclear non-proliferation, each employed some version of the same argument; namely, that you should care about (fill in the blank with my movement's issue) because God, in the Bible, told you that you should. Unlike the EEM, ESJM followers struggle within their own culture to define themselves as making orthodox grievance claims.

Practices

In terms of the practices of this movement, ESJM followers are much more varied than the followers of other movements studied. This is due to the fact that ESJM is really more a collection of movements that performs two common sets of activities. First, all ESJM follows participate in some form of education, and especially in some form of consumer education. The *Not for Sale* campaign, for example, has developed a rating system called *Free2Work*. This system rates companies on their use of slave labor in every part of the production process of an individual product. The consumer can then choose based on a simple rating. At the time of this writing, for example, the Gap and Old Navy had a B+ rating, but chocolate maker Ghirardelli had a C+. Second, most ESJM followers use education to inform customers of their potential role in global

---

; Batstone, D. B. (2007). <u>Not for sale : the return of the global slave trade-- and how we can fight it</u>. New York, HarperSanFrancisco.
                    Human trafficking generates
        , Clawson, J. (2009). <u>Everyday justice : the global impact of our daily choices</u>. Downers Grove, Ill., IVP Books.
                    ; Platt, D. (2010). <u>Radical : taking back your faith from the American Dream</u>. Colorado Springs, Colo., Multnomah Books.

injustice. The focus of its 2010 *Stop Paying for Slavery Tour* was to provide specific and concrete examples of the injustices perpetuated when consumers are unthinking in their actions. One example from that tour can be found in the nation of Estonia. Estonia is the world's largest producing nation of cotton used in the global clothing industry. Estonia also has terrible child labor laws, as these laws allow children of nine and ten year old to gather cotton. Therefore, the *Not for Sale* campaign seeks to educate consumers to believe that when they mindlessly buy shirts without being aware of the supply chain implications, they could quite literally be taking children out of the classroom and forcing them into fields as slave laborers.

Likewise, most of the ESJM movements provide tools for personal and consumer action. The ratings developed by the *Not for Sale* organization are now available on a smartphone app. Julie Clawson's book *Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of our Daily Choices* educates the AE consumer on global injustice with regard to everything from coffee to clothes, and from chocolate to cars. Additionally, she concludes each chapter with a list of resources such as books, magazines and websites that will enable individuals to make ethical consumer choices.

One interesting point with regard to the calls to action of the ESJM is that I found very little evidence that this group is interested in calls to political action. Comprised of mostly younger evangelicals, ESJM followers seem to have little faith in the political process to solve the issues they are working on. And, they seem to have a completely different engagement framework than the confrontational generation of evangelicals that preceded them. In the ABC interview, Dan Harris asked the following question:

Not one of you mentioned abortion or gay marriage. Is it telling to any of you that

when I asked what are the biggest issues nobody mentioned a traditional hot-

button social issue?

Consider the following response to that question from Gabe Lyons of the Q Ideas

Project[44]:

> Here's what changing, Dan. I think what we're finding is changing is that even
> when you address the question to us, what are the issues you care about, you don't
> hear us define the issues in terms of something that's wrong. We're not saying
> abortion. We're not saying gay marriage. What we're talking about is adoption
> reform. What we're talking about is education reform. What we're talking about is
> nuclear non-proliferation, environmental stewardship. We even frame the
> question and the response very differently than a previous generation may have,
> because we're seeing the world, I think, in just a different light. We see us having
> a role and having an opportunity to be a part of partnering with God to solve those
> issues in any way that we can. And we can't do that alone, but we get the
> opportunity to do that. I think it's a different mentality that we have when we even
> get asked this question. That we don't think in terms of what's wrong. We think in
> terms of what we could be doing to be a part of restoring what it is that God wants
> the world to look like, and how things ought to be.

Conceptions of Place

The various ESJM members speak constantly about their care for people, but I

could see no evidence of the importance of place to this movement. This is largely due to

the fact that the injustices addressed by these movements are, in every instance I

encountered, global in nature. Nuclear weaponry, developing nation debt and AIDS

orphans in Africa are not locally defined grievances for the actors from this movement.

ESJM as new social movement

The ESJM clearly fits within the definitions of a new social movement. Buechler

speaks of new social movements as problematizing the "constructing (of) collective

---

[44] Q defines itself as a group that "educates church and cultural leaders on their role and opportunity to embody the Gospel in public life." Retrieved from http://qideas.org/ on 10/12/2015

identity and identifying group interests" and stressing the "socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology" New social movements such as the ESJM are often driven by postmaterialist values rather than conflicts over material resources. Certainly all of the movement actors I interviewed saw themselves as contributing to the material betterment of definable groups of individuals, yet there seems less evidence to suggest that the people participating in these movements. For example, the consumers using the *Free2Work* smart phone app see themselves as working directly on the betterment of the material situation of groups that have been harmed by inequalities in the global economy. There seems to be more evidence that social justice, for the consumers of products in the American economy, has become a cultural commodity.

Finally, like all the movements in this area, there are strong bridging ties between it and the other movements. For example, Shane Claiborne from New Monasticism has spoken at Q Ideas talks[45] organized by Gabe Lyons, a person who is often connected with the ESJM. But there is more to the American Post-Evangelical networks than simply showing up for each other's events. People from all four movements are involved in collective action and often work for the same goals. To illustrate, actors from all four movements were involved in helping organize a festival called *The Wild Goose Festival*, a festival that describes itself as being at "the intersection of justice, spirituality and art".[46] Wild Goose, in turn, did much to inform the attendees about various ESJM claims. All of the attendees, for example, received a water bottle promoting the organization *blood: water mission*, a group that states its mission as "empowering communities to work together against the HIV/AIDS and water crises in Africa"

---

[45] Q Ideas is a gathering of speakers modeled after the TED talks. See http://www.qideas.org/
[46] http://www.wildgoosefestival.org/about-us/

The Emerging Church Movement – *A New Kind of Christian*

Description

The Emerging Church movement (ECM) may be the best studied of all four movements analyzed here. At the time of this writing, there were two recently defended dissertations with five more works in progress in a wide variety of academic areas, including sociology, history and theology.[47] As I will argue below from a social movemental perspective, I contend that this movement has gained the most attention because it is the furthest from the boundaries of AE in terms of both belief and practice.[48]

What is the ECM? Perhaps the best place to start is to place ECM historically. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, there was a growing sense in the West that something was desperately broken in the models the church was using to gain new adherents and to form congregations. Missionary writers like Lesslie Newbigin brought their field experience back to England and Australia and began to theorize that the West was moving toward a post-Christian future (Newbigin 1989). Interestingly, this resonated with ideas that were spreading throughout the social science world. For instance, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde's asks, "Does the free, secularized state exist on the basis of normative presuppositions that it itself cannot guarantee?" (as quoted in (Habermas, Benedict et al. 2006) In other words, ECM believes that many of the religious and theological assumptions that underpinned the development of democracies in the West

---

[47] Emerging faith boundaries: Bridge-building, inclusion, and the Emerging Church Movement in America. Chia, Lloyd. University of Missouri - Columbia, 2010. Organization and Religious Participation: Solving Collective Action Problems at the Congregational Level. Wollschleger, Jason. University of Washington, 2010.

[48] There are many, including some of the reviewers of this work, who question whether the Emerging Church Movement is so far beyond American Evangelicalism that is no longer post-Evangelical but, rather, non-Evangelical.

were fading away, as were the religious and theological assumptions that underpinned Western Protestantism, including American Evangelicalism. Concurrently, there was the growth of the mega-church model within the United States. Bill Hybels' mega-church *Willow Creek Community Church*, in Chicago, IL, had grown to over 20,000 members by the mid-1980's, as had Rick Warren's mega-church, *Saddleback Community Church*, in Orange County, CA. Both Hybels and Warren had begun training networks to train churches to replicate their models and people flocked to the conferences.

The mega-church movement coincided with the maturing of the Baby Boomers and the massive development of suburban and ex-urban (i.e. third ring) housing developments during this time. Many Baby Boomers had grown weary of "their parent's church" and were looking for a more experiential, more individually oriented style of church (Shires 2007). The mega-churches accommodated this desire. Many offered stadium seating, surround sound systems and graphics systems that would rival Disney. Indeed, Saddleback's system was actually built by a Disney engineer. The methods behind this movement were even studied by business schools, with Harvard University producing a famous study on Willow Creek.[49] Many of these megachurches hired professional staffs to rival the best corporations by poaching executive officers from businesses like IBM and Bain Consulting to serve in titles such as Executive Pastor and Chief Ministry Operations Officer.

In addition to church-based training networks, ancillary networks sprang up to train people in these new megachurch methods. One notable training network was *The*

---

[49] https://hbr.org/product/willow-creek-community-church-a/an/691102-HCB-ENG. Describes the historic evolution and current positioning of a Christian church which focuses on the attraction of "unchurched" individuals. Describes the church's strategic service vision and its current growth and leadership problems. Accessed 10/12/2015

Leadership Network. This network was started by successful businessman Bob Buford, a person who committed the rest of his life to training individuals in business-like methods for evangelism. Buford also pioneered "*church planting*," a phrase that had previously meant the starting of a new church, but in the mega-church parlance looked more and more like the starting of a new business franchise. To receive funding from networks like The Leadership Network or the Acts 29 Network, one needed a business plan, a board of directors with seasoned veterans, a budget, and a staff plan. In other words, one needed the kind of documentation you would expect to present to a venture capital fund before receiving financing for a new business venture.

Much of the thinking in the mega-church movement was generational. This was due in large part to the ontology of the movement, as it was designed to bring Baby Boomers back to church. However, many of the leaders of training networks realized they would need to extend the model beyond one generation. Thus, strategic plans were developed to create leaders for the next generation. *The Leadership Network* gave birth to *The Young Leaders Network*. Many of the individuals brought into this network were, not surprisingly, youth pastors whose previous experience involved working with young people in the middle school and high school age groups. The larger the church, the more likely was the youth pastor to be a specialist in a particular age. So while a small, rural church may have had one youth pastor who worked with all kids in many age groups, mega-churches hired specialists to, for example, work with 12th graders as they prepare to head out to college. Not only was the decision to start a young leaders network generational, it was also practical. Statistics from organizations like the Barna Research Group, an evangelical consumer trends polling firm, suggested that people who leave

126

Protestant churches in their 20's are much less likely to return (Kinnaman and Lyons 2007). Thus was born the idea of developing Gen-X services.

Willow Creek developed one of the most successful of these services. The service was called Axxess, and at one point Willow Creek hired a young intern named Shane Claiborne. Claiborne's youth group included a high school student named Chris Haw. Also working at the church was another young man named Darin Petersen. These three individuals are, significantly, very important movement leaders in New Monasticism. The *Young Leaders Network* also hired a youth pastor named Doug Pagitt as its director. Pagitt had been working at a mega-church in a Minneapolis suburb. In his circle was Brian McLaren, who was a mega-church trained pastor in suburban Baltimore, a person who was more than ten years older than Doug and just beginning to develop a conversation around the church and postmodernism. Other voices in that conversation included Tony Jones, a youth pastor at yet another mega-church in Edina, MN. Mark Driscoll, a church planter supported by the Acts 29 Network to locate a church in Seattle, was also part of that conversation, as were a number of others. Many, if not most, of these folks who would eventually become leaders in the EMC were pastors and youth pastors who had been raised in the Evangelical culture and trained in Evangelical seminaries. Pagitt went to Bethel Seminary, Jones to Fuller Seminary, and Driscoll to Western Seminary, all bastions of Evangelical training. They had, therefore, not read broadly in the more liberal traditions of Western Protestantism in their education but had largely studied theology and church formation as foundational subjects built on traditional understandings of truth.

Interestingly, when this movement is critiqued by more conservative elements within AE, it is often pilloried for a lack of theological training or reflection among movement leaders. Consider the following quote from the late Jerry Falwell:

Another problem of the Emerging Church is that its leaders, who no doubt started with good intentions, have very little theological training. Their emphasis has been on appearances. Many of its leaders have been to conferences that tell them how to do things, but they don't know why they are doing them.[50]

However, the ECM movement is in fact comprised of individuals educated in theological thought, often from schools that Falwell would consider orthodox. Many in the movement are seminary graduates that also include a large number of folks with undergraduate degrees in theology or biblical studies from places like Liberty, Cedarville, and Biola. The notion that the ECM is comprised of people unschooled in orthodox AE thought is belied by the evidence. This attempt to discredit the movement does show, however, the concern that AE leaders have regarding the ECM.

McLaren is the lone exception among the leadership of the ECM.[51] He did not attend seminary, but was instead trained in literature and was teaching at the University of Maryland when he planted a "seeker-sensitive"[52] church in the suburbs of DC. In the field of literature, McLaren had been exposed to the postmodern critique. He began by bringing some of the questions being asked by postmodern theorists like Derrida, Rorty and Fish to the conversation about how church was being done and how scripture was

---

[50] Page 11, National Liberty Journal, May 2007

[51] http://www.relevantmagazine.com/relevant-u/seminary/does-seminary-still-matter

[52] The "seeker sensitive" label is used to denote churches whose orientation is toward those individuals who have not converted to Christianity. This is usually stated in opposition to churches whose focus is the existing members.

interpreted. That conversation gave birth to a whole series of questions about what it means to think in a more "emergent" way about God and the Church. The emergent thesis in biology is that complex systems could not be explained by the sum of their parts. McLaren, Pagitt and others began to ask if this insight provided a more proper way of thinking about the church in the increasingly pluralized culture of American religion. As one might guess, this did not sit well with the funders at *The Leadership Network*. New methods for *doing* church were quite predictable. Nevertheless, emergent *ideas* about church and God were not predictable at all, since they could not be mapped on a spreadsheet. As a result, in 1999 a group that eventually came to call itself Emergent Village was born, with Pagitt, Jones and McLaren among its earliest organizers.

Beliefs

In my previous discussion of the EEM and ESJM movements, I concluded with an analysis of how each movement could be compared to AE with regard to an ideal type comprised of the beliefs and practices of American Evangelicalism. For this movement, however, I am going to begin with a clear statement that this movement is the furthest from that ideal type. This is especially important to consider when comparing the belief claims of the ECM to those of AE. Consider the following from Tony Jones, one of the movements' primary leaders:

> A Biblicist claims to love and obey all portions of the Bible equally, not to live under a biblical hierarchy (wherein some portions of the Bible are more authoritative than others). Nor does a Biblicist give any grounds to the culture as it supposedly demands "liberal" readings of the text. For instance, the Biblicist's compatriots recently built the $27 million Creation Museum near Cincinnati.

Promoting a "literal" interpretation of the Bible, they believe that the reliability of the resurrection – the centerpiece of Christianity – hinges on the facticity of a seven-day "young-earth" creationism. To heck with scientific consensus, they say, as they show an animatronic exhibit with dinosaurs and humans cohabiting (Jones 2008).

Brian McLaren, who is widely regarded as the leader of the ECM within the American context, puts a wide variety of questions about AE beliefs on the table in his book, *A New Kind of Christian.* One of the major questions he asks, a question that is clearly outside of the boundary markers of AE orthodoxy, is the question "*How should the bible be understood*" (McLaren 2010). Consider the following quote:

> But my quest for a new kind of Christianity has required me to ask some hard questions about the Bible I love. There will be no new kind of Christian faith without a new approach to the Bible, because we've gotten ourselves into a mess with the Bible (68).

This position is the kind of belief-questioning that makes the blood boil of those committed to a literalist hermeneutic and reading of the Biblical text. Donald Carson, a New Testament scholar and research professor at Trinity Evangelical School in Deerfield, Illinois, wrote perhaps the most detailed and scathing critique of the ECM in his book, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*, published by Zondervan in 2005. Carson spares no punches, especially with regard to McLaren and his approach to scripture, as the following quote indicates:

But what (McLaren) wants the most is to emphasize the Bible's profitable purpose – all good deeds and transforming character and conduct presupposed by a passage like 2 Timothy 3:16-17. All "truly biblical Christians (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberal, conservative, charismatic, whatever), have done these deeds: that's what makes them biblical. There is not a hint that biblical fidelity may be tied in some ways to questions of truth. The most important factor is reading the Bible as narrative, culminating in Jesus' new command "that fulfills and supersedes all Torah" (McLaren 2006).

Carson is offering a prima facie critique of McLaren's orthodoxy to literalist concepts of biblical truth. However, employing Bielo and Malley's ideas that literalism has more to do with boundary markers than with actual fidelity to a full literal reading of the Bible, Carson's critique offers greater insights into the problems the thinkers from AE orthodoxy have with the ECM.

Carson (Carson 2005) is dismissive of the notion that "good deeds and transforming character and conduct" might be the outcome of reading the text of the Bible and taking the words contained therein seriously. But, people involved in the ECM would counter that, in Carson's hermeneutical construct, certain biblical mandates becoming problematic. Consider, for example, the passage, "Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor" (Luke 18:22, NRSV). Or, the following instruction:

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your

cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to

borrow from you (Matthew 5:38-42, NRSV).

One interviewee shared with me his experience of reading scripture in preparation

for a sermon and the way in which it moved him toward ECM claims about the text:

I had been reading McLaren – *Adventures in Missing the Point*, the book he wrote

with Campolo. He was talking about how we had totally screwed up our

understanding of how the Bible was meant to be read. I was taught it was God's

word and you don't screw around with how you understand it – you just read it

and then *boom*, out falls truth. All my job, then, as a pastor is to just take that truth

and tell others who maybe didn't have the same training as me. But one day I was

preparing for a sermon on Matthew 25, and it hit me – am I supposed to take this

literally? Because a literal reading of that passage says that the people who go to

heaven do good works and the people who don't do good works go to hell. I sat

immobilized in my office chair for probably thirty minutes and the only thing I

could think was, *holy shit – it's over.*

And by "it's over" he wasn't simply referring to the way in which he read

scripture. By "it" he meant the radical way in which the structure of his life and its many

relationships – his board, his congregants, his family, his professors from seminary –

would be shaken if he decided to publicly profess a new belief structure and no longer toe

the AE line with regard to the text. This example brings up one interesting potential

critique of the ECM: are the job- and relationship-threatening narratives of pastors who

132

join this movement simply a matter of life imitating art? Brian McLaren's book, *A New Kind of Christian*, provides a fictional moral story that describes similar experiences for a pastor who begins to ask serious questions about orthodox American Evangelical beliefs.

Critics of the ECM will often suggest that this is somewhat of a straw man and just more of the drama created by those ECM troublemakers. But it was not a straw man for Chad Holtz. I met Chad in the course of my research, but did not have the opportunity to interview him. Chad's story was widely covered on the Internet and by national media outlets. Here is the opening line from the coverage on Fox News:

> A Methodist pastor who voiced support for a book questioning the view of hell as a place of eternal damnation is "shocked" by his church's decision to fire him. Chad Holtz, who served as pastor of the United Methodist church in rural North Carolina, said he hoped his personal belief posted on Facebook would engage – not anger – members of his congregation.[53]

Other examples of this dynamic abound. NPR recently did a story of the Creation/Evolution debate and highlighted two evangelical professors – Karl Giberson from Eastern Nazarene and John Schneider – who were fired for ceasing to believe in a literal, six-day creation account. Peter Enns, a well-regarded biblical scholar with an MDiv from Westminster Seminary and a PhD from Harvard, was fired from his teaching position at Westminster when he suggested, in his book *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, Christianity needs a new approach to explaining the Old Testament in light of the difficult challenges caused by that part of the

---

[53] http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/03/24/whos-hell-michigan-pastors-book-sparks-debate-eternal-torment/

text, an approach that would be in keeping with modern biblical scholarship. Greg Boyd, a pastor in Minneapolis, lost half of his congregation of 5,000 people after he presented a sermon that offered biblical reasons for why the invasion of Iraq was unjust. And, in one final example, a communication director was forced out of his position at a large evangelical non-profit for questioning whether the Bible truly condemned homosexuality.[54]

I am not saying all of the above examples are people who joined or were part of the ECM, although some were. Rather, they are offered to highlight Bielo and Malley's contention that literalism is more of a boundary marker for the AE than an actual hermeneutic. By moving outside of the literalist hermeneutic, the ECM has made itself appear to American Evangelicalism as something other than orthodox.

If the members of the ECM are not committed to a literalist hermeneutic, what then is their interpretive model? I am going to suggest that the hermeneutic by which the ECM interprets both the text and culture is contained in the adjectives *emergent* and *relational*. Doug Pagitt, one of the founders of the movement and a pastor at Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, makes a clear statement of the ECM hermeneutic in the following quote:

> As a result, there is a shift in the seat of authority. It isn't in the wisdom of the
> village leaders or the deep pockets of the factory owners or the knowledge of the
> corporate executives. Authority is found in the way our experiences come
> together and create reality. It is found in relationships. We tend to be suspicious of

---

[54] http://knightopia.com/blog/2011/08/10/in-solidarity/

134

objectivity, uncertain if it is possible or even desirable. Authority – as much as anything else in the Inventive Age – is user generated (Pagitt 2010).

Even the idea of interpretive authority is, for ECM members, diffuse and relational. While the EEM and the ESJM look to the Bible for concepts of authority, the ECM looks both to the community and to social networks, but does so with a postmodern incredulity toward objectivity and governing meta-narratives.[55] Thus, when we look at the motivations for movement actors, there is a prophetic sense that motivates the movement actors, as there was with the other movements analyzed. The difference for the ECM is the object of their prophecy. Both of the literalist movements, and especially the EEM, are very much driven by a *sola scriptura* impulse which is the notion that scripture alone provides the authority for Christian living. Furthermore, both the EEM and the ESJM are evangelical in the sense that they seek to gain adherents by motivating people through moral truth claims bolstered by the objective authority of the Bible. Neither of these qualities – sola scriptura or conversion – would explain the ECM. The movement is, as Brian McLaren told me in my interview, a *post-sola* movement. By that he meant that, rather than trading one authority for another, the ECM is driven by the belief that a single source of authority is not possible in a complex, emergent system.

Practices

In its practices, the ECM is often considered to be *deconversionist*, an idea not without controversy in the ECM. The term comes from an article by Philip Harrold in which he defines the term as the "experience of turning away from a particular religious

---

[55] See Lyotard, Jean-François. Introduction:The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge," 1979.

identity or way of life" (Harrold 2006). This notion of deconversion, i.e. causing people to move away from their existing beliefs and practices, is at the heart of the critique of the movement. The movement actors I interviewed felt that the concept of deconversion was yet another linear or foundationalist model to explain a complex, emergent event. When asked why deconversion was a bad explanation for the ECM, here is how one individual put it:

> If I'm on Lake Shore drive heading toward Evanston, am I "turning away" from Chicago? Well, sure if that's how you want to see it, then that's how you're gonna' see it. But I would never describe my trip as, "I'm leaving Chicago." I would describe the drive more in terms of what lay ahead in the future.

The ECM is every bit as evangelistic as the other movements, but they are not seeking to convert people to the fundamentals of AE orthodoxy. So what are they seeking to convert people to? I suggest two conversion goals. First, the ECM is seeking to convert adherents to the importance of questions and conversations. For someone committed to a concept like absolute truth, it seems absurd to suggest that one can convert to uncertainty. But uncertainty is a key constitutive element of the ECM. Consider the following from the ECM philosopher Peter Rollins:

> What if one of the core elements of a radical Christianity lay in a demand that we betray it, while the ultimate act of affirming God required the forsaking of God? And what if fidelity to the Judeo-Christian scriptures demanded their

renunciation? In short, what if the only way of finding faith involved betraying it with a kiss?[56]

Dialogue is also critical to the ECM. The movement continues to organize "conversations" that bring people from the ECM movement into dialogue with renowned theologians and philosophers. Some of the past participants in these events have included theologian Jürgen Moltmann, theologian Miroslav Volf, theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, and continental philosophers John Caputo and Richard Kearney. In 2010 the conversation was entitled "Creating Liberated Spaces in a Postcolonial World" and brought in a diverse groups of speakers that included Musa Dube, a female New Testament scholar from Botswana, and Richard Twiss, a member of the Rosebud Lakota/Sioux Tribe and the author of *One Church, Many Tribes*. [57]

While the quality of the speakers at these events was quite high, of more interest here is that they were organized on highly egalitarian principles. Although the speakers at these events had a time when they addressed the whole group in a one-to-many fashion, the questions all came from the audience, and there was a time in each event where non-academics such as pastors were given the opportunity to be on the stage with the conversant and interact. Additionally, at the Caputo and Kearney event I observed in 2007, both world class philosophers were invited to break out sessions – not to lead them, but to be participants. Thus, one of the main practices of the ECM is converting people to the power of conversation.

---

[56] http://www.zedekiahlist.com/cgi-bin/quotes.pl?&id=21864026&pid=33693413
[57] http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e2x12pqm0181b7a6

The second practice is converting people to the power of relationships. Dwight Friesen, an ECM theologian and church planter, speaks of it this way:

> Our faith communities are not simply one-on-one relational encounters; there is a shared sense of *We*. And this *We* identity is not an exclusionary "us vs. them" but it is a differentiated *We* for the blessing of all. (Friesen 2009).

All of the ECM actors and leaders I interviewed talked about the importance of the *Gathering*, an event that happens each year in Glorieta, NM. The event is like a big family reunion. Even those who have not attended the event speak of its importance in terms of relationship building. More importantly than the relationships themselves, several interviewees mentioned that the *Gathering* is an event where ECM leaders seek to convert people to the power of relationships. Here is how one person described her Glorieta experience:

> I thought it was gonna' just be a bunch of people hanging out and talking. No surprise there. That's exactly what it was. But I came away from that first trip to Glorieta with a totally different perspective on the power of people hanging out and talking.

Conceptions of Place

In terms of conceptions of place, my interviews and analysis shows that this is a complicated question when analyzing the ECM. Many of the leaders are very rooted in particular local contexts. Doug Pagitt, for example, told me he couldn't have imagined starting his church, Solomon's Porch, anywhere other than Minnesota. However, in my research I found that, for ECM members, place is primarily related to the "creative class"

(Florida 2002) composition of the ECM. Florida conceives of the creative class as those workers and environments that are not just white collar but are defined by the creativity one must bring to the work. These are the kinds of jobs that "draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems". For example, cities that rely heavily on technology tend to be those that Florida brands as creative class locations.

The better-known churches that are a part of the ECM tend to be located in creative class centers such as Seattle or Raleigh-Durham. While the concept of place matters to the ECM, the relationship of the movement to its place seems to relate to the freedom of that place for individuals to live an aesthetically interesting life and to view "oneself as a work of art." One ECM leader who is also a pastor suggested that she was organizing "a gathering that is in service to those in need." In follow-up questioning, the needs of her congregation had more to do with middle class concerns like finding the right day care center than with fundamental conflicts over material resources. Thus, while place plays a greater role in the ECM than it does in the EEM or ESJM, it does not play the same kind of informative role in determining the grievances of the ECM than I will suggest it does in New Monasticism.

ECM as new social movement

The ECM clearly fits the definition of a new social movement, as its theological conversations are clear examples of "processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of strategies for maximizing influence and power." (Buechler 1997) As far as "variet(ies) of submerged, latent and temporary networks that often undergird collective action," (Buechler 1997) myriad examples of this abound. Earlier I referred to the way in which the Wild Goose Festival was organized, and that is also valid

as evidence for the ECM's status as an NSM. Also, many of the NM actors, such as Darin Petersen, were at one time part of the ECM. Finally, with regard to the notion that the ECM stands "in opposition to the structural notion of clearly defined and centralized organizations," one could almost consider that the subtitle, or at least one of the dominant themes, of Doug Pagitt's book *Church in the Inventive Age*.

New Monasticism – *A Vision So Old It's New*

Description

Because chapters five and six are devoted exclusively to New Monasticism, I will briefly describe it here by providing only enough information to make a comparison with the other movements. The history of the movement, its movement actors and its social movement organizations will be discussed at greater length in future chapters.

Beliefs

My analysis puts NM squarely in the middle of the four movements with regard to belief. In this movement there is a high regard for the authority of scripture. Every interviewee shared, in their own words, some version of the following statement offered to me by a member of an NM community: "We are a community rooted in the biblical narrative. We believe in the Gospel enough to live this way" as with the Emerging Church, there is also a sense of the role of the community in providing a hermeneutic for reading scripture among NM members. One NM community member put it this way:

> We don't show up on Sunday morning … heck, we don't go anywhere on Sunday morning. But when our community gets together and reads scripture, we don't

then look to one person and say, "What does this mean?" We – *the whole*

community (emphasis hers) – are the preacher.

In terms of the prophetic nature of the movement actors, this is unavoidable. All of the

people I interviewed with agree with the sentiment Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove expressed

to me in an interview: "monasticism is the church's normative counter-culture." Thus, to

describe this movement, I have chosen a title from a Wilson-Hartgrove article, *A Vision*

So Old It's New.

Practices

New Monasticism represents a radical break from AE in terms of practices. In a

future chapter I will define the *12 Marks of New Monasticism*. Suffice it to say here that

these 12 marks range from "relocation to the 'abandoned places of Empire' " to "lament

for racial divisions within the church and our communities combined with the active

pursuit of a just reconciliation" (House 2005). But as a quick way of understanding how

different the practices of the NM are from American Evangelicalism, consider the

following: the book that defines those twelve marks lists its editor as "The Rutba House,"

one of the five communities I researched. This communal mentality pervades the

practices of the movement.

Conceptions of Place

The NM is deeply connected to place. When NM actors speak of "relocating to

the abandoned places of Empire," they do so as a way of hearing the perspective of that

place and of standing in solidarity with those affected by particularized economic or

social inequalities. Another mark, "care for the plot of God's earth given to us along with support of our local economies," also demonstrates the importance of place.

NM as new social movement

New Social Movements (NSM) theories apply well to the New Monastic movement. Collective action in this movement has a strong symbolic component in both the civil society and the cultural sphere, and such action forms an important self-understanding of NM. Throughout discussions and literature of NM, there are repeated references to the concept of serving as "communities of witness" (Yoder 1994). John Howard Yoder, an Anabaptist theologian and ethicist, is quite influential in the new monastic movement. His work, *The Politics of the Cross*, seems almost *de rigueur* for this movement, as I saw a copy of it in each of the five communities I studied. Claiborne's *Jesus for President* borrows heavily from Yoder, who coined the notion of "communities of witness" as an alternative to the instrumental rationality of the American Protestant Church seen in traditional evangelizing, i.e., presenting particular truth claims about the Christian faith toward the goal of converting individuals to that religious framework. As an Anabaptist, Yoder also saw the "community of witness" as an alternative to the instrumental political action of, for example, the religious right. Communities of witness are therefore signal communities with symbolic action at the core of their constitution. Thus, NM communities might not fully connect with Buechler's notion of symbolic action operating "alongside" political action, unless removing oneself from the political process is itself defined as an inherently political act.

Buechler further identifies a new social movement as one that highlights "the importance of processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of

strategies for maximizing influence and power." NM as a social movement can be described this way, but not without some explanation. This is because the movement is not geared toward maximizing influence and power. The decision of many in NM to live among the poor and, at the same time, forego control of personal funds, a signature feature of NM communities, is clearly not designed to maximize power. The NM communities I studied do not represent Buechler's conception of the contrast of power maximization either. In other words, NM is not a movement designed to promote autonomy and self-determination. NM is, at least in its stated goals, designed to promote interconnectedness and group determination. In this area, NM does not find a precise fit to Buechler's model.

New social movements are also said to spring from postmaterialist values, "as opposed to conflicts over material resources" A postmaterialist ethic is a central value for the constitution of NM communities. Many from these communities, in both public statements and in private conversation, reference the following Biblical passage: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." (Acts 2.44, 45, NRSV)

NM communities then clearly can be represented as a movement that comes from motivations other than material gain. That having been said, however, Buechler's stress on the role of new social movements in problematizing the construction of collective identity finds its clearest expression in the NM movement, more so than in any of the previously mentioned movements. Structure, of course, plays some role in collective identity, and most NM adherents see themselves as part of the religious institution of the

Christian Church, thereby deriving some sense of their collective formation from that construct. However, many in the NM movement exhibit an ecclesial anomie, a strong sense of disconnection and dissolution with the established structures of "the organized Christian Church." For many, if not most, this anomie comes as a response to the hyper-individualism that is rampant in American Evangelicalism (Smith and Denton 2005).

NM individuals also realize that working through local struggles, such as the Kensington Housing Rights movement that sparked the formation of *The Simple Way,* have as much to do with collective identity as does an understanding of group identity that has been institutionally passed down from Christian upbringings. In this sense, collective identity for NMs seems to be "rooted" (Tarrow 2005) in a place. This rootedness is related to another value that writers on community have identified as the "theology of place" (Day 1963, Samson and Samson 2007). This theological stress on place amounts to a reframing of Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, in effect inverting Weber's formula. Weber spoke of religious Protestant adherents who perceive God's blessing as exhibited in their individual and financial well-being. The theology of place broadens that definition to describe individuals who perceive the blessing of their place – their city, town, region – and their own blessing/well-being as being "bound up together" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008).

Relatedly, Buechler states that new social movements demonstrate the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology. Many individuals leading this movement have been educated in institutions within the established structure of the Christian Church. Claiborne, Wilson-Hartgrove and Haw each attended Eastern University where they were influenced by Tony Campolo. Wilson-Hartgrove holds an M.Div degree from

Duke Divinity School, and Haw is a PhD candidate in theology at Villanova. However, all are developing ideological and theological positions that spring from their experience. For example, Haw's community is in Camden, NJ, a city devastated by environmental waste. Much of his theological work attempts to address the problems around this issue. Wilson-Hartgrove lives in the Walltown section of Durham, NC, an area with a history of racial tension and is deeply involved in issues of racial reconciliation. Similarly, many of the other NM leaders are working on ideological positions surrounding race and ethnicity. For instance, Claiborne co-authored a book with civil rights leader John Perkins dealing with racial justice entitled, *Follow Me to Freedom: Leading and Following as an Ordinary Radical* (Regal, 2009).

Lastly, Buechler speaks of new social movements as being composed of diffuse networks rather than centralized structures. This rings quite true with NM, with one example being the *Schools for Conversion* (SFC).[58] The SFC is an outgrowth of the NM movement that is designed to provide opportunities for individuals to process many of the issues being raised by the NM movement experience, including racial reconciliation and food justice issues. The schools are held over a weekend in NM communities and congregations that resonate with those values. The schools have a fixed structure to them in terms of the subjects being taught, but provide flexibility to the local community to choose what to teach within that area. Additionally, mostly volunteer staff runs these schools.

Three other thoughts with relation to NM as a new social movement should be offered here. First, Wilson-Hartgrove speaks of New Monasticism as a "Community of

---

[58] http://www.newmonasticism.org/index.php

Communities," and this may provide a proper historical sense of the Christian Church, which, he claims, is "in essence a 2,000 year experiment in social networking." This diffuse understanding of the Christian religion is allowing NM to spread. Second, NM communities are far more concerned with cultural, rather than material, reproduction (Habermas 1981). This is evident in the already mentioned *Schools for Conversion*, which are far more focused on training adherents in new cultural ideas than in new models for ecclesial organization. Third, NM communities should be seen exhibiting an "ongoing social construction rather than as unitary empirical objects" (Buechler 1995, Melucci 1997). To illustrate this, *Communality*, a NM community in Lexington, KY, currently has 35 members but has had well over two hundred different individuals as part of its community at different times during its ten years in existence. At that age and size, it is considered one of the more stable NM communities nationally. Also, during its ten years various organizations have sprung from the group, including a community gardening initiative, a counseling service for the marginalized, and a non-profit foundation to fund projects in the developing world.

Other Contenders

There are two other movements that might be considered part of the AP-E movement area that I have chosen not to analyze. The first is the house church movement, popularized by people like Frank Viola and George Barna who co-authored the book *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*. The central idea behind the house church movement is that "most of what Christians do in present-day churches is not rooted in the New Testament, but in pagan culture and rituals developed long after the death of the apostles" (Viola and Barna 2007). I chose not to

study this movement because I found little evidence that this movement is of any significant size. While there is an active conversation within AE about what to do with the people who are "spiritual but not religious," (see (Fuller 2001). I could find no evidence to support a substantial movement of people away from congregations and toward house churches.

A second movement within American Evangelicalism is the move toward multi-ethnic churches. The central goal of this movement is to create Christian congregations that intentionally move away from the ethno-religious model. In my analysis of this movement, I found no evidence that those concerned with making congregations more multi-ethnic were asking any fundamental questions about the belief or practices of AE, beyond the one practice of intentionally creating congregations that are multi-ethnic in their composition. The goal of the movement is to change the ethnic makeup of congregations but it does not represent a significant enough shift toward what I conceptualize as Post-Evangelical.[59]

AP-E as a Social Movement Area

American Post-Evangelicalism can be conceived of as a social movement area. All four movements that I have described participate in the sharing of a conflictual culture and a collective identity in that all have clearly stated grievance claims that place them in conflict with mainstream American Evangelicalism. This is true for those movements whose grievance claims come from a literalist hermeneutic (EEM and

---

[59] There are many, including Gerardo Marti, who would contend the multi-ethnic church is challenging dominant structures as a post-evangelical movement. In this research I chose to focus on other movements, but there is a strong argument that the move within American Evangelicalism to create multi-ethnic churches could be seen as a unique and important social movement.

ESJM), from a communal and relational hermeneutic (ECM), and for the NM, which in terms of beliefs, bridges between those two hermeneutical positions. Finally, there is ample evidence that each of these movements share formal and informal relationships with one another, and that they participate in creating shared cultural goods including books that movement actors endorse across movement lines. For example, Shane Claiborne, a central figure in New Monasticism, endorsed Matthew Sleeth's book *Serve God, Save the Planet*, a prominent example of the EEM's beliefs and practices. Another example of the way in which movement actors participate in creating cultural goods is the book, *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, which was edited by Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (both from the ECM) and includes essays from actors within other movements, including Randy Woodley (ESJM) and Geoff and Sherry Maddock (NM).

By conceptualizing these four distinct but overlapping religious movements as constituting a social movement area, I hope to solve one particular problem that researchers in any of the four movements have encountered. I call this the Gertrude Stein problem. Stein is famous for the quote, "There's no *there* there." And, while someone viewing any one of the four movements on their own might be tempted to make that claim, it is my hope that the four movements taken together will be seen as substantial and having significant implications for the future of American Evangelicalism.

Chapter Six – The Origins of New Monasticism

No music minister stands and gathers up the emotions of the congregation into a state called worship. Nobody called the assistant pastor reads the announcements or gives a short lesson to the children before they file out of the sanctuary. A senior pastor never walks upon a stage and hovers over a group sitting in lines, Bibles open in their laps, ready with a pen and notepad. After the sermon, nobody disassembles a stack of brass plates, distributes them to deacons or elders, and passes the communion elements to the same group sitting in lines.

This is a gathering in a New Monastic community. The worship happens when a guitar or a banjo is pulled out, an original song is shared, or someone just leads the group in *There is a Balm in Gilead*. Every community member is a pastor and the announcements could range anywhere from housekeeping matters such as who has kitchen duty to when the bus leaves for a demonstration against mountaintop removal mining. Bibles are sometimes open, usually to read a portion of the lectionary reading that had been assigned for the week. Perhaps someone will share an insight. But the sermons are lived each day of the week, not just on Sunday, experiences collected here in a circle of mismatched chairs, the smell of the potluck offerings making its way into the gathering room. Members share how they saw God, in the eyes of the schizophrenic woman who yells at people by the library, how a refugee experienced a miraculous turnaround in the hospital. Miracles, still performed by a Savior who helps the homeless and the heartsick, don't just happen in the pages of scripture. So they come, and they feast, and they worship, and nobody quite knows which is which.

In the midst of the turmoil in American Christianity in general, and Evangelical Protestantism in particular, there is a growing movement of young, Evangelical Protestant men and women who are not satisfied with the current state of the Christian Church. They are particularly disappointed by the political struggles. Consider the following from Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove:

> One side says our moral fabric has worn thin and we have to defend the family. The other side says we're drunk on war and need to defend the poor. Both camps circle the wagons and insist that their concerns are most important. Either way there isn't much hope the world will know we are Christians by our love for one another. Often we can't even agree that we are all Christians (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008).

Wilson-Hartgrove is one of the leaders of a new social movement happening largely within American Protestant Christianity known as New Monasticism (NM). The five communities that comprise this research are The Simple Way (Philadelphia, PA), Camden House (Camden, NJ), The Rutba House (Durham, NC), Communality (Lexington, KY) and Englewood (Indianapolis, IN)

Wilson-Hartgrove, Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw, a few of the movement's leaders, have been featured in publications ranging from the Boston Globe to CNN, and have written about the subject in such books as *New Monasticism, Jesus for President* and *The Irresistible Revolution.* The movement has spawned over two hundred communities in the last ten years. There are publications such as Conspire magazine, as well as social movement training organizations such at the *Schools for Conversion.* The

movement has birthed an organization called the *Relational Tithe* which is a network of givers who are seeking to create an alternative method of giving that stands in opposition to traditional church donations.

So what exactly is New Monasticism? Perhaps a good place to start is by defining Old Monasticism, which will then provide points of comparison. Early Christianity struggled with many definitional issues, including what it meant to be a follower of a religion that was banned by the Roman Empire. However, when Christianity was legalized under Constantine, the questions changed. A new set of questions emerged for those religious adherents, including struggling to embrace the military and governmental enterprise that had previously oppressed them. Many individuals, particularly clergy, found that they could not embrace the Empire. They chose, instead, to establish alternative communities that served as "acts of renunciation" (Workman 1913) against the mixing of the state and the Church. And, while these communities had some early influence on both the Church and the State, they were nonetheless a small influence.

All that changed when Benedict of Nursia began his monastic life in the Sixth Century. While his work was still rooted in the renunciation of the world (Inspexit et despexit: "He saw the world and he scorned it") (Workman 1913) his was the first monastic order to establish a firm rule. This rule was modified because of earlier failures, but the power of the structured counter-resistance formed a movement of monastic orders that spread throughout the world within two hundred years (Meeks 1993).

Like the ancient Monastics before them, the New Monastics see themselves as also creating a community that serves as an alternative community to the contemporary

American Church and its strong connection to the State. New Monasticism grew out of a number of experiments that young Evangelicals were conducting in how to live among the poor and those in need. A signal moment in this movement happened in Philadelphia in 1997. Shane Claiborne and a group of students from Eastern College in St. David's, PA, had moved into the Kensington area of Philadelphia, an area wracked by crime and poverty. What began as a move without a plan quickly took on a revolutionary feel when the City of Philadelphia and the Catholic Diocese threatened to move a group of homeless people out of an abandoned Catholic Church in the area. In response, Claiborne and the other students stood in solidarity with the homeless people and eventually prevailed over both the city and the Church. Thus was born the community known as The Simple Way.

Claiborne went on to influence two other students, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Chris Haw. Wilson-Hartgrove subsequently traveled with Claiborne to Iraq to serve with Christian Peacemakers Team prior to the U.S. invasion of that country in 2003. Haw traveled to Belize to spend a semester studying Christian views of the environment. Both men, radicalized by what they had seen and by the story of Claiborne, began their own communities. Haw settled across the river from Claiborne in Camden, NJ, founding the Camden House, and Wilson-Hartgrove settled in the Durham, NC area, founding Rutba House.

Monasticism formed orders that meant to serve as a renunciation to the outside world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer recast the notion of a monastic community that could serve as a renunciation to the Empire's captivation of the Church in 1935 when he wrote the following words to his brother Karl-Friedrick:

"...the restoration of the church will surely come only from a new type of monasticism which has nothing in common with the old but a complete lack of compromise in a life lived in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount in the discipleship of Christ. I think it is time to gather people together to do this..." (Bonhoeffer, Kelly et al. 1995)

Bonhoeffer was referring specifically to the captivation of the German Church by the Empire of Hitler. But this theme of "a new monasticism" was resounded by Jonathan Wilson in 1997 (Wilson 1997) and then picked up again by his son-in-law, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove in 2004 in a conference of Christian communities that published the work, *12 Marks of New Monasticism*.

The 12 marks of new monasticism are:

1. Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire;

2. Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us;

3. Hospitality to the stranger;

4. Lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation;

5. Humble submission to Christ's body, the church;

6. Intentional formation in the way of Christ and the rule of the community along the lines of the old novitiate;

7. Nurturing common life among members of intentional community;

8. Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children;

9. Geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life;

10. Care for the plot of God's earth given to us along with support of our local economies;

11. Peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution within communities along the lines of Matthew 18;

12. Commitment to a disciplined contemplative life.

The 12 Marks in Practice

But what do these marks look like in practices? A good example can be seen in Communality, a NM community in Lexington, KY and one of five studied for this research. Communality has approximately 40 members. It is 12 years old. Its weekly routines include lectionary reading, prayer, a Sunday gathering and a common commitment to various social justice ministries.

In terms of relocation to abandoned places of empire, most of the community resides in downtown Lexington in a racially mixed area. They share economic resources with fellow community members and the needy by gardening and sharing that food. One couple, a founding member of Communality, just purchased the lot next to their house to turn that into an urban farm and provide their neighbors with eggs from their chickens. Most in the group have made deliberate employment choices that provide them time to be involved in their neighborhood. And, in keeping with this sentiment, many of the

members of the community are involved in their neighborhood associations, often as the only white members of that group.

Regarding "Lament for racial divisions within the Church and our communities combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation," this is an area where this community has done some very strong work. Communality helped sponsor a garden near a burial ground which sought to bring the historically African-American Episcopal congregation together with the predominantly white Cathedral. The garden was named for the only African American to be buried in that cemetery.[60]

Submission to the Church is a mark that may look different based on one's ecclesial perspective. Most of the members consider Communality their church home, while some attend other churches. However, it should be noted that the community was founded, at least in small part, with funds from the CMA (Christian and Missionary Alliance) church planting group and, until very recently, the community maintained informal ties with that group.

If the community were to be evaluated against the 12 Marks, the formation of a novitiate for this community would be by far the weakest element, as it would for every other community studied. Many of the members of these communities were drawn to New Monasticism because they did not connect with the institutional church in America. As such, convincing people to connect with a rule of life is difficult. By contrast, nurturing common life among members of intentional community is an area where Communality shines. In addition to the Sunday gatherings, there are various groups that

---

[60]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Ferrill

meet during the week. Most of the community is involved in some form of common gardening practices. And, until recently, most of the community worked together on refugee resettlement issues in conjunction with Kentucky Refugee Ministries.

Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children is not a strength of this group. Although there is a wide age range from 1 to 60, most of the community are young married couples. Additionally, the community, like most of the NM communities, has not yet addressed the question of what to do with homosexual relationships. Geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life is also a bit unsure for this group. In terms of proximity, only one house in the community is more than six blocks from another. And, at the time of the initial research almost everyone had someone living with them. However, as the community has grown in age and kids have come along, this is increasingly harder to maintain for the community. Additionally, given the lack of a rule of life that binds the community, they only regularly meet half of this mark.

Care for the plot of God's Earth given to us along with support of local economies is an area where Communality far exceeds most of the other communities studied. At the time of this research project, every household in the community had their own garden. Most raised chickens in the back yard for egg production. And, the community helped birth an organization called Seedleaf, which has become the dominant community gardening organization in the city.

Regarding peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution along the lines of Matthew 18, this community has been at the forefront of various racial

reconciliation movements in the city. And, in that same vein, Communality has been a leader in the fight against mountaintop removal mining, particularly with regard to efforts at community building among those affected by the practice.

New Monasticism as a Theopolitical Response to American Evangelicalism

In order to understand the theological and political motivations of the New Monastics one must first understand that, for this group, these are not separate questions. Motivated by writers like John Howard Yoder and William Cavanaugh,[61] the leaders of the New Monastic movement, would contend that is precisely the false dichotomy of these two spheres that has gotten the Church into trouble. Consider the following from *Jesus for President:*

> We in the church are schizophrenic: we want to be good Christians, but deep down we trust that only the power of the state and its militaries and markets can really make a difference in the world. And so we're hardly able to distinguish between what's American and what's Christian. As a result, power corrupts the church and its goals and practices (Claiborne and Haw 2008).

Three theopolitical frameworks emerged from my examination of NM writing and from the qualitative interviews. The first is that of an alternative politic, which is contained in the title, *Jesus for President.* For virtually all of the New Monastics I interviewed, whether leaders or community members, there is a sense that the politics of

---

[61] Cavanaugh employed the term *theopolitical* in his work: Cavanaugh, W. T. (2002). Theopolitical imagination. London ; New York, T & T Clark. This has been influential in the New Monastic movement.

man fail, but the politics of God provide an alternative that is different than simply a third way choice.[62] This alternative politic is captured well in an ABC interview from 2010 with young Evangelicals. Speaking is Gabe Lyons, the head of the Q Project:

> What we're seeing is the church start to flourish as Christians embrace that, you know, the way to be Christian isn't just to vote a certain way or to align yourself with a certain political persuasion or a party, but it's to be thoughtful about all the issues confronting us and the world and to choose how we're going to engage in those thoughtfully.

The second theopolitical framework with which to analyze Evangelical social engagement in general and New Monasticism in particular is that of a communal politic. This is contained in a chapter title in Wilson-Hartgrove's book, *New Monasticism,* which discussed "God's plan to save the world through a people." In that chapter he discussed the importance of learning to read the "you" in the bible as "y'all"; in other words, for the New Monastics "salvation and sanctification depend on finding my true home with God's people" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008).

This idea has enormous implications for Evangelical social engagement. As Kniss and Numrich (2007) discuss, congregations as collective centers of moral authority are more typically equated, at least within the Christian sphere, with Orthodox and Catholic traditions, which have historically been more engaged in collective civic behavior (Kniss and Numrich 2007). Given this, it follows that many of the New Monastic communities

---

[62] For more on this topic, see Ellul, J. (1972). The politics of God and the politics of man. Grand Rapids, Mich.,, Eerdmans.

are deeply engaged in neighborhood associations, community-based social justice organizations and other forms of collectivist social engagement.

The third theopolitical framework with which to interpret the social engagement of the New Monastics is that of a narratival politic, that is there is an interesting tension that exists in the writings of NM leaders between a rootedness in a vision of the past and a sense of the prophetic nature of these communities. In multiple articles and books, Wilson-Hartgrove speaks of New Monasticism as having a "vision so old it's new" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008). In that sense he is seeking to connect today's Evangelicals with the long history of the Church and, in particular, with communities that renounce the intrusion of the empire into that Church. However, he also speaks of New Monasticism as pointing to something new. That something, he suggests, will be look like the past, such as the Church's work on civil rights and Dorothy Day's work for the poor. But,

> "as we begin to share our stories with one another, they begin blending into a wonderful gift: the sketch of a new monastic movement in which all of us agreed the Holy Spirit was at work" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008).

Thus, for Wilson-Hartgrove it is the narrative that ties together the past and the future. This is similar to sentiments expressed by a NM community member in an interview:

> "I spent so much time in my childhood learning to defend whether the Bible was *right.* These days I am far more concerned with whether the *story* is right. That's not to say that I don't believe in the Bible anymore, but I realize now that we don't have to start from scratch – people have already dealt with some version of

the issues that we face today." … "And we make the future together, in community, as we tell the story of God. And that has to be in community."

Chapter Seven – New Monasticism as a Post-Evangelical Movement

New Monasticism as a Response to Therapeutism

The first theme to examine is that of a reaction to the therapeutism that has dominated American Evangelicalism in modern times. In his book on New Monasticism, Wilson-Hartgrove critiques a religion that only required that people "make a simple choice for Jesus from the comfort of their homes," one where "All their listeners needed to do was believe" (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008). In his *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Rieff speaks of the effect of therapeutism in creating a culture where each person is given "permission to live an experimental life." And further, "Psychological man, in his independence from all gods, can feel free to use all god-terms; I imagine he will be a hedger against his own bets, a user of any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use" (Rieff 1966). Fast forward forty years, and in a quintessential statement of therapeutic Evangelicalism, Joel Osteen states: "God wants to make your life easier. He wants to assist you, to promote you, to give you advantages. He wants you to have preferential treatment" (Osteen 2004).

GK Chesterton once said, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." My research indicates that exactly the opposite is true for those flocking to NM communities. Specifically, in terms of beliefs, members of new monastic communities are looking for creeds that hold a greater claim on their life than the therapeutic deism that pervades American Evangelicalism. In terms of practices, NM community members are increasingly turning to more ancient and communal

practices such as lectio divina[63] and reading scripture guided by the church calendar. This offers a stark contrast with the individualistic stadium mentality of the mega-church.

It is striking that the therapeutism against which many of the NM community members are reacting was a product of the mega-churches that were designed for their parents. Shires speaks of this when he states that many Baby Boomers had grown weary of "their parent's church" and were looking for a more experiential, more individually oriented style of church (Shires 2007). Ironically, it is individually oriented style of church that is driving young Evangelicals to New Monastic life and away from the organized Evangelicalism of the mega-church. The practices by which New Monastics combat therapeutism are fairly self-evident. Even the choices themselves – to seek to live in community, to seek to live among the poor, and often to seek to grow at least some of your own food – these place NM community members in a very different place than even other young Evangelicals.

New Monastic Beliefs vs. Therapeutism

One of the distinguishing characteristics of New Monasticism is the way in which they serve as a counter to what has been called *easy believism*, or what Bonhoeffer referred to as "faith without cost." One NM community member referred to the call to New Monastic life as the "antidote to Joel Osteen and Rick Warren."

---

[63] "Lectio Divina, literally meaning "divine reading," is an ancient practice of praying the scriptures. During Lectio Divina, the practitioner listens to the text of the Bible with the "ear of the heart," as if he or she is in conversation with God, and God is suggesting the topics for discussion. The method of Lectio Divina includes moments of reading (lectio), reflecting on (meditatio), responding to (oratio) and resting in (contemplatio) the Word of God with the aim of nourishing and deepening one's relationship with the Divine." Accessed at http://www.centeringprayer.com/lectio_divina.html on 10/12/2015

Relocation is seen as a sign of commitment and as counter to the low-cost faith that NM participants see in the American Evangelical church. Sr. Margaret McKenna, in the 12 Marks book, states the following with regard to the New Monastic practice of relocation:

Relocation expresses conversion and commitment, the decision to resist imperial pressures and the pleasure and rewards of non-conformity to the way of all empires: pride, power and reduction of all values to the 'bottom line' (House 2005).

In this sense NM members and communities clearly fit within Smith's sub-cultural identity model. The idea of this movement serving as a counter to easy believism was a strong theme in all the interviews and throughout the literature. Claiborne refers to this dynamic as making "the comfortable uncomfortable" (Claiborne 2006). But in what way could this movement be seen as a counter hegemonic discourse against the low level of belief required in most Evangelical Churches? Consider a fuller version of the quote from above:

"We're the antidote to people like Joel Osteen and Rick Warren. People come to our community with all the baggage they've inherited from the church and we don't offer them any magic answers. All we can say is, if you stick around five years you'll get five years of community. That's all we've got to offer."

Finally, on the subject of easy belief, one can observe obvious choices of framing in opposition to that cultural element. Wilson-Hartgrove, in the curriculum for the *Schools for Conversion* talks of being born again and again. In this he is suggesting that

the call to conversion is not a one-time shot as is often preached in American Evangelical churches, but rather an ongoing process that requires discipline.

Next, with regard to beliefs that stand counter to the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism, NM communities are deeply rooted in what Catholic social teaching calls the "preference for the poor." Visiting these communities the bookshelves were filled with the works of Oscar Romero and Dorothy Day, as well as the founder of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez. All of these individuals have been activistic in their concern for the poor and their writings, or at the least their name and major ideas, came up in many of the NM community interviews. All of these writers have also been sub-cultural players within their religious tradition. The preference for the poor is seen in the founding story of the Simple Way. Claiborne's willingness to leave the safe confines of the college dorm and stay in Kensington over and against the powers of the city and the Catholic church demonstrate the counter-hegemonic beliefs of this group. Finally, the term *God's preference for the poor* is itself a reframing of religious claims. Although it comes from Catholic social teaching, the term was a rallying cry on behalf of foreign priests fighting for the liberation of native people in South America (Smith 1991).

Next, with regard to the ways in which New Monasticism stands counter to the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism, consider the fifth mark, *Humble submission to Christ's body, the church*. This stands in direct opposition to the therapeutic impulse that is causing younger Evangelicals to leave the Church in larger numbers than ever before. According to David Kinnaman of the Barna Research Group, two out of three Evangelicals think going to church is optional for a Christian, and one in three have left the church believing they will never return (Kinnaman and Hawkins). Thus in an unusual

turn commitment to the church is displayed as counter-cultural. Consider the following quote from Wilson-Hartgrove:

> "Maybe the most important thing new monasticism has to say to the church is that we need it. We're not trying to leave the church behind and do something new on our own."

In this sense this commitment to the church is a counter-hegemonic move against evangelical entrepreneurialism. Quoting from one community member:

> "To stand with the church when everyone else is leaving her … that's truly radical. You know, *radical* like getting back to the root. It's weird because all these kids are leaving the church and think they're sticking it to the man. To those of us who look to our community, well, we look at them and they just look like sheep to us. Every one of 'em thinking they're the first people who ever rebelled against the church."

Another example of the way in which new monastics see themselves as fulfilling a counter-hegemonic role is seen in the church work of Wilson-Hartgrove, who serves part-time on the pastoral staff of a predominantly African-American church. This has him serving under black leadership. In interviews he has mentioned he hopes to demonstrate an alternate model for the dominant church paradigm that has congregations broken along color lines. Finally, with regard to this third point, the NM members and leaders use this mark to identify and thus frame the church into something deeper than them. Ivan Kauffman, writing in the 12 Marks book, states the alternative to submission to the

church is "act(ing) as though we were the only Christians who had ever lived" (House 2005).

New Monastic Practices vs. Therapeutism

In addition to beliefs, it is also important to look at the practices of new monastics and the way in which those practices serve as a counter to the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism. The first of these practices is that of *relocation to the abandoned places of empire*.

One repeated theme in the interviews was the way in which NM members viewed the mega-churches that have come to dominate the AE landscape. Many critiqued the fact that those churches are no longer only purveyors of religious good and services but often have shops that provide everything from coffee to Christian–themed clothing. One NM member said it concisely: "In my mind, mega-church equals megamall." The critique of the commercial market is also implicit in the act of relocation. The term *empire* is shorthand within this movement for the way in which the church becomes intertwined with the powers of the state and the market, which many within New Monasticism view as the underlying dynamic also at work in the growth of the mega-church.

The second practice of New Monasticism that I register as a counter to the therapeutism of AE is that of sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us. This practice has many manifestations. One of the ways in which the sharing of economic resources is carried out is in the career choices that many community members have made. Although members of NM communities tend to be individuals with high levels of social capital, most have chosen social or non-profit

occupations as a way to give them extra time to spend in their neighborhoods. One member I spoke with, referring to his present job said, "The twenty hours I spend at (his job) are just to subsidize my real job … spending time with my neighbors."

Another manifestation of this sharing of economic resources is in the urban farming that is a part of many of the communities. There are greens and eggs to share with neighbors. Quoting from one NM member who was referring to their garden:

"We don't just grow food for ourselves. And we sure don't make a profit. We do this so that our neighbors, our friends, so that they have some taste of real food. That is the gospel – sharing eggs with the people on (our) street."

Along these same lines is the manifestation of the sharing of economic resources known as the Relational Tithe, which is heavily comprised of NM members. This is a social movement organization that is working to reshape the giving models for the American church. Below is the self-description of the organization from their website:

"Relational Tithe helps connect you and your resources with people in your life. We desire to see a world to where we eliminate personal economic isolation. The ideas driving Relational Tithe can be illustrated in a one sentence description: God has created an economy of abundance and intends for people to care for one another; not simply by benevolence, charity, or even philanthropy, but through a call to friendship."[64]

The third NM practice that stands counter to the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism is *nurturing common life among members of an intentional community*.

---

[64] http://www.relationaltithe.com

Most of the NM members interviewed spoke of the lack of connectedness they felt growing up in the American Evangelical church. Many spoke of the lack of comfort they felt in community but the need for it nonetheless. Consider the following from Sherrie Steiner and Michelle Harper Brix:

> In community, as in every Christian life, there is no substitute for the difficult task of separating what we *want* God to be saying from attempting to discern what God might *actually* be saying. If there is a loving and accepting culture within the community, people seldom leave because of poverty, danger (e.g. drive-by shootings) or differences in eating habits, hygiene standards, or music preferences. People usually leave, in my experience, because they can't handle the emotional pain that surfaces." (quoted in House 2005, 97).

Thus, the nurturing of common life is, ironically, therapeutic but still stands counter to the individual therapeutism preached in most of American Evangelicalism.

New Monastic Conceptions of Place vs. Therapeutism

Finally, we turn to the way in which New Monasticism serves to affect conceptions of place with American Evangelicalism. The first way this occurs is with the idea of relocation to those places that have been abandoned by *empire*, which is shorthand for the political and economic system. For the New Monastics, relocation becomes an act of finding or reclaiming a place. This stands in stark contrast to the *placelessness* of the mega-church. Here is how one NM community member put it:

"So you're in this crowd of thousands of people. What is that? More importantly, where is that? With the mega-churches I've been in, you could be in Seattle or Grand Rapids … doesn't make a difference. They all feel the same."

The new monastics, by contrast, talk of connecting, or in some cases, reconnecting with the space where they live. And, they talk of the cost of that commitment in ways that stand opposite to the therapeutic impulse. One member spoke of her belief that relocation is a way of giving your life for others, not a way to make yourself feel better.

This occasions the second way in which New Monasticism reconceives of place over and against the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism – the act of living in geographic proximity to other community members. One member told me:

"We don't just become entangled only into the lives of those who benefit us. I don't go to church to make connections, but rather I live in community to be connected. Connected to something bigger than you get in big church. I get neighbors and friends. That doesn't mean we always get along. But for us it means we are trying to find something bigger than we had growing up."

Finally, the idea of caring for God's earth stands as a contrast to the therapeutism of American Evangelicalism. While some in AE might be involved in farming or community gardening, it is the motivation of the NM members that differs, especially with regard to place.

New Monasticism as a Response to Militaristic Moralism

The second theme to examine is that of a reaction to the militaristic moralism of the religious right. In simplest terms, New Monasticism should be seen as a counter-movement to the Evangelical dominance in the political sphere since the years leading up the election of Ronald Reagan. In my interview with Claiborne, he offered the following:

> "What seems clear to me is that, in the last, or, thirty years ago there was this growing movement of the Moral Majority and the religious right and all that, and that became increasingly a disconnect for a lot of Christians, especially young Christians, that felt like, wow, where did this come from and why is it so specialized in its hot button issues that Jesus spoke very little about."

New Monastic Beliefs vs. Militaristic Moralism

To unpack this broader theme, there were three sub-themes that emerged to explain the belief differentiation from that of militaristic moralism. The first is that of *America as aggressor*. This was clearly the most dominant sub-theme. Interestingly, almost every interviewee mentioned the attacks of September 11th and the subsequent invasion of Iraq as motivating them to seek an alternative ecclesiology and body politic. Most interviewees mentioned concern over the reaction to these events from both the left and the right as a motivating reason for their involvement with New Monasticism. One NM community member listed it as the number one reason:

> "I heard Jerry Falwell say that God is pro-war and I thought, which God is he talking about? The God I know preached sacrificial peace. Anyway, it just got to

170

the point where I got sick and tired of the pro-American agenda coming from the pulpit and I had to get out. That's the start of the story of how I got here (to a New Monastic community)."

The concept of NM communities having distinct sub-cultural identities that ran counter to AE was a consistent theme in my interviews. In many interviews respondents spoke of their community as being distinct from AE in the way they viewed America.

The second sub-theme that emerged is the concern over the belief of *America as Christian nation*. Consider the following quote from Claiborne:

"But what happened after September 11th broke my heart. Conservative Christians rallied around the drums of war. Liberal Christians took to the streets. The cross was smothered by the flag and trampled under the feet of angry protestors. The church community was lost, so the many hungry seekers found community in the civic religion of American patriotism" (Claiborne 2006).

There exists strong evidence to state that the NM members and communities perceive themselves to a contra-force to the hegemonic beliefs of America as a Christian nation. Consider the following quote from a NM member when asked about America as a Christian nation:

"My first thought is that there cannot be a Christian nation. Jesus operated at the margins of society. So being a Christian and being a nation are two different things. And that's why we seek to model an alternative economy. That's what why try to do at (our community). The political *oikos* of God and that of men and women are so completely different that to conflate the two is absurd."

171

The third sub-theme that emerged from the research is concern over the dominance of *the politics of personal piety*. While a surprising number of New Monastic community members hold to more conservative positions, particularly on the issue of abortion, there was an overwhelming consensus that abortion and gay marriage should not dominate the conservation within the Church in the way they have for the last 30-plus years. Here is one quote from a community member that illustrates this well:

> "The gay issue and the abortion issue, they're just not in the Bible, at least not the way they are lived out today. So you've got people pushing these agendas and then you've got us (young college students at a Christian university) who really want to read our Bible and do what it says but we're like – dude, where were those verses about gay marriage again?"

New Monastic Practices vs. Militaristic Moralism

So, how then do these communities work against this militaristic moralism? One way is through a radical commitment to peace work. Rather than rely on reading a Daniel Berrigan book (although most had books by Berrigan, John Dear and other peace activists on the community bookshelf), many in these communities were involved with Christian Peacemaker Teams. Many had been arrested for protesting at School of the Americas, a military base that trains Latin American military personnel. For example, at one Family Reunion, an annual gathering of New Monastic communities, one individual was reporting to jail the following week for protest activities. The speaker, Chris Haw from the Camden House, asked for all who had been arrested for protest work, to come up on

the stage and lay hands on the person headed to jail. Half of the audience of over 50 people headed to the stage.

Another practice of New Monastic communities that seeks to work against the militaristic moralism of the religious right is that of radical inclusion. Although the communities were mostly white and middle-class, every community studied had one or more individuals who did not fit the dominant type. Several communities had folks coming off the streets and dealing with mental illness. Several had folks working through their sexuality or struggling to stay in the church after coming out sexually.

New Monastic Conceptions of Place vs. Militaristic Moralism

With regard to the New Monastic response to the militaristic moralism and conceptions of place, three findings support the notion that New Monasticism stands in opposition to the militaristic moralism of the religious right. The first of these is the belief in focusing on local, as opposed to national, concerns. Whereas the rise of the religious right brought about a focus on winning back America, New Monasticism instead places its emphasis on what is happening in each of their neighborhoods. One community member put it this way:

> "In church I kept hearing that we need to take America back for God, and that just seemed crazy when I read the gospels. Even when I read the Old Testament, like in Jeremiah 29[65], I think, wow, this is where it's all supposed to happen. God doesn't care so much about America as he does about (my neighborhood)."

---

[65] That theme of Jeremiah 29 was repeated many times during the interviews. This is a passage of scripture that suggests the welfare of the city and one's personal welfare are deeply connected.

Second, there is a sense in which the New Monastics are returning to some of the themes of the social gospel against which the fundamentalists and the religious right were reacting. Place, in this sense, becomes the location for the practice of the gospel. Consider the following from an interview with Claiborne:

"There's people that are starting communities, that are joining communities. People that are busting through barriers of race and class right there in their neighborhood. There's people that are rethinking their entire lives and vocations in terms of the gospel."

Third, ones' place becomes a location for inclusion, as opposed to what many in the NM communities perceived as the exclusion of the generation who preceded them. Consider the following quote, also from an interview with Claiborne:

"the thing that we have to be careful of, I think, is having ideologies that exclude people from conversation."

Conclusion: Implications, Future Research

I started with one overarching question: How are Evangelicals who came of age in the last thirty years reacting against the beliefs, practices, and conceptions of place of American Evangelicalism in the contemporary context?

To answer this question it was first important to show that historical and cultural forces are shaping the actions of younger evangelicals. Rieff predicted that individuals in contemporary society would become "user(s) of any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use." (Rieff 1966) I argue that a long historical stream of therapeutic thought has come to dominate AE, ranging from Charles Finney in the 19th Century to contemporaries such as Rick Warren and Joel Osteen. For younger evangelicals to continue to identify with AE, they must accept a belief system Smith and Denton identify as "moralistic therapeutic deism." (Smith and Denton 2005)

In the last 70 years, the rise of the religious right has also shaped the identity and actions of AE. A reaction to perceptions of liberalism in the social gospel, as well as to the ontological challenges brought about by Darwinian thought in general, and the Scopes Trial in particular, had led to an earlier separation from social engagement to the point where AE "had evolved into a somewhat reclusive and defensive version of itself." (Smith and Emerson 1998) However, evangelicals rejoined the cultural debate in force from the 1970's forward and have presented younger evangelicals with a belief system defined by militaristic moralism. In order for younger evangelicals to identify with AE they must accept the contentions that America is a Christian nation, and that their

religious beliefs compel them to contest culture on issues of personal piety, with particular emphasis on the fight against abortion and gay rights.

Concurrently with the rise of therapeutism and militaristic moralism with AE, cultural forces were compelling the need for a more robust academic defense of their particular religious beliefs and epistemic framework. While this began as a conservative impulse to defend perceptions of orthodoxy, it also broadened the perspective of American evangelicals, creating the possibility of breaks with both the therapeutism and militaristic moralism that defined the belief system with which younger evangelicals were presented. I argue that this desire for intellectualization, combined with opposition to the increasing marketization of AE, combined to create a broad social movement area I define as American Post-Evangelicalism.

Within this broad social movement area are four smaller movements. They are the Evangelical Environmental Movement, the Evangelical Social Justice Movement, the Emerging Church Movement and New Monasticism. Each of these movements challenges conceptions of orthodoxy within AE in different ways, specifically in their beliefs, practices and conceptions of place.

Each of these movements has potential to shape the future of AE. The Evangelical Environmental Movement challenges the dominance of personal piety as the primary political agenda for AE. Instead, it seeks to frame environmental responsibility within an orthodox, moral framework rooted in scriptural claims. Similarly, the Evangelical Social Justice Movement makes moral claims about the need for evangelicals to engage on issues such as human trafficking and slavery.

176

The Emerging Church Movement is the most "post" of all the post-Evangelical movements I researched. I included them in this discussion because they share movement actors and history with the other movements, and especially with New Monasticism.

I chose New Monasticism for further examination because I believe it provided the most interesting points of analysis for the future of American Evangelicalism. People in NM communities seek to adhere to what they would describe as orthodox beliefs and practices. Yet many of these beliefs and practices appear unorthodox to contemporary American evangelicals. NM leaders would argue for a desire to integrate practices from the two thousand year life of Christianity, often implementing ancient practices into the life of their communities.

In some ways, this could be compared to the primitivistic impulse that has been evident in AE, from Barton Stone to Billy Graham. However, because the desire for intellectualization shaped the evangelical academy, and many of the NM leaders were trained at such schools, these individuals have a much broader understanding of what it means to be connected to the historical stream of Christianity.

Thus, for NM adherents to grapple with issues of belief and practice, they are contending with a much broader range of these concerns. Additionally, New Monasticism was the only movement among the four that was seeking to be connected to a geographical place. As I contend in Chapter Six, the desire for physical grounding within these communities is yet another way they are challenging AE with regard to therapeutism and militaristic moralism.

The term *new monasticism* was coined by the German theologian and martyr

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This was picked up by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, a leader in the

New Monastic movement. As a way of structuring this movement, Wilson-Hartgrove,

along with other writers, created 12 Marks of New Monasticism. These "marks" follow

very closely the model of Benedictine rules. What separates these communities from

other monastic models is the fact that these communities are of mixed gender, and have

families and children present.

As these marks are worked out in the life of NM communities, it is evident how

they serve as a counter to the therapeutism that dominates in AE. Their preference for

living among the poor stands against the prosperity gospel and easy believism of AE

actors like Joel Osteen. Their notion of *humble submission to Christ's body, the church*,

is in opposition to belief among most evangelicals that connection to the church is

optional to their expression of belief.

Similarly, as these marks are worked out in NM communities, they present a

distinction from the practices of AE. As these adherents seek to relocate *to the*

abandoned places of empire, they are drawn mostly to areas of urban poverty. This

causes them to stand out from the suburban, trendy mega-churches that dominate AE.

Sharing economic resources with fellow community members is also a practice that

would be difficult to conceive of, and practice, in an American evangelical mega-church.

But perhaps the mark of *nurturing common life among members of an intentional*

community is the greatest distinction in practice from AE and its therapeutism. The

members of NM communities are predominantly individuals who felt alienated from their

large church experience while growing up in AE. The idea of a common life, among people you know well, who choose to live together, is what draws most adherents to these communities.

Living together, in geographic proximity, and sharing economic resources, also speaks to the ways in which NM serves to distinguish itself from AE in terms of conception of place. These individuals are choosing small, geographically defined communities where they connect with each other, their neighbors and neighborhood, and often the land, through community gardening efforts.

These communities also serve as a counter to the theme of militaristic moralism with AE. The evidence of this, however, is seen more in my interviews and observations than in the practice of the 12 Marks. In terms of beliefs, many NM leaders and community members were motivated toward an NM community by the American response to the September 11th attacks. They perceive and present themselves as a counter force to the hegemonic belief of America as a Christian nation.

On issues of personal piety, many NM community members were more conservative than I would have expected, especially on the issue of abortion. However, what they all shared in common was the desire to move the conversations about abortion and gay rights off the center stage and replace them with conversations about the moral issues surrounding poverty and economic.

Their practices also demonstrate how NM serves as an alternative to AE. Many NM members have been arrested for protesting at the School for Americas, a military

base that trains Latin American military personnel. Additionally, these communities practice radical inclusion and seek to invite all into their communities, regardless of race, sexual orientation or economic situation.

NM conceptions of place also stand them against the militaristic moralism of AE. Rather than focus on the national, they emphasize the local. Rather than see America as a Christian nation, they see their community and neighborhood to practice their beliefs in location as a place for radical inclusion.

What does New Monasticism say about the future of Evangelical social engagement? There are at least three lessons to be taken from this research. First, to the extent that the New Monastics represent one possible future of Evangelicalism, they will be less likely than the generation before them to be politically engaged on either side of the political aisle. Rather than move toward the center or the left, if this group is indicative of larger trends, younger Evangelicals are moving out of the political process altogether.

Second, the New Monastics will be more likely to think locally and act locally. The emphasis on place makes the national political scene seem less relevant to this group. If they represent larger trends regarding Evangelical social engagement, there will be less Evangelicals working national political campaigns and more working with local non-profits on issues they can directly affect.

Finally, the future of Evangelicalism is, to quote Pagitt, "user generated." Whereas in the past large, national organizations played a strong role in shaping the

direction of Evangelicalism, the future of this movement is likely to be more in the hands of small, local communities than the National Association of Evangelicals.

Bibliography

Ammerman, N. T. (2007). Everyday religion : observing modern religious lives. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Ball, J. (2010). Global warming and the risen lord : christian discipleship and climate change. Washington, DC, Evangelical Environmental Network.

Balmer, R. H. (2008). God in the White House : a history : how faith shaped the presidency from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush. New York, HarperOne.

Baptist (2006). Baptist History and Heritage. Baptist History and Heritage.

Batstone, D. B. (2007). Not for sale : the return of the global slave trade-- and how we can fight it. New York, HarperSanFrancisco.

   Human trafficking generates

Beckford, J. A. (1989). Religion and advanced industrial society. London ; Boston, Unwin Hyman.

Beckford, J. A. (2003). Social theory and religion. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Bender, C. J. (2007). Touching the Transcendent: Rethinking Religious Experience in the Sociological Study of Religion. Everyday religion : observing modern religious lives. N. T. Ammerman. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press: 201-238.

Benford, R. D. (1997). "An Insider's Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective." Sociological Inquiry 67: 409-430.

Benford, R. D. and D. A. Snow (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and Assessment. Annual Review of Sociology, Annual Reviews Inc. 26: 611.

Benford, R. D. and D. A. Snow (2000). "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." Annual Review of Sociology 26: 611-639.

Berger, P. (2006). Speaking of Faith.

Berger, P. L. (1990). <u>The sacred canopy : elements of a sociological theory of religion</u>. New York, Anchor Books.

Bielo, J. S. (2009). <u>Words upon the Word : an ethnography of evangelical group Bible study</u>. New York, New York University Press.

Bloom, H. (1992). <u>The American religion : the emergence of the post-Christian nation</u>. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Bonhoeffer, D. and C. J. Green (1998). <u>Sanctorum communio : a theological study of the sociology of the church</u>. Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

Bonhoeffer, D., et al. (1995). <u>A testament to freedom : the essential writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer</u>. [San Francisco, Calif.], HarperSanFrancisco.

Boone, K. C. (1989). <u>The Bible tells them so : the discourse of Protestant fundamentalism</u>. Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press.

Buechler, S. M. (1995). "New Social Movement Theories." <u>Sociological Quarterly</u> **36**(3): 441-464.

Buechler, S. M. (1997). New Social Movement Theories. <u>Social Movements: Perspectives and Issues</u>. S. M. Buechler and J. F. Kurt Cylke. Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing Company**:** 295-318.

Buechler, S. M. (2004). The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Action. <u>Blackwell companions to sociology</u>. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** 47-66.

Burawoy, M. (2007). For Public Sociology. <u>Public sociology : fifteen eminent sociologists debate politics and the profession in the twenty-first century</u>. D. Clawson. Berkeley, University of California Press**:** vii, 275 p.

Carson, D. A. (2005). <u>Becoming conversant with the emerging church : understanding a movement and its implications</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan.

    "An exploration and evaluation of the emergent church and how it relates to more traditional forms of worship and theology"--Provided by publisher.

Claiborne, S. (2006). <u>The irresistible revolution : living as an ordinary radical</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan.

Claiborne, S. and C. Haw (2008). Jesus for president : politics for ordinary radicals. Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan.

Clawson, J. (2009). Everyday justice : the global impact of our daily choices. Downers Grove, Ill., IVP Books.

Cohen, J. L. (1985). "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements." Social Research **52**(4).

Collins, K. J. (2005). The evangelical moment : the promise of an American religion. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Crusade, C. from http://campuscrusadeforchrist.com/about-us/history.

Csordas, T. J. (2002). Body/meaning/healing. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Day, D. (1963). Loaves and fishes. New York,, Harper & Row.

Dayton, D. W. (1988). Discovering an Evangelical Heritage. Nashville, Hendrickson Publishers.

Degenne, A. and M. Forsé (1999). Introducing social networks. London ; Thousand Oaks, SAGE.

Dobson, E., et al. (1981). The fundamentalist phenomenon : the resurgence of conservative Christianity. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday.

Document, P. E. (2011). "List of Bestselling Books."

Durkheim, E. (1952). Suicide, a study in sociology. London,, Routledge & K. Paul.

England, E. A. o. "Evangelical Alliance - Culture Page." from http://www.eauk.org/culture/.

Evans, R. H. (2010). The Evolution of a Christian Creationist. Washington Post. Washington, DC.

Fine, G. A. (2010). "The Sociology of the Local: Action and its Publics*." Sociological Theory **28**(4): 355-376.

Fisher, A. (2003). "Five Surprising Years for Evangelical-Christian Publishing: 1998 to 2002." Publishing Research Quarterly **19**(2): 20.

> Assesses the last five years of Christian publishing, which includes books, authors, publishers and retailers in the U.S. as of June 2003. Top-selling evangelical fiction books; Popularity of the book 'The Prayer of Jabez,' written by Bruce H. Wilkinson; Careers of evangelical authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins; Profile of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., a Christian publishing company.

Florida, R. L. (2002). The rise of the creative class : and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life. New York, NY, Basic Books.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). Making social science matter : why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again. Oxford, UK ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Frame, J. M. (1997). Contemporary worship music : a biblical defense. Phillipsburg, N.J., P&R Pub.

Friesen, D. J. (2009). Thy kingdom connected : what the church can learn from Facebook, the Internet, and other networks. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books.

Fuller, R. C. (2001). Spiritual, but not religious : understanding unchurched America. Oxford New York, Oxford University Press.

Galli, M. (2001). "Now What? (Cover story)." Christianity Today **45**(13): 24.

> Discusses about religious terrorism. Definition; Examples; Reasons for its existence; Ways to address the problem.

Giddens, A. (2000). Runaway world : how globalization is reshaping our lives. New York, Routledge.

Goffman, E. (1974). Frame analysis : an essay on the organization of experience. New York, Harper & Row.

Grenz, S. J. and J. R. Franke (2001). Beyond foundationalism : shaping theology in a postmodern context. Louisville, Ky., Westminster John Knox Press.

Habermas, J. (1981). "New Social Movements." Telos **49**: 33-37.

Habermas, J. (1984). The theory of communicative action. Boston, Beacon Press.

Habermas, J., et al. (2006). <u>The dialectics of secularization : on reason and religion</u>. San Francisco, Ignatius Press.

Hankins, B. (2004). <u>The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists</u>. Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press.

Harding, S. F. (2000). <u>The book of Jerry Falwell : fundamentalist language and politics</u>. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Harrold, P. (2006). "Deconversion in the emerging church." <u>International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church</u> **6**(1): 79-90.

> The experience of turning away from a particular religious identity or way of life â€" deconversion â€" is frequently noted in Emerging Church (EC) discourse. The impulse of rejection is emphasized as much as, perhaps more than, the inclination to find a new spiritual home. A survey of EC blogs and published works, principally from the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand, indicates not only the pervasiveness of deconversion, but also its varied contours and ambiguities. Four rubrics of deconversion, as suggested by John D. Barbour, provide helpful tools for examining this late modern (or postmodern) phenomenon: intellectual doubt, moral criticism, emotionally charged metaphors and narratives of disaffiliation. Ambivalences abound â€" most especially, the predicament of finding oneself unable to move toward an identifiable destination. There are ironies too. The journey may be its own reward, but it is no less susceptible to the kind of homogenizing and commercializing forces which prompted deconversion to begin with. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

> Copyright of International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts.)

Hayhoe, K. and A. Farley (2009). <u>A climate for change : global warming facts for faith-based decisions</u>. New York, FaithWords.

House, T. R. (2005). <u>School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism</u>, Wipf & Stock.

Hunter, J. D. (1983). <u>American evangelicalism : conservative religion and the quandary of modernity</u>. New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1990). Values, Ideology and Cognitive Mobilization in New Social Movements. <u>Challenging the Political Order</u>. D. a. Kuechler**:** 43-66.

Johnson, P. E. (1978). <u>A shopkeeper's millennium : society and revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837</u>. New York, Hill and Wang.

Johnston, H. (1997). Identities, Grievances and New Social Movements. <u>Social Movements: Perspectives and Issues</u>. S. M. Buechler and J. F. Kurt Cylke. Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing Company**:** 274-294.

Jones, S. H. (2005). Autoethnography: Making the Personal Political. <u>The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research</u>. N. K. Denzin, Lincoln, Yvonna S.**:** 763-791.

Jones, T. (2008). <u>The new Christians : dispatches from the emergent frontier</u>. San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass.

Kinnaman, D. and A. Hawkins <u>You lost me : why young Christians are leaving church-- and rethinking faith</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., BakerBooks.

Kinnaman, D. and G. Lyons (2007). <u>Unchristian : what a new generation really thinks about Christianity-- and why it matters</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Books.

Kniss, F. and G. Burns (2004). Religious Movements. <u>Blackwell companions to sociology</u>. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** 694-716.

Kniss, F. L. and P. D. Numrich (2007). <u>Sacred assemblies and civic engagement : how religion matters for America's newest immigrants</u>. New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press.

Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (1985). <u>Hegemony and socialist strategy : towards a radical democratic politics</u>. London, Verso.

Leland, J. (2005). A Church That Packs Them In, 16,000 At a Time. <u>The New York Times</u>.

Lindbeck, G. A. (2009). <u>The nature of doctrine : religion and theology in a postliberal age</u>. Louisville, Ky., Westminster John Knox Press.

Lindsay, D. M. (2007). <u>Faith in the halls of power : how evangelicals joined the American elite</u>. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Lowe, B. (2009). <u>Green revolution : coming together to care for creation</u>. Downers Grove, Ill., IVP Books.

Marsden, G. M. (1991). Understanding fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Grand Rapids, Mich., W.B. Eerdmans.

Marsden, G. M. (2006). Fundamentalism and American culture. New York, Oxford University Press.

McAdam, D. (1982). Political process and the development of Black insurgency, 1930-1970. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

McCarthy, J. D. M. N. Z. (1977). "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." American Journal of Sociology 82 **82**(6): 1212–1241.

McGuire, M. B. (2008). Lived religion : faith and practice in everyday life. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

McLaren, B. D. (2006). A generous orthodoxy : why I am a missional, evangelical, post/Protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian. El Cajon, CA, Youth Specialties.

McLaren, B. D. (2010). A new kind of Christianity : ten questions that are transforming the faith. New York, HarperOne.

Meeks, W. A. (1993). The origins of Christian morality : the first two centuries. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Melucci, A. (1997). The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements. Social Movements: Perspectives and Issues. S. M. Buechler and J. F. Kurt Cylke. Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing Company**:** 259-274.

Melucci, A., et al. (1989). Nomads of the present : social movements and individual needs in contemporary society. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Mohler, A. (2009). "Mohler on "Asking Jesus Into Your Heart"." from http://saidatsouthern.com/mohler-on-asking-jesus-into-your-heart/.

Murphy, N. C. (1996). Beyond liberalism and fundamentalism : how modern and postmodern philosophy set the theological agenda. Valley Forge, Pa., Trinity Press International.

Newbigin, L. (1989). The Gospel in a pluralist society. Grand Rapids, Mich.

Geneva [SZ], W.B. Eerdmans ;

WCC Publications.

Noll, M. A. (2002). America's God : from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Noll, M. A. (2003). The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys. Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity Press.

Oliver, P. E. a. H. J. (2000). ""What a Good Idea: Frames and Ideologies in Social Movements Research."" Mobilization: An International Journal **5**(1): 37-54.

Osteen, J. (2004). Your best life now : 7 steps to living at your full potential. New York, Warner Books.

Pagitt, D. (2010). Church in the inventive age. Minneapolis, Sparkhouse Press.

Pasquarello, M. (2006). Christian preaching : a Trinitarian theology of proclamation. Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Academic.

Penning, J. M. and C. E. Smidt (2002). Evangelicalism : the next generation. Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Academic.

Piñon Press. (2004). Chicken soup for the soul Bible : New Living Translation. Colorado Springs, CO, Piñon Press.

Platt, D. (2010). Radical : taking back your faith from the American Dream. Colorado Springs, Colo., Multnomah Books.

Postman, N. (1993). Technopoly : the surrender of culture to technology. New York, Vintage Books.

Postman, N. (2006). Amusing ourselves to death : public discourse in the age of show business. New York, N.Y., U.S.A., Penguin Books.

Ramsay, W. M. (1986). Four modern prophets : Walter Rauschenbusch, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gustavo Gutiérrez, Rosemary Radford Ruether. Atlanta, Ga., John Knox Press.

Rauschenbusch, W. (1907). Christianity and the social crisis. New York, Macmillan Co.

Rauschenbusch, W. (1917). <u>A theology for the social gospel</u>. New York,, The Macmillan company.

Rauschenbusch, W., et al. (2007). <u>Christianity and the social crisis in the 21st century : the classic that woke up the church</u>. New York, HarperOne.

Report, B. P. (2004). "Rick Warren Boosts HC Results." <u>Book Publishing Report</u> **29**(6): 5-5.

    Reports that book-publishing unit of the News Corp. has posted solid gains during its second quarter of fiscal 2004 ended December 31. Percentage of the increase of the revenues of the HarperCollins Publishing Inc., as compared to that posted in the same quarter a year earlier; Operating income; Reason for the profitability of the company.

Report, B. P. (2006). "Tyndale House Sees Growth Outside of Left Behind Series. (cover story)." <u>Book Publishing Report</u> **31**(46): 1-2.

    The article reports on the financial forecast of Tyndal House for 2006 revenue in Wheaton, Illinois. The company has anticipated that the revenue will remain steady in 2006 at $90 million. It will represent overall growth through out the business apart from its bestselling "Left Behind" series. According to CEO Mark Taylor, there is no way to replace a huge series like "Left Behind", so they continue to focus on backlist as well as frontlist in fiction, nonfiction and Bibles.

Rieff, P. (1966). <u>The triumph of the therapeutic; uses of faith after Freud</u>. New York,, Harper & Row.

Ritzer, G. (2008). <u>The McDonaldization of society 5</u>. Los Angles, Calif., Pine Forge Press.

Rucht, D. (1988). Themes, Logics and Arenas of Social Movements: A Structural Approach. <u>International Social Movement Research</u>. B. Klandermans. Boulder, Westview Press. **1**.

Samson, W. (2009). <u>Enough : contentment in an age of excess</u>. Colorado Springs, CO, David C Cook.

Samson, W. and L. Samson (2007). <u>Justice in the burbs : being the hands of Jesus wherever you live</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Books.

Schaeffer, F. (2007). <u>Crazy for God : how I grew up as one of the elect, helped found the Religious Right, and lived to take all (or almost all) of it back</u>. New York, Carroll & Graf.

Schaeffer, F. A. (1968). <u>The God who is there; speaking historic Christianity into the twentieth century</u>. Chicago,, Inter-varsity Press.

Schaeffer, F. A. (1970). <u>Pollution and the death of man; the Christian view of ecology</u>. Wheaton, Ill.,, Tyndale House Publishers.

Schaeffer, F. A. (1981). <u>A Christian manifesto</u>. Westchester, Ill., Crossway Books.

Schaeffer, F. A. and C. E. Koop (1979). <u>Whatever happened to the human race?</u> Old Tappan, N.J., F. H. Revell Co.

Shires, P. (2007). <u>Hippies of the religious right</u>. Waco, Tex., Baylor University Press.

Simon-Peter, R. (2010). <u>Green church : reduce, reuse, recycle, rejoice!</u> Nashville, Tenn., Abingdon Press.

Sleeth, J. M. (2006). <u>Serve God, save the planet : a Christian call to action</u>. White River Junction, Vt., Chelsea Green Pub. Co.

Sleeth, J. M. (2010). <u>The gospel according to the earth : why the Good Book is a green book</u>. New York, HarperOne.

> From the leading Christian voice for the green movement comes a primer on everything the Bible teaches about caring for the Earth.

Sleeth, N. (2009). <u>Go green, save green : a simple guide to saving time, money, and God's green earth</u>. Carol Stream, Ill., Tyndale House.

Smith, C. (1991). <u>The emergence of liberation theology : radical religion and social movement theory</u>. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Smith, C. (2003). <u>The secular revolution : power, interests, and conflict in the secularization of American public life</u>. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Smith, C. and M. L. Denton (2005). <u>Soul searching : the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers</u>. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Smith, C. and M. Emerson (1998). <u>American evangelicalism : embattled and thriving</u>. Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press.

Snow, D. A. (2004). Framing Processes, Ideology and Discursive Fields. <u>Blackwell companions to sociology</u>. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** 380-412.

Snow, D. A., et al. (2004). The Blackwell companion to social movements. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.

Soule, S. A. (2004). Diffusioni Processes with an Across Movements. Blackwell companions to sociology. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** 294-310.

Spencer, M. (2009). "The coming evangelical collapse." Christian Science Monitor **101**(71): 9-9.

Stevenson, T. W. (2007). Brand Jesus : Christianity in a consumerist age. New York, Seabury Books.

Stiver, D. R. (2001). Theology after Ricoeur : new directions in hermeneutical theology. Louisville, Westminister John Knox Press.

Takacs, D. (2002). "Positionality, Epistemology, and Social Justice in the Classroom." Social Justice/Global Options **29**(4): 168-181.

Tarrow, S. G. (2005). The new transnational activism. New York, Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, M. C. (2007). After God. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Tilly, C. (1978). From mobilization to revolution. Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Torrey, R. A., et al. (1990). The Fundamentals : the famous sourcebook of foundational biblical truths. Grand Rapids, Mich., Kregel Publications.

Turner, J. G. (2008). Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ : the renewal of evangelicalism in postwar America. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press.

Viola, F. and G. Barna (2007). Pagan Christianity? : exploring the roots of our church practices. Carol Stream, Ill., BarnaBooks.

Warren, R. (2003). The purpose driven life : what on earth am I here for? Philadelphia, Running Press.

Williams, D. K. (2010). God's Own Party : the making of the Christian right. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (2004). The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action: Constraints, Opportunities and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements. <u>Blackwell companions to sociology</u>. D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** 91-115.

Wilson, J. R. (1997). <u>Living faithfully in a fragmented world : lessons for the church from MacIntyre's After virtue</u>. Harrisburg, Pa., Trinity Press International.

Wilson-Hartgrove, J. (2008). <u>New monasticism : what it has to say to today's church</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich., Brazos Press.

Workman, H. B. (1913). <u>The evolution of the monastic ideal from the earliest times down to the coming of the friars</u>. London,, C. H. Kelly.

Wuthnow, R. (1987). <u>Meaning and moral order : explorations in cultural analysis</u>. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Wuthnow, R. (1988). <u>The restructuring of American religion : society and faith since World War II</u>. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Yoder, J. H. (1994). <u>The politics of Jesus : vicit Agnus noster</u>. Grand Rapids, Mich.

Carlisle, UK, Eerdmans ;

Paternoster Press.

Curriculum Vitae – William A Samson

Education:

PhD, Sociology (Expected) – The University of Kentucky (2016)

M.S. in Information Systems – The George Washington University (2003)

B.A., General Studies (Concentrations: Theology, Communications) – Liberty University (1993)

Employment:

March, 2014-Present – Organizational Change Manager, Atos Consulting

January, 2012-January, 2014 – Executive Director, Seminary Stewardship Alliance

August, 2008-December, 2011 – Assistant Professor, Georgetown College

April, 2003–May, 2005 – Consultant, Washington, DC

February, 2001–March, 2003 – Senior Project Manager, The American Chemical Society

September, 1998–February, 2001 – CEO, SmartMinistry

December, 1997–September, 1998 – Service Engineer, Infovista, Inc.

April, 1995–October, 1997 – Director of Network Services, Liberty University

May, 1987–November, 1994 – Political Consultant

Published Writing

Peer-Reviewed Publications:

"Evangelical Christians and the Environment: 'Christians for the Mountains' and the Appalachian Movement against Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining," Worldviews: Religion, Culture and Ecology (Yale Divinity School), February, 2012

Journal Reviewer:

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Spring, 2013

Journal of Qualitative Sociology, Spring, 2011

Books Chapters:

"The New Monastics," in The New Evangelical Social Engagement, Oxford University Press, November 15, 2013