



## AMERICAN TELEVANGELICAL FRAMES: RELIGIOSITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND COMMODIFICATION

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 2019-10-31  Accepted: 2019-11-27  Published: October 2019  Volume: 3  Issue: 2  DOI:  <a href="https://doi.org/10.33019/lire.v3i2.53">https://doi.org/10.33019/lire.v3i2.53</a></p> <hr/> <p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Religiosity, Spirituality, Frames, Commodification</p>	<p>A secular state, like United States of America, guarantees the private right of individual to express their religious ideas in public. In the era of media, religious broadcasting serves as a mean for individuals to express their private rights of speech and act based on their faith in public. By taking prosperity televangelical broadcasts as the main object, this article examines several aspects that are critical for understanding the religiousness and the secularization of American televangelism. This article provides an overview of the socio circumstances and movement roots of evangelism, examines the religiosity and spirituality frames in televangelism, and identifies the commodification of the religiosity and spirituality frames.</p>

### 1. Introduction

The use of broadcasting media has become a common practice in Church ministry and Christian inter-denomination ministry in United States of America since the beginning of radio in 1930s. Such practice is commonly known by the term televangelism. By definition, televangelism is a ministry which applies the use of broadcasting media to spread religious teaching. Televangelism has been more popular in U.S since television networks and cable TV is accessible virtually to those who can afford it. It has been a familiar practice in United States since 1950s. Moreover, in the era of globalization American televangelism has used its international broadcast networks to reach a wider audience. The media has the power of publicity to negotiate religion in the public sphere by carrying out its role as a provider of arguments and narratives around religion and bringing the sacred to the profane space. The media becomes a means to change traditional missionary practices to be technology-based and in some ways also take advantage of trends in popular culture.

Media has operated like a marketplace where the more demand for religiosity and spirituality, the media supply will also increase. The increasing media mediating religion means that spirituality and religiosity are also increasingly available outside the boundaries of “formal” religion. The existence of formal religious institutions as a source of religiosity and spirituality can be replaced by the media with the role of religious mediation. Religiosity and spirituality are determined by individuals and become individual choices. This tendency is in line with the impact of secularization by the media. The emergence of personal autonomy that places religiosity and spirituality as personal identity and space in the vortex of modern life that leads to a decline in institutional authority is a trend that crosses religion (Hoover, 2008).





The term “spirituality” stands out in this trend because people increasingly feel uncomfortable identifying with “religion,” which they define as a package that combines leadership and institutional authority, and feels more comfortable with “spirituality,” which seeks symbols and other sources outside the boundaries of certain religious traditions, which try to create something new and meaningful that works for them. This is where the media provides access to resources so that when people look for individual and collective spirituality, they turn to religious symbols that have appeared in local and global media.

Religious broadcasting has transmitted orthodox spiritual messages to audience that places it into the crossroad of the matter of religiousness and secularization. This article focuses on the booming of televangelism after 1970s which are supported by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulation and the growing of communication technology. FCC has changed the look of American televangelism by including religious programming in their definition of public service broadcasts, thus evangelists had to pay their air time in order to acquire and retain media access, which required them to solicit private donations – the primary source of funding their ministry was their audiences. Since the 1990s satellite, cable, and internet technologies offered new opportunities for evangelical outreach and made increasingly sophisticated forms of presentation readily available which include such as biblical prophecy, mix of entertainment, self-promotion, and missionary outreach to other groups.

By taking prosperity televangelical broadcasts as the main object, this article examines several aspects that are critical for understanding the religiousness and the secularization of American televangelism. This article provides an overview of the socio circumstances and movement roots of evangelism, examines the religiosity and spirituality frames in televangelism, and identifies the commodification of the religiosity and spirituality frames.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Socio Circumstances and Main Church Decline**

It is notorious that communication technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has supported televangelism, however, other socio aspects also become the stimulus for the changing look of Christian ministry in the United States of America. Religion was an openly debated topic and was being explored by this new generation in ways it never had been in Americas past. Therefore, it is necessary to traced back the roots and socio circumstances of the religion in America in 70s-90s.

Bailey and Farber (2004) explained that America in the 70s was dogged by economic and political crises at home and foreign policy failures abroad in which Americans responded to a growing sense of uncertainty in a variety of ways. Some explored the new freedoms promised by the social change movements of the late Sixties. Some challenged the technological verities that ruled corporate America. Others sought to create autonomous zones in the ruins of decaying cities or on the bleak landscape of anomic suburbia. And, against a backdrop of massive economic dislocation and bicentennial celebrations, many Americans struggled to redefine patriotism and the meaning of the American dream.

Focusing on how Americans made sense of their changing world by analyzing such sources as film, popular music, use of public space, advertising campaigns, and patriot rituals, Bailey and Farber (2004) add that the themes of economic transformation, identity reconfiguration, and cultural uncertainty. The contributors cover such topics as the publics increasing mistrust of government, the reshaping of working-class identity, and the tensions





between the ideological and economic origins of changing gender roles. From existential despair in popular culture to the reactions of youth subcultures, these provocative articles plot the lives of Americans struggling to redefine themselves as their nation moved into an uncertain future. Together they recapture the essence and spirit of that era—for those who lived it and for curious readers who have come of age since then and struggle to understand their own time.

Zinsmeister (1990) notes that in the 80s the rising prosperity of American Private life occurred. In other concern of American culture, there has been a pronounced turn toward traditionalism. Television culture was free. On Television and film new value became apparent. Films that treated religion sympathetically, admired military value, and celebrated small town virtue were popular. The social condition of the 80s as well as the double-sided trend of the decline of mainline churches and the growth of evangelical churches and the reduction of the role of religion in public life through the enforcement of the Supreme Court's legal doctrine of separation of church and state have shaped American religious life over the last half of the twentieth (Sundberg, 2000).

During such socio circumstances, Study notes the decline of main churches. Eight churches (American Baptist Churches in the USA, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church) belong to mainline denominations have suffered loss of members since 1965 (Sundberg cited Reeves, 2002). The mainline churches which eviscerated the substance of orthodox Christianity lost their religious identity and communal identity therefor they were not either able to sustain tension with their surrounding culture or accommodate churches decline (Coleman, 1997). The figures for the period from 1965 to 1994 are (Sundberg cited *Christianity Today*, 2000, p. 23):

American Baptist Churches in the USA	-3.3%
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	-51.1%
Episcopal Church	-27.0%
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	-8.5%
Presbyterian Church (USA)	-13.1%
Reformed Church in America	-19.8%
United Church of Christ	-27.5%
United Methodist Church	-22.4%

The socio condition of the mainline churches notes that the members identify with their local congregation, not with the denomination thus in their view, the main flaw of the mainline churches and the cause of their decline was their inability to pass on their religion to the next generation; This is a new religious landscape of seekers that wear their denominational loyalties lightly, more individualistic and consumer-oriented toward spirituality and religion (Coleman cited Hoge et. all, 1997). On the other hand, mainline theologians and church officials rationalize membership loss by ascribing it to the effects of modern secularization and see the decline of the church is inevitable because of the “post-Christian” era in which fewer people are attracted to organized religion (Sundberg, 2000).





### 3. DISCUSSION

#### **Movement Roots and Evangelical Churches Growth**

Evangelism has played an integral part in the history of religion in America, from colonial times to the present, while its methods of dissemination have changed dramatically. Spreading the “Good News” during colonial times was accomplished through books printed by the Puritans on the press brought to Boston in 1638, or carried across the Atlantic on ships loaded with colonists. During the Great Awakening of the 1740s, white Protestant evangelists proselytized to black Americans. The Methodists were most successful, owing to their belief in a “near” rather than “distant” god, self-help, liberation of sin through conversion, and their lively preaching and singing methods of worship during evangelical revivals. During the 19th century, Methodists held camp meetings in the frontier states.

Hall (2008) cited historian David Bebbington’s statements that four major impulses that link different strands of evangelicalism and set evangelicals apart from other kinds of Christians. “Conversionism” is the belief that salvation comes through a personal experience of divine forgiveness and embrace. For over two centuries evangelicals have called this the “New Birth” and described themselves as “born again.” A second impulse, “Biblicism,” entails reliance on the Bible as the ultimate authority in religious belief and practice. Evangelicals are also “activists,” both in proclaiming their message of salvation and engaging in humanitarian, social, and political action. The final impulse focuses on the cross, on which Jesus died on humanity’s behalf.

In addition to David Bebbington’s statements, Hall (2008) also refers to historian Mark Noll who observes that evangelicalism’s conversionism, Biblicism, activism, and focus on the cross have never produced “easily definable, well-coordinated, or clearly demarcated groups of Christians”. Religious organizations shifted toward evangelical impulses at some points in their history but away at others. Groups preaching similar evangelical messages often competed for converts or damned each other as imposters. Some evangelicals led reforms such as abolition and temperance while others defended conservative institutions such as slavery. Evangelicalism shaped the white nineteenth century urban middle class even as African Americans seized on its implicit egalitarianism, adapting its powerful message to sustain them through slavery and Jim Crow and nourish their struggle for civil rights. Evangelism turned to elaborate crusades in the 20th century when such preachers as Billy Sunday attempted to convince nonbelievers that they should “jump ship” from their ancestral Christian denominations. Tent revivals, broadcast by radio and television, were dynamic with charismatic preachers who captured the attention of millions of people. Study shows that the charismatic movement marks the orthodox Christianity meaning to the teaching that the normal beginning of genuine Christian life is spiritual transformation and that combine this teaching with a conservative stance on theological and moral issue. Moreover, such denominations defined by Sundberg (2000) as evangelical denominations which also relate theological issues with political issues show a significant number of growth while mainline denominations are in decline. The chief examples of evangelical denominations that have enjoyed membership growth in the period from 1965 to 1994 are (Sundberg, 2002, p. 24):

Assemblies of God	+306%
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	+252%
Church of God in Christ	+1,232%
Church of the Nazarene	+74%
Southern Baptist Convention	+45%





“Televangelists” of the 1950s through the late 1980s brought a personality-based form of worship to the small screen, until scandals involving Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson and Oral Roberts, provoked widespread distrust of them. While they were relegated to cable TV networks, evangelistic websites slowly began to crop up on the Internet during the early 1990s.

According to Robbin (2010), during the 1960s, prosperity gospel teachers embraced televangelism and came to dominate religious programming in the United States. Oral Roberts was among the first, developing a syndicated weekly program that became the most watched religious show in the United States. By 1968, television had supplanted the tent meeting in his ministry. Harell (1975) noted that Reverend Ike, a pastor from New York City, began preaching about prosperity in the late 1960s. He soon had widely aired radio and television programs and became distinguished for his flashy style. His openness about love for material possessions and teachings about the “Science of the Mind” led many evangelists to distance themselves from him. In the 1980s, public attention in the United States was drawn to prosperity televangelism through the influence of prominent televangelists such as Jim Bakker. Bakker’s influence waned, however, after he was implicated in a high-profile scandal. In the aftermath, religious broadcasting emerged as the dominant force in prosperity televangelism, having brought Robert Tilton and Benny Hinn to prominence.

Because of the anonymous nature of that interactive communication tool, people felt more comfortable sharing their personal beliefs and faith over the Internet with a large audience, or with one unknown person. Media evangelists incorporated multimedia presentations with sound, the written word, movies and video technologies. Although they crossed the Atlantic to be free of a state-sponsored religion, settlers’ everyday lives were extensively shaped by their religious beliefs and practices. The First Amendment to the Constitution (narrative), which is called the “Establishment Clause,” states, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Also, the relationship between religion and politics was established in Article VI of the First Amendment that states, “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” The definition of the separation of church and state found in the U.S. Constitution has caused more disagreement than any other in the nation’s history. To prevent a return to a centralized, overbearing government, the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, without which ratification by Virginia and New York would not have occurred.

### **Separation between Church & State: From First Amendment to Privatization**

If there is a secular institution in American society that fears religion as a dangerous thing in politics, and has the power to do something about it, it is the Supreme Court in which since 1947 the Court has operated under the legal doctrine of the separation of church and state to reduce the public role of religion in American life (Sundberg, 2000). The separation between church and state came after the first Amendment of Bill of Right which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” in which becomes the foundation of non-establishment and the toleration of religious practices (Hoskins, 1984).

The preservation of religious liberty is an important institutional concern, thus congress has no power to infringe upon either the religious liberty of individuals, or the power







of States to set what they consider to be the proper boundaries between church and state (Destro, 1994). The major stripping of religious elements from American government would require radical changes that would secularize public life in a way that conflicts not only with American tradition, but with religious freedom as well (Berg, 2001). In 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and so on, religious people ask for exemptions for themselves or their group from laws that society generally sees as inherently secular and usually have little difficulty with others being bound by them, but not specifically attack the laws as in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century (Curry, 1989).

Separation between church and state refers to privatization of religion in which according to Hart (1987, pp. 320-321) marked by several phenomena as follows: (a) Religion without churches: it is a model of "electronic church" in which worship and vital spiritual life is more preferred than associated to particular church. (b) Churches as voluntary associations: being associated to a particular church is based on individual values and interest which means that loyalty to a church depend on if it is considered as effectively achieving the individual values and interest or not. (c) Individual theological responsibility: it is a contradictory to confessionalism in which a loyalty to a particular church is not defined as being responsible for defining religious beliefs. (d) Religious subjectivism: It is a thought that all beliefs are valid if sincerely held thus religious issues are a matter of personal preference. (e) Separation of religion from public concerns: the idea that religion is concerned only with the inner life of each individual, but is not concerned with the issues that arise in the public domain. It means that Christian faith and teachings relate only to the life of each individual and not to public, thus privatization does not connect faith to social issues at all. (f) The religious marketplace: the tendency for religious life to become partly infused with the spirit of the market through designing programs, sermons to compete with each other in their attempts to meet the needs of members and potential members, There are several factors operative within American Christianity which bear some responsibility for privatization (Hart, 1987, pp. 321-325): First, the basic nature of religion as an internalized phenomenon which emphasizes that all religions teach and affect actions and feelings through the respect toward sacred things.

Second, the critique of idolatry in the Judeo-Christian tradition which set the authority of God against the authority of "idols" of human artifacts and worldly objects. Third, the universalism of the New Testament meaning that religious life is independent from group memberships, gender, race, and nationality. Fourth, division between material and spiritual questions which rejects worldly standards of value, but underlines salvation over material well-being. Fifth, Protestant voluntarism which focuses on the voluntary response each individual to God. Sixth, sectarian and antinomian influences in American religion. Seventh, aspirations for democracy and local control in which Americans want their institutions to be accountable to the people, and often this desire is understood in terms of local control. Eighth, respect for the individual as a sacred principle elevates the rights, dignity, and freedom of the individual to a quasi-sacred status. Ninth, American versions of individualism which refers to not only a set of value preferences sacralizing individual freedom, but also a cognitive framework blinding Americans to the supra-individual aspect of human life. Tenth, relativistic strands of thought in which choices about the values Americans are to live by are essentially matters of opinion.

### **Individualism and Privatization of Religion as the Impulses of Televangelism**

The socio characteristics where people are more individualistic and consumer-oriented toward spirituality and religion are a form of individualism in term of American religion. This





individualistic mind contrast spirituality and religiosity, self-identifying as spiritual, but not religious or as more spiritual than religious. Keeping distance from church or religious tradition without affecting the search for a transcendent which remain religious is a form of privatized individualized and experience-oriented religiosity (Streib and Hood, 2011).

Religion is the broader construct, a broadband construct which encompasses the search for many objects of significance, while spirituality focuses on the search for one particular object of significance—the sacred (Streib and Hood cited Pargament, 2011, p. 444). Sensibility and taste for the infinite is a form of consciousness identified with the infinity of God-consciousness which can be elicited by a variety of finite objects, but is always in need of some theological clarification, thus the range of experiences is treated as spiritual, but which have classically been acknowledged as the proper domain of religion (Streib and Hood cited Schleiermacher, 2011, p 446). Religiosity which becomes something private and irrelevant to public affairs emphasizes the meaning of secularization.

In American context, religion's ability to shape public discourse on broad-scale issues of morals ethic in a vigorous secular environment prospered long past the demise of the progressive movement (Butler, 2004, p. 1370) The broad ecumenism of post-1960 religious activism, liberal and conservative alike, signaled the sponsors' acceptance of modern functionalism and its religious activists throughout America. The ubiquitous emphasis on how Christianity bring moral crusade as people religious identities rooted in particular creeds or liturgies and stress broad principles (Butler, p. 2004, 1374).

People prefers to the essence rather than the form of what they believe, what church they belong to or even not belong to any churches. The churches become plural as the Protestant hegemony declines in American culture. In practice and theories, churches and religious institutions are free to actualize themselves in public though providing optional – technological channel as a resources for people's religious life. Becoming a church member is based on voluntarily association. The technological changes have made it increasingly possible for people to have a vital spiritual life and most of what churches provide, without leaving their houses, having to deal with other people, or especially having to connect themselves to an enduring, stably-organized church (Hart, 1987, p. 326). The technological changes also meet the individual (believer) needs. Believers behave as consumers, making individual choices based solely, and without any need to account to others, on their individual wants and needs.

Individual believer is capable of acting and thinking in in ways which are more or less privatized. This phenomenon can be seen from the increased viewing of religious TV which indicate more widespread religion without churches where television becomes the inevitable tool for the lonely striver's worship. In earlier periods, people may have listened to religious radio, read religious where periodicals and pamphlets, attended revival meetings independent from conventional churches, or even gone on pilgrimages.

Social surveys and research on the electronic church make it apparent that many people are having vital religious lives without benefit of traditional kinds of churches (Hadden and Swann, 1981). Many others show the connection of both traditional churches and religious media before 70s that can be seen church attendance and membership, after a modest rise in the 1950s and fall in the 60s and early 70s (Hart, 1981, p. 328). However, Hadden and Swann (1981) conclude that the electronic church has not had any major negative impact on involvement with traditional churches, and show that audience size has been level since 1975. The revivalism which marks American religious history has provided possibilities for





religious life independent from those provided by standard churches. The modern religious life in America, is significantly privatized in this sense compared with pre-Reformation Christianity.

Televangelism is hardly claimed to be reaching millions of people worldwide with the gospel and producing numerous converts to Christianity since such claims are difficult to verify independently, as stated by Calvin L Smith, Principal of King's Evangelical Divinity School, that despite a clear market demand for religious broadcasting, the evidence shows something ironical in which the medium actually wins very few converts and completely ineffective as an evangelistic tool since religious broadcasting is primarily aimed at and viewed by Christians (2010).

The evangelical community has competing power in American society today through its electronic communication network. The big-time TV preachers are the generals of this new power base in which the programs are sent by satellite to cable systems over, for examples, the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), PTL Broadcasting Network, and Trinity Broadcasting Network. More than 300 radio stations broadcast religion full-time. Therefore, there is no doubt that the electronic church has brought to millions of Americans a new way of experiencing religion. This electronic religious experience is also affecting the manner the people view and understand the world they live in.

The points are that individualized (personalized) religion and its privatization springs in very large measure from internal tendencies of Christianity. It comes along with material factors contributing to the development which facilitates huge opportunity for self-expression and autonomous action. The tendencies toward individualized religion and its privatization are long-term phenomena that are deeply rooted in American culture and social structure as the consequences of both liberals and the religious right (Hart, 1987, p. 333).

### **Prosperity Televangelism: Religiosity Frames**

Here three terms need to be defined: frame, religiosity and spirituality. Frames must be understood as a scheme for presenting and understanding information (Schuefele, 1999). Conceptually the media frame is defined as an idea or story line arranged to present the meaning and / or essence of an issue (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987). Religiosity is a system of beliefs, principles, or shared doctrines related to beliefs and worship of supernatural things or forces that are considered as creators and regulators of the universe (Love, 2002).

In televangelism, language helps audience to remember information and acts to transform the way in which we view situations. To use language, people must have thought and reflected on their own interpretive frameworks and those of others. What religious frames and how they are conveyed in prosperity televangelical broadcasts can be seen as follows:

Through building a metaphorical Bible as a “contract” between God and humans. In this “contract” faith in God is the foundation of security and prosperity (Walton, 2009). The atonement (reconciliation with God) preceding this “contract” is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. Christ’s substitutionary atonement secured for believers a right to divine healing that was attained through positive, faith-filled speech; the spoken word of God allowed believers to appropriate the same spiritual power that God used to create the world and attain the provisions promised in Christ’s death and resurrection (Bowler, 2013, p. 94). Through postulating a metaphorical blessing as “pact” and as “seed.” The laws of faith as a “blessing pact” in which God would return the giving “seven fold” (Robin, 2010, p. 87), promising that the givers would receive







back from unexpected sources the money they donated to the ministry. Blessing pact teaching as the “seed faith” doctrine which refers to the point that the giving was a form of “seed” which would grow in value and be returned to the donor (Coleman, 2000, p. 42).

Using catchphrases to frame a subject in a memorable and familiar fashion. The “word of faith” or the power to speak something into being (Robins 2010, p. 85) is a catchphrase – making a “positive confession” of God’s promise and believing God’s word stirs the power of resurrection which raised Christ from the dead (see Ephesians 1:19-20; Ephesians 3:20), and brings that promise to fulfilment. This teaching is interpreted from Mark 11:22-23. In ‘word of faith’, faith is called a “force” (Copeland, 1989). Conversely, “negative confession” can harm, so believers should be conscious of their words. This is argued on the interpretation of Proverbs 18:21, “Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and they that love them will eat the fruit thereof,” also Numbers 14:28, “...said the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do,” among other scriptures.

The religiosity frames show Bible and the verses as the sacred core that the individual search. The frames would help audience get through the process of searching by enabling them to identify what is sacred and therefore worthy of devotion or commitment, to articulate what has identified as sacred, to maintain the sacred within the individual’s experience, and to modify through the process itself.

The frames of the sacred core make the Bible and the verses alive – a living Bible called “*rhema*” in Greek. The televangelical frames transform *Logos* into *rhema*. The *logos* is universal for all humanity, while any intellectual changes for a specific individual believer are categorized as *rhema*. The *Logos* is the standard of all truth, but the *rhema* provides the precise word needed for the specific situation. The frames emphasize that Christians must live by the *Logos* and receive the *rhema* as needed. Under this definition the method of receiving *rhemas* may come by many ways through reading the Bible, as God quickens a certain text, or it may come to individual through the spoken words of another person (Hamon, 1987).

The televangelical frames put forward the position that *rhema* is a process within Christian faith. “Rhema” is a term that includes many types of spiritual interaction; any method God uses to reveal His specific will to an individual, whether by divinely directed desire, illumination, revelation, vision, or dream. *Rhema* will be a general term to refer to all of these means of God communicating His specific will to an individual; it is a divinely inspired impression upon individual soul, a flash of thought or a creative idea from God. It is conceived in individual spirit, but birthed into individual natural understanding by divine illumination and carries with it a deep inner assurance and witness of the Spirit (Hamon, 1987).

The frames put the position the sacred core as the source of specific information coming from the mind of God for a specific situation, an inspired word directed to a certain audience. The frames show that there are no border lines between preaching and personal prophecy; between quoting the *logos* and speaking a *rhema*; between speaking faith statements based on scriptural truth and speaking the specific mind of the Lord for that individual: between speaking the Word of God and speaking a word from the Lord. The frames work under the understanding that faith for specific miracles come not from opinions but rather from a *rhema* from the *Logos*. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the *rhema* of God as written in Rome 10:17. The *rhema* spoken from mouth has to come from heart as a *rhema*. The frames also indicate the belief that the spoken word has more power than the written word.





### **Prosperity Televangelism: Spirituality Frames**

Here spirituality is defined as the search for personal authenticity and wholeness, developing a sense of meaning, purpose, and direction, and openness to build relationships with higher powers or centers of value that transcend human existence and transcend human rationality (Bryant et.al, 2003). What spirituality frames and how they are conveyed in prosperity televangelical broadcasts can be seen as follows.

Through providing a concept so as to give it a positive or negative connotation, the frame produced is the importance of personal empowerment to achieve through donations of money, visualization, and positive confession. The prosperity evangelism is “an American gospel of upward mobility” formed from the intersection of different ideologies: Pentecostalism, New Thought, pragmatism, and individualism (Bowler, 2013, p. 11). The New Thought teaching, which emerged in the 1880s, was responsible for popularizing belief in the power of the mind to achieve prosperity. While initially focused on achieving mental and physical health, New Thought made material success a major emphasis of the movement (Bowler, 2013, p. 32). By the 20th century, New Thought concepts had saturated American popular culture, being common features of both self-help literature and popular psychology (Bowler, 2013, pp. 35-36). New Thought concept emphasizes the power of mind, supernatural revelation, and positive declaration.

Using catchphrases as a form of confession of faith and action. Such catchphrase “Money cometh unto me, NOW!,” that each individual must proclaim this faith and reach out for God’s blessings. They must act as if God’s financial blessings poured out, and money fell from the sky to meet every need. Another famous catchphrase states “You give \$1 for the Gospel’s sake and \$100 belongs to you; give \$10 and receive \$1000; give \$1000 and receive \$100,000. “Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane.

The use of parable “Acres of Diamonds” which equates poverty with sin and asserts that anyone could become rich through hard work. This is an expression of muscular Christianity that understand success to be the result of personal effort rather than divine intervention (Bowler, 2013, pp. 31–32). The parable “Acres of Diamonds” was also written as an inspiring book (Conwell, 1968) which offers some common sense as follows.

Each of individual is right in the middle of our own “Acres of Diamonds,” that needs each individual to realize it and develop the ground s/he is standing on before charging off in search of greener pastures. Maintaining a ready mind, having no preconceived notions that cloud judgments, and never overlooking the value of something that is believed to be already known are important to see the possibilities. Looking at the familiar in new ways is done by those who find new approaches and new uses for common place objects since opportunity does not just come along – it is there all the time to be seen. Success comes when strong will meets hard efforts. Knowledge, positive thinking about self and surrounding, and believing in the great opportunity are more important than capital.

The spirituality frames of positivism, hard work, and charity to televangelists’ ministry in televangelical broadcasts are inherent with the social-psychological circumstances of American society expressed in certain group or at least influenced by reference groups (Preus, 1987; Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). Such basic norms are rooted in religious perspective that provide acceptable range of alternatives for normative behavior (Stark, 1984; Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). These spiritual norms are related to cognitive phenomena which refers to the relationship between particular forms of religious commitment and complexity of thought





(Hills, et. all, 2000). It may provide social support for less complex types of thinking (Hunsberger, Alisat, Pancer, Pratt, 1996; Hunsberger, Lea, Pancer, Pratt, McKenzie, 1992), provide a normative model of particular affective norms of intense arousal in rituals (Lovekin & Malony, 1977), and have positive derivative social function in the form of effective sponsored alternative to welfare (Maton & Wells, 1995). The hallmark of spirituality frames in televangelical broadcasts emphasizes on God-oriented spirituality where thought and practice are premised in theology either broadly or narrowly conceived and a humanistic or people oriented spirituality stressing human achievement or potential. The frames show the multidimensional construct of spirituality which includes the meaning of life, an encounter with transcendence, and highest values. The frames emphasize the individual experience and identified as personal transcendence, supra-consciousness sensitivity and meaningfulness.

### **Commodification of Frames**

In the context of televangelism, commodification refers to religious symbols becoming commodities, objects of consumption readily available in the media landscape. It is a process of recontextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture. The commodification of religion works on several levels. The two most obvious are the offers of blessings, prayers, etc., through the purchase of religious artifacts, books, figures, etc. and the attachment of religious values through a religious aesthetic to consumer products (Ornella, 2013). What can be seen from the televangelical broadcasts is that frames of the sacred core which refers to the religious symbols is not merely understood in the immaterial sphere, but also acknowledged in material sphere though what so called “material blessings.” Here, the recontextualization of the sacred core is done through the process of obedience which results in prosperity. The religious obedience framed in televangelical broadcast refer to obedience of giving to support the ministries of the televangelists. This practices have stimulated critiques which criticized the focus on prosperity taken by independent evangelists (Harrell 1975, p. 108) and argue that such prosperity ministries are forms of fund-raising tactics unfairly pressured attendees – the tactics were prompted in part by the expense of developing nationwide radio networks and campaign schedules (Harrell 1975, p. 171).

American televangelists have given prominence to the pursuit of materialism and upward mobility through the religious concept of prosperity gospel. Bible and its verses framed as the sacred core are actually not the core of the religious concept of prosperity. This religious concept is nothing but the good old American Dream re-clothed in Biblical garments (Adeleye, 2014). The religious concept of prosperity is a gross example of the church’s cultural accommodation to the wordily values of American materialism (McConnell, 1980, p. 183). It is perfectly suited to American society that ‘worships health, wealth and happiness (Wiersbe, 1988, 52). This cultural trend has invaded ministry as – Eyre called it – “dragon of materialism” which leads individuals to become pre-occupied with the material side of life and spend all time, energy and thoughts in the physical aspects of life. The creed of the Dragon of materialism is matter is all that matters (1987, p. 28). The evangelical frames offer the instant materials gain through Bible and scriptural verse to replace the idea of the sweat of hard work.

The rhetoric of seed faith – seed of giving –is another form of commodification of spiritual blessings framed in televangelical broadcasts. It refers to the principle which stresses that through seed-giving, all insurmountable problems, can be solved because God essentially





becomes an insurance agent to whom one invests with expectations of returns (Adeleye, 2014). The rhetoric of seed of giving which is believed as a spiritual law of prosperity requires an action of charity to the televangelists' ministry. It is a law set in motion by positive mental attitude and positive confession which is built on the most popular verses to motivating or mobilizing the congregation to give. The frame of positive confession is some sort of offering an unhealthy escape from reality. The quest for deliverance from present challenges has brought about almost a denial of reality. The frames of sacred core to serve materialism blunts a living faith and Christian orthodoxy.

The center of the spiritualism frames in televangelical broadcast is self, not the divinity of Christ. It is it is predominantly anthropocentric, rather than Christocentric. There is an implicit confidence in the power of positive thinking and positive confession (Coleman, 1993, p. 356), in which faith enables what believers think and say to become actualized realities. Through the force of faith, the positive power is activated, and the negative is confronted and negated (Hunt, 1998, p. 275). The frames commodify the idea of spiritual self-efficacy. When people think "upbeat, self-confident" thoughts about themselves and "speak words of victory" over dire situations, happiness and abundance will result. Here one encounters an ideology of materialism that is "framed in a kind of positivism" (Van Biema & Chu 2006).

While theologically conservative evangelicals tend to stress the blessings awaiting Christians in the future messianic kingdom, televangelical broadcasts offer frames that redirect the spotlight on obtaining worldly abundance right now. This shift from the transcendent future to the workaday present is seen in a more pragmatic approach to life in which the needs of the individual attain foremost importance (Speck 2007:6-7). In turn, the focus is taken off of theocentric providence and placed on anthropocentric prosperity (Sarles 1986:329). The spiritual frames of self-efficacy in televangelical broadcasts commodify the religious imagery from the Judeo-Christian tradition to advance their own ecclesiastical aims and aspirations that is to keep with the postmodernist societal order and operates in a relativistic manner that reflects the increasing inner secularization of faith. This commodification implicitly explains that truth is not necessarily anchored to or verified by a particular sacred text. Instead, truth—not to mention ultimate reality itself—is deconstructed and reconstructed by prominent televangelists and their followers.

The ideas that commodified are self-help, self-improvement, a capitalistic obsession with individual self-esteem, ambition, and confidence. The frames impose on religion as a consumer-centric of self in which people believe they are the measure of all things. Like other forms of humanism, it is an attitude or way of life centered on human interests or values (Mish, 2006). A critique arises concerning that idea states that when people insist they are complete within themselves, it leads to a rejection of virtually every truth-claim about God and His existence. A Christ-centered ethical norm is abandoned for a man-centered, materialistic one. Also, rather than look to Scripture for moral guidance, ethical standards are determined by one's own feelings and experiences (Lioy, 2007, p. 3).

## Conclusion

Televangelism is an issue of paradox seen in three ways. First, it presents the sacred (religiosity and spirituality) through the profane (media), however, the religiosity and spirituality frames offered by televangelical broadcasts are expected to counter the secular world which believes that religion should be separated from daily life. While evangelism as





the hallmark of the church and ministry presents in the media, the influence of the pulpit on the secular world seems to be eroding on a daily basis. Second, televangelism in which the purpose is anti-secularism, indeed, grows rapidly under the circumstance of political secularism. Secularism protects everybody's freedom of conscience and religion and belief, by staying neutral between them. Televangelism is a form of the freedom to express religious ideas in public. Third, looking closely at prosperity televangelical broadcast, it is not that religious as the label attached to it. The pragmatism and individualism framed are some sorts of profane ideas.

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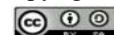
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