5 Theology and the study of Christians at work

In the present chapter, I will discuss theological approaches to contemporary workplaces (and to workplace-related questions) and assess their contribution to the study of Christians at work. In chapter 2 (see 2.1.2), I already briefly noted that theology can be viewed, broadly speaking, as related to fsw research and the study of Christians in contemporary workplaces in two different ways. More precisely, on the one hand, theologians have been working in the areas of theological business and economic ethics, the theology of work and related areas.[1] On the other hand, a number of management and organization scholars have begun to explore and develop theological approaches to business, management, and organization. Different academic disciplines are thus used as starting points, contexts, and target discourses for 'doing theology' with reference to contemporary workplaces.[2] Additionally, the two types of approach are also characterized by the use of different concepts and methodologies or, in other words, by different research traditions. What they share is their common use of the term 'theological' to qualify their approach.

Although one can clearly distinguish studies which explicitly adopt a theological approach from those which do not, it is not at all clear what *material*, that is, content-related implications or differences to 'non-theological'

1 Within academic theology, the place for addressing questions pertaining to contemporary work contexts has been mainly that of theological ethics and moral theology, even though such questions can, in principle, also be addressed within other theological settings, such as practical, systematic, historical, or biblical theology. This primary localization of workplace issues within theological ethics, which seems to be dominant at least in German-speaking theology, reveals an emphasis of theological reflection *on moral aspects* of existence in the workplace.

2 While the research discussed so far (chapters 2–4) has been published mainly (but not exclusively) through the channels of management and organization studies (at least if one includes business ethics journals here, even though business ethics can itself be viewed as an interdisciplinary field), some of the more theologically oriented texts are also published in management and organization journals (e.g. Deslandes 2018, Sørensen et al. 2012), or in business ethics journals (e.g. Erisman et al. 2004, Mabey et al. 2017), while others are found in theological or religious studies journals (e.g. Posadas 2017, Radzins 2017, Ligo 2011, Charry 2003), or as theological dissertations (e.g. Black 2009, Whipp 2008). Additionally, theological scholars have commented on workplace-related concepts in textbooks (e.g. on ethics or business ethics), and in specific publications on the theology of work (for an overview with an emphasis on the Anglo-Saxon discussion in this respect, see Posadas 2017).

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approaches, this positioning of an approach as theological should entail.[3] The adoption of a theological position to workplace-related questions is not a privilege of trained theologians, as management and organization scholars also propose theological perspectives (e.g. Daniels et al. 2012, Deslandes 2018, Miller 2015, Sørensen et al. 2012, Tackney 2018). Moreover, some authors also use the same entry concepts[4], which are used in theological approaches,[5] to address Christian perspectives on workplace themes or Christian existence in work contexts, *without* them particularly or explicitly claiming to adopt a theological perspective.[6] And the theme of Christian spirituality in work contexts is addressed by theologians (e.g. Ligo 2011, Radzins 2017) and management scholars (e.g. Cavanagh et al. 2003, Delbecq 2004, Kennedy 2003, Mabey et al. 2017) alike, *without* them particularly claiming a theological perspective.[7] Furthermore, there are (Christian) theological approaches which do not seem to be much interested in the existence of Christians at work, but which propose a conceptual contribution to, for example, a (Christian) *understanding* of the notion of work (e.g., Posadas 2017) or the (Christian?) theology of organization (e.g. Sørensen et al. 2012) without particular reference to contemporary Christian existence. Therefore, it is, in particular, not automatically clear that an approach to the workplace which claims to be theological actually contributes to the study of Christians at work, and it is also not clear, in more general terms, what one is doing by qualifying an approach to the workplace as theological. This terminological situation makes theology appear to be in a seemingly enigmatic relationship to the study of Christians at work.

Nevertheless, there are pragmatic reasons for considering theology to potentially contribute to the study of Christians at work alongside fsw research (as discussed in chapters 2–4). First, extant social scientific research on faith, spirituality, and religion at work, as has developed mainly within the context of management and organization studies, produces a limited picture of Christian existence at work (see chapter 4), Second, the

3 Therefore, unless otherwise indicated, I will use the term 'theological' to refer to approaches which the authors of these approaches themselves call theological.

4 On entry concepts, see section 5.2.

5 Such as business, work, management, et cetera, see 5.2.

6 For example, on the notions of business (Delbecq 2004, Kim, Fisher and McCalman 2009, Nash 2004, Schwartz 2006, Van Duzer et al. 2007), work (Baumgartner & Korff 1999, Forster 2014, Ryken 2004, Sikkema and Van der Werff 2015), management (Martinez 2003, Kennedy 2003), leadership (Cavanagh et al. 2003, Delbecq 1999), and the economy (Graf 1999).

7 For a discussion of four approaches, see 4.3.

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study of Christians at work has no single academic home discipline and there are theological approaches which do address the theme of Christian existence at work. Therefore, such texts can be assessed for their potential contribution to crafting a social scientifically as well as theologically informed study of Christians at work.

I will approach the respective theological literature by asking the following questions: In what way do theological approaches to the workplace contribute to the study of Christians at work, and what role do theological approaches play in (mis)understanding the existence of Christians in contemporary work contexts? I will proceed as follows. First, I shall address the question of the neglect of contemporary work settings by academic theology, an issue which has been raised by some authors (5.1). Second, I will present a brief overview of concepts used as 'entry concepts' for theological engagement with present-day workplaces and workplace-related questions to offer a glimpse of the variety of theological engagement with workplace-related topics (5.2). In the subsequent sections, I will then discuss the potential contribution of theological approaches to the study of Christians at work by focusing on selected theological ethical approaches (5.3), and on instructive proposals for a theology of work, a theology of business, and a theology of the corporation (5.4). Finally, I will draw some conclusions with regard to theological engagement with contemporary workplaces and its relation to the study of Christians at work (5.5) by employing some of the hermeneutical lenses (see 1.4) concerning embodied Christian existence.

5.1 The question of a theological neglect of contemporary work contexts

It seems that academic theological reflection in present-day Western contexts tends to somehow be alienated from, at a distance to, or disinterested in ordinary workplaces, such as a business company.[8] For example, with respect to the German-speaking context[9], a look at texts published in the

8 Interestingly, some of the more relevant theological work concerning Christian existence in contemporary workplaces has been conducted by trained theologians with extensive work experience in secular, non-academic work environments, which they usually obtained prior to their theological training (e.g. Black 2009, Miller 2007, Whipp 2008).

9 Earlier, I analyzed how German-speaking theological engagement with the business world has been focused heavily (although not exclusively) on the macro-economic level (Brügger 2010) and there, on ethics, morality and on broader questions of economic systems, and not primarily on concrete individuals working in concrete workplaces (see also 5.3).

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Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik, in *Evangelische Theologie*, and in the ThLZ[10] reveals that, although there are some texts on broader economic questions, the theme of the concrete role of individuals in contemporary workplaces does not seem to occupy a prominent role.[11] The RGG (Kehrer et al. 2018) and TRE (Preuss et al. 1995) entries on *Arbeit* seem to be symptomatic.[12] Several scholars have diagnosed a theological neglect of contemporary workplaces and/or the situation of Christians therein. In this section, I will discuss some of the proposed assessments of the current situation in this respect and situate the present study in relation to them.

Based on a review of current accounts of work in Christian ethics and theology, Jeremy Posadas (2017:331)[13] argues that work has been "a niche interest within Christian theology". He observes that

> despite such enormous impacts of work on every facet of human life, in Christian normative scholarship—by which I primarily mean Christian ethics and theology—work has barely registered as a phenomenon in comparison to the voluminous interpretations that have been produced regarding such other activities as sex, rela-

10 In the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (www.thlz.com, accessed 31 August 2017), I found three entries on business, 22 entries on management (most of them, with four exceptions, address management in non-profit contexts), seven entries on leadership (most of them related to non-profit and historical contexts), and 130 entries on *Wirtschaft*, which are mainly oriented toward macro-level questions. (Searches for *Führung* and *Arbeit* do not produce suitable results because most entries are not directly related to the concepts of *Führung* and *Arbeit,* as the terms also appear in titles such as "Ein*führung*" and "be*arbeit*ete Version". More sophisticated search options are not currently available.).

11 I found one journal article by a German theologian that addresses "Spiritualität und *spirituality* in der Welt der Arbeit und der Welt der Gesundheit" (Schneider 2012; he also considers some of the contemporary fsw studies), while with regard to the Anglophone context, Theology Today (2003) provides a special issue on theology's relation to the world of business, work, and the corporation (volume 60, issue 3) and also more recent articles on fsw topics (e.g., Ligo 2011, Tucker 2010).

12 They can be read as exercises in "how to speak theologically about work without addressing Christian existence in contemporary work contexts too directly", resulting from a combination of an emphasis on biblical and historical aspects of *Arbeit* with a passion for the dogma that "die biblischen und reformatorischen Aussagen über die Arbeit sind nicht unmittelbar auf den konkreten Vollzug der 'Arbeit' heute anwendbar" (Preuss et al. 1995:655). Being at a distance from the *Vollzug der Arbeit*, the actual performance of work, theological engagement with work is left with the *evaluation* ("Beurteilung"; Preuss et al. 1995:654) of work (on the emptiness of normative work without empirical insights, see Huppenbauer & Tanner 2014:240). Such conceptual moves seem to allow a theological engagement with the theme of work from a Christian perspective without addressing actual Christian existence in contemporary work settings (see also 5.3).

13 See also my discussion of his account of work in more detail in section 5.4.

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> tions with practitioners of other religions, or war and peacemaking. Even where Christian normative scholarship has addressed economic matters, it has focused on poverty and consumption, not work (2017:331).

The "economic matters" mentioned seem to be, indeed, a main conceptual entry point for theological engagement with current workplace-related questions.In this regard, broad coverage of economic issues and related questions from theological perspectives exists (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).It seems that theological discourses related to the workplace have focused heavily (but not exclusively) on such general and broad questions like the relationship between theology and economics, or the question of overall economic systems and structures (for examples see, again, sections 5.2 and 5.3). Fred Glennon and Vincent Lloyd (2017:221) argue that such "broad-strokes" approaches, by moving from the concrete to the abstract, hinder the development of academic reflection on what they call religious ethics at work:

> This tendency to move from labor itself (the laboring body, the relationship with the products of labor, the site of labor, the possible transformations of labor, collective labor organizing) to broad-strokes pictures of the global economy continues to hinder the development of scholarly reflection on the religious ethics of labor (2017:221).

In this respect, Glennon and Lloyd identify great potential in bringing the resources of religious studies and theology to questions of contemporary work contexts:

> The leader of the Princeton [Faith at Work Initiative] program, former bank executive David W. Miller, argues that corporate managers who bring their religion into the workplace have a positive effect on corporate ethics and make stronger leaders (Miller 2007). Yet discussions of this type often ignore the more fundamental questions about the role that banks and corporations play in making possible the proliferation of low-paid, undignified labor for the most marginalized members of society. *These deeper questions are closed off because "faith" is understood in an essentially secular frame, as an individual conviction and as an individual, voluntary practice*, not in the broader and deeper sense embraced by religious studies and theology scholars. Yet *these religious studies and theology scholars have shown limited and inconsistent interest in probing how they might bring the resources of their disciplines to questions of labor* (2017:220, my emphasis).

What might be the reasons for such limited interest in questions concerning contemporary work and workplaces? Focusing on business contexts, Schneider (2007) identifies an overly negative view of capitalism as the main problem of a lack of theological engagement with contemporary workplaces. In his view, the problem is not 'broad-strokes', but excessively nega-

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tive evaluations of capitalism, which, he argues, are of little help for Christian practitioners working in these contexts. In his view, Christian theologians, such as Daniel Bell and Graham Ward (their arguments resemble the criticism of capitalism raised by Karl Marx and Max Weber, who deemed capitalism to be essentially inhuman in its cultural core, says Schneider 2007:281), engage in "the intellectual and practical demolition of capitalism" (2007:279). This is problematic with regard to practitioners because in "consequence, very little intellectual vision exists in academia for the human potential that exists for people doing the business of capitalism" (2007:280) and therefore,

> people who are committed to doing that business are left without sophisticated theory to help guide them through the complexities of modern economic life. This is sadly true of Christians who look pretty much in vain to moral theologians and ethicists for counsel on the constructive engagement of capitalism (2007:280f).

Schneider's discussion seeks to elucidate the interconnections between the macro and individual-level implications of a capitalist culture and reflect on them theologically. He demonstrates that theological engagement with general questions of capitalism does not need to be ignorant of concrete working conditions.[14]

Along similar lines, Margaret Whipp (2008:90) points out that "the contextual realities which face individual Christians as they inhabit this contested sphere [of the workplace] have not been subjected to sustained, critical reflection". This is due to the primary concern of the theological academy and the church with macro-level "questions of political–economic policy", says Whipp (2008:90). In her view, macro-level-oriented church reports, practical theology, and theological ethical studies bear little relation to the concerns of ordinary working Christians. Thus, theological analysis of the situations of ordinary working Christians falls

> between the two stools of a macro-level style of 'public' theology which treats matters beyond their effective reach and a micro-level style of 'pastoral' theology whose remit is limited to the intimate and personal matters of domestic and family life (Whipp 2008:90).

Her account, then, seeks to fill part of this gap by focusing on how Christians can speak in an appropriate way about their faith at work in the face of the "huge discursive pressures against the articulation of faith-talk, which

14 See, in particular, his interesting reflection on his car mechanic (2007:288f), but note that it seems to be *irrelevant* for Schneider's purposes whether or not the respective car mechanic is a Christian.

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most lay Christians are ill-equipped to withstand" (2008:4) and she aims at articulating a "sufficiently 'workable' theology" (2008:6), which may inform the education and support of Christians "for a more faithful daily apostolate" (2008:6).

Focusing particularly on practical theology and the question of the priesthood of all believers in the context of the Reformed tradition, Ralph Kunz (2018:36) outlines that practical theology is dominated by a tunnel vision focusing on pastoral practice, while, in principle, the subject of practical theology is concerned with the *Lebenspraxis* of the community of all believers. Actually, however, a pastoral theological paradigm dominates practical theology. It focuses on the *Praxistheorie* of the pastoral profession and there are, consequentially, some blind spots, in terms of the general priesthood of all believers. However, practical theology does not ignore the situation of ordinary Christians, but addresses it *through the lens of one profession* which does something for others: "Aus bildungspragmatischen und organisationslogischen Gründen richtet sich die Literatur in der Regel an diejenigen, die das Sagen haben, um (im besten Fall) andere anzuleiten, als mündige Christen zu leben" (2018:36f). Kunz (2018:37) shows that lay[15] Christians *are* a topic in practical theological reflection, first, in a *Praxistheorie* for pastors, which identifies the support and development of the church in the sense of the priesthood of all believers as a central task of pastors. Second, practical theological literature provides education for those people who serve in the church. Third, practical theological literature addresses those responsible in church settings and focuses on *Gemeindeaufbau* in the sense of strengthening and developing the priesthood of all believers.[16]

It must be noted here that, in the light of the study of Christians at work, this is a particularly unfortunate situation. It is one thing to approach Christian *Lebenspraxis* with a professional lens or with a focus on those who have a say in the church, and another thing to approach it almost *exclusively* with such a lens. Such adoption of a particularly dominant professional lens at the expense of other perspectives seems to require a certain numbness with

15 The term laity refers to all believers and does not exclude, say, pastors (see Kunz 2018:30).

16 This situation, which Kunz describes with respect to practical theology, whereby theology has become accustomed to adopting particular lenses through which to recognize the situation of ordinary Christians, will appear again in the case of theological ethics (see 5.3). If this is conducted in an unreflected way, such practices become different variations of the implicit influence of research traditions (see also 4.1.2), which in turn, of course, becomes problematic if the use of such lenses begins to obscure aspects which would actually be relevant to the respective research endeavor.

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respect to the (sometimes seemingly anarchistic) stings in the flesh which the New Testament seems to present to those who seek to conceptualize Christian existence as being decisively shaped by the interaction with 'Christian professionals', or with those who have a say in the church.[17] A particular problem linked to a professional lens is the focus on church settings (sociologically speaking) at the cost of other contexts in which Christians live. Those who study Christians in work contexts are left wondering what to do with such a distinction between Christians who have a say in the church and those who do not. With regard to contemporary work settings, this distinction seems to lose its *bildungspragmatische* as well as its *organisationslogische* legitimacy. In this regard, Kunz (2018:46–48) outlines how newer approaches of missional ecclesiology seek to remedy a narrow focus on church settings by proposing decentralized structures and by suggesting an attempt not to bring people 'into the church', but to enable them to build a Christian community in their lifeworld.

In addition to the above analyses of theological reflection concerning 'ordinary' Christians at work, it has been suggested that a lack of understanding of *the specifics of Christian living* is a root cause of the separation of theological reflection from contemporary workplaces. Focusing on corporate contexts, Ellen Charry (2003:296) argues that "every Christian with purchasing power, investments, or a position in a firm (whether for- or not-for-profit) is part of the corporate world". In this light, the separation of Christianity and the corporate world is made possible by a flawed understanding and practice of Christian living:

> For, in truth, it is only our failure to articulate and follow through on what a godly life entails and proscribes that enables us to draw a line between our piety and our corporate embeddedness. That is, from a spiritual perspective, the tension between church and business, no matter where we are in the table of organization, is the question: *How do I live Christianly here, now* (2003:296, my emphasis)?

17 See, for example, Matthew 23:1–13 (in the context of woes against the 'religious elite' of the time, in particular verses 8–10: "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi', for you have one teacher and you are all brothers. 23:9 And call no one your 'father' on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. 23:10 Nor are you to be called 'teacher', for you have one teacher, the Christ"), and 1 John 2:27 (in the context of a warning about false teachers: "Now as for you, the anointing that you received from him resides in you, and *you have no need for anyone to teach you*. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, it is true and is not a lie. Just as it has taught you, you reside in him" (my emphasis)). A related notion with regard to teaching can also be found in the Hebrew Bible (see Jer 31:34).

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In line with this question, the present study focuses on the existence of Christians in contemporary work contexts and not primarily on a theological evaluation of economic working conditions (Schneider) or faith-talk at work (Whipp), even though these questions are related to Christian existence at work. I share with Posadas, Glennon, Lloyd, Schneider, Whipp, and Charry the impression that theology seems to have somehow failed to adequately address the situation of Christians in contemporary workplaces. If we keep in mind, however, what Kunz points out in terms of practical theology, namely that it does not ignore the situation of ordinary Christians, but addresses it through a professional lens, the broader problem might be related to using 'lenses' that seem to be problematic for studying Christians at work.

Moreover, I hesitate to say that 'theology' has neglected the theme of the existence of Christians in contemporary workplaces, given the sheer amount and sophistication of theological literature available. You never know if, one day, you will find a textbook by an old Scandinavian moral theologian who has already covered it all. It also needs to be considered (again) that what runs under the label 'theology' is, in an academic context, not restricted to the discipline which calls itself by that name, but appears in other contexts as well, in particular as it concerns the workplace.[18] What I try to do in the following sections is to engage with some of those authors who seem to contribute theologically to the study of Christians at work, and identify and assess their contribution. But, first, I am going to sketch the use of 'entry concepts' in theological engagement with contemporary work contexts.

5.2 Theological 'entry concepts' to the workplace

Theological approaches to the workplace and to workplace-related questions employ a variety of 'entry concepts', that is, workplace-related concepts on which they focus their account. Common entry concepts are 'business', 'management', 'work'/'labor', 'corporation', 'organization', 'leadership', and 'the economy' in general or 'capitalism' in particular. I have already sketched the strands of fsw research which focus particularly on the notions of leadership, management, and entrepreneurship (see section 3.3), and I have also addressed the lack of clarity that comes with the use of such workplace-related concepts (3.5). In this section, I will offer a brief

18 On management scholars who characterize their approach as theological, see the introduction to the present chapter.

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overview of the use of these entry concepts[19] employed in theological engagement[20] with contemporary workplaces, and below I will discuss in more detail three theological accounts of the notions of work, business, and the corporation (5.4).

With reference to the notion of *business*, the studies in question use the term business in different combinations with that of theology, such as business theology, theology of business, or theological business ethics. I think it is suitable to say that these terms tend to reflect two types of literature: one type concerned with a broader theological perspective on business (e.g. Byron 1988, Daniels et al. 2012, Heslam 2015, Roseman 2003, Sandelands 2016, Vinten 2000), and the other with theological *ethical* aspects of busi-

19 The term 'entry concept' is coined from the viewpoint of the study of Christians at work. The respective concepts may not be viewed as such by the authors who use these concepts. A theologian who develops a theological perspective on the notion of the 'economy', for example, may not be interested in concrete contemporary workplaces, but her/his approach is still (albeit peripherally) related to the topic. This peripheral connection allows me to look for potential contributions to the question of Christian existence at work and, approached in this way, the economy is the 'entry concept' with which to address concrete workplaces, although the respective theologian does not seek to address workplaces, but the economy, and therefore s/he may not agree with my qualification of the economy as an 'entry concept' with which to address the workplace, although s/he would probably agree that what s/he says regarding the workplace is shaped via the notion of the economy. See, in particular, my discussion of theological approaches to business and economic ethics (5.3).

20 In addition to entry concepts, there are 'mediating concepts' used in theological approaches to work contexts. These are concepts that are positioned at the intersection or to mediate between faith, spirituality, or religion, on the one hand, and work, management, business, or the corporation, on the other. For example, Simmons (2016) suggests *vocation* as the nexus of faith and work. With respect to Christian living, a number of traditional concepts, such as vocation, calling, stewardship, and co-creation, are related to existence in work contexts. These concepts are used, on the one hand, by Christian practitioners (Werner 2008), but they are also used as sources for conceptual academic work on the workplace (e.g. Diddams et al. 2005, McCann & Brownsberger 2007, Simmons 2016). In their mediating function, these concepts can be viewed as variations on the theme of the Christian location of individuals at the intersection between worldly and other-worldly spheres (see 4.2). Others build a mediating moment into their phrasing of the subject, for example 'spirituality of work' (Ligo 2011). Grand and Huppenbauer (2007) propose the formal notion of a 'trading zone' to conceptualize a mediating arena between theology and management, and position the concepts of uncertainty and intractability at the functional nexus of management and religion. Others use 'worldview' as a category to analytically mediate between spirituality, management, and business (Daniels, Franz & Wong 2000, see also Kim, Fisher & McCalman 2009).

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ness (e.g. Behrendt 2014, Fetzer 2004, Magill 1992, Rossouw 1994, Stackhouse et al. 1995, Van Wensveen Siker 1989, Wieland 2016[21], and Williams 1986).[22]

With reference to the notions of *work* and *labor*, the studies in question use the terms work or labor in different combinations with those of religion, theology, and ethics, such as theology of labor or theology of work (e.g. Posadas 2017, Roseman 2003, Van Erp 2017, see also the literature there), theology of working life (Whipp 2008), religious ethics of labor (Glennon & Lloyd 2017), theological ethic of work (Malesic 2017), and Christian ethic of work (Kretzschmar 2012). Others discuss a theological understanding (Simmons 2016) or a theological or ethical perspective on work (e.g. Diddams & Daniels 2008, Hauerwas 1985, Meireis 2008[23], Rendtorff 2011[24]). I think it is, again, appropriate to say that these terms tend to reflect two types of literature: one type is concerned with a broader theological perspective on work and the other with theological *ethical* or moral aspects of work.[25]

With regard to the notion of *management*, some studies explicitly draw on theological reflection (e.g. Daniels et al. 2000, Deslandes 2018, Dyck & Schroeder 2005, Grand & Huppenbauer 2007, Huppenbauer 2008, Mutch 2012, Stackhouse 2003). As regards the notion of *leadership*, some publications explicitly refer to theology for studying leadership (e.g. Ayers 2006, Case et al. 2012, Dames 2014, Kretzschmar 2014, Worden 2005, see also

21 Wieland is an economist writing on the implications of Luther's thought on economic and business ethics.

22 The role of theology in business ethics has been particularly controversial, as can be observed, for example, in the 1986 special issue of the Journal of Business Ethics with articles from a symposium on 'religious studies and business ethics'. The issue opens with an article by Richard De George (1986), entitled "Theological ethics and business ethics", in which he argues that, although ethical issues with regard to business have traditionally been addressed by theologians and management scholars, *philosophers* developed business ethics as a field. In his view, given the existence of business ethics as a *philosophical* discipline, the role and tasks of theologians in business ethics is not (or is no longer) clear. The subsequent articles in the issue then present a number of reactions to De George's text, focusing on various aspects of the role of religion and theology in business ethics (e.g. Krueger 1986, Leahy 1986, McMahon 1986, and Williams 1986).

23 Meireis also offers a general analysis of the notion of work with reference to the contemporary German-speaking context which considers historical developments and current challenges.

24 Rendtorff's (2011) ethics covers both the notions of work [*Arbeit*] and the economy [*Wirtschaft*].

25 For an overview of the German-speaking discussion, see Preuss and colleagues (1995) and Kehrer and colleagues (2018).

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the literature there). Additionally, with reference to the entry notion of the *corporation*, there are particular theologically orientated studies on it (Black 2011, 2009, 2008, Charry 2003, Erisman et al. 2004, Novak 2004, Stackhouse 1995). Others have proposed a connection between theology and the notion of *organization* (Dyck & Wiebe 2012, Miller 2015, Sandelands 2003, Sørensen et al. 2012).

In addition, various theological approaches address issues related to contemporary workplaces via the notion of the *economy*, and related concepts, such as *capitalism* and *globalization* (e.g., Cox 2016, Hill 2001, Murtola 2012, Nixon 2007, Oslington 2012, Rich 2006, Schneider 2007, Schwarzkopf 2012, Stackhouse et al. 1995) or the notion of *money* (see, e.g. Goodchild 2009). In German-speaking theology, the economy and its ethics (*Wirtschaftsethik*) have become a main focus for theological engagement with the secular workplace (e.g. Herms 2004, Honecker 1995[26], Jähnichen 2015, Oermann 2014, 2007, Rendtorff 2011, Rich 2006, 1990, 1984, Ruh 1992, Ulshöfer 2015, 2001, and Wieland 2016).

While this list of theological approaches to the workplace through the lenses of the above concepts is incomplete, it offers a glimpse of the variety of accounts of theological engagement with (historical and contemporary) work contexts, and it identifies some of the main conceptual roads taken toward a theological analysis of the workplace. Before I discuss some of these contributions in more detail, let me proceed with two observations on the role of theology in studying Christians in contemporary work contexts.

First, composite terms like the 'theology of business', 'theology of the corporation', or 'theology of organization' seem to be at worst questionable and at best in need of an explanation.[27] Some seemingly use "a Christian perspective on the modern corporation" as an equivalent to a "theology of the corporation" (Erisman et al. 2004:93). A theology of something, then, equals a Christian perspective on something. Others differentiate between (academic) theological perspectives and a Christian executive's "intellectual perspective", that is, the convictions held by a practitioner (see Delbecq

26 Under the heading 'the economy' (*Wirtschaft*), Martin Honecker (1995), in his *Grundriss der Sozialethik*, discusses a number of relevant concepts, such as the economic order (*Wirtchaftsordnung*), work (*Arbeit*), profession (*Beruf*), property (*Eigentum*), money and interest (*Geld und Zins*), performance and competition (*Leistung und Wettbewerb*), and worker participation and industrial conflict (*Mitbestimmung und Arbeitskampf*).

27 If the term 'theology' is used with an object, then since the term 'theology' already entails an object, it is necessary to explain how the two objects relate to each other. This is accomplished, in my view convincingly, in the case of Black's (2009) theology of the corporation.

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2004:244). A theological perspective, then, is a Christian perspective proposed by an academic. To offer some clarification regarding the use of the term 'theology', various systematic categorizations have been proposed (e.g. on general levels of theology, see Fischer 2002:15–44; on different types of theology with reference to organization studies, see Sørensen et al. 2012:274–276). Instead of offering an additional categorization, in this study I am going to assess different accounts which claim to be theological for their contribution to the study of Christians at work.

Second, entering the study of how people live in present-day work settings through the lens of particular concepts, such as the ones discussed above, is necessarily limited in its outcomes by the very concepts that are employed. With respect to the study of Christians at work, such engagement with concepts poses the danger of us coming to understand Christian existence as a mode of existence which is somehow preoccupied with concepts.[28] Theological engagement with workplace issues then becomes a matter of knowledge transfer between theology and other disciplines (such as economics and management studies). Alternatively, in terms of management, Grand and Huppenbauer (2007) have proposed understanding the relationship between theology and management more in terms of a 'trading zone' than of knowledge transfer, and Huppenbauer (2008) has developed this further by arguing that, from a theological viewpoint, what is crucial in terms of communication between theology and management is not so much elaborated theories and reflections on management, but *encounters* between people who embody their message (2008:41). Relating this to the study of Christians in contemporary workplaces, I suggest adding: What is crucial in terms of studying Christians at work is not so much elaborated theories of and reflections on work/management from a theological perspective, but encounters between people who embody their message in

28 On different types of concept, see chapter 7. The study of Christians at work cannot (and should not intend to) bypass the level of concepts in order to study people (Christians). Arguably, what (or who) is studied in the study of Christians at work is dependent on the notions of 'Christians' and 'work' one employs. That said, the notion of 'Christians' differs significantly from concepts such as faith or religion (or entry concepts such as business, work, management, etc.) in that it is a concept which designates particular people (it is a 'people-concept' instead of a 'thing-concept', see also section 7.2). Additionally, as I have argued in 4.2.2, the notion of 'Christians' is not an arbitrary concept but has relatively clear content. In particular, it entails socio-existential normativity (see sections 4.4 and 7.2) in that it offers a criterion with which to decide whether people meaningfully fall under the category of 'Christians' or not.

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work/management contexts and *the study of and reflection on the mode of existence of these people who embody their message*.

In conclusion, to evaluate the contribution of theological approaches to the study of Christians in secular work contexts, it needs to be noted, first, that there is no general consensus on what a theological approach to the workplace should be and, second, that consequentially it cannot be said in general terms what these approaches contribute to the study of Christians in work contexts. Therefore, in terms of the literature, individual approaches have to be scrutinized for their particular contributions to the study of Christians at work, and in terms of a thematic focus, it is not accounts of particular concepts but of people and their mode of existence that must be at the forefront of such an analysis of theological literature. In the following, I will, first, discuss theological ethical approaches to the workplace and, subsequently, address theological approaches to work, business, and the corporation.

5.3 Theological ethical approaches to the workplace

In this section, I will focus on five Protestant theological ethical approaches to the workplace from the German-speaking context (Graf 1999, Honecker 1995, 1990, 1980, Jähnichen 2015, Oermann 2014, 2007, and Rich 2006, 1990, 1984). While this is admittedly a small sample, I argue that this particular selection[29] permits an illustration of a crucial problem of theological

29 On the selection of the literature sample, see also 1.3. The intention here is to discuss some of the more prominent Protestant approaches to business and economic ethics. I will analyze the dynamics that lead to a neglect of the situation of individual Christians at work and identify important questions for the study of Christians at work which result from relating extant theological ethical proposals to the study of Christians at work. However, because of restrictions of time and space, the present review focuses on Protestant approaches and, within Protestantism, on approaches taken from the German-speaking context. The review of relevant Protestant approaches must remain incomplete, even though it includes some of the more prominent authors (other relevant contributions from the German-speaking context which I could not discuss in more detail here include Behrendt 2014, Fetzer 2004, Herms 2004, Meireis 2008, Rendtorff 2011, Thielicke 1951–1987, Ulshöfer 2015, 2001.) The problem of a focus on normative concepts at the cost of exploring how the moral conduct of Christians is actually embedded in a way of life seems to me to be also present in Roman Catholic approaches. Note, for example the Roman Catholic emphasis on ethical social principles and such ideas as the claim that business leaders are or should be, on a practical level, guided by principles (see Naughton & Alford 2012). Instead, I propose that the *catholicity* of Christian business leaders is characterized, on a practical level, not by them being

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ethical engagement with the workplace,namely the de-coupling of concepts from their embeddedness in Christian existence. In the following discussion of five theological ethical approaches, I will proceed by first presenting the respective approach as it relates to Christian existence in contemporary workplaces and, second, evaluate its particular contribution to the study of Christians at work. Each of the five subsections will cover one author. In the sixth subsection, I will offer a concluding discussion of the relationship between theological ethics and the study of Christians at work.

5.3.1 Friedrich Wilhelm Graf on the role of Christianity in the process of globalization

In his analysis of Christianity in the process of globalization, the German Protestant theologian Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (1999)[30] addresses the role of Christians by focusing on their normative orientations. According to him (1999:627), the term 'Christendom' was coined in the late 17th and 18th centuries to facilitate the identification of the essence of Christendom [*Wesen des Christentums*]. The theological proponents of the enlightenment did not search for such an essence on the level of beliefs and dogmatics, but on the level of ethics and morality. According to them, lived Christianity should be norm-guided and oriented toward Jesus of Nazareth as a moral example. In contrast, they considered questions of doctrine as secondary. However, as

guided by principles, but by them participating "in the one particular body of a crucified and resurrected Jew" (Miller 2014:198).

For a general introduction to theological ethics in English-speaking contexts, see Hauerwas and Wells (2011) and Meilaender and Werpehowski (2007). A review of recent introductions to Christian ethics in English-speaking contexts is presented by Townsend (2020). For a recent overview of Christian ethics in relation to economics and business contexts, see Melé and Fontrodona (2017), who consider in particular Catholic approaches. On Eastern Orthodox ethics, see Hamalis (2013). For an overview of Christian theological ethical engagement (considering Catholic and Protestant approaches) with economics and business in the German-speaking context, see Korff and colleagues (1999:683–780). A discussion of theological approaches to economic ethics from the US is presented by Ulshöfer (2001:282–302). For a recent discussion of Catholic approaches, see Oermann (2014:81–105) and the literature there.

30 Graf's contribution is part of the *Handbuch für Wirtschaftsethik* (1999) and is untypical insofar as Graf, as a trained theologian, does not explicitly claim to be speaking from a theological position in this text, and he seems to be fluent in both the sociological and the theological literature with regard to his subject. Nevertheless, I discuss his account at this point in the present dissertation because he shares a concern for normativity with other theological ethicists, and his approach is not restricted to a detached sociological description, but he also engages in reflection on the question of appropriate norms for Christian existence, the *vita christiana*, in the 21st century.

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early as the 18th century, intellectuals pointed out that the Christian churches do not only differ in questions of doctrine, but also in questions of the interpretation of and solutions to ethical problems. This led to a particular interest in those confessional differences in terms of the normative orientations related to the practical formation of Christian living. Theologians and sociologists (such as Werner Sombart, Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber, Adolf von Harnack, and Karl Holl) thus focused on idealized concepts of Christian living and their differences across Christian churches and denominations, says Graf (1999:628). Drawing upon these discussions (and in particular upon the writings of Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber, Richard Tawney, and Alfred Müller-Armack), Graf (1999:228) concludes that the Christian churches have no consistent conception of the relationships of religious faith, ethics, and economic behavior. There are particularly significant differences with regard to their economic ethics and attitude to capitalism.[31]

In Graf's view, the following aspects are relevant in terms of the economic ethics of a religious tradition: the understanding of salvation and the ways and means necessary to obtain salvation, forms of organizing in the religious community, motivations that are emphasized in the religious community, and practices and ways of living that are either encouraged or delegitimized. In his analysis of Protestant cultures, Graf, following Weber, analyzes the particular virtues and values that have been propagated by Protestantism which are related to capitalism (such as discipline, diligence, and education). In different developments, these sets of values are employed and modified contextually, such as in the development of the charismatic

31 This conclusion is, of course, based on quite old empirical work, and it seems to imply a static understanding of the affiliation of individuals with Christian confessions/denominations and a linear influence of denominational affiliation on the faith orientation, ethics, and economic behavior of individuals. That is, in such a view, someone's affiliation with a particular denomination seems to determine how they live as Christians at work. If we take more recent developments into account, the influence of different denominations and traditions on individual Christians and their lifestyles seems to have become more dynamic and fluid (see 4.2.1, and also sections 1.3 and 6.1.1), where a variety of different influences come together in the formation of Christian modes of existence, and where denominational affiliation does not have to be a decisive factor. Interestingly, this dynamic situation offers itself to the search for Christian characteristics of living at work *beyond* denominational or confessional particularities or, sociologically speaking, the dissolution of denominational milieus may give way to the formation of a cross-confessional Christian milieu, that is, "die Trennungslinie verläuft immer weniger zwischen den Konfessionen und ihren Milieus und immer mehr zwischen Christen und Nicht-Christen" (Joas 2012:188).

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movement in Latin America (Graf 1999:662). Just as German Lutherans played an important role in the shaping of German society (1999:656f), so do the charismatic Protestants in the capitalist developments in developing countries (1999:662). Graf (1999:665) argues in his conclusion that, instead of cultivating a thoroughly negative attitude to global capitalism, Christian communities are better off if they strengthen individual autonomy and responsibility, emphasize an ideal of an active, performance-orientated, and creative way of living, and build networks of mutual trust and solidarity. However, the acceptance of contemporary economic developments needs to be critically reflected on and it needs to be stressed that Jesus's ethos of fraternity [*Ethos der Brüderlichkeit*] is to be incorporated in institutions of lived charity (Graf 1999:666).

Graf (1999) explicitly considers the existence of Christians in his analysis of global capitalism. He is interested in the social standing of Christians and their role in shaping social and economic developments. His focus is also clearly normative in that he not only analyzes the norms and ideals that different Christian groups adopt, but also offers his own recommendation of what he holds to be the preferable Christian ideals in light of contemporary developments. The possible influence of Jesus in contemporary contexts is reduced to that of a moral example providing an ethos which can be applied. Graf thus offers a *thin* account of Christian existence. His analysis of Christian existence in work settings focuses on the ideals that the subjects adopt and, apart from his reference to Jesus' ethos, does not take further account of the reality and spirituality which followers of Christ confess shapes their lives.[32] In other words, his account of Christian living tends to be normatively reductionist and to stay at the surface of norms and ideals.

5.3.2 Martin Honecker on being a Christian at work

The German Lutheran theologian Martin Honecker (1995:1) develops his ethics as a doctrine of the good [*Güterlehre*]. He argues that theological ethics is linked to theological worldviews or interpretations of the world [*Weltdeutungen*], which refer to an overall view of reality from the perspective of the Christian belief in God. Theological worldviews encompass the basic tenets of Christian faith but are also open to experience and historical insights (1995:12). Such a worldview is, for example, contained in the doctrine of the two kingdoms [*Zweireichelehre*] and the notion of the kingship of Christ [*Königsherrschaft Christi*]. Honecker (1995:16) argues that the distinc-

32 See 4.2, 4.3, and chapter 6.

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tion between the two kingdoms is not to be viewed as a dogma, but as a means to understand Christian existence and worldly reality from the perspective of faith, in order to differentiate between the duties of a Christian toward God and toward other people. According to Honecker (1995:27), commitment to the reign/kingship of Christ has been central to the Christian tradition from the beginning, but it provoked various different interpretations in terms of its implications. According to Honecker, the strength of the notion of the kingship of Christ is that it proclaims Christ's claim to rule over the world. The whole life of Christians comes under this claim, including their political and social existence. This implies a claim for unconditional allegiance to Christ. Honecker (1990:145–151) also addresses the topic of discipleship [*Nachfolge*]. After discussing different views and positions, he concludes that discipleship as *Nachfolge* should be understood as "Christian symbolic agency" [*christliches Symbolhandeln*] (1990:151), which does not impose rigid rules and norms, but demands from individuals that they make their own ethical judgments.

Honecker (1995:445–464) addresses the notion of work by first providing a historical overview of how work has been viewed in Christian tradition. In addition, he analyzes current developments and problems (such as structural changes, rationalization, changes in the perception of work, unemployment, changes in value orientations, and future structural developments). Protestant Christians understand work as an opportunity to thank God for the salvific work of Christ and for their justification. Through justification, human beings become free cooperators with God to shape this world, says Honecker (1995:449). From a Christian perspective, work is relativized through faith, in that faith is more important than work (1995:457). Honecker argues that work should not be 'theologized' too much (1995:449.463), and that "Christian realism" should allow for pragmatic solutions to contemporary problems, instead of an ideological approach to work (1995:463).

Additionally, Honecker addresses ethical and sociological aspects of the notion of vocation/profession [*Beruf*]. Christian vocation encompasses one's daily living in the world (1995:465). In terms of a professional ethos, concrete duties to serve others arise out of one's profession. In addition, from a theological perspective, the Christian faith bestows meaning on one's work. Faith can even instill meaning into work which is experienced as toilsome, given that it is useful for wider society. Through the motif of the cross, which Christians are to bear as they follow Christ, they can accept toilsome work contexts and can overcome dispiritedness (1995:469). The

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main vocation of a Christian is to exercise love within and without one's worldly profession (1995:470).

Although Honecker cautions against the imposition of rigid rules and norms and against the ideologization of work, his analysis focuses on (normative) views and valuations of work. Apart from this emphasis, the implications of the worldviews of the doctrine of the two kingdoms and the kingship of Christ for the world of work are only indicated fragmentarily. In other words, Honecker introduces the crucial conceptual material concerning Christian existence, but hardly brings it to bear upon the question of Christian living *at work*. One could argue that his normative focus on work is already built into his reading of the doctrine of the two kingdoms (1995:23.74),[33] in which the doctrine refers primarily to the *duties* of a Christian toward God and toward other people.[34] His focus thus tends to be limited to how Christians should view work and what they should do while working, and only peripherally considers the reality which Christians claim enables their Christian living at work in the first place.

This is partly transcended by Honecker's hint at justification as the condition which shapes a Protestant Christian's attitude toward work and his allusion to the motif of the cross, which can enable individuals to find meaning in toilsome work. These are examples of how Honecker translates existential aspects of Christian living into particular attitudes toward work. In this way, he establishes a connection between Christian existence in general and normative/evaluative orientations of Christians at work in particular. However, by taking the route of normative orientations, Honecker seems to construe a kind of cognitivist–normativist detour in the faith–work relationship, in that he seems to conceive of faith as indirectly related to work by the implications of certain understandings, such as an understanding of justification or the motif of the cross. Such a detour, however, seems to obscure the more direct, straightforward, and bodily relationship between human action and Christ, as is, for example, portrayed in the Pauline writings. In Paul, justification refers to a just and obedient bodily

33 It seems ironic that, referring to Gerhard Ebeling, he calls such a duties-oriented or normatively oriented reading of the doctrine of the two kingdoms *fundamentaltheologisch*, as it precisely transfers the existential question of Christian existence in the world away from its existential context toward an engagement with Christian existence in the world, which is narrowly oriented toward duties.

34 Another reason for this distance to lived Christian existence could be that, in this respect, Honecker's ethics seems not to be empirically informed (on empirically informed ethics, see the volume of Christen et al. (2014) and, in particular, the chapter by Huppenbauer & Tanner (2014)).

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practice, where followers of Christ participate "literally and physically" (Miller 2014:5) in Christ's death and resurrection by putting to death their passions, which are situated in the body, while the Spirit infuses their bodies with Christ's dying and with the life of Christ's risen body (Miller 2014:103).

While Honecker analyzes and describes the conditions and developments of the work environment in detail, he seems not to apply the same descriptive rigor to the question of Christian existence at work. While he offers a general account of Christian existence, his transfer of the analysis of Christian living to work contexts tends toward a form of normative reductionism. This tendency seems to be already inbuilt into his general account of Christian existence,[35] as is, for example, reflected in Honecker's (1990:151) understanding of Christian discipleship, where he seems to identify *Nachfolge* with exercising individual ethical judgment instead of following imposed rigid rules and norms. In opening up a contrast between individual ethical judgment and following imposed rules, it seems as if the relational reality of the living Christ is suspended once it comes to questions of ethical judgment and moral agency.[36] Having said that, I will argue below (6.2.1) that Honecker's remarks on the force of faith to relativize work and on the function of the cross at work correspond to crucial aspects of a theory of how Christian existence is embodied in contemporary work settings.

5.3.3 Traugott Jähnichen on Protestant economic ethics

The German Protestant theologian Traugott Jähnichen (2015:335) argues that Protestant economic ethics is characterized by proposing theological perspectives on economic behavior in dialog with the discipline of economics. In his view, Protestant economic ethics aims for the elaboration of impulses, that is, of relevant "maxims" (2015:335) for the development of society toward the common good. These maxims target the general public, are oriented toward rationality, and are therefore to be formulated in a way which is comprehensible to a broader public. Jähnichen (2015:336) differen-

35 Honecker discusses various positions, and it is not always clear to me which of these are also his own views and which are only views he discusses but does not share (note that Honecker's ethics is presented in the format of a textbook).

36 Here and in his discussion on work/profession, Honecker does not seem to consider *Nachfolge* in the sense of a "relational way of life" (Oakes 2018:255), in the sense of an existential orientation toward the living Christ (an aspect which he describes, but which he does not seem to take up, see 1990:147f).

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tiates between descriptive and normative economic ethics. While descriptive ethics explores a particular ethos and its consequences, normative economic ethics evaluates economic behavior and proposes alternative normative concepts. Thus, while descriptive approaches explore the norms and ideals of particular groups, Protestant ethics offer particular normative perspectives, a material system of norms (2015:344), and a theological anthropology (2015:394). Jähnichen proposes freedom, justice, and sustainability as basic norms of economic behavior. As regards individual existence in work contexts, Jähnichen (2015:387) notes that Luther discovered that all Christians enter a spiritual state through baptism, and Jähnichen argues that therefore "all humans—and not only the clergy—can view their working activities as worship or vocation [*Beruf*]". Note the shift from 'Christians' to 'all humans' in Jähnichen's phrasing. Does this imply that he views all humans as Christians or potential Christians?[37] In any case, vocation [*Beruf*] refers to the concrete place where an individual takes on responsibility. This leads to a renewed appreciation of the active life, the *vita activa*, which becomes the central place of testing and training [*Bewährung*]. Protestant ethics is positioned at a distance to economic processes because God's economy of salvation is an economy of giving, which operates according to a logic of abundance and runs contrary to an economy based on scarcity. Christian faith knows that trust is to be put in God alone, who gives salvation freely. From this distance, Protestant ethics proposes normative perspectives in dialog with economists and practitioners.

While it appeared earlier as if Jähnichen was blurring the lines between Christians and non-Christians, the last phrasing is indicative of an awareness of a particularity of Christian existence as '*Christian* faith knows that God gives salvation freely'. However, Jähnichen seems to modify the understanding of a particular Christian mode of existence into common concepts devoid of their particular Christian content. By the very setup of his approach, Jähnichen comes into a position where he draws on traditional Christian content, which he then conceptually modifies in order to be receivable for both Christians and non-Christians alike. Thus, he speaks from a Christian perspective, proposes Christian viewpoints, but does not speak about Christian existence. Instead he proposes ideals to everyone as ideals inspired by Christian perspectives but modified in such a way that

37 This seems to ignore that there are, empirically, Christians and non-Christians. However, if such an obvious empirical condition is ignored, such a move needs to be substantiated.

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they are acceptable for the addressees without requiring them to locate[38] themselves with regard to Christ. For example, Jähnichen (2015:352–355) translates "freedom through Christ" into common "protection of property rights". The argument goes like this: Freedom is a gift from God through Christ, which is realized in the social sphere by mutual acceptance of the freedom of others and therefore, in the end, in the protection of property rights. Jähnichen thus takes an aspect which characterizes a Christian mode of being and translates it into a common concept of property rights which is Christologically empty. This is, arguably, a case for what Antony Kelly (2010:803), in another context, has referred to as "theology's first task", namely "to insist that faith be receptive to its own data". I propose that this can be done by relating what has been said above to a Pauline perspective (see e.g. Miller 2014). Even though "Freedom through Christ" (Jähnichen 2015:352) might be characterized in the social sphere by mutual acceptance of the freedom of others, what is at stake is how it comes about. Freedom through Christ is not just a given cultural good which is somehow there in society, but it is embodied by individuals who participate in Christ and share in the death of Christ by putting to death their desires and by being vivified by the Spirit, in that he 'infuses' their bodies with the just life of Christ (see Miller 2014). Freedom through Christ, is not, therefore, concretized in the social sphere via a common concept of property rights, but is embodied by individuals who live the presence of Christ "performatively" (Kelly 2010:799).

5.3.4 Nils Ole Oermann's Protestant approach to economic and business ethics

The German Protestant theologian, historian, and jurist Nils Ole Oermann (2007, 2014) offers a Protestant approach to economic and business ethics [*Wirtschaftsethik*] which builds on the concepts of justice (including both the idea of justice as fairness and an option for the poor) and human dignity.[39] Both concepts are based on the Great Commandment. Oermann (2014:16) proposes an intervening [*intervenierende*] form of ethics. An intervening approach is different from a merely demanding, appellative one in that it seeks, first, to understand the economic argumentation, which it then weighs up, criticizes, or completes. Ethics must be careful to obtain the nec-

38 On the Christian location of individuals, see 4.2.

39 The present passage on Oermann is a revised version of the respective section from my master's dissertation (2010:144–148, see also Brügger & Kretzschmar 2015:2f).

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essary economic knowledge in order not to advocate simplistic moralism.[40] The contribution of theological economic and business ethics includes the two elements of, first, a reflection on the rules for economic action and, second, a realistic description of the existence of market participants, says Oermann. Theological ethics should use globally understandable terminology, terms like justice, charity [*Nächstenliebe*], and human dignity.

Oermann makes considerable efforts to clarify who the recipients of his ethics are, and the particularity of the (Protestant theological) perspective from which he is speaking. For Oermann, a global economic ethic from a Protestant perspective does not address a system or abstract markets, but responsible individuals. The term 'market' comes from the Latin *mercari* and means 'to merchandise' or 'to trade'. It means merely the place of an activity (although this is now more and more a global activity) which is shaped by its participants. There is thus not an impersonal market, but individual market participants who are ethically responsible, says Oermann (2007:26f). Therefore, Protestant ethics must focus on the individual and individual responsibility before God, not on vague social terms like the common good or social justice. Terms and concepts that focus on society as a whole are too vague and lead to general demands with no clear recipient, and unclear responsibilities. It is paradoxically necessary, says Oermann, in order to prevent individualistic economics, to focus ethical analysis on individuals with their rights and duties, strengths and weaknesses (2007:410). Oermann's aim is to develop an approach to business ethics which is clearly *evangelisch*[41] and Protestant[42], but at the same time a global approach that can be understood and adopted by both Christians and non-Christians. It is theological argumentation and substantiation which makes an ethic a theological one. Thus, for Oermann, the distinctiveness of a Christian ethic is not a different or new ethical claim, concept, or criterion (not a normative ethical contribution), but a different view of reality (especially on the world and the economy). For his general understanding of the task of theological ethics, Oermann follows the German theologian and ethicist Johannes Fischer (2002:46f) in arguing that theological ethics faces

40 Oermann (2007:336–407) makes extended use of case studies with an emphasis on macroeconomic issues (failed states, demographic development, debt relief, global access to information technology, and corporate governance).

41 He defines the term *evangelisch* as being founded on the gospel (*Evangelium*), see Oermann (2007:16).

42 Which to him refers to an awareness of the political dimension of faith, and to the advocating of convictions (which ones?) in the midst of the world and, if necessary, to *protesting* publicly.

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the hermeneutical task of describing and explaining the Christian symbolization of reality (in terms of spirit, sin, freedom, et cetera) in critical engagement with other current symbolizations of reality because the Christian symbolization of reality is obscured in contemporary Western society. Therefore, according to Oermann, the specific Christian contribution to ethics is a hermeneutical one, not a normative one. In his view, Christians and non-Christians will often come to the same conclusion about ethical matters, but because of their different views of reality, their reasoning and justification of ethical norms are different. Thus, with regard to the result of ethical reflection, Christian and secular normative ethics are (roughly) identical, but their substantiation may be very different. According to this view, Christianity should not develop approaches that are different from other business ethics approaches (no Christian 'extra-ethics'). The main Christian task is to advocate its distinct view of reality and thus make a specific contribution.[43]

More specifically, Oermann focuses on the hermeneutical task of Christian ethics given with Christian anthropology.[44] The specific Christian element in a Protestant approach to global business ethics is its anthropological foundation in the Protestant doctrine of human nature as *simul iustus et peccator* (at one and the same time righteous and a sinner). Basing his approach on a particular conception of Christian anthropology, he seeks to develop a better understanding of economic processes. In particular, he rejects the reductionist anthropology of a *homo oeconomicus* and adopts a more comprehensive view of human beings as *simul iustus et peccator*. The Protestant concept of human nature is more suited to understanding economic life than the one-dimensional *homo oeconomicus* model, says Oermann (2007:174). For example, he suggests that the concept of human dignity, which can be derived from Christian anthropology, is universally translatable and is crucial for the global discussion on justice (2007:57–69). In focusing on its hermeneutical task, a Christian economic ethic does not seek to replace economics, but to complete it. Oermann criticizes both Catholic and Protestant approaches, which only make normative claims and demands. In his view, Christian anthropology which addresses the question

43 That is why Oermann (2007:56) prefers to speak of an "economic ethic from a Protestant perspective", rather than a "Protestant economic ethic".

44 Oermann draws on the biblical scriptures not as a direct source of norms, but by using biblical texts to illuminate basic ethical concepts and terms (for example, common welfare, social justice, human dignity, values, equality, and human rights), which he then applies to concrete cases.

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of how the individual as created by God exists in the economic sphere is decisive in the building of a bridge between ethics and economics. The task of theological anthropology in ethics is not to make normative claims about human behavior, but to explain it. To the extent that theology can contribute and help economics to gain a broader and more realistic concept of human nature, it can contribute to a more comprehensive and therefore better understanding of people as market participants, says Oermann (2007:289).

How is the Protestant element in Oermann's approach related to ethical normativity? Oermann holds that there are universally valid ethical concepts, like human dignity. Human dignity can be based on a Christian creational argument, but it can also be based on a rational–stoic argument. Global ethical concepts must be universal. Universal means first translatable, and only second enforceable. Such concepts are valid transculturally.[45] Ethical concepts based on human dignity (such as the option for the poor) can also be understood and adopted by those of other faiths (e.g. Muslims or Hindus) without them having to become Christians. There are normative claims that are universally valid like the golden rule. It can be interpreted from a Christian, a Buddhist, or a humanist perspective. The claim for compliance with such basic ethical concepts is universal, but the *motivation* for compliance is different. A Christian conception of a global business and economic ethic needs to be aware of the fact that most people in the world are non-Christians. That is not a problem for a Christian ethic, says Oermann (2007:165) because, although the reasoning for ethical guidelines and the motivation for compliance differs, the guidelines themselves are often congruent. Thus, Oermann differentiates a moral/ethical substance to which ethical concepts refer from the reasoning on which they are based, and from the motivation for compliance, and locates the distinctively Protestant element on the level of the reasoning and motivation of ethical norms, while, in his view, the norms themselves are universal.

In conclusion, Oermann holds that worldly justice is important for Christians, but is penultimate. Economic and business ethics are not an option, but a necessity in the face of pressing global problems, such as failed states, global poverty, and mass unemployment. But neither Christianity nor Judaism is an appropriate basis upon which to develop economic programs or political agendas. The contribution of theology is a hermeneu-

45 As an example, Oermann offers the relation between female circumcision and human dignity. Although female circumcision seems to be accepted in some cultures, most of the circumcised would be glad if human dignity was universally enforceable.

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tical–anthropological one. Theology can develop the theological–anthropological groundwork for the economy as it seeks to influence the development of economic theory. Theology and the church have the duty to engage and intervene in the economic sphere and in society, says Oermann (2007:412). Protestant theology has to speak the truth to the state, the economy, and society from the liberating perspective of the gospel.

I will now briefly note two difficulties arising from Oermann's identification of the Christian element of business and economic ethics with Christian anthropology and its concretion by reference to Luther's *simul iustus et peccator*[46], before proceeding to relate Oermann's approach to the study of Christians at work. First, in terms of the communication between non-Christians and Christians, it is to be noted that secular economists have themselves criticized the reductionist tendency of the *homo oeconomicus* model (see e.g. Akerlof & Shiller 2009). Now, it might be interesting for them to see that there are other perspectives which share their criticism of the *homo oeconomicus* model and argue that individuals have to be understood in a tension between their own interests and altruism (Oermann 2014:315), but it seems, in this regard, not to be true that economists are in need of theological anthropology to see human nature 'as it really is' (see Oermann 2014:317) or to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of human beings. What, then, is the relevance of a Protestant perspective apart from this relativization of the *homo oeconimcus* model, which also appears elsewhere? If the anthropological substantiation as well as the resulting ethical norms are not particularly Protestant, but can be replaced by other approaches, what then, from the viewpoint of non-Protestants, is the point of introducing a Protestant perspective? With this way of communicating 'the Protestant message', it seems to me that Oermann tends to make the Protestant element of his perspective irrelevant.

A second difficulty arises with Oermann's (see e.g. 2014:315) identification of anthropology as the main area of a distinctive Christian contribution to economic ethics, at the exclusion of other aspects. Why should Christian anthropology be used as a hermeneutical lens, but not, say, Christology, ecclesiology, or eschatology? Moreover, is not Christian anthropology inextricably bound to Christology[47]? In particular, the New Testament writings on human beings, which are specifically linked to the condition of being in

46 For a recent critique of the notion of *simul iustus et peccator* in the light of an exegesis of Paul's epistle to the Romans, see Miller (2014:5).

47 I do not know if Oermann acknowledges or advocates such a connection or not. However, I have not found such a connection made or explicated in Oermann's work.

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Christ, are not, I argue, general statements about human nature which can be abstracted from this condition.[48] In this light, the view that humans are sinful but accepted and justified in Christ cannot be reduced to a general statement that humans live in a tension between good and bad and between altruism and self-interest (e.g. Oermann 2014:315). Christ, then, is not a means to an end that can be used to gain a better understanding of reality and that we can then abandon for the purpose of a seemingly better dialog with non-Christians.[49] This, again, seems to be a case for "theology's first task" (Kelly 2010:803), namely "to insist that faith be receptive to its own data".

From the viewpoint of the study of Christians at work, however, the main problem of Oermann's approach is that he does not explore a specifically Christian life in the context of work. Or, more precisely, he does describe what he takes to be the moral aspects of and the claims related to such a life, which are, however, no different, as he argues, from the moral aspects and claims related to the life of non-Christians. The shape, so to speak, of Christian life is similar to that of non-Christians if it is lived morally; only the reasoning and motivation behind it are different. The 'Christian element' is only used for the substantiation of Oermann's ethic, and is, therefore, replaceable. Given that they both live morally (say in accordance with Oermann's ethic), it would therefore not be possible to distinguish a Christian from a non-Christian individual in work contexts, except in terms of their motivation. From the perspective of the study of Christians, which is not reductionistically interested in morality in terms of normative concepts, this is, then, an *empty* proposal, or (if one takes into account Oermann's particular Christian substantiation and motivation, although they are replaceable) a *thin* contribution to Christian living at work.

5.3.5 Arthur Rich's economic ethics from a theological perspective

The Swiss Reformed theologian Arthur Rich (2006:70–75) develops a comprehensive approach to economic ethics from a theological perspective[50] which identifies a distinctive Christian contribution to economic ethics, but

48 For a recent study on "Christological primacy" in the Pauline writings, see Miller (2014:1).

49 See, in particular, Oermann's summary (309–318) with no reference to Christ. I take this to be indicative of Oermann's prioritization of anthropology over Christology.

50 This passage on Rich builds on the respective section from my master's dissertation (2010:141f, see also Brügger & Kretzschmar 2015:3).

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aims to be received by non-Christians and Christians alike.[51] He develops his ethics in the tradition of religious socialism (see Oermann 2007:17). Rich's approach centers on the ideas of the humanly just [*das Menschengerechte*] and the economically rational [*das Sachgemässe*].[52] As his concern is Christian groundwork for business and economic ethics, Rich argues that these terms are suited to starting a discourse between Christians and non-Christians on economic ethics. For the economy, the principle that what is not economically rational cannot be humanly just, and vice versa, is valid. The economically rational is characterized by three components: efficiency, competition, and planning. The humanly just is based on humanity [*Humanität*], which for Rich can be grounded in either a Christian or a humanist rationale. This makes the humanly just an important concept, because human dignity and charity can also be respected by non-Christians. For Rich, on the level of its normative ethical concretion, Christian existence as a Christian form of humanity [*christliche Humanität*] does not differ from general human humanity [*menschliche Humanität*].

The specifically Christian element in business and economic ethics is primarily hermeneutical, in that a Christian approach seeks to mediate between the relativity of this world and the absoluteness of divine justice, says Rich. The humanly just represents a conceptual bridge between the relativity of economic necessities and the absolute nature of faith. Christian business and economic ethics does not develop new economic principles or guidelines, but seeks to locate the relativity of this world in the absoluteness of faith and ethics. However, Rich's understanding of the Christian element of ethics goes beyond the hermeneutical dimension. The Christian *proprium* of business and economic ethics is not only a different understanding: it is that the Christian faith is always more than ethics. It is always more than claims, but it is a *form of being* which is a gift that is received, which comes from what is to come (Rich 1984:242–243). Rich's analysis of the particularity of Christian existence focuses on resurrection faith [*Auferstehungsglauben*] as an experience of the Other [*Erfahrung des ganz Anderen*] in the midst of the reality of our world (1984:122). Christian faith is based on experience, not on ideology, says Rich (1984:119). It is rooted in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, his crucifixion and resurrection. Christian faith as resurrection faith relates to the experience of the resurrection of the Crucified,

51 For an introduction to and a critique of Rich's proposal, see Enderle (2010) and Oermann (2007:148–156).

52 Both German terms are difficult to translate. Here, I use the official translations from the 2006 English version.

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to which Christians bear witness. Resurrection faith refers to faith that arises *out of the experience* of resurrection, and not to mere belief in the resurrection (1984:121).

Rich's proposal has been criticised for being formalistic, that is, for providing only abstract principles that cannot be applied (see Oermann 2007:148–156), and, more importantly (with reference to the study of Christians in work contexts), for neglecting the corporate context in which much of contemporary work takes place (see Fetzer 2004:39) by focusing heavily on general questions relating to the economic system. However, Rich is quite precise in situating the characteristic experience of Christians in the experience of the living God and, particularly, in the experience of the risen Christ (1984:122). However, since his proposal focuses more on the question of economic systems than on concrete workplaces, he does not provide an analysis of the formation of this Christian experience in concrete work contexts. While Rich thus offers a 'thick' account of Christian existence, he does not outline how the Christian in his analysis may 'walk' in work contexts.

5.3.6 Theological ethics and the study of Christians at work

So far in this section, I have discussed how Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, Martin Honecker, Traugott Jähnichen, Nils Ole Oermann, and Arthur Rich approach the workplace from a (Christian) theological perspective. I will presently discuss the relationship between these theological ethical approaches and the study of Christians at work, and draw on C.S. Lewis's understanding of Christian living, on David Horrell's work on the historical meaning of the label 'Christian', and on Colin Miller's work on Paul's theological ethics to accentuate a 'thicker' account of Christians at work. In particular, I will assess the move proposed most explicitly by Oermann and Rich in order to offer, from a Christian perspective, a (de-Christianized) ethical normative conception, which they claim should be universally applicable, that is, valid for Christians and non-Christians alike (1), before I come to a conclusion concerning the contribution of these Protestant theological ethical proposals to the study of Christians in contemporary workplaces (2).

1) In the proposals of a normative ethical conception, as offered by Rich and Oermann, the characteristic of a Christian perspective is that it provides a particular (but replaceable) substantiation of the proposed norms

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and potential motivation for compliance.[53] In the light of the study of Christians in contemporary workplaces, such a move must appear remarkably strange. Why emphasize that you are speaking from a Christian perspective if you subsequently put so much effort into 'de-Christianizing' your message in order to make it acceptable or comprehensible to both Christians and non-Christians? If you are convinced that there is only one morality that is valid for all, and if you want to speak about it with regard to, say, the economy, what is the point in first articulating your Christian perspective just to hasten to add that *it does not make any difference* to your proposal in terms of the normative ethics you propose? I do not know. Many would agree with Rich and Oermann that there seems to be no specific Christian morality,[54] in terms of particular Christian ethical norms or a 'material Christian ethos', which differs from the norms adopted by other people.[55] However, with regard to the study of Christians at work, the problem is not so much the claim that there is no particular Christian morality, but that such approaches tend to isolate morality or ethical normativity from the rest of one's existence.[56] In some way, the theoretical question of the existence or non-existence of a particular Christian ethics seems to be a distraction from the existential character of following Christ.[57] The very term 'Christian' has historically[58] been used from the beginning of its emergence as a politico-existential norm to refer to the allegiance or belonging of individuals to Christ. While this historical context differs from contemporary Western contexts, the normativity this early

53 Rich and Oermann suggest this most explicitly. Jähnichen seems, in principle, to follow a similar line in that he demands that ethics should be receivable for all and 'de-Christianizes' his ethical concepts to fit this requirement. Honecker (1980:344) also seems to argue along similar lines by pointing out that there is no particular material Christian ethos, but that the Christian faith opens up a new horizon toward the ethical.

54 See e.g. Fischer (1994:168.172.188.276), Honecker (1980:325.344), Lewis (1980:82).

55 Note, however, that the very idea of universal ethics, with which these approaches work, is not without its critics (for a recent discussion of universalism in ethics, see Hellsten 2015).

56 The fact that morality is not to be isolated from the rest of life is a point which, for example, authors who draw upon the thinking of Alasdair MacIntyre make with regard to the embeddedness of moral claims in communal traditions (see, for example, McCann and Brownsberger 2007, and for an approach to theological ethics, see Hauerwas 1983 and 1995a; see also 4.1.1 in the present dissertation).

57 See also Fischer (1994:188) on „die ganze leidige Diskussion darüber, ob es eigene ‚christliche' Normen gibt".

58 See Horrell (2007, see also 2013, 2002). On Horrell's work on the label 'Christian', see below in this section and in 4.2.2 and 6.1.2.

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usage displays is not unlike the normativity that comes with the use of the label by contemporary Christian business managers, in that it promotes an understanding of what being a Christian is about (see 6.1), in which being a Christian is highly relevant for one's conduct. In this light, it is not clear what purpose the insistence on universally valid ethical normativity, which itself (or at least its explication) is not specifically Christian (see Rich 1984:242), serves.[59] In fact, if, in addition, Christian living at work is equated[60] with its moral aspects in such a way, then the study of Christians at work becomes superfluous, as Christian living is, in such a view, characterized by its morality, which is, then, no different from other moralities, *ergo* Christian living must be similar to other forms of living, provided they are moral. Methodologically speaking, in terms of the study of Christians, the theoretical move to abstract a de-Christianized ethical normativity (or a de-Christianized *explication* of ethical normativity) from *Lebenspraxis* is the methodological eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which would cause the study of Christians to "surely die" (see Gen 2:17). In other words, in this case, the study of Christians at work would cease to be recognized as an option the researcher can pursue.[61]

What I want to address here is not so much the question of whether these authors are right or wrong in terms of the ethical concepts they propose, but far more that these approaches are thoroughly misleading in terms of the picture of Christianity they present. In short, such approaches do not consider sufficiently the existential, existentially relational, and embodied character of Christian living. To explicate this, I will draw, in the

59 The circumstances, under which such a project, to me, seems understandable, is if one speaks (maybe hypothetically) from a ruling position in society, or if one speaks to someone in such a position. One can imagine that this would be the way, for example, a benevolent and committed Christian monarch speaks to her/his people. S/he does not want to be silent about his/her Christian commitment, but at the same time s/he does not want to impose her/his faith onto others, but still foster moral agency in society as a whole. Historically, the influence of Christians in Germany in the shaping of the modern state and the *soziale Marktwirtschaft* (see e.g. Graf 1999:656f, Brakelmann 1999:713–737) indicates that these may indeed be the condition which implicitly characterizes the position from which theological ethicists speak 'from a Christian perspective', that is, from the position of those who (want to) shape and influence the structuring of society. It seems that these contributions are uttered from a (hypothetical) position of influence at the 'top' of the society which they seek to address.

60 Which seems to be indirectly implied by theological approaches to work contexts which focus solely or largely on ethics.

61 Which is a remarkable effect in the light of the empirical existence of both Christians and non-Christians.

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following, on C.S. Lewis's account of Christian living and on David Horrell's work on the historical emergence of Christian identity and the related use of the label 'Christian'. "For when you get down to it," says Lewis (1980:155f),

> is not the popular idea of Christianity simply this: that Jesus Christ was a great moral teacher and that if only we took His advice we might be able to establish a better social order and avoid another war? Now, mind you, that is quite true. But it tells you much less than the whole truth about Christianity and it has no practical importance at all.
>
> It is quite true that if we took Christ's advice we should soon be living in a happier world. You need not even go as far as Christ. If we did all that Plato or Aristotle or Confucius told us, we should get on a great deal better than we do. And so what? We never have followed the advice of the great teachers. Why are we likely to begin now? Why are we more likely to follow Christ than any of the others? Because He is the best moral teacher? But that makes it even less likely that we shall follow Him. If we cannot take the elementary lessons, is it likely we are going to take the most advanced one? If Christianity only means one more bit of good advice, then Christianity is of no importance. There has been no lack of good advice for the last four thousand years. A bit more makes no difference.
>
> But as soon as you look at any real Christian writings, you find that they are talking about something quite different from this popular religion. They say that Christ is the Son of God (whatever that means). They say that those who give Him their confidence can also become Sons of God (whatever that means). They say that His death saved us from our sins (whatever that means).

Lewis explains at length the process of becoming a Christian. He outlines that by attaching ourselves to Christ we can become 'Sons of God', and thus share in the life of God and have spiritual life instead of (only) biological life.[62] Becoming a Christian involves a radical shift from having (merely) biological life to having spiritual life. Lewis compares this process to a statue which changes from being a carved stone to being a real human being. It is a change from being created by God to participating in the very life of God. This is a fundamentally distinct state, as Lewis points out with reference to the difference between something which is produced by human beings (such as a statue, which may have a human-like shape) and someone who is a human being (a living person). "Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ" (1980:177). The result is that every Christian becomes a "little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Chris-

62 Lewis (1980:156.159.161) uses the terms *Bios* and *Zoe* with reference to the New Testament terminology concerning 'life'.

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tian is simply nothing else" (1980:177). Christians are 'putting on Christ', which is something radically different from applying ethical norms:

> And now we begin to see what it is that the New Testament is always talking about. It talks about Christians 'being born again'; it talks about them 'putting on Christ'; about Christ 'being formed in us'; about our coming to 'have the mind of Christ'.
>
> *Put right out of your head the idea that these are only fancy ways of saying that Christians are to read what Christ said and try to carry it out*—as a man may read what Plato or Marx said and try to carry it out. They mean something much more than that. They mean that a real person, Christ, here and now, in that very room where you are saying your prayers, is doing things to you. It is not a question of a good man who died two thousand years ago. It is a living Man (1980:191, my emphasis).

Lewis points out that living as a follower of Christ is, at the same time, harder and easier than trying to be good or trying to act morally. This is because Christ does not primarily demand compliance to certain moral requirements in the sense of certain duties one can fulfill and then move on:

> Christ says 'Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it.' (…) The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self—all your wishes and precautions—to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are all trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call 'ourselves', to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be 'good'. We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way—centred on money or pleasure or ambition—and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do (1980:196–198).

Thus, Christian living involves turning away from our "own way" (1980:198) and a re-orientation toward the living Christ. This is why it becomes misleading to claim to adopt a Christian perspective in a public context and then talk primarily about ethical norms. Christians, in this sense, are primarily followers of Christ. And the life of followers of Christ is not primarily characterized by a concern for the application of ethical norms, but for the reality of Christ. This relational orientation of a Christian mode of existence, as Lewis sketches it, seems to be the characteristic feature of Christian existence, which is obscured in Christian theological approaches to the workplace when it addresses primarily ethical norms.

The fact that the positioning work performed by some contemporary theological ethicists is somehow at variance with or ignores the existential character of living as a follower of Christ can also be illustrated by relating it to the positioning performed by Christians in the early historical contexts in

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which use of the label 'Christian' was established. Before I explore this in more detail, I have to say a word here about the role of such a historical excursion within the overall project of the present dissertation. I introduced the distinction between nominal and existential connotations in different usages of the term 'Christian/s' in section 4.4. Now, usages of the label 'Christian(s)' can carry nominal as well as existential (or substantial) connotations, and these connotations can be present in varying degrees in different usages. Two aspects are two be considered, in my view, in this regard: First, the different usages of the label Christian are to be understood in their respective contexts, and the function of the term may vary considerably across different contexts, as is the case in any use of concepts (see Skinner 2002). Second, the very design of the term in its particular linguistic and historical context imposes particular boundaries on the different variations of later usages in terms of their meaningfulness. That is, it provides a measure of their being meaningful (see also Lewis 1980:XII–XV) in the light of the emergence of the term; it offers an orientation against which later usages can be held accountable. This measure relates, on a very basic linguistic level, to the reference to the Hebrew concept of the משיח and its Greek equivalent of the Χριστός (see e.g. Grundmann et al. 1973 and Shahar 2018), and historically to the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose followers the term has come to denote. These connections seem to be inbuilt into the term in such a way that it can be said that a meaningful contemporary usage takes account of them, while usages empty of substantial or existential meaning (or merely nominal usages) ignore them. Interestingly, contemporary usages (see also 6.1) seem to differ not so much in terms of content (the basic content being that of denoting followers of Christ), but in terms of how much of this existential content is connoted or implied in a particular use. I use the term nominal to characterize usages that are more or less empty in terms of existential content, meaning, or substance. That is, they simply denote someone as Christian without implying certain information as to what being a Christian refers to. I refer to usages of the term Christian as existential or as carrying existential connotations, where the term is fuller in terms of content, meaning, or substance. It is, therefore, the substance of meaning displayed in the context of the historical emergence of the term which—even though it is sometimes abandoned—still serves as a criterion with which to characterize different contemporary usages. In this light, I will address here the historical situation of the emergence of the label Christian,[63] because it is crucial for the

63 See also section 4.2.2.

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argument of this dissertation in general, and also because it is important to understand the existential connotations of the label Christian, which I argue are insufficiently considered in the theological ethical approaches to the workplace discussed.

David Horrell (2007, see also 2013, 2002), drawing upon Pliny's correspondence with Trajan (around 111–112 C.E.), describes the situation where "Christians are coming to trial for their faith" (2007:370). In terms of its content, the term "Christians" simply referred to the followers of Jesus Christ as those who *belong to* or are *allegiant to* Christ (see Horrell 2007:362, and also Grundmann et al. 1973:529, Bile & Gain 2012, Blass 1895, and Spicq 1961). The label 'Christian' was applied by the ruling Roman administrators as a politico-existential normative criterion, where non-compliance or compliance determined life and death. In short, Christians could choose between renouncing their Christianity or being executed. If they denied ever having been Christians or admitted to having been Christians, they were to "demonstrate their religio-political loyalty by invoking the gods and offering to the emperor's statue, and prove their nonallegiance to Christ by reviling his name" (2007:370). Horrell notes that Pliny's practice of capital punishment is not oriented toward certain crimes (which were sometimes associated with Christians at that time), but "for the name itself (*nomen ipsum*)—that is, merely for being a *Christianus*" (2007:371).

It is the totalitarian context of the time which brings to light the existential character of being a Christian by forcing situations where pledging allegiance to Christ results in physical death. Now suppose for a moment that someone with an attitude similar to that proposed by Jähnichen, Oermann, or Rich to the public positioning of Christians were to face the same trial[64], with the choice of either renouncing the name of Christ or being executed. Now s/he might come up with a way out and offer the Roman administrator an alternative: "Let me, privately, hold the convictions I want, but publicly, I can modify and translate my beliefs in such a way that they don't bother anyone, do no longer refer to the name of Christ, and can even

64 The execution of Christians 'for the name itself' does not seem to be unique to the early historical stages of Christian identity formation, as current press reports indicate (see e.g. https://www.cbsnews.com/video/new-isis-video-shows-execution-of-21-christians/#x, accessed 20 December 2017 or https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/nigeria-boko-haram-kidnapped-pastor-hostage-video-testimony.html, accessed 10 February 2020). It seems, however, to occur mainly in totalitarian contexts. On the study of Christian martyrdom in the 20th and 21st centuries, see Johnson and Zurlo (2014). On the related problem of the death penalty for 'apostasy' in Islamic contexts, in historical and contemporary perspective, see Schirrmacher (2012).

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serve you in developing a better society." The administrator might have been interested, but more probably he would have said: "I am not interested in your convictions and translations, but in your *loyalty*. It is your choice: the emperor, or Christ". The reaction would reveal the Christianity of the one facing the trial, in terms of her/his allegiance to Christ (Horrell 2007:2362). In this ultimate test of Christian identity, it is precisely the fact that the one facing the trial is forced to *publicly* take a stand, and that there have indeed been people who pledged allegiance to Christ even in the face of death, and would rather die than compromise their commitment to Christ, which reveals the existential character of Christians' allegiance to Christ.[65] Now, while this test of Christian identity might be typical in totalitarian contexts and does not seem to occur in democratic contexts, it arguably reveals a *general* feature of being a Christian, irrespective of the context in which it occurs. It indicates the existential claim of Christ, which Lewis indicates with the words: "Christ says 'Give me all'" (1980:196) and which can be referred to as "Christ's Lordship" (see e.g. Harink 2003:74, quoted in Miller 2014:3). While the practical explication of one's allegiance to Christ may differ from democratic contexts to totalitarian contexts, its substance stays the same.

From the Christian approaches to the workplace by Jähnichen, Oermann, and Rich, I only found the consideration of an existential allegiance to the living Christ as a characteristic feature of Christian existence in Rich's approach. In the case of Jähnichen and Oermann, it seems to be left open what the adoption of a Christian perspective entails in existential terms. There is thus a stark contrast between the existential connotations of the label Christian, which are present in the historical contexts described by Horrell (2007), and which refer to an individual's allegiance or belonging to Christ, and a usage of the label Christian which is mainly nominally connoted and not specified existentially, in which the label might vaguely refer to a cultural–religious heritage which can be changed, modified, and trans-

65 The test reveals an existential Christian identity via one's verbal commitment to Christ by coupling it directly to the readiness to abandon one's earthly life. One can imagine that the threat of such a test can bring people who have counted themselves as Christians to withdraw from such a high-priced public commitment. But note that for the actual execution, much has to come together: the coupling of a public Christian commitment with the readiness to lose one's life (on the side of the Christians) and with the readiness to execute those who take such a stand (on the side of the administrators). In this sense, such a trial can only work as an ultimate test because one's life is at stake *anyway* in following Christ (otherwise the Christians would not demonstrate the readiness to give up their lives).

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lated according to the situate appropriateness. The term, then becomes empty in terms of existential meaning. One is reminded here of Francis Schaeffer's (2006:19f) dictum that "the meaning of the word Christian has been reduced to practically nothing". Thus, different usages of the label Christian can be categorized according to the connotations that are predominant: existential connotations (in meaning-ful usages) or nominal connotations (in meaning-less usages). Of course, one can argue that there is nothing wrong with commenting, from a Christian perspective, on moral problems of our time without explicitly pointing to the existential claim of Christ, but this then, it seems to me, is far from an "authentic Christian … mode of taking seriously Christ's Lordship over the public, the social, the political" (Harink 2003:74, quoted in Miller 2014:3).

2) In concluding this discussion of Protestant theological ethical proposals with reference to their contribution to the study of Christians at work, I contend that Graf (1999), Jähnichen (2015), and Oermann (2007) offer a thin account of Christian existence, while Honecker (1995) and Rich present a more comprehensive approach in this regard. But while Honecker, in my view, does not offer a clear analysis of Christian existence,[66] it is Arthur Rich who has pointed to the existential Christian condition of living one's life oriented toward the living God in Jesus Christ. Having said that, I find that the analysis of the Christian condition as it relates to daily living in contemporary work contexts suffers from the preoccupation of theological ethicists with ethical normativity in terms of normative ethical concepts. In terms of Christian living, such conceptions of living morally via an orientation toward ethical norms seem to imply an idea of 'ethics as application'[67] in terms of the "implementation of Christian values and principles" (Melé & Fontrodona 2017). If this is transferred to the question of daily living at work, it can lead to the (somewhat strange) idea that Christians at work are preoccupied with the intellectual application and practical implementation of certain normative ethical concepts.[68]

66 He discusses the traditional themes related to Christian existence, such as discipleship, the doctrine of the two kingdoms, and the kingship of Christ, but in my view without a clear outcome (which might be because of the textbook character of the respective work).

67 For a discussion of the notion of 'ethics as application' in Oermann and Rich, see Brügger & Kretzschmar 2015:2f. See also Miller (2014:136), who argues that, for Paul, just practice is not the application or implication of salvation, "but its very content". On the problem of the application of biblical texts, see Fischer (1994:193–196) and Holmes (2012:146–148).

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A main reason why it is difficult to put forward the criticism of these normativist[69] approaches to (Christian) theological ethics as keenly as required is that Christian existence *is* and must be thoroughly moral. So when I criticize these particular normative approaches to ethics, I do not say that morality is not important in Christian life. I do, however, criticize how morality is conceptualized and taken out of its embeddedness in the existential Christian condition of participating in the life of Christ, in a way which leads, in my view, to a thoroughly misleading picture of Christianity. In Rich's (1984:121) account, this seems to be facilitated by his metaphoric understanding of resurrection[70], which seems to stand in the way of appreciating the concrete bodily connection of the followers of Christ to Christ as portrayed, for example, in the Pauline writings (see e.g. Miller 2014). Taking this connection into account may reveal how Christians participate in the death of Christ by putting to death the passions of the body that tends toward sin, and they thus die with Christ and share in his resurrection and his just and good life through a "pneumatic vivification" (Miller 2014:130). According to Miller's interpretation of Paul, the just life is not the result or the application of salvation, but its very content (2014:5136).[71] This just, obedient practice is "genuine human action that is at the same time entirely a gift" (2014:61). As such, participation in the death and resurrection of Christ *is* the substance of Christian moral living, from which it cannot be abstracted. Lewis (1980:198) puts it this way:

> As He said, a thistle cannot produce figs. If I am a field that contains nothing but grass-seed, I cannot produce wheat. Cutting the grass may keep it short: but I shall still produce grass and no wheat. If I want to produce wheat, the change must go deeper than the surface. I must be ploughed up and re-sown.
>
> That is why the real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter, life come

68 Which might explain why the term "intellectual" (see Delbecq 2004:244) is used to characterize Christian life at work.

69 On the "normativist misunderstanding of theological ethics", see Fischer (2002:83).

70 For a historical perspective on Jesus's resurrection, see Wright (2002). That resurrection is "real", however, is not only a historical problem, but concerns the bodily relationship of Christ with those who belong to him, as Miller (2014) aptly points out.

71 For a reformulation of Christian ethics, not as application, but as the "Spirit-led participation in the formation of Christ", see Brügger and Kretzschmar (2015:6f).

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> flowing in. (…) He never talked vague, idealistic gas. When He said, 'Be perfect,' He meant it. He meant that we must go in for *the full treatment* (my emphasis).

Thus, if one wants to consider the formation of moral conduct in work contexts from a Christian perspective, the observable behavior of Christians cannot be separated from the bodily concreteness of their attachment to Christ: "what we must hold together is that participation in the death of Christ is 'real' and that this participation is a visible one borne out in the church's acts" (Miller 2014:130).

5.4 Theologies of work, business, and the corporation

Having discussed Protestant theological ethical contributions, I will now continue the exploration of the role of theology in the study of Christians at work by discussing some proposals from the theology of work, from the theology of business and management, and from the theology of the corporation. I have chosen texts which illustrate the variety of theological engagement with the workplace, and which I hold to be instructive for the study of Christians at work. In the first subsection, I will discuss Jeremy Posadas's critical engagement with the Christian theology of work. In subsection two, I will introduce Denise Daniels' theological approach to business, management and work. And, in the third subsection, I will address Michael Black's theology of the corporation.

5.4.1 Jeremy Posadas on a critical Christian theology of work

Jeremy Posadas (2017) reviews current accounts of work in Christian ethics and theology and seeks to advance them. I discuss his work here because his approach builds on a review of important contemporary theological approaches to work and because his proposal serves well to illustrate both the potential of such an approach to work and the problems that come with a neglect of Christian existence. Posadas first analyzes the different understandings of work. Second, he draws upon 'anti-work' thinkers, arguing that they present a vital corrective to the Christian thinkers. Third, he proposes a synthesis of an 'anti-work' perspective and Christian theology of work. In the following, I will sketch Posadas's account and then briefly outline how his practical proposal could be advanced by considering more explicitly the existence of Christians in contemporary workplaces.

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First, Posadas discusses the accounts of the theology of work proposed by David Jensen, Miroslav Volf, John Paul II, Esther Reed, Darrell Cosden, and Darby Kathleen Ray. Although these accounts are diverse and draw on a variety of different traditional sources, Posadas (2017:343) identifies a "remarkable degree of conceptual congruence" in these accounts, consisting of a number of shared axioms concerning the notion of work. In particular, they apply an implicit distinction between "work-in-its-essence" and work in the everyday sense of paid jobs and unpaid domestic labor. Based on this distinction, 1) work in its essence must be understood as a basic part of human existence. 2) Work in its essence is viewed as intrinsically good. This is 3) often derived from "defining God's activity as work and extrapolating from that point" (2017:342). 4) Work which degrades human dignity is viewed as a deformation of work in its essence and not as a problem inherent to work itself. 5) Degrading work is to be redeemed by adjusting the working conditions. So much for his synthesis of current approaches.

Second, after describing this conceptual convergence, Posadas moves on to draw upon thinkers who adopt an anti-work perspective (Paul Lafargue, André Gorz, Kathi Weeks, and others). From an anti-work perspective, writers criticize the taken-for-granted concept and respective structuring of society that "wage-earning work, performed either by oneself or by others in one's household, is the means by which people gain access to those goods and services necessary for living at all" (Posadas 2017:344). Anti-work writers argue for the recognition of "the possibility that society's collective resources could be organized in such a way that the aggregate amount and intensity of work could be decreased while still ensuring that everyone's basic needs are met" (2017:344) and for the decrease of work's *dominance* over the spheres of human life. This dominance, they argue, says Posadas, is maintained through the concepts of the work society and its work ethic: "the work society is organized so that people must devote and orient much of their lives to working, often in variously degrading conditions; its governing ethic affirms that hard, honest work is a major mark of moral worthiness and a source of dignity and fulfillment" (Posadas 2017:348).

Third, by synthesizing the theology of work with an anti-work perspective, Posadas argues for the adoption of a so-called 'refusal of work' position in Christian theology, combined with a definition of work which is narrower than that usually adopted (the new definition would *not* include productive activity and creativity *outside the wage relationship*): "In late capitalism, work consists of all wage-earning activities, plus unwaged activities

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that are necessary to enable people to perform wage-earning activities: that is work includes jobs, childcare and other caregiving, housework, and home maintenance" (2017:354). He then proposes concrete policies for the reorganization of society, which avoids the dominance of work: First, "a basic livable income guaranteed unconditionally to every member of society" (2017:350f) and second, "a redefinition of full-time work as six hours a day, without any reduction from current pay rates" (2017:351). In addition to this general redefinition of work and its related policies, Posadas suggests that the 'refusal of work' perspective can inspire Christian accounts of work in a number of ways: 1) the distinction between work in its essence and actual work needs to be abandoned, and it should be recognized that work "only exists in concrete forms" (2017:354) as wage-earning activities plus unwaged activities necessary to perform wage-earning activities, not as an abstract essence. 2) In this view, "God is not a worker and God's actions are not properly defined or construed as 'work'" (2017:355). 3) Therefore "work is not what humans were created for" (2017:355). 4) Work (as a consequence and manifestation of the brokenness of human life) "is a problem rather than a good and should be limited as much as possible" (2017:356). 5) "No one should have to work in order to live with basic human dignity" (2017:356) and therefore, 6) "Christians should constantly organize and advocate for political changes that allow everyone to be able to work less and less" (2017:357), and 7), Christians should promote a vision of worker justice that seeks "the increase of time and resources for life outside of work" (2017:358), and "the eradication of degrading and alienating conditions and consequences of work" (2017:356).

Posadas criticizes theological accounts of work as employing an *implicit* distinction between work-in-its-essence and actual work (2017:332). This move allows theologians to simultaneously embrace the notion of work as positive, while criticizing problematic current forms of work as corrupted, says Posadas. This 'layered' evaluation rests on the idea of work as intrinsically good and part of God's nature. In the argumentation which Posadas criticizes, what follows from the status of human beings as being made in the image of God is that work is also a positive part of human nature. However, according to Posadas, the theologians he analyzed do not account for why the category of work "properly applies to God's activities" (Posadas 2017:333) at all. Concluding that it does not, he argues that, from a Christian perspective, a narrower definition of work is appropriate (2017:354, see above), and that work is to be interpreted as a consequence of the brokenness of human life, and the influence of work on human life needs to be limited as much as possible. From my reading of theological

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texts, I think that Posadas's identification of an implicit distinction between essential and actual work captures an important aspect. In particular, it appears to be true that in theological approaches work tends to be portrayed as good, but some forms of it as corrupted.[72] Theologically, the good aspects relate to creational aspects of work, while the corrupted elements of work relate to the fall or to sin. Having said that, I doubt that these two (the positive and negative) aspects of work are to be allocated to an essential (good) and an actual (corrupted) understanding of work. I cannot tell if such a distinction is really implied by the authors Posadas discusses, but in the theological account of work which I will discuss below (see 5.4.2) it seems to me more of a dialectic which characterizes actual work under the conditions of creation and fall. Be that as it may, I do think, however, that Posadas's criticism of the inhuman dominance of paid work in contemporary society can be better supported by addressing the characteristics of Christian existence and identity than by the redefinition of work he proposes. In the following, I will, first, discuss his proposal for a redefinition of work (1), and second, substantiate his criticism of the dominance of paid work by a 'thicker' account of Christian existence (2).

1) To support his practical proposals and policy recommendations, I do not think that Posadas's conceptual re-interpretation of work is necessary. Without it (which means sticking to the 'traditional' notion of work as essentially good), one has no less of a basis to criticize the fact that many people's lives are dominated by the imperative of paid work in a way which violates their human dignity. Posadas does not, in my view, convincingly make the case why a broader notion of work should be narrowed down in the way he proposes. In particular, his theological criticism of the implicit distinction between essential and actual work rests on the argument that, from a Christian perspective, it is incorrect to portray God as a worker.[73] Posadas concedes that "God makes concentrated efforts, pursues planned actions, persists, creates, produces", but he still insists that "God is not a worker and God's actions are not properly defined or construed as "work" (Posadas 2017:355). While this seems to be untenable as an interpretation

72 In addition to the accounts discussed by Posadas, see, for example, the account of work by Diddams and Daniels (2008) discussed in the following section.

73 A similar idea is proposed by Kathryn Tanner (2005:47): "God after all is very rarely thought by Christian theologians to make the world through labor: God speaks, and the world immediately comes to be, without any effort, without materials or tools". I can only note *en passant* that this conclusion seems to ignore that people whose professional work includes *speaking* activities do actually work and they know that speaking does not have to mean "without any effort" (Tanner 2005:47).

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of relevant scriptural texts, Posadas rightly points out that the talk of God as a worker needs to be justified by those who apply it (2017:333, see also 2017:336.338.342.349, footnotes 10, 11, 14, and 21). Now, many would agree with Posadas that God does not need to earn wages according to the biblical texts. Posadas is simply applying here his own narrower definition of work (see, e.g. 2017:336.355). And it is true that the scriptural texts do not contain any specific notions of work taken from the 21st century.[74] While the scriptural texts use a variety of different terms to refer to God's activities, there is, nevertheless, a textual basis which uses terminology for God's activities that displays similarities with a contemporary notion of work. This is reflected, for example, in how Bible translators *consistently* translate Genesis 2:2f by using the term 'work': "By the seventh day God finished the work[75] that he had been doing, and he ceased on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing". This is the wording of the NET Bible. I have not found any English translation which does not translate here with 'work'). This textual basis must be ignored to conceive of God as 'not a worker' or 'not working'. The burden of proof is thus on the side of those who want to argue *against* the notion that God is working (in the light of the biblical texts) in spite of the fact that God is clearly portrayed as working in a text like Genesis 2:2f. Posadas also criticizes an understanding of Genesis 1:28 (advocated e.g. by John Paul II), which equates 'subduing the earth' with work, and asks if this is not better conceptualized as artistry or transformation.[76] Here, again, Posadas applies his own definition of work as paid work and, based on his definition, he argues for the exclusion of certain activities from the concept of work to maintain his narrow definition of work. While this exercise in exegesis must remain unfinished here, I do not see the value of approaching the scriptures[77] by asking what may or may not count as work. This brings me to my second point.

2) In Posadas's account, Christians in their relation to work seem to be (only implicitly) defined as those who should adopt the views of and attitudes to work which Posadas suggests. This is at best a very thin account of Christian existence at work. Rather than such re-conceptualizations of

74 As they do not contain *any* concepts from the 21st century, which seems obvious, but which can easily be ignored.

75 Hebrew: מלאכה, Greek: τὰ ἔργα.

76 From an fsw perspective, one might add 'management' or 'leadership' to Posadas's proposal (note the Latin *dominium*).

77 In addition to this exegetical argument against a narrow definition of work, it also seems contradictory to Posadas's intention to restrict the dominance of paid work and to restrict the contemporary definition of work to paid work.

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work, which Posadas suggests, it seems to be much more decisive, with reference to a mode of existence pertinent to followers of Christ in work contexts, to note the following: According to Ephesians (2:9), those who live in allegiance to Christ are not saved by their own "works"[78], but "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Moreover, work is not primarily something followers of Christ *do*, but they are, in the first place, the objects and receivers of God's working activities, "for we are his workmanship" (ποίημα) (Ephesians 2:10)[79]. I share Posadas's concern for mitigating the negative effects of the unhealthy dominance of paid work over the life of human beings. However, I do think that the contemporary Christian contribution to the question of work is not primarily a conceptual reformulation of what work is or should be. Rather, it is that Christians, as those who let God be the one who works on them, can witness and learn to live and act in accordance with their liberation from the stronghold of the inappropriate dominance[80] of work over their lives. While I think that this may manifest itself in such steps as advocating a basic livable income guaranteed unconditionally or a re-definition of full-time work as a reflection of the primacy of God's work over human action,[81] it may also, at times, include "working night and day" (1 Thess 2:9) as a reflection of the dignity of human agency embedded in the life of God.

5.4.2 Denise Daniels on the theology of business, management, and work

Denise Daniels draws on the work of the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, who argued that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ extends across all areas of life.[82] I discuss her work here because it is comprehensive in its theological approach and in its coverage of the concepts of business, management, and work.[83] Daniels and colleagues employ the concepts of *creation*, *fall*, and *redemption* from salvation history as a frame-

78 The Greek term here is again ἔργον, as in the Septuagint version of Genesis 2:2f.

79 I will outline in chapter 6 how Ephesians 2:10 can be said to entail, in a nutshell, a whole theory of living Christianly at work.

80 See also Honecker (discussed in 5.3.2) on the relativizing force of faith on work.

81 Miller's (2014) approach seems to question such separation of God's work from human action. If we take this seriously, it might be more appropriate to speak of the primacy of God's work *in* human action.

82 In various texts published together with several colleagues (Daniels et al. 2012, Daniels, Franz & Wong 2008, Diddams & Daniels 2008:63). See also her recent book on spiritual practices at work (Daniels & Vandewarker 2019).

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work in order to develop a theology of business (Daniels et al. 2012), a Christian approach to management (Daniels, Franz & Wong 2000)[84], and an 'ideology' of work (Diddams & Daniels 2008:61). In this subsection, I will present an overview of these three texts, and in the conclusion to this chapter (see 5.5) I will relate her approach to other theological approaches to work contexts.

Daniels and colleagues (2012) sketch a "theology of business". They employ the concepts of *creation*, *fall*, and *redemption* from salvation history as a framework in order to construct a theology of business grounded in a biblical worldview. *Creation* points to the goodness of the world as created by God, the dignity of human beings created in the image of God, and the "ruling" role of humans as stewards of creation, and as participants in God's creative activities (2012:61). Community, institutions, and corporate structures are part of the created order. They refer to business as an institution "because it is the means by which a group (society/culture) chooses to solve one of its basic social problems—in this case the production and distribution of goods and services" (2012:62f). The purpose of every institution is to facilitate abundant lives lived in relationship with God and in community with other people (2012:63). The specific purposes of the institution of business are (2012:63):

- Creating, producing, and justly distributing good products and services for people to live well
- Providing opportunities for "vocationally rich work" (2012:63)
- Facilitating and developing community
- Guarding, tending, and nurturing the earth as a shared resource

The *fall* refers to human sin as distrusting God, a denial of God's authority and an unwillingness to accept the human role in creation as stewards. This leads to usurpation of ownership over resources (2012:64) and the corruption of work. Businesses, as well as other institutions, suffer from a particular form of corruption under the fall. Businesses intended to serve broader purposes as means to an end are becoming an end in themselves.

83 While there are many theological approaches to business (see 5.2), her approach is one of the proposals which is not limited to ethical aspects of business, but adopts a broader theological perspective, which also considers a Christian mode of existence which the present dissertation refers to.

84 This text differs from the other two in that it does not explicitly draw on Kuyper's work and does not employ the full frame of creation–fall–redemption, but focuses more on aspects of creation and fall.

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The profit motive becomes the sole and idolatrous focus (2012:64), and the purposes of business (see above) are being undermined.

Redemption, with regard to business, refers to the restoration of business to the purposes for which it was intended, and participation in the coming kingdom of God (2012:65). Redemption is a crucial aspect of any Christian approach to business:

> Any consideration of a theology of business is incomplete without a thorough understanding of the impact of the cross, the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the eschaton (what we are calling collectively, "redemption"). Indeed, it would be difficult to characterize a theology of business as "Christian" without a detailed understanding of the impact of Jesus Christ on the purpose and practice of business (2012:65).

Redemption through Jesus Christ is specifically linked to a suitable role of business in human life. Drawing on the New Testament writings on "principalities" (see e.g. Col 1:16; 2:15), Daniels and colleagues (2012:66) argue that Christ revealed the idolatrous corruption of institutions (as ends instead of means) "and 'disarmed' their ability to deceive mankind as authorities of ultimate significance".

It is, however, difficult to clearly pinpoint the concrete contribution of redemption to a theology of business, according to Daniels and colleagues. This is due to three main debatable (and interrelated) issues: first, what is the extent of the corruption that happened at the fall, and how did this impact the state of the world? Second, to what extent is the victory of Christ at the cross already realized, and to what extent are the consequences of this victory still waiting to be worked out (the already–not yet paradox)? And third, "what will happen at the end of human history?" (2012:67) In particular, what is the relationship of the new heaven and the new earth to the existing world? Is it marked by radical discontinuity and the destruction of the world as we know it, or will the new build on the old and transform it?

Daniels and colleagues (2012) argue that differing approaches to these questions are related to different ways of conceiving the relationship between Christ and culture in Christianity, and between Christians' attitude to contemporary culture. They draw upon a proposal by Louke van Wensveen Siker (1989), who adapted H. Richard Niebuhr's (1951) five types of the relationship between Christ and culture to the area of business: Christ against business, Christ of business, Christ above business, Christ and business in paradox, and Christ transforming business. These five types reflect a "plethora of viewpoints" (Daniels et al. 2012:70) with differing

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implications for the view of business and the life of a Christian therein. In concluding their discussion of Siker's (1989) five types of relationship between Christ and business, Daniels and colleagues (2012:70) sketch their own perspective: they argue that the cross of Jesus and his command to take up our cross and follow him points to an inevitable conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. They also point out that, for Jesus, obedience to the Father did not result in material success, but rather in a sentence of death, and that the New Testament is clear in that the followers of Christ should expect nothing better. "The cross embodies the fundamental and fierce tension between the ways of God and the ways of this world" (2012:71). In terms of a Christian's ethical orientation, sacrificial love is the one feature of Christ's life "most clearly held up as a model of behavior" (2012:71). However, the cross and Christ's resurrection are more than ethical models. They are the basis for the later outpouring of the Spirit, who now enables Christians to live according to God's Kingdom in the midst of a fallen world. Individually, Christians are, through redemption, "liberated from the idolatry of the market and set free to pursue, with assurance of power, a business life lived in obedience to Christ" (2012:73). Redemption thus involves a call to participate with God in the restoration and transformation of business (2012:75).

Daniels, Franz, and Wong (2000) outline a Christian approach to management. Based on their typology of worldviews (see 3.2.2) and their argument that different worldviews imply different spiritualities, they locate a Christian worldview as *theistic* in their framework of worldviews. Their approach is descriptive, in that they do not argue that it is "the best or only way" to understand management; rather they seek to describe how "our Christian beliefs inform our understanding and teaching of management" (Daniels et al. 2000).[85] For Daniels and colleagues (2000), a Christian worldview has implications for two main themes relevant to how they understand and teach management: human nature and community.

First, human nature and the human condition are marked by creation and fall: humans are created by God in God's image, yet they rebelled against God. The human condition and the nature of human work are thus "neither purely good nor evil" (Daniels et al. 2000), humans display a "dual nature".[86] Daniels and colleagues (2000) find similarities between a Chris-

85 This seems to be an approach similar to the one Marsden suggests: "If so and so religious belief were true, how would it change the way we look at the subject at hand? (1997:52)" (see also 4.1.2 and 7.2).

86 See also the similar view adopted by Oermann (5.3.4).

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tian account of the nature of humans and current management theories, in particular in McGregor's theory X/theory Y and in agency theory.

Second, community is a significant Christian concept in that "people in relationship with one another and with God" (Daniels et al. 2000) are central to the Christian narrative. In this light, work becomes a means to honor God and serve other people. This is mirrored in a number of areas of managerial study, such as job satisfaction, leadership, and resource usage (Daniels et al. 2000). For example, from a Christian perspective, Daniels and colleagues (2000) view job satisfaction as a legitimate organizational goal. They argue, however, that the human need and desire for meaning in life can only be met when work is viewed as a vocation or calling. People are called to a given task and can thus find meaning and fulfillment and serve others at the same time. The concept of community also points to the broader social context, in which a business exists. This entails responsibilities toward other people, organizations, and the environment.

The salvation history framework, characterized by the three aspects of creation, fall, and redemption, can also be employed in an analysis of work[87] (Diddams & Daniels 2008). In terms of *creation*, work is to be viewed as good. Work activities, outcomes, and workplaces partake in God's creation and are therefore good. Workers have inherent dignity, are co-creators[88] with God, have volitional will, and are relational beings (2008:67). In terms of the *fall*, the good characteristics of work are tainted, and work becomes 'work with toil'. Work activities have become toilsome and full of sorrow. Work outcomes are not always positive. Work contexts are under the curse of the fall (2008:72f). Workers reject their dignity and their co-creation role as partners of God. Rather than practicing volition, people are prone to self-deception and personal enslavement. In addition, the fall leads to the "propensity of elevating self over other" (2008:73), resulting in distorted relationships. *Redemption*, as it relates to work, refers to God's action of reconciling creation and restoring the co-creator role of human beings through and in Jesus Christ (2008:77), which results in 'redeemed work'. Redeemed work is "objectively meaningful" (2008:77). It recognizes that people are created in the image of God and seeks to minimize toil (2008:78).

87 Note that, in their proposal of a Christian approach to management (Daniels, Franz & Wong 2000), they also address the notion of work (see above in this section, and on the problem of the semantic ambiguity of such terms as management and work, see 3.5).

88 For a critique of the theological idea of work as co-creation, see Hauerwas (1995c).

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Diddams and Daniels (2008:66–71.73 – 76) show that the creation and fall characteristics of work are mirrored in current academic management theory, in particular in the disciplines of organizational behavior and human resource management theories. However, management research associated with creation and fall characteristics tends to be descriptive, "data-driven, backward looking". Instead, they propose the paradigm of 'redeemed work' to "harmonize" (2008:77) the research agenda on work and management, resulting in an approach to management which is "theology-driven, forward looking and normative"[89] (2008:77).

In this outlook, Christians (2008:63) are those who have begun to experience Christ's redemptive work and who are drawn to participate in God's redemptive work in this world. Christian existence in the world is marked by an 'already–not yet' tension, and until "redemption has been completed in the fullness of the Kingdom of God, there will always be good work with toil. Nevertheless, this work may be redeemed" (2008:82).

Note that Daniels's approach explicitly considers the role of Christians at work, in contrast to many of the theological approaches discussed so far. The theme of the role of Christians at work is not explicitly addressed in her text on management (Daniels et al. 2000), the earliest of her three texts that are dealt with here; it pops up in her later text (Diddams & Daniels 2008) on work, and it is most explicitly covered in the most recent text (Daniels et al. 2012) on business. The early text on management seems yet to be close to Oermann's proposal in its conclusion that Christian beliefs inform the approach to management via a particular understanding of human nature (see above). Such an approach has a cognitive emphasis in that it does address how Christian beliefs influence an understanding of management. It has, however, no direct concern for the fact that Christian beliefs are not just 'there' somewhere, but they are embodied, that is, held by Christians who live as Christians in their respective contexts. Put differently, 'Christian beliefs' are embedded in Christian ways of living. This is the theme which enfolds in more detail in the later two publications, and in particular in the 2012 text on a theology of business. In the light of the study of Christians at work, this is an important step in broadening theological engagement with workplaces. I will, therefore, come back to Daniels's

89 I do not think that their approach is purely normative. The three notions of creation, fall, and redemption are used by Daniels and colleagues, I would say, in different ways, including (and, in a way, synthesizing) explanatory, interpretative, descriptive, and normative usages (see also Daniels et al. (2000), who refer to their approach to management as "descriptive").

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approach in the concluding section of this chapter. But first, I will now turn to Michael Black's work.

5.4.3 Michael Black on practical corporate theology and on the theology of the corporation

Michael Black (2009) explores the 'theology of the corporation' by drawing on sources from Jewish and Christian tradition.[90] I discuss Michael Black's brilliant work on the corporation here because he is fluent in various theories of the corporation and offers, to my knowledge, an unparalleled and comprehensive account of the corporation. He succeeds in accentuating the particular importance of a theological approach which, as I will point out below, indicates, at least in my reading of his proposal, a remarkable relationship between corporate contexts and what I call a Christian mode of existence at work.

Black argues that the corporation is "not natural" (2008:252), but a theological concept which "eludes purely secular analysis" (2011:1). The term is used by Black in a very broad sense, as a social institution with its *own identity*, which is distinct from other social institutions, such as families, governments, states, partnerships, clubs, et cetera (2008:50; 2011:1). However, managerial accountability (see below) of those in charge applies not only to the modern corporation, but to the democratic state, democratic society, and the church, which all have their origin in the "Pauline innovation of the use of the Roman *peculium* as a model for the church" (2011:3). The church is thus "the first corporation" (2011:2), or an "institutional representative of the corporation" (2008:51). "The distinguishing feature of a corporation—a limited liability company, for example—is that it somehow possesses an identity, a life, independent of its members. It can act through its members" (2011:1). The

> corporation has its own interests, values, or criteria of choice, which are not those of its members. This is universally accepted without question. It is the formal method by which *dominium* (management) is separated from *usufructus* (benefit) and is the essential mark of the corporate relation (2011:1).

According to Black, the basic practical challenges which corporations face today occur *because* the theological character of the corporation is not considered and respected. In his dissertation, Black (2009) explores the sources

90 See also the work of Edward Wray-Bliss on some relations between early Christian thinking and contemporary corporations (2019a, 2019b).

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of the corporation and traces the history of the 'corporate relation' from its beginnings in the Israeli covenant to the twentieth century. In 'The crisis of the corporation' (2011) and in 'Speaking the Word to corporate managers' (2008), he sketches the implications of this theological character of the corporation for corporate managers. Black's conception of the corporation is comprehensive and far-reaching in scope and in its claims, and he also develops a comprehensive understanding of the demands of managerial practice. It is important to note that these demands are not only placed on adherents to a certain tradition (because they happen to be both managers and adherents to a certain religious tradition), but are tied to the very functioning of a corporation and its management and thus affect everyone with some relation to corporate contexts. Moreover, in Black's (2008:47.51) view, every participant in or member of a corporation is a corporate manager. This is because the corporate relationship is fractal: "It looks the same whether one is viewing the corporation as a whole in relation to the rest of society or the relation of any component of the corporation to the entirety" (2008:47.51).[91] In particular, members of a corporation act on behalf of the corporation. In this regard, Second Isaiah describes the corporate character and contains the "basic rules of the game", says Black (2008:48), as they "are still in force for those who participate in corporate life" (2008:48): managerial accountability, corporate freedom, submission to corporate identity, and corporate immunity.

Crucial to the corporate relation is *management accountability*: "Members of the corporation must be prepared always to justify their actions and submit this justification to the rest" (2008:48). YHWH's demand does not refer to specific required actions or results. What is demanded is an explanation for what was done, a reason for what has been attempted. "What is required from the corporate manager is accountability for the criterion of his action" (2008:48). It has to be given in the form of "a scale or metric, of importance, of progress, of value, on which and in which both intention and outcome are to be measured" (2008:48). Therefore, the first managerial responsibility is the choice of the criterion of action, performance, and success. This choice has to be defended before the other members of the corporation, and before God. The manager's intention needs to be documented in a "publicly available expression" as the "locus of accountability" (2008:48).

91 This seems to reflect the idea that the whole society, similar to the corporation, also functions corporately. A related idea can be found in Abraham Kuyper's (see Heslam 2015:15f) comparison of society with a human body.

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Related to management accountability and inherent to the corporate relation is the spiritual demand of *corporate freedom*. This freedom is paradoxical: The corporate manager is to decide upon the criterion by which s/he is to be judged. This is the demand. However, there are infinite possibilities for this criterion, says Black (2008:49). The choice of the criterion of action is beyond logic or rational argument. The information necessary for the decision cannot be known because the managerial decision on the criterion of action "actually makes the distinction between mere 'noise' and what is meaningful data" (2008:49). In a similar way, personal experience is secondary. Experience is not a reliable form of input for this basic managerial decision, but a consequence of it. This is the paradox of corporate freedom: "there is no compelling reason that can be found for the choice of any criterion whatsoever! Yet the choice *must* be made" (2008:49).

Black points out that participation in terms of belonging to a corporate relationship means *submission to a corporate identity*. The corporation has its own identity, and its own interests (which do not have to be those of its members). It is a distinct entity. Each member of the corporation is fully responsible for the entire "corporate body", says Black (2008:50). Individual members act on behalf of and realize the whole: "When I act, the whole is in me" (2008:50). "Each member is the whole corporation when he or she acts in its name" (2008:50.52). This is most appropriately described neither by "representation" nor by "agency", but by "embodiment" (2008:50.52). Corporate members embody the corporate relationship. That it is a distinct entity is not only a legal aspect of the corporation, but a theological aspect as well. Just as participation in Israel means participation in the life of YHWH, "those participating in the corporate relation can be said to be participating in the life of the Trinity itself" (2008:50). Community arises out of submission/obedience to God's will. The command of God cannot be heard by one alone. Referring to Bonhoeffer, Black argues that community is a revelation, and that this is the case in the church as well as in the corporation. Participation in the corporate relation requires a "kenotic, perichoretic vulnerability", says Black (2008:51). It is the demand to "empty oneself spiritually (kenosis) in order to express the corporate good in oneself (perichoresis)" (2008:50). Submission to the corporate identity entails submission to judgment and accountability to other corporate members, and "ultimately to the interests of the divine" (2011:2). Participation in the corporate relation is to "free oneself from one's own self-interests" (2008:50). This participation is "not possible without the assistance of the Spirit, that is without becoming part of the very relation between Father and Son in our action of submission" (2008:50). In making

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this point, Black epistemologically draws upon the work of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Baltasar, who argued that "all secular relations and realities are to be explained in terms of the self-revelation of God's Word in Jesus Christ" (Black 2008:50.52). Ontologically, Black refers to Daniel Jenkins, who indicates that every human being dwells in the word of God and lives out her/his life in God's presence, and that therefore every human being somehow encounters God (has 'dealings' with God), even if s/he does not know God's name in Christ (2008:51.53), and Edward Schillebeeckx, who argues that "in every case of true human encounter between men, revelation and faith are present" (in Black 2008:51:53). The role of the Spirit is to assist corporate managers in their kenotic and perichoretic vulnerability to other members of the corporation, says Black (2008:51).

Submission takes on the form of our expression of our view of what we hold to be the criterion of action now, and of listening to others and synthesizing a greater criterion. And "the more articulate our expression is, the more vulnerable we become" (2008:51). Submission can also assume the form of exercising authority by cutting off further discussion about the criterion. In these instances of submission, we become vulnerable. It is not possible to enter into this vulnerable condition unassisted. This is why Black refers to such acts of submission and vulnerability as "real spiritual exercises, not pious ritual" (2008:51) and as "essential habits of the corporate relationship" (2011:2). As regards his terminology, Black points out that, "'Submission', 'kenosis', 'perichoresis', 'faith', and 'the presence of the Spirit' are all moments of the same event" (2008:50.52), with no causal relationship intended. "Faith" is interpreted by Black as referring to being "prepared to disclose completely and subject oneself to mutual judgment as well as judgment by authority" (2008:50–52, footnote 27).

Corporate immunity (and 'corporate grace') exists with regard to two main aspects: first, the failure to appropriately decide upon the criterion of action. This failure is inevitable, for "the only thing certain about the managerial decision regarding the criterion of action is that it is necessarily and inevitably *wrong*", says Black (2008:50, emphasis in the original). This will be forgiven within the corporate relation as long as it is "representative of a continuing attempt to articulate the true corporate interest" (2008:50). Thus, the authenticity of the criterion becomes the prerequisite for forgiveness in this regard. The case for the criterion has to be made "not based on what it is but on how it was arrived at" (2008:50). The corporate covenant guarantees its participants protection against harm as long as they attempt to act in the true interest of the corporation, says Black (2008:50).

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How is this account of corporate management related to the situation of contemporary corporations? While in his first article (2008) Black takes the perceived gap between the church and the corporate world, between faith and corporate life, as a starting point, in another text (2011) he articulates a corporate theology with a focus on the current crisis of the corporation. In the modern world, the corporation has become a social monster (2011:1), an instrument of exploitation (of employees, of the environment, of national governments, of customers and suppliers, of the political system, and of the global legal system), individual repression, and social division. This happened because the essence of the corporate relation has been forgotten: all corporate members have a responsibility for answering and agreeing upon an answer to the question of what "the measure of benefit" (2011:1) of the corporation is. Among the corporate members, there is thus a relationship of mutual submission. The basic idea of the corporation is the "incorporation (and transformation) of individual interests into the interests of the whole" (2011:2). This corporate relationship has been corrupted, and corporate reform, in other words the recovery of the authentic corporate relationship, is a spiritual task "which can only be understood theologically", says Black (2011:2), because the corporation maintains its theological character, "even in an apparently secular setting" (2011:5).

Black (2011:4) contrasts the theological concept of the corporation with "current mainstream managerial theory". He illustrates the contrast with reference to the case of a hospital attempting to achieve independent trust status, which according to current management theory has to be judged as a success, but which at the same time "lost sight of its responsibilities of patient care" with a patient mortality rate between 27 and 45 percent higher than would be expected. According to Black, the core of current mainstream management theory is

> that corporate organization requires "alignment" among its members in order to function effectively. In short everyone must be pulling in the same direction, or some equivalent euphemism. The job of the corporate executive, so the theory goes, is to ensure this alignment by first formulating a vision, strategic direction, and programme for the corporation, and then ensuring "buy in" or acceptance of these throughout the corporate hierarchy, from the janitor in the toilets to the head of finance and all the levels in between (Black 2011:4).

In such an approach, managers manipulate the behavior of subordinates toward an overall goal. In contrast, theologically understood, the relationship of corporate members is one of mutual submission, "of the junior to the senior in matters of direction, and the senior to the junior in the matter of benefit", says Black (2011:4). Questions of *usufructus* (benefit) are decided

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upon from below. "The key function of management in this process is to synthesize and reconcile competing and inconsistent formulations of the corporate intention" (2011:5). There is thus a stark contrast between "dictatorial direction" and "corporate management" (2011:5). The mutual relationship of corporate members (and the creation of the corporate entity) is not a matter of commitment by contract, but that of "enacting a covenant", says Black (2011:5). In terms of the covenant of God with humanity, the relationship of mutual submission can be identified with the Holy Spirit (2011:5). The existence of the corporation is dependent on the continuing commitment of its members. The corporate purpose is distinct from the purposes of its members, but they are related in that the former is "constructed from" the purposes of its members (2011:5). And the corporate relation is not superior to its members' individuality, but distinct from it (2011:6).

However, corporate ambition has become "the fundamental ethical problem of modern life", says Black (2011:8). Ambition, that is, the drive and passion toward personal power, has used the corporation as its instrument. However, the corporation cannot be controlled because it has a life of its own. It is a person, not a tool that can be instrumentalized toward some end. It has its own ends, even if it appears to be subservient. Thus, the "corporation consumes its most talented and most willing members" (2011:7). Because of ambition, the corporation dominates modern life in a destructive way. It destroys relationships (with friends, neighborhoods, national states, and the environment). "All ambitions are merely grist for the corporate mill of power", says Black (2011:8), and "ambition itself is the raw material of corruption" (2011:8). The "passion of ambition" (2011:8) has thus to be replaced by compassion, that is, by giving up instrumental use of the corporate relationship. The corporate relationship "is its own end" (2011:8). As such, the corporation is recognized as "a theological person with its own place in the kingdom of God" (2011:8). Christians are well prepared to contribute to the transformation needed because they have been set free from "the separation among human subjects" (2011:6). By maintaining the corporate relationship of mutual submission, "we do encounter God through others in the corporation" (2011:6): "Just as the image of God the Father in Jesus Christ is not merely a copy or an imitation or a representation, so the image of ourselves in the other is neither inferior nor defective nor misleading" (2011:6). In this relationship of mutual submission, we are to express our views of the criterion of action, to listen to the expression of others, and to synthesize a greater criterion. These are spiritual exercises (in contrast to pious rituals or managerial tech-

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niques), potential steps in uncovering "the will of God in daily life", says Black (2011:8). Thus, "searching for God" is an inherent part of corporate existence (2011:6).

What are the implications of Black's theological conception of the corporation for the role of Christians working in corporate contexts? He argues for the importance of a perspective on the corporation rooted in Christian tradition, precisely because the concept (and its respective practice) is a product of this tradition. Overall, it seems that, for Black, corporate life requires *all* its participants (Christians and others) to live with faith[92] and to practice the spiritual exercises of mutual submission, express one's view of the criterion of action, listen to the expression of others, synthesize a greater criterion, and seek to uncover "the will of God in daily life" (2011:8). Thus, "searching for God" is an inherent part of corporate existence (2011:6) for *every* corporate member. Corporate existence requires the assistance of the Spirit, that is, it requires participation in the relationship between God and Jesus Christ (2008:50). I am not quite sure what this means in terms of Christian existence in corporate contexts. It seems to imply that, since corporate existence is a product of a Christian form of existence, every corporate member participates or needs to participate, to a certain degree and in a way which seems quite existentially demanding, in a Christian mode of existence, even if they do not know God's name in Christ (see Black 2008:51.53), and regardless of their being counted, nominally, as Christians or not. By recovering the theological character of the corporation, it can be transformed from a corporate monster into "a theological person with its own place in the kingdom of God" (2011:8). What exactly such a place of such theological people could be is not immediately clear. However, it seems that corporations, by their very existence, confront Christians and non-Christian individuals alike with the privileges and potentialities of a Christian mode of existence and with the demand to live Christianly.

5.5 Theology and the study of Christians at work

Let me conclude this chapter on the relationship of theology to the study of Christians at work with two observations. In so doing, I take up, first, Daniels's understanding of Christian living and, second, her explicit consid-

92 Defined as being "prepared to disclose completely and subject oneself to mutual judgment as well as judgment by authority" (2008:50–52, footnote 27).

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eration of Christians, which helps to illuminate a particular challenge of theological engagement with the workplace.

First, I would like to offer a concretization of Daniels's understanding of Christian existence at work by taking up some aspects of her approach, and by suggesting that these are more intimately related in the formation of Christian living at work than it seems at first sight. Based on this, I will then briefly indicate an agenda for Christian theological engagement with contemporary workplaces. The following passage from Daniels and colleagues (2012:71) accentuates some of the key aspects of her analysis of Christian living in business contexts:

> The cross and subsequent resurrection are clearly more than mere ethical models. They stand at the decisive center of human history and mark Christ's victory over death and sin. They also are events that triggered the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As such, they represent not only a call to self-sacrifice but also an assurance of power that enables Christians to begin to live out God's kingdom values in the midst of a fallen world. Enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are both called and enabled to bring evidence of God's triumph into the world. "[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) We testify to God's victory not only in words ("for the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power," 1 Cor 4:19) but by deeds that evidence the outbreaking of God's justice and righteousness.

To me, the question which arises from this basic outline is the following: In what particular way are the cross and Christ's resurrection more than ethical models? They are, as Daniels and colleagues (2012:71) point out in terms of salvation history, the basis for the later outpouring of the Spirit, who now enables Christians to live according to God's Kingdom in the midst of a fallen world. Colin Miller (2014), in his exegesis of Paul's epistle to the Romans, points out that the way in which the Spirit enables followers of Christ to live is intimately connected to Christ's dying and resurrection. In this view, the particular way the Spirit enables humans to live is itself cruciform! More specifically, Christians live according to God's Kingdom in that they participate bodily and spiritually in Christ's death and resurrection by putting to death their passions and desires, which are situated in the body, and by letting the Spirit infuse their bodies with Christ's death and resurrection, which becomes visible in just practice:

> Thus the Spirit is, *in a very specific way*, the key term in participation: it cooperates with the church to put to death its evil deeds and at the same time vivifies those dying bodies and *ipso facto* makes them virtuous qua dead to passions and able to genuinely cooperate with God toward the good. The Spirit's part of the cooperation

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> is to 'infuse' sinful and in-themselves-sin-tending bodies with Christ's dying (since dead bodies cannot sin) and at the same time with the life of Christ's risen body as a foretaste of the new bodies church members are to fully receive in the resurrection (Miller 2014:103).

In this outlook, the spiritual and bodily character of Christian living are not in opposition but interrelated in their linkage to Christ's body. Making a similar point, Anthony Kelly (2010:814) comments (with regard to Ephesians 2), "Here and elsewhere, the Body[93] and Spirit are never played off against each other but exist in a positive reciprocity: the more [there is] of the Body, the more there is of the Spirit; and the more there is of this one Spirit, the more believers are united in the Body". These remarks of Kelly's, alongside Daniels's and Miller's conceptions, may underline the importance of taking into account the bodily, spiritual, Christic, and cruciform character of Christian living in theological engagement with the workplace.[94]

With this in mind, *practical theology* and *theological ethics,* with regard to contemporary work contexts, can be conceived of as being concerned with exploring the particular ways in which a Christian mode of existence entails just practice at work through bodily participation "in the living Body of the Lord" (Kelly 2010:815).[95] A *theology of work* can address the relationship between God's work and human agency in the formation of Christian living at work and a *theology of the corporation* can explore the corporation and the corporate mode of existence, with reference to Michael Black (2011, 2009, 2008), as an invitation (or a call) to live Christianly. A theology of *management* and *business* can explore the ways in which the Christian body is managed by an ongoing 'putting to death of one's passions and desires' and the ways in which such body management facilitates management and business practices which are substantiated by the participation of Christians in Christ's dying and resurrection.

Second, the specific setup of the approach of Daniels and colleagues to business (2012) facilitates the illumination of a particular problem which their approach avoids, but which is common in theological engagement with contemporary work contexts, as discussed in this chapter. The approach of Daniels and colleagues (2012) entails, first, a Christian *account*

93 Kelly (2010:793) capitalizes "Body" to refer to the incarnation as it expands in history. Thus "Body" refers to the "reality of the Body of Christ (…) as the point of convergence for all other considerations of the bodily dimensions of human existence" (2010:793).

94 On the spiritual and cruciform (as participating in Christ's death and resurrection) character of Christian existence, see also Fischer 1994:186–189).

95 For a practical theology that takes up the notion of 'christopraxis', see Root (2014).

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of the notions of business and, second, an account of *Christians* as existing in business contexts. These two can be described as different accounts, even though they are related, because they have different subject matters. In the first case, the subject matter is that of business (which is, in this case, approached from a Christian/theological perspective). In the second case, the subject matter is that of *Christians* living in business contexts. In other words, the approach of Daniels and colleagues offers conceptual space for Christians to live as Christians in the respective contexts. This contrasts with other theological approaches; for example, most of the theological ethical approaches to workplaces discussed in this chapter (see 5.3), which are confined mainly to the first option (a Christian or theological account of business or work), or if they consider the question of the existence of Christians, make the case that a Christian perspective on work contexts can be made intelligible without reference to the particular existence of Christians (e.g. 5.3.5).

I will refer to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the habitus in this section in order to argue that the Christian account of something and the account of Christian existence therein or in relation to it are intertwined, and that what in Daniels's approach falls somehow naturally together necessarily needs to be considered together, and that approaches that dissociate a (Christian) theological approach to work contexts from Christian modes of existence in work contexts deprive themselves of their existential grounding, without which they can neither be practiced nor made intelligible. In the case of Daniels and colleagues (2012), the conceptual starting point and basis is the former (the Christian account of work or business as an overall framework), and it implies the latter (the account of Christian existence as the existential *localization*[96] of Christians that live within business or work contexts). Existentially, I argue that the latter is inextricably bound to and dependent on the former. Bourdieu's account of the habitus, which I will introduce presently, helps to illuminate why such localization is practically relevant in the formation of particular lifestyles.

The texts discussed in this chapter on the role of theology in the study of Christians in contemporary workplaces pursue a variety of different purposes and objectives, which are sometimes quite far removed from my interest in the study of Christians at work. For example, a Christian theological perspective on work can be related to the theme of Christian existence at work merely by proposing a certain view of and attitude to work which, it argues, Christians (or even everyone) should adopt, without offering an

96 On the Christian location of individuals, see 4.2.

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account of what it means to be a Christian at work, apart from the contention that Christians should hold the proposed views and attitudes (see e.g. the discussion of Posadas, 2017, in 5.4.1). They thereby somehow implicitly equate Christian living at work with holding these views and attitudes. Or they can be even more loosely related to Christian existence, in that they claim that their views and attitudes are proposed *from* a Christian perspective but addressed *to* everyone (see in particular the authors discussed in 5.3). From the perspective of the study of Christians at work, such forms of Christian theological engagement with the workplace are deficient in that they claim to *speak from* a Christian perspective, but do not offer *localization* or an understanding of the Christian position from where they speak. Such approaches are therefore characterized by a 'certain blindness', to borrow a term from William James, as far as their own position is concerned. This lack of localization, then, can be referred to as the 'blindness' problem[97] of theological engagement with contemporary work contexts.

This distinction of a Christian perspective on *work contexts* from an account of *Christians* at work, which is the backbone of the 'blindness' criticism of theological approaches to contemporary work contexts, can be substantiated by reference to what some have referred to as a habitus. I will briefly sketch here the notion of a habitus as it is relevant for this distinction.[98] According to Pierre Bourdieu (2006:315), a habitus is what translates the necessities and facilities linked to particular conditions of existence into a particular lifestyle. Particular lifestyles, as they emerge in relation to different areas of cultural practices, such as sport, music, food, politics, language, food, clothing, cosmetics, et cetera, are defined within a "space of lifestyles" (2006:315), within an area of "stylistic possibles" (2006:315). The habitus is embodied "by implementing one of the stylistic possibles offered" (2006:315), in other words by living in a particular or distinct way. The notion of the habitus thus serves to account for 1) the practices and products of an agent, and 2) the capacity of an agent to *classify* practices and products (perception, appreciation, taste). These classificatory judgments of practices and products are linked *to a bird's-eye view of social space dependent on*

97 With regard to the efforts of theologians to orient people, one is reminded of Jesus's characterization of the "Pharisees and experts in the law" as "blind guides" (Mt 15:1), and of his subsequent remark that "if someone who is blind leads another who is blind, both will fall into a pit" (Mt 15:14).

98 For a more detailed engagement with Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, see chapter 6.1.

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one's position within it, says Bourdieu (2006:90f).[99] The habitus thus refers to the "common root" (2006:291) of both one's own (classifiable) practices and one's classificatory judgments (of the practices of others and of oneself).[100] Someone who presents, say, a (Christian theological) normative ethical perspective on work contexts without addressing the existence of Christians within the respective contexts isolates one of Bourdieu's aspects (that of classificatory judgments) and dissociates it from its existential context (Christians who may hold such a perspective) and from the bird's-eye view of social space (in this case, work contexts), which is dependent on this existential position. Such de-coupling of Christian concepts from their existential embeddedness is, however, a move, I argue, which cannot be performed, either practically or conceptually, without losing their very essence. This linkage between Christianity as a form of existence at work and a Christian perspective on work contexts is part of the substance of my criticism of extant theological approaches to work contexts, which claim to offer a Christian perspective on the subject, but do not consider Christian living as an actual mode of existence distinct from other modes of existence.[101]

99 See the related observation by Mellor and Shilling (2014:281), who argue that actors are routinely forced to take "an 'external', third-party view of their own practices, asses them in relation to others, and plan according to changing contexts".

100 This relationship between evaluation and behavior is, I think, also reflected in the observation that how someone lives is related to their worldview or understanding of reality (see e.g. Brügger 2010, Cavanagh et al. 2003, Daniels et al. 2000, Honecker 1995:11–13, Kim, Fisher & McCalman 2009, Kim, McCalman & Fisher 2012, Rendtorff 2011:7, Rossouw 1994), and to a hermeneutical emphasis in theological ethics on the symbolization of reality (see e.g. Fischer 2002, Oermann 2007). In a similar vein, with reference to spirituality, Cavanagh and colleagues (2003:119) have argued that spirituality entails a worldview and a path. In theology, a way to take seriously the importance of the bird's-eye view on social space for human agency is the hermeneutic emphasis on the Christian symbolization of "Lebenswirklichkeit" (Fischer 2002:82) and its practical, localizing, and orienting character. Oermann (2014:18f) seems to intend to bring this to bear on business contexts, but his resulting theological–anthropological groundwork for economics seems to offer little more than an expansion of an understanding of the human being as a *homo oeconomicus* to that of a *simul iustus et peccator* (2014:314f).

101 One could argue that Christian moral theologians or ethicists do offer existential localization in terms of the normative conception or the particular norms they propose as points of orientation for living in contemporary workplaces. However, the theologians discussed are quite explicit in pointing out that these norms are not meant to be descriptive of a Christian mode of existence but are intended for everyone. Moreover, such norms seem to be only loosely related to concrete modes of existence, and they

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Arthur Rich (see 5.3.5) addresses the question of Christian existence and offers an understanding of it, but does not bring to bear the general understanding of Christian existence upon the analysis of one's concrete living in the workplace, apart from normative criteria and maxims (Rich 1984:172).[102] Thus, except for some normative guidelines which are offered, it seems that the Christians in such an analysis have not yet learned to *walk* in contemporary work settings and appear, in this regard, 'paralyzed'. This is, then, the 'lameness' problem of theological engagement with contemporary work contexts. In this respect, chapter 4.3 indicated that the notion of spirituality seems to offer some potential conceptual space (for theologians and others alike) to explore the 'existential legs'[103] of an account of Christians at work.

To be precise, identification of the blindness and lameness problems is, in the first place, not a *general* criticism of the texts under discussion, but an evaluation relative to the question of the contribution of theological engagement with the workplace to the study of Christians at work. It can, of course, always be countered by saying that the authors *did not intend* to offer such a contribution. The serious question, then, in this regard is what the point of Christian theological engagement with work contexts is if it does not account for the mode of existence by which it is nourished and sustained. Of course, one could argue that others have addressed the question of Christian existence in general terms and that theological engagement with workplace-related topics is only concerned with the implications of Christian existence at work. This seems to be right, but then one has to deal with the fact that some authors seem to do this in such a way that theological insights are abstracted from the respective mode of existence in such a way that Christian existence becomes a non-topic, and one is left wondering why they claim to advocate a Christian perspective at all. In contrast to this, I have, in this chapter, also discussed authors who do explicitly consider Christian existence (in particular Arthur Rich and Denise

neither entail a view of social space nor of one's position within it, apart from the contention that these norms are proposed as characteristics of an ideal way of living in respective contexts. See also Paul, who describes in Galatians (5:13–25) two different modes of life (addressing followers of Christ), the life according to the Spirit and the life according to the flesh. He presents both a view of the different possibilities of living ("the space of lifestyles"; Bourdieu 2006:315) and a view of the preferable option (the position to be chosen within it).

102 In particular, Fetzer (2004:39) has indicated that Rich addresses questions of the economy in his ethics but neglects concrete corporate contexts.

103 On ecclesiological legs, see Miller (2014:6).

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Daniels). As Daniels's approach indicates, both 'blindness' and 'lameness' can be remedied by explicitly addressing the role of Christians in contemporary work contexts. Thus, in terms of such 'blindness and lameness', while some extant theological approaches to contemporary workplaces are deficient or reductionist in their account of Christian living at work, others indicate a cure. In short, extant theological engagement with contemporary work contexts is to be complemented by the study of Christians at work.

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