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Transcendent work motivation: biblical and secular ontologies

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Scholars in the field of work motivation have begun to formulate contemporary theories that address the self-transcendent needs of people who work in organizations. However, the core assumptions of these theories derive from a secular sociological paradigm purporting that humans are only motivated to sustain a symbiotic relationship initiated by the larger society. Thus, these theories may not accurately explicate the true essence of transcendent work motivation – TWM (i.e. a spiritually induced process driven by a selfless need to improve the welfare of society). Therefore, based on a conceptual model synthesized from biblical exegesis of the Salvationist views of Christianity, two recent theories on TWM were critiqued. In light of the capriciousness of human nature and the skewed depiction of altruism portrayed by these theories, it was argued that the biblical ontological frame of reference provides a better ethical platform through which future studies on TWM could spring up.

Keywords: transcendent work motivation; ethics; Bible; theory; organizations; society

1. Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, the field of work motivation experienced the proliferation of individualistic theories that somewhat encouraged the manifestation of egocentric work behaviors in organizations (Mansbridge 1990, Monroe 1996, Sarin 2009). These theories are entirely devoted to explaining the causes of productivity variances among employees strictly from an individualistic perspective.

For instance, work motivation theories like Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Victor Vroom's expectancy theory either implicitly or explicitly assume that individuals are egocentric in nature and that work performance can be boosted when individuals are treated as separate entities. This underlying assumption immensely influenced the direction of extant studies on work motivation (Ellemers *et al.* 2004, Bridoux *et al.* 2011).

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However, it is important to note that historically, the evolution of work motivation theories has been occasioned by the need to resolve certain work-related problems that confronted practicing managers during different epochs of economic development in a few industrialized countries. For example, Frederick Taylor's theory on scientific management which derives from Adam Smith's concept of rational-economic man emerged at a time in which industrial managers had to respond to the challenge of soldiering that characterized workers' behavior during the industrial revolution in Britain and the United States of America.

The primary assumption of scientific management was that man would rationally and positively respond to monetary rewards. The theory helped us appreciate the relevance of financial incentives in motivating individuals toward boosting of their productivity in organizations. The need for the individual to affiliate with others so as to ensure organizational performance was brought to the fore by Elton Mayo's social man concept. The concept was sub-consciously formed in order to mitigate the effects of the deep state of individualism that most workers were plunged into during the scientific management era. Albeit, it was utilized in a bid to meet the egocentric social need of an industrial worker who desires to fraternize with others while working in groups.

Nevertheless, the exigencies that ushered in the reign of Adam Smith and Elton Mayo's philosophical concepts of human nature are quite different from those faced by contemporary managers. In today's world of business, the moral basis or ethical dimension of managing corporations has been brought to the fore. Prior to this time, managerial ethics which address the potential conflict between managerial actions, organizational practices, and moral judgments were neglected (Goodrich and Rossiter 2009). Until recently, in the aftermath of continuing national business scandals, business ethics had been grossly ignored in business curricula. However, integrating ethical issues into business decisions adds to the complexities of motivating people in organizations, since these issues are highly subjective.

For instance, the subjective nature of ethical issues is expressed in the different positions taken by Friedman (2002) and Freeman (2002) with regard to the profit motive of business organizations. While Friedman (2002) noted that profit maximization is the principal objective of business organizations, Freeman (2002) asserts that managerial capitalism is better promoted by extending the fiduciary relationship from shareholders to include other stakeholders.

The above positions are neither entirely false nor true (Goodrich and Rossiter 2009). Rather, the extent to which any of the positions would be accepted by persons in the corporate world depends on how it is being subjectively interpreted (Agle and Van Buren 1999). Yet the complexities that business ethics bring to motivating people at work stem from the degree to which corporations can be primarily concerned about satisfying all their stakeholders at the expense of meeting only their own selfish interests, perhaps in the short run.

These complexities could have influenced managerial perceptions about human nature since business ethics are caught up in the middle of the road between the egocentric motives of organizations that strictly pursue maximization of shareholders' wealth and the spirit of transcendence that their stakeholders expect them to manifest for the common good of society. The reverberating effects of this dilemma within the minds of management scholars could have created the impression that humans had a complex nature – complex in the sense that it is possible for humans to harbor egocentric and self-transcendent motives at the same time, hence necessitating the search for transcendent theories on work motivation that can somewhat account for the dialectics of selfishness and altruism manifested by modern employees/managers while they engage in their disparate work activities.

Fortunately, two theories on TWM (e.g. Perry's theory on public service motivation (PSM) and Sarin's contributory theory of existence) have been recently formulated. These theories ostensibly tend to help the global management community understand the internal and external forces that propel the individual to think beyond the "self" while responding to the needs of others in different organizations and societies.

Nonetheless, scholars have noted that it would be difficult to conceive of acts of transcendent motivation with secular contemporary management theories, which are compelled to employ instrumental language in trying to justify such acts (Ferraro *et al.* 2005). These theories are often circumscribed within a secular paradigm that is based on rational choice (Dyck and Wiebe 2012). Conversely, a theological perspective to transcendent motivation which recognizes a benevolent God will be able to conceive that the lure of self-transcendence may be just as strong as the lure of selfishness (Godbout and Caille 1998).

The use of theology that focuses on the relationship between God and man in understanding forces underpinning TWM could be quite offensive to behavioral scientists, since these scientists are interested in studying observable behavior rather than invisible phenomena (Kriger and Seng 2005). However, according to the 2004 Encyclopedia Britannica, 72% of the world's population (i.e. 4.6 billion people out of 6.4 billion people in the world) are members and practitioners of various religions. These statistics imply that business organizations operating around the world are likely to have more religious employees than non-religious employees (Kriger and Seng 2005). Besides this point, research already indicates that certain religious beliefs predict or influence work-related attitudes (Agle and Van Buren 1999, Pavlovich and Corner 2014, Karakas *et al.* 2015).

Furthermore, leading organizational scholars and practitioners have begun to utilize theology as the specific starting point for developing different perspectives to management theory (Hamel 2009, Vasconcelos 2009, Sandelands 2010). According to Dyck and Wiebe (2012), such a theological perspective allows scholars develop alternative management theory and practice based on unique concepts that transcend secular contemporary management theory.

In light of the foregoing justifications for espousing a theological perspective to TWM, this current study uses biblical exegesis of the personal and social salvationist views of Christianity to examine the core assumptions of two secular transcendent theories (i.e. Perry's theory on PSM and Sarin's contributory theory of existence) on work motivation. The focus on exegesis of the Bible is based on the fact that Christianity has been one of the strongest and longest standing religions in the world (Werner 2008).

Empirically, the Christian faith has been associated with transcendent work values and found to influence the ways managers and executives conceptualize their business/organizational practices (Ibrahim *et al.* 1991, Lee *et al.* 2003, Werner 2008, Dyck and Wiebe 2012). Moreover, the business ethics literature on the relationship between theology and work values/motivation tend to place more emphasis on Christianity than many other religions (e.g. Agle and Van Buren 1999).

Therefore, using a conceptual model synthesized from biblical exegesis of the salvationist views of Christianity, it is the main objective of this article to unveil the true nature of TWM by identifying the missing links between its biblical and secular ontologies. Moreover, recognizing these missing links would enable management scholars appreciate the kinds of moral obligations imposed on both Christians and secular people that are altruistically motivated to engage in work-related activities. It is believed that actualizing this objective would promote the establishment of some ethical guidelines that could influence future studies in the field.

In order to achieve this objective, the article shall be divided into six sections. The first section would dwell on why it is necessary for individuals to be transcendentally motivated in organizations. The second section shall focus on the biblical ontological perspective to TWM. The third and fourth sections elucidate the two different secular ontologies (i.e. theories) on the subject matter. The fifth section critiques these secular ontologies using the biblical frame of reference. The sixth and last section establishes some ethical guidelines that could influence the direction of future studies on TWM.

2. Why promote transcendent work motivation in organizations?

The notion that people desire to engage in work activities that enable them satisfy only their egocentric needs (e.g. social needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs) has been implied by extant individualistic theories on work motivation (Mansbridge 1990, Monroe 1996, Sarin 2009). Apparently, this idea has directly or indirectly influenced the behaviors of modern business executives.

The spectacle of business executives being led away in handcuffs as a result of the recent corporate scandals in North America (Klenke 2005, Friedman and Lynch 2012) and other parts of the world indicates that these executives have been somewhat influenced by the spirit of individualism and egocentrism that these extant theories perpetuate. Unfortunately, many modern business

executives have been forced to yield to maximizing shareholder value without taking cognizance of the effects of their actions on other stakeholders such as employees, host communities, pension holders, customers, creditors and so on (Kochan 2002).

The temptation to place an overarching emphasis on maximizing shareholder value while jettisoning the interests of many members of the general society is most likely contingent on the personal benefits that this business strategy brings to these executives, at least in the short run. For instance, the pursuit of this business strategy could allow them gain more respect from their companies' shareholders who would traditionally appraise executives' performance based on corporate profits generated per period of time (Friedman and Lynch 2012), and this in turn reflects in the higher financial and non-financial perquisites that these executives earn at the end of the day.

Recent statistics in America show that both corporate profits and executive compensation have grown astronomically since the great recession of 2008–2009 (Friedman and Lynch 2012). Corporate profits for American companies reached 1.678 trillion dollars, while average executive pay at the top two hundred companies increased by 12.9% over 2009 and skyrocketed to 9.6 million dollars (Costello 2011). Although, in 1950, the average executive's paycheck-to-average employee's paycheck ratio was 30:1, it currently stands somewhere between 300 and 500 to 1 (Snyder 2010). These statistics imply that there is a positive correlation between corporate profits and personal benefits that accrue to business executives. Given these statistics, business executives are more likely to pursue strategic choices that positively impact their compensation packages.

In support of the above argument, a recent study by Chatterjee and Hambrick (2007) has shown that narcissistic business executives reflecting a work value of self-aggrandizement more than an interest in advancing other's well-being (e.g. employees, customers, etc.) had a significant impact on their organizations' strategic choices. Nevertheless, business leaders are expected to set high moral standards for their followers and to be more concerned with the collective good than their own selfish interests (Fu and Tsui 2003). They are required to display a set of behaviors that motivate followers to do more than they are originally expected to do and to subsume their selfish interests for the good of the collective (Bass and Avolio 1995).

In this regard, Fu *et al.* (2010) found that egocentric work values that focus on the leader's own happiness attenuated the effect of transformational leadership (i.e. leadership that predispose followers to espouse altruistic work orientations) on followers, while self-transcendent work values focusing on other people's happiness accentuated the impact of this kind of leadership style on followers. Therefore, it is imperative for leaders to ensure that they do not allow their selfish interests overshadow the collective good of the organization. If this happens, the entire organization could be thrown into a precarious state in which members devise several means through which only their disparate

egocentric needs would be satisfied at the expense of the collective good (Lindenberg and Foss 2011).

Based on the above discussions highlighting the need for business executives to embrace altruistic work values while performing their various leadership roles, it becomes expedient to acquaint the global management community with the true nature of TWM that propels individuals to think beyond the “self” while responding to the needs of others in different organizations and societies. Toward this end, the next two sections of the article shall present the biblical and secular ontologies on TWM with a view to providing some guidelines that can influence the direction of future studies in the field.

3. Biblical ontology of transcendent work motivation

Christianity as a religion came to limelight because it sought to find answers to humanity’s long quest for salvation from all forms of suffering. Although salvation is the main crux of Christianity, scholars generally agree that there is no common understanding of what salvation means within the Christian faith. However, this is not to suggest that a simple conceptualization of salvation does not exist (Dyck and Wiebe 2012).

For instance, even though scholars agree that it will be impossible to find a precise meaning of salvation in the New Testament (Schillebeeckx 1980), one study on salvation implied that it could be reduced to “Jesus makes God present in a saving way” (Haight 1994). Nonetheless, Dyck and Wiebe (2012) opined that this simple understanding of salvation does not account for the unique ways by which it can be achieved, for whom it is available and when it is evident.

Despite lack of a common definition for salvation, Dyck and Wiebe (2012) have argued that contemporary organization theory and practice have been highly influenced by the understanding of salvation as interpreted within the Protestant work ethics. It is for this reason that this article adopts Protestants’ definition of salvation and this simply connotes an individual’s acceptance of Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior of human life.

Salvation according to Protestants is inextricably connected to the self-discovering of a divine assignment that Jesus has called a person to undertake in this world, as well as the successful implementation of this assignment via human interactions in a social or work organization domiciled within a particular societal context (Dyck and Wiebe 2012). The theological literature often equates the self-discovering of divine assignment (i.e. a person’s calling) with the personal salvationist view of Christianity and the execution of this calling is equated with the social salvationist view of Christianity (Dyck and Wiebe 2012).

There are examples of people that have witnessed both the personal and social Salvationist views of Christianity. For instance, Mother Teresa – a Catholic nun – experienced her personal calling in 1946. She was instructed by God to care of the sick and poor in this particular year. Mother Teresa later

undertook social salvation by founding an organization called the “Order of the Missionaries of Charity”. This organization is a Roman Catholic congregation of women dedicated to helping the poor.

Kent Brantly (i.e. the US medical doctor who contracted, but survived the Ebola disease) is another example. Apparently, his response to a personal calling led him to join the Christian medical mission group called the Samaritan’s Purse. Social salvation was expressed in his life within Samaritan’s Purse and this led Kent Brantly, along with his other medical contemporaries to get involved with the treating of very infectious Ebola patients in Liberia in year 2014.

Although calling now has several secular interpretations (Wrzesniewski 2003, Berkelaar and Buzzanell 2015), it has been broadly defined as a transcendent summon, originating beyond the self, that approaches a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation (Dik and Duffy 2009).

While it is often assumed that secular connotations of work as calling emerge from individuals’ internal beckoning or consuming passion to undertake specific types of work (Hall and Chandler 2005, Rosso *et al.* 2010, Dobrow 2013), personal salvationists rather see work as a moral duty that may necessitate sacrificing pay, personal time, and the comfort of this world (Dyck and Wiebe 2012). They view work as a sacred calling, i.e. an invitation from Jesus Christ to undertake vocations that express God’s will in the lives of men (Hardy 1990, Weiss *et al.* 2004).

Based on personal salvationists’ tradition, the sacred calling is unveiled to different people and it is the means by which they can represent the “hands of God” on planet earth (Dik and Duffy 2009). According to Hardy (1990), obeying one’s call is actually meant to give purpose to menial jobs because such jobs are done in service of a sacred meaning that is much greater than the individual. Construing work as calling implies that work done solely for economic or career advancement reasons is not likely to induce a sense of significance, purpose, or transcendent meaning (Bellah *et al.* 1985, 2007, Bunderson and Thompson 2009, Beadle 2013, Sims and Rosso 2013, Wrzesniewski *et al.* 2013, Harvath 2015).

Findings from work orientation research reveal that employees who view work as calling can be found in different job positions, organizations, and occupations (Wrzesniewski *et al.* 1997). When employees hold calling orientations, their identities and occupations are inseparably linked because it imbues their lives with personal and social meanings as they perceive that they are making valuable contributions to society through their work assignments (Berg *et al.* 2010).

The main source of this work orientation can be traced to Jesus’ message to his disciples in Matthew 14: 24 – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (King James Version). In the above Bible verse, Jesus informs his

disciples (i.e. his followers) on key conditions underpinning the sustenance of a man's personal salvation. First of all, a man must deny himself. In other words, he must ensure that self-oriented passions do not control or take hold of his life. These egocentric passions are strong desires for things that a man would personally benefit from. Getting such things would enable him satisfy the needs of life (i.e. physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs).

According to Matthew 6: 32, these are things that the gentiles (i.e. those who have not received personal salvation) continually crave for. Therefore, in order to sustain one's personal salvation, these things should never influence human cognitions and emotions in ways that induce individuals to make choices that only pacify their self-aggrandizement. This is not to say that these things are not important for human existence. As a matter of fact, Jesus' last statement in Matthew 6: 32, that is, "... for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things" (King James Version), suggests that humans require these things in order to successfully live well on earth.

However, Jesus further instructs his disciples in Matthew 6: 33, that they must seek the will of God (i.e. kingdom of God and his righteousness) first. Afterward, all those things that unsaved men crave for will be given to them. The will of God, which is synonymous with the protestant idea of God's calling was the main thrust of Jesus' concluding remarks in Matthew 14: 24 (i.e. "... Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"). It is already established within the Christian faith that Jesus himself yielded to the will of the heavenly father by carrying the cross and dying on it.

His death on the cross was an act of self-transcendence because in Matthew 20: 28, Jesus explicitly stated that he gives his life as a ransom for many. Therefore, the instruction he earlier issued to his disciples (i.e. taking up their cross and following him) signified the need for them to respond to a specific self-transcendent call that would reduce the sufferings of man in certain segments of society. Albeit, it was imperative that they deny themselves first, that is, ensure that self-oriented (i.e. egocentric) passions do not overwhelm their cognitions and emotions before responding to this specific self-transcendent call.

This personal salvationist view of Christianity that was once espoused by great reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin construed self-transcendent call as that place in the world of productive work that an individual was created and destined to fill by virtue of God's given talents and opportunities presented by the individual's station in life (Werner 2008, Bunderson and Thompson 2009). It presupposes a world of productive work in which persons engage in specialized work activities for the benefit of all (Durkheim 1984), and demands that people seek their self-transcendent calls and make whatever sacrifices required to judiciously and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities and duties associated with them for the welfare of the human family and the glory of God (Werner 2008, Bunderson and Thompson 2009).

In a bid to fulfill self-transcendent calls, humans must socially interact with one another. In contemporary times, it is expedient that human interactions occur both within and outside organizations. Since the personal salvationist view of Christianity tends to only unveil self-transcendent calls, in the sense that one's place in the world of productive work becomes known through relationship with God, there is another form of salvation that is required for executing self-transcendent calls that are prone to human interactions. Dyke and Wiebe (2012) call it the social salvationist view of Christianity.

Social salvationists emphasize collective salvation through organizational transformation and social justice within the economic sphere of life and the promotion of an egalitarian society (Miller 2007). They believe that this collective salvation takes place in tightly knit communities. For instance, social salvationists hold that poverty is not merely personal, but to a very large extent, social and systemic (Dyke and Wiebe 2012).

The social salvationist view of Christianity is quite reminiscent of Ananias and Sapphira's story, recorded in Acts 5: 1–14. Despite the fact that the primary mission of the early apostles was to preach the gospel as expressed in the second part of Acts 6: 2, in which the apostles affirmed that “it was not reasonable that they leave the word of God, and serve tables”, they were also concerned about satisfying the diverse needs of their followers. Toward meeting these needs, they had to develop an economic/organizational system that was based on principles of egalitarianism, social justice, equitable resource sharing, and collectivism.

Prior to Acts 5: 1–14, disciples of Jesus who had experienced the personal salvationist view of Christianity (i.e. denied themselves, took up their cross and followed Jesus) sold all that they had and brought them to the apostles for equitable distribution to all in the Christian community. Presumably, Ananias and Sapphira have had their own fair share of goods previously brought in by self-transcendent Christians. However, instead of allowing the entire community benefit from money obtained in selling a piece of land that belonged to them, they decided to keep back part of the price so as to promote their own personal gain.

This was viewed as an abominable act because Ananias and Sapphira yielded their hearts to Satan by lying to the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God (Acts 5: verses 3 and 9). It was God that they directly offended (Acts 5: 4). Therefore, Peter had to execute the judgment of God by making them suffer the death penalty. This penalty could have been meted out in order to forestall the occurrence of subsequent exploitative acts that are diametrically opposed to the execution of divine callings. Such acts would have destroyed the tightly knit Christian community that was being nurtured at that time.

With a view to promoting the spirit of community, social salvationists emphasize sharing with the poor without obligation, reducing the inequality gap between the rich and poor, treating one another with dignity, welcoming people who are outcasts or marginalized, and inclusiveness that goes beyond kinship groups (Dyck and Wiebe 2012, Stansbury 2014). It has already been

reported by an empirical study that a belief in egalitarianism as defined by social Salvationists highly correlates with the stakeholder and social activism notions of corporate social responsibility (Agle and Van Buren 1999, p. 579).

This empirical finding resonates with Drucker’s idea that a corporation is a creature and part of a bigger society that transcends individual ethic of self-interest (Meynhardt 2010). According to Drucker (1973, p. 41), free enterprise cannot be justified as being good for business; it can be justified only as being good for all members of the society.

Following the above arguments, a conceptual model on the biblical ontology of TWM is presented in Figure 1. The model shows two pathways of an individual who possesses personal salvation (i.e. a follower of Jesus). In both pathways, the individual yields to a self-transcendent call by denying himself and carrying his cross. However, the significance of this call is better understood and provides real meaning after the individual engages in the social salvation process. This process commences immediately after the individual acknowledges the deprivations that people suffer within a particular societal context. Through personal experiences, education, religious training, and varied forms of human interactions that occur within this societal context, the individual gains deeper insights into specific human deprivations that his/her self-transcendent call is meant to redress.

In the first pathway, the individual executes this call within an organization that espouses the value creating perspective to corporate social responsibility via the social salvation process. Since value is anything that a person or a group of persons subjectively appreciates (Malhotra and Bazerman 2007,

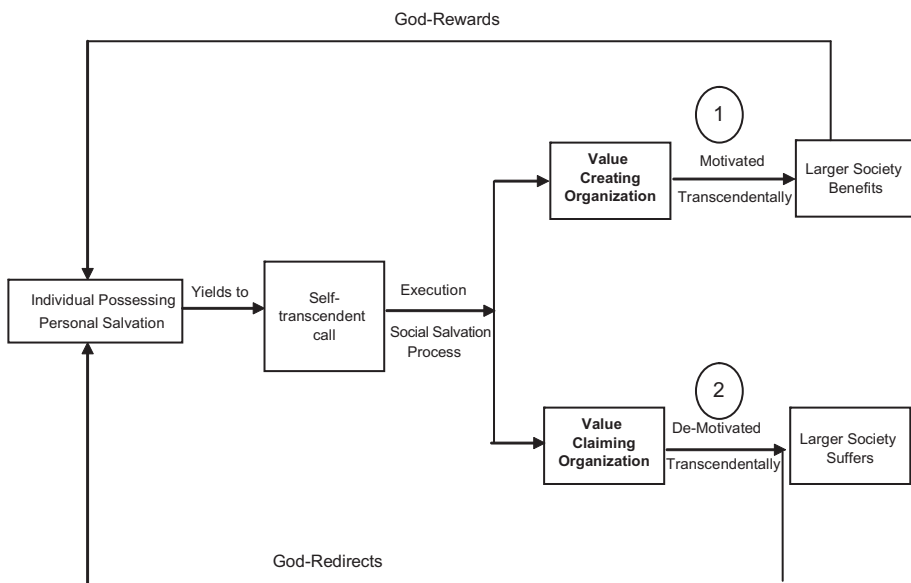


Figure 1. Biblical ontology of transcendent work motivation.

Harrison and Wicks 2013), a central premise of the value creating organization is that focusing on stakeholders, especially treating them well and managing their underlying interests, helps an organization create value along a number of social and economic dimensions and is therefore good for organizational performance (Freeman *et al.* 2007, Harrison *et al.* 2010, Porter and Kramer 2011, Harrison and Wicks 2013, Bridoux and Stoelhorst 2014, Ghasemi *et al.* 2014, Strand and Freeman 2015).

The value creating organization upholds three fundamental tenets of the instrumental stakeholder theory. These are: jointness of interests, cooperative strategic posture, and rejection of a narrowly economic view of the firm (Strand and Freeman 2015). The tenet “jointness of interests” depicts organizations and their stakeholders as having mutual (shared) interests. Consequently, the role of the manager is to focus on creating more value for a greater number of stakeholders by promoting the shared interests between the organization and its stakeholders (Freeman 2010).

The tenet on cooperative strategic posture sees cooperation between organizations and their stakeholders as necessary for social and environmental sustainability of the world (Strand and Freeman 2015). The tenet on the narrowly economic view of the firm that the shareholder theory upholds takes into account other stakeholders beyond shareholders insofar as these additional stakeholders serve as a means through which wealth can be created for the organization’s shareholders. The value creating organization outrightly rejects this last tenet (Harrison and Wicks 2013, Strand and Freeman 2015).

It is expedient to note that the organizational/economic system developed by the early apostles in the biblical book of Acts aligns with the above tenets of the value creating organization. Although the primary interest of the apostles (i.e. the figurative shareholders of the economic system) was to propagate the word of God, they did not jettison the economic and domestic needs of followers (i.e. their figurative stakeholders). While they focused on their main mission of propagating the gospel, an organizational system was established (Acts 6: 1–6) in order to satisfy the needs of followers (e.g. poor widows).

Through this organizational system, the apostles were able to create value because they fully satisfied their own interest by preaching the gospel (Acts 6: 7), as well as the specific interests of their followers (Acts 6: 5). Sidelineing the needs of followers could have destroyed value because the word of God would not have been received wholeheartedly by followers. Nonetheless, the idea of creating value was not a one-sided game. The followers were also very cooperative, as they were motivated to create value for the organizational system by yielding to their self-transcendent calls which necessitate that they give up their entire possessions (Acts 4: 34).

Therefore, an individual who executes his or her self-transcendent call in a value creating organization as exemplified in the early apostles’ organizational system and depicted in the first pathway of the conceptual model in Figure 1 gets motivated transcendentally (i.e. experiences transcendent work motivation) because functioning within an organization that upholds the tenets of value

creation would allow him or her express the self-transcendent call. This ultimately benefits the larger society and the individual is rewarded by God.

God's reward is contingent on the absolute obedience of the individual for serving his or her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the execution of the self-transcendent call (Colossians 3: 22–24). This must not be misconstrued for employers' obligations toward self-transcendent employees. Employers are still expected to provide fair pay and decent working conditions for these employees (Colossians 4: 1).

Yet there are instances in which an organization may want to create value for employees and other stakeholders, but the latter may not be cooperative because they are too self-oriented. This self-orientation may stem from their belief that they possess a higher bargaining power than the value creating organization (Bridoux and Stoelhorst 2014). In such instances, the organization could protect its interests from being destroyed by the self-regarding stakeholder by resorting to value claiming or arms-length approaches to stakeholder management (Malhotra and Bazerman 2007, Bridoux and Stoelhorst 2014).

The term "value claiming" was deployed by Malhotra and Bazerman (2007) in their book entitled *Negotiation Genius* to describe a situation in which a negotiator decides to arrive at a zero-sum game outcome that could help protect his or her underlying interests. Although value creating organizations espouse a management philosophy that recognizes and appreciates the interests of their stakeholders, they may have to fall back on claiming value if stakeholders are only self-oriented.

The demise of Ananias and Sapphira was meant to prevent the value creating organizational system that the apostles had established from disintegrating. This organizational system ensured that the word of God was being propagated and the needs of all the followers were simultaneously met. In order to curb the value claiming tendencies of other followers, God's judgment had to be meted out to Ananias and Sapphira. If other followers had imitated the behavior of Ananias and Sapphira, the apostles would have had insufficient economic resources. Albeit, adequate amounts of these resources were required for equitable distribution to all followers. Dissatisfaction of followers would have ensued if the apostles were unable to meet their needs. Followers' dissatisfaction should have hindered the dissemination of the word of God, thus negatively affecting the primary mission of the apostles.

Consequently, in this exceptional scenario, the apostles had to claim value through the judgment of God. The divine judgment which cannot be humanly faulted somewhat resulted in a zero-sum game. This is because it ensured the continuity of the spread of the gospel at the expense of Ananias and Sapphira's lives.

However, it is possible for an organization to perpetually embark on value claiming activities. If this happens, the organization becomes a value claiming organization. A value claiming organization is associated with a "parasitic logic" that allows it adhere to a self-interested, socially harmful approach to generating value while engaging in isolated efforts to create value for stakeholders (Crane

et al. 2014). It contravenes the Kantian categorical imperative that human beings should never be treated solely as a means for self-profiteering, but rather as an end in and of themselves (Bowie 1999). Due to the egocentric nature of the value claiming organization, it is most likely that it will not appeal to self-transcendent individuals with callings.

In support of this notion, Evans and Davis (2011) found that job applicants who were higher in self-transcendent work orientation were less inclined to join an organization that scored poorly on corporate social responsibility than potential employees that were more self-regarding. If self-transcendent individuals with callings mistakenly join a value claiming organization, they are likely to find it socially uncomfortable.

Social comfort has been viewed as a relational or interpersonal aspect of work involvement (Dobrow 2013). It entails enjoying, feeling comfortable, and having a fit with other people (Lawrence *et al.* 2010) who strive toward executing an organization's mission. Organizational behavior research has demonstrated the importance of incorporating a relational perspective to understanding a subjective career phenomenon (Higgins and Kram 2001, de Janasz *et al.* 2003, van Emmerik 2004, Higgins *et al.* 2008) such as the fulfillment of one's self-transcendent call.

Within this relational perspective, individuals learn and grow in their work-related experiences through connections with their organizations (Kram 1996). In order for self-transcendent individuals with callings to experience this type of connection, they have to be socially comfortable with the behavior of their organizations.

Therefore, the second pathway of the conceptual model in Figure 1 attempts to capture the socially uncomfortable experiences of an individual that operates within a value claiming organization. In this second pathway, an individual possessing personal salvation yields to a self-transcendent call. Nonetheless, he wrongfully undertakes the social salvation process in an organization that is only interested in claiming value. Since this organization does not strive to improve the lot of different people in society (i.e. employees, customers, government, host community, indigent in society, etc.), the individual gets socially uncomfortable with its value claiming activities because he or she does not see the possibility of successfully executing the self-transcendent call that is meant to add some value to some segments of society.

In this circumstance, the organization may, for example, make huge profits but at the expense of the larger society. Consequently, the individual becomes de-motivated transcendentally (i.e. does not experience transcendent work motivation). At this instance, the individual seeks the face of God for re-direction. In practical terms, re-direction of God means seeking new employment in a value creating organization. Gaining employment in such an organization would facilitate the expression of the individual's self-transcendent call.

In order to appreciate the ethical significance of the above conceptual model that focuses on biblical ontology of TWM, it will be necessary to

juxtapose it with the secular ontology of the subject matter. Hence, the next section dwells on the latter.

4. Secular ontology of transcendent work motivation

Some years ago, scholars in the field of work motivation excoriated the non-existence of theories that can effectively explicate the forces behind self-transcendent work behaviors in organizational settings (Brief and Motowidlo 1986, Organ 1988, Kanungo and Conger 1993, Perry 2000, Sarin 2009). According to Kanungo and Conger (1993), besides the point that self-transcendent work behaviors can enrich our work and family lives, they are highly needed to enhance organizational effectiveness in a free market global economy that is becoming increasingly complex and interdependent.

Fortunately, few scholars have responded to this call mandating the formulation of transcendent theories of work motivation. For instance, a theory on meaningful work motivation – a subjective evaluation of the existential significance of self-transcendent work in the life of a person – is already in an advanced stage of development (see Lips-Wiersma and Morris 2009). There have also been previous attempts aimed at formulating models on pro-social work motivation (see Brief and Motowidlo 1986, Grant 2007).

However, two full-fledged theories on TWM have recently been developed. These are Perry's (2000) theory on PSM and Sarin's (2009) contributory theory of existence. This section of the article shall be distilling the essential features of these theories in order to construct the secular ontology of TWM. For the purpose of enhancing logical reasoning, Perry's theory will first be presented and thereafter complemented by Sarin's theory.

Perry's theory on PSM brought a sociological perspective to work motivation because it showed how the social values of societal institutions influence the work motivation process. Although the PSM concept was introduced into the work motivation literature in 1990 (see Perry and Wise 1990), it was only at the dawn of the twenty-first century that Perry (2000) developed a full-blown theory of the concept. It was specifically brought into the literature so as to address the lack of attention that has been given to work motivation in the public sector. However, recent empirical research has found that the PSM concept also applies to private sector organizations (Andersen and Kjeldsen 2013).

PSM was originally defined as a person's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public sector organizations (Perry and Wise 1990). Later on, Vandenabeele (2007) X-rays PSM from a sociological perspective when he defined it as the beliefs, values, and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of the larger society and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate. While Perry and Wise's definition seems to suggest that a person's public service motivational orientation arises from the motive of external public institutions (i.e. maximization of societal welfare), Vandenabeele's definition

highlights the internal motivation of a person which is directed toward serving people in the larger society, with organizations only serving as a means of satisfying the self-transcendent motives of the individual.

Perry's theory was based on four core assumptions. The first assumption states that PSM can be affected by three processes. These are rational, normative, and affective processes. Rational processes enable individuals choose among courses of action based on the principle of utility maximization. Normative processes help them internalize social norms, while affective processes stem from emotional responses to social situations.

The second assumption holds that individuals are motivated by their self-concepts to undertake certain work activities. Since self-concepts are formed when people espouse societal values, these values should be integral to any work motivation theory. This assertion informed the third assumption of Perry's theory (i.e. social values should be endogenous to any theory of motivation). However, these social values are learnt through processes instituted by society. They primarily originate from social interactions in society. Hence, this social learning process justified the position of the fourth assumption of the theory, which states that values are learned in social processes.

In its simplest form, Perry's (2000) theory provided the predisposing factors of PSM orientation. According to Perry (2000), there are three main antecedents of PSM. These are: the socio-historical context-representing influences from institutions of the larger society (e.g. family, churches, government, and school); nature of motivational context-connoting situational factors that influence behavior in organizations (e.g. job characteristics, organizational incentives, and work environment); and individual characteristics specifying the impact of individual identities and self-concepts on work behavior.

Perry's theory therefore assumes that the PSM orientation of an individual will be a function of the above variables. Figure 2 shows how these variables interact and shape an individual's PSM orientation. As shown in the figure, the most influential variable of PSM is the socio-historical context. The socio-historical context defines the values of society, and this in turn influences the motivational context of organizations (i.e. beliefs, performance incentives, work environments, etc.) as well as individual characteristics (i.e. abilities, competencies, self-concepts, etc.).

Unfortunately, Perry (2000) did not exactly specify what kind of societal values correlate with PSM. For instance, it would have been interesting to know how the values of Scandinavian countries shape PSM and what hampering effect corrupt societal values have on PSM. However, in spite of the theory's shortcoming, it can be safely inferred that values promoting quality of life are likely to positively impact PSM orientation, while those that emphasize materialism and corrupt practices would be detrimental to PSM in societies.

It will be useful to connect the above arguments with the premises of Sarin's (2009) contributory theory of existence. Before formulating his theory, Sarin observed that business executives in the private sector of some industrialized countries manifested high levels of PSM because they once personally

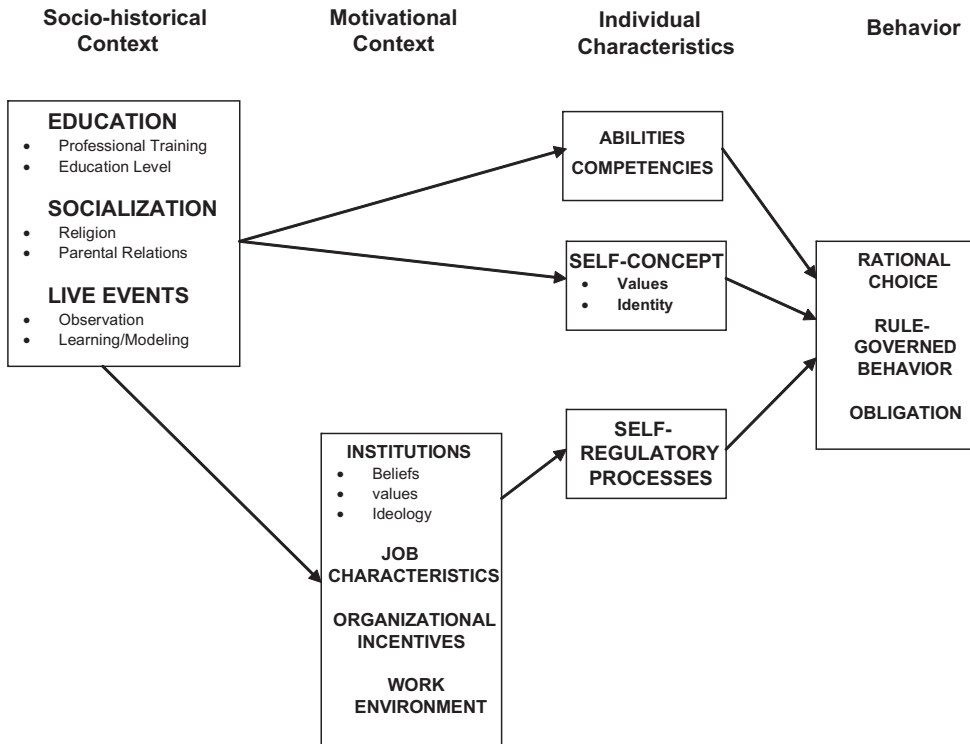


Figure 2. Perry's (2000) process theory of public service motivation.

benefited from the various social institutions of their societies. For example, Bill Gates' PSM orientation was depicted by the establishment of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates particularly mentioned in his letter available at the foundation website:

We believe that from those to whom is given, much is expected. We benefited from great schools, great health care, and a vibrant economic system. That is why we have the tremendous responsibility of giving back to society.

Other business executives like Bill Gates who had benefited from institutions of the larger society are morally obligated to give back to the society because these institutions held social values that promoted quality of life (Sarin 2009). It is believed that business executives must have been positively influenced by these social values and so they should be motivated to contribute to the society.

Sarin's (2009) contributory theory of existence derives from a functionalist sociological framework which assumes that people who have once benefited from a particular organ of society (e.g. educational system, health care system, etc.) will be motivated to contribute to that organ or other organs of society. The theory presupposes a situation in which such individuals would be more

inclined to unleash the altruistic component of their human nature in order to improve the lot of others in society.

The theory specifically states that individuals seek to satisfy a unique set of needs termed “needs mix”. The composition of an individual’s needs mix is reflective of his or her personal characteristics, social interactions with others in society, and some prevailing situations. The theory is specifically different from Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory because it postulates that people harbor selfish and altruistic needs at the same time and that needs are not satisfied in a hierarchy. Therefore, a combination of the selfish and altruistic needs of an individual defines his or her needs mix. Nevertheless, the expression of the altruistic component of needs mixes varies from one person to another and from one situation to another.

Particularly, an individual’s needs mix is composed of four mutually co-existing motivational slots (Sarin 2009). While slots 1, 2, and 3 deal with the selfish needs of the individual, slot 4 is basically the altruistic component of his or her needs mix. Individuals may be motivated to satisfy their needs mix in varying magnitudes by maintaining some equilibrium between the four slots.

The four motivational slots are depicted below in a non-hierarchical order:

- (i) Immediate existence (Slot 1).
- (ii) Prolonged existence (Slot 2).
- (iii) Recognized existence (Slot 3).
- (iv) Social contributory of existence (Slot 4).

The first slot on immediate existence pertains to individuals’ desire to satisfy the basic needs of life. These basic needs are required for immediate existence and they include air, water, shelter, sleep, and food. Furthermore, within this slot, individuals desire to have painless body (free from extreme physical and mental pain). This extreme pain is termed Painful Pain, and it is beyond the tolerance limit of an individual (Sarin 2009).

The second slot on prolonged existence represents needs for longevity. Individuals are motivated by the availability of job security, safe environment, acquisition of professional skills, opportunities for higher education, and presence of old-age benefits. These kinds of benefits focus on the need for long life and material security that will be sustained in the very long term.

The third slot on recognized existence is characterized by the need for individuals to gain some recognition from members of many segments in society. People are often motivated by the respect they earn from others. They desire to engage in prestigious assignments, participate in decision-making, amass some form of political power, attain some celebrity status and gain professional recognition. Satisfaction of these needs is actually meant to extol the existence of individuals.

Individuals that are influenced by the fourth slot on social contributory existence positively impact human lives and the society at large. They provide

social services and look for social problems to solve. They consider the sufferings of people in society, their own sufferings, and involve themselves in socially responsible initiatives in order to provide benefits to the society. These individuals believe that the fullness of success/wealth can only be enjoyed when they are willing to give back to others in society.

Corporate leaders that are motivated by this slot would make individual contributions to societies around them. They may even be willing to donate their blood and body parts (eyes, kidney, etc.) in certain situations. While managing business, their motivational slot on social contribution gets activated because of the social imbalances that they see all around them. In the course of their managerial careers, they have amassed a lot of money, power, and recognition that resonate with the slots on immediate existence, prolonged existence, and recognized existence. They are now more attuned to unleashing their slot on social contributory existence because they currently believe that business and society are indispensable to each other.

According to Sarin (2009), there could be both vertical and horizontal flows of needs. Vertical flows represent the changes undertaken by individuals to meet the needs of items within a specific slot. Horizontal flows specify changes that individuals undergo per time in terms of their motivational drive to satisfy the needs in the four different slots. However, whatever form the slots may take, a unique set of needs mix is formed. The magnitude and presence of each need in the needs mix would vary from one person to another and are significantly influenced by personal, environmental, and social factors.

5. Ontologies of transcendent work motivation: disconnects

A retrospective look at Figure 1 which captures the biblical ontology shows that the individual initiates the process of TWM by yielding to the self-transcendent call and executes it through the social Salvationist process within a suitable value creating organization. Ultimately, the individual becomes transcendentally motivated because members of the general society benefit from his or her work-related outputs. Thereafter, he is rewarded by God.

It is imperative to note that within the biblical frame of reference, the exact reward obtained from God is not known. There is also no indication of the specific time that the individual gets rewarded and so it is unclear whether or not the individual reaps the reward on earth while alive or obtains it in heaven after death. In a bid to obey the divine law that admonishes Christians to always seek the will of God first and then they will be rewarded by God (Matthew 6: 33), the individual ensures that he does not get influenced by his or her personal needs before yielding to the self-transcendent call. Notwithstanding, he knows that God would always administer his rewards to those that diligently seek his will (Hebrews 11: 6).

Moreover, at the point of obeying the call (i.e. the point of obtaining personal salvation that precedes the commencement of the social salvation process), the individual's decision to positively contribute to other people was not

affected by his extant relationship with society. In other words, yielding to this call was not determined by previous society's disposition toward him. The individual may have initially benefited from or been maltreated by society, but his past relationship with society is quite immaterial, in terms of its impact on the individual's personal desires to fulfill the self-transcendent call. However, the society later provided the secondary motivational impetus to execute the self-transcendent call only after the individual undertook the social salvation process.

The foregoing analysis implies that in light of the assumptions supporting the biblical ontology, TWM can be defined as a spiritually induced process driven by a selfless need to improve the welfare of society. It is a spiritually induced process because it emanates from the acceptance and obedience of the unseen Jesus Christ – the Lord and Savior of the individual. The biblical ontology actually presents the pure and unadulterated form of TWM because its definition reverberates around the common saying – “think always of what you can do for your society and not what your society can do for you”.

However, the core assumptions of the secular ontology on TWM are somewhat diametrically opposed to this common saying. The nuanced understanding of self-transcendence derived from Perry's theory of PSM and the subsequent elucidation of Sarin's contributory theory of existence only accentuates a moral obligation to give back to society that an individual has once benefitted from. These theories are rather hinged on a secular sociological paradigm purporting that humans are solely motivated to sustain a symbiotic relationship initiated by the larger society.

They inadvertently assume that if individuals have benefited from societal values that previously uplifted the general quality of their lives, then they should be morally obligated to give back to society. Nonetheless, an extrinsically induced process that morally obligates the individual to improve societal well-being cannot be equated with self-transcendence. The secular ontology therefore portrays a skewed depiction of altruism that does not reflect the true nature of TWM.

Egocentrism may become too prevalent, if individuals expect to benefit from society before contributing to it. Prior to their contributions, the scarce economic resources of societies could be grossly insufficient in dealing with all egocentric needs. With a view to pacifying their self-aggrandizements, egocentric individuals may even be lured to undertake certain corrupt practices that misappropriate society's economic resources. Kardec (2003) buttresses this point when he posited that:

selfishness is the source of all moral faults, just as compassion (i.e. altruism) is the source of our virtues. To destroy the former and nurture the latter should be the aim of everyone who wants to ensure human happiness, both in the present and in the future. (Kardec 2003, p. 337)

Kardec's position implies that if individuals in societies are selflessly motivated to contribute to the lives of other people, societies would experience more economic prosperity and social progress because people would preoccupy their minds with self-transcendent motives that add true value to common societal goods. Apparently, this position mirrors the Bible's ontological perspective to TWM. It therefore provides a better ethical platform through which future studies on the subject matter could spring up. Therefore, the next section concludes the article by further exploring the ethical implications of this perspective.

6. Conclusion and future research directions

The secular theories propounded by both Perry (2000) and Sarin (2009) viewed TWM as an outcome of certain variables. Some of these variables include the societal/environmental context, personal characteristics of the individual, and even situational factors within the work organization. This therefore implies that as these variables change, the work motivational orientation of people may also change. As a matter of fact, Sarin's theory explicitly stated that the motivational orientations of people vary from time to time depending on the constitution of their needs mixes, thus inferring that human nature is somewhat capricious. There is an ethical implication that this secular perspective to human nature brings to the fore.

The ethical implication is that people in organizations could either fall prey to egocentrism or commit themselves to self-transcendent behaviors depending on the impact of the above variables on their work motivational orientations. Obviously, these variables may sometimes inform the preponderance of a person's egocentric motives and the resultant disdain for the common organizational good.

However, Grusec (1992, p. 782) has averred that:

people do not behave like weather vanes, constantly shifting their behavior in accord with momentary influences. Rather they hold to ideological positions in spite of a changing situation. They do this because they bring judgmental self-reactions into play whenever they perform an action.

Grusec's (1992) stance on sticking to an ideological position irrespective of the prevailing situations that an individual finds himself in is in sync with a core assumption of the conceptual model synthesized from biblical exegesis of the salvationist views of Christianity, as depicted in Figure 1. Recall that the individual who yields to a self-transcendent call, but wrongfully finds himself executing it in a value claiming organization resorts to seeking a new employment within a value creating organization that enables him effectively execute this call.

This is because the individual tenaciously upholds a set of altruistic work ethics that mandate him to contribute to the larger society. These work ethics

are immutable from the point of view of the biblical ontology on TWM. Unlike other sources of work ethics, the spiritual origin of this ontology is independent of external resources, does not deplete as it is spent, and continually stimulates self-transcendent work motivational orientations (Goltz 2011).

Therefore, Christian and non-Christian leaders espousing altruistic work values and egalitarian ideologies would perennially promulgate policies that benefit people from different demographic origins within organizations and societies. This would translate into the satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders, and the concomitant increase in organizational social capital (i.e. intangible capital derived from maintaining good relationships with various stakeholders of the organization). Accumulation of this form of capital could guarantee the long-term survival of corporations.

Since these leaders are concerned about the collective organizational good, their followers are likely to be inspired by the high moral standards that they have set for themselves (Fu and Tsui 2003). In the leadership literature, leaders with high moral standards are often referred to as authentic transformational leaders (Bass and Steidlmeier 1999, Avolio *et al.* 2009). The high moral values that some Christian leaders possess are likely to be driven by their self-transcendent calls. These calls provide compelling visions and missions for those under the influence of their leadership style. This would result in the exhibition of organizational citizenship behaviors, i.e. individuals working beyond their formal contracts of employment so as to promote the collective good of the organization (Rayner *et al.* 2012).

However, citizenship behaviors are less likely to be manifested in organizations governed by inauthentic transformational leaders. Incidences of low citizenship behaviors should probably stem from lack of expression of high moral values and this may be traceable to the complete absence of altruism in careers of inauthentic transformational leaders. Yet in order to effectively execute self-transcendent calls, authentic transformational leaders espousing the Salvationist views of Christianity would have to ensure that followers do not commit themselves to egocentric work values that detract from the actualization of the collective organizational good. Therefore, these leaders would have to institutionalize very rigorous recruitment and selection processes that forestall the entry of individuals that are not motivated to contribute to the common organizational good and the overall satisfaction of all people in society.

Placement decisions in organizations would also be very critical because it will be expedient to make individuals occupy job positions that allow them fulfill their own self-transcendent calls. Consequently, jobs should be designed in ways that enhance individuals' TWM, as this would enable them contribute to the general well-being of society.

Since the biblical ontology of TWM presented in this article was extensively synthesized from Jesus' instructions to his disciples, as well as the spiritual authority of apostles that managed the primordial economy of the early Christian society, there is a need to engage in future research that will enable

scholars of management, spirituality, and religion understand how different situations influence the behavior of contemporary Christians that respond to self-transcendent calls. For instance, it may be very useful to know whether there are differences in the ways they engage in the social salvation process (i.e. relate to other people) within individualistic and collectivistic societies having different labor market conditions. The adoption of an ethnographic case study of research design involving a wide variety of societies around the world should help unpack these differences. Knowledge of the population of modern Christians that fully yield to the tenets of the conceptual model could also be gained through future research.

Future studies should also attempt to find out whether TWM becomes precarious without callings. The Christian tradition of TWM depicted in this article seems to suggest that TWM becomes virtually impossible without the presence of callings. Future research undertakings should therefore be aimed at verifying this primary assumption.

One longitudinal study by Dobrow (2013) showed that the efficacy of callings devoid of religious beliefs waned as time progresses. This finding is somewhat consistent with the variability of the secular ontology on TWM posited in this article. Consequently, it is recommended that future longitudinal research could help shed light on how religion later influenced the callings or self-transcendent work orientations of people that were initially non-religious.

The scope of this article does not cover the self-transcendent work orientations of people belonging to other religions. Therefore, non-Christian religious scholars are hereby encouraged to synthesize conceptual models on TWM from their sacred books and materials. This could help facilitate a common spiritual understanding of the subject matter.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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