Ecclesiology in A Secular Age:

Ecclesiological Implications of the Work of Charles Taylor

and Bernard Lonergan

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ECCLESIOLOGY IN A SECULAR AGE:

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ABSTRACT

ECCLESIOLOGY IN A SECULAR AGE: ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORK OF CHARLES TAYLOR AND BERNARD LONERGAN

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The contemporary condition of secularity poses a unique environment in which the Church becomes incarnate in the world. The subject of secularity itself has been the focus of serious academic study, and two broad sources of this phenomenon can be drawn from the lifetime work of Charles Taylor: the rise of foundational epistemology and particular changes within the modern social imaginary. These two paradigm shifts have created a latent moral and religious skepticism within contemporary secular society in which it is generally accepted that complex moral and religious issues cannot be arbitrated by reason and must ultimately be decided on the basis of an individual’s personal feeling.

In this thesis, the author draws on an integration of studies by Charles Taylor and Bernard Lonergan to establish that intellectual, moral, and religious conversion form the basis for the act of knowing and therefore provide an adequate theological response to the problem of skepticism. Furthermore, the author examines the social imaginary particular to contemporary secular society in order to develop a means by which the Church is able draw on sacramentality, communion, catholicity, the liturgy, and cosmology to embody an incarnational spirituality in a secular age.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... iv

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1 ................................................................................................................ 5

Secularity According to Taylor ............................................................................ 5

Foundational Epistemology and Skepticism ......................................................... 13

The Best Account Principle and Framing Epiphanies ........................................... 20

Chapter 2 ................................................................................................................ 34

The Best Account Principle and Intentionality Analysis ....................................... 35

*A Secular Age* and Conversions ........................................................................ 47

Ecclesiology ........................................................................................................... 62

Conversion and Ecclesiology ................................................................................ 65
Introduction

In every age, the Church has continually developed and adapted itself to represent and become the Body of Christ in each particular time and place. At every instance, this Church has constituted and been constituted by particular people – people who have been transformed by the living Word of God and inspired to bring that Word to the world in which they lived. At the forefront of this transformation have no doubt been the constant questions: “Who is the person of Jesus Christ?” and “What does it take to be a disciple of Christ?” But besides the personal (or perhaps ‘existential’) questions, this concern has also been raised socially in the form of “What does it mean to be Church?” In this thesis, however, I will not be asking the general question “What does it mean to be Church?” but rather the more specific question “What does it mean to be Church today?”

This contemporary question is difficult because we are aware, perhaps more than any other time in history, that the world of ‘today’ is experienced in drastically different ways depending on where one in standing. Culture, economics, politics, gender roles, attitudes towards race and class, nationalism, militarism, modernity, religious pluralism, religious intolerance, relationships between clergy and laity, globalization and more each play a role in answering this question. While each of these deserve attention, I want to ask this question in light of one particular condition of the contemporary world: secularity.

Over the past decades, a wide range of academics have each attempted to put a finger on the sources and meanings of secularity. Other than a few brief mentions, I will not have the
space to address those efforts in this thesis. Rather, I will be primarily using the works of Charles Taylor who offers a new perspective on secularity which views it not as a condition of who or how many people believe in God nor as a condition of whether such belief is held ‘publically’ or ‘privately’, but rather as a particular development in the background conditions for belief in God. In this thesis, I will explore two directions in this development: epistemological methodology and the social imaginary. Regarding the first, Taylor has clearly illustrated in some of his earlier works the way in which foundational epistemology has come to function in our grasp of what it means to know something and how we come to that knowledge. The result of this seizure has been the development of moral and religious skepticism in which it is now commonly assumed – by religious believers and non-believers alike – that belief in God is not to be determined by reason but rather by something like one’s personal gut feeling. The second direction here, the social imaginary, is taken up by Taylor in his recent book, A Secular Age, in which Taylor takes us away from discussing the theories that people hold and their actions in the world, although both are still relevant and related. Rather, Taylor’s work provides a narrative in which the essential change between pre-secular and secular society is located in what he calls the social imaginary – that is, the way people “imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations.”¹

As Taylor has put forth in his body of work and as I am about to do here, the rise of secularism cannot be seen as either fully good or bad, as a movement that has saved us from the errors of pre-modern society or as a development that has left religion in the dust. For all the difficulty of religious skepticism, secularity has in a way actually paved a new way for

¹ ASA, 171.
authentic religious belief. In the first case, we will see that developing modes of moral and religious reasoning have not only stripped religion of a worldview that one simply must believe in God or face immanent peril, but by showing that all worldviews are, in fact, inculturated these modes of reasoning also work against the notion that skepticism is the fundamental stance towards the world. This leaves the table open for philosophical and theological methods that point towards authentic intellectual, moral, and religious conversion as a grounds for the act of knowing. In the second place, it is also not the case that the developments within the contemporary social imaginary are purely hostile towards religion. Rather, I will frame these developments in this thesis as movements from a commonsense worldview to a theory based worldview which are to be advanced further into a worldview of interiority which can distinguish between commonsense and theory and move fluently between the two.

Furthermore, I will draw on elements from the Catholic social imaginary which are on the level of interiority, can make sense of the secular worldview, and finally move beyond it towards authentic religious belief. Based on these elements from the Catholic social imaginary, I will then advance the ecclesiological vision that the Church in a secular age exists as the social body who is continually becoming the Body of Christ, finds God socially in the Church as a communion of communions, unites eucharistically despite diverse itineraries and therefore overcome denominational divisions, comes into contact with the eschaton through liturgical time, and constitutes a corporal body of cosmic significance as it stands in the gap between covenant history and world history in expectation of the Parousia.

In order to create this vision, there will be four stages to this thesis: (1) I will provide model of religious skepticism as a latent condition in contemporary secular society that has arisen as result of foundational epistemology, (2) drawing also on the work of Bernard Lonergan, I will develop a notion of conversion which provides an adequate theological response to
foundational epistemology and skepticism, (3) I will outline Taylor’s notion of the social imaginary and five changes in it which have led to the creation of a secular age, and (4) I will develop an ecclesiological vision which accepts the notion of conversion necessary in theological methodology and responds to each of the five changes in the social imaginary. In doing so, I will advance sacramentality, communion, catholicity, the liturgy, and cosmology as five elements within the Catholic social imaginary which are necessary for an incarnational ecclesiology in a secular age.
Chapter 1

The goal of this chapter is to outline how the development of foundational epistemology has paved the way for a latent moral and religious skepticism in our contemporary secular age. Furthermore, I will use the earlier works of Charles Taylor to work through how this epistemology is grounded upon a faulty anthropology and then begin to work through how the concepts of engaged agency and what Taylor calls the best account principle begin to move us beyond the impasses of skepticism. The content of this chapter thus falls in three main sections. In the first place, I will put forth an argument that moral and religious skepticism – that is, the notions that issues such as the good and belief in God cannot be arbitrated by reason and must simply be chosen on the basis of whichever belief feels best to us today – is indeed, a latent condition in our North Atlantic secular age. In the second place, I will use Taylor’s earlier works to generate an understanding of foundational epistemology, its sources, and how it contributes to skepticism. Finally, I will present what Taylor calls the ‘best account principle’ as the beginnings of an epistemological methodology which moves beyond moral skepticism and provides an account of how one can come to know the good.

Secularity According to Taylor

Taylor begins *A Secular Age* with a discussion of three ways in which the term ‘secularity’ is often employed. The most prevalent description of secularity is that it consists of a removal of religion from the public spheres, or “put in another way, in our ‘secular’ societies, you can engage fully in politics without ever encountering God, that is, coming to a point where
the crucial importance of the God of Abraham for this whole enterprise is brought home forcefully and unmistakably.”

In this definition, secular societies are ones where the public/political realm exists independent of any overt religion with the exception, perhaps, of a few pleasantries (such as the slogan “In God We Trust” on US currency). This understanding has not held up, however, in recent examinations of ‘private religion’ which emphasize a need to reexamine the notion of secularity in light of the recent ‘deprivatization’ of religion.

A second way in which secularity is commonly defined relates to participation in religious rituals and practice. In this sense, a secular society is one in which the majority of people do not attend a church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc. Taylor notes, however, that “the United States is rather striking in this regard. One of the earliest societies to separate Church and State, it is also the Western society with the highest statistics for religious belief and practice.” Such belief and practice, however, has not prevented the United States from becoming a secular nation. So it seems to be the case that we must look for something besides religious ritual and practice in order to describe a secular society.

Taylor locates that ‘something’ in the conditions for belief in God rather than in belief itself. In doing so, he defines secular society in a third sense as “a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.” The shift to secularity in this sense “takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in

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2 ASA, 1.
3 For example, Taylor nods to José Casanova’s work, Public Religions in the Modern World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). In this work, Casanova refers to the 1980s as a period of religious deprivatization, involving “a dual, interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and renormitivization of the public economic and political spheres,” (5-6). Because of this reemergence of religion in the public sphere, Casanova concludes that secularization theories need to reevaluate their premises in order to account for the fact that religion has neither disappeared nor seems likely to do so.
4 ASA, 2.
5 ASA, 3.
which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.”

Everyone in these secular milieux has an understanding of what life would be like if one did not believe in God, even if such a life is wholeheartedly rejected. And this is the difference Taylor would like to articulate between now and five hundred years ago – in earlier times, unbelief in God was simply inconceivable. Imagining a world without God would be something perhaps like US American youth imagining a world without computer technology. It quite simply forms the basis for everything they do. They could not imagine a world without it, and would be quite at a loss in how to go about daily life if they were suddenly placed in a world where access to computer technology was not the norm.

Focusing on the conditions for belief requires that Taylor tells a different narrative than is commonly assumed in not only sociological, philosophical, and theological discourse but also in ordinary, everyday conversation as well. This narrative runs counter to what Taylor calls ‘subtraction stories’ which have been popular at least since Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Such stories have a tendency to talk about the rise of contemporary – that is, ‘secular’ – society as if the final wonder of humanity, science, had finally arrived on the scene to pick away at the heavy infestation of religiosity that so thickly entrenched the pre-modern world. In these stories, Copernicus and Darwin become the heroes that refute the mere myths of religion so that we can live free of a fiction propagated by the Bible and other such religious (read ‘non-scientific’) texts. Thus led by the clarity of science, all talk of morals can finally get down to a discussion of the ‘real human condition’ without all the nonsense of

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6 ASA, 3.
7 Although Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is where much of the subtraction story takes form, Taylor mostly draws on its continuation in the works of Peter Berger [*The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1969)] and Oliver Tschannen [*Les Théories de la Sécularisation* (Geneve: Droz, 1992)].
the extra, spiritual baggage of our predecessors. This story is one of subtraction, and its content, in a word, is disenchantment.

We do not have to dwell long on this subtraction account, for it is told not only in our universities but also in our supermarkets. It saturates our news media and shapes our politics. And whether by the Dawkins-Hitchens consortium of ‘evangelical atheists’ or by religious fundamentalists – this is the story through which the phenomenon of religion is commonly understood.

Charles Taylor, however, remains thoroughly unconvinced by this narration of events, and not to a small degree because this story gets the order of events wrong. In the subtraction stories, everything begins with science marching in on the scene from outside; “science gave us [a] ‘naturalistic’ explanation of the world. And then people began to look for alternatives to God.” ⁸ Europe, and later the Americas, had revolutions, rebelling against their churches and monarchies alike, and these peoples soon walked away with a sense of morality that both began and ended with new reference points (of which human flourishing is the most predominant).

But this story ignores one giant factor: the rise of secular society neither began, nor could have begun, with science for two reasons. The first is simply that these changes began long before Darwin came along to ‘refute the Bible’, but the more astonishing factor is that the roots of such changes actually lie within particularly Christian motives. ⁹ Both of these reasons can be seen in Taylor’s remark that “the new mechanistic science of the seventeenth century wasn’t seen as necessarily threatening to God. It was to the enchanted universe and magic. It also began to pose a problem for particular providences. But there were important Christian motives for

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⁸ ASA, 26.
⁹ These motives include, among others, a new spirituality of death, judgment and the afterlife, increased devotion to the crucified Christ, a growing dissatisfaction with the divide between hierarchy and laity, and a rejection of perceived Church magic, (cf. ASA, Chapter 1.6).
going the route of disenchantment. Darwin was not even on the horizon in the eighteenth century.”

So instead of telling a narrative in which religion was generally weeded out from other aspects of human life, Taylor tells a story in which the tremendous plurality of belief systems that we are accustomed to today arose out of the continued development of what he calls the work of Reform. While the standard subtraction narrative usually begins with the Reformation, Taylor’s narrative is instead centered on the movement that he labels ‘Reform’. Reform “expresses a profound dissatisfaction with the hierarchical equilibrium between lay life and the renunciative vocations” which is ultimately a demand “that everyone be a real, 100 percent Christian.” Reform is perhaps a less obvious source to point at than Reformation, but it is closer to the real source of things much same as a mushroom is easier to point out than the entire system of fibers running through the log.

Looking at Reform demonstrates how the change in the conditions of belief traces to a much earlier point in history – what Karl Jaspers coined the Axial revolution. In his adaptation of the concept of the Axial Revolution, Taylor notes three dimensions of a break in embeddedness between the early religions (before the first millennium BC) and those that came later (especially in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Platonism, though also in the push towards monotheism evident in Zoroastrianism). Before the Axial turn, people were embedded in ways of life that (1) involved social relationships with the presence of spirits, forces, and/or powers, (2) related to ‘intra-cosmic’ spirits that were associated with things of this world, and (3)

\[\text{10 ASA, 26.}\]
\[\text{11 ASA, 61.}\]
\[\text{12 ASA, 774.}\]
\[\text{13 Karl Jaspers. Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte. (Zürich: Artemis, 1949). Although using Jaspers’ terms and general observations, Taylor does want to distance himself from the conclusion that there can be an identified ‘Axial Age’ in which Jaspers’ features all take place and are completed. Cf. ASA, 151ff.}\]
understood divinity’s purposes to be defined in terms of human flourishing. In Taylor’s diagnosis, the Axial religions served to initiate a break with all three of these forms of embeddedness. In this context, then, the work of Reform is seen as a continuation of the “thrust to complete the Axial revolution [...] to end the post-Axial equilibrium, that is, the balance and complementarity between pre- and post-Axial elements in all higher civilizations.”

So Reform did not come all at once, but rather that pre-Axial elements were held in tension – in Christianity for roughly the first 1200 years – with the Axial reconceptions that God is outside the cosmos and that the end of human good lies beyond mere human flourishing. The work of Reform, then, in its emphasis on each individual person being a ‘real’ Christian, continued the Axial turn in the way it aimed to disembend people from their society. I say ‘aimed to’ here in a way that is perhaps vague, but I use it to convey the notion that there is a difference between formal and material modes of social embedding. Regarding these, Taylor notes that “on the first level, we are always socially embedded; we learn our identities in dialogue, by being inducted into a certain language. But on the level of content, what we may learn is to be an individual, to have our own opinions, to attain to our own relation to God, our

14 ASA, 774. Taylor scatters his discussion of the Axial Revolution throughout his book, but the greater part can be found in the third chapter “The Great Disembedding”.

15 Here there is the tendency to let Nietzsche’s critique surface in Taylor’s language: If the work of Reform represents the thrust to complete the Axial turn (of which Christianity is a part), then is exclusive humanism, and therefore secularity, the natural end of Christianity? Taylor disagrees with this line of reasoning and instead follows an argument by Ivan Illich in which he claims that the disembending that we ended up with was both powered by Christianity as well as a ‘corruption’ of it. “Here’s where the corruption comes in: what we got was not a network of agape, but rather a disciplined society in which categorical relations have primacy, and therefore norms. But it nevertheless all started by the laudable attempt to fight back the demands of the “world”, and then make it over. ‘World’ (cosmos) in the New Testament has on one hand a positive meaning, as in, e.g., “God so loved the world” (John 3.16), and on the other a negative one: judge not as the world judges, etc. This latter sense of ‘world’ can be understood as the present sacralized order of things, and its embedding in the cosmos. In this sense, the church is rightly at odds with the world. It was this which Hildebrand clearly saw when he fought to keep Episcopal appointments out of the invasive power field of dynastic drive and ambition in the Investiture Controversy,” (ASA, 158).
own conversion experience.”¹⁶ So in this case, the Axial revolution may have brought a turn in how people conceived of their embeddedness (in extreme cases, they may not have thought of themselves as embedded at all), but there is, in reality, no way for the formal characteristic to go away.

So as people began to reconceive of themselves as a result of the work of Reform, so too did they reconceive the world around them. As the disembedding process furthered, people began to sever and eventually reject relationships with the world of ‘spirits’ and, as it became identified, ‘magic’. This is the process of disenchantment that the subtraction stories commonly attribute science as the source of. But not only does the disembedding work of Reform extend farther into history than does science, it encompasses additional elements. For when these moderns, as they were to become known, worked to disenchant the world, they also removed God as an implication in the existence of society, dissolved the need for renunciative vocations, collapsed our concept of time into an empty void to be filled, and generally shifted our worldview from a cosmos whose constant movement was propelled by God to a universe which, however much created by God, regularly functions according to fixed laws discernable by scientific method.¹⁷

These changes, which I will discuss in much greater detail in the third chapter, greatly altered the ways in which we commonly imagine both the world in which we live and the way we understand our ‘selves’ to be constituted in that world. In both accounts, people eventually began to generally conceive of their world through what Taylor calls the ‘immanent frame’ that “constitutes a ‘natural’ order, to be contrasted to a ‘supernatural’ one, an ‘immanent’ world

¹⁶ ASA, 157.
¹⁷ These subjects will be addressed in more detail when we return to a discussion of Taylor’s content in the third chapter.
over against a possible transcendent’ one.”\textsuperscript{18} This framework did not necessarily close off the possibility that a ‘transcendent world’ or a ‘transcendent being’ exists, only that it is distinct from this world. Taylor refers to this separation of the immanent and the transcendent as Providential Deism. Furthermore, Taylor insists that this movement was a change in our moral sense of the world as well, for if one imagines that human life exists within a purely immanent frame, then it becomes natural to assume a standpoint of exclusive humanism; that is, a moral stance in which human flourishing is not only a good, but ultimately the only good which should be sought. In this narrative, as opposed to the subtraction stories, it is significant that exclusive humanism – which Taylor marks as the first in the wide range of moral and religious stances that have evolved out of the process of secularization – arose out of the work of Reform which was an intensely Christian movement. Thus, Taylor writes that “exclusive humanism in a sense crept up on us through an intermediate form, Providential Deism; and both the Deism and the humanism were made possible by earlier developments within orthodox Christianity.”\textsuperscript{19}

In a secular world, in this third sense, it is not possible to believe in God naively as was the case in the past. We cannot simply assume that such belief is the only option for rational human beings because, quite frankly, we are constantly confronted with other options. Further, this naivety only seems to work in one direction: it can be removed but not regained. Taylor explicates this notion with a nod to one of his influences.

\textit{As Wittgenstein points out, my research into rock formations takes as granted that the world didn’t start five minutes ago, complete with all the fossils and striations, but it would never occur to me to formulate and acknowledge this, until some crazed philosophers, obsessively riding their epistemological hobbyhorses, put the proposition to me. But now perhaps I have caught the bug, and I can no longer be naively into my research, but now take account of what I have been leaning on, perhaps entertain the possibility that it might be wrong.}\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} ASA, 542.
\textsuperscript{19} ASA, 19.
\textsuperscript{20} ASA, 13.
Leaving naivety behind is not necessarily harmful to religious belief: do we not often hear that belief must be questioned if it is to be fully accepted? We do, but this only goes to demonstrate the dissolution of naïve belief, for such comments are only possible in a secular society where it is legitimately possible to question such belief. Understood in this way, then, secularity itself is not necessarily dangerous to religious belief. The problem comes when it is combined with a particular understanding of the act of knowing widely referred to in philosophical conversation as foundational epistemology.

Foundational Epistemology and Skepticism

Although a discussion of foundational epistemology remains, for all intents and purposes, outside *A Secular Age*, it has been treated heavily in many of Taylor’s previous works. As a broad categorization, foundational epistemology is a combination of philosophical concepts. In being epistemological, it has “the tendency to think out the question of what something is in terms of the question of how it is known.” The foundational character of this project crystallizes in the philosophies of Descartes and Locke and corresponds well with the modern mechanistic science of the day. Descartes contribution was to portray a novel depiction of the self as ideally disengaged from the rest of the world. Thought, and therefore knowledge, is ‘interior’ while the rest of the world is ‘exterior’; commitments of certainty come

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22 *PA*, 34.

23 Taylor’s largest treatment of Descartes and Locke occurs in *Sources of the Self*, chapters eight and nine, respectively, although he gives abridged versions of the argument in *Philosophical Arguments* chapters one and four. It should be noted that the limitation of this conversation to these two intellectuals is a result of my own necessary abridgment; Taylor himself includes many additional sources to the development of foundational epistemology which cannot be expounded upon in the space here.
about through a reflexive mapping of what these internal thoughts are based on. This view of
the self concretizes further in Locke’s description of the self as punctual – that is, a free and
autonomous agent who is able to act in the world on the basis of non-biased and rational
thought. The ultimate goal of the foundationalist mode of thought, then, is to shake one loose
from one’s bounded, perspectivist beliefs and arrive instead at ‘logical’ knowledge grounded
upon ‘disengaged’ facts.

Perhaps the most subtle, as well as the most enduring, aspect of this strain of
philosophical thought is the anthropology it presupposes. One of the greatest shifts from the
pre-modern to the modern worldview is the individualistic understanding of human nature, and
this took explicit form in the atomistic theories of society which continue to form the basis of
many of our legal theories and national government structures. Taylor identifies the first
inspiration for these institutions as Hugo Grotius and encapsulates his position as being that
“political authority itself is legitimate only because it was consented to by individuals (the
original contract), and this contract creates binding obligations in virtue of the pre-existing
principle that promises ought to be kept.”24 This notion was further developed by Locke, who
expanded this contract theory to include not only an original agreement by the masses but also
the continuing consent to taxation. While most contract language has waned in political theory,
the underlying anthropology remains in the idea that society and the political structures that
govern it exist for the mutual benefit of its individuals as well as the defense of their inherent
rights and freedoms.25

24 ASA, 157.
25 “In the next three centuries, from Locke to our day, although the contract language may fall away, and
be used only by a minority of theorists, the underlying idea of society as existing for the (mutual) benefit
of individuals, and the defense of their rights, takes on more and more importance. That is, it both comes
to be the dominant view, pushing older theories of society, or newer rivals, to the margins of political life
and discourses; and it also generates more and more far-reaching claims on political life. The
So we see that foundational epistemology was associated from the very beginning with new conceptions of the self as both disengaged and punctual, and both the foundationalism and the anthropology were intermixed in the atomistic portrayal of society that served politically as the basis for social contract theories. This is important to the argument I will be making regarding religious skepticism because it demonstrates that the consequences of epistemology have not been confined to philosophical debate, but rather have extended into the state in which ordinary way people commonly imagine themselves to exist.

The second feature of this section is a description of how Taylor understands epistemology to have created an extensive epidemic of moral skepticism – that is, “the widespread belief that moral positions can’t be argued, that moral differences can’t be arbitrated by reason, that when it comes to moral values, we all just ultimately have to plump for the ones which feel best to us.”26 This development arises from the inability of philosophy to find a starting point for objective argumentation, which in turn, in Taylor’s diagnosis, is fed by a reliance upon what he calls the apodictic mode of practical reasoning inherent in foundational epistemology. The apodictic mode of practical reasoning is more or less a direct application of the disengaged, punctual reason described above. In this description of things, the winner of a moral argument will be declared on the basis of appeal to disengaged criteria that must be accepted by all parties involved. Unfortunately, this seems to set too high of a standard for reason. Moral issues, and not only ones such as abortion, gay marriage, and euthanasia, but also day to day events such as which job offer to accept or whether children ought to be spanked, seem to flaunt the inability of the apodictic mode of practical reasoning to arbitrate the respective positions.

26 PA, 34.
As a result of these difficulties, philosophers such as John Stuart Mill turned to an *ad hominem* mode of reasoning often, as in Mill’s case, in the form of utilitarianism. This mode of reasoning differs from the apodictic by the fact that it assumes that there are some things which are inherently agreed upon by both parties in any given situation. Moral arguments start with the perspective of the interlocutor and then demonstrate that this person really does hold the same fundamental principles that we do. If the interlocutor’s conclusions are adverse to ours, then the task is simply to show how their argument does not really adhere to the fundamental principle on which we all agree. In Mill’s case, that principle is happiness, which he finds to be desired by all people.\(^{27}\) Mill’s case collapses, however, with the famous criticism by G.E. Moore and others which centers on an argument against the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ that Mill makes in equating what is pleasurable with what is good. Taylor’s own version of this criticism relies upon the necessary distinction between strong and weak evaluation of moral goods.\(^{28}\)

So when the choice is between the apodictic mode of reasoning, which seems impossible, or the *ad hominem* mode, which in its given forms has appeared inadequate, irrelevant, or just plain wrong, we feel forced to accept the apodictic and assume that it is not impossible, but merely needs to be worked at harder. We say that the criteria to make these moral arguments must exist somewhere and like good scientists, we must simply continue to turn over enough rocks until we find the evidence we’re looking for. But as long as these criteria

\(^{27}\) “No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness.” [Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*, 13\(^{\text{th}}\) edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 53.]

\(^{28}\) Briefly, this distinction is that “(1) In weak evaluation, for something to be judged good it is sufficient that it be desired, whereas in strong evaluation there is also a use of ‘good’ or some other evaluative term for which being desired is not sufficient,” and “(2) when in weak evaluation one desired alternative is set aside, it is only on grounds of its contingent incompatibility with a more desired alternative [. . . .] But with strong evaluation this is not necessarily the case. Some desired consummation may be eschewed not because it is incompatible with another, or if because of incompatibility this will not be contingent.” [*What is Human Agency?*](http://humanagencyandlanguage.com) *Human Agency and Language.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 18-9.
fail to show up, it seems that we are forced, however reluctantly, to accept a degree of moral skepticism.

Taylor finds and additional source of moral skepticism in “the belief that a critical morality, by its very nature, rules out the ad hominem mode of practical reasoning.”\(^{29}\) As long as we subscribe to foundational epistemology, we ultimately believe that the only way to answer questions of what the good is is with the method of disengaged reason. This type of reason, as discussed above, attempts to “shake us loose from our parochial perspective”\(^{30}\) and verify the certainty of our knowledge with ‘external’ proof (that is, evidence independent of the particular observer). If this is a fundamental requirement of valid logic, then the ad hominem mode of practical reasoning cannot stand because it assumes that practical reasoning can be based upon elements shared in common by all participants, and such perspectival thinking is definitively uncritical and illogical. On this account, it is impossible for one to be radically critical of moral positions when one is bound only to the given perspectives of those present in the conversation. In Taylor’s words, “starting from where your interlocutor is not only seems an inferior mode of reason in general, but in can be presented as a peculiarly bad and, indeed, vicious form of practical reasoning.”\(^{31}\) Confronted with this desire for a critical morality, the apodictic mode of reasoning, for all its flaws, suddenly seems much more attractive. Moral skepticism, then, seems inevitable as long as foundational epistemology continues to be our understanding of what it is to know something.

The upshot of this section has been to demonstrate that seventeenth century philosophy brought with it a shift in our anthropological conceptions. Descartes and Locke, among a hoard of others, paved the way for an understanding of the self as disengaged and

\(^{29}\) PA, 41.  
\(^{30}\) PA, 40.  
\(^{31}\) PA, 40.
punctual that goes far beyond the quarrels of philosophical debate and forms the basis for European and North American political society (and, to varying degrees, for everywhere else that mode of political action has been enforced). This shift in anthropology is further concretized through foundational epistemology in the way we understand the act of knowing as being an inner projection of the outer world. One of the fundamental characteristics of this epistemology is its apodictic mode of practical reasoning. Such reasoning continues to be used in moral arguments despite the clearly impossible standards it sets because of the rejection of the *ad hominem* mode of reasoning that accompanied the criticism of naturalism as well as its attractive promises of a critical morality.

What is more, though, is that this form of reasoning has created a widespread epidemic of moral skepticism. Because it seems that logic and reason are unable to arbitrate between moral positions that begin with vastly different sets of presuppositions, the only natural conclusion seems to be that we must accept this moral skepticism regardless of how opposed to it we may be.

*Religious Skepticism*

Thus far, two themes have been extracted from Taylor’s body of work – the notion of secularity and foundational epistemology as the ground for moral skepticism – in order to advance the argument that the way in which secularity is described in *A Secular Age*, combined with an understanding of the effects of foundational epistemology, demonstrates a latent religious skepticism that exists within contemporary culture and secular society. In the first place, we recall that Taylor defines a secular society as one in which there exist newly created options such as exclusive humanism that create an environment of choice between forms of
belief and forms of unbelief. This potential for choice exists for most people in such societies regardless of how firmly set they are in their respective positions. The question is, then, how does one decide which option to choose? As demonstrated above, the primacy of foundational epistemology has created a climate, not only philosophical but also political, in which a widespread moral skepticism exists.

The same issue unfortunately comes to a head in the subject of knowledge of God, for no more disengaged criteria have been found in this intellectual arena than in moral philosophy. The difference is perhaps that as far as belief in God is concerned, it has long been accepted – in the full sense of the word – that there are no such criteria for knowledge. This seems to be implied even in Paul’s definition of faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.” But what is new in this climate is that such lack of criteria is no longer acceptable – it does not fit with our understanding of what it is to know something.

Thus, it seems that if a secular society is one in which even firm believers in God recognize their faith to be one possibility among others, and if the climate of foundational epistemology has incapacitated practical reason such that we cannot arbitrate between them without a common ground of human experience, then secularized societies are left in a condition where both believers and unbelievers alike are generally left without any recourse to objectivity in order to support their respective positions. Believers may talk of the experience of God in their lives while non-believers often make a mechanistic reduction but neither is able to make a convincing argument unless the other accepts their particular starting point. And while it certainly is the case that particular individuals sometimes change their worldviews, the multiplicity of starting points in our secular society continues to dictate that belief in God simply

32 Heb 11:1, RSV.
cannot be arbitrated by reason and must be chosen (or chosen against) on the basis of one’s own, personal preference.

The Best Account Principle and Framing Epiphanies

The focus of the second section of this chapter is on the mode of practical reasoning that Taylor calls the best account principle and then to show how this methodology begins to move beyond religious and moral skepticism. I will accomplish this task in two phases – a deconstructive one and then a constructive one. The deconstructive phase will reexamine the philosophical anthropology that supports the climate of foundational epistemology and point out some of the flaws inherent in it. The constructive phase will transition to a new anthropology of engaged agency. Working from this new perspective, Taylor’s best account principle forms the basis of a method of practical reasoning that opens the doors to authentic belief in God that religious skepticism has closed.

In the above discussion regarding foundationalism and the sources of skepticism, I described foundational epistemology as a conception of the act of knowing as the ‘inner’ attainment of ideas about an ‘outer’ world. This understanding is inherently dualistic in the sense that, from the standpoint of a subject, there is an “I” and then there is the rest of the world. This understanding began with the Cartesian notion of the disengaged self, proceeded with the Lockean development of the punctual self, and ended in an atomistic construal of

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33 Taylor’s argument is focused exclusively on moral skepticism, but because both moral skepticism and the religious skepticism latent in contemporary secular society rely upon foundational epistemology and the dualistic anthropology that supports it, a non-dualistic method of practical reasoning that works against moral skepticism also functions against religious skepticism.
society. Taylor’s criticism of this epistemology is that this understanding rests upon two inconsistent assumptions: (a) that ideas can be identified accurately and separately from the ‘outside’ world, and (b) that these ideas can somehow still claim to accurately represent this outside world. Taylor’s analysis of these assumptions is that:

The incoherence of this combination may be hidden from us by the existence of things that seem to have feature (a), such as certain sensations, and even of states that seem to combine (a) and (b), such as stable illusions. But what clearly emerges from the whole argument of the last two centuries is that the condition of states of ourselves having (b) is that they cannot satisfy (a).\(^{34}\)

Taylor’s knowledge of ‘the whole argument of the last two centuries’ is clearly extraordinary, and he cites examples from Hegel, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, Herder, Husserl, and Brentano to illustrate what he understands this argument to be. But the first step in overcoming foundational epistemology, in Taylor’s understanding, goes even farther back than these philosophers and involves the formation of transcendental arguments, which trace back to Kant. These arguments “start from some feature of our experience which they claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil [... and] then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject’s position in the world.”\(^{35}\) The transcendental move extends beyond Descartes because its basis no longer requires that the self be completely disengaged and unformed by its place in time and history. Instead, Kant maintained that it is the experiential quality of the subject that allows for the establishment of knowledge. This is a significant step forward, but in an important sense transcendental arguments have continued to be mixed up in foundational epistemology. This becomes especially clear in the contention that transcendental arguments are able to lead the subject to an apprehension of objective

\(^{34}\) PA, 10.
\(^{35}\) PA, 20.
knowledge by intending objects in the world.\textsuperscript{36} The most common analogy here is that knowing something is like taking a good look at it and seeing it accurately and without deception.

While Taylor does not wish to entirely do away with transcendental arguments altogether, he finds fault with this ocular metaphor in the realization that “although a correct formulation will be self-evidently valid, the question may arise whether we have formulated things correctly.”\textsuperscript{37} In other words, we may have a valid transcendental argument, but still be left unsure as to any ‘objective’ knowledge because different perspectives can be taken in intending objects without any recourse to determining the ‘correct’ one. An example of this problem can be found in one of Wittgenstein’s more famous examples, the duck-rabbit image, in which Wittgenstein demonstrates that all our seeing is fundamentally aspect-seeing.\textsuperscript{38}

This realization changes our understanding of the act of knowing from something similar to ‘taking a look’ to the proper use of language-games. Wittgenstein’s observations regarding aspect-seeing demonstrate, in a sense, that we are more embodied than Kant imagined. We are not only embodied subjects (that is, subjects who only understand the world through experience) but engaged agents who must have a sense even of their own experiences as embodied. When I see a cup, for instance, I do not know that it is a cup simply because something ‘internal’ tells me so, but rather because I can successfully employ the use of language – that is, a system of knowledge that is seemingly external to me. Some readers of Wittgenstein understand this as a collapse of the distinction between the inner self and outer

\textsuperscript{36} The particulars of Kant’s transcendental arguments and intentionality are both too lengthy and unnecessary to retrace here. This is done in his well known Critique of Pure Reason. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to simply focus on the results of his Critique.

\textsuperscript{37} PA, 32.

world. In a similar fashion, Taylor describes this non-dualistic anthropology by saying that the self has sources both internal and external.

From this brief examination, it seems clear that the real problem with foundational epistemology is the philosophical anthropology that supports it. If this epistemology is to be properly confronted in order to address the subject of skepticism, then one must begin by doing away with the notion that the self is comprised exclusively of internal sources. One might question what all the discussion about the epistemology was for in the first place then, but the answer to this question is that the discussion of foundational epistemology is essential in order to address the further question of methodology. The roots of the problem may be anthropological, but the way in which we address this problem ultimately depends on what we imagine it means to come to know something. Method, in other words, is a question of epistemology.

We noticed before that foundational epistemology relies upon a method demanding that one give immediate criteria – that is, data that could be verified by any given person given the same set of conditions – in order to support all lines of reasoning. To most contemporary people, this demand probably not only sounds reasonable, but is the only one that even makes sense. If this is so, then it is because we have been completely captivated by the preeminence of foundational epistemology. To move forward, therefore, Taylor needs a methodology that operates out of a non-foundational epistemology. Therefore, the positive phase of this section will have three steps: briefly describing the anthropology of engaged agency, demonstrating

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39 I have not found Taylor ever claim the field ‘non-foundational epistemology’. He often writes of simply ‘epistemology,’ and it is confusing as to whether or not he wishes to completely disassociate with the term or not. If epistemology must mean foundational epistemology, then he most certainly does. Introduction of the term non-foundational epistemology here is meant simply to categorize an understanding of what constitutes the act of knowing that does not rely upon the apodictic model of objective criteria.
what this means for our understanding of the act of knowing, and concluding with a philosophical method that looks to move beyond moral and religious skepticism.

One understanding of the self that influenced Taylor’s concept of engaged agency is Heidegger’s articulation of *Dasein* (‘there-being’, or ‘being-in-the-world’). As Brian Braman describes it, “for Heidegger, Dasein does not appear upon the scene fully constituted in its being like the Cartesian or Lockean subject that seems to manifest itself *ex nihilo*.”\(^{40}\) The notion of self as Dasein instead requires an understanding that the embodied agent has a “sense of self as embodied subject.”\(^{41}\) This implies that one cannot possibly be understood as disengaged from the world, but instead only as already situated within it.

This philosophical understanding that we have been tracing in terms from both Heidegger and Wittgenstein heavily relies upon the notion of the ‘background’ or ‘pre-ontology’ of our understanding.\(^{42}\) This makes Taylor’s task difficult because the ‘background’, by nature, “is that of which I am not simply unaware, as I am unaware of what is now happening on the other side of the moon, because it makes intelligible what I am uncontroversially aware of; at the same time, I am not explicitly or focally aware of it, because that status is already occupied by what it is making intelligible.”\(^{43}\) The act of knowing, then, looks a lot more like accumulating insights into one’s situation in the world than discovering time- and cultureless facts about the universe.


\(^{41}\) PA, 26.

\(^{42}\) Heidegger claims that pre-ontology is always existent for beings like us who have been ‘thrown’ into their worlds: “Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being [...] To be ontological does not yet mean to develop ontology. Thus if we reserve the term ontology for the explicit, theoretical question of the meaning of beings, the intended ontological character of Da-sein is to be designated as pre-ontological.” [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Joan Stambaugh, trans. (Albany: State of New York Press, 1996), 16.]

\(^{43}\) PA, 69.
The force of Taylor’s insistence on the background is especially driven home in the context of moral reasoning. For example:

There are social rules, like those governing our behaviour in a socialist commune, where the norms of social interchange are profoundly marked by the aspiration to certain goods: e.g., absolute equality without regard to rank or sex, autonomy of individuals, solidarity. Only against this background can we understand why the question whether A takes out the garbage and B washes the dishes, or vice versa, can be a moral issue here.44

In this example, Taylor illustrates how irreducibly social our goods are.45 Unlike the ‘natural science’ approach to moral questions in which moral issues should be arbitrated by impartial observers, day to day moral issues—such as who takes out the trash and who does the dishes—can only be arbitrated by those who are familiar to the entirety of background conditions involved. It would simply be absurd to try to locate some inherent, universal property by which we know how to settle an issue such as this. Furthermore, if Taylor’s assessment is correct, then moral decision making is always made against the context of a given background. Without a worldview of absolute equality, which includes even the language base of ‘equality’ and ‘fairness’, as well as a particular historical circumstance of gender assigned tasks, it is impossible to accurately make sense out of why A and B consider the best moral choice to be to alternate doing the dishes and taking out the trash (or whatever the actual case may be).

Moral reasoning, then, becomes a search for the best way to make sense out of our actions in the terms that we live these actions. Taylor first defines this as the best account principle in Sources of the Self:

The terms we select have to make sense across the whole range of both explanatory and life uses. The terms indispensable for the latter are part of the story that makes best sense of use, unless and until we

44 SS, 55–6. Taylor’s emphasis.
45 While Taylor does not use the phrase ‘irreducibly social’ in Sources of the Self, it is the same notion that he develops in a later essay “Irreducibly Social Goods” (PA, 127-145).
can replace them with more clairvoyant substitutes. The result of this search for clairvoyance yields the best account we can give at any given time, and no epistemological or metaphysical considerations of a more general kind about science or nature can justify setting this aside. The best account in the above sense is trumps.  

Taylor finds that working under the best account principle is a way to overcome the methodological problems of foundational epistemology. Encapsulated in a word, this is the problem of ‘criteria’, and to quote Taylor at length again, he defines this problem of criteria as such:

*What is aimed at by this term [criteria] is a set of considerations such that, for two explicitly defined, rival positions X and Y, (a) people who unconfusedly and undividedly espouse both X and Y have to acknowledge them, and (b) they are sufficient to show that Y is right and X is wrong, or vice versa. It is then driven home, against those who take an upbeat view of practical reason, that for any important moral dispute, no considerations have both (a) and (b). If the rift is deep enough, things that are (b) must fail of (a), and vice versa.*

Now this does not mean that people are ultimately unable to give reasons for their moral decision, only that these reasons are not ‘universal’ ones that *must* ultimately be shared by all persons thinking in an untroubled manner. Of course, though, this was exactly the point where the issue of skepticism arose above. When confined to a foundational epistemology, it seems as if practical reasoning fails in light of the lack of these criteria in moral arguments.

Taylor’s conception of practical reasoning, however, outlines a methodology that does not have to succumb to moral skepticism in his article “Explanation and Practical Reasoning” by demonstrating that people are, in fact, able to make moral determinations even in situations where criteria as such are unavailable. These decisions are ultimately made based on our ability to make concrete judgments regarding particular transitions. Taylor notes three general

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46 SS, 58.
48 PA, 34-60
ways in which this occurs. One manner of judging a given transition in positions as a gain is when the new account provides additional resources for comparative reasoning than existed in the first account. In many ways, this mode of judging transitions is similar to judgment based on ‘criteria’, because one account simply incorporates more facts, observations, benefits, etc., that the other does not. But Taylor’s point is not that what passes for criteria may never be used, only that they are not the exclusive measures by which we determine the outcome of moral questions.

Another means of judging transitions occurs when one account has the ability to make sense out of both its own story as well as that of the other. Taylor uses the example of the transition from Aristotelian to modern science, in which case models of science changed from explanation in terms of finding the appropriate place of things within the order of the cosmos to explanation in terms of knowing one’s way about in the world through the means of prediction and control. Now, while it is certainly the case that we think today that the ability of scientists to continue to predict and control experiments demonstrates the superiority of this position, it seems that this would not necessarily convince the pre-Galilean. Each has an accepted view of what science consists, and success on the other’s terms hardly seems convincing.

This is a difficult point from which to proceed if one is stuck in the Cartesian framework of disengaged reason, for each position is justifiable from its own perspective. It seems that a truly neutral bystander would be unable to choose between them. But from Taylor’s perspective, these are not two positions chosen between by some sort of outsider, but instead from the vantage point of an engaged agent. Such an agent is forced to deal with these arguments as an actual transition. The fact of the matter is, our understanding of science transformed from an Aristotelian one to the modern one of prediction and control, and by working through this transition we have come to see that knowledge, understood roughly as
‘knowing your way about in the world’ has played a large role in functioning human society in the last few centuries. In Taylor’s words, it seems that “beyond a certain point you just can’t pretend any longer that manipulation and control are not relevant criteria of scientific success,” and therefore, “pre-Galilean science died of its inability to explain/assimilate the actual success of post-Galilean science, where there was no corresponding symmetrical problem.”49 The contemporary position has the advantage that it can make sense of both the pre- and post-Galilean positions whereas the earlier position is left helpless to explain the actual success of post-Galilean science.

But neither of these methods has yet strayed too far beyond foundationalism because they both follow a course of argument in which “the winner has appealed to some consideration that the loser had to acknowledge […]. In the light of this consideration, it was possible to show that the transition from X to Y could be shown as a gain, but not the reverse. So there is still something like a criterion operating here.”50 Taylor’s third way of recognizing a better account steps completely outside the boundaries of criteria as defined by insisting that there are instances in which certain transitions can be understood as gains (or losses) only from the vantage point of the new perspective. It is perhaps best to clarify this notion through an example of Taylor’s:

Joe was previously uncertain whether he loved Anne, because he also resents her, and in a confused way he was assuming that love is incompatible with resentment. But now he sees that these two are distinct and compatible

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49 PA, 47.
50 PA, 51. It should be noted that Taylor is not taking issue with the fact that criteria function within practical reasoning to form arguments. The purpose of these first two means of transition from one account to a new one is, in fact, to specifically include criteria and data analysis as legitimate forms of providing a best account. The problem, though, is that the task of providing criteria has been assumed to be the only rationally proper task, whereas Taylor’s principle looks to subsume this task under his larger principle. Thus, his third means of transition marks a distinct break with providing criteria in order to demonstrate ways in which providing a best account can be independent of (and therefore subsume) the task of providing criteria.
emotions, and the latter is no longer getting in the way of the former. Joe is confident that his present self-reading (I certainly love Anne) is superior to his former self-reading (I’m not sure if I love Anne), because he knows that he passed from one to the other via the clarification of a confusion – a move that in its very nature is error-reducing.51

In this example, Taylor’s account of practical reasoning clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of the foundational approach. If approaching the subject from a foundationalist perspective, Joe would have had to be able to give some set of criteria that could be judged by any neutral observer. Saying something like “I love Anne because she is the most beautiful woman in the world” would make no sense. A good foundationalist would have to point out that (a) there is no ‘external proof’ that Anne is the most beautiful woman in the world, and (b) finding someone beautiful is neither a necessary nor sufficient criteria for love. And such would be the case no matter what reasoning Joe was to give. Fortunately, in a large number of cases, our practical reasoning just does not have to function this way. Instead, we are able to judge particular transitions as gains because we are able to recognize them as inherently error reducing moves: we may remove a contradiction, or move from confusion to clarity, or recognize a previously ignored factor. In the terms used above, we have found that one account provides a set of terms which provide a better account of the issue than the previous ones. In this way of understanding knowledge, it makes sense for Joe to say that he loves Anne because she is the most beautiful person in the world because this is the account that provides the greatest clarity.

It must be noted, though, that in this case, the ability to provide a better account is the result of a particular ‘search for clairvoyance,’ as Taylor called it above. As such, it is not necessarily the case that the ability to judge the transition as a gain is available to all parties. Before Joe determined that he loved Anne, it was not clear to him that that was, in fact, the best

51 PA, 52.
account of the situation. Only through the actual process of actually accepting ‘love’ as his feeling for Anne and then further reflecting on this transition could Joe concretely judge the account of the situation in which he is said to love Anne as the best account.

What is significant especially in this last example of the best account principle is that one’s conception of the good is realized through a personal resonance. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor equates this concept to the language of framing epiphanies that developed within modern art and poetry. Here, Taylor uses the term epiphany to describe the “notion of a work of art as the locus of a manifestation which brings us into the presence of something which is otherwise inaccessible, and which is of the highest moral or spiritual significance; a manifestation, moreover, which also defines or completes something, even as it reveals.”

Epiphanic events are thus events in which one has a personal resonance with what is being revealed in the work of art; the symbols and artistry speak directly to the observer. Taylor finds an additional significance in the turn from the ‘epiphanies of being’ found in Romantic art to the ‘framing epiphanies’ found in modernist art. The difference here is that the previous can be characterized “by three features: they (1) show some reality to be (2) an expression of something which is (3) an unambiguously good moral source. Framing epiphanies negate (2); they are not expressions of anything.” In other words, the notion of a framing epiphany has the additional feature that it is not a representation of something more general such as ‘love’ or ‘the unrestricted human desire for power’ or whatever. Although descriptive and critical language might be useful in bringing one to the epiphanic moment, it is no substitute and

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52 SS, 419.
53 These later are called ‘framing’ epiphanies because, although we remain “unable to ‘name’ things, we can nevertheless frame them in ‘constellations’, clusters of terms and images whose mutual affinity creates a space within which the particular can emerge,” (SS, 478).
54 SS, 479.
certainly not a purer or more precise articulation of what is being revealed than exists in the art itself. For example, Taylor asks himself:

_How can I formulate the epiphany which opens through The Waste Land? Going through the critical apparatus may facilitate the epiphany, but doesn’t yield a formulation of it. Well, I can write another poem myself, index it to my personal vision. Otherwise, I can only indicate what it is by directing you to the poem itself._

Now in understanding moral sources as mediated either by framing epiphanies or best accounts, the notion of the good is defined or revealed directly by the source itself and realized directly through a personal resonance. Such realizations of the good are inherently biographical: they must be lived through and reflected upon and it is only through this process that one can come to a clearer comprehension of the good. And just the same as reading an art critic, however helpful in understanding a piece of art, is no substitute or purer articulation of what is being expressed than the piece of art itself, philosophical analysis of the good can only help to guide and assist one in comprehending the actual revelation of the good that comes from moral sources in our lives. So although this portrayal of moral reasoning places philosophical analysis in more of a navigator’s position than that of the driver, it certainly allows for a discussion of one being able to know the good. In other words, Taylor’s conception of practical reasoning allows for a movement beyond moral skepticism because it moves past notions that the good is unable to be ‘known’ for sure and identifies a mode of reasoning in which it is possible to make claims of actually knowing the good.

55 SS, 492.
The point of this chapter, then, has been to demonstrate how Taylor’s narrative functions to work against religious skepticism by refuting the claim that because no external ‘criteria’ exist whereby to ‘prove’ the existence (or non-existence) of God then there does not exist a mode of practical reasoning by which one can have valid, objective knowledge of God. This argument began by showing how Taylor’s perspective on secularity can be used to demonstrate an inherent religious skepticism latent in secular society. This skepticism was addressed, not by playing by its rules (i.e. foundational epistemology) but instead through a shift to a philosophical anthropology based on engaged agency which accepts practical reasoning as a process of judgment based on transitions.

Now given the fact that the subject matter of this conversation is the change in conditions for belief in God, it is perhaps ironic that the real substantive argument so far has in fact been much more about philosophy than theology. This should not be surprising, however – Taylor is, after all, a philosopher and keeps almost exclusively to philosophical conversations. But it will be the larger conclusion of this thesis that Taylor’s work actually carries with it serious theological implications – especially ones related to ecclesiology – and such ramifications will be the subject matter for the third chapter. Before this discussion can take place, though, I must take a detour in order to outline the theological tradition out of which I will be working. Namely, this is the work of Bernard Lonergan on transcendental method and conversion. What Lonergan’s work will do for this conversation is outline the process of religious, intellectual, and moral conversion whereby one comes to know God. With Lonergan’s work in place, I will then

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56 The argument here is not to reduce the validity of arguments such as Anselm’s ontological proof of God. Such proofs certainly have functioned for Anselm and others who share certain of his presuppositions. Rather, the point is that such proofs do not function based on the understanding of foundationalist criteria such that both believers and non-believers alike must acknowledge them and from them conclude that belief is the correct option. This observation has been made by philosophers such as Iris Murdoch, who upholds that “if considered carefully, however, the ontological proof is seen to be not exactly a proof but rather a clear assertion of faith,” [The Sovereignty of Good]. (London: Routledge, 2001), 61.
be able to demonstrate how Taylor’s narrative extends beyond philosophy and offers a basis for theological conversation. Particularly, his work can be applied to sketch an outline of how the Church is able to provide the matrix for conversion that allows one to overcome the latent religious skepticism of our secular age.
Chapter 2

In the previous chapter, I proposed that Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* contains serious implications for the Church and ecclesiology. These implications, though, are not articulated clearly by the author – his focus is to shift his reader’s understanding of secularity to one that is concerned with the background conditions for belief in God. Thus, because the theme of this thesis is concerned with Taylor’s implicit content rather than his explicit content, I conducted a methodological study appropriating the theories of anthropology, epistemology, and logical method that Taylor outlined in his previous works. This led to several discoveries. The first is that Taylor’s secularization narrative indicates that part of what it means to be a secular society is that there is a latent religious skepticism in the ways in which we normally make sense of our lives. The second is that through the notions of framing epiphanies and the best account principle, Taylor is able to articulate a method of practical reasoning that – although it is used in most of our decision making processes and although it is able to overcome moral and religious skepticism – nevertheless gets sidelined in questions of morality and belief in God. By incorporating this method of practical reasoning into theological dialogue, we may be able to make significant headway in working against religious skepticism.

But it seems that only half of the picture has been drawn so far, for although Taylor’s account presents an excellent deconstruction of secularity, there remains a significant body of positive work to be done in illustrating what belief in God entails as well as how such belief exists on the social level. My proposition for this chapter is that a more complete analysis of Taylor’s methodology as well as what ‘working against religious skepticism’ means can be found
by appropriating the notion of conversion. For this, I will integrate Taylor’s works with the
intentionality analysis of Bernard Lonergan. This is not an entirely new idea; and therefore, I will
begin by reviewing previous integrations between these two authors. Existing literature on
Taylor and Lonergan only gets us part way towards our goal, however, because it does not yet
account for the shifts Taylor had made in his most recent publication which this paper is
ultimately about. Thus, I will proceed with a further integration between Taylor and Lonergan
that addresses the notion of conversion in both the implicit methodology of Taylor’s *A Secular
Age* as well as the explicit discussion of the subject in its concluding chapter entitled
‘Conversions’. As I will argue, this notion of conversion is one that necessarily includes not only
individuals but also the Church. Thus, I will conclude with a section outlining the general
considerations that the notion of conversion holds for ecclesiology before mapping out more
particular implications in the third chapter.

**The Best Account Principle and Intentionality Analysis**

*Why Integrate Lonergan and Taylor?*

The intuition that the works of Charles Taylor and Bernard Lonergan are highly
complementary is not a new one. Cursory articles have been published by both Nicholas
Plants and Frederick Lawrence, and a recent book has been published by Brian Braman.
Braman’s study on human authenticity provides the clearest reason for integrating the two
scholars. Adapting Lonergan’s conception of the hermeneutical circle, Braman refers to a

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57 Plants, Nicholas. “Lonergan and Taylor: A Critical Integration,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 19 no.1 (2001), 143-172. Plants seeks an integration of the two based on their commitment to realism, but confines Taylor to a notion of ‘uncompromising realism’ which is based on a very small selection of Taylor’s body of works and does not sit well in light of later studies.

58 Lawrence, Frederick. “The Hermeneutic Revolution and the Future of Theology.” In *Between the Human and the Divine*. Andrzej Wiercinski, ed. (Toronto: Hermeneutic Press, 2002). Since most of Lawrence’s intuitions are taken further in Braman’s work, I will simply address Braman’s.
person as a dramatic subject who both constitutes and is constituted by her heritage. This can be conceived spatially in terms of upward and downward movement in which “the way down describes the lived and already given cultural and linguistic matrix (which is historical) that structures the person’s sense of identity. The way up explains the constituting activity of the human subject: the intentional activity of the person as she constitutes herself to be a knower, chooser, and lover.”

Taylor’s work on the modern identity in *Sources of the Self* is significant for Braman because it establishes a genealogical (or ‘downward’) account of the way in which we understand ourselves to exist as always already constituted in the world. I outlined much of this account in the previous chapter.

Braman is not satisfied, though, with Taylor’s account for two reasons. The first is that Taylor’s account is “abbreviated because it does not seem to get at ‘precise speech about the intelligible in the sensible and insights into concrete situations.’” This is an interesting critique given Taylor’s commitment to contemporary cultural and political phenomena, but I will leave it aside for now and return to it when I turn to content analysis in the third chapter of this study.

For now, it is important to focus on Braman’s second critique which focuses on the concept of heritage. Braman traces this concept back to Heidegger, who “distinguishes between a tradition – in which the meanings and values that constitute the givenness of Dasein’s being-in-the-world have become reified, hardened, or even distorted – and a ‘heritage’.” Heritage, in contrast, lies beyond standard interpretations of the world and constitutes the enduring ideals of human existence. Authentic human existence, then, involves a continual re-discovery of this heritage on the part of Dasein.

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59 Braman, 74.
61 Braman, 27.
Now Braman finds that Taylor’s account of human authenticity surpasses Heidegger’s “because Heidegger’s position on human authenticity ultimately closes off the possibility of real transcendence” with his insistence that human existence ends in death whereas Taylor’s account locates an authentic human ideal beyond the limits of death.62 But Braman nevertheless finds a problem with the fact that “if, as Lonergan suggests, one’s heritage is rarely free from aberration because of the consistent presence of different types of biases, how is one ever to adequately address the problem of appropriating an ideal that in some way continues to be distorted?”63 Answering this question, for Braman, requires “a thicker and more differentiated explanation of the experience of self-transcendence, one that not only compliments Taylor’s more undifferentiated account, but thematizes more concretely the ‘human subject as subject’.64 He finds one such account in Lonergan’s intentionality analysis which more clearly articulates the upward portion of the hermeneutical conception of the human agent in a way that introduces a higher integration of human living that removes the problems of a distorted heritage.

Lonergan’s Intentionality Analysis

The intentionality analysis of Fr. Bernard Lonergan is grounded upon the understanding that authentic human existence is achieved in self-transcendence which can be reached through a threefold form of conversion that is intellectual, moral, and religious. By exploring this understanding of the process of conversion, Braman closes the hermeneutical account of authentic human existence as both a constituted and constituting subject. That is, while our explorations of Taylor’s genealogical account of the human subject as an engaged agent in the

62 Braman, 26.
63 Braman, 88.
first chapter provided the ‘downward’ or ‘constituting’ aspect of authentic human existence, it remains to be seen how one moves through the ‘upward’ or ‘constituted’ aspect and develops new insights into human existence. Thus, we will work through the threefold conception of the process of conversion in order to complete the hermeneutical conception of authentic human existence that forms the basis of Braman’s integration of Taylor and Lonergan.

In the first place, then, we must address the subject of intellectual conversion.

Intellectual conversion is conceived as a dynamic process through the transcendental operations in which one comes to know the world mediated by meaning and affirms one’s self as a knower. To grasp the meaning of this concept, I will work through what sort of dynamic process is meant in this context, what is meant by knowing the world mediated by meaning, and how one affirms one’s self as a knower. The first notion here is that human insight is arrived at through a basic pattern of operations which correspond to the basic levels of human consciousness. These operations are experiencing, understanding, and judging, and they relate to the empirical, intelligent, and rational levels of consciousness. So first, we have some experience of the world, but our intelligent consciousness desires to know, ‘What is it?’ When we answer with an insight into what it is, our rational consciousness asks, ‘Is it really so?’ Thus, our conscious operation is a successive pattern of questioning which is directed towards knowing what Lonergan calls proportionate being, that is, “whatever is to be known by human experience, intelligent grasp, and reasonable affirmation.”

In full, then, “we experience in order to understand, we seek to understand in order to judge, we judge in order to know particular beings, and we desire to know particular beings in order to know being in general.”

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65 Insight, 416.
66 Braman, 62.
When one executes this process, one both affirms and is affirmed as a knower — a process which Lonergan refers to as the self-affirmation of the knower. One is affirmed as a knower because it is a process of discovery, but one also affirms oneself as a knower because such discovery only comes about through the conscious activity of that individual. Doing so is introspective, but it is important to note that Lonergan distinguishes between introspection and inward inspection. Inward inspection is based on the mistake that knowing is analogous to looking. In this mistaken view, inward introspection would be something like one turning one’s gaze back on oneself and looking inwards. The problem with this view is that it views the knower’s self-affirmation as if it were something like the subject experiencing himself knowing, where ‘experiencing’ is taken as a conscious operation. Rather, it is important to draw the distinction between consciousness and conscious operations, for consciousness exists prior to any conscious operation. Thus, introspection “is not a matter of looking, inspecting, gazing upon. It is an awareness, not of what is intended, but of the intending.” This, I believe, is the same insight shared by Ludwig Wittgenstein when he wrote “I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say ‘I know what you are thinking’, and wrong to say ‘I know what I am thinking.’”

So intellectual conversion “is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of [the] exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth [that knowing is like looking].” It moves us to the insight that we are knowers and that our knowing is a process of experiencing, understanding, and judging. But there is another distinction made in the process of intellectual conversion.

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67 Insight, 343.
68 Method, 8.
69 Method, 15.
71 Method, 238.
conversion, and that is the one between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. The world of immediacy is the world that is known through direct sense experience, but it comprises only a small portion of the world mediated by meaning. As Lonergan puts it, “the world mediated by meaning is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community.” Thus, there are two elements to the world mediated by meaning that are not present in the world of immediacy. The first is that the world of immediacy is determined entirely by the experiences of the individual. This gives the illusion that knowing is an entirely individual act. But, in fact, the vast majority of one’s knowledge does not come simply through direct sense experience and personal interpretation, but rather through the shared pool of knowledge to which each person both adds and from which each similarly receives.

In the second place, knowing the world mediated by meaning does not just occur through experience, but rather through a more complete process that works all the way through the conscious operations through judgments of fact and value. In this case, Lonergan asserts that “knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing.” We see this, for example, when we say that we know that $2 + 2 = 4$. Such knowledge is based on experience, say, of placing two apples together with two more and then counting four. But such an action is already an understanding, for there is a great deal of difference (as every elementary school teacher can verify) between putting two apples together with two more and coming to the intellectual grasp whereby we can declare “Ah ha, two and two are four.” Furthermore, to assert that such a statement as $2 + 2 = 4$ is true, we need to

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72 *Method*, 238.
73 *Method*, 238.
make a judgment that it is in fact so. Such judgment is all the more obvious if we were to take
this insight and judge further that $2 + 2 \neq 5$. Furthermore, once we have come to such an insight,
we can judge additional statements such as $3 + 4 = 7$ to be true without ever laying out apples or
having direct sense experience of the addition at all. Thus, “the criteria of objectivity are not
just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of
understanding, of judging, and of believing.”

So in working through the concept of intellectual conversion, I have described the
conscious operations of experiencing, understanding, and judging. By properly distinguishing
between consciousness and conscious operations, we found how Lonergan is able to work out
the process of the knower’s self-affirmation in a way that does not get caught in the mistaken
view that knowing is like looking and introspection is like inward inspection. Furthermore, such
a grasp of human knowing encompasses a much larger domain than the world of immediacy
claimed by the ocular metaphor of knowledge that involves also the world mediated by meaning.
Thus, we have come to understand the concept of intellectual conversion as the fruit of a
dynamic process through the transcendental operations in which one comes to know the world
mediated by meaning and affirm one’s self as a knower. But a full analysis of the intentionality
of authentic human experience is not completed by only analyzing the cognitive elements of our
being. In addition, we must understand and accept an additional, existential element that adds
a connection between what we know and what we do.

Lonergan describes the connection between cognitional and existential human
existence as a process of moral conversion that occurs on yet a fourth level of human
consciousness. This level is the responsible level, and it is on this level that we make the
decision to accept and act on judgments of truth and value. On this level, “we are concerned

74 Method, 238.
with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.”

Precisely because we are concerned with ourselves and we are beings who are both knowers and doers, the responsible level is concerned with what we know and what we do. It does not reject, surpass, ignore, or otherwise diminish the experiencing, understanding, or judging of the previous levels of consciousness, but rather incorporates them into itself.

Moral conversion, to use a term of Karl Rahner’s, sublates intellectual conversion, meaning that moral conversion goes beyond where intellectual conversion left off at judgments of fact and value but at the same time depends on it. It goes beyond intellectual conversion because it involves an “existential moment when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or rejected objects, and that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself.” But in another sense, moral conversion depends on the intellectual, the insights gained by experiencing, understanding, and judging, in order to make its decisions. Thus, the reality of such sublation is that moral conversion entirely needs, includes, and preserves the features and properties of intellectual conversion while, at the same time, it “carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.”

Now Lonergan’s justification in asserting this pattern of operations is not based upon anything other than the reader’s own experience, understanding, judging, and deciding. It will be grasped by applying these operations for oneself; that is:

To apply the operations as intentional to the operations as conscious is a fourfold matter of (1) experiencing one’s experience, understanding, judging,

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75 Method, 9.
76 Lonergan cites his use of this phrase as coming from Karl Rahner’s Hörer des Wortes. [München: Kösel, 1963], 40.
77 Method, 240.
78 Method, 241.
and deciding, (2) understanding the unity and relations of one’s experienced experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, (3) affirming the reality of one’s experienced and understood experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding and (4) deciding to operate in accord with the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of one’s experienced, understood, affirmed experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding.\textsuperscript{79}

In continually working through each of these levels, one strives towards both intellectual and moral self-transcendence. The goal of cognitional self-transcendence is truth; that is, insight through experience, understanding, and judging. Moral self-transcendence results in the process of deciding between what is apparently good and what really is good, and therefore changing “the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfactions to values” in such a way that one opts “for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict.”\textsuperscript{80} But there is a further, implicit questioning in each of these levels. When we experience, understand, and judge facts about the universe, “implicitly we grant that the universe is intelligible and, once that is granted, there arises the question whether the universe could be intelligible without having an intelligent ground.”\textsuperscript{81} Furthermore, “when we ask whether this or that is worth while, whether it is not just apparently good but truly good, then we are inquiring, not about pleasure or pain, not about comfort or ill ease, not about sensitive spontaneity, not about individual or group advantage, but about objective value.”\textsuperscript{82} In other words, while we know that our intellectual judgments and moral decisions are always related to our conditions, we want to know if there is a ground of being on which they are unconditioned.\textsuperscript{83} But these questions are questions of God.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Method}, 14-15.  
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Method}, 240.  
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Method}, 101.  
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Method}, 104.  
\textsuperscript{83} A technical note: Lonergan distinguishes between the formally unconditioned and the virtually unconditioned. “The formally unconditioned has no conditions whatever,” where in contrast, the virtually unconditioned “involves three elements, namely, (1) a conditioned, (2) a link between the conditioned
So for Lonergan, the grounds for authentic intellectual and moral self-transcendence involve the question of God. These capacities for full self transcendence become a reality when one falls in love with God. Thus, “as the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality.” Being in love with God constitutes a third level of conversion, and this is religious conversion. Just as moral conversion sublated intellectual conversion, so religious conversion sublates both moral and intellectual conversion. Similarly, just as moral and intellectual conversion involved self-transcendence, even more so is it true that “religious conversion is to a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence, whether in the pursuit of truth, or in the realization of human values, or in the orientation man adopts to the universe, its ground, and its goal.”

Being-in-love with God, then, provides the basis by which we surrender ourselves and therefore make decisions based on judgments of value and not on mere satisfaction. Furthermore, “among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion.”

Thus, although religious conversion sublates moral and intellectual conversion it can also be said that God’s gift of love precedes religious, moral, and intellectual conversion.

It is in this final phase that we see the contrast between Lonergan and Taylor’s approaches. Taylor was correct in his assessment that the field of epistemology has historically been almost, if not entirely, mixed in with a mistaken anthropology that understands the human subject as one who is ideally disengaged from her merely subjective worldview. It is only on this

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and its conditions, and (3) the fulfillment of the conditions,” (Insight, 305). Therefore, while our knowledge may be objective in the sense that it is virtually unconditioned, it still remains that it is dependent on the fulfillment of conditions, whereas the formally unconditioned is not.

84 Method, 105.
85 Method, 241.
86 Method, 243.
mistaken anthropology that one arrives at the faulty conclusion that knowing is analogous to looking, and further, that ‘knowing’ is limited to knowing the world of immediacy. Instead, he argues, human agents are always already engaged agents, and therefore, such separation is impossible. Instead of succumbing to some form of relativism, Taylor instead insists that it is precisely through the lived experience of transitioning from perspectives that one is able to make concrete judgments regarding the truth and value claims of one perspective over another. In doing so, Taylor seeks to create a philosophical understanding that adopts the valid insights of Kant’s transcendental arguments without falling in the trap of any sort of foundational epistemology which, in this case, must assume that there is something gained in our experiencing of the world that is beyond doubt or question.

All of this has strong parallels to Lonergan’s intentionality analysis. Lonergan, like Taylor, insists that the subject is an engaged agent, that is, he is both constituted by as well as continually constituting his heritage. Thus, both Taylor and Lonergan agree that knowing is more than a disengaged look, but rather a process of coming to grips with the world not only through our experience, but also through an act of understanding in which we come to grips with a best account of the situation as well as make concrete judgments as part of authentic human life. In other words, both Taylor and Lonergan, in their own ways, shift the discussion of the act of knowing away from the classical understanding that what is foundational in human knowing is analogous to taking a good look at some object which can be known to a new insight that the ‘foundational’ aspect of human knowing lies in the intentional operations of the authentic human subject.

But our discussion of Lonergan’s threefold distinction of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion does more than add a clearer language to Taylor’s insights. Instead, I think Braman is right to assert that there is still something missing with regards to overcoming a
distorted heritage if this cognitional theory is the end of the rope. One way of expressing this concern is by discussing the act of knowing as what Lonergan calls “the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit”. For Taylor, as in Lonergan, this eros is satisfied through epiphanic events such as in artistic expression, but it is only in Lonergan’s account of conversion and self-transcendence that we come to an adequate understanding of how this eros overcomes a distorted heritage. This is because, simply put, that “where Taylor’s emphasis falls primarily upon a hermeneutics of objects and its relationship to the eros of the human spirit, Lonergan is more explicit in claiming that the eros of the human spirit is intrinsically ordered to the true, the good, and the holy.” Furthermore, not only is the human spirit dissatisfied with what is merely apparent and therefore seeks the real truth, not only does the human spirit continue to pursue what is really good instead of only good for itself, and not only does it ultimately hunger for the good and intelligent ground on which such aspirations lie, but the human spirit is able to realize these ambitions by falling in love with God.

In short, we can overcome a distorted heritage cognitively because the universe is intelligible and we are able to affirm ourselves as knowers to the extent that we are intellectually converted. We can overcome a distorted heritage existentially and make decisions based on what is truly good and not only good for ourselves to the extent that we are morally converted. Furthermore, we are able to achieve such intellectual and moral self-transcendence to the degree in which we are able to fall in love with God, “in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing.”

In this section, then, we have briefly worked through Lonergan’s intentionality analysis in order to integrate Taylor and Lonergan’s conception of human authenticity. This study has

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87 Method, 13.  
88 Braman, 91.  
89 Method, 106.
been greatly aided by Brian Braman’s analysis of the human subject as both constituted and constituting with respect to her heritage. While Taylor’s genealogical account of the human subject as an engaged agent whose identity is comprised of sources both internal and external provides an excellent basis for understanding for how we are constituted by our heritage, Lonergan’s intentionality analysis has aided us in determining how one authentically constitutes, and therefore overcomes, a distorted heritage. But I think that for all of the insight that has been provided by previous integrations of Taylor and Lonergan, Taylor’s recent publication of *A Secular Age* demands further study. Thus, I will examine the degree to which Taylor himself incorporates an understanding of conversion in *A Secular Age*. I will propose that Taylor has shifted his philosophy in *A Secular Age* such that: (1) it methodically incorporates the idea of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion by operating dialectically, and (2) it leads up to Taylor’s own explicit account of conversion in his concluding chapter.

**A Secular Age and Conversions**

In the previous two sections, we have briefly worked through Brian Braman’s account of how to integrate the philosophies of Taylor and Lonergan in order to arrive at a hermeneutical account of human authenticity which identifies the subject as constituted by his received heritage as well as a constituting subject who makes true and good contributions to that heritage. In this section, I wish to explore how Taylor’s work in *A Secular Age* incorporates the notion of conversion in its own right. The methodological exploration in the first chapter gave us an appreciation of the ‘downward’ hermeneutic of *A Secular Age* by exploring how it works against religious skepticism by presenting a best account of secularity and allowing for a framing epiphany on the part of the reader. But, as we have seen, an account of conversion requires an
additional ‘upward’ hermeneutical aspect as well. Thus, I will build on the work of the first chapter to demonstrate how Taylor’s narrative engages its reader as a constituting subject as well. In order to work towards this goal, I will first provide a general review of the eight functional specialties that Lonergan describes in *Method in Theology*. With this general understanding in place, I will then examine the functional specialty ‘Dialectic’ in fuller detail in order to conclude with an analysis of how Taylor’s narrative in *A Secular Age* contains the features of theological dialectic. By functioning dialectically, Taylor distinguishes fundamental conflicts in cognitional theory, ethical stances, and religious outlooks and points to the evidence for a proper resolution of such conflicts through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

The first task, then, is to come to a general understanding of Lonergan’s eight functional specialties in theology. To begin with, we must clarify the type of specialization that Lonergan is referring to, for there are three ways of distinguishing specialties: “(1) by dividing and subdividing the field of data, (2) by classifying the results of investigations, and (3) by distinguishing and separating stages of the process from data to results.”

The first two distinctions here are fairly common. In theology, one would distinguish scriptural studies from patristic studies, medieval studies, or modernity studies and this would relate to the first distinction relating to the field of data. By the second distinction, though, a scholar would distinguish between studies of Greek history, Christology, ecclesiology, etc.

The third distinction, however, is methodological; it is derived from the intentionality analysis described above that distinguishes four levels of consciousness and intentional operations “where each successive level sublates previous levels by going beyond them, by setting up a higher principle, by introducing new operations, and by preserving the integrity of

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90 *Method*, 125.
previous levels, while extending enormously their range and their significance.\textsuperscript{91} In addition to the level of consciousness, though, Lonergan’s intentionality analysis differentiates in understanding the subject as constituting and constituted. Therefore, theology also has both a mediating and a mediated phase where one respectively learns from and adds to the body of theological knowledge.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, in sum there are eight total distinctions to be made within the process of studying theology: four correlating to the mediating phase of theology and four related to its mediated phase, where each phase can be subdivided with relation to the empirical, intelligent, rational, and responsible levels of consciousness.

In the mediated phase, then, one begins on the empirical level with the collection of raw data. One proceeds to the intellectual level where one begins to interpret the data and follows on the rational level with judgments between the data of research and the facts of it. But while this level may succeed in distinguishing between the facts and the data of research, there are yet additionally differences, which Lonergan classifies as dialectic, which are “fundamental conflicts stemming from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, an ethical stance, [or] a religious outlook,” which “profoundly modify one’s mentality” and “are to be overcome only through an intellectual, moral, religious conversion.”\textsuperscript{93} The dialectic task, then, is evaluative in the sense that it goes beyond making the data available, clarifying the intention of the data, and narrating the facts to an encounter with the past by “meeting persons, appreciating the values they represent, criticizing their defects, and allowing one’s living to be challenged at its very roots by their words and by their deeds.”\textsuperscript{94} Thus, there are four mediating specialties in theology: Research, Interpretation, History, and Dialectic.

\textsuperscript{91} *Method*, 340.
\textsuperscript{92} Cf. *Method* 133 and 267.
\textsuperscript{93} *Method*, 235.
\textsuperscript{94} *Method*, 247.
In the mediating phase of theology, one allows the conscious operations to work and is subsequently led to an encounter with the received theological tradition. In that encounter, one faces the often implicit question, “In what manner or measure am I to carry to the burden of continuity or to risk the initiative of change?” and therefore decides for oneself whether to accept or reject this tradition.\(^9^5\) This decision is a religious event and only becomes theology when we come down (hermeneutically speaking) to theology in the mediated phase.

Because the mediated phase of theology begins with the event of one’s own intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, it takes on a more explicit character with respect to conversion. Where the mediating phase draws out the propositions, beliefs, and actions of others, the mediated phase begins with one’s personal stance on the issues that have been established as a result of one’s own religious, moral, and intellectual conversion and then proceeds to work through judgments of fact and value, their systematization, and meaning for others. The functional specialties in this second phase, then, may be understood in relationship to the four levels of consciousness in the inverse order as Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications. Respectively, then, “one begins from reflection on authentic conversion [Foundations], employs it as the horizon within which doctrines are to be apprehended [Doctrines] and an understanding of their content sought [Systematics], and finally moves to a creative exploration of communications differentiated according to media, according to classes of men, and according to common cultural interests [Communications].”\(^9^6\) In full, then, one both achieves the necessary horizon for faith as well as accepts the doctrines handed down through the tradition in accordance with one’s conversion.

\(^9^5\) *Method*, 135.

\(^9^6\) *Method*, 136.
As a result of this discussion, it is evident that conversion is a key factor in comprehending the structure of Lonergan’s functional specialties; it is what allows theological studies to make an authentic transition from the propositions, beliefs, and actions of others to truthful and righteous insight into foundational reality, doctrines, systematic understandings, and communications. Now it must be noted that this is far from claiming that all propositions regarding foundational reality, doctrines, or systematics represent complete and authentic conversion; indeed, this can hardly be the case. Instead, what this does go to show is that the understandings and judgments of such propositions can only be evaluated by the process of transcendental method and undergoing authentic intellectual, moral, and religious conversion for oneself.97

In the above description, it has come to light that the key to understanding the connection between human authenticity and theology lies within the process of conversion. It is intellectual, moral, and religious conversion by which one comes to self-transcendence, and it is in self-transcendence that one achieves authenticity.98 But as we have seen in the last section, the notion of conversion is not unique to Lonergan’s analysis; it has taken a greater place in Taylor’s account of human authenticity as well. Thus, although Taylor’s A Secular Age seems to dodge any explicit theological claims, it seems that we might uncover the theological implications that Taylor’s secularization narrative holds for theological conversation if we

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97 This may raise the additional question of how much one can really know about theology if this is in fact the case, for it seems that even highly studied theologians have the ability to work through the entire process of transcendental method for only a minute fraction of the entirety of theological issues. Further reflection will show, however, that this is in fact the case with every area of expertise. The career physicist, for example, will surely admit that her understanding of physics is highly dependent upon the experiments of countless others that she herself has not completed. Thus, Lonergan writes that “ninety-eight percent of what a genius knows, he believes. It isn’t independently acquired knowledge. Human knowledge is an acquisition that goes on over centuries and centuries, and if we want to accept nothing, that we don’t find out for ourselves, we revert to the palaeozoic age,” (Lonergan, Bernard J.F. A Second Collection. Edited by William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996], p. 219).

98 Method, 104.
consider the impact it has in clarifying issues in a manner that leads towards intellectual, moral, and religious conversion – or in short, if we consider it as a dialectic work within the eight functional specialties in theology.

The Function of Dialectic in A Secular Age

Dialectic, as was conceived above, is the process of creating distinctions between the “fundamental conflicts stemming from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, an ethical stance, [or] a religious outlook,” which “profoundly modify one’s mentality” and “are to be overcome only through an intellectual, moral, religious conversion.” The tasks of dialectic, then, are (1) to add an appreciation of value to its preceding studies of interpretation and history, and (2) to draw out the differences between positions that are truly differences of dialectic horizons and not merely of perspective or data sets. Now these tasks, and especially the second one, may seem more modest than what is hoped for. For we desire not only to be able to distinguish between dialectic horizons, but also to resolve them. We want to know which is right, which is wrong, which is good, and which is evil. Now on one hand, such resolution of horizons cannot be the task of dialectic because such evaluations are the result of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion which is not found in books or arguments, but within actual people. On the other hand, though, it is only through the communication and process of passing along of insight that one is lead through this threefold conversion. Thus, Lonergan comments on the method of dialectic as such:

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99 *Method*, 235.
100 Horizons may have differences that are complementary, genetic, or dialectical. Dialectic horizons are ones in which “what in one is found intelligible, in another is unintelligible. What for one is true, for another is false. What for one is good, for another is evil,” etc. (*Method*, 236).
101 These tasks are summarized from *Method*, 246.
Moreover, the theologian’s strategy will be, not to prove his own position, not to refute counter-positions, but to exhibit diversity and to point to the evidence for its roots. In this manner he will be attractive to those that appreciate full human authenticity and he will convince those that attain it. Indeed, the basic idea of the method we are trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and showing how to appeal to it. It is not an infallible method, for men easily are unauthentic, but it is a powerful method, for man’s deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity.\footnote{Method, 254. It should be noted that Lonergan’s use here of the terms ‘position’ and ‘counter-position’ are used in a particular sense. I have left a discussion of these terms out for the sake of brevity, but the interested reader can find relevant discussions in Insight 413-15 and Method, 251-53.}

The method of dialectic, in short, is to provide positions that are the result of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion which therefore attract those who ‘appreciate full human authenticity’. This is not to say that such a method is only functional for those who have achieved full human authenticity, for authenticity “consists in a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement.”\footnote{Method, 252.} Thus, dialectic serves to promote conversion by ‘exhibiting diversity’ and ‘pointing to the evidence’ in order to allow for transcendental method to take hold and work in those who encounter it.

So now that we have worked through the eight functional specialties in theology in general as well as the fourth functional specialty, dialectic, in particular, we would like to know whether or not \textit{A Secular Age} functions as a theological dialectic. It will be dialectical if: (1) it distinguishes between conflicts which are neither due to different sets of data nor merely perspectival, but rather that stem from fundamental differences in cognitional theories, ethical stances, or religious outlooks, and (2) its method is one which seeks not to prove its position but rather to point to the evidence and allow for intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.
In the first place, dialectic conflicts are differences in horizon caused by a lack of any combination of intellectual, moral, and/or religious conversion. “Without intellectual conversion the person will consistently mistake the world of sense for the world mediated by meaning; without moral conversion, what is truly worthwhile and good will be understood in terms of values as ego-regarding, and without religious conversion one is ‘radically desolate: in a world without hope and without God.’” As we have seen in the first chapter, Taylor’s secularization narrative in *A Secular Age* is focused on three transitions: (1) from a dualistic anthropology to engaged agency, (2) from an apodictic mode of moral reasoning to practical reasoning based on transitions between accounts, and (3) from subtractive stories of secularity to one in which secularity is the result of the creation of new positions regarding belief. As I will argue, each of these transitions correlate, respectively, to fundamental differences in cognitional theory, ethical stances, and religious outlooks and, furthermore, promote a shift towards the intellectual, moral, and religious conversion that will resolve such differences.

With respect to the first of these transitions, we found that the mistaken theory that knowing is like taking a look is based upon a dualistic anthropology which ideally separates inner knowing from the outer world. Taylor’s movement towards engaged agency represents a fundamental shift in cognitional theory, then, because it supports an understanding of the act of knowing which accepts the reality of meaning. Meaning cannot be a purely internal cognitive event because it is embodied in language, art, and human living, and it is only through these embodiments of meaning that we can make sense of our lives. The world is more than an immediate reality, then, it is also mediated by meaning.

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To the second point, Taylor finds that the source of contemporary moral skepticism lies within a seemingly necessary, albeit reluctant, retreat into apodictic modes of moral reasoning. In the first chapter, we discussed Taylor’s distinction between apodictic modes of reasoning and *ad hominem* ones. Here, the *ad hominem* modes of reasoning begin with the assumption that one already shares a common, fundamental position with one’s interlocutor. Thus, differences in moral arguments simply need to be traced down to their relationship to the more fundamental position and then see where the logical error was made by one of the parties. On the other hand, apodictic modes of reasoning assume that interlocutors have fundamentally different positions and that the only way to resolve them is by reference to evidence that is immediately available (in the sense that it belongs to the world of immediacy) to both parties.

This becomes a problem when a wide range of moral issues seem to lack such immediate ‘criteria’ or ‘data’ to prove their point. Thus, the real source of confusion in moral arguments, according to Taylor’s analysis, is a foundational approach to epistemology, and the result has been a widespread epidemic of moral skepticism. In addition, I have argued in the first chapter that the limiting presence of only these modes of reasoning in theological debate as well, combined with the background of secularity as described in Taylor’s secularization narrative (the third transition), has combined to create a latent religious skepticism in addition to the moral skepticism.

The difficulty in addressing how these differences in cognitional theory, ethical stances, and religious outlooks are apparent in *A Secular Age* is that they are by and large only implicit in the work. Taylor makes no claims in this book to be persuading the reader that he is an engaged agent and therefore ought to recognize the world of meaning as real, or that he can resolve issues of moral skepticism through lived transition towards increasingly better accounts of the problems, or that he can work through religious skepticism in accordance with religious
conversion by which one falls in love with God. But I believe that this brings us to the second condition of a theological dialectic; its method is not one which seeks to prove its position but rather point to the evidence and allow for intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. In other words, Taylor’s work allows for intellectual conversion because it directs the reader to reflection on concrete ways in which the world mediated by meaning has a real and significant impact on her daily life. It allows for moral conversion because it continues the genealogical account which began in Sources of the Self and describes the formation of the modern moral order.\textsuperscript{106} In this description, the reader is given an account of the sources of moral skepticism and modes of moral reasoning that are based on other premises. Finally, Taylor’s narrative allows for religious conversion because it clarifies an account of how religious skepticism has developed as a result of the formation of new ways of imagining the world which close doors to authentic transcendent knowledge.

\textit{Conversions in A Secular Age}

Thus far, I have made the case that Taylor’s A Secular Age incorporates the notion of what Lonergan means by ‘conversion’ in his methodological structure. In this section, I will go further by working through the explicit account of conversion that Taylor provides in his concluding chapter, ‘Conversions’. Although not as clearly articulated as Lonergan’s account, Taylor provides a notion of conversion as a process of coming to a sense of fullness as a result of forming one’s own itinerary toward God that both emerges out of the larger tradition of the Church while at the same time opening new paths beyond the present order.

Taylor’s discussion of fullness and conversion represents more than a mere semantic shift from the language of best accounts and framing epiphanies that I traced in the first chapter.

\textsuperscript{106} Cf. ASA, 159 ff. A technical note: the term “Modern Moral Order” was not used in SS, but only was initiated in Modern Social Imaginaries, which was included almost verbatim into ASA.
We recall that the notion of a framing epiphany maintains that there are certain sources—such as poetry and art—that resonate deeply with our sense of identity. This is significant because it locates “moral sources outside the subject through languages that resonate within him or her, the grasping of an order which is inseparably indexed to a personal vision.”\textsuperscript{107} When one experiences a framing epiphany, in other words, one’s moral sense is not dictated exclusively by some internal reasoning, but instead by pointing to something beyond one’s own individual cares and concerns. In moments of great profundity such as had by the subject of Caspar David Friedrich’s \textit{Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer} or when one hears of Mother Teresa’s great charity, but also through more everyday interactions with the people, places, and things around us, we come to interpret the good not from a purely individualistic reasoning, but through an identity-forming process in which we resonate with powerful expressions of meaning. It seems, then, that “the notion of a framing epiphany overcomes the relativism and the instrumentalization of human reason, by revealing to the human agent meanings and values that transcend the limitations of self-concern, or the utilitarian understanding of reason.”\textsuperscript{108}

The problem with the notion of a framing epiphany in which one identifies moral ideals not from an internal decision but from a personal resonance with those ideals through moments of epiphany both great and small is that they cannot fully account for human bias. Bias is Lonergan’s term for the exclusion of intelligible insight in a manner that can be dynamic, individual, group, or general bias.\textsuperscript{109} Dynamic bias is the preconscious exclusion of insight that is often discussed by depth psychologists, but “there also are the individual bias of egoism, the group bias with its class conflicts, and a general bias that tends to set common sense against

\textsuperscript{107} SS, 510.
\textsuperscript{108} Braman, 44.
\textsuperscript{109} For a full discussion of this subject, see \textit{Insight}, 214-231 (on dynamic bias) and 244-267 (on individual, group, and general bias).
science and philosophy.” Pure decisionism in which people select an ideal to dedicate themselves to clearly seems to fall prey to each of these biases. Even if one selects from among the noblest of ideals, say ‘love’, it is a fact of human existence that dramatic bias keeps one from truly realizing ideal love because of psychological factors, individual bias holds one back on account of various forms of egoism, group bias inhibits full realizations of love by confining within the boundaries of one’s own classes, associations, nationalities, etc., and general bias distorts love through the refusal and omission of insights that remain embedded in the longer cycles (Taylor might say the social imaginaries) of human history.

Now Taylor’s language of framing epiphany is certainly better than pure decisionism. Because it identifies the formation of one’s moral constitution as a resonance with sources greater than the ‘internal self’, it is possible for an epiphany framework to work out how dynamic and individual biases are overcome. But it is not quite so clear how such language accounts for overcoming what we have been calling a distorted heritage but can now be articulated more clearly as group and general biases. Braman, for instance, questions the ability of the framing epiphany conception to address for the group bias clearly present in, say, Nazi art. Now I would not go so far as to say that the concept of a framing epiphany fundamentally cannot account for overcoming group or general bias. One might say that it is only through a greater epiphany that one could ever realize that there was a sense of love larger than German nationalism could ever account for. Or to address a theme from general bias, one might even say that it is only through resonating with works such as Taylor’s Sources of the Self that one overcomes the general bias of modern individualistic anthropology. But it seems that it is not only the analyses of Lawrence and Braman that find Taylor’s use of epiphany language to be

\[110\] Insight, 244.
\[111\] Cf. Braman, 89.
either incomplete or at least not as clear as the language of conversion; Taylor himself has shifted to conversion language as well.

Instead of getting at his understanding of conversion directly, Taylor makes references to several ‘converts’ who he believes spent their lives working through this process. As dramatic examples, he quotes from Bede Griffiths and Vaclav Havel as they reflect on what we might call epiphanic experiences where they suddenly felt seized by a deep sense of love although without necessarily having some direct object to the love. Now Bede and Havel perhaps have extra-ordinary accounts to share; “for most people who undergo a conversion there may never have been one of those seemingly self-authenticating experiences, like Bede’s or Havel’s; but they may easily take on a new view about religion from others: saints, prophets, charismatic leaders, who have radiated some sense of more direct contact.”

At this point, one might not see much of a difference between Taylor’s account of Bede and Havel’s conversions versus an account of fullness in their lives from the viewpoint of a framing epiphany. Taylor continues, though, by noting that “we need to enlarge our palette of such points of contact with fullness, because we are too prone in our age to think of this contact in terms of ‘experience’; and to think of experience as something subjective, distinct from the object experienced; and as something to do with our feelings, distinct from changes in our being: dispositions, orientations, the bent of our lives, etc.” Experience, so defined, may be part of what is happening, but it certainly is not the whole picture. Instead, to appropriate the terms we have used above, Taylor provides an account that not only describes how conversion is received by a constituted subject, but also how conversion necessarily involves the thoughts, actions, and lives of the subject as she goes forth in the world and actively participates in God’s

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112 ASA, 729.
113 ASA, 729-30.
love in the world. Such a subject constitutes the love of God (she embodies it, or becomes it) as well as is constituted by it.

Such was the case with St. Francis, for Francis’ “story also includes visions, for instance, of this love of God in Nature (brother sun and sister moon); but the salient inspiring feature of his life emerges in the story of his conversion, how he was moved to abandon everything in his life for the love of God.” Francis’ life was one which not only received the love of God, but also brought it forth to the world in a way that drastically shook the world in which he lived. Taylor continues with other examples from more modern history, including Charles Péguy and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Péguy is notable in this conversation for maintaining a strong sense of fidélité as “a faithfulness to the tradition which precisely excluded just going back,” and then applying that sensibility as best he could to the French political culture of the time. His way forward necessarily included both Catholicism and the Revolution and therefore sought a path that was neither caught in the heavily clerical pro-monarchy party nor the anti-Church Left which sought science and progress above anything from the past. Hopkins likewise forged a new route in poetry in his insistence that language had the power to give a captivating sense of God’s power acting in creation when the dominant trend of the time was to treat language as flat and unable to “Name things in their embedding in this deeper/higher reality.”

In these cases as well as the many more they are chosen to represent, Taylor is trying to get at at least two points related to religious experience and conversion. The first is that authentic conversion has a distinctive bodily element to it – that is, it is an incarnate process. It cannot be a purely cognitive event, or understood as something set apart from the very core of

114 ASA, 729.
115 ASA, 747.
our being. Taylor warns that such forms of religiosity have become common in our secular age and are repressive and marginalize the full content of faith. These forms of religious experience have come about as part of a thoroughly damaging, if subtle, process of ‘excarnation’, that is, “the steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more ‘in the head.’”117 I will talk more on this theme in the next chapter, but for we will simply note Taylor’s insistence that conversion clearly changes the entire direction of people’s lives – it affects the totality of what they do, of who they are.

The second point that Taylor brings home is that none of these conversions are identical. In fact, they all seem to bring some new facet to the world in which they lived that is in many senses new and unique. For Francis, conversion involved taking up a mendicant life of sharing the love of God while accepting a deep sense of poverty; for Péguy it involved a refashioning of revolutionary France along a trajectory that few others seemed to understand; for Hopkins it involved sharing a direct and profound sense of God and Christ against the grain of literary trends of his time. Put in this way, it becomes suddenly difficult to pinpoint the common thread in these conversions, and this is in fact Taylor’s point. In his language, each of these conversions represents a different ‘itinerary’ towards God, and the fullness of the Christian faith can never be realized as long as any one of these itineraries is left out. Homogenization of the faith, then, is one of the greatest mutilations that the Church could possibly support. “The Church was rather meant to be the place in which human beings, in all their difference and disparate itineraries, come together; and in this regard,” Taylor insists, “we are obviously falling far short.”118

117 ASA, 771.
118 ASA, 772.
Taylor’s acceptance of many diverse itineraries reminds the reader of his deep dedication to pointing out how much our identities are deeply embedded within our social order, for we are forced to recognize that our itineraries are a part of a whole. When one moves through the process of conversion, that is, when one develops one’s own itinerary towards God, one’s itinerary develops out of the tradition of previous and contemporary itineraries in the full sense of the word. Without the larger tradition, there would be nothing from which new itineraries are able to develop, but at the same time, these new itineraries are not exact replicas of their predecessors. Thus, Taylor indicates that “what this fragmentary and difficult conversation points towards is the Communion of Saints. I’m understanding this not just as a communion of perfect persons, who have left their imperfections behind them; but rather as a communion of whole lives, of whole itineraries towards God.”\(^{119}\) If this is true, though, then this means that we must hold a much larger conception of the Church than that which is represented by any one historical social order because the Church stretches across all times and itineraries.

**Ecclesiology**

What has emerged in our discussion of Charles Taylor’s description of conversions in *A Secular Age* is that the subject of conversion cannot be treated purely on the basis of individual persons. Just as the sources of our selves are both internal and external, so is our conversion an interpersonal event because the development of any itinerary of faith necessarily requires the greater tradition and society of faith within which one lives. This leads us to the subject of ecclesiology. The implications that Taylor’s narrative has for ecclesiology in a secular age is the subject of my third chapter, but we must take a few words now to transition from the general

\(^{119}\) ASA, 754.
discussion of theological method and conversion to the appropriation of such a methodology in ecclesiology in particular. To do so, I will focus on a particular study by Joseph Komonchak outlining the ecclesiological project in light of Lonergan’s theological method.  

Lonergan’s vision of the Church is similar to Taylor’s vision of the Communion of Saints as a communion of the vast itineraries of all human lives directed towards breaking into God’s transcendent reality through the process of conversion. Lonergan expresses his conception of the Christian church as “the community that results from the outer communication of Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.”  

Extrapolating further on this comment, Komonchak explains that “that potential for full community is given form, actuality, and realization as the Christian Church when the wordless inner gift is matched by the outer gift of God in Jesus Christ whose word mediates the movement of transformed immediacy and intersubjectivity into the world mediated by meaning and thus founds the community of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision which is called the Church.”  

To make sense of this conception of the Church and therefore to determine the application of theological method to this Church, we must work through Lonergan’s presentation of the commonsense, theoretical, and interior realms of meaning. In the first place, “the realm of common sense is the realm of persons and things in their relations to us.” On this level, we understand that the sun rises in the east, for example. On the level of theory, however, one seeks to comprehend the world without relation to oneself and, to continue by the same example, would work through how the location of the sun on the horizon is relative to


\[122\] Komonchak, 266.

\[123\] Method, 81.
one’s place on the earth, the rotation of the earth about its axis, and the rotation of the earth around the sun. The rise of this second realm of meaning demands a new critical exigence to confront the questions of regarding what it is to know the world expressed through common sense and theoretical language. In order to address these questions, Lonergan writes that one’s consciousness “turns attention upon interiority, when self-appropriation is achieved, when the subject relates his different procedures to the several realms, relates the several realms to procedures to the several realms, relates the several realms to one another, and consciously shifts from one realm to another by consciously changing his procedures.”\(^\text{124}\) In other words, one is able to not only comprehend the reality expressed by both expressions of the sun rising in the east as well as the heliocentric scientific model but also to shift fluidly between the two expressions and furthermore explain how they are both related.

Although the space does not exist here to work it through, Lonergan is able to take these realms of meaning and further outline them as successive stages within human development.\(^\text{125}\) For now, it is sufficient to relate that Komonchak’s presentation of the Church is one which lies within the third realm of meaning (interiority) and it is directed towards moving ecclesiology out of the second stage of theory into the contemporarily appropriate level of interiority. On this level, ecclesiologists would be able to differentiate between early, commonsense depictions of the Church and the social theories appropriated from the Middle Ages on. Furthermore, “this transportation would suggest the movement from a normatively conceived social theory to a critical and historically conscious theory founded in intentionality-analysis.”\(^\text{126}\) Without writing off earlier theologies of the Church as either invalid or no longer appropriate for theological conversation, this Lonerganian vision looks for an ecclesiology that

\(^{124}\) *Method*, 84.


\(^{126}\) Komonchak, 272.
“neither reduces theology to empirical observation nor forgets that the biblical, traditional, dogmatic, and theological language always refers to a concrete social reality constructed around the transformed intersubjectivity of concrete persons in the world.” Such an ecclesiology, Komonchak believes, is realized in the language of the Church as the ‘Mystical Body,’ ‘People of God,’ ‘Temple of the Holy Spirit,’ etc. In sum, Komonchak conceives the task of ecclesiology on the level of interiority as such:

_The Church remains the creation of the mysterious God’s self-gift in Word and in Spirit. But the project does not forget that it is not God but Christian men and women who constitute the Church, that the Church is constructed when divine favor transforms and promotes conscious acts of human intentionality and intersubjectivity – feelings, experience, understanding, judging, speaking, deciding, loving, acting, believing, remembering, celebrating, hoping, etc. – that these conscious acts are the referent in the world to which image and symbol, doctrine and theory refer when they speak about the Church, and that, thus, ecclesiology has for its object of investigation and reflection not only such images and symbols, doctrines and theories, but also the concrete ‘process of self-constitution’ by which the Church comes to be in Christian men and women._

We arrived at this section on ecclesiology through a discussion of Taylor’s vision of conversion and the realization that his vision was inherently communal. In the preceding section, I will conclude this study of theological methodology by tying these two subjects, conversion to ecclesiology, together in a more complete manner.

**Conversion and Ecclesiology**

So far in this chapter, I have argued that Lonergan’s threelfold notion of conversion can successfully be integrated with Taylor’s methodology in order to provide an account of the human subject who both constitutes and is constituted by her heritage. That is to say that for both of these authors, human authenticity is achieved in the self-transcendence of conversion in

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127 Komonchak, 273.
128 Komonchak, 273.
which two things happen. The first is that there is a movement where one breaks out of the
immanent frame and into the transcendent. The second is that there is another direction to this
movement in which one comes to a sense of fullness when God’s order breaks into our human
lives. In neither case is the divide between the immanent/secular and the transcendent/divine
exclusive. Rather, Lonergan would distinguish these orders in terms of sublation, where each
successively higher integration of human living builds upon the previous without rejecting what
came before. Furthermore, the process of conversion is one that involves the entirety of one’s
being. For Lonergan, this means that conversion cannot be just intellectual, moral, or religious,
but rather in its entirety is intellectual, moral, and religious and that each of these dimensions
affects the other. In Taylor’s description, conversion must be understood as an incarnate
process. One cannot claim that it involves only one’s cognitional, or emotive, or physical states,
but must fully incorporate one’s entire being in the world.

It is also important, though, to note the differences between Taylor and Lonergan’s
account of conversion. Lonergan’s account clearly has more to say regarding the levels of
conversion and how conversion relates to the levels of human consciousness. Taylor’s account,
on the other hand, spends more time establishing what it means to be an engaged agent as well
as establishing a genealogical account of the background conditions that affect conversion in the
dominant particular moral, social, and cosmic orders of contemporary secular society. I do not,
however, think that any of these differences are incompatible. In fact, I believe that Braman’s
account (in which Taylor represents a more ‘downward’ and Lonergan a more ‘upward’
dimension to human authenticity) clearly demonstrates how they are hermeneutically related.

But there are two additional differences between Taylor and Lonergan that I do not
think have been already accounted for in Braman’s hermeneutical account of human
authenticity. The first is that Lonergan’s account of conversion more clearly outlines how
conversion is a continual, or ongoing, process. It never comes to full completion, but is rather an ever increasing withdrawal from unauthenticity. Taylor’s account, by contrast, seems more concerned with demonstrating that authentic conversion is possible even in an age where secularity and excarnation rule. Demonstrating the ongoing aspect of conversion is thus not excluded as much as simply not addressed. On the other hand, Taylor’s account seems to more clearly articulate the necessity, as well of the shortcomings, of the Church with regards to conversion. While Lonergan certainly agrees that the Church must both teach and accept the basic Christian message as it has been developed in various cultures, his emphasis is clearly not the same as Taylor’s when it comes to sorting out the particular historical, philosophical, and religious shifts of modernity and discovering which of them lead to authentic conversion and which do not. The difference here, as I have argued above, is that Lonergan’s approach is to outline the general principle of transcendental method while Taylor’s is to execute the genealogical and dialectic tasks with regards, in his most recent work, to the conditions for belief in God. Thus, it seems that we are able to combine these two corresponding strong points from both Taylor and Lonergan into a synthesis that holds that conversion is an ongoing process that necessarily includes the Church as well as individual Christians.

In this section, I will explore this relationship between conversion and ecclesiology in greater detail. In the first place, where we have been discussing the authenticity of individual persons, I will extend our discussion here to include the Church as a whole. Given the understanding that human authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence and attained through the threefold process of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, and given that this notion of conversion engages humans as both constituting and constituted subjects, it is appropriate to

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129 For instance, see Lonergan’s section on “The Christian Church and its Contemporary Situation” in Method in Theology, 361-367.
understand the Church as a social order that achieves authenticity through the conversion process which involves both self-expression and self-realization. In addition, I will trace in greater detail the relationship this process of conversion implies regarding the relationship of the Church to both the immanent order and the transcendent.

The first task here – demonstrating in what sense the notions of authenticity and conversion can be applied to the Church – requires approaching the topic of the Church in a different manner than is frequently done in the field of ecclesiology. In a sense, this is because discussions about conversion are inherently methodical; related to the Church, they seek to answer questions about how the Church exists rather than what the Church is. To illustrate this difference, take Avery Cardinal Dulles’ classic study, *Models of the Church* as an example. Dulles offers six models (in the expanded edition) of what the Church is: an institution, a mystical communion, a sacrament, a herald, a servant, and a community of disciples. Such an approach works well in order to examine issues such as what the mission of the Church is as well as its patterns of ministry, its conceptions of revelation, and its approaches to ecumenism. But for all of the breadth and vision of Dulles’ work, it remains mostly silent on questions of how the Church properly executes its mission, ministers to its flock, is open to revelation, or actively engages in ecumenical efforts. Or to put the issue in Stanley Hauerwas’ terms, if “the first duty of the church for society is to be the church” then how exactly does it go about that duty?

Without engaging the responses of my two example theologians, I would like to claim that the perspective Taylor and Lonergan give to this question is that the core insight in addressing how the Church is the Church is captured in the notion of conversion. This

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132 This proposition does not contradict the insight of Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Dulles that “The Church is a mystery [....] It lies, therefore, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and ever
proposition arises from the insight that conversion is not one undertaken by individuals detached from their historical and social contexts but rather undergone by persons who constitute and are constituted by the Church. This does nothing to deny the personal nature of conversion; conversion necessarily requires that each person work through the conscious acts of intentionality, intelligence, reason, and responsibility for him or herself. Christians must uncover the insights of the tradition for themselves; they must eventually decide for themselves to take up these insights and live them out in their own lives. But conversion can never be solitary because it leads all to the same gift of God’s love, and “from a common communion with God, there springs a religious community.” Conversion in this sense is cohesive on the most fundamental level of human existence: it discovers the unifying truths contained in diverse propositions, it makes over the actions of the people that hold these insights into truly good actions such that these people constitute a virtuous social order, and it grasps each of these people with the gift of God’s love such that they achieve full self-transcendence and are all, as Paul writes in the Epistle to the Galatians, “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

But we must be careful here on two accounts. In the first place, if one only deals in the abstract and loses contact with the concrete then it is possible to misconstrue conversion as the actual achievement of such self-transcendence (and likewise the Church not as the community constituting and constituted by conversion but of the fully self-transcendent). This would be a grave mistake: it builds the sin of pride in inauthentic persons who imagine that they have fully completed the process of conversion and maintaining this viewpoint quickly leads to ostracizing greater exploration” because it says nothing about what the Church or the content of its ever greater explorations is. Likewise, it does nothing to limit further questions about the Church and mission, ministry, revelation, or ecumenism or how these elements are to be engaged in particular places and times. Rather the opposite is true; conversion continually opens one to an ever further questioning and deeper sense of mystery. [Citation is from Paul VI as quoted in Dulles, 10.]

133 *Method*, 118.
those viewed as ‘unconverted’. But as Lonergan insists, “human authenticity is not some pure quality, some serene freedom from all oversights, all misunderstanding, all mistakes, all sins. Rather it consists in a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement.” Conversion is thus not a process whereby at its end, so to speak, all ‘converts’ now form the basis for an ideal religious community, i.e. the Church. Instead, conversion is to be understood as a continual and ongoing process of actively coming together, of growing toward, of aspiring to, and ultimately of falling in love with God.

In the second place, it is not to be concluded that just because the process of conversion is an increasing movement towards a single source of truth, goodness, and beauty, it is to be understood homogeneously for every person. Instead, as Taylor writes, “my itinerary crucially includes my existence embedded in a historic order, with its good and bad, in and out of which I must move towards God’s order.” Perhaps if we really were pure Cartesian subjects, then it would be possible to prescribe one standard itinerary of faith, but the fact is that we are not. While we are each moving towards God’s order, we are all doing so out of social orders which are clearly not identical (although some overlap more than others). This gives us a convincing “reason not to let the issue of final truth occlude the difference of itineraries. It is that the Church, as a communion of different peoples and ages, in mutual understanding and enrichment, is damaged, limited, and divided by an unfounded total belief in one’s own truth, which really better deserves the name of heresy.” Wherever one person, group, class, or other social order upholds its own itinerary of conversion to the extent that it excludes the wide diversity of itineraries that authentically exist, then it is in fact dangerous and harmful to the true Church and indeed in need of further conversion itself.

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\(^{134}\) Method, 252.

\(^{135}\) ASA, 754.

\(^{136}\) ASA, 754-5.
What I have proposed thus far is that the Church continually achieves authenticity through the ongoing process of conversion. This process exists on the personal level of each member of the Church, but because these members are not only constituted by the Church but also play an active role in constituting the Church as well it is also valid to say that the Church as a whole is continually in the process of conversion. Another way of putting this is that the Church encompasses all the itineraries of the Communion of Saints toward God. Because there are ever increasing itineraries of the faith, the Church as a whole is continually falling in love with God over and over again. In sum, we have seen that the notion of conversion which we have extracted from Lonergan and Taylor is not only applicative to individual persons, but also to the Church as a whole. Or to be more precise, because the Church both constitutes and is constituted by each of its member’s itineraries of conversion, the Church itself is continually in the process of conversion. It is ever falling in love with God anew, for God’s gift of love is never finished, never exhausted, never ended.

The second point in this section has to do with the relationship between the Church and immanent and transcendent orders. One of Taylor’s primary tasks in *A Secular Age* is to work in broad strokes to outline the large-scale pre-modern and modern moral, social, and cosmic orders of the dominant North American society. This is a monumental task, and I will not retrace it all here, although some of these features have been mentioned in my first chapter and will be extrapolated from in the next chapter as well. In an almost barbarically short form, though, Taylor’s overall analysis is that the ways in which we all commonly make sense of our lives are by and large developed out of the larger moral, social, and cosmic orders in which we live. In the pre-modern world, these orders were inescapably connected to God or another sense of (a) transcendent being. Neither the dynamics of the world and cosmos, nor social structures, nor human actions and moral struggles could be accounted for without this sense of
transcendence. But over hundreds of years and through a very long and very complicated process, people began to create new orders, in which first morality, and then later society and the cosmos, could be conceived of without any explicit reference to transcendence.

Now as opposed to those who find this entire process to be (for good or worse, depending on whether one is a believer) nothing but detrimental to religion, Taylor is able to find a sense in which this process has been quite edifying for religious and non-religious persons alike. Quite frankly, it seems absurd anymore to not imagine that there is an intelligibility to the world in which we can make sense of it on its own terms. We quite simply can and do discuss competing notions of the good with reference to human flourishing, or society in terms of economic structures, or the cosmos in terms of physical, chemical, and biological laws. In many ways, this is well and good. But this does not mean that there cannot and does not exist a higher intelligibility than these orders which is open to transcendence. In fact, Lonergan argues that such an order must exist and that it is known through the process of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

Part of the reason that Lonergan finds there must be a higher order of intelligibility is that none of the immanent orders listed above can account for overcoming the systems of bias we discussed in the section above. The fact of human suffering, for instance, defies even the best frameworks of human flourishing or social interaction, and by this I do not simply mean that our practices have not yet had the time to catch up with theory. Rather, there are endless cases where one person or group must willingly accept suffering for the sake of another – parents, for example. Accepting such suffering makes no sense in a framework where the ideal is to pursue flourishing for everyone, all the time. So there must be a higher order within which such acts make sense. Thus, Lonergan concludes that there must be a solution to the problem of liberation from bias:
The solution has to be a still higher integration of human living. For the problem is radical and permanent; it is independent of the underlying physical, chemical, organic, and psychic manifolds; it is not met by revolutionary change, nor by human discovery, nor by the enforced implementation of discovery; it is as large as human living and human history. Further, the solution has to take people just as they are. If it is to be a solution and not a mere suppression of the problem, it has to acknowledge and respect and work through man’s intelligence and reasonableness and freedom. It may eliminate neither development nor tension yet it must be able to replace incapacity by capacity for sustained development. Only a still higher integration can meet such requirements. For only a higher integration leaves underlying manifolds with their autonomy yet succeeds in introducing a higher systematization into their nonsystematic coincidences.\(^{137}\)

This higher integration of human living can only be reached through self-transcendence, and the process towards such transcendence is conversion. Now one of the real advantages to the framework of conversion over that of framing epiphanies is that, while epiphany language may adequately describe how a given order – say the higher integration of human living realized through being-in-love with God – can break into ordinary living, conversion language adds to that insight with an additional account of how human agents break into that order. Conversion, in other words, must be understood hermeneutically; that is, it exists in the necessary tensions and movement between higher orders and secular ones. It accounts for how people are able to overcome bias and fall in love with God while at the same time it acknowledges in a serious way how the grace of God precedes and makes possible the human cognitive and existential processes that lead one to being-in-love.

But one may ask the question: why is it that we are speaking of the gap between transcendent and secular orders as a necessary tension? Could it not instead be that, although these orders do not currently coincide, the only problem is between the larger order and this particular order? Taylor addresses this question first by making a distinction between two types of people: ‘traditionalists’, for whom there was no gap between the orders in some time

\(^{137}\) *Insight*, 655.
previous to this one (perhaps in the early Church of Acts) and ‘progressives’, for this gap is only the result of a few particular problems which we are working to solve, and once we do so, we will have accomplished an historical order that corresponds with the larger one. But Taylor insists that neither of these types have it right, for the deeper Christian insight here is to realize that these orders are always disparate. No one historical order has ever or will ever get it fully right. “On this view,” Taylor writes, “there must always be this gap and tension between the demands of Christian faith and the norms of civilization, even the very best of civilizations.”

So as these civilizations and their established norms and orders change over time, it is necessarily the case that the people within those civilizations adapt new itineraries towards fullness. To cite an example, Taylor considers the frequently posed question over what changed in the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council. One way of looking at this question is to insist that the clearly different ‘Catholicisms’ are opposed to one another. The question then boils down to something like: ‘Who got it right, Trent or Vatican II?’ But in Taylor’s view, Tridentine and post Vatican II Catholicism are not entirely opposed to one another. Instead, there is another option in which they both represent formulations of alternate itineraries toward fullness. Thus, we see “two different meanings we can give to the sense the contemporary convert has that she must move outside the established order. One sets us to look for the perfectly adequate historic order; the other invites us to a conversion which can reach beyond any one such order.” Taylor clearly opts for the latter meaning in which there is no one person, time, or society which can fully get it right. That is to say, no one person, time, or society can construct an order, a timeless and perfect framework that will provide everyone in it with a complete sense of fullness. Different contexts require different itineraries and in this

\[138\] ASA, 745.
\[139\] ASA, 755.
framework, the task moves from picking among who got it right (the first century Church, the Medieval Church, the Tridentine Church, Vatican II, etc.) to what the complementary insights are.

So what does all of this say for the relationship between the Church and the immanent and transcendent orders? Well, on one hand, it indicates that it is a mistake to confuse the Church with a purely immanent social or moral order, although there are clearly ‘visible’, ‘institutional’, or ‘immanent’ structures to the Church. The Church does not, in other words, exist solely for the purpose of promoting human flourishing. Rather, it gently leads its members through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion towards a higher integration of human living, and it does this by gathering together all the diverse itineraries of saints past and present and letting them resound in the hearts and minds of all its members. On the other hand, the Church does not exist is a purely mystical state that can only be reached at the end of each personal conversion, so to speak. It is not some lofty, perfected society that has nothing to do with the day-to-day struggles and trials of the world. The proper location for the Church, then, is somehow with one foot in both of these orders, in the tension between the immanent and the transcendent. The proper designation for such an existence, in short, is incarnation.

By working through this understanding of conversion and the Church which is present both methodologically and explicitly in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, we are now prepared to return to the content of Taylor’s secularization narrative and map out additional implications that this narrative holds for the field of ecclesiology. This will be the subject of the third chapter.
In the first chapter, I presented Charles Taylor’s conception of secularity in *A Secular Age* as one which is not necessarily detrimental to religious belief. Secularity, in Taylor’s definition, involves a change in the background conditions to belief in a way that makes naïve religious belief much more difficult. Today, even the most devoted believers are confronted with the fact that there exist alternative worldviews in which God is simply not a factor although such believers may deny legitimacy to these views. So although from one vantage point, it may seem that religion has lost a good number of adherents to secularity, Taylor’s more in-depth analysis indicates that it has, in fact, laid out a conception of secularity which insists that in order to continue, traditions of religious belief must rely less on the ‘unquestioning belief’ of its adherents and be more concerned with fostering religious belief that is reconcilable with authentic human reasoning. In this view, secularity actually provides an opportunity for the strengthening of authentic religious belief.

But there is also a clear difficulty that has arisen out of the process of secularization, and that has to do with the issues of moral and religious skepticism. As I traced the theme of skepticism through the corpus of Taylor’s works, I outlined the ways in which Taylor locates the source of skepticism in poor anthropology and lack of practical reasoning. In Taylor’s earlier works, the proper response to skepticism was the formation of an engaged anthropology as well as a reconceived concept of practical reasoning. On this view, moral and theological arguments are not ultimately grounded upon criteria of immediacy, but rather on our best account of the world. This best account principle accepts the fact that we are inherently linguistic creatures.
and cannot separate our conception of the world and our lives without the prior reception of language and narratives about such reality. Thus, Taylor locates the primary act of coming to a best account in framing epiphanies where the internal sources of our selves deeply resonate with the external sources of our selves.

In the second chapter, though, I presented Brian Braman’s critique of Taylor’s work which accepts the value of a philosophy of framing epiphanies but nevertheless finds it inadequate in dealing with distorted heritages. In order to form an account of how a distorted heritage is overcome, Braman integrates Taylor’s philosophy with Bernard Lonergan’s intentionality analysis into a synthesis that conceives of the subject as one who both constitutes and is constituted by her heritage, is propelled forward by the dynamic unfolding of the operations of human consciousness as well as the received gift of God’s love, and achieves self-transcendence in an ever increasing withdrawal from unauthenticity. This understanding of human authenticity avoids the result of skepticism brought about by foundational epistemology because it grounds objective knowledge of fact and value in the human capacity for self-transcendence which is realized in conversion. Rather than basing the source of knowledge on a single ‘foundational’ fact, this approach grounds human knowledge in the dynamic unfolding of the human consciousness which develops through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Furthermore, I have proposed that the account in the concluding chapter of Taylor’s A Secular Age adds to this notion of conversion by demonstrating how conversion is properly understood not only as an achievement of individual persons, but also as the means by which the Church

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140 Braman adapts the concept of Heidegger’s ‘heritage’ for his critique in order to demonstrate the continuity of thought in Heidegger, Lonergan, and Taylor; however, as I discussed in the second chapter, I have found it more useful to describe this concept in Lonergan’s language of bias. Using Lonergan’s fourfold distinction of dynamic, individual, group, and general bias, I specified this critique to a greater detail by noting that the concept of framing epiphanies articulates the manner in which we overcome dramatic and individual biases but remains vague with regards to group bias and the general bias of longer cycles.
continually becomes incarnate in the world. That is to say that the Church as a body is itself continually undergoing conversion and that it is only through such conversion that it continues to exist with one foot in both the immanent and transcendent orders – to be in the world, but not of it.

If left at the current state, however, I believe that the true force of this argument will be lost. Although Taylor’s work certainly provides a great deal of material for philosophical and theological methods studies in general, method remains useless without appropriate application. Thus, it is now time to focus this thesis with greater specificity. Although I have offered conversion as a general solution to the problem of religious skepticism, we have yet to see the particular ways that it may unfold given the unique social matrix of contemporary secular society. I will not be able to provide an exhaustive review of what such conversion might look like not only because of the large scope of the task, but moreover because strikingly original itineraries of the faith are continually emerging anew out of the tradition and it is impossible to map out all the ways in which the Church (constituting and constituted by its members) will continue to live out the gospel mission. However, given Taylor’s excellent analysis of secularity and secular society it is nevertheless possible to outline some of the major directions that are in need of attention by the Church. Thus, I will briefly review the five analytic themes that Taylor presents in his secularization narrative and use these to map out five respective implications for the field of ecclesiology.

As I present the five changes Taylor finds between the pre-modern ways of imagining the world as it was in earlier times (say, in 1500) to the ways we imagine the world today, I cannot emphasize enough that these propositions are not to be accepted on a purely analytic basis. Rather, they require the proper telling of a narrative. Taylor, for one, insists that “our past is sedimented in our present, and we are doomed to misidentify ourselves, as long as we
can’t do justice to where we come from. This is why the narrative is not an optional extra, why I believe that I have to tell a story here.” Nevertheless, it is possible to present these changes analytically as long as they are understood as having been extracted from the narrative that Taylor tells. They are:  

1. Disenchantment: People came to imagine that the only source of meaning, thoughts, and feelings is the human mind, whereas in the ‘enchanted’, pre-modern world, people generally acknowledged the presence of spirits, demons, fairies, or other moral forces besides those in the human mind.

2. The Removal of God as Implicated in Society: Through the action of some dimensions of Nominalist thought, but also through the creation of the notions of the economy as an objectified reality, public opinion and the public sphere, a sovereign people, and a direct-access society, the implication that God’s saving power is the driving force behind all societal structures from the kingdom to the local guild eventually was replaced by more humanistic alternatives.

3. The Loss of Certain Tensions: Where earlier societies embodied forms of life which held the demands of ordinary human life on one hand and a sense of good beyond human life itself in a profound tension, the rise of exclusive humanism collapsed such tensions such that human flourishing is now commonly understood to be the goal of all moral and religious order.

4. The Flattening of Time: Our sense of time gradually shifted from a ‘kairotic’ sense in which ‘higher’ forms of eternity broke into the daily regimen of the secular order to one

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141 ASA, 29.
142 This list is given by Taylor in its most succinct form on ASA, 29; however, Taylor’s complicated writing style makes it difficult to simply cite.
in which flat, empty, and homogeneous time is not only the norm, but the extent of the contemporary conception of time.

5. The Shift from ‘Cosmos’ to ‘Universe’: Taylor uses the term cosmos to represent the totality of existence held in earlier times in which “the order of things was a humanly meaningful one,” whereas the common contemporary understanding is of a universe which has its own intrinsic rules and order independent of us.

Now one additional issue to be addressed is what sort of ‘level’ on which we are examining these background conditions. Although each of these five analytic changes involves particular practices, they nevertheless seem to be on a ‘broader’ scale; they are to some degree autonomous from individual practices and have the ability to reach across actions that at first glance seem unrelated. Furthermore, these conditions do not present themselves simply on the level of theory, for where theories can certainly play a significant role in social change, our day to day actions are usually more natural and less reflective. That is to say, it would not be surprising if most secular persons had never considered these subjects although they play a dominant role in the way they look at the world. So although certain theories have helped to propel and represent the currents of secularization, the theoretical level is not that which has had the most influence. Instead of either strict theory or practice, then, Taylor proposes another level on which to discuss the conditions for belief: the social imaginary.

In his discussion of the social imaginary, Taylor follows Hans-Georg Gadamer in shifting our account of human nature away from the conception that it is somehow “below the level of culture, so that cultural variation, where it is not trivial and negligible, can be explained from

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ASA, 60.
Culture, in this rejected view, is a superficial façade to real human nature which lies beneath the outward appearance of culture. Taylor’s concept of the social imaginary follows a separate line of thought along with “those who find this account of human life unconvincing, who see it as an evasion of the most important explananda in human life, which are to be found at this level of cultural difference.” Features of culture, in Taylor’s treatment, are inseparable from features of human nature. In other words, human nature can be accounted for within the modern culture, but modernity (whatever that may mean) itself cannot be a neutral ground upon which we see human nature without bias. Instead, human understanding always comes through a particular way of imagining the world – what Taylor calls the social imaginary. Thus, Taylor writes about how the ‘modern social imaginary’ influences the ways in which people within this culture come to understand themselves and their actions in the world.

The social imaginary, then, is Taylor’s “category of understanding social praxis and the reasons people give to make sense of these practices”). Understanding is meant here in a two-way manner, for engaging in particular practices actually shapes our understanding of those very practices themselves, but at the same time, those practices require that one has a preexisting understanding of them to make sense of them in order for one to participate. The concept of the social imaginary is highly significant in that it marks a break with discussions of social theory that have been popular at least since Max Weber. Social theory is, for Taylor, a

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145 Ibid, 282.
146 Morello, Gustavo. “Charles Taylor’s ‘imaginary’ and ‘best account’ in Latin America”. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 33, no. 5:633
147 Taylor notes three differences between the social imaginary and social theory: “I speak of ‘imaginary’ (i) because I’m talking about the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings, and this is often
legitimate form of human understanding, but it is too abstract to account for the ordinary way in which we live our lives. For instance, Weber’s theory of the ‘Protestant work ethic’ may well indeed be correct, but even if it is, few individuals would ever stop to consider Weber’s theory when giving reasons for and making decisions about their actions (even if the theory accurately describes those actions). Our usual manner of understanding is less reflective: we see and look to the right without considering the social conditioning it took to understand what that particular symbol means. Or in the case of work ethic, we go in to work on the weekend not because of a theory, but simply because ‘catching up on our work’ is something that makes sense to us – we can imagine it.

To further clarify the function of the social imaginary, Taylor describes three levels of understanding: habitus (that is, our embodied understanding present in our abilities to execute certain actions), the social imaginary itself, and theory. In his work to apply Taylor’s discussion to Latin American affairs, Gustavo Morello succinctly identifies the social imaginary as such:

In between [habitus and theory], Taylor places the imaginary: expressed in ritual, symbols and works of art, it is more explicit than mere gesture and asks for imitation. This level is nourished by the habitus one, but also gives it a kind of expression. Our beliefs about our world are held against a background of unformulated understandings, expressed through symbols that reveal our relationship with which we consider the source of good. Even though those beliefs are not expressed in doctrines, they constitute the ‘social imaginary’. This one is broader than intellectual schemes, and is expressed not in ‘theories’ but in images, stories and legends, which are shared by large groups of people, generating a common understanding. It is the background that makes sense of any given ideas that draw our whole world: space, time, our life among others, our history and our relationship with divinity.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{148} Morello, 620.
In other words, there is a sense we commonly have about our world which is neither strictly theory, nor is it dependent only on particular practices we carry out in our ordinary lives and that sense is our imagination.\textsuperscript{149} The problem with talking about the imagination, though, is that many readers are likely to assume that imagination is about fantasy and therefore has nothing to do with reality – that is, with our lives as we actually live them out. Anthony Godzieba points out, however, that not only is imagining a form of knowing, it is a form of ‘knowing otherwise’ which is \textit{intentional} in two senses: as a realistic response to contemporary situations and as a direct probing of the new possibilities for existence which those situations present.\textsuperscript{150} Furthermore, this process of ‘thinking differently’ is not a purely ‘mental’ way of thinking, but rather an embodied or \textit{incarnational} way of thinking. Drawing on the work of Maruice Merleau-Ponty, Godzieba writes that \textit{“knowing differently,”} starts here, with \textit{body consciousness:} the body reveals the structure of the world – even, we should say, the ‘truth’ of the world – because ‘to the extent that I have a body . . . through that body I am at grips with the world.’\textsuperscript{151} So the imagination is far from irrelevant or unreal – it allows us to know not only what is directly present in current theory or praxis, but also to come to grips with what is not directly perceptible. Furthermore, this allows for a transformation in the world, for imagination does not halt with one’s coming to grips with the world, but rather, \textit{“thinking} otherwise is the catalyst for \textit{acting} otherwise with the confidence that the transformation promised by these new possibilities can be appropriated through action.”\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{149} For this paper, I am sticking to the simple term ‘practice’ and not differentiating between practice, praxis and \textit{habitus}. While this distinction is valid and potentially relevant, it is beyond the scope afforded here.
\textsuperscript{152} Godzieba, 367.
Given this conception of the social imaginary, it is important to map out directives for conversion within the social imaginary. More specifically, I will treat conversion from within the cultural matrix we have already been working - North Atlantic secular society. Furthermore, I will be discussing conversion not of individuals but of the Church who is both constituted by and constituting particular persons. That is to say that this account of conversion accepts the ongoing processes of being attentive, intelligent, rational, responsible, and falling in love with God that occurs to and within particular persons as well as these same processes occurring within the body of the Church. Thus, in this chapter I will briefly describe the five analytic changes in Taylor’s narrative account of the modern social imaginary and then point towards a theological response to each that is drawn out of the Catholic social imaginary. Namely, these theological themes will be sacramentality, communion, catholicity, the liturgy, and cosmology.

Now by introducing the notion of the Catholic social imaginary I do not mean that the simple fact that one is a Catholic means that one necessarily has a completely different worldview than everyone else in contemporary social society. In fact, I believe that the vast majority of Catholics (practicing, pseudo-, and ‘only by baptism’ types alike) have – to varying degrees – exercised only a fraction of the potential of their Catholic imagination. Part of that reason, as I shall articulate below, is that there is a need for a greater ecclesiology of imagination in which sacramentality, communion, catholicity, the liturgy, and cosmology are dealt with not only on the levels of theory and praxis, but also in the ways the Church actively embodies them in its imagination. In addition, by discussing the Catholic social imaginary, I do

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153 Again, this will look different than conversion in theory or practice. In the former, we may speak of the Church working through the ‘ongoing discovery of mind’ (to use Lonergan’s phrase) or ‘re-receiving to Spirit’ (to use Congar’s phrase) in which doctrines, systematic theologies, and their respective linguistic bases develop over time. In the latter, we can speak of the development of Christian ethics and what the action of following Christ is in different times and places. Conversion in the social imaginary entails a breaking through from one way in which we commonly understand or imagine our lives into that of a more transcendent frame.
not mean to disregard the reality that there are other religious (or perhaps even non-religious) traditions which share some parts of this imagination. The social imaginary can allow for various people and traditions to converge where they diverge in theory and practice. In fact, Maureen O’Connell points out that one of the greatest contributions Taylor’s work has made to theology is offering “the concept of the social imaginary as the place where belief and unbelief have long converged.”\textsuperscript{154} The Catholic social imaginary, then, is neither exclusively held by Catholics nor held in its fullest potential by Catholics, but is rather a developing part of the Church of Christ which subsists in the Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{155}

In short, then, it will be the function of this chapter to highlight five elements within the Catholic social imaginary which are able to foster conversion in the life of the Church as it exists in contemporary secular society. Authentic conversion will allow the Church to overcome the latent moral and religious skepticism inherent within secularity while at the same time remain in continuity with the good and true elements that have arisen and been sustained within the process of secularization.

**Disenchantment and Sacramentality**

*Disenchantment*

The first change in the social imaginary from the pre-modern to the contemporary situation deals with ‘enchantment’, a term that Taylor has adopted from Max Weber’s description of secularity as a process of disenchantment. In the enchanted world, people imagined any number of ‘extra-human but intra-cosmic subjects’ in which meanings could reside. Such subjects, which could be spirits, demons, holy relics, etc., had two kinds of powers: “(1) We

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Here I am intentionally drawing on the phrasing of *Lumen Gentium*, which I will cover in the subsection ‘Catholicity and Ecumenism’.
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may observe these things, and therefore change our view of the world, or be stirred up in ways that we otherwise wouldn’t be. (2) Since we are ourselves as bodies continuous with these external things, and in constant exchange with them, and since our mental condition is responsive causally to our bodily condition in a host of ways (something we are aware of without espousing any particular theory of what exactly causes what), our strength, moods, motivations, etc. can be affected, and are continually being affected, by what happens outside.”

Taylor strongly emphasizes that there is a great deal of difference in the enchanted way of understanding the world than from the way we understand the world today. Where we may still say that something in the world (art, for example, or a good book) affects us deeply, we nevertheless maintain that the real source of the effect is in our minds. We may have been presented by an external state of affairs, but in the end, it is our reaction to this source that carries meaning. By way of contrast, Hildegard of Bingen writes about how black bile is the source of melancholy and anger. This is not the same as when a doctor locates a chemical imbalance as the cause of one’s depression; in that sort of case we want to say that the real meaning of things remains unaffected by the clinical depression. The patient is fine, he is just being affected by some hormones and feeling down because of it. In Hildegard’s world, however, meanings are imposed on a person. One’s melancholy is not just a reaction to body chemistry; melancholy is actually forced upon a person by black bile. In this sense, “black bile is not the cause of melancholy, it embodies it, it is melancholy.” The bile could boil one’s blood and cause anger, or it could press one’s humors down to melancholy, but in either case, the

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\[156\] ASA, 33.
\[157\] ASA, 37.
anger or melancholy is clearly contained in the black bile and only imposed on the person, rather than contained in the person as a reaction from the bile.\textsuperscript{158}

A second example comes from Ivan Illich’s description of the monastic world of Hugh of St. Victor and the monk’s manner of reading. Illich describes, for instance, how “the modern reader conceives of the page as a plate that inks the mind, and of the mind as a screen onto which the page is projected and from which, at a flip, it can fade. For the monastic reader, whom Hugh addresses, reading is a much less phantasmagoric and much more carnal activity: the reader understands the lines of moving to their beat, remembers them by recapturing their rhythm, and thinks of them in terms of putting them into his mouth and chewing.”\textsuperscript{159} This is why monastic readers literally had to read aloud in order to receive the meaning of the text. They really felt as if they were receiving \textit{words} out of the text, and words were not mental expressions, they were physical sounds.\textsuperscript{160} Thus, the page carried these sounds, these words and meanings, in it and gave them to the monk. The only experience we could have of this today would be in listening to another person. If we receive meaning from a book, it is only because it came from the author – a person – through the medium of the book, but it is the author’s meaning and not the book’s.

Over time, and most notably in the sixteenth century, there arose a revolt against enchantment. But these reformers were not initially seeking a change in the entire framework of enchantment, but rather a specific element of it: church magic. In the enchanted world, many objects from relics to blessed candles, to church bells were seen as magical, either for


\textsuperscript{159} Illich, Ivan. \textit{In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh’s Didascalicon}. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 54.

\textsuperscript{160} The monk could receive other meanings as well, such as light, from the text. This is why medieval manuscripts were illustrated, or illuminated – so they could impart their light onto the reader, (cf. Illich, 19 ff.). The same could be said about Fra Angelico’s use of gold leaf in his paintings.
good or evil. And while “causal power exercised in a good cause, like healing, was perfectly all right; even more so when it was inseparable from positive influence, as when the healing was effected partly by undergoing confession and absolution,” Taylor records that there were also “dubious uses of causal power, like employing the Host as a love charm; and frankly evil ones, like having a Mass for the dead said for a living person, in order to hasten his demise.”\textsuperscript{161}

Well before Luther, and certainly before the advent of modern science, early movements in the Church sought to rid the world of such church magic, but such movement was not easy. The problem was that in such a world, if you renounced magic then you renounced it all, good and evil, and it was only because of good magic (which ultimately came from God) that one was guaranteed victory over the evils of the world. Rejecting magic was thus seen as too terrifying a concept for most to toy with. Thus, the fear of God kept at bay the fear of evil. This was, of course, until Luther struck this overworked and oversensitive nerve with the issue of salvation by faith though which “Luther operated another reversal of the field of fear, analogous to that involved in denying church magic. The sale of indulgences was driven by a fear of punishment. But Luther’s message was that we are all sinners, and deserve punishment. Salvation involves facing and accepting this fully. Only in facing our full sinfulness, can we throw ourselves on the mercy of God, by which alone we are justified [....] We have to face down our fears, and this transmutes them into confidence in the saving power of God.”\textsuperscript{162}

The intent of those that sought to rid the world of misused indulgences and church magic was good, but their effect in history has been much greater than they could ever have intended. Whereas it is possible that they could have envisioned the curtail of such practices as beating the bounds of the parish or ringing bells to ward off thunder, it seems virtually

\textsuperscript{161}ASA, 71 and 72, respectively.
\textsuperscript{162}ASA, 75.
impossible that they could ever have imagined that this process would end in a change in anything like the way we imagine the meaning of texts to be understood. And furthermore, they never intended to remove the sense we had that God’s saving power was alive and active in the world. Such, however, has been the case. As I have argued before and will yet again, though, these conditions are neither fully advantageous nor fully detrimental to authentic faith. They only provide the conditions out of which intellectual, moral, and religious conversion must arise.

_Sacramentality_

The general solution to the problem of religious skepticism worked out in the last chapter indicated that what is necessary for authentic religious belief is a way of life embodied by the Church that leads its members to accept the world mediated by meaning, act on what is truly good and not simply good for themselves and particular members, and fall in love with God. Given that one of the causes of contemporary religious skepticism is the process of disenchantment, it seems that we must find a way of locating God’s effective grace in the workings of the world today. Now it would be a mistake – let alone a practical impossibility – to try and re-enchant the world, especially by pre-modern standards. But I believe that a proper sacramental imagination is not limited to an enchanted worldview but rather an authentic way of understanding and making recognizable the saving power of God in the world.

Such a sacramental imagination is captured extraordinarily well in William Cavanaugh’s _Torture and Eucharist_ in which Cavanaugh presents a concrete and intelligible way in which the Eucharist has been, is, and can be a direct response to the devastating use of torture by the paramilitary government regime in Chile. In Cavanaugh’s understanding, torture in Pinochet-ruled Chile was “a social strategy, the effect of which is to discipline the citizenry into a complex
performance scripted by the state. That performance atomizes the citizenry through fear, thereby dismantling other social bodies which would rival the state’s authority over individual bodies.”

This approach to torture differs greatly from ones which insist that torture is wrong simply because it is a violation of inherent human rights. While human rights language is not wrong, Cavanaugh finds it to be a largely ineffectual argument which effectively reduces to the point of ‘torture is very bad’. Cavanaugh, however, changes the entire scope of the argument in his claim that, “while certainly individual bodies suffer grievously, the state’s primary targets in using torture are social bodies.” One of the most powerful and long-lasting effects of torture is the degree to which it isolates people as individuals. Instead of being people embodied in their social groups and larger world, “the immediacy of the pain shrinks the world down to the contours of the body itself; the enormity of the agony is the sufferer’s own reality.” The victim has no sense of past or future – only a scathing sense of the present. Thus, torture does not simply mutilate individuals, it creates individuals.

Although large portions of the Chilean Church remained bound by inadequate ecclesiologies, Cavanaugh finds that “under the regime, nevertheless, parts of the church were able to break out of this ecclesiological bind and draw on the resources of the Eucharist to resist the regime.” In particular, Cavanaugh points to three practices of the Church’s resistance: excommunicating torturers, knitting the social fabric back together through the social services of the Comité de Cooperación para la Paz en Chile (COPACHI) and the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, and liturgically performing the Body of Christ through the Sebastián Acevedo Movement. Each of these practices, Cavanaugh writes, represents a Eucharistic imagination at work in the world in

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164 Cavanaugh, 3.
165 Cavanaugh, 37.
166 Cavanaugh, 2.
the sense that the Eucharist “is much more than a ritual repetition of the past. It is rather a literal re-membering of Christ’s body, a knitting together of the body of Christ by the participation of many in His sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{167}

In the first place, excommunication is Eucharistic because it provides an opportunity to heal the gross social rifts in the Church. It is not a punishment, nor a ban, nor an exclusion, for in reality the divide already exists. Torturers, in this case, have already separated themselves from the Church. By making this rift visible and stating what is in fact already so, the excommunicating bishops are actually taking the first step in reconciling torturers with the Body of Christ. Secondly, the work of COPACHI and the Vicariate as a network of legal, informational, and social services by and for the people of Chile was not only a source for meeting immediate needs, (which it could sometimes meet and other times only try) but also the way in which the people of the resistance learned solidarity. Cavanaugh finds that “Solidaridad was not only the name of the Vicariate: it was a key word among the poor and in church circles which captured the realization that the only way the regime’s social control could be resisted was through cooperation and membership in one another.”\textsuperscript{168} Finally, the Sebastián Acevedo Movement arrived at symbolic locations and prearranged times and publically denounced the torture with banners, leaflets, and litany. Thus, they not only pointed to Christ suffering in the word, but actively joined in with the suffering members of the Body of Christ. In this way, “the members of Sebastián Acevedo become Eucharist by uniting their bodies in sacrifice with the body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{169}

Cavanaugh’s account of the Eucharistic imagination at work in Chile represents a strong sense of conversion within the Church’s social imaginary. In the first place, the heart of the

\textsuperscript{167} Cavanaugh, 229.  
\textsuperscript{168} Cavanaugh, 266.  
\textsuperscript{169} Cavanaugh, 277.
issue for Cavanaugh was not the appropriation of a theory nor the specific outcomes of any one action, it was the activation of the social imagination, which he understands as “that vision which organizes the members into a set of coherent performances, and which is constantly reconstructed by those performances.” In the second place, the development of a Eucharistic imagination requires conversion. This is one of the main ways in which Cavanaugh believes his approach differs from that of Leonardo Boff, who he understands as attempting to counter the process of disenchantment through a simple re-enchantment process. In Boff’s theology, “anything on earth can be a sacrament for a particular individual, provided she look through the object itself and see the presence of God.” Initially, such an approach looks exactly like what is necessary for us to truly feel the effective grace of God in the world. Cavanaugh, however, is quick to notice how “this attempt to re-enchant the secular world, however, only leaves the world more bereft of God. If God always stands ‘behind’ signs, then signs become interchangeable, and God never truly saturates any particular sign.”

Now Cavanaugh does not enter into a full scale analysis of Boff’s theology, but I believe that the heart of the issue is that in Cavanaugh’s understanding, Boff holds an overly subjective view of sacramentality. As Boff writes, “everything is, or can become, a sacrament. It depends on human beings and the way they look at things. The world will reveal its sacramental nature insofar as human beings look at it humanely, relating to it and letting the world come

170 Cavanaugh, 12.
171 Cavanaugh, 13.
172 Cavanaugh, 13.
173 Cavanaugh’s analysis of Boff’s writing is brief, and I think a fuller analysis would need to be more generous. Thus, it is important to take this argument not as an actual study of Boff and certainly not as a polemic against him. Rather, this argument should be taken as against one possible (and not the most generous possible) reading of Boff.
inside them to become their world." In this view, a thing becomes a sacrament when it holds meaning for us. Thus, the significance of the sacrament is in the meaning. A sense of conversion, however, requires a more objective view of sacramentality. Things are sacraments because the saving presence of God is in them, and it is through conversion that we come to accept the reality that is mediated by the symbolic meaning they carry.

Correctly understanding the process of self-transcendence found in conversion adds to the sacramental function of theology not only the task of discovering subjective meaning for particular individuals in the world, but also an objective level of meaning in which Christ’s incarnation, life, death, and resurrection can be concretely identified by all with eyes to see. In this view, the significance of the sacrament is not just the meaning, but rather the actual presence of God which is mediated to people by the meaning. The difference between these points, as Cavanaugh has shown, can be serious. If the significance of sacraments is their meaning, then a Eucharistic imagination would not have been a successful means of resistance to torture in Chile. Certainly the Church could have drawn on sacramental themes in order to impart the meaning that torture was wrong and must be stopped. But because (at least parts of) the Chilean Church was able to draw not only on the meaning of the Eucharist, but also on the deeper reality which it implied about the nature of the Body of Christ, then it was able to actively participate in the Christian narrative.

**The Removal of God from Society and The Church as Communion of Communions**

*The Removal of God from Society*

Another difference between contemporary society and the pre-modern is that in earlier times God was implicated in the very fabric of society. Taylor offers a pithy formula to articulate

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this difference. “Not only does it follow: I have moral and spiritual aspirations, therefore God is; but also: we are linked in society, therefore God is.” Some may read this as the claim that religion has been privatized, and this is certainly part of the trend that Taylor articulates, but the removal of God from our understanding of society is a much larger shift than privatization alone can account for. So what changed? One factor is related to the notion of the enchanted worldview, for not only was ‘good magic’ required for protection against evil forces, but such forces were typically deplored communally. Thus, sacred power was located in the communal fabric of parishes, guilds, or even the kingdom. But something more than disenchantment is required to allow for God’s power to be removed from our conception of society in order for people to function within a social order; they must have some conception of how their social structures work and what their role in these structures is. Thus, Taylor describes four elements in the modern social imaginary that took the place of God’s saving power at work in holding society together: the economy as an objectified reality, the public sphere, a sovereign people, and a direct-access society.

- The Economy: Where in earlier conceptions, the harmony and order of society was understood to arise from “the consonance between the Ideas or Forms manifested in the different levels of being or ranks in society,” our fundamental model changed in the eighteenth century to one in which “humans are engaged in an exchange of services.” ‘Invisible hand’ theories outlining how the economic order could be thought of as an objectified reality were first put forth by Locke, Smith, and a few others, but soon became part of the social imaginary and our daily practices.

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175 ASA, 43.  
176 ASA, 177.
• The Public Sphere: While there have always been spaces or forums for people to discuss the issues of their life, what was new about the eighteenth century is the way in which these spaces moved from being topical – that is, assemblies in local places – to increasingly meta-topical ones in which people who have never met before form a consensus of opinion. Furthermore, this new public sphere evolved more concretely as it established: (1) “its force as a benchmark of legitimacy,” and (2) “its independent identity from the political.”¹⁷⁷ Like never before, public opinion was seen as a way to check political power from outside, which involves a radically secular imagination which is directly subject neither to God or Law but only to the opinions of the people.

• The Sovereign People: Highly related to the creation of the public sphere was the increasing shift in worldview such that no longer did people imagine that the king represented the kingdom, the bishop the church, etc., but rather that these institutions were all represented by ‘the people’ in various ways. Now this is not an easy transformation, for it must run like a well directed play: “the actors have to know what to do, have practices in their repertory,” while at the same time “the ensemble of actors have to agree on what these practices are.”¹⁷⁸ Taylor writes that while the Russian Revolution seemed clearly to be missing the first of these aspects and the French Revolution lacked the second feature, the U.S. Revolution epitomizes the formation of a sovereign people as evidenced not only by its success but also in its concise articulation of “We the people…”

• The Direct-Access Society: The final change involves the way in which people understood society to be arranged ‘vertically’ to existing for the most part ‘horizontally’.

¹⁷⁷ ASA, 188.
¹⁷⁸ ASA, 200.
Living in an earlier society “meant that one belonged to this society via belonging to some component of it. As a peasant one was linked to a lord who in turn held from the king.”\(^{179}\) Society was conceived as a pre-existing structure, and each member had its place in it. In such society, the vast majority of people either had no access or at best had limited access mediated by a chain of ‘higher ups’ to those who were seen to really represent the society. Today, however, we can write our members of Congress or start an ad campaign to influence public opinion, both of which are seen as direct connections to society. And in the case of those with whom we might not be able to directly communicate, (celebrities, the President, large corporation executives, etc.) we at least have direct access to what they are doing, thinking, and feeling via mainstream media, all of which would have been unimaginable in pre-modern societies.

These four points represent a broad change from the way God was implicated in every facet of society to a general understanding that society is held together by forces much more immanent. Now the difficulty comes in assessing whether or not this change has been for the better. On one hand, we are most certainly glad to have a more direct means of shaping society for the better and feeling like there is a way of creating change. But there is another sensibility that complains when unemployment rates rise or people become unable to purchase houses that our lives are centered more around the economy than the good - that there is a bit of the tail wagging the dog so to speak. Or we complain about the fickleness of the masses when politics are dominated more by catchy phrases and marketing tricks to keep voters happy than by the best interests of society.

Using the terminology developed in the last chapter, I would argue that Taylor’s narrative is articulating a change in which society went from one in which God’s power in

\(^{179}\) ASA, 210.
society was understood to deeply constitute each member to one in which we by and large imagine that it is the individuals who constitute society. An authentic imagination, however, is one in which we have a deep sense that we are both constituted by a higher and good ordering of society as well as have the ability to reconstruct that order as distortions and biases come to light.

*Communion of Communions*

The issue at hand here is that of the relationship between God’s order and human orders. One of the key contributions of Taylor’s narrative has been to illustrate how, although there have always been tensions between Church and government structures from the early persecutions to the investiture controversy to the rise of the nation-state, the structures which governed society were never seen as being fully independent from an understanding that God was working behind it until very recently in history. But the formation of the modern social imaginary changed this notion when it created a new understanding of an order that was purely immanent. Since we are seeking an understanding that goes beyond both the ‘pre-modern’ and the ‘modern’ conceptions, we can accept neither the exclusive conclusions that the will of God is directly responsible for the entire structure of society or that society is held together by entirely immanent (although potentially vague and invisible) forces. Rather, we can extend the conversation above in locating God’s presence in the world sacramentally and locate God’s presence in society as existing in human communion.

In discussing the Catholic Church’s magisterium today, Richard Gaillardetz describes the Church as best represented as an ordered communion of communions. Such communion exists on many levels: “(1) communion with God in Christ by the power of the Spirit, (2) communion with the fellow believers gathered at the Eucharistic assembly, (3) communion with other
Eucharistic communities throughout the world, (4) communion with Christians who supped at the Lord’s table in times past and (5) communion with the saints who celebrate at the eternal banquet.”

Here, the word communion is particularly important. Gaillardetz uses this term not in the sense of just exhibiting a complementarity among Christians, but in the sense that St. Paul appropriates when he speaks of koinonia, thus implying a real coexistence. Further, this coexistence is not hierarchical even though some of the terms employed for the magisterium may still reflect the medieval hierarchy. “The pope,” Gaillardetz writes, “is neither head of the whole Church, nor bishop of the whole Church,” but rather “pastor of the universal Church by virtue of his role as bishop of the local church of Rome.”

What this sort of structure allows for – if implemented properly – is a Catholic imagination that is both ordered and communal. So the question is, what does this type of imaginary hold with regard to the difficulty of establishing a model of relationship between church and state? If we employ the general solution of conversion to this problem, we come to the result that the Church is always met with the task of authentically forming communions that reflect the spirit of koinonia of the early Christian centuries. It is a crucial feature of this task that it does not hold a static vision of the Church, but rather envisions the Church as a dynamic body. Thus, what is needed is neither a conception of the Church as government nor of the Church as a whisperer to the government (through the people). When the Church becomes understood as or mixed in with a governing body (such as in pre-revolutionary France, for instance), then it loses the ability for authentic conversion. Likewise, when it withdraws into

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181 For his interpretation of koinonia, Gaillardetz relies on Jerome Murphy-O’Connor’s “Eucharist and Community in I Corinthians,” in *Living Bread, Saving Cup.* Edited by Kevin Seasoltz. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 4.
182 Gaillardetz, 69-70.
itself and refuses to become a political structure – either through overt sectarianism or covertly submitting to excarnational forms of being which only seek to make aspects of faith relevant to political systems – it confides only in its own heritage and maintains any distortions within it. Rather, what is needed is an imagination of koinonia in which the Church is understood to be continually becoming incarnate in the world in intentional communions of faith and therefore remaking the world anew.

The Loss of Profound Tensions and Catholicity

Tensions

As I outlined in the first chapter, Taylor finds many of the changes in the conditions of belief to be due to what he calls the work of Reform. Reform is not the same as Reformation; it reaches farther back into history and is much broader in scope. The Reformation, on this view, is one of the fruits of Reform. Taylor locates four causes of Reform: a growing and specifically Christocentric spirituality, an increasing concern over death, a movement towards an intense, inner devotional life, and the formation of a new spiritual (and not necessarily social) élite who brought forth a focus on inner spirituality instead of ‘pious’ communal practices. In many ways, these movements represented a further Christianization of society in the way they demanded living with an eschatological focus. In this view, death has been overcome by Christ, and therefore life is to be lived for something beyond the confines of human life itself. In another sense, though, this process was heavily individualizing. People no longer were concerned with the common judgment (of their village, parish, kingdom, etc.) but rather with their own personal judgment. The combination of all these directions, though, was that Reform clearly pointed towards the demand “that everyone be a real, 100 percent Christian.”

\[^{183}\text{ASA, } 774.\]
Given this new demand that each person strive to imitate Christ through the cultivation of an inner devotional life, the work of Reform was eventually bound to attack the Medieval two-tiered, or as Taylor calls in, the ‘two-speed’, system in which the monks were understood to pray for all while the laity worked for all. The problem with this was not that there were variations in modes of Church life, but rather that only the renunciative vocations were seen as truly accepting the gospel call while the laity was understood to be making concessions of sorts for the requirements of ongoing human life. This issue comes to head in a large way in over the tension between celibacy and procreation. In early monastic communities, “celibacy enabled a total turning of the heart to God. Procreation is our answer to the Fall, and the death which it introduces into the world. By procreating, we go on perpetuating the species in fallen time. But through celibacy, we can attempt to leap out of fallen time, and return to God’s eternity.”

Two attempts were made to end this tension. One was to enjoin celibacy on everyone, such as in Shaker communities; the other was to toss out celibate vocations altogether.

A second form of tension was the understood tension between structure and anti-structure. While it was apparent that formal societal structures were necessary in order to continue to function, there was nevertheless a sense that things weren’t supposed to be that way. Rather, there was a general feeling “that all codes limit us, shut us out from something important, prevent us from seeing and feeling things of great moment.” This need for anti-structure was lived out in Carnival, or various feasts of misrule which were not only festivals, but entire reversals of the way life was normally lived. “Boys wore the mitre, or fools were made kings for a day; what was ordinarily revered was mocked, people permitted themselves various

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184 ASA, 44.
185 ASA, 50.
forms of license, not just sexually but also in close-to-violent acts, and the like.\textsuperscript{186} So while it would not be accurate to say that such feasts were accurate portrayals of what the Parousia or the transcendent realm is like, they clearly had an understanding that the standard human order was not the entirety of things – that the spiritual cosmos included a sense of disorder as well as the ordinary social order.

In both of these examples, it seems that the result of the work of Reform was to raise a real concern over how it is possible for everyone in society to actively live out the call to follow Christ. Where earlier societies seemed resigned enough to the fact that this call was so radical that only certain members could follow it fully, Reform wanted everybody. Reform demanded a form of life that each person could follow and an order that could maintain this form. Now there are two problems with this Reform movement, one correlating with each of the examples given. The second will have to wait until the next section on the flattening of our conception of time, but I will address the first here. The problem with the Reform drive to create one single form of life for all Christians is that it took away from the ability to imagine the church as a place where the deep paradoxes of faith can dwell.

\textit{Catholicity and Ecumenism}

A discussion of Taylor’s ‘loss of profound tensions’ could be taken in many directions, but I would like to focus in particular on a part of the Catholic imagination that resists this trend – namely, catholicity. A concise definition of the term is difficult; however, the notion of catholicity indicates both a concrete unity of the Church as well as a fundamental diversity within that unity. Perhaps ‘unity in diversity’ provides a concise definition. Henri de Lubac defines catholicity “in terms of a generous and open embrace of all that is good and worthy and

\textsuperscript{186} ASA, 46.
true” in spite of – or perhaps even because of – the inherent paradoxes of Christian faith.\(^{187}\)

This notion, I believe, uncovers a further aspect of conversion inasmuch as an appropriate understanding of conversion not only allows for “a pluralism in the expression of the same fundamental stance and, once theology develops, a multiplicity of theologies that express the same faith,”\(^{188}\) but also a foundational means by which unauthentic distortions in various itineraries of the faith are removed as they become a concrete unity.

Catholicity, then, is an appropriate quality that resists the homogenization and fragmentation evident in the loss of tensions of which Taylor speaks. (Again I am primarily addressing the first tension – the collapse of the ‘two-speed system’ – here because the second heavily overlaps with the flattening of time discussed in the next section.) This loss, which has been an undesired effect of the route in which the work of Reform took as it brought forth the Reformation and the further ‘nova effect’ of increasing options ranging from orthodox religion to explicit atheism,\(^{189}\) ultimately represents a rejection of the necessity of a diverse set of Christian vocations. Rejecting the need not only for a celibate clergy but of celibate vocations altogether, Reformers pushed an agenda of homogenization where homogenization is not possible, for they distorted the Axial intuition to make each person a full, 100 percent Christian with a desire to greatly reduce the range of itineraries of the faith.\(^{190}\) This drive of homogenization led to a deep fragmentation in the Reformation, which continues today every

\(^{187}\) This reading of de Lubac is from Dennis M. Doyle’s *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 59.

\(^{188}\) *Method*, 271.

\(^{189}\) Cf. Part III of ASA, “The Nova Effect”.

\(^{190}\) On this theme, Taylor remarks that “Luther and Calvin were surely right to condemn the ideology of spiritual superiority which infected late-mediaeval monasticism, but they ended up discrediting celibate vocations as such, greatly reducing the range of Christian lives. And their Reformation has helped to produce, via another stage of ‘reform’, today’s secular world, where renunciation is not just viewed with suspicion – to a certain degree that is always healthy and necessary – but is off the radar altogether, just a form of madness of self-mutilation. We end up from all this with a narrower, more homogeneous world of conformity to a hedonic principle,” (ASA, 772).
time a new denomination sprouts up or a renegade pastor gathers together a new ‘free-will’ or ‘nondenominational’ congregation.

The question then becomes what perspective conversion and catholicity can bring to ecumenism. Richard Gaillardetz addresses this subject from the Roman Catholic perspective in his book *The Church in the Making*. Here, Gaillardetz writes that the pre-Vatican II view, “at least as officially articulated in ecclesiastical statements, was not open to any acknowledgement of shared membership in the body of Christ on the part of non-Catholic Christians.” In this mind, Pius XI’s approach to ecumenism was a pleading for non-Catholic churches to return to Roman Catholicism:

*The union of Christians cannot be fostered otherwise than by promoting the return of the dissidents to the one true Church of Christ, which in the past they so unfortunately abandoned; return, we say, to the one true Church of Christ which is plainly visible to all and which by the will of her Founder forever remains what he himself destined her to be for the common salvation of human beings.*

Vatican II certainly represented a different sort of ecumenism, but it is not as readily apparent as to what approach it is. One of the changes was that the council wrote in *Lumen Gentium* that the Church, understood as the Body of Christ, “subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, [...] although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.” The most common word to point out here is the verb ‘subsists’, and Gaillardetz traces the development of this theology through

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192 Gaillardetz, 69.
Leonardo Boff’s interpretation, its rejection by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the CDF’s document *Dominus Iesus* to determine a position in which the fullness of the means of salvation can be found only within the Roman Catholic Church but that some of these means can be found elsewhere. “The conciliar teaching,” Gaillardetz writes, “suggests that one can enumerate the various ‘means of salvation’ present in various Christian traditions (all of which are present in the Roman Catholic Church) and score them accordingly.” Thus, a Catholic parish which in theory has access to all the means of salvation might not actually live them all out while some of these means are being lived out more fully in neighboring non-Catholic churches.

But however much Gaillardetz may have clarified the council’s position on other Christian churches and ecumenism, he remains in doubt as to whether or not this position is practically helpful in creating unity among the traditions. His suggestion is that “future reflection on this important topic must consider the catholicity of the church, as it extends to Catholicism’s relations with other Christian traditions, not only quantitatively and objectively but also existentially and pastorally [*]. Full, visible unity among the churches must remain an indispensable goal of every authentic Christian tradition. What, concretely, full visible unity actually requires, however, will have to be thought anew.”

Dennis Doyle writes about one such attempt at an actual step towards unity in his study of *The Church Emerging from Vatican II*. In 1983, Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner called “for intercommunion and pulpit sharing among ‘the large Christian

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194 See Gaillardetz, 155ff.
195 Gaillardetz, 168.
196 Gaillardetz, 169.
churches [... which] would then be identified as ‘Partner churches.’"¹⁹⁷ Intercommunion, however, is a difficult subject and then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger quickly disagreed with their proposal citing that “it would be better to explore these fundamental issues of truth [regarding the Scripture, Tradition, church authority, and the meaning of the act of faith] more deeply than to engage in the ‘forced march towards unity’ proposed by Fries and Rahner."¹⁹⁸ The difficulty, it seems, is that real progress forwards requires a real unity. And while a forced march was not necessarily the intent of Fries or Rahner, catholicity cannot be understood as either making concessions about essential truths or coming to a lowest common denominator.

Another ecumenical endeavor has been attempted to by the Faith and Order movement, whose progress up through 2004 has been chronicled by Jeffery Gros, F.S.C.¹⁹⁹ While the significance of the core issues that have been addressed by the Faith and Order movement are not overlooked by Gros, I think it is most beneficial to this particular conversation to focus on what he identifies as the three methodological considerations that have developed throughout the movement. The first took place at a meeting in Lund in 1952 in which “a shift occurred from the earlier comparative ecclesiology approach to a Christocentric methodology with a strong emphasis on the common sources of Scripture and Tradition,” or resourcement.²⁰⁰ Instead of seeking to merely compare and contrast the various faith traditions present, Faith and Order’s turn to resourcement has allowed each church to evaluate again its formulations and

²⁰⁰ Gros, 27.
practices in light of the historically accepted sources. The second methodological consideration that Gros finds significant is the articulation of a distinction between convergence and consensus. With this distinction made, it has been possible to articulate the degree to which doctrinal formulations agree with one another – whether they have reached a consensus such that they agree to a substantial enough degree to no longer be considered divided on the issue, or whether they converge and hold “a framework of agreement within which more work is necessary for full unity to be achieved.”

Finally, Gros notes the emergence of a third methodological consideration, ‘reception’. The concept of reception conceives of ecumenical dialogue in three stages: mutual exploration and understanding, a dialogue of truth, and reception. In the first stage, the churches seek to learn the depth of each other’s tradition and the significance of its doctrinal formulations. When sufficient trust has been gained, the churches begin to dialogue on the full range of issues with respect to how each issue contributes to the overall integrity of each tradition. In the third stage, each church is prepared to evaluate and act on the fruits of the dialogue and then return to the table.

Now I have not highlighted the progress of the Faith and Order movement because I believe it represents the fullness of ecumenism. Indeed, there is much work to go before the goal of full communion can be reached. But I do believe, however, that the efforts of this movement are reflective of actual attempts towards Church conversion and fuller catholicity. It is through this sort of dialogue and discernment that will eventually reverse tragic fragmentation and homogenization that has been a result of the work of Reform. But I believe that there is one additional task that Taylor’s work

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201 Gros, 28.
highlights that has yet to be addressed, and that is the degree to which catholicity exists not only in theory but in the social imaginary of the Church as a whole.

As Taylor has so skillfully articulated, the ‘nova effect’ of churches was not driven primarily by theological differences on the level of explicit doctrines, but rather by a growing dissatisfaction with the way Christians commonly understood their lived experiences. We should not suppose, then, that conversion from fragmentation to catholicity can be achieved without engaging the social imaginary. Now as I have already claimed, I believe that efforts such as the Faith and Order movement are on the right track; we do not need to start over from square one. Rather, what is needed is an increase in popular engagement with the set of encounters that are had in ecumenical meetings and councils. In other words, local ecumenical dialogue needs to occur in local areas among individuals who are not academics or clerics (although these dialogues naturally ought to involve by such persons). The point of these dialogues may be different than those of the Faith and Order movement, for it is probably not the case that new resolutions to difficult issues will frequently occur on this level. Rather, these levels of dialogue ought to (a) reflect on the depth of ecumenical dialogue that has occurred in higher level meetings and (b) come to grips with how these issues actually affect the lives of those present. This sort of ‘next step’ to the method of the Faith and Order movement would necessarily require intentional efforts by all participating churches, but would go a long way in developing the social imaginary of a Church that is truly one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
Flattened Time and the Liturgy

The Flattening of Time

In the previous section regarding how earlier societies held profound truths in tension with one another, I briefly discussed one of Taylor’s examples of how these societies would occasionally reverse their social world through enacting a world framed by anti-structure. There is an additional element here that has to do with the pre-modern conception of time. Today, we think of time as a purely immanent dimension of reality. It is homogeneous, the same for everyone everywhere. Furthermore, it is linear and transitive. In Taylor’s words, “If A is before B and B before C, then A is before C. The same goes if we quantify these relations: if A is long before B, and B long before C, then A is very long before C.”\(^\text{202}\) In such a view of time, there is no real connection between the past and the present or the present and the future. First century events, for example, are not a present reality, but historic events. And naturally, (it is almost absurd to raise the point) they are more ‘in the past’ than events in the eleventh.

But this was not the pre-modern conception of time. The pre-modern conception imagined time as kairotic; it was multi-layered and full of knots and warps. There was, of course, a sense of time which was linearly ordered, and this is the original meaning for the term secular. Time was secular (or being in the *saeculum*) when it was being understood in the ordinary, linear manner. Another layer of time existed, however that was ‘higher’ or ‘eternal’. For the Greek philosophers, higher time was that of the realm of the eternal Ideas which were mirrored in secular time. For Christians, the notion was similar except that eternity becomes the notion of how God exists as creator of time and space and therefore necessarily beyond them. What made time kairotic is that, in these societies, people understood that there were certain points where either the secular touched the eternal or that certain points in secular time were

\(^{202}\) *ASA*, 55.
somehow ‘closer’ to eternity. Because of their closeness to eternity, it was possible that those times could also come into contact with regularly lived time. For instance, in kairotic time it would appear that “Good Friday 1998 is closer in a way to the original day of the Crucifixion than mid-summer’s day 1997.”

So what brought about this change from kairotic time to flattened time? The answer of the subtraction stories is that the development of science made it impossible to hold ‘mythic’ senses of time such as the Adam and Eve story or Mount Olympus. But that is missing the point: kairotic time doesn’t really have much to do with the question of whether or not there were dinosaurs 65 million years ago; it has to do with how we experience the world mediated by meaning embedded in time as we live it. And although the sciences play a significant role in our imagination of time, they certainly do not hold complete control over it. Taylor’s narrative is more complex than the subtraction stories, and we see this in the way he sorts out the change in the ways that “nature figures in our moral and aesthetic imagination.”

I would like to highlight two such changes that Taylor finds in order to illustrate how our sense of time became flattened: the first relates to the sciences, but the second relies more on the artistic and poetic sense of the sublime. The first change involved a drastic expansion of our sense of space and time. Where pre-modern conceptions of the natural world were pretty much limited to the world we could see, scientific developments extended this world in three dimensions. The first extension is of space – advances in astronomy and physics were able to map out a much larger image of the universe than ever before. Not only isn’t the earth the

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203 ASA, 55.
204 Lonergan makes this same point in distinguishing between the realm of theory and the realm of common sense. While the physicist may know, on the level of theory, that her table is comprised of atoms and is therefore mostly empty space, her common sense way of imagining the table is nevertheless as a solid object, (cf. Method, 274).
205 ASA, 323.
center of the few celestial objects we can see from the ground, but in fact we have found that it is tucked neatly in a small corner of one galaxy among many. The universe is huge beyond imagining. But in another sense, the universe is also small beyond imagining, for we have also extended our knowledge of the universe into increasingly smaller cells, molecules, atoms, and the subatomic (and modern string theorists are trying to push this smaller still!). And in case these two dimensions were not enough, our sense of time has been extended. First, it was extended to include time before human memory, then before the human species, and now even before and after the small blip in time in which the earth and solar system exist. Such discoveries have a profound effect on the cosmological imagination; it is hard to imagine any other ‘higher’ time being woven in with the secular when the secular stretches out of sight and without bottom in any direction we can look.

But there has also been a more readily available sense in which nature changed in our moral and aesthetic imagination, and in many ways, this was required to even allow the first change to seep into the imagination. The entire narrative that Taylor tells is too complicated to retrace here, but the upshot is that there became a growing idea, epitomized in Romantic art, poetry, and philosophy, and also as far ranging as in Freud and the depth psychologists “that our existence, or vitality, or creativity depends, not just on the inhuman outside of us – for instance, on the overwhelming power of raw nature which awakens heroism in us – but on the wild and pre-human in us which resonates to that alien external power.” 206 To get a sense of ourselves now requires a firm grasp of the natural and human orders, and this represents a large shift from earlier ways of thinking. 207 In earlier conceptions, one’s sense of self did not come from

206 ASA, 346.
207 Taylor shares this anecdote from Tocqueville: “A young Frenchman of the Romantic era, who had read Chateaubriand, out in the Michigan territory, he obviously wanted to see the wilderness. But when he tried to explain his project to the local frontiersmen to enlist their help, he met a wall of incomprehension.
beholding the beauty of nature or our pre-conscious minds, but from our relation to the eternal order of the world. In the Platonic understanding, being human meant being in harmony with the eternal Form of humanity; for Christians, this became a struggle to perfect oneself according to God’s original design before sin entered the world. This predominance of nature in our moral and aesthetic imagination no longer requires – and in fact debases – a need for a kairotic vision of time in which secular and higher times were mixed with one another. Instead, we have reduced our sense of time to a flattened vision in which only the ordinary ticking of clocks is significant.

**Liturgy**

The Christian understanding of time, in contrast to the flat, empty time of the saeculum, is one in which the meaning of time is made over in reference to the eschaton. As Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmeman writes, this is based on the ancient Jewish ‘liturgy of time’:

*Morning, evening, day, the Sabbath, feast days – all these have an ‘eschatological’ significance, as reminders of the ultimate and great ‘Day of the Lord’ which is coming in time. This is the liturgy of time; but not natural or cyclical time, not that time which is, so to speak, ‘immanent’ in the world, determining and containing it within its own self-sufficient, cyclical rhythm. It is time that is eschatologically transparent, time within which and over which the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is constantly acting, and which discovers its real meaning in the Kingdom of Yahweh, ‘the Kingdom of all ages’.*

Thus, time is conceived differently; it is always in reference to the eschaton.

The difference between Judaistic and Christian time is that in Christian time, the Messiah has come and the Kingdom is already at hand. Jürgen Moltmann attempts to re-introduce a notion of such higher or eschatological time in his book *God in Creation*.

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Somebody wanting to enter the primeval forest just to *behold it*; this made no sense. He must have had some undeclared agenda, like lumbering or land speculation,” (ASA, 349-50).

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by demonstrating the need “to find a Christian way of sanctifying the sabbath” in order that “worship on Sunday morning can then be set wholly in the liberty of Christ’s resurrection for the new creation.”

The way that Moltmann tries to do this is heavily pneumatological; he seeks to retrieve “the earlier theological idea of the Creator Spirit who interpenetrates, quickens and animates the world [but] was pushed out by the modern mechanistic world picture.” And although most of Moltmann’s book is dedicated to recovering this theological idea in theory, he concludes with a plea to celebrate the sabbath day as the feast of creation. By celebrating the sabbath as the feast of creation – of God’s rest day from the act of creation – “Israel knows no imitation of creation; it knows only participation in God’s sabbath rest through the sanctification of the sabbath.” In this feature, Israel’s conception of the divine is different from that of other traditions, for God is not represented in images or in name but directly in time. In the celebration of God’s hallowed time, Israel celebrates the eternal Spirit of God entering into creation, and therefore resounds with “the rhythm of eternity in time.”

Furthermore, Moltmann argues, this sense of time is not to be just for the Jewish people, but for Christians as well. Christians cannot reject this sabbath feast, for Jesus “did not abolish the sabbath in favour of good works and good working days. On the contrary, he raised working days into the messianic festivity of life, of which Israel’s sabbath is a unique foretaste.” In Moltmann’s presentation, reinstituting the celebration of the sabbath does not detract from Sunday’s feast of the resurrection.

210 Moltmann, 98.
211 Moltmann, 284.
212 Moltmann, 287.
213 Moltmann, 292.
the contrary, it brings out the fullness of the meaning of the Christian Sunday as “the messianic extension of Israel’s sabbath.”\textsuperscript{214} In this view, the Christian celebration of the resurrection becomes more than the remembrance of a purely historical event but also a celebration of the new creation present and alive in time today. The resurrection of Christ becomes present and alive in those who celebrate it today.

Now I think that the direction Moltmann takes in his presentation of the sabbath is a good step towards constructing an authentic liturgical imagination that can orient Christians towards conversion and the eschaton. In my judgment, however, Moltmann stops short of a full liturgical imagination. If Moltmann is correct that Jesus did not come to abolish the sabbath but rather to inaugurate the presence of the Kingdom of God into all the days of the week, then we need to have a way of living and celebrating that presence not only on Sunday and the sabbath, but throughout the week as well. Furthermore, if the inauguration of the Kingdom of God is not limited only to Jesus’ resurrection, but also to his Incarnation, life, and death as well, then we need to celebrate more than just the day of resurrection but also the seasons of Jesus’ life. The Catholic imagination has traditionally held room for both of these inclusions in the Divine Office celebrated each day as well as the liturgical calendar in which the Church moves through the seasons of Jesus’ Incarnation, life, crucifixion, and resurrection. The theory and praxis of the Catholic liturgy already receive much attention in scholarly work, but I would like to capture a sense of the imagination that is involved. One such imagination is clearly at work in Patrick Kavanagh’s poem ‘Advent’.\textsuperscript{215} For Kavanagh, the

\textsuperscript{214} Moltmann, 294.
\textsuperscript{215} Kavanagh, Patrick. ‘Advent’. \textit{Collected Poems}. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), 70. The following citations are from this source.
season of Advent is not limited only to the official celebrations of the Church, but rather, these celebrations penetrate into the very fabric of his life. For instance, he writes:

    But here in the Advent-darkened room
    Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea
    Of penance will charm back the luxury
    Of a child’s soul

Symbolized by the darkness of his room and the plain fare he eats, Kavanagh feels the coming of the Christ child in a very real way. Further, Kavanagh’s liturgical imagination gives him a definite sense that the world will be made over anew after Christmas:

    O after Christmas we’ll have no need to go searching
    For the difference that sets an old phrase burning-
    We’ll hear it in the whispered argument of a churning
    Or in the streets where the village boys are lurching.
    And we’ll hear it among decent men too
    Who barrow dung in gardens under trees,
    Wherever life pours ordinary plenty.

But the aspect of Kavanagh’s poem that most captures the sense of liturgical imagination I am pointing to is the way in which his contact with the eschaton present in the coming Incarnation of Christ is part of conversion. Kavanagh is keenly aware of both his own sins and the sins of society, but these sins are borne in history. It is only through the liturgy in which God’s eternity breaks into history that Kavanagh feels he will be able to overcome the sins of the secular world of ordinary time. Thus, in the season of Advent he dreams of the new reality that will come with Christmas:

    Won’t we be rich, my love and I, and please
    God we shall not ask for reason’s payment,
    The why of heart-breaking strangeness in dreeping hedges
    Nor analyse God’s breath in common statement.
    We have thrown into the dust-bin the clay-minted wages
    Of pleasure, knowledge and the conscious hour-
    And Christ comes with a January flower.
Kavanagh’s imagination clearly holds a deep sense in which Christmas will restore a profound yet simple faith in God. He will no longer search for his own means of self-gratification (which for Kavanagh is typically represented in sexual turmoil) or justification for his belief in God through knowledge (by which Kavanagh means “the knowledge we stole but could not use” in the Genesis story\textsuperscript{216}). In other words, Kavanagh cannot conceive of his reconciliation with God except through time. Such time is not just the ordinary sense of time, but rather a more complex time in which there are concrete moments where God’s eternity breaks into our order and we likewise break from our immanent frame and into the transcendent.

**Cosmology**

\textit{‘Cosmos’ to ‘Universe’}

The fifth and final change that Taylor describes between the pre-modern and the modern ways of imagining the world is less of a specific idea in its own right and more of a summation of the previous four. To get at this notion, Taylor writes:

\textit{We might say that we moved from living in a cosmos to being included in a universe. I use ‘cosmos’ for our forebearers’ idea of the totality of existence because it contains the sense of ordered whole. It is not that our universe isn’t in its own way ordered, but in the cosmos the order of things was a humanly meaningful one. That is, the principle of order in the cosmos was closely related to, often identical with that which gave shape to our lives.\textsuperscript{217}}

Taylor conceives this transition from cosmos to universe as an amalgamation of sorts of the processes of disenchantment, the removal of God as implicated in society, the loss of profound tensions, and the flattening of time. From the vantage point of the ‘cosmos’, the

\textsuperscript{216} This citation is also from Kavanaugh’s ‘Advent’.

\textsuperscript{217} ASA, 60.
world is imagined almost entirely as it relates to humanity. We can see this in the enchanted worldview in the way that human meaning is not only inferred but understood to be carried within an enormous host of sources lurk everywhere one looks. Or socially, the notion of a cosmos can be found in the implication of divine kingship or the great chain of being in the way that not only do social structures exist for human benefit, but that they are furthermore intended throughout the entire cosmic order. The cosmic order, in other words, exists with an inherent concern for the social structure of humanity. Perhaps most clearly, the cosmic worldview is upheld in pre-modern, kairotic conceptions of time in which time was not understood as existing as an empty void which human activity filled, but rather in direct relationship to our feasts, worship, and work. In contrast to our temporal imagination today in which such events are generally understood to be human markings upon the independent flow of time, these earlier conceptions imagined that human meaning actually constituted part of time itself. Taylor’s way of describing our common way of imagining the whole as a cosmos to a universe is thus a sort of summation of the difference we feel between the pre-modern worldview and that which we hold today.

Now Taylor is not alone in noticing the eerie absence of cosmology in contemporary theological discourse. In her 1996 presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, for example Elizabeth Johnson likewise makes the case that the endeavor of pre-modern theologians to interpret the whole world in the light of Christian faith gave vitality to their work and inspired impressive systems in which cosmology, anthropology, and theology of God formed a harmonious unity.” 218 In the contemporary theological arena, however, the first of these three traditional major areas in theology – cosmology – is glaringly missing. Johnson

continues by arguing that the absence of cosmology in theological discourse will greatly compromise the intellectual integrity of the field because the inability of theologians to hold scientifically informed conversations with regards to the exact extent to which the universe is incredibly old, large, dynamic and organic leaves theology without a relevant framework from which to approach theological questions. But perhaps more intriguing is Johnson’s insistence that a deficiency in cosmology is also detrimental to theology’s moral integrity. 

Now while I don’t think that Taylor would disagree with the essence of Johnson’s argument, I think that his perspective goes beyond Johnson’s in the way that he is able to identify particularly moral reasons for the way our cosmological imagination exists in the form that it does. According to Taylor’s narrative in which our cosmological imagination shifted from conceiving ‘the whole’ as a ‘cosmos’ to a ‘universe’, the story cannot simply read that modern science has stripped theologians of the ability to participate in cosmological conversations (although it has insisted that theological cosmology become more fluent in handling mathematical and scientific observation and logic – a condition which has not been frequently met). Rather, Taylor’s narrative insists that contemporary theologians (and, indeed, most secular persons) have a very particular type of cosmological imagination which not only has moral consequences but is, in fact, grounded upon the moral agenda of the work of Reform. This agenda, as we have seen, emphasizes (at least) the desire to include only human agents as sources of meaning, remove God as an implication in the fabric of society, introduce human

\[219\] Johnson specifically discusses the ways in which the failure to attend to cosmology will greatly deter theology’s ability to adequately address moral issues such as ecology, poverty, and women’s issues. While the issue of ecology has relatively clear connections with cosmology, the latter two involve steps which I can only briefly indicate here. Johnson upholds that cosmology affects our outlook on the poor because “economic poverty coincides with ecological poverty, for the poor suffer disproportionately from environmental destruction,” (10). Furthermore, gender inequality is also related to ecological concerns, for “exploitation of the earth also coincides with the subordination of women within the system of patriarchy,” (11).
flourishing as the sole conception of the good, and elevate secular time (that is, time of the *saeculum*) as the only valid conception of time.

So what does this condition have to say about the place of cosmology in theological discourse (or, perhaps, theology in cosmological discourse)? Well, if Taylor’s theme of the shift from a ‘cosmos’ to a ‘universe’ imaginary can be seen as arching over the previous four themes, then the cosmology we are searching for should likewise be a synthetic vision enrapturing our four previous responses. In discussing sacramentality, we discussed how a truly sacramental vision went beyond an attempt to merely re-enchant the world and describe God’s grace as something that can be found anywhere as long as one look from the proper angle. Instead, authentic sacraments are moments where God’s grace enters the world and forms something new. With regards to the Church, this means that the Church is continually becoming the Body of Christ. Discussing God’s presence in society, we advanced moved beyond both the pre-modern conception that the societal and political structures are created purely by divine institution as well as the modern conception that such structures arise from purely immanent means and instead moved towards an understanding in which the presence of God can be located socially in human communion. God’s presence resides in the Church, then, as a communion of communions.

In the third section on catholicity, we focused on the particular problem of ecumenism rejecting positions simply of an ‘ecumenism of return’ in which world churches must simply ‘come back’ to the Roman Catholic Church as it is as well as ‘least common denominator’ attempts to represent communion between the churches without real unity. Rather, we turned again to the method of Church conversion to come to an understanding that authentic communion will only be the result of unifying despite and through diversity as God remakes the Church ever anew and it becomes again the Body of Christ. Finally, we explored the pre-modern
conception of *kairotic* time as well as the shift towards modern, flattened time and advanced instead the liturgical time of the Church. In liturgical time, the Church is brought to a contact point between the *saeculum* and the eschaton.

In each of these elements of the Catholic social imaginary, there is a definitive Eucharistic implication. Sanctifying the world, establishing a social order filled with the presence of God, growing in communion with the world churches, and living in the fullness of liturgical time each requires the gathering, breaking, and pouring of the body and blood of Christ. But the reality of the Eucharist is not only a local event that occurs in the here and now of the moment: in the Church gathered, the bread broken, the wine poured. Rather, the Eucharistic vision is a truly cosmic event in which the two histories of the ordered whole (whether we prefer to call it cosmos or universe) are joined together.

**Cosmology**

In order to clarify the sort of cosmology that best encapsulates the previous four themes, I will begin with what at first glance may appear to be an unusual (or perhaps even unworthy) starting point: the doctrine of the ascension. In particular, I will primarily reference Douglas Farrow’s work on what the doctrine of ascension in the flesh means for cosmology and ecclesiology.\(^{220}\) In his book *Ascension and Ecclesia*, Farrow takes up the study of a doctrine that has long been a bit of an embarrassment in theological reflection – the ascension of Christ. As Farrow notes:

> *Today it is something of an embarrassment. Both exegetically and theologically the ascension is quickly assimilated to the resurrection. Its festival is commonly passed over as a redundant marker on the road to Pentecost, allowing it little or no impact on the shape of Christian life and thought. It is said to smack of the*

triumphalism we intend to put behind us or of the remoteness of God we want to overcome. For many the very idea conjures up an outmoded cosmology; for a few, something more sinister. But perhaps its greatest offence is that just here the eucharistic dilemma of the two histories, and with it the troubling ambiguity of the church, stubbornly asserts itself.\footnote{Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 9.}

The doctrine of ascension in the flesh is clearly difficult for the post-Copernican world; it is quite simply not possible for us to imagine the risen Christ merely floating off to a heaven which lies above the clouds. Here, we would like to say that contemporary scientific cosmology has clearly replaced the earlier (or, perhaps, ‘religious’) cosmological worldview. In other words, the doctrine of ascension in the flesh forces us – whether we like it or not – to reconcile contemporary scientific cosmology with theological doctrine.

But the scandal of the doctrine of ascension in the flesh is both older and deeper than this recent tiff with modern science. In fact, the scandal of the ascension is raised even in John’s gospel when, “addressing the dispute that broke out among his followers over the seemingly coarse and foolish notion of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, Jesus asks: ‘Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!’”\footnote{Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 38.} As great of a mystery (and as great of an offense) as the Eucharist was, it appears that the Johannine narrative clearly holds the ascension as an even greater mystery and, likewise, offense. According to Farrow, the real scandal of the doctrine of ascension of the flesh – articulated in its fullest form by Irenaeus of Lyons – is that it recognizes a cosmic significance to both the person of Jesus as well as to the Church. This directly contradicted popular Gnostic thought in which “ascension was a strictly vertical affair. It meant dissociation from the corrupt realm of material existence, a movement of the inner man that entailed a repudiation of the temporal creation with its inherently
unstable mixture of flesh and spirit. It was not so much a fact of Jesus-history as a kind of antidote to all history."  

In response to Gnostic thought, Farrow writes that Irenaeus’ position – including the doctrine of ascension in the flesh – maintained that the Church is situated squarely in a paradoxical position between not one but two histories. Farrow describes these two histories as such:

> In biblical terms the ascension involves a real departure of Jesus of Nazareth. That is the basis on which we find ourselves compelled to speak of two histories rather than one. Covenant history and world history have divided in this departure, for in and with Jesus the former has already reached its goal. In the resulting gap a place has opened up for the eucharistic community as a genuinely new entity within the world history, albeit a peculiar one with its own peculiar view of the way things are.

In other words, on one hand, there is a spatio-temporal reality (my words) in which the person of Jesus Christ is present with us. But in another distinct reality, the Christ whom the Church waits and longs for to return in glory on the last day has gone where we cannot follow. Now at first glance, this doctrine – which is essentially nothing more than the doctrine of ascension in the flesh – appears relatively docile, but has, argues Farrow, in fact confounded a wide range of systematic theologies beginning with Origin and Augustine and continuing today. On one hand, the issue of the presence and absence of Christ has thought to have been resolved by maintaining that, while the human Jesus is no longer with us, the divine Christ remains eternally present and manifested in the Church and sacraments. Or to take a slightly different

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223 Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 46-7.
224 Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 40.
225 Although Farrow notes that “the ecclesiastical tradition [including Augustine] consistently sided with Irenaeus [and the doctrine of ascension of the flesh] when the chips were down,” he nevertheless finds an unfortunate trend starting with Origin and solidified in Augustine to maintain that the universal presence of Christ is manifested through his divinity alone. For instance, Augustine writes, “In respect of his majesty, his providence, his ineffable and invisible grace, his own words are fulfilled, ‘Lo I am with you
take, we might find a divide not necessarily between human and divine but of particular and universal, in which case it is the universal Christ with whom we are in contact although we may have lost the particular. In neither case is the argument that it is incorrect or unhelpful to make a distinction between either Christ’s divinity and humanity or particularity and universality. Rather, the point is that neither can be strictly associated with either his presence or his absence. The difficulty with such an association is that in doing so, we fail to arrive at a real absence of Christ. If Christ is present in his divinity (or universality), then he is, in effect, always present and never really absent. And by the same token, the fact that he is present divinely (or universally) means that the person of Jesus Christ – who is both human and divine; both particular and universal – can never be fully present. We are left with a half truth that the humanity of Jesus is always absent from us while the divine Christ is always with us instead of the fuller (and no doubt more complex) truth that the full person of Jesus is both present and absent until the Parousia.

The true difficulty of the doctrine of the ascension, then, is that it insists upon, in Chalcedonian terms, no division or confusion in the two natures of the person Jesus Christ. For this reason, Farrow sides with Irenaeus in maintaining that the ascension marks a real division in history such that now we can no longer speak of one history but two. This understanding of history is crucial for the identity of the Church, for “it is the divergence of Jesus-history from our own that gives to the ecclesia its character and its name. It is the divergence of Jesus-history

always, even to the end of the world.’ But in respect of the flesh he assumed as the Word, in respect of that which he was as the son of the Virgin . . . ‘you will not have him always.’ And why? Because in respect of his bodily presence he associated with his disciples for forty days; and then . . . he ascended into heaven, and is no longer here,” (John 50:13, cited in Farrow, 123-4). Here, the distinction between the physical presence of Jesus and his divine power is clearly drawn.

226 Here, Farrow points out Teilhard de Chardin’s theology of the Cosmic Christ – especially evident in his Mass on the World – as a prime example of an ability to overemphasize the universal at expense of the particular (cf. Farrow, 198-215).
from our own that calls for a specifically eucharistic link: for the breaking and remoulding, the substantial transformation of worldly reality to bring it into conjunction with the lordly reality of Jesus Christ.”

At this point, the scandal becomes something much greater than what ascension of the flesh may have looked like for anyone around to see it. Rather, the real scandal of the doctrine is that it insists that the particular person Jesus of Nazareth (and as a corollary, the eucharistic community) has a truly cosmic significance. That is, the events of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ do not merely have a certain meaning for the people who bear witness to their narrative (although all of this is certainly true), but moreover that these events have entirely altered cosmic history from ‘the beginning’ to the eschaton. And, just in case one scandal was not enough, there is an additional scandal in the phenomenon of the Church, for “the ecclesial communion as such is the prophetic sign to the world that God has organized all things around the one whom he has enthroned at his right hand. The church has cosmic significance, precisely in its anticipation of the appearance of that order.”

In other words, the Church, as a communion who remembers, celebrates, and becomes the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, has a cosmic significance because it stands directly in between covenant history and world history until they are rejoined in the Parousia.

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227 Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 10.
228 Farrow, Ascension and Ecclesia, 33.
Conclusion

What I have been after in this paper is a vision of an incarnational ecclesiology in which
the Church comes to be in secular men and women through the mediation of sacramental,
communal, catholic, liturgical, and cosmological meanings. Such an ecclesiology is known not by
individuals looking at objects in the world with disengaged reason but rather by authentic and
dynamic persons who both constitute and are constituted by the Church and come to
intellectual, moral, and religious conversion through the attentive, rational, reasonable, and
responsible processes. Furthermore, because this ecclesiology is concerned with the conversion
of real people, it deals not only with correct doctrine and moral action but also with the
aesthetics of the imagination. Thus, this vision shows how ecclesiology can function in the social
imaginary in order for Christians grow as a Church that is continually becoming the Body of
Christ, find God socially in the Church as a communion of communions, unite eucharistically
despite diverse itineraries and therefore overcome denominational divisions, come into contact
with the eschaton through liturgical time, and constitute a corporal body of cosmic significance
as it stands in the gap between covenant history and world history in expectation of the
Parousia. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how this ecclesiological vision is necessary for the
Church in a secular age in order for Christian men and women to develop an incarnational
spirituality that is grounded in authentic conversion. It is through this type of spirituality that
the impasses of moral and religious skepticism can be overcome and the Church can not only
survive but truly thrive in our secular age.
MAJOR WORKS CITED IN THIS THESIS

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Works by Bernard Lonergan:


ADDITIONAL WORKS REFERENCED AND CITED:


