CREATING A MARKET FOR SALVATION: NEOLIBERALISM AND PASTORAL POWER

by

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ABSTRACT

TIMOTHY JAMES EYRICH. Creating a market for salvation: neoliberalism and pastoral power. (Under the direction of DR. GORDON HULL)

This thesis examines the megachurch phenomenon in the United States since the 1950s as a way of explaining the transformation of pastorship in Christianity with the onset of American neoliberalism. This examination relies on Michel Foucault's analysis of pastorship and pastoral power in the Christian pastorate and a variety of literature regarding American neoliberalism. By using the theology of the prosperity gospel and the identity and role of the pastor in a megachurch, this thesis proposes that pastoral power in megachurches is a function of power quite different from traditional pastoral power as analyzed by Foucault. Furthermore, the pastor of a megachurch is also fundamentally different from the traditional pastor. These changes are, in large part, due to biopolitics and the spread of American neoliberalism.

INTRODUCTION

The remarkable growth in the size and number of established megachurches in the United States is an interesting phenomenon of the past fifty years. A megachurch is typically defined as a nondenominational, Christian congregation which generally satisfies seven criteria according to The Hartford Institute for Religion Research:

> 1) 2,000 or more persons in attendance at weekly worship, 2) a charismatic, authoritative senior minister, 3) a very active seven day a week congregational community, 4) a multitude of social and outreach ministries, 5) An intentional small group system or other structures of intimacy and accountability, 6) Innovative and often contemporary worship format, and 7) a complex differentiated organizational structure.[1]

Scott Thumma suggests the megachurch phenomenon can be traced back to about 1955[2], and John Vaughan locates the megachurch boom in the 1980s.[3] Nonetheless, church growth data point to substantial increases in the number of megachurches in the United States over the past few decades. For example, Thumma's research on megachurches reports that about 350[4] megachurches existed in the United States in 1992. This number rises to 1,210[5] in 2005 and to at least 1,668[6] in 2015. While churches with membership of 2,000 or more persons certainly existed before the megachurch phenomenon[7], Thumma

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[1] "Megachurches," The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed March 24, 2016, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurches.html

[2] "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their characteristics and cultural context," The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed April 2, 2015, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html

[3] John Vaughan, *Megachurches and America's Cities: How Churches Grow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 50-51.

[4] "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their characteristics and cultural context."

[5] "Megachurches Today 2005 Summary of Research Findings," The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed April 2, 2015, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megastoday2005_summaryreport.html

[6] "Database of Megachurches in the U.S.," The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed April 2, 2015, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/cgibin/mega/db.pl?db=default&uid=default&view_records=1&ID=*&sb=3&so=descend

[7] Vaughan, *Megachurches and America's Cities,* 17-28.

claims there is sufficient evidence suggesting that at most twelve of these churches existed at any time in the history of Christianity.

Further, even though such large congregations existed, the megachurch is an entirely novel enterprise modeled upon contemporary American culture.[8] The megachurch does not simply function as a church with a multi-thousand-person attendance, but frequently fulfills a variety of other consumer desires by including shops, food courts, and coffee bistros on the church campus. In these and other ways, the megachurch profoundly redefines the role of the church in the lives of Christians. Further, the underlying theological message is essentially the same in every megachurch: God wants his faithful people to be prosperous throughout their lives. Megachurches are the sanctuaries of a prosperity theology in Christianity that claims God wants to bless Christians in their earthly lives with better jobs, higher salaries, happier marriages, and healthier bodies. In this, prosperity theology presents a theory of investment: with plenty of faith in God and generous tithing to one's church, God will return one's donations a hundredfold. Prosperity theology claims that these material blessings come from Christ because: "He became poor in order to suffer and purchase this redemption for you, redeeming you from the curse of the Law, which included poverty" (Bishop 1997, 20). What brought about the megachurch in the Christian pastorate, and what about this dramatic reversal in traditional Christian ideas about poverty? I think an analysis of pastoral power from Michel Foucault's literature situated alongside the general rise of neoliberalism in the United States and the integration of the church in the life of the secular state provides a fascinating explanation of the recent megachurch phenomenon.

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[8] "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their characteristics and cultural context."

In his lecture series *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault outlines the structure, history, function, and purpose of pastoral power in Christianity. Pastoral power in Christianity is exercised by a pastor whom God appoints. As Foucault reads pastoral power, the flock is organized around the principle of *omnes et singulatim,* and the pastor's fundamental role is the flock's salvation. Pastoral power is a particular "art of governing men" (Foucault 2007, 165). It is this art that I intend to investigate based on Foucault's exegesis of pastoral power in Christianity from the 3rd century to the 18th century. I will present Foucault's discussion of pastoral power and trace the continuity to contemporary neoliberal pastoral power in the Christian megachurches established in the 20th and 21st centuries. I contend that contemporary pastoral power is neoliberal and biopolitical. Although I argue there is a continuity of pastoral power, in the past half century, pastoral power has fundamentally transformed. There is a new identity of the Christian pastor in the 21st century in which the pastoral relation Foucault observed is fundamentally transformed. The Christian pastor in the United States in the 21st century has been inundated with American neoliberalism (this will be discussed in the second chapter of this paper), which has fundamentally transformed the notions of pastor and pastoral power. In this thesis, I will present Foucault's analysis of pastorship and pastoral power and then argue that the neoliberal pastor and neoliberal pastoral power in the 21st century is an entirely transformed mechanism of pastoral power.

This thesis will proceed in three chapters: 1) I will present an exegesis of Foucault's notion of pastoral power in Christianity, stake some claims for how pastors receive pastoral power, and the type of power God exercises over pastors, 2) I will make an argument that there's a transformation of pastoral power in the 20th and 21st centuries

to a kind of neoliberal pastoral power which creates some changes in the relationships between pastors and their flocks, and 3) I will document the specific ways that the prosperity gospel is an example of the neoliberal pastorate when I discuss its theology and hermeneutics.

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CHAPTER ONE: FOUCAULT'S NOTION OF PASTORAL POWER

Foucault thoroughly develops the history of Christian pastoral power in his lecture series *Security, Territory, and Population.* Pastoral power is a mechanism of power that Christianity establishes. However, Christianity could only establish pastoral power because of the success of a previous power structure. This power structure is what Foucault labels "a government of men" (Foucault 2007, 123). Governing, for Foucault, "refers to the control one may exercise over oneself and others, over someone's body, soul, and behavior" (Foucault 2007, 122). To this point, Foucault claims that the "origin of the idea of a government of men should be sought in the East, in a pre-Christian East first of all, and then in the Christian East, and in two forms: first, in the idea and organization of a pastoral type of power, and second, in the practice of spiritual direction, the direction of souls" (Foucault 2007, 123). Traditional pastoral power is the continuation of a kind of power that developed in the East and comes to fruition in Christianity. So before discussing pastoral power specific to Christianity, we must understand its embryonic form.

Foucault claims that some aspects of pastoral power exist in the pre-Christian East, especially in the Hebrews (Foucault 2007, 123). Pastoral power in the pre-Christian East develops a "theme of the king, god, or chief as a shepherd of men, who are like his flock" (Foucault 2007, 123). For the Hebrews, the notion of pastorship is found in the shepherd-flock relationship between God and his chosen people. Foucault goes on to say,

"the shepherd-flock relationship is essentially, fundamentally, and almost exclusively a religious relationship" (Foucault 2007, 124). In fact, there is something essentially unique to the relationship between the Hebrews and their God. For example, Foucault notes: "You never find the Greeks having the idea that the gods lead men like a pastor, a shepherd, leads his flock" (Foucault 2007, 125). The idea of pastorship, of God as a shepherd who tends to a flock, which is found in the Hebrews, is entirely foreign to other pre-Christian societies. What then, are the qualities of the shepherd's power?

When Foucault speaks about the Hebrew shepherd, he is thinking about the God of Abraham. God was the only shepherd of his people. Foucault proceeds to point out several characteristics about this shepherd-God. The first feature of the Hebrew shepherd is that his "power is not exercised over a territory but, by definition, over a flock, and more exactly, over a flock in its movement from one place to another" (Foucault 2007, 125). Foucault's point here is that God, the shepherd, leads the sheep of the flock on a journey. While the Greek god has power over a particular place—a town or temple—the Hebrew God roams and leads a people place to place (Foucault 2007, 125). As it is written in Exodus 15:13: "In your faithful love you led out the people you had redeemed; in your strength you have guided them to your holy pastures." The shepherd's goal is the wellbeing of the flock, and he therefore moves the flock from place to place in order to guide "the flock to good pastures" (Foucault 2007, 127). The Hebrew shepherd, therefore, works for the good of the flock.

Foucault's second point is that the Hebrew shepherd exercises a power that is "fundamentally a beneficent power" (Foucault 2007, 126). While many may argue that beneficence is universal of all power and thus isn't at all unique to the Hebrew shepherd,

Foucault points out that the shepherd's power is "entirely defined by its beneficence" (Foucault 2007, 126). There is, indeed, no other aspect of the Hebrew shepherd's power except doing good. The Hebrew shepherd, unlike other notions of power, is not concerned with wealth, triumph, or conquests (Foucault 2007, 126). Rather, its *raison d'être* is the goodness and wellbeing of the flock. This is the shepherd's primary duty. The Hebrew shepherd has a governing power, which has as its goal to lead the flock to salvation (Foucault 2007, 126). This notion of salvation is first of all subsistence (Foucault 2007, 126). God, who is the Hebrew shepherd, leads the flock to good pastures and feeds the flock.[9] This leading and feeding creates a type of power that is not only a "beneficent power" but Foucault also calls it a "power of care" (Foucault 2007, 127). God's power over the people he shepherds comes in the form of care. When the people were hungry, God gave them food to eat. When they were thirsty, God gave them water to drink. God fulfilled his shepherding duties by taking care of the flock. The shepherd, therefore, has the duty to "look after the individuals of the flock, [to] see to it that the sheep do not suffer, [to] go in search of those that have strayed off course, and [to] treat those that are injured" (Foucault 2007, 127). Due to this task, the shepherd manifested his power in caring for the sheep. God must take responsibility to ensure the sheep are not "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd."[10] In this way, the shepherd exercised his power for the good of the flock, for their beneficence.

While likely an unconventional idea, Foucault posits that the Hebrew shepherd-God's power over the flock does not take its form in "strength and superiority" (Foucault

[9] Refer to Exodus 3 when God promises Moses that he will lead the people to a "land of milk and honey," and in Exodus 10 when God sends down "bread from heaven" for Moses and the Israelites as they travel, and finally in Exodus 17 when the Israelites are thirsty, God sends them water from a rock after he commands Moses to strike a rock with his staff.
[10] Matthew 9:36.

2007, 127). The Hebrew God, is not one "whose strength strikes men's eyes, like the sovereigns or gods, like the Greek gods, who essentially appear in their splendor," but rather as "someone who keeps watch" (Foucault 2007, 127). I think his point is that there is a clear distinction between sovereign power and the rise of a type of power that originates in religion. On the one hand, it's essential for the sovereign to show strength and splendor. They appear to their people wearing precious clothes, riding chariots, and leading thousands of troops. All bow for the sovereign because the sovereign has the power to take life. However, the Hebrew shepherd-God doesn't even show himself to his people. For example, one of his most tangible appearances is in the form of a burning bush. And even though he has the power to destroy an entire city,[11] this attitude is rare as his power is focused on care rather than strength.

To care for the people, God "keeps watch because he has an office, which is not particularly defined as an honor, but rather as a burden and effort" (Foucault 2007, 127). To shepherd a flock is a duty and not an honor. The shepherd's duty is leading the flock to salvation. The sheep in the flock benefit from the shepherd's power because the shepherd acts for the good of the flock. The shepherd also benefits because his salvation is intertwined in his ability to guide the flock to salvation. Foucault points out that the shepherd "does not even consider his own advantage in the well-being of his flock" (Foucault 2007, 128). This is to say that the Hebrew shepherd's power is not intended for the shepherd's personal wellbeing. Instead, the job of the shepherd is one that is particularly undesirable. It requires sacrifice for one and for all as "the shepherd directs all his care towards others and never towards himself" (Foucault 2007, 127-8). However, in the process of caring for the sheep, the shepherd simultaneously cares for himself. The

[11] Refer to Genesis 19 when God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah.

role of shepherd has the reciprocal nature so that in caring for the sheep, the shepherd cares for himself.

The last feature of the Hebrew shepherd is that his power is individualizing (Foucault 2007, 128). The shepherd directs the whole flock but he only succeeds if not one single sheep escapes his care. His care is for one and at the same time for all. The shepherd must look after all the sheep entrusted to his care by caring for each sheep individually. This twofold duty demands great responsibility from the shepherd because he must care for all without neglecting any one and he must care for each one without neglecting the others (Foucault 2007, 128). Foucault calls this the paradox of *omnes et singulatim* (Foucault 2007, 128). The shepherd must be prepared to sacrifice himself for his flock and also sacrifice the entirety of his flock for one sheep. If the salvation of the sheep requires the sacrifice of the shepherd, he is obliged to give up his own life for their benefit. This is the fundamental paradox of the shepherd to which Foucault claims "will be the absolute heart of the Christian problematic of the pastorate" (Foucault 2007, 129). While the Hebrew shepherd had many features of power, it is not until Christianity that pastoral power actually establishes itself.

Foucault claims, "in the Western world I think the real history of the pastorate as the source of a specific type of power over men, as a model and matrix of procedures for the government of men, really only begins with Christianity (Foucault 2007, 147-8). In the Christian pastorate, Foucault locates a kind of power, a governmentality[12] that is

[12] What Foucault calls "*conduire des conduits*" or a conduct of conduct in *Dits et écrits IV*. Paris: Gallimard (1994), 237. He explains the notion of conduct further in his essay "Subject and Power." He says: "Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term conduct is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to "conduct" is at the same time to "lead" others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the

entirely new and unrelated to any previous notion of power (Foucault 2007, 148). This new type of power comes when "a religion, a religious community, constitutes itself as a Church, that is to say, as an institution that claims to govern men in their daily life on the grounds of leading them to eternal life in the other world, and to do this not only on the scale of a definite group, of a city or a state, but of the whole of humanity" (Foucault 2007, 148). The transition from the Hebrew shepherd to the Christian pastor is that for the Hebrews, God was the shepherd, but for the Christians God makes men the shepherds. In Christian pastoral power, God commands these human shepherds to become pastors over a flock.

So we have a type of power that by promising salvation lays claim to governing individuals' daily lives to the extent of the "whole of humanity" both present and future (Foucault 2007, 148). The magnitude of this type of power, for Foucault, is one that surpasses every other power structure in all of history. Time and again, this power evolved and perfected itself from the second or third century to the eighteenth century after Jesus Christ (Foucault 2007, 148). Although this power "was no doubt shifted, broken up, transformed, and integrated in various forms…it has never been truly abolished" (Foucault 2007, 148). And even now Foucault admits, "pastoral power exercised as a power, is doubtless something from which we have still not freed ourselves" (Foucault 2007, 148). Pastoral power, then, can be understood as a kind of power that evolves with Christianity.

In the Hebrew shepherd-flock relationship, God was the only shepherd of the people. God did not assign other shepherds to lead the Jewish flock. So within Hebrew

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possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government."

society there was no established institution of shepherds (Foucault 2007, 152) That is to say that no human person held a God-given position as shepherd over the Hebrew people. For Foucault, even the Hebrew kings were not particularly shepherds in the way as God, except perhaps King David, but Foucault does not really spend much time on that point (Foucault 2007, 152). Nonetheless, the institution of shepherds as pastors is something that first appears in Christianity. For the Hebrews, God was the only shepherd. In the Christian Church, however, Foucault claims that the concept of pastorship in the shepherd-flock relationship "will become the fundamental, essential relationship…a relationship that will, of course, be institutionalized in a pastorate with its laws, rules, techniques, and procedures" (Foucault 2007, 152). The Christian pastors from century to century will exercise their power over a people.

In Christianity, Jesus Christ is the first shepherd and pastor.[13] Christ, then, as the great shepherd in Christianity, lays down his life for the sheep in the flock. He lays down his life for each sheep individually, and the entire flock which brings us back to the paradox *omnes et singulatim*. Whereas the sovereign has the right to take the life of his subjects, the pastor has the duty to die for his subjects. Therefore, Christ does this in order to bring the flock to salvation. This concept becomes, for Foucault, "the keystone of the whole organization of the Church" (Foucault 2007, 152). Although Christ was the first pastor, the institution of the Church and by order of Jesus Christ the great shepherd, the apostles also become pastors. As pastors, they are charged with the same

[13] Paul's epistle in Romans 13:20 eloquently supports this claim when he exhorts the people: "May the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep…"

responsibility as Christ—to lay down their lives for the flocks which are entrusted to their care.[14]

The pastoral power of the apostles comes from Christ's command. As the great shepherd and first pastor, Christ shares pastoral power with the apostles so that the apostles only have pastoral power in the Church through their being called and commanded by Christ to lead a flock. Because of this, Foucault calls the apostles' pastoral power a "sacramental power" (Foucault 2007, 153). The apostles pastoral power is sacramental power because it is through the sacraments of the Church that the apostles, the Church's first pastors, exercise their power. The pastors have power through the sacraments they exercise over their flock. It was through the sacraments that the Church was able to exercise a power over a people. While I don't want to develop this point too far, it is worth saying that the Church instituted seven sacraments. There is Baptism, Eucharist, Confession, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. Baptism calls the sheep into the flock, Eucharist gives spiritual nourishment (and reminds us of the "bread from heaven"), Confession (which will be further discussed later in this paper) brings lost sheep back to the flock, Confirmation affirms one's Baptism and makes an individual a full member of the Church, Matrimony, brings a man and woman together in a union with God to form a family, Holy Orders appoints new pastors in the Church, and Anointing prepares one for the journey to salvation in the next life. Foucault says, "pastoral power is only concerned with individuals' souls insofar as this direction of souls also involves a permanent intervention in everyday conduct, in the management of lives, as well as in goods, wealth, and things" (Foucault 2007, 154). In effect, through all

[14] This happens most obviously in John 21:15-17 when Jesus three times commands the apostle Peter to feed his sheep. The claim can then be made that feeding the sheep means caring for and guiding the sheep to salvation.

of these sacraments, the Church essentially forces itself into every aspect, every dimension, and every moment of individuals' lives.

According to Foucault, Christian pastoral power is fundamentally different from other types of power. It is different from the power used to "subject men to a law or to a sovereign," and it is different from the "methods used to train children, adolescents, and young people" (Foucault 2007, 165). In fact, he goes on to say that pastoral power is much more concerning than those methods of power because "in Christianity the pastorate gave rise to an art of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men, an art of monitoring them and urging them on step by step, an art with the function of taking every moment of their existence" (Foucault 2007, 165). In a word, pastoral power is focused on "governing men" (Foucault 2007, 165).

Foucault initially defines pastoral power as a technique of power that is linked to three ideas. He says the pastorate is connected to salvation, law, and truth.[15] The pastorate is in the first place linked to salvation (Foucault 2007, 166). Pastoral power accepts the essential task of guiding individuals to salvation in the next world. This promise of salvation, of course, is the fundamental reason people allow themselves to be directed and guided by the pastor. Pastoral power is, secondly, linked to a law. The notion of law is the determining factor of whether or not individuals have accepted the will of God in their lives and have therefore earned their salvation. The pastorate is, thirdly, linked to the truth. Salvation is earned by accepting the law and the law is based on a specific truth. So as Foucault writes, "the pastor guides to salvation, prescribes the law, and teaches the truth" (Foucault 2007, 167). All three of these are essential links between pastoral power

[15] However, he will later argue that Christianity cannot be summed up so easily. He first explains salvation, law, and truth, but then situates Christianity in a different set of notions.

and those who are governed. However, despite the links between pastoral power and these three ideas, Foucault does not accept that pastoral power is entirely defined by them. He goes on to elaborate on all three of these ideas and how the Christian pastorate has crafted entirely new ways of seeing salvation, the law, and truth.

The notion of salvation in the Christian pastorate is refined and shifted into a series of complex and at times paradoxical relationships. According to Foucault, the pastor and his sheep depend on each other in that they share the responsibility for their individual salvation. The first characteristic of this relationship that Foucault notes is that the pastor and sheep's relationship is "fully and paradoxically distributive" (Foucault 2007, 168). He describes this by saying the pastor is charged with the responsibility to guarantee the salvation of the entire flock of sheep. This is to say that the pastor must be concerned with the flock as a whole and he is responsible for bringing that flock to salvation. No individual sheep can escape the entire flock in the path to salvation (Foucault 2007, 168). This is paradoxically distributive, Foucault notes, because there may be a time when saving the entire flock requires the surrendering of an individual sheep who threatens the salvation of the flock. However, the notion of salvation in the Christian pastorate determines that any individual sheep's salvation is just as important as the salvation of the entire flock. Jesus makes this clear in Luke 15:4 when he says: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?" The pastor must at once assure the salvation of the flock while not leaving out any sheep, even though some sheep may threaten the salvation of the flock, while simultaneously giving the same care to individual sheep as he does to the entire flock.

While this paradoxical notion of salvation is similar to the Hebrew notion of *omnes et singulatim*, Foucault argues that Christian pastoral power developed and added four new and unique aspects to the paradoxically distributive relationship of salvation. Foucault calls the first developed principle "analytical responsibility" (Foucault 2007, 169). This analytical responsibility requires that the Christian pastor, at the end of his life, give a report for every sheep in his flock. And he will be judged on the manner in which he cared for his sheep. He will not only be held responsible for every sheep, but he must take responsibility for every particular action of the sheep in their lives. He will be judged generally on whether any sheep are missing and particularly on the behavior of the sheep—did they act rightly or wrongly in their lives (Foucault 2007, 170). The second developed principle is what Foucault calls "exhaustive and instantaneous transfer" (Foucault 2007, 170). This principle is the most distressing for the pastor because on that last day of judgment, the pastor will not only be judged on the salvation of the sheep and the actions of each individual sheep, but indeed the pastor must accept every action of the sheep as his own. It will be as if any good deed or moral evil committed by any of the pastor's sheep will be counted among the good and evil actions of the pastor himself (Foucault 2007, 170). So an exhaustive list of actions is accounted for and they are transferred instantaneously to the pastor.

Foucault's third principle is "sacrificial reversal" (Foucault 2007, 170). This notion, which again is particular to the Christian pastorate, demands that the pastor be ready to lose his life for the sake of his sheep (Foucault 2007, 170). Since the sheep may not have lived their lives in a way to earn salvation, the pastor has the responsibility to reverse that decision through self-sacrifice. This self-sacrifice of the pastor takes shape in

two ways. He must in the first place be prepared to lay down his earthly life if his sheep are in danger. But more importantly, he must be willing to sacrifice his eternal salvation by sacrificing his soul for the souls of his sheep (Foucault 2007, 171). Finally, Foucault's fourth principle is what he calls "alternate correspondence" (Foucault 2007, 171). Foucault explains this notion by saying the pastor would not worry much if the sheep were always perfectly behaved and consistently worked for their own salvation. Rather, the pastor must always gather the sheep who are running astray. The pastor must continually exercise power over the sheep. The pastor, therefore, earns his salvation because he is always in a struggle with the sheep who simply ignore what they should be doing (Foucault 2007, 172). The pastor tirelessly works to guide the sheep towards salvation, and it is this work that earns his salvation. This theme of an "economy of faults and merits" (Foucault 2007, 173) is particular to the Christian pastorate and entirely distinct from earlier notions of salvation.

Pastoral power also develops a notion of care of the self for the pastor. Since the pastor's salvation is linked to the salvation of the flock, the pastor cares for himself by caring for the flock. The pastor has a personal motivation to guide the flock to salvation because the pastor earns salvation through his pastoral actions. Therefore, by exercising power over the flock in order to lead them to salvation, the pastor earns salvation as well. The successful pastor, then, makes the decisions for the flock that moves them in the direction of eternal life. The pastor decides where the flock goes and when they eat. Pastoral power creates "a complex (and thoroughly affective) tie between the pastor who exercises a minute and careful jurisdiction over the bodily actions and the souls of his flock" (Golder 2007, 167). Nonetheless, the sheep tend to wonder off from the flock. This

wondering off causes the shepherd to go out in search for the lost sheep. And upon finding the sheep, the shepherd must guide the sheep back to the flock.

For the Foucault in *Society, Territory, and Population,* individuals were directed by the law, before the Christian pastorate. He discusses Greek societies before Christianity and points out that individuals in Greece would follow a law that was clearly prescribed. For the Greeks, the law was set by the city-state and it was the same for every free person (Foucault 2007, 173).[16] Foucault claims that the Christian pastorate is not concerned with the law but rather "it is a religion of God's will, a religion of what God wills for each in particular" (Foucault 2007, 174).[17] So there is a shift from a universal law for everyone to a particular will for each individual. Therefore, the pastor must help each sheep discover God's particular will. This forces the sheep into a relationship of "complete subordination" whereby each and every sheep submits to the pastor for help in finding and living in accord with God's will (Foucault 2007, 175).

In pastoral power, complete subordination takes shape in a few ways. First, an individual subordinates the self to another by virtue of that person holding the office of pastor. So one is not subordinate to the law, as for the Greeks, but fully obedient to one's pastor who then guides the person's daily life. The Christian not only relies on the pastor for spiritual guidance but also just as much for guidance in practical, daily matters (Foucault 2007, 175). Second, the subordinate relationship is continuous for the person's entire life. For Foucault, there is no final goal to the subordination and obedience, but

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[16] Despite these claims in *Security, Territory and Population*, Foucault returns to these ideas in his later ethical writings.

[17] Of course, the Greeks have "equity" which for Plato and Aristotle is a kind of correction to the law for an individual person. So there is a law, but there's a sense that particular details of cases should be accounted for. The law is not a syllogism, but requires perspective of any individual situation. However, this is different than what takes place in Christianity. Rather than a universal law that can be applied to particular cases, the Christian pastorate is concerned with the will of God which is entirely singular so that it is individualized for each person.

rather one is obedient for its own sake. One must be obedient for its own sake continuously in order to arrive at the Christian notion of humility (Foucault 2007, 177). And humility is not some state that is finally achieved, but is simply the act of renewing one's obedience time and again. Foucault points out that any end of obedience would be "a state of obedience defined by the definitive and complete renunciation of one's own will" (Foucault 2007, 178).

The pastor who subordinates the people and exercises pastoral power over a flock does not choose such a task. Rather, Foucault points out, the shepherd "does not command in order to command, but only because he has been ordered to command" (Foucault 2007, 179). God orders the pastor to look after a flock. Because of this command from God, the pastor has the decision to accept or refuse. In the end, the pastor always accepts because to deny would be in direct contradiction of his God-given responsibility to care for the flock. This pastor becomes a rigorous watchman who, although he did not ask for the task, accepts the duty to "keep an eye out for possible evils" and to guard the flock from "possible misfortune" (Foucault 2007, 179).

The third and final change that comes from the Christian pastorate is the notion of truth. Foucault points out: "The pastor must teach by his example, by his own life, and what's more the value of this example is so strong that if he does not give a good example by his own life, then any theoretical, verbal teaching he gives will be nullified" (Foucault 2007, 180). When the pastor teaches his flock to avoid promiscuity and drunkenness, it is therefore important that he himself not fall into any such temptation. For Foucault, the Christian pastorate uses the notion of truth to accomplish two goals. In the first place, pastoral power claims that in order to teach truth, pastors must have access

to the daily lives of the flock (Foucault 2007, 180). This access to daily life is "a daily modulation, and this teaching must also pass through an observation, a supervision, a direction exercised at every moment and with the least discontinuity possible over the sheep's whole, total conduct" (Foucault 2007, 181). In order for the pastor to lead the flock to salvation, he must know the sheep intimately. For the Christian pastor, he is able to accomplish this when he "take[s] charge of and observe[s] daily life in order to form a never-ending knowledge of the behavior and conduct of the members of the flock he supervises" (Foucault 2007, 181).

The second characteristic of truth for the Christian pastorate comes in the form of spiritual direction (Foucault 2007, 181). In addition to teaching the truth and modeling the truth with his life, the pastor must also guide the consciences of the individual members of the flock. Of course, Foucault points out this is not a Christian invention because the sophists had something similar in Greece. However, spiritual direction outside of the Christian pastorate is entirely different than spiritual direction within the Christian pastorate. Foucault claims that spiritual direction in antiquity was something entirely optional, and initiated by the individual seeking direction. At times it was even a service which required payment and it was temporary and "circumstantial" (Foucault 2007, 181). However, in Christianity, spiritual direction was typically neither optional nor circumstantial (Foucault 2007, 182). In fact, with the Council of Trent in 1551, Christians who have reached moral maturity are required to go to confession at least one time per year for their entire lives. Foucault goes on to argue that the end of spiritual direction was not to help one become the master of one's life, but the fundamental goal of spiritual direction is "to tell the director what one has done, what one is, what one has

experienced, the temptations to which one has been subject, and the bad thoughts that inhabit one's mind, that is to say, one examines one's conscience the better to mark and fix more firmly the relationship of subordination to the other" (Foucault 2007, 182). Spiritual direction in the Christian pastorate was nothing more than a method for governing individual lives.

In sum, the Christian pastorate is not simply connected to salvation, the law, and truth as pre-Christian civilizations, but instead is connected to these three notions in different spheres. For salvation, the pastorate is "a form of power that, taking the problem of salvation in its general set of themes, inserts into this global, general relationship an entire economy and technique of the circulation, transfer, and reversal of merits, and this is its fundamental point" (Foucault 2007, 183). For the law, the pastorate is "a kind of exhaustive, total, and permanent relationship of individual obedience" (Foucault 2007, 183). And for truth, Christian pastoral power institutes "a structure, a technique of, at once, power, investigation, self-examination, and the examination of others, by which a certain secret inner truth of the hidden soul, becomes the element through which the pastor's power is exercised, by which obedience is assured, and through which, precisely, the economy of merits and faults passes" (Foucault 2007, 183). Because of these novel institutions, Foucault comes to the conclusion that in Christian pastoral power, "we see the birth of an absolutely new form of power" (Foucault 2007, 183). What, exactly, then, does Foucault mean when he speaks of the Christian pastorate being a type of power?

For Foucault, "power is not simply a relationship between 'partners,' individual or collective; it is a way in which some act on others" (Foucault 2000, 340). The fundamental tenet of power whereby some act on others is part and parcel of traditional

pastoral power. Traditional pastoral power does not establish a relationship of 'partners' but rather a hierarchical ontology that stems from God to the shepherds then to the sheep. God is the source of pastoral power, which is then funneled through the shepherd to the sheep. It is God who acts on the shepherd and the shepherd who acts on the sheep. Power also "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault 1980, 30). In pastoral power, the pastor must do just this. It is the pastor who must exercise pastoral power in such a way that his authority pierces the heart of hearts of every sheep in the flock. The pastor must guide their bodies to act in such a way, form their attitudes according to God's decrees, and enter their discourses and lives through the confession. The confession and spiritual direction are two of the great ways that pastors exercise power over their flock because both of these techniques give the pastor intimate knowledge about each individual sheep.

For Foucault, knowledge is necessary for power. He says:

> Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true.' Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (Foucault 1977, 27).

The pastor possesses knowledge of God and the sheep. The pastor uses this knowledge of God and of each sheep to lead the flock to salvation. The pastor's knowledge of God allows the pastor to relate God's will to the sheep. And, as noted previously, the sheep always tend to wonder off. When they wonder off, the pastor must go out and bring them back to the flock. This bringing back takes place through the confession. The confession

is part of the pastor's "sacramental power." The confession is a technique through which the sheep disclose their sins to the pastor so that they can be forgiven and brought back into the flock. Foucault notes, "the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat; it is driven from its hiding place in the soul or extracted from the body" (Foucault 1988, 59). In addition, the confession is "a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation" (Foucault 1988, 62). The pastor, therefore, knows each of the sheep intimately. Through their confessions he gains power over the sheep and the ability to direct the souls of the sheep towards salvation while punishing the body through penance. Foucault recognizes that this mechanism of power, the confession, is fundamental to the exercise of pastoral power. Specifically referring to pastoral power, Foucault claims: "this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (Foucault 2000, 333). The pastor's knowledge of God and of the sheep, through their confessions, are central tenants to the exercise of pastoral power.

How does the pastor receive this pastoral power? Foucault maintains that an important criterion for a shepherd "is that he refuses the pastorate for which he is given responsibility" (Foucault 2007, 179). The shepherd "refuses because he does not want to command" (Foucault 2007, 179). He only acquiesces in the end because he recognizes his refusal is in defiance and he must, in complete obedience, accept God's command to pastor a flock. God, therefore, exercises a kind of power over the pastor. And in this case,

God's power over the pastor seems to be resonant not only of the complete subordination of the pastor, but also a form of biopower. Foucault maintains that biopower is "a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (Foucault 1988, 138). Even though it's not necessarily about biological processes, God's power over the pastor is biopower because what's being allowed is a form of life (eternal life), which for Christianity, is literal life—the highest good in the beatific vision. For the Christian pastorate, the mortal, bodily, earthly life is not characteristic of real 'life'. Real life in the Christian pastorate, then, is more particularly eternal life.[18] In addition, Revelation 21:1-4:

> Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

In light of this, the claim that God exercises biopower over the pastor becomes plausible. Biopower seeks to "foster life or disallow it," and it is through God's exercise

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[18] Augustine makes this claim many times in *City of God*, but especially in Book XIV Chapter 25: "However, if we look at this a little more closely, we see that no one lives as he wishes but the blessed, and that no one is blessed but the righteous. But even the righteous himself does not live as he wishes, until he has arrived where he cannot die, be deceived, or injured, and until he is assured that this shall be his eternal condition. For this nature demands; and nature is not fully and perfectly blessed till it attains what it seeks. But what man is at present able to live as he wishes, when it is not in his power so much as to live? He wishes to live, he is compelled to die. How, then, does he live as he wishes who does not live as long as he wishes? Or if he wishes to die, how can he live as he wishes, since he does not wish even to live? Or if he wishes to die, not because he dislikes life, but that after death he may live better, still he is not yet living as he wishes, but only has the prospect of so living when, through death, he reaches that which he wishes. But admit that he lives as he wishes, because he has done violence to himself, and forced himself not to wish what he cannot obtain, and to wish only what he can (as Terence has it, "Since you cannot do what you will, will what you can"), is he therefore blessed because he is patiently wretched? For a blessed life is possessed only by the man who loves it. If it is loved and possessed, it must necessarily be more ardently loved than all besides; for whatever else is loved must be loved for the sake of the blessed life. And if it is loved as it deserves to be,—and the man is not blessed who does not love the blessed life as it deserves,—then he who so loves it cannot but wish it to be eternal. Therefore it shall then only be blessed when it is eternal." In a word, one doesn't live as one wishes unless one is living the eternal life.

of power over the pastor in commanding the pastor to lead a flock that biopower establishes itself. In being commanded by God to lead a flock the pastor is given a task that is fundamentally targeted at fostering life in the Christian sense. It is only by accepting the duty to pastor and guide a flock that life is fostered because without a pastor the flock is lost. Then, if the flock is lost, the pastor is also lost because his life is contingent on the life and salvation of the flock. Therefore, by accepting pastoral power, God fosters the lives of the sheep in the pastor's flock while also fostering the pastor's own life. Furthermore, the other side of biopower is not to take life as a sovereign who sentences one to death, but rather to disallow life. So the pastor who does not accept the pastoral duty to direct a flock is not sentenced to death in the town square. God does not simply take the pastor's earthly life as the sovereign does, but rather disallows the pastor's eternal life. If the pastor denies the flock, the pastor and the flock have no opportunity to receive salvation. And since salvation, life in the next world, is the fostered life itself, God disallows this life for the pastor who denies his duty and the flock he would have led. This pastor and the flock that had been chosen for him live the rest of their early lives, but their eternal lives are disallowed to the point of its death. So this biopower can be read in two ways. In the first sense, one's refusal to be a part of the Christian pastorate and to obey the will of God disallows eternal life, which is nothing short of death for Christianity. And in the second sense, one's presence in the Christian pastorate disallows one's earthly life, by minimizing attention to it and always trying to do less of it, in order to gain eternal life.

CHAPTER TWO: NEOLIBERAL PASTORAL POWER

The shepherd exercised pastoral power over each sheep individually and the flock as a whole. The shepherd was not simply a guardian of the flock. He was this, of course, but he was also a commander who urged the flock in the direction of eternal life. He ordered the sheep, by way of power, to move towards salvation (Foucault 2007, 167). "In Christianity the pastorate gave rise to an art of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men, an art of monitoring them and urging them on step by step, an art with the function of taking charge of men collectively and individually throughout their life and at every moment of their existence" (Foucault 2007, 165). This power took its shape in the daily life of the sheep who were governed by the shepherd to live, speak, and think a certain way. When the sheep wondered off and decided to live, speak, or think in ways contrary to what the shepherd commanded, the shepherd brought them back through confession. Pastoral power, indeed, was "the power to govern men in their daily life on the grounds of leading them to eternal life in the other world…" (Foucault 2007, 148).

Throughout its history from the 3rd to the 18th centuries, pastoral power was "shifted, broken up, transformed, and integrated in various forms" (Foucault 2007, 148). Despite the many changes that occurred during these years, Foucault argues that pastoral power "has never been truly abolished" (Foucault 2007, 148). The power of the Christian pastor over the flock "is doubtless something from which we have still not freed

ourselves" (Foucault 2007, 148). Rather, as Foucault claims, "the pastorate does not coincide with politics, pedagogy, or rhetoric. It is something entirely different. It is an art of 'governing men,' and I think this is where we should look for the origin, the point of formation, of crystallization, the embryonic point of the governmentality whose entry into politics, at the end of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, marks the threshold of the modern state" (Foucault 2007, 165). There is, therefore, a continuity of pastoral power in the Christian neoliberal pastorate of 20th and 21st centuries.

What does pastoral power in the 21st century look like? Pastoral power in the 21st century is evermore a widespread exercise of power. It is the power of one person over many, of the Christian pastor over the flock. While neoliberal pastoral power retains several of the techniques from pastoral power—it conducts, directs, guides, and manipulates[19]—neoliberalism changes the function of pastoral power.

Given the number of people in the United States and the rise of American neoliberal theories of government, we should expect them to interact. The question is how this interaction occurs, and what a neoliberal pastoral power might look like. One interaction seems to come about when the church gets involved in governmental functions. And this is one of the many ways that disciplinary power establishes itself.[20]

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[19] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population,* 165.

[20] Foucault talks about "The swarming of disciplinary mechanisms" in the "Panopticism" chapter of *Discipline and Punishment*. He argues: "While, on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become 'de-institutionalized', to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a 'free' state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted. Sometimes the closed apparatuses add to their internal and specific function a role of external surveillance, developing around themselves a whole margin of lateral controls. Thus the Christian School must not simply train docile children; it must also make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals. The school tends to constitute minute social observatories that penetrate even to the adults and exercise regular supervision over them: the bad behaviour of the child, or

As Foucault notes: disciplinary "mechanisms have a certain tendency to become 'de-institutionalized', to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a 'free' state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted" (Foucault 1977, 211). Disciplinary power socializes itself in part through Christian schools. The Christian school not only disciplines the children but also monitors the parents "to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals" (Foucault 1977, 211). Not only are Christian schools involved in disciplinary functions, Foucault posits that "[r]eligious groups and charity organizations had long played this role of 'disciplining' the population" (Foucault 1977, 212). The goal of disciplinary power is to compel individuals to internalize certain norms. However, pastoral power is not concerned with only the individual. As previously stated, Foucault claims that the Christian pastorate "constitutes itself as a Church, that is to say, as an institution that claims to govern men in their daily life on the grounds of leading them to eternal life in the other world, and to do this not only on the scale of a definite group, of a city or a state, but of the whole of humanity" (Foucault 2007, 148). As a result, pastoral power is concerned with the population. Disciplinary power, focuses on the individual, while biopower focuses on the population. How, then, do we get from discipline to biopower? For Foucault, disciplinary power is a part of biopower. Foucault explains this quite straightforwardly:

> [T]his power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however; they constituted rather two poles of development

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his absence, is a legitimate pretext, according to Demia, for one to go and question the neighbours, especially if there is any reason to believe that the family will not tell the truth; one can then go and question the parents themselves, to find out whether they know their catechism and the prayers, whether they are determined to root out the vices of their children, how many beds there are in the house and what the sleeping arrangements are; the visit may end with the giving of alms, the present of a religious picture, or the provision of additional beds (Demia, 39-40).

> linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anotomo-politics of the human body*. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births, and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*. The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. In the transition from discipline to biopower, power over life moves from the individual to all of humanity. Foucault writes: "If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and make knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life (Foucault 1988, 143).

The transition from disciplinary power to biopower is essential because with biopower there's a continuity to neoliberalism. The pastorate reflects the rationale of the state and the disposition of the people. In the neoliberal state, the government demands individuals to be entrepreneurs so that the disposition of the people points to their individual responsibility to succeed financially. For Foucault, *homo economicus* becomes "an entrepreneur of himself" (Foucault 2008, 226). The economic consequence of one becoming an "entrepreneur of himself" is one's capacity to become one's own capital through investment in the self (Foucault 2008, 226). One's new role in the economy as an entrepreneur empowers oneself to become "his own producer" who creates rather than consumes which "produces his own satisfaction" (Foucault 2008, 226). What one does, as an entrepreneur, is the fundamental realization of one's worth and value. Foucault sums up Becker on *homo economicus:* "the person who accepts reality or who responds

systematically to modifications in the variable of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. *Homo economicus* is someone who is eminently governable" (Foucault 2008, 270). Furthermore, Dilts argues, "entrepreneurial activities and investments are the most important activities of the neo-liberal self" (Dilts 2011, 137). Just as the government adopts this neoliberal theory, pastoral power also shifts its focus to fit into this entrepreneurial schema.

Since the neoliberal state adopts programs that encourage people to be entrepreneurs and success is measured by economic prosperity, neoliberalism also faults individuals who don't succeed according to these criteria. In the same way, neoliberal pastoral power claims that those who are blessed are the ones who are successful in the marketplace and those who don't succeed in the marketplace are not blessed. The blessed are the ones moving towards neoliberal salvation whereas the ones who aren't blessed are not saved.

A discussion of neoliberalism in the United States is crucial because the general rise of neoliberalism is a significant cause in the development of neoliberal pastoral power. David Harvey claims: "Neoliberalism…has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey 2007, 3). Neoliberalism transforms the ontology of the person so that one sees every activity in terms of a market rationale. As Wendy Brown argues, "all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality" (Brown 2005, 40). To this extent, neoliberalism is a mode of living, which is concerned with "the quotidian experience of buying and selling commodities from the

market" and turns every aspect of social experience into "the marketplace of ideas" (Read 2009, 26). Due to this permeation of market rationale into every layer of human experience, neoliberalism "claims to present not an ideal, but a reality; human nature" (Read 2009, 26). The interesting move is that neoliberalism "is intimately tied to the government of the individual, to a particular manner of living" (Read 2009, 27). With the onset of this "whole [new] way of being and thinking,"[21] the activity of the individual becomes focused on entrepreneurship as a means for participating in society and achieving economic success in the marketplace.

As entrepreneurs in the marketplace, individuals are solely responsible for their economic success. Every choice has an impact on the investment in the self "from taking courses on a new computer software application to having their teeth whitened" (Read 2009, 30). With neoliberalism, there is a shift in the way individuals think and act as economic rationale and market behavior is extended into every aspect of life. Foucault recognized that the neoliberal identity endeavored "to extend the rationality of the market, the schemes of analysis it offers and the decision-making criteria it suggests, to domains which are not exclusively or not primarily economic: the family and the birth rate, for example, or delinquency and penal policy" (Foucault 2008, 323). Or, as Brown puts it, "Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action,* even as the market itself remains a distinctive player" (Brown 2005, 39-40). I contend that the shift to neoliberalism as governmentality, in a major way, transformed the Christian pastorate in the 20th century. Jason Read's claims

[21] Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 218.

about the consequence of this shift to neoliberalism will become all the more salient as I discuss the transformation of the Christian pastorate:

> As a mode of governmentality, neoliberalism operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions. Thus, neoliberal governmentality follows a general trajectory of intensification. This trajectory follows a fundamental paradox; as power becomes less restrictive, less corporeal, it also becomes more intense, saturating the field of actions, and possible actions (Read 2009, 29).

The general adoption of neoliberal governmentality changes the identity of the pastor in the same way that neoliberalism dismantles the welfare state. The Christian pastor in the 20th and 21st centuries is an entirely novel ontological individual. The neoliberal Christian pastor takes on original roles and responsibilities. The pastor in traditional Christianity did not want to command, only reluctantly accepted the duty, but nonetheless acted for the good of the flock. He cared for all while also caring for each. The traditional pastor exercised a kind of power over the flock through guiding the mind and soul through confession and acting on the body through corporal penances with the intention of guiding the flock to eternal life. This was the discipline side of biopower. The neoliberal pastor in the 21st century is a pastor with a very different identity. The neoliberal pastor takes on the role of an entrepreneur who focuses on personal economic success while acting as a model that the flock should follow in order to achieve their own economic goals and ambitions. The entrepreneurial neoliberal pastor invests in himself and establishes himself as the leader of his own Christian pastorate. Everything about this newly created pastorate is the result of the entrepreneurship of the neoliberal pastor. By investing in himself, the neoliberal pastor creates the opportunity to establish a new

Christian pastorate. As a result, the Christian pastorate is not a flock given by God but entirely the work of the neoliberal pastor.

Creating a Christian pastorate with neoliberal pastoral power in the 20th and 21st centuries takes shape in a number of steps: 1) the neoliberal pastor invests in himself to receive the training (formal education or apprenticeship for example) necessary to gather and lead a flock, 2) the neoliberal pastor markets his brand to gather a small flock of interested individuals, 3) the neoliberal pastor uses the flock to further market his brand, 4) after establishing a flock, the neoliberal pastor operates his church as a business enterprise and continually works to grow its membership which is realized as a market share in the Christian pastorate, and increase its economic prosperity which is the sign of neoliberal salvation, and 5) produces his own satisfaction and the satisfaction of the pastorate as the pastor and flock are mutually involved in their successes. In the United States, the model of a successful brand of a pastor's entrepreneurial activity is the megachurch.

The neoliberal pastor takes the first step by investing in himself. Historically, and I mean over the last millennium in Christianity, pastors who were given a flock by God were first educated by the Church. In fact, some of the first universities primarily taught theology. The pastor was expected to have knowledge of God, his laws and scriptures, in order to lead the flock to salvation. The pastor did not see this education as an investment in himself (the neoliberal notion) but as a necessary component in his pastoral vocation for the benefit of the flock. This changes for the neoliberal pastor who decides to enter, typically but not always, a seminary education program as an investment in himself in pursuit of neoliberal pastoral power. Consequently, any individual seeking to establish or

lead a church must self-invest through education or training. A few examples: 1) Joel Osteen, pastor of the largest megachurch in the United States, apprenticed for seventeen years under his father before becoming the pastor; 2) Bill Hybels, founder and pastor of the fourth largest megachurch in the United States, earned a bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies before founding his church; 3) Steven Furtick, pastor of one of the fastest growing megachurches in the United States, earned a Master of Divinity before founding his own church. Although many of these pastors go to seminaries for a few months or a few years to study theology before pastoring a flock, it is not uncommon that neoliberal pastors earn a bachelor's degree in a business field. Since neoliberalism stresses the importance of entrepreneurialism and market rationality and Americans since the 1970s have bought into this argument, potential pastors realize the importance of learning how to be successful in business. Osteen's only formal education is a degree in communications, and before earning their Masters of Divinity degrees, Furtick earned a bachelor's degree in communications and Craig Groeschel earned a bachelor's degree in marketing. Further, churches who were not founded by a pastor with business experience or education look to hire pastors and assistant pastors who have earned MBAs (Battista 2010, 85). New churches, then, are established with a neoliberal identity and old churches are neoliberalized by bringing in business savvy individuals to lead as pastors. And pastors who start their own church are more and more involved in the business side of the church in addition to the teaching and preaching side.

The second step for the neoliberal pastor is to gather a small flock of interested individuals. While the neoliberal pastor gathers his flock and builds a church, it never starts as a megachurch. Rather, the megachurch is the end product of the successful

entrepreneurial activity of the neoliberal pastor. Several years of research into megachurches conducted points out that a megachurch comes from the entrepreneurial activity of the pastor and that these pastors are successful because they are creative, spiritual pioneers, many lacking any traditional pastoral education.[22]
Since, the megachurch is the sign of a successful brand of the Christian pastor, the beginning stage for the neoliberal pastor is a small gathering, similar to a startup company.

In his text *Reinventing American Protestantism,* Donald Miller outlines the change in Christian churches in the 20th century. While I use the term megachurch in this paper, Miller coins the phrase "new paradigm church" to explain the phenomenon. Writing about the ways new paradigm churches come about, Miller's research points out that these churches typically begin in the leader's home as a Bible study (Miller 1997, 15). The self-appointed pastor invites individuals to his home for gatherings. This is the second step: gathering a small flock of interested individuals. As he leads them in Bible studies, he gives the people time to get to know him and he gauges their interest in supporting him as a pastor. He does not demand that they leave their churches, but rather encourages them to continue attending their churches. As such, the people are placed in a position of comparison. Do they prefer their current church and the pastor of their church, or do they feel moved by the new potential pastor who has started something in his home? Many times these people feel drawn to the new pastor—something perhaps about

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[22] See: Greeley, Andrew M. *Religious Change in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. and Olson, Richard. "The Largest Congregations in the United States: An Empirical Study of Church Growth and Decline." PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1988.

his personality or his leadership. Miller then tells the story of a successful pastor who built a paradigm church.

Skip Heitzig began a Bible study in his apartment in 1981. At his first meeting, five people showed up in addition to Heitzig and his wife. Within weeks, however, the group grew to sixty people. Heitzig continued to tell the attendees that the Bible study did not count as a church because he "did not want to be accused of 'stealing sheep'" (Miller 1997, 157-8). As the group grew and more members came to join the flock, Heitzig proposed forming a church. Everyone approved. His new church grew to a few hundred people so he rented a small space in a strip mall. In early 1982, the church incorporated and in 1983 the membership had grown to a weekly attendance of about 1,000 people (Miller 1997, 158). The church continued to grow so that after a few years, Heitzig had to purchase a facility. And by 1990 the church had 7,000 adult members (Miller 1997, 159). The point of this story is simply to point out that pastors in the neoliberal Christian pastorate must build their churches and gather their flocks. They are not given a flock by God, as in the traditional pastorate, but they establish their own flock and use marketing techniques to grow it. While Heitzig's church grew to be a megachurch, it did not start out as such but required his entrepreneurial activity.

After the initial group of interested individuals has joined the small flock, the neoliberal pastor shares his brand with the flock and uses the sheep to market his brand. The neoliberal pastor, who builds his own church, has to gather his own flock. Elevation Church in Charlotte, NC, one of the fastest growing churches in the country, is a local example of this marketing. In the "About" section of its website, it reads: "He [Pastor Steven Furtick] and his wife, Holly, founded Elevation in 2006 with seven other

families." At their first service as a church, however, they claim to have had 121 individuals in attendance. Now, less than nine years later, the church has thirteen locations and over 17,000 members.[23] The growth of Elevation is due to the entrepreneurial success of Pastor Furtick.

But what, in particular, did Furtick do to be successful? Furtick is successful, in large part, because of who he is as a person and the brand he has created. People don't only go to Elevation to participate in a church service. They go because of who Furtick is. He's 'hip' and they love that. They prefer a pastor wearing a V-neck to a pastor in traditional robes. So many of them love the fact that when they go into church it feels like a music festival and their pastor plays the electric guitar. Furtick is at least as much performer as pastor. The branding materials, a simple orange caret on a white background, is easily recognized on cars, shirts, and buildings. And that symbol takes on a real meaning. When you join his Elevation Church, you become known as an "Elevator" as though you are moving up in social status.

This branding aspect is central to the successful entrepreneurialism of the pastor. Of course all of these pastors, to some extent, have common beliefs. They all believe the Bible is the word of God. They're Christians so they believe in the Trinity. And they believe in some notion of salvation. The difference between these pastors is that they each offer their own branding of those beliefs. The purpose of the small gathering initiated by the prospective pastor was to market his particular brand. For example, Joel Osteen's and Steven Furtick's brands are positive thinking. In an interview with Larry King, Osteen claimed that he does not use the word sinner to speak about anyone or their actions. Rather, his brand is one of motivation. He says: "It's just an attitude we've got to

[23] Refer to: www.elevationchurch.org; http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article14407898.html

get up and make a decision every single day…And I believe that all of us, if we want to, can be happy right where we are."[24] Again later he says, "To me, I say it all the time, every day we lie negative and discouraged and unhappy, that's a day we've wasted."[25] Furtick claims, "Stop waiting for what you want, and start working what you have. This can turn your greatest frustration into your greatest potential innovation. If you'll do your part, God will begin to do what only He can do: He'll make your box bigger" (Furtick 2012, 87). And, "the voice you believe will determine the future you experience" (Furtick 2014, 12). Other pastors focus less on positive thinking and more on financial giving as the essential aspect of participating in the Christian pastorate and earning salvation. For example, Robert Tilton says, "I believe that it is the will of God for all to prosper because I see it in the Word [the Bible], not because it has worked mightily for someone else. I do not put my eyes on men, but on God who gives me the power to get wealthy" (Tilton 1983, 6). And Gloria Copeland says: "Give $10 and receive $1,000; give $1,000 and receive $100,000; …in short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal" (Copeland 1973, 4-6;54). The brand—way of living, teaching, and preaching the Christian life—established by the neoliberal pastor outlines the life of the flock.

After gathering and establishing the flock, the neoliberal pastor operates his church as a business enterprise and continually works to grow its membership and increase its economic prosperity. Thumma notes that megachurches are not simply churches but are also corporations.[26] Chapel Hill Harvester Church's administrator claims: "We are a church but we are also a business that happens to be operating by the name of a church. We are a ten million dollar a year church that has to operate like a

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[24] Joel Osteen, interview with Larry King. *Larry King Live.* CNN, June 20, 2005.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their characteristics and cultural context."

business."[27] Churches have to operate like businesses because they will not survive in a neoliberal system by following old economic practices. Because the church is a business enterprise, the relationship of the pastor to the sheep is a business relationship. While in traditional pastoral power the pastor received the flock from God, which established his pastoral power over the sheep, the neoliberal pastor gathers his own flock and the sheep invest in his brand, which establishes the business relationship between pastor and flock. The neoliberal pastor did not receive pastoral power in the same way as the traditional pastor because God did not entrust the neoliberal pastor with a flock to guide towards eternal life. Rather the neoliberal pastor recruited his own flock through successful entrepreneurialism.

The pastor's church and flock are the visual signs of the pastor's successful entrepreneurial brand. This is like a follower count on twitter and Facebook. The flock is entirely composed of the individuals with whom the pastor established a business relationship. The business relationship is one in which the flock invests in the pastor's brand and the neoliberal pastor leads the flock to neoliberal salvation. By joining the neoliberal pastor's flock, the sheep simultaneously invest in the pastor's brand because the expectation is that each individual has a responsibility to finance the church. By doing so, the sheep simultaneously finance the pastor who operates the church. In fact, one cannot be a successful member of the neoliberal pastor's flock until one has invested in the brand. Joel Osteen makes this claim clear. On his church website he says, "to be successful in your walk with God, commit to honor God with your finances. When you commit to give the Lord the first 10% of your income, God promises He will pour out

[27] "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their characteristics and cultural context."

blessings you cannot contain. Tithing is the first key to financial prosperity."[28] Success is coupled with financial giving.

This business relationship that is established between pastor and sheep is fundamental in neoliberal pastoral power. As a result, these people, Brown argues, "become individuals for whom Neoliberalism claims: "the 'responsibility' of individuals constitutes a form of market morality understood as the maximization of economy through the autonomous rational deliberation of costs and benefits followed by freely chosen practices" (Hamann 2009, 44). Since neoliberalism places the responsibility of economic success on the individual, the sheep must think about their options in order to decide which pastor will successfully lead them to salvation. The sheep do not want to invest in a pastor who is unsuccessful because such a decision will certainly prove to be economically detrimental. As such, the neoliberal sheep consider particular criteria before investing in a pastor's brand. Marion Webb's research in 2012 sought to determine which factors played a role in attracting attendees to churches over the past ten years. Among a wide variety of factors, Webb discovered that the financial strength of the church had a two-part role. Not only did the financial strength of the church attract individuals to consider the church as an option but it was a major factor in persuading individuals to join the church and retaining individuals in the church (Webb 2012, 77-8). This fact becomes salient when considered in light of the notion that every decision has an economic consequence and therefore individuals establish business relationships and invest in order to achieve the best return on investment.

[28] "Commit," Lakewood Church, accessed March 24, 2015, https://www.lakewoodchurch.com/Pages/Pathway/commit.aspx.

Since neoliberalism argues that financial health is a good reason to invest, sheep want to invest in a wealthy pastor and church. Again, Foucault notes: "The pastor must teach by his example, by his own life, and what's more the value of this example is so strong that if he does not give a good example by his own life, then any theoretical, verbal teaching he gives will be nullified" (Foucault 2007, 180). The pastor's life must be representative of his preaching. Since the neoliberal pastor preaches market success leads to salvation, his life must be exemplary by owning a nice house, driving an expensive car, and maintaining a healthy body and family. An unhealthy pastor, one who is poor or divorced, is not a successful entrepreneur and an unhealthy church does not provide all the services that people desire. These are investments that sheep would want to avoid. On the contrary, healthy pastors and churches excel financially and offer a variety of services for smart investors. For example, Joel Osteen is reported to have a net worth of $40 million[29], including a $10.5 million home and a second $2.9 million home.[30] It's safe to say he is considered a very healthy pastor. Also, his Lakewood Church brings in approximately $75 million a year in donations[31] and is located on the site that previously housed the Houston Rockets of the NBA. Just over a decade ago, Osteen renovated the basketball arena for an astounding $105 million.[32] Whether the church paid for most of the renovations up front or the bank backed such deal, it was only possible because the church is exceptionally healthy.

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[29] "Joel Osteen Net Worth," Celebrity Net Worth, accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.celebritynetworth.com/richest-celebrities/joel-osteen-net-worth/

[30] "After move to $10.5 million River Oaks mansion, Joel Osteen offers Tanglewood land for $1.1 million," Culturemap Houston, accessed October 24, 2015, html http://houston.culturemap.com/news/real-estate/07-04-10-after-move-to-river-oaks-joel-osteen-wants-to-sell-tanglewood-land-for-11-million/.

[31] "Minister of Finance," Vanity Fair, accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/04/otl-osteen-201004.

[32] "Defending success and fame: Joel Osteen says he is keeping the faith," Penn Live, accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/05/joel_osteen_harrisburg_pennsyl.html.

Consumer value is also important. In the neoliberal pastorate we start to see that healthy churches offer services that cater to a variety of interests. For example, churches build their campuses to include shops, movie theatres, daycares, and food courts. Even more fascinating is that Osteen's Lakewood Church offers a variety of services to its membership which have not traditionally been provided by churches, such as: Financial Freedom, Total Life Challenge, Business Ministry, Creative Arts, and Dance Ministry. Why are these churches expanding their interests? Ted Haggard, pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, succinctly answered that question when he said: "for Christianity to prosper in the free market, it needs more than 'moral values' it needs consumer value" (Sharlet 2005, 47). People want churches to offer more than religion, and megachurches supply that demand.

The relationship between the pastor and the sheep in neoliberal pastoral power is fundamentally different than in traditional pastoral power. In traditional pastoral power, the sheep are integrated into the flock by virtue of their baptisms and relate to their pastor through penance. God has given the flock to the pastor because through baptism, the sheep have been rescued from their sinful destiny in hell. The job of the pastor, then, is to ensure that all of the flock, each baptized sheep, lives in such a way as to merit salvation. The sheep did not choose the pastor because of his worthiness, but rather chose God through baptism and in their desire for God placed themselves under the guidance of the pastor to lead them to God. The flock does not choose the pastor for any particular brand or service that he provides. The traditional pastor only existed as a means to lead the flock to salvation.

In the neoliberal pastorate, however, the sheep choose the pastor. This is neoliberal for two reasons. In the first place, the neoliberal pastor offers a brand (whether positive thinking in the cases of Osteen and Furtick or strictly financial in the cases of Tilton and Copeland) in which anyone can invest. The potential church members are expected to treat their choices of which church to join as a market choice. In the second place, the neoliberal pastors must market their brands to gather their flocks. The pastor works hard to market his brand because gathering a flock increases the number of investors. One way many neoliberal pastors market their brands is by writing and publishing books. For example, almost every pastor mentioned in this paper has published at least one book and several of those books have been best sellers. The principle of the traditional pastor—to receive a flock from God and know the lives of the sheep by extracting their desires and sins and to care for the sheep individually and the flock wholly in order to lead them all to eternal life—becomes one of the primary sacrifices in the neoliberal pastorate. The neoliberal pastor cares for the flock in an entirely novel way. The neoliberal pastor doesn't extract their deepest desires and sins in order to lead them to eternal salvation but rather focuses on the sheep's financial successes and failures. Will the sheep invest in the pastor's brand? If the answer is yes, then the sheep have taken a step on the right path. If they continue to invest in the pastor and church and the church continues to grow and get richer, then the sheep are not straying away. But if they stop investing, if the church starts failing and the pastor goes bankrupt, the sheep are not moving towards salvation. On the other side of the coin, if the sheep cannot invest because they are in debt or because they are bankrupt, they cannot

take the major step towards salvation. They must pull themselves up by their bootstraps and recover financially before they can continue towards salvation.

The economy of merits and faults is not composed of lustful thoughts or good deeds as in the traditional pastorate but is replaced by a spreadsheet outlining their economic and financial successes and failures. These merits and faults are completely tracked by the churches. Churches track the sheep's investments by asking them to give on Sundays using envelopes labeled with their names and amount of donation. Or to make things even simpler, churches really want the sheep to invest by giving online or by texting.[33] This makes keeping track of giving easier for the church. Just as one would set up automatic payments to a 401k, the sheep set up automatic payments to the church so that they never miss an investment. The pastor doesn't want the sheep to forget a weekly investment because that is his return for his entrepreneurial success. But the sheep also don't want to miss a payment because their investment is their ticket to salvation. Because God wants to bless Christians who invest in their pastors and churches, the sheep don't want to miss their guaranteed returns on investments. And since the sheep's success is directly correlated to the pastor's, their investment in the pastor and the church reflects his success which is realized by recruiting sufficient investors in his brand.

The fact that the sheep choose the pastor is neoliberal in the second place because the sheep have options and make rational choices from those options. By choosing a particular brand and joining a flock, the sheep invest in the pastor. This choice of where and in whom to invest creates a financialized account of risk for the sheep in the neoliberal pastorate. The sheep are leveraging money only because they are expecting a

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[33] See: "Give," Lakewood Church, accessed November 13, 2015, https://www.lakewoodchurch.com/Pages/Give.aspx and
"Online Giving," Elevation Church, accessed November 13, 2015, http://elevationchurch.org/giving/

return on their investments. As they invest in the pastor and the church, there is an expectation to receive a return. Again, as Gloria Copeland says: "Give $10 and receive $1,000; give $1,000 and receive $100,000…" One of the main points of investing in the pastor and church is the expectation of further financial blessings from God. Not only do the investments help the pastor, who gains from the investments of the sheep, but the sheep also want some return on the investment. And not only are the sheep leveraging their money, but according to Andy Stanley, God leverages too. In his Sermon series "God is Great," Stanley says, "He will have leveraged your sin for his glory's sake. He will not be undone." In the same talk he continues: "At the end of the day, we can say 'God, if you can leverage sin for your glory, certainly you can leverage this (my life's situations), and I make it available to you." While the sheep are leveraging their money for a return on investment, God is leveraging their sins in order to turn them into blessings to return to the sheep. This financialized account of risk is fundamentally neoliberal. The neoliberal market rationale stems from the fact that each person has options and can compare any pastor's brand. And from those options, the neoliberal subject can choose the brand that seems favorable. Neoliberal rationality creates "a 'free' subject who rationally deliberates about alternative courses of action, makes choices, and bears responsibility for the consequences of these choices" so that "as individual 'entrepreneurs' in every aspect of life, subjects become wholly responsible for their well-being" (Brown 2005, 43). The choice a sheep makes in the marketplace of salvation is therefore paramount to earning salvation.

The risk assessment in the neoliberal pastorate is different than in the traditional pastorate. In the traditional pastorate, the risk assessment was very minimal. It was the

case that the pastor was chosen by God and the flock was given to the pastor. The flock knew that God had chosen the pastor because this was confirmed by the Church.[34] The people, therefore, had a faith in God and in the Church that the pastor could lead them to eternal salvation. The sheep did not have to weigh options and choose a pastor so their margin of error was minimal. However, for the neoliberal sheep, their risk is much greater. These sheep are not part of a flock that is given to a pastor by God. Instead, they know that the pastor started his own church brand and they must weigh the options and choose. In another way, the sheep in the traditional Christian pastorate knew that their goal was eternal salvation in the next life, and that their whole life, and the life of the pastor, would be measured to determine whether or not they earned salvation. However, the goal of neoliberal pastoral power is neoliberal salvation.[35]

Osteen argues that God has equipped each person with the abilities necessary to have a successful and prosperous life on earth. In his book, he claims, "Happy, successful, fulfilled individuals have learned how to live their best lives now" (Osteen 2005, xi). To have their best lives now, people simply need to follow the ideas in Osteen's book. In fact, he states: "By following the principles I'm going to share with you...you can be happy and fulfilled, starting today" (Osteen 2005, x). One of Osteen's points is that one's own thoughts lead to attitudes and actions. The old adage of "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps" is particularly laced in Osteen's claims. Interestingly, this is the view of neoliberalism that one determines one's own success and can become anyone and anything that one wants. Since Osteen claims that, "thoughts determine

[34] The Rite of Ordination, one of the seven Sacraments, for example, was the Church's guarantee that God had called the person to be a pastor.

[35] Generally, what I am asserting is that notions of salvation are changed in neoliberal pastoral power. Salvation for neoliberal pastors is being rich which is entirely different than salvation for traditional pastors. Also, with neoliberalism, salvation starts now.

destiny [and] we can control our destinies," any person can achieve neoliberal salvation through positive thinking (Osteen 2005, 101 and 103). Indeed, positive thinking is paramount to neoliberal salvation because neoliberal salvation is defined as living one's best life now through economic success and wellbeing. And, for Osteen, positive thinking is the means to achieving material success. In fact: "When you think positive, excellent thoughts, you will be propelled toward greatness, inevitably bound for increase, promotion, and God's supernatural blessings" (Osteen 2005, 104). This conclusion hinges on Osteen's premise that "God is positive!" (Osteen 2005, 105). Since God is positive, he must inherently desire that all humans accomplish greatness, which for neoliberal salvation is understood as economic prosperity. In addition, Rick Warren claims that eternal life begins when one accepts Jesus Christ. Neoliberal salvation, unlike traditional salvation can be achieved in this life. One does not need to be poor now and live a certain life to merit salvation in the next life. Rather, since one's eternal life begins when accepting Jesus, neoliberal pastoral power claims that people can become rich now. And since the fate of the pastor is tied to the fate of sheep, the pastor can also earn neoliberal salvation now, depending on whether or not the church has gained or lost members, increased or decreased investments, and gained or lost assets.

Neoliberal salvation says, "You can win right here and right now. You don't need to wait until you die to experience heaven." Salvation in traditional Christianity is quite the opposite. These two very different notions—winning here and now versus winning later on—are the themes of Robert Kiyosaki's book *Rich Dad Poor Dad*. The juxtaposition of the rich dad to the poor dad correlates to the juxtaposition of the neoliberal Christian to the traditional Christian. The neoliberal Christian uses religion to

increase. The entire reason for investing is earning a return. The traditional Christian doesn't see life in terms of money or improving the current condition since the afterlife will compensate. In a similar way, the rich dad wants to take advantage of the current condition and increase his stake. On the contrary, the poor dad simply wants to use the present as a means to earn something good in the future. Kiyosaki writes of the dads: "One said 'when it comes to money, play it safe, don't take risks.' The other said, 'learn to manage risk'" (Kiyosaki 2011, 15-16). The author's point is that the "play it safe" attitude never boosts one's financial standing as risk management does. Sam Binkley notes that: "For Kiyosaki, the path to riches is one that leads us through a difficult labor of self-transformation" (Binkley 2009, 66). This is precisely the transformation that neoliberalism brings about in the Christian pastorate. Binkley goes on to say, "the text gently exhorts us to go to work on ourselves, to transform our poor dad habits into rich ones" (Binkley 2009, 67). Neoliberal Christianity forces individuals to see themselves, their role in the church, and their salvation in a completely new and unique way. No longer should Christians be the poor and suffering who await a better life in eternity.

Christians should realize that they can have their best life on earth because that's what God wants for them. According to Osteen, "We will never rise above the image we have of ourselves" (Osteen 2005, 74). Achieving neoliberal salvation is dependent on seeing ourselves the way God sees us. Osteen believes that, "God sees you as a champion. He believes in you.... He regards you as a strong, courageous, successful, overcoming person" (Osteen 2005, 58). Without the perspective of a champion, you will not achieve salvation, which is realized through consistent personal improvement. Thankfully, God is present to help one achieve neoliberal salvation. According to Osteen,

God wants Christians to achieve neoliberal salvation because God desires for Christians to improve their health, abundance and increase materially (Osteen 2005, 79). Since God wants Christians to achieve neoliberal salvation, he has "equipped you with everything you need to live a prosperous life [and] He planted 'seeds' inside you filled with possibilities, incredible potential, creative ideas and dreams" (Osteen 2005, 82). One may wonder why God would create humans for earthly success when the historical understanding has been that God created humans for life with him in heaven. The notion of neoliberal salvation completely transforms the teleology of Christian human life. While traditionally it was believed that God created humans to live with him, neoliberal pastoral power seems to argue that God created humans for earthly success.

According to Osteen, God has given people everything they need to be happy on earth, so happiness is a decision that one makes. Happiness is not something that comes as a result of outside forces, but rather it is internal. The act of choosing to be happy in this case seems to be closely associated with the neoliberal notion of producing one's own satisfaction. In neoliberalism it is the choice of the individual to become an entrepreneur and satisfy oneself. One must become "his own producer" who creates rather than consumes which "produces his own satisfaction" (Foucault 2008, 226). I think this point is interesting in light of the claims of salvation, which are meant to produce happiness. If one invests in the neoliberal pastor's entrepreneurship, then this person has the ability to follow the pastor and earn salvation. The neoliberal Christian pastorate guarantees happiness in this life rather than the next life. So one's active decision to practice happiness is constitutive of salvation. Insofar as one follows the pastor, one has the capacity to earn salvation in this life and happiness is included. However, running

parallel to the act of following, one must also continually "choose to be happy." If these people are to be happy in this life, they must make an active decision to choose happiness. Accordingly, the initial decision to be happy helps one build habits that lead to salvation.

The financial investment required of the sheep to achieve neoliberal salvation is a central power mechanism. On August 18, 2013, Steven Furtick exercised this power mechanism over his flock with what I am going to call the "phenomenon of the dime."[36] During his sermon, Furtick invited a young girl to join him on the stage in the front of the church. Furtick pulled out a bucket of dimes and began dumping them on the girl's closed fist. He explained that the dimes falling from the bucket are blessings from God but someone with a closed fist neither gives a dime per dollar nor gains dimes as blessings. He then asked the young girl to open her hand, and as she did multiple dimes fell into her palm. Furtick told her to dump the dimes, and afterwards, of course, more dimes fell into her palm. The explanation that Furtick offered to those present was that as we open up our hands to give our dimes to the church, we also open up our hands to receive God's blessings. The dime phenomenon is thus closely tied to the Law of Compensation. Furthermore, Furtick had given a dime to each of the flock before the sermon. However, the flock did not understand what the dime represented prior to this part of the sermon. Following his demonstration, Furtick mentioned to the flock that each of them had something that belonged to him. And here is the connection—the dime belongs to the pastor. And it is not just the dime that the pastor gave to the flock before the sermon that belongs to the pastor, but also a dime from every dollar. Of course the notion of tithe is

[36] I use this phrase to refer to Furtick's technique of pastoral power exercised over his flock in a particular sermon. I accessed this sermon from Furtick's Elevation Church: www.elevationchurch.com.

nothing new. Tithing has existed in Catholicism and Judaism for millennia. But there is something new here from Furtick. His argument is not that one should give as a material participation in the life of the church but that one should give and expect returns. As one gives, one opens up to receive. Emptying the dimes from one's hand makes space for one to receive. Similarly, opening up one's bank account to the church through online giving or texting to give also opens up one's bank account to receive the blessings from God in return. On the contrary, a closed bank account which doesn't give is also closed to blessings. Furtick wants people to give a dime for every dollar because that brings him, as pastor, and the church financial health. As sheep open up their bank accounts and give, the church and pastor receive and the bank accounts of the sheep are open to receive. This is the dime phenomenon. And this seems to be quite different from ancient and medieval notions of giving. Furtick went on to tell his flock that if they will commit, before God and the rest of the people present, to give a dime per dollar every week, they should start by giving this dime back to the church that day. If, however, any of them could not commit to doing so, they should take the dime home and set it in an openly visible place so they can see it every day and be reminded that they need to commit to God and the church.

Later on in the sermon, Furtick confirmed my points that the pastor must market his brand and recruit members while the sheep must also make the choice to invest in the pastor. Speaking to them, he said, "if you don't trust me then give it somewhere else." Quite simply, Furtick has a particular brand and his flock invests in that brand. If anyone wants to join that flock, they must invest in that brand. There is an aspect of trust that comes with the investment—trust that the pastor will help the investing sheep achieve

neoliberal salvation. If anyone doesn't trust the pastor, they shouldn't invest in his brand, but should go out and continue searching for a brand they like and a pastor they trust. And this trust is crucial for the sheep because they are taking a fully responsible risk by investing in a pastor's brand. As Hamann argues: "Neoliberal subjects are constituted as thoroughly responsible for themselves and themselves alone because they are subjectified as thoroughly autonomous and free. An individual's failure to engage in the requisite processes of subjectification, or what neoliberals refer to as a "mismanaged life" is consequently due to the moral failure of the individual" (Hamann 2009, 44). Investing in the best brand is, therefore, paramount to success.

When the sheep discover a pastor that they trust and desire to join the flock, they are obliged to invest in the pastor's brand. For those who invest in a neoliberal pastor's brand, the commitment is a dime. It is a dime for every dollar that is earned in the marketplace. It is a dime for every dollar that comes as a blessing from God. And these dollars that come as a blessing from God are the sheep's return on their financial investment in the pastor. There is always one more dime from one more dollar. The point is simple: by investing a dime per dollar, an individual buys a share in God's blessings, which is returned through future monetary blessings. The investment never ends because as one receives monetary blessings, the amount of future investments simply increases. Following this argument, it is economically rational to invest because continued investment guarantees future returns on the investment. In addition to the economic rationale to invest, the act of investment frees the individual and prepares the individual to join the pastor's flock. By virtue of the financial investment, the sheep become free to place themselves under the guidance of the neoliberal pastor. Pastor Furtick made this

claim to his flock. When speaking about their commitments to financial investment he said: "Until you get this right [the act of investing a dime per dollar] you're going to struggle because you're not free." The investment frees the individual and prepares the individual to be directed by neoliberal pastoral power because power can only be exercised over free individuals. As Foucault notes: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are "free." By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available."[37] As I have claimed, the sheep have several choices regarding which church to join and in which pastor to invest. The sheep are free because they have the possibility to choose.

The sheep weigh their options and invest in the pastor of their choosing, thus joining the neoliberal Christian pastorate. Although the neoliberal pastor will not force the sheep join the flock and invest, the pastor nonetheless maintains that to be free requires an investment. The freedom that ensures neoliberal salvation comes at the price of a dime. This shift in pastoral power transforms the purpose of pastoral power. Whereas in traditional pastoral power the pastor received a flock given by God and exercised pastoral power over the flock in order to lead the flock to salvation, in neoliberal pastoral power the pastor must market a brand to recruit sheep and the sheep must choose to invest in the brand in order to become free and become part of the neoliberal pastorate.

Neoliberalism also transforms Christian iconography inside the church and in the home. While Christians in the traditional pastorate would have placed Crucifixes on the wall or statues of the Virgin Mary on a pedestal, Pastor Furtick sends his flock home with a dime. It is the dime that he wants his flock to think about every day. If they see the

[37] Foucault, "Subject and Power," 342.

dime, if they think about the dime, then they will never forget the importance of their investment. In Osteen's church, he opted for a massive globe rather than any religious symbols. When asked about this decision, he said: "When my dad founded our church, he used either a globe or a map of the world behind him. It was symbolic of what Christ said: To go forth and preach hope to the world. We believe in the cross, but we just continued with the globe."[38] Whatever Osteen may say about the reasons for choosing a globe rather than a cross, it is salient for the identity of neoliberal churches. Putting a dime in the home or having a globe as the only decorative symbol in the church seems to be indicative of the changes in the neoliberal Christian pastorate.

Are neoliberal pastors acting from a firm disposition through which they truly believe they are guiding the sheep in such a way to lead them to salvation? I think the answer to this is yes. However, I will argue that their notion of salvation is entirely different from the notion of salvation for the traditional pastor. With neoliberal rationality, the *raison d'etre* of salvation has shifted from salvation as eternal life in heaven to salvation as financial success now.

While these pastors don't really believe in hell anymore as a place that people go when they die,[39] more shocking than not really believing in hell, I think, is that many of these pastors don't really believe in heaven anymore. In Osteen's book *Your Best Life Now,* there's no talk of heaven either as a place that people can go after they die or even as a reward for living a certain type of earthly life. Further, I wasn't able to find any

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[38] "Spreading the "prosperity gospel," televangelist Joel Osteen is his own case in point, with best-selling books, a global audience, and America's largest church."

[39] See Rob Bell's book *Love Wins*. Bell is the pastor who founded Mars Hill Bible Church in Grandville Michigan which as of 2005 was attracting over 10,000 weekly members. For Robert Schuller, hell "is the loss of pride that naturally follows from separation from God—the ultimate and unfailing source of our soul's sense of self-respect. A person is in hell when he has lost his self esteem" (Schuller 1982, 14-15).

sermon from Osteen about heaven. This pastor who reaches millions of people every week never speaks about heaven. Rather he speaks about life here and now. In one interview, I found that Osteen said, "When I look out there I think 'this is what heaven's going to be like.'"[40] He is speaking about when he looks at his church congregation. This claim makes it seem that Osteen simply thinks heaven is here and now and he is living a type of heaven every time he is at his church. Furthermore, Osteen believes the real reason Jesus came to earth was to invite people to have a relationship with him. It seems that Jesus didn't come to open up the gates to heaven for the Gentiles, but rather to build relationships. And since Osteen believes that this relationship is cultivated on earth, there's no need for anyone to go to heaven. Rick Warren says, "To be eternally separated from God is hell. To be eternally in union with him is eternal life. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith." On that account, heaven and hell aren't these places we go after we die but are rather places here on earth. And whether we go to one or other is contingent on whether or not we accept Jesus Christ. Schuller says, "Many sincere students within the larger body of believers are turned off by a theology that offers nothing more than a classical heaven and hell proposition. The alternative theology of mission focuses on peace, brotherhood, and economic equality" (Schuller 60). Certainly "believers" would only be "turned off" by notions of heaven and hell if they actually believed that heaven and hell don't exist as places one goes after death. And for heaven to be replaced by earthly notions such as peace, brotherhood, and economic equality, is simply to say that we need to replace the idealistic make-believe with the

[40] "Joel Osteen: The Man Behind America's Largest Church," The Christian Broadcasting Network, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www1.cbn.com/700club/joel-osteen-man-behind-americas-largest-church.

pragmatic. Because there is no heaven after one dies, this life is the most important one that anyone has.

CHAPTER THREE: PROSPERITY THEOLOGY AND NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberal pastors reread scripture and traditional doctrine to develop novel interpretations that support their claims about the importance of neoliberal success through financial prosperity and personal well being and health. The first major change comes through a series of scriptural gymnastics to establish a new hermeneutic on four mains themes: 1) the Abrahamic Covenant, 2) the atonement, 3) giving, and 4) faith.

The Abrahamic Covenant is discussed in Genesis 17. The first eight verses of the covenant read:

> When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am *El Shaddai*. Walk with me and be trustworthy. I will make a covenant between us and I will give you many, many descendants." Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, "But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations. And because I have made you the ancestor of many nations, your name will no longer be Abram but Abraham. I will make you very fertile. I will produce nations from you, and kings will come from you. I will set up my covenant with you and your descendants after you in every generation as an enduring covenant. I will be your God and your descendants' God after you. I will give you and your descendants the land in which you are immigrants, the whole land of Canaan, as an enduring possession. And I will be their God.

Kenneth Copeland reads the Abrahamic Covenant in the following way:

> After Adam's fall in the Garden, God needed an avenue back into earth; [and]…since man was the key figure in the Fall, man had to be the key figure in the redemption, so God approached a man named Abram. He reenacted with Abram what Satan had done with Adam…God offered Abram a proposition and Abram bought it (Copeland 1987, 10).

Because Abram "bought" God's proposition, all of Abraham's descendants are entitled to blessings. Copeland continues: "Since God's Covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now!" (Copeland 1974, 51). Further, it has been argued that "Christians are Abraham's spiritual children and heirs to the blessings of faith…This Abrahamic inheritance is unpacked primarily in terms of material entitlements" (Pousson 1992, 158). All of the rhetoric from the prosperity pastors draws on the notion that God's covenant with Abraham primarily concerned material blessings.[41] Because neoliberal pastors shift the focus of salvation from eternal life to earthly success, material blessings are the primary entitlement of the faithful Christian. While it is true that Abraham was given Isaac from God even though Sara was far too old to naturally conceive, the pastors are not only advocating for blessings within the family but also blessings which are extravagant. For neoliberal pastors, spiritual success is measured exactly the same as economic success. That is to say that a sign of God's favor is monetary wealth, job promotions, successful marriages and the like. David Jones argues: "this egocentric gospel teaches that God wants believers to be materially wealthy" (Jones 1998, 79). Osteen claims that God "wants you to go further than your parents ever went" (Osteen 2005, 24). God does not want anyone to rent an apartment. Rather, "God wants to give you your own house" (Osteen 2005, 35). God desires 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 2005, 38). It's therefore important to pray for "everything from modes of transportation (cars, vans, trucks, even two seat planes), [to] homes, furniture, and

[41] See: Gloria Copeland, *God's Will is Prosperity*, 4-6; Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*, 51; *Our Covenant with God* 10; Pousson, *Spreading the Flame*, 158; Kenneth Copeland *The Troublemaker,* 6.

large bank accounts" (Pilgrim, 1992, 3). Again, Tilton says: "I believe that it is the will of God for all to prosper because I see it in the Word [the Bible], not because it has worked mightily for someone else. I do not put my eyes on men, but on God who gives me the power to get wealthy" (Tilton 1983, 6).

Instead of the blessing of eternal life, which came through traditional pastoral power, neoliberal pastoral power claims that God simply wants to bless the Christian with economic prosperity. Neoliberal pastors use the biblical text Galatians 3:14: "That the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus…" to support their insistence that they deserve the material blessings that come through God's covenant with Abraham. However, one major issue with their presentation of this text is that they omit the second half of the verse. The omitted text reads: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." This is one instance where the neoliberal pastors ignore the spiritual context of the scripture and chop the verse in order to fit with their economic interpretation. While the traditional pastor taught that the flock received spiritual blessings and heavenly salvation, the neoliberal pastor seeks to convince the sheep that God's blessings are material rather than spiritual. This point is profoundly neoliberal. The neoliberal rationale claims that the goal of the individual is economic success. It is this type of success that the Christian earns through the neoliberal reading of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Through Jesus Christ, Christians are not only able to claim the Abrahamic Covenant, but they also have the Atonement. The Atonement is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant that was discussed in the last section. The Abrahamic Covenant promised many descendants and possession of a land, but the Original Sin of Adam in the

Garden still needed fixing. The Atonement allowed for the reconciliation of Original Sin and the sins in every person's life through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The idea in traditional Christianity is that the Atonement makes salvation possible. Before the Atonement there isn't forgiveness of sins. However, because of the Atonement, Original Sin can be wiped away with Baptism and daily sins are forgiven through penance.

Ken Sarles writes: "the prosperity gospel claims that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the Atonement" (Sarles 1986, 339). Because Christ's sacrificed freed people from sin, they became ready to receive further blessings from God. Copeland argues, "the basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, *and poverty* on Jesus at Calvary" (Copeland 1974, 6). Some justify financial prosperity by saying that Jesus also lived luxuriously. John Avanzini says: "Jesus had a nice house, a big house," and "Jesus was handling big money," and he "wore designer clothes" (Hanegraaff 1993, 381). Jesus father was a carpenter. It's not clear whether or not Jesus was born into the lower class or middle class, but he likely didn't grow up in a nice, big house in such a situation. Furthermore, Avanzini's claims disregard several of Jesus' own statements. In one case Jesus says: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."[42] Therefore, as an adult, Jesus certainly didn't have a nice, big home. Speaking to his disciples in Luke 9:3, Jesus says, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece." While it's possible that Jesus' disciples had the most expensive tunics, he certainly discouraged excess.

[42] Luke 9:58.

Neoliberal pastors also use 2 Cor. 8:9 which reads: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Prosperity pastors tend to believe that Christ died to increase everyone's net worth. However, they leave out a key phrase five verses later in 2 Cor. 8:14, which reads: "that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack." This reading of the Atonement seems plausible if we follow Joel Osteen's argument. For Osteen, the Atonement is not just something that comes from God but it is something in which people actively participate. To make this claim, Osteen also needs to present a different concept of Original Sin.

In traditional Christianity, the Church taught the doctrine of original sin—that because of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, all peoples inherited that sin and were therefore inherently sinful. Baptism washed away Original Sin, but there still remained the ramifications of Original Sin in people's lives which led one to sin again and again. That was the reason for confession and spiritual direction. In a message titled, "Your Original Software," Osteen makes some different points about Original Sin. In this sermon, he uses the analogy of a computer and software to represent a person's soul. He says:

> Our minds work like a computer. The way you program it is the way it's going to function. You can have the most powerful computer made, but if you put the wrong software in it, it's not going to function like it was designed. We've all had to deal with these computer viruses. All these problems occur not because the computer is defective, but because somebody contaminated the software.
> In the same way, when God created you, He stepped back and said, "Another masterpiece." Your hardware is perfect. From the very beginning, He programmed you to be victorious, healthy, strong and creative. He programmed, "Whatever you touch will prosper and succeed." He programmed, "The head and not the tail. Lend and not borrow. Victor and not victim."

> That's how your Creator designed you. But the reason we don't always experience this abundant life is because we've allowed viruses to contaminate our software. Because our software is infected, we go around with low self-esteem, negative and doubtful. It's time to reprogram your mind with the Word of God! Meditate on what He says about you, delete the viruses, and get back to your original software![43]

For Osteen, people are designed inherently good by God. There is no Original Sin, whereby we are sinful almost from the start, but rather we are good from the start and remain that way. If we operate as we are "designed," essentially perfect, then we will have the best computer, the best life, possible. However, it is our fault, as Osteen says, when our computers gets viruses and our souls get contaminated with sin. People are not inherently sinful, then, because there is no Original Sin. We have complete control over the type of person we become. We have control over our successes and failures. Osteen's claims lead to the conclusion that we are not drawn into temptation because we are tainted by Original Sin and thus always drawn towards a sinful life, the traditional argument, but we are simply susceptible to viruses and we must delete them so we can achieve the perfect life on earth that God designed for us to live. Because there is no Original Sin that we need God to atone but only sin that comes into our lives through our own doing, the Atonement is entirely different as well. Since there is no Original Sin, the notion of the Atonement is different.

Just as we have the ability to sin, we also have the ability to not sin. For Osteen, it is all a matter of letting go of the past and transforming the mind for the future. The past characterizes an old way of thinking and living. Since the God in neoliberal salvation always desires the flock to increase and become better, the past is a perpetual image of the old self. The old self is not worthy of salvation because neoliberal salvation, by

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[43] "Your Original Software," Joel Osteen Ministries, accessed April 2, 2015, https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/MessageViewer.aspx?date=2014-08-25.

definition, always seeks more success. In Osteen's words: "Unless you let go of the old, God will not bring the new" (Osteen 2005, 146). This notion of "the new" is closely tied to neoliberalism. With neoliberalism there is always destruction of the old to make space for the new.[44] This is also the case in neoliberal salvation. In neoliberal salvation, the neoliberal pastor guides his sheep to always shed the old and anticipate the new. The new is made up of a better job, a bigger house, a healthier marriage, and more. However, without destruction of the old, none of the new comes. Although Osteen makes these promises to his flock, he does not tell the sheep when to anticipate the new or what to do if one never realizes the new. Nonetheless, he charges the flock to remember that all things happen in God's time and one must continue to trust God for a prosperous and extraordinary future (Osteen 2005, 178). In a way, this is just a new way of framing an old conversation.

In case anyone in the neoliberal flock grows anxious in striving to achieve their salvation, Osteen counsels them to believe and remain determined against adversity. The key is to remember that one can always improve one's attitude. Osteen truly argues that the right attitude is the common denominator for neoliberal salvation. This is in stark contrast to traditional notions of salvation, which emphasized a faithful disposition and repentance. For Osteen, "God is waiting on you to get up on the inside. When you do your part, He'll begin to change things and work supernaturally in your life" (Osteen 2005, 190). The interesting transition here for neoliberal salvation is that God transforms from the chief shepherd—his place in traditional pastoral power—to a machine of production. Instead of being the source from which pastoral power derives, God becomes

[44] See Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction."

an economic device. This is to say that God's central role in neoliberal pastoral power is to be a font from which the flock can draw inspiration to achieve neoliberal salvation.

After letting go of the past, one must transform the mind. Osteen writes: "The Bible tells us that we need to be 'transformed by the renewing of our mind.' If you will transform your mind, God will transform your life" (Osteen 2005, 108). This point is interesting if read in light of the transformation in economic thinking from liberalism to neoliberalism. As Foucault noted, neoliberalism is an entirely new way of thinking about economics and one's economic activity. In his words: "Economics is not therefore the analysis of processes; it is the analysis of an activity. So it is no longer the analysis of the historical logic of processes; it is the analysis of the internal rationality, the strategic programming of individuals' activity" (Foucault 2008, 223). As changes in economic thinking shifted, the notion of the Atonement also transformed. For example, in the verse from Romans 12:2 that Osteen uses, the meaning of being 'transformed by the renewing of the mind' in traditional Christianity is entirely different from Osteen's interpretation in the 21st century. Traditionally, the renewal of the mind that causes transformation is associated with confession, which is possible because of the Atonement. The Greek word *metanoeó,* used to translate "renewing of the mind," can also be translated as "I repent." One would repent of Original Sin once in Baptism but many more times in one's life one would repent of other sins through the confession. Confession is important in traditional pastoral power because it was a mechanism of power by which the shepherd exercises power over the flock. With confession, the sheep divulge their sins to the shepherd and seek repentance. The power of confession is apparent in the effect it takes in the lives of the sheep. While the sheep repent through confession, they put themselves under the

power of the shepherd who aids them in reorienting their lives to avoid such sins in the future. The confession also is the power through which the sheep can merit salvation. Therefore, being "transformed by the renewing of the mind" in traditional pastoral power is closely associated with the confession through the Atonement in order to gain salvation.

Neoliberal pastoral power, on the contrary, uses the "renewing of the mind" translation of *metanoeó* and therefore has a different interpretation of being "transformed by the renewing of the mind." This transformation of mind is a neoliberal transformation. For Osteen, a transformation of the mind is changing one's mindset to see one as a successful individual. This is to say that one must transform one's mind and imagine worldly success, in effect transform one's mind to think neoliberal rationality, and then God will provide for neoliberal salvation. It is not just that Osteen translates the biblical word differently, but that he has a completely novel understanding of what the biblical verse means. He reads the biblical verse through a neoliberal lens. Osteen writes: "Before we were ever formed, He [God] programmed us to live abundant lives, to be happy, healthy, whole. But when our thinking becomes contaminated, it is no longer in line with God's Word" (Osteen 2005, 114). For Osteen, the biblical passage of being "transformed by the renewing of the mind," is a command from God to change one's mindset in order to achieve success. Since achieving success is determined by having the right mindset, the neoliberal Christian pastorate interprets this biblical text as a charge from God to fix one's mindset, achieve economic success, and live abundantly. If one's thinking is 'contaminated' in that one does not have the right mindset and is not achieving economic success and living abundantly, it is not because one does not have the ability but rather

because one does not have the right mindset. Having the right mindset is paramount to material success and material success is the measure. This is what leads Osteen to claim: "If you don't believe, if you're negative, fretting, worried or upset, then supernatural changes will not be possible for you" (Osteen 2005, 118). A supernatural change, for Osteen, is that someone goes from bankruptcy to millionaire or divorced several times to happily married with several children. So the major transition in the notion of the Atonement is that it was not meant to right the wrong of Original Sin. The Atonement happens when people decide to forgive themselves and take on a positive mindset. God designed people perfectly, leaving out any need for forgiveness from him. The salvation earned through this notion of Atonement is to live the way God designed. To do so, people must first renew their minds and be positive so that God can give them all he desires. Salvation is, therefore, not available to anyone who fails to set right their mind or gets caught up in vicious cycles of worrying or negativity. These individuals who are worried and negative do not transform their mindset so they do not experience material or economic success.

The idea of giving for neoliberal prosperity pastors is eloquently summed up in Gloria Copeland's statement: "We have been called to finance the gospel to the world" (Copeland 1973, 45). The two obvious questions are: 1) who is called to do the financing, and 2) why are these people called to finance? The obvious answer to question one is the people who buy into neoliberal pastoral power. However, the "why" is a much more interesting question with an equally interesting answer.

Tilton and other neoliberal pastors express their message most succinctly in what they call the "The Law of Compensation." This law is based on biblical passages that seem to suggest earthly rewards for Christians. For example, in Mark 10:30, we read:

> Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sister or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.

Neoliberal pastors read this passage as a prescription for an economic advantage associated with investing in the gospel. The Law of Compensation dictates that when Christians give abundantly to finance the gospel, God will return monetary blessings. Their message is give and expect to receive which is essentially the neoliberal entrepreneurial rationale to invest in order to earn returns on the investment. And, according to the neoliberal pastors, any Christian can earn returns on their investments. Gloria Copeland says: "Give $10 and receive $1,000; give $1,000 and receive $100,000; …in short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal" (Copeland 1973, 54). This of course creates infinitely increasing prosperity. The more one gives, the more God blesses. The more often one gives, the more often God blesses. For these pastors, there is no notion of scarcity. This idea also inspired Pastor Furtick to tell his flock, "I do it off the gross [speaking of income] because I want to be blessed off the gross." And according to Furtick's dime phenomenon, giving is fundamental in the neoliberal Christian pastorate. Osteen argues that the flock should live to give. He claims that one can gather only after he has scattered. Indeed, the amount one gathers is directly proportional to the amount one scatters. As one gives he actually improves his neoliberal salvation and sheds part of his old self because in giving one rises above selfishness. And selfishness must be

overcome to receive God's blessings. Remember Furtick's demonstration of a bucket of dimes falling on a closed fist. If you don't give you don't get. All of this points to the diffusion of the neoliberal identity in the Christian pastorate of the 21st century. The argument that there is a Law of Compensation intimately connects one's religious identity with one's economic role. Indeed, it is the various laws of economics that drive market behavior. By tying together the responsibility to finance the Gospel with a law that produces blessings in return for giving, is a clear indication of the neoliberal foundation in pastoral power.

This give and expect message, however, seems to be contrary to Jesus Christ's words, "give hoping for nothing in return."[45] Nonetheless, Joel Osteen is adamant that God wants Christians to give with expectation. He writes: "Let me encourage you to raise your expectations; start seeing yourself receiving good things. Expect the favor of God. Expect his blessings. Expect to increase. Expect promotion. Get up and face each day with enthusiasm, knowing that God has great things in store for you" (Osteen 2005, 19). Osteen tries to explain away this Gospel text by taking a different approach than the other pastors. Instead of a strict give-to-receive message, Osteen shifts to a give-and-expect message. His point is that one shouldn't see the relationship of giving and receiving as a simple transaction. Rather, one should give while at the same time expecting certain favors from God because Osteen believes, "As his children prosper spiritually, physically and materially, their increase brings God pleasure" (Osteen 2005, 87). So when you give to the church, you should expect a return on that investment because that's really what God would want to do for his children.

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[45] Luke 10:35

The dime phenomenon is interesting in its connection to the Law of Compensation and financing the gospel in neoliberal pastoral power. Neoliberal pastors use the dime phenomenon to represent a standard financial commitment. These pastors argue that individuals should contribute to the church one dime for every dollar earned. It is important to remember that the church is the product that the neoliberal pastor has developed through his entrepreneurial activity. The dime, then, is an investment in the neoliberal pastor and a return to the neoliberal pastor on his investment in himself.

There is a total transformation of faith for prosperity gospel. While traditional Christianity has tended to emphasize that faith is, "trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching, and the redemptive work He accomplished at Calvary,"[46] neoliberal theology argues a different point. Copeland argues, "faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith, which makes the laws of the spirit world function. There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in Gods' word. Faith causes them to function" (Copeland 1974, 19). Copeland further says, "If you make up your mind…that you are willing to live in divine prosperity and abundance…divine prosperity will come to pass in your life. You have exercised your faith" (Copeland 1974, 41).

Osteen also has some new ideas on faith. For Osteen, faith is necessary for success and it is enough to imagine success, wellbeing, joy, and happiness. In fact, as long as you imagine these, "nothing on earth will be able to hold these things from you" (Osteen 2005, 5). Wake up each morning and declare, "I'm going to do something great [and] This is going to be a great day" (Osteen 2005, 8 and 14). It is in these moments that

[46] Douglas, J. D., Tenny, Merrill C., eds., *The New International Dictionary of the Bible.* Grand rapids: Zondervan Publishing. 1987. s.v. "faith."

one sees eye to eye with God who "is trying to promote us, to increase us, to give us more" (Osteen 2005, 10). Imagining success leads to realizing success because "It is a spiritual principle as well as a psychological fact. We move toward what we see in our minds" (Osteen 2005, 18). In fact, Osteen goes so far as to say that "what you receive is directly connected to how you believe and what you expect" (Osteen 2005, 22). The stronger one believes the more one can expect to receive from God.

Interpreting faith in this way leads to a notion of faith that is anthropocentric. An anthropocentric faith completely reorients the focus from God to man so that the most important aspect of faith is what we gain from it. If we can gain from believing, then the reason one believes is to prosper. Victoria Osteen has the most vivid declaration of this anthropocentric faith. In a 2014 sermon to the members of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, she asserts:

> I just want to encourage every one of us to realize when we obey God, we're not doing it for God-I mean, that's one way to look at it-we're doing it for ourselves, because God takes pleasure when we're happy. That's the thing that gives Him the greatest joy...So, I want you to know this morning: Just do good for your own self. Do good because God wants you to be happy. When you come to church, when you worship Him, you're not doing it for God really. You're doing it for yourself, because that's what makes God happy. Amen? (Blair 2014).

CONCLUSION

This entire analysis has attempted to show the ways in which traditional aspects of pastoral power transform in the context of American neoliberalism, where the growth in sizes and numbers of megachurches preaching a prosperity gospel seems to turn traditional Christian ideas on their head. These often shocking theological gymnastics can be seen as effects of the social diffusion of neoliberal power. Particularly interesting is that while Pew Polls[47] indicate that religion is on the decline in America—every year less people claim to believe in God and attend weekly services—megachurches continue to grow each year. There is something about megachurches that is entirely different than traditional Christian churches which allows these churches to grow exponentially and retain membership.

Earlier I suggested that perhaps the neoliberal pastors truly believe they are leading their flocks to salvation, but their notion of salvation is entirely novel. The traditional pastor's essential responsibilities included governing the flock and leading them to eternal salvation in heaven. Heaven was understood as the eternal reward that could be earned. The pastor was charged with ensuring his flock behaved on earth in order to earn such a reward. However, the neoliberal pastor's novel view of salvation is that one should have one's reward not in heaven at the end of a dismal earthly life, but right now in this moment and throughout one's earthly life. The flock is then saved on

[47] "U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious," Pew Research Center, accessed October 14, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/.

earth rather than saved in heaven. For neoliberal pastoral power, there is neoliberal salvation.

One can see Marx' claims about religion coming full circle. Marx says: "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx 2015, 7-8). At the time, his point was that religion gave the suffering, poor, neglected, overworked, and tired religious people something to look forward to. Of course, their earthly lives were going to be miserable, but their suffering would be compensated in the next life. That was the "heart," the salvation that the religion of the traditional Christian pastorate gave to people who had nothing.

In the neoliberal pastorate, the heart of salvation given to the people is the opposite. Neoliberal salvation is here and now rather than in the next life. Since God's blessings are found in economic success, financial prosperity, promotions, and health, one realizes neoliberal salvation in earthly life. When one gives to the church and receives blessings from God, one is experiencing neoliberal salvation. Proper investment in the neoliberal pastorate guarantees a return on the investment and improving one's status in the economy. Whereas the poor and suffering used religion to get them to salvation in another life without struggle and pain, the neoliberal Christians use religion to earn a salvation that improves their current life.

Edward Pousson once claimed: "The prosperity message is in captivity to the American dream" (Pousson 1992, 159). This is precisely what has developed in the neoliberal Christian pastorate. The American Dream is the ethos that declares anyone can

become prosperous and successful and the realization of such comes through determination and hard work. The American Dream is a neoliberal notion. The gospel and the structure of the Christian pastorate after neoliberalism is fundamentally defined by the dialectic of the American Dream. After neoliberalism, pastoral power is fundamentally changed. The role of the pastor, the goal of salvation, and the activities of the flock are shifted as traditional pastoral power transforms into neoliberal pastoral power. At the core, this fundamental shift in pastoral power dissolves the religious relationship and manufactures a business relationship.

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