An Exercise in Theological Imagination: Missing Constructs and Management Implications

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ABSTRACT: Modern management theory and practice is predicated upon a world of order, power, hierarchy, and sin. These profoundly theological constructs describe the reality within which we live and thereby frame the kind of organizations we create. But what if this vision of reality is incomplete? In this essay, I explore the management implications of four "missing" (i.e., under-appreciated) theological constructs that depict inherently relational and personal beings living in a communal and redemptive reality.

Key Words: power, *imago dei*

INTRODUCTION

Even before the recent Great Recession prompted many to rethink current economic models, some leading management scholars (e.g., Gary Hamel, 2007; Susidia, 2007) and business titans (e.g., John Mackey's "Conscious Capitalism" and Bill Gates' "Compassionate Capitalism") were calling for the reinvention of management. I agree with them, but as a Christian business scholar, I contend that we need to rethink our management models not simply because the context has changed around us — e.g., globalization, technology, etc. — but because at a deeper level, our management models neglect important aspects of reality. This paper considers four theologically informed, but under-appreciated, dimensions of reality that could have profound implications for management. The current problems with traditional management models provide an opportune moment to propose alternatives.

Most of the dominant management models for the past 100 years — from Taylor's "scientific management," Weber's "bureaucracy," and Fayol's "administrative principles" through successive waves of "restructuring," "reengineering," "quality management," "lean-manufacturing," "systems thinking," and "big data" — have been designed for a world characterized by an implicit order that is imposed by power through hierarchical structures in which opportunism, guile, and apathy (i.e., sin) are endemic.[1] Order, power, hierarchy, and sin — these fundamental presuppositions reflect core theological truths and together form the bedrock of our modern worldview. As such, they describe the reality within which we live and therefore frame the kind of organizations we create. Management — i.e., planning, organizing, leading, and controlling — is all about imposing order upon people and organizing resources into productive processes by coalescing power into centralized structures in order to achieve desired outcomes. Systems built upon these assumptions are effective because they *do* map onto important aspects of reality — but while these presuppositions are all true, they are not the whole story. As Christians, we know there is more to say about reality. It is my contention that management theory and practice are deficient for failing to embrace a more complete picture of reality. There are some profoundly important missing pieces.

As Christians, we believe that reality is not simply about order, power, hierarchy, and sin; the world is also inherently relational, personal, communal, and redemptive.[2] To ignore these dimensions is to seriously misconstrue the object of our attention — and as a result, we mis-specify the systems and structures we create to organize and control our world. In this paper, I will trace the theological roots of these worldview assumptions and highlight four under-appreciated (i.e., "missing") theological constructs. Then I will suggest how their inclusion might reshape our thinking about organizations and management. My goal is not to provide a full-fledged theoretical model but to suggest a conceptual framework to spark our collective imagination as we develop theologically informed management models.

THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ORDER, POWER, HIERARCHY, AND SIN

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Creation account as described in the book of Genesis informs our understanding of the world by describing (albeit in non-

scientific language) the origin and purpose of creation. Jews and Christians embrace Genesis as part of their holy scriptures. These faiths affirm the truth revealed about God, about creation, and about humanity's role and relation to both God and creation described in Genesis. Therein we find the basis for order, power, hierarchy, and sin.

From the very start, God imposes order on chaos as he calls creation into being (Gen. 1:1-2). He separates light from dark (Gen. 1:3-5), heaven from earth (Gen. 1: 6-8), water from land (Gen. 1:9-10). God is a God of order. By his power, God speaks and creation obeys (e.g., Gen. 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). God is the author of creation, but distinct from it (Gen. 1:1). God has authority over creation; he is Creator; it is his creation. People are creatures within creation but with special authority delegated by God (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:5-25). Order, power, and hierarchy are inherent in reality. Creation reflects God's nature and desire because at each stage and again at the end, he declares it to be "good" and "very good" (Gen. 1:31). It is as he intended it to be. But two short chapters into the story, the plot thickens. Sin enters the picture.

By refusing to obey the single restriction God gave them (Gen. 2:16-17), Adam and Eve upset the balance of creation (Gen. 3). The goodness of the garden was marred with the evil of sin. Tasting the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil forever changed humanity. Our innocence was lost (Gen. 3:8). Our eyes were opened to our nakedness as we became self-conscious (Gen. 3:7, 10). Our guilt (i.e., our knowledge of doing wrong) prompted us to blame others for our actions (Gen. 3:12-13). And as a result, our relationship with God was fractured (Gen. 3:9, 23). Our relationships with each other were poisoned. We were expelled from paradise and sentenced to a life of struggle against the very creation to which we are inextricably linked (Gen. 3:14-24).

That is the gist of the story. It is easy to see the fundamental, inherent reality of order, power, hierarchy, and sin. While this brief overview does capture the high (and low) points, it also glosses over some very important details. To paint in broad strokes is bound to blur some of the details — and to paraphrase the saying, God is in the details. It turns out that some of the missing "details" are not so small. For example, all the action described so far happens in the first few pages of the first book of the Bible. The entire rest of Scripture is the story of how God works to restore a right relationship with humanity. To fixate on sin is to miss the bigger reality of redemption. Sin is a fact, but restoration is the point. We must never forget the reality of sin, but we must never stop working for reconciliation.[3] To miss this part of the story is to miss the major theme of Scripture (and a key aspect of reality). Scripture is the story of how God reveals himself to us. The eternal, transcendent, all-powerful God makes himself known to finite, temporal, sinful humanity. The nature and character of the Creator, which is expressed and reflected in his creation, is described in vivid and varied detail.

What does the story tell us about God?[4] Some important "missing" concepts can be found in the following excerpts from the Creation account: "Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness…and God created man, in the image of God He created him…male and female He created them"(Gen. 1:26-27). In these verses we are introduced to three important themes: (1) we see a hint of the relational nature of God, (2) we find the basis for the doctrine of *imago dei* — that people are created in God's image, and (3) we see the first evidence of the complementary, communal nature of humankind. To ignore these aspects of reality is to operate out of a partial and incomplete understanding of how the world works.

MISSING THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

When it comes to creating systems and designing organizations that work for the people inside them, it makes sense to be sure one has an accurate picture of the people one is trying to organize. What can we glean from a theological anthropology that could reshape how we manage? The theological idea of *imago dei* — humans created in the image of God — is a vital jumping-off point. *Imago dei* means that people reflect the characteristics of God — albeit in a limited and finite way. So knowing about God tells us something about humanity. What do we know about God?

Theology — a.k.a. "the study of God" — has a lot to say about God. Among the central Protestant theological concepts are that God is relational, personal, communal, and redemptive. Let us take these characteristics in turn, but first a few words about *imago dei*.

Imago Dei

The nature of God is reflected in human nature because of the *imago dei*. This doctrine has been debated over the centuries (Grenz, 1994, pp. 168-180), but one of the things it means is that humans reflect — imperfectly — the nature and character of God. So we can learn a lot about human nature by studying its source code. People

are not gods, but they reflect many of God's characteristics in a finite, limited way. Where God is all knowing, people are rational (or at least intend to be rational) (Simon, 1961; Kahneman, 2003). Where God creates *ex nihilo,* people are imaginative and creative. Where God is all-powerful, people are causal and volitional. Where God is transcendent, people are spiritual as well as material beings. Where God is eternal, people are conscious of time but temporal. With the notion of *imago dei* we can transpose what we know about God to humans.

Another implication of the *imago dei* is the special status humans enjoy as God's "image bearers." Of all creation, only people are described as being made in God's image. The idea that somehow people represent God in the midst of His creation is one implication of this idea (Grenz, 1994, p. 174). This special honor also carries special accountability. Not only are we charged with guarding and tending the garden (Gen. 2:15), but humans are also the only creatures to be given a "thou-shalt-not" restriction (Gen. 2:17). The special "sacredness" of persons is reaffirmed in a later "image of God" passage (Gen. 9:6-7) where God warns of the dire consequences of shedding man's blood because of humanity's special status as being made in God's image. All of creation is sacred, but there is something unique and special about humankind. To treat people merely as objects is to deny the *imago dei.*

Thirdly, the *imago dei* is a social concept. According to Grenz (1994), the Genesis account "explicitly links the plurality of humankind, which includes a plurality of sexes, to a plurality found in the divine self-reference" (p. 175). He goes on to say: "God creates the first human pair in order that humans may enjoy community with each other.… The creation of humankind in the divine image, therefore, can mean nothing less than that humans express the relational dynamic of the God whose representation we are called to be" (p. 179). God is inherently relational and communal, therefore, so are people.

God is Relational

From the very beginning (Genesis 1) God was not just actively involved in creating this world; he was intimately connected to it. While not needing to, God desired a people with whom to relate, to share himself, and whose company he could enjoy. The grand "meta-narrative" of Scripture is all about God's desire and efforts to forge a relationship with humanity.

The Creation account depicts Adam and Eve taking long walks with God in the Garden and working side-by-side to name the animals (Gen. 3:8 and 2:19-20). The picture is one of intimacy and familiarity. After the "fall," this relationship is broken as people avoid God's presence (i.e., Adam and Eve hide from God (Gen. 3:8-10)) and are ultimately banished from the garden (Gen. 3:23). The remainder of Scripture is the story of God seeking out, nurturing, shaping, punishing, wooing, exiling, rescuing, warning, and rewarding his "chosen people." It starts with certain righteous individuals (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) then extends to an entire family (the 12 sons of Jacob), then 12 tribes (in Egypt), then to the whole nation of Israel, and ultimately to all of humanity — Jews and gentiles alike.

From the very start, God desired and intended for people to live in relationship — with God, with one another, and with creation. We were designed for relationship. Indeed, many theologians contend that we are defined by relationship, and our humanity only makes sense in the context of relationship (Grenz, 1994, pp. 83-85). The isolated, independent individual is a myth. To be human is to be in relationship. Our human-ness is realized in relationship. We, like God, are innately and inherently social creatures. The fact that sin disrupted this core of our being should come as no surprise. For all our efforts to live autonomous lives, we cannot escape the fundamental fact of our nature — we are hard-wired to relate.[5] Any management model or organizational system that disregards this basic reality is working at cross-purposes to the "laws" of human nature; the famous Hawthorne Studies are a classic illustration of this (Mayo, 1933) as is the more recent work by Sisodia et al. (2007).

God is Personal

But God did not just make us capable of connection; he actively sought us out and made himself known so we could know, and be known by, him (Ps. 139:1-6). While God often deals with families, tribes, or nations, he also deals with individuals. God knows each of his creatures. He has numbered the hairs on our heads. He knows and cares about every sparrow but cares even more about each human person (Luke 12: 6-7). He knows us by name (John 10:3-4) and had a hand in fashioning each of us before we were even born (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13-16). God cares for each person like a Shepherd seeking a lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7). He goes to great lengths to disclose himself to us so we can know and love him. In short, God is not only relational, he is personal.

To be personal is to be able to respond to someone in their uniqueness and in a way that is particular to them — i.e., to "personalize" our response to them. This requires

that we be able to *choose* our responses, be *aware* of the other as a particular person, and *respond* to them accordingly. Being personal entails connection and is rooted in relationship (Grenz, 1994, p. 84). To treat everyone the same or in a manner indifferent to their situation is to be impersonal — the opposite of being personal.

To be personal is to know (and be known by) another. It is rooted in knowledge and manifests in behavior. It means recognizing the other as a person, and valuing them on that basis (Packer, 1975, pp. 29-37). To be personal requires that one *be* a person in relation to the other. The fact that we are personal beings does not necessitate that we treat others as people.

Buber's (1958) distinction between I-thou and I-it relations is helpful here. Buber describes two different modes of engaging: one personal, intimate, and unself-conscious (for this he uses the German word "du" which is the informal, familiar form of "you" that was translated into English as "thou"); the second mode is impersonal and instrumental (characterized by treating the other as an object in one's experiential landscape — i.e., as an "it," not seeing into or engaging their humanness). Many of our social encounters remain at the object-level in I-it mode because it is easier; we must deliberately engage with our whole person in order to encounter the other as person — and this entails much more effort and risk. In a world over-run with transient encounters, it is little wonder we typically default to I-it mode. But since our personhood is only activated in relationship with other people, to the extent that our lives are devoid of such relationships, our humanity is diminished. Indeed, our very identity is rooted in personal relationships. We come to know who we are as we experience ourselves in relation to others. To live in an impersonal world is to risk losing our person-ness.

We often treat other people as objects or resources for the attainment of our purposes (i.e., I-it). Indeed, if we live in a reality dominated by power relations and driven by self-interest, it should be little surprise for personal, I-thou relations to be rare. While we may be people, it does not mean we are personal. Core to being personal is not simply the ability to relate but the recognition (and respect) of the other as a person. History is rife with examples of entire races or ethnic groups or nationalities being treated with inhumanity precisely because they were never conceived of as real people. To be personal is to connect as people, interpersonally, not as object to object. Doing so is more than instrumental. It takes certain skills and abilities and values to exert the effort to be personal.

God is Communal

"The concept of tri-unity lies at the heart of the Christian understanding of God" (Grenz, 1994, p. 54). The Trinity — i.e., that God is one God comprised of three beings: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all co-existing in perfect, mysterious harmony and unity — declares the inherently communal nature of God (Grenz, 1994, p.78).

Hinted at in Genesis, the Trinitarian aspect of God's nature is more fully revealed in the New Testament. In John's Gospel we find a poetic reprise of the creation story:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being.… And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1: 1-3, 14)

The incarnation of God-the-Son in the person of Jesus is believed by Christians to be the ultimate revelation of God to humanity. Jesus, himself, claimed to be the "Son of God" (John 9:35-37) and declared: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Those hearing these claims are reported to have been so outraged by his blasphemy that they moved to stone Jesus (John 10:31-33). There was no doubt that he was claiming to *be* God.[6]

People reflect God's communal nature in their very physical bodies. From the beginning, God created humans as complementary partners of an interpersonal whole. God said:

> It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helper suitable for him… but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.… So the Lord God fashioned into woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman'…. For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen 2:18, 20, 22-24)

Couples, families, tribes, nations, churches, "children of God" — most of the images used in Scripture reflect an inherently collective or communal character. We were not designed or intended to live as isolated individuals. A community is more than a collection of individuals; it is the reality within which individuals find their meaning.

"Our doctrine of God concluded with the declaration that the triune God is the Creator of the universe. The Creator God is purposeful, for he fashions the universe

with a goal in view. God's ultimate purpose is to establish community with his creatures" (Grenz, 1994, p. 125). Opening the possibility of community also opened the door to rejection. True communion can never be forced; it must be freely entered into by both parties. The bulk of Scripture is the story of fickle people alternately trusting and turning their backs on God. God's repeated attempts to "establish community" are often met with indifference and rebellion. And while he comes close to giving up on humanity (e.g., Gen 6: 5-8), God's covenant promise compels him to grant mercy and keep trying (e.g., Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos).

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost prompts uneducated fishermen and trades-people (i.e., Jesus' disciples) to suddenly begin making compelling arguments (in a variety of languages) about history and religious law, tracing God's work through Scripture culminating in the coming of the Son of God (Acts 2:1-36). The balance of the New Testament recounts the ongoing activities of God's Spirit working through and among the early church. We see God again calling and growing a people for Himself — this time from among all nations.

The metaphors for the Church are also instructive. Repeatedly, the church is compared to a body composed of many parts, each different yet vital to the collective flourishing (e.g., Rom. 12: 4-8). The inherent interdependence of the parts is emphasized. The value of each part is rooted in its connection to the whole. The community provides the context within which the various parts find their meaning. Unity and love are expected among the parts. Apart from the community the parts lose their true purpose and identity.[7] Beyond our innate relational capacity, the communal nature of reality reminds us that we are more than individuals; we were created to be part of something bigger and deeper — to which we are reconciled by Christ's death and resurrection. Our root identity is as *part of* the whole, not first and foremost as *a part*. And as a result, people disconnected from community tend to lose their way and get into all kinds of mischief.

God is Redemptive

Key to understanding Adam and Eve's temptation — and subsequent "fall" — is humankind's dissatisfaction with the limitations of our "creatureliness." We desire to "be like God" (Gen 3:5). Indeed, the "fall" (and "original sin") might be usefully understood as the propensity of people to reject authority and assert their desire for self-determination. We do not like being told what we can and cannot do. We want to choose for ourselves and to

be the ultimate authority of our own lives. As a result, we usurp the authority of God and claim the right to pursue our own agenda. We supplant servanthood with self-interest. We reject submission in favor of self-expression. We sacrifice relationship for autonomy. In this way, the inherent connectedness and interdependence of Creation is trampled in the pursuit of our own, narrow self-interest. So prevalent is this tendency that we have created theories, constructed systems, and codified laws, which *presume* self-interest as the fundamental trait of human nature.[8] The problem is not that this is wrong but that it is incomplete.

Whereas sin upset the balance of creation and fractured the relationship between God and humanity (and among people, and between people and the planet), that is not the end of the story. Unlike other religious traditions where God distances himself from his creation (Deism) or where the trajectory of history is towards an increasingly impersonal and disembodied future (Buddhism), the Judeo-Christian tradition contends that God is actively at work recruiting and restoring people into relationship with himself. Sin is a reality, but redemption is underway. In Scripture we get a prophetic glimpse how things will turn out — i.e., we are promised that restoration will ultimately be attained (e.g., Rev. 21; Isaiah 61).

This redemptive reality provides a very different lens through which to understand the grand sweep of history. "The moment we permit evil to control our imaginations, dictate the way we think, and shape our responses, we at the same time become incapable of seeing the good and the true and the beautiful" (Peterson, 1997, p. 39). While the reality of evil often feels overwhelming, people of faith are confident that God's restorative activities will prevail. And rather than fixating on controlling corruption, deceit, and exploitation, by aligning ourselves with God's redemptive plan, we are reminded to emphasize the reality of renewal and restoration in the systems and structures we create. We can focus on maximizing and realizing the potential for good, not just minimizing and preventing the potential for evil.

Interestingly, one can see redemptive themes in the intentionally restorative and constructive orientation of the emerging fields of "positive psychology" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), "positive organization scholarship" (Cameron et al., 2003), and "appreciative inquiry" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). We can also see similar threads in the field of leadership, where inspiration and working for the benefit of the community are keys to the ideas of "transformational leadership" (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) and "servant-leadership" (Greenleaf, 1977), respectively.

In sum, we were made to relate. We are people in relationship. We find our identity and meaning in community. And we live in a world full of potential as it is in the process of being restored by, and reconciled to, its Creator. This is a very different reality than the order-power-hierarchy-and-sin model with which we started.

COMPETING REALITIES IN BUSINESS

We can see these two realities all around us, but we try to keep them separate. We act as if we live in a bifurcated world — cleanly compartmentalized into personal and professional domains. For example, "It's not personal; it's just business" is a common expression which suggests that the normal rules of personal interaction do not apply to business. But it's not true. Much of what we mean by "professional" behavior is precisely a de-coupling of subjective, personal considerations from the objective, impartial, dispassionate, rational advice of a skilled practitioner. It is not that we deny the richer, personal, communal (and even redemptive) nature of reality, but that we try to create public systems free from such "complications" (e.g., Weber, 1921). Non-rational considerations get in the way of technical competence (Taylor, 1947). While striving for competence and efficiency are worthy goals, they become hollow outcomes in the absence of compassion and community.

Weber's (1921) bureaucratic model of organization was an intentional effort to remove precisely the messy, non-rational, "personal," and idiosyncratic relational obligations and complications from the efficient operation of organizations (Scott, 1987). There are certainly advantages to doing so. It promotes merit over nepotism, elevates logic and rationality over prejudice and emotion, and it roots it all in the "rule of law" as opposed to other less formal forms of authority. Of course there are also certain disadvantages to bureaucracy that have come to light over time — e.g., the rigid adherence to rules makes innovation and change problematic, the impersonal basis of interaction has a dehumanizing effect on everyone involved, and the single-minded focus on productivity ignores (and thereby tends to undermine) all the non-rational, informal, value-based aspects of life (e.g., relationships, happiness, love, etc.) (Blau, 1956; Crozier, 1964; Etzioni, 1964; Gouldner, 1954; Hummel, 2007; Jackall, 1988; Merton, 1957; Ritzer, 1993; Selznick, 1957).

This tendency to compartmentalize the world of business may also contribute to the problem of economic "externalities" — i.e., those costs and impacts of production that are not borne by the actor creating them. We have designed our business organizations with the single-minded intention of producing goods and services at a financial profit. But as we have discovered, the cumulative personal, social, and environmental consequences of such single-minded productivity are increasingly problematic. Indeed, one way to understand the trend towards "corporate social responsibility" is as the crumbling of the wall around corporations that defined them as strictly engines of economic productivity (Carroll, 1979). Society is now calling on business to live in a multi-dimensional world with "double-" and "triple-bottom lines" (e.g., Elkington, 1997) and to be responsive to multiple "stakeholders" (e.g., Freeman, 1984).

No doubt something is gained by depersonalizing business. If our actions do not really affect other people but only other objects, then we do not have to deal with all the social, emotional and personal "baggage" of people's lives. Being impersonal makes it easier to make the "tough" decisions, to be ruthless, to be calculating, to be a "sharp" businessperson. But something profoundly important is lost, too. Beyond the impact upon others, when we are impersonal, we become desensitized and detached; we stifle and deny a fundamental part of what it means to be human. In short, we become something less than human.

How would management and organizations be different if they were designed for a personal, relational, communal, and redemptive reality?

ORGANIZATIONAL THEOLOGIZING

As Christians, we operate out of a different conception of reality (Sire, 1997). As business scholar-practitioners, this ought to make a profound difference in how we manage (e.g., Chewning et al., 1990; Hill, 1997; Alford & Naughton, 2001; Stevens, 2006; Van Duzer, 2010; Wong & Rae, 2011; Dyck, 2013). The longstanding history of "faith-integration" efforts at Christian colleges and universities (and as exemplified at CBFA and *JBIB*) embodies such work. From seminal theological reflections and exegeses (e.g., Lynn & Wallace, 2001; Chewning, 2010; Fields & Bekker, 2010; Cafferky, 2013) to helpful faith-integration frameworks (e.g., Chewning, 2001; Dyck & Starke, 2005; Roller, 2013) to classroom cases, methods, and teaching innovations (e.g., Smith & Johnson, 1997; Surdyk, 2002; Karns, 2002; Johnson, 2005) and practical

managerial applications (e.g., Martinez, 2003; Bretsen, 2010; Salgado, 2011), Christian scholars have been actively applying scriptural principles to business. We start with a theologically infused worldview that shapes our underlying assumptions and informs our ultimate ends. From this vantage point, we critique the bedrock assumptions of the dominant management models and build alternative models which employ a different set of starting assumptions.[9]

The rest of this paper will suggest some of the potential managerial implications of the relational-personal-communal-redemptive reality. There is much more work to be done, but having a simple theological framework to guide our theory-development efforts will hopefully facilitate increased collaboration among Christian business scholars (cf. Vander Veen, 2011) and provide useful managerial innovations to faithful practitioners.

Table 1

	Relational	Personal	Communal	Redemptive
Communication	"Dialogue"	"Voice"	Radical transparency e.g., "open-book" management (Stack, 1994)	
Motivation	Centrality of social needs and connectedness (Rutledge, 2011; McClelland, 1961)	Individualized compensation plans		"Meaningful work" as contributing to God's redemptive agenda (Keller & Alsdorf, 2013)
Teamwork	Innately wired to work together; validates social roles (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993)			
Leadership	Leader mediates connection with the organization	Leader as "face" of the organization; embodies personal relationship with Co.	"Servant-leadership"; creating mutual and shared benefits (Greenleaf, 1977)	"Inspirational" vision & transformational leadership (Burns, 1978)
Structure		"Personal identification" with organization	Facilitating "membership" in collective enterprise	"Triple bottom line"; development of people (e.g., Balanced Scorecard) (Kaplan, 2010)
Culture			Fostering an "ownership" mindset (Pierce et al., 2001)	

If we accept that reality is fundamentally relational, personal, communal, and redemptive, then our management models and organizational theories ought to manifest that reality. In Table 1, I have put the four "missing" theological constructs across the top and listed several common managerial topics down the side.[10] (See Table 1.) How would our thinking about each managerial topic be informed if we added the "missing" theological construct? What aspects of the mainstream models would need to be modified if we assumed the alternative construct(s) were true? What processes would be different if we embraced the alternative assumptions? What behaviors would be altered?

I do not claim to have all the answers, but I have found the exercise of "rethinking" some managerial models in light of the "missing" theological constructs to be very provocative. You will notice that many of the cells in Table 1 are empty. Space limitations preclude even the most cursory discussion of every cell, so in some of the cells, I have listed an interesting finding or trend that I think resonates with a particular topic and "missing" construct — and which might serve as a jumping-off point for further consideration. I have left some cells blank because I do not have all the answers. Hopefully the empty cells in Table 1 will provide space for your own theological imagination to fill in the gaps. In the last section of this paper, I have chosen to highlight just the shaded cells to illustrate the utility of the framework.

Personal & Communal Structure: "Membership"

I start with the communal construct because before the Fall, even before Creation, the 3-in-1 God existed in perfect harmony and community (Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-3). The communal nature of humanity reflects this foundational reality of God. Indeed, the relational and personal dimensions are rooted in this communal reality because in order to be communal, one must be able to relate, and in order to relate, one must become personal. No doubt, people within any organization can choose to develop personal relationships with each other, but what would it mean to have a personal, communal relationship *with an organization*?

The normal understanding of organizational structure is as a social system of interacting positions and procedures designed to accomplish a productive purpose (cf. Daft, 2012). While there have been models with a more organic emphasis (e.g., Burns & Stalker, 1961; Hannan & Freeman, 1987), the traditional organizational models tend to reflect a mechanistic orientation —i.e., people are hired to serve and tend the corporate "machine" (Hammer

& Champy, 1993; Taylor, 1947; Ward, 1964). The system exists independent of the people who work within it. Particular people come and go; no one is irreplaceable. This is the epitome of impersonal, "I-it" relationships … by design.[11] One can trace this instrumental thread through management history from scientific-management and the rise of "human resources" through reengineering and "lean" methods.

At the same time, it is not uncommon to hear things like: "An organization is nothing more than a collection of individuals" — with the emphasis on individuals. Such expressions acknowledge that there are systems and situations, but they reinforce an understanding of reality in which organizations are comprised of individuals who come together to accomplish a goal that is beyond any of their solitary capabilities — i.e., organizations are collaborations of convenience. The primacy of the individual makes it difficult to contemplate, let alone appreciate, the fundamentally communal nature of reality. There might be instrumental utility in joining forces with others, but one ought to be wary of subjugating (i.e., "losing") one's individual identity to some collective entity. Putnam's (2001) work documenting the declining American participation in group activities and civil society — and people's increased feelings of alienation and isolation — illustrate this trend. In our individualistic culture, the reality of collective, communal, super-individual entities is increasingly difficult to imagine. But in other cultures, the social-, familial-, and group-identity is more real — and more important — than the individual (Hofstedt, 1996; House et al., 2004).

While Scripture affirms that God knows and addresses each of us as individuals, it also proclaims the inherent communal nature of our calling and selves. We are adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:23, 9:4). We are part of the church body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). We are grafted into the tree of God (Rom. 11:17-24). We are indwelled by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). We are united with Christ (Rom. 6:4-6). We become one flesh with our mate (Eph. 5:31). In short, we do not exist in isolation but rather in connection and communion with God and with others. We find our identity in the collectives of which we are a part. We are part of a whole before we are a part that contributes to the whole.

How would an organization be structured if it embraced the fundamentally communal nature of reality? I think the idea of "membership" resonates with the "missing" communal dimension. Membership is more than paying dues or formally "joining" a club or church; it represents a level of involvement and identification

with the collective enterprise. There is a sense of common purpose involved with membership that engenders a close connection with the group. This level of personal connection and identification starts to look a lot like an "I-thou" relationship with the company.

Previous notions of organizational membership have focused on the alignment between the member's self-concept and the organization's image (both perceived and projected) (Dutton, et al., 1994). Consonance leads to feelings of identification with the organization. Involvement with a particular organization also tends to "rub off" on the members as their self-concept is influenced by their participation in organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Additionally, Masterson and Stamper (2003) have proposed a multidimensional model of Perceived Organizational Membership that tries to account for peoples' varying levels of cognitive attachment to their employing organization. This tendency of people to form connections with organizations resonates with the underlying relational nature of reality. But what would a communal organization look like?

Membership is different from employment. Employment is more of a contractual than a communal relationship. The desire of companies for an "ownership" culture is a form of personal identification with the organization (Pierce et al., 2001). We want employees to view themselves (and their interests) as part of the collective enterprise, such that they are willing to look beyond their narrow job descriptions and self-interest to do what it takes to help the organization succeed.[12]

While equity ownership might give one a stake in an enterprise, it does not guarantee membership. Many people own stock in firms without feeling any connection to the company or its products and people. The separation of ownership (I-it) from membership (I-thou) is a problem. Not only does it encourage transient (i.e., lack of commitment) ownership on the part of stockholders, thereby perpetuating a purely instrumental orientation, but it inhibits the active participation of motivated partners from the governance of the enterprise. If the owners do not care about anything other than their financial returns, why would employees care about anything beyond their contractual obligations?

By contrast, a communal conception of membership would be based in shared interest and "common good." If I am a member of a club or organization, then I assume some responsibility for the whole (i.e., I might pay dues, hold office, attend meetings, support activities, etc.) and I expect to share or participate in certain collective ben-

efits (i.e., friendship, camaraderie, outings, recognition, accomplishments, success). Membership organizations will likely be characterized by more participative and/or democratic processes, which may require heightened levels of internal transparency so people can make informed decisions (e.g., "open-book" management (Stack,1994)). They may also likely employ profit-sharing compensation plans and perhaps even shared-ownership models (e.g., stock-options, ESOPs and/or cooperatives) — less as a motivational tool than to ensure that members share in the fruits of their collective efforts. As a communal orientation and commitment to shared outcomes, membership promotes a stewardship mindset as participants become "keepers of the commons" for all their colleagues.[13] We see these methods practiced to differing degrees across many companies, but what is lacking is a unifying framework and compelling justification for why they are effective and how they can be combined to create structures and systems that resonate with people's fundamental nature.

The notion of membership also resonates with the tendency to view organizations today as comprised primarily of volunteers (e.g., Drucker, 2001). Membership cannot be mandated. People choose which organizations and groups they will join. The experience and feeling of being a member can be encouraged and facilitated, but it can never be coerced.[14]

A membership model of organizations adds a new layer of meaning to discussions of employee engagement. People must be invited to join and then be offered meaningful roles and responsibilities to play in the pursuit of collective outcomes from which they share in the mutual benefits produced by their joint efforts. This is the difference between hired hands and owner-members — where the former is an instrumental exchange and a transaction of convenience (e.g., Williamson, 1975), the latter is a mutual commitment to a shared outcome.

It is important to point out that this heightened commitment makes staffing decisions more difficult; not only is it harder to find and develop those who might be willing to join the community, but once they join, it is problematic to let them go (if necessary). You cannot simply "fire" members. As partners or even "co-owners" they have a very different stake in the enterprise of which they are a part. The instrumental calculus of human "resource management" becomes complicated — in a good way.

Personal Communication: "Voice" and "Dialogue"

Communication is often defined as the transmission of information between parties, or at a higher level, the

attainment of shared understanding. Miscommunication and misunderstanding are so prevalent within organizations that good communication skills are vital in management. But what if communication is about more than the effective transfer of information? What if it is about forging personal relationships and developing community? How would we communicate if we respected the sacredness and appreciated the person-ness of those with whom we interact?

Hirschman (1970) posited that people will respond in one of three (later modified to four by Rusbult et al., 1982) ways to situations of discontent in organizations. They will either "voice" their frustration (in hopes of changing the situation), carry on despite the frustration while trusting management to do what they can to fix the problem ("loyalty"), avoid the issue by walking away ("exit"), or give up and passively resign themselves to the situation ("neglect"). Given the high costs associated with passivity and/or turnover among employees, it behooves the organization to figure out ways to encourage loyalty and voice over exit and neglect. Voicing complaints does not necessarily solve the problem, but it is impossible for others to do anything about a problem until they are aware of it.[15] What Hirschman described under conditions of dissatisfaction can be usefully extended to the normal operation of the firm as a way to facilitate personal relationships.

Voice is the right to be heard and to have one's concerns included, respected, and addressed by the whole. Giving voice to someone does not guarantee their wishes will be *granted*, but it does ensure that their interests will be *considered* and taken seriously in the mix of concerns to be addressed. In every situation, some voices will be given preference over others — but not to the exclusion of the others. Not everyone is entitled to voice; the right to voice is rooted in one's connection to the enterprise and commitment to its success. Ignoring someone's voice or giving heed to outsiders' voices over insiders' are sure-fire ways to alienate and undermine the personal commitment to, and level of participation in, an organization (Vroom & Jago, 2007; Westhuizen et al., 2012).

Being personal requires openness to the other and disclosure of self — both of which entail sharing information. Voice is an act of self-expression. Voice is a form of contribution — it is a gift of information often inaccessible to the other. Voice values participation; it is a form of engagement that expects a response. Indeed, voice requires hearing, and hearing requires being open and paying attention. Being heard respects one's person-ness (Packer, 1975).

Voice and loyalty are more than just reactions to dissatisfaction. They can be built into the day-to-day operation of the enterprise in such a way that a deep connection (loyalty) is built by respecting and responding to the voices of one 's stakeholders.

As Buber described, I-thou encounters require openness on both sides. Our mutual awareness and availability to each other is a profoundly different encounter from the instrumental, impersonal transactions we normally experience in organizations. Mutual voice, or dialogue, is the medium of personal relationship. It is how personal knowledge is conveyed. I have to know you to be able to treat you as a person, but this means you have to be willing to tell me about yourself and your desires. Fostering voice is vital to facilitating personal connections. Communication is the transmission of information between parties (i.e., a transaction); dialogue is the exchange of knowledge between receptive persons (i.e., a relationship).

Meaningful voice is different from the appearance of voice. We all know of the employee suggestion box that is nothing more than a black hole where ideas go to die. This is not voice (nor even communication). True voice requires a response. There must be a person on the other end who hears and then does something with the information. They may tell us "no," but that is better than no response. Nothing kills connection faster than unrequited communication — we soon give up trying to be heard ("neglect") and then we give up on the relationship ("exit"). But hollow participation is no better. I cannot tell you how many meetings I have been where we go through the motions of voice but nothing ever changes; none of the suggestions are incorporated or acted upon. One quickly learns that it does not pay to speak up because no one is really listening. This is the equivalent of "learned helplessness" (Seligman & Maier, 1967) — i.e., "learned voicelessness" or "(l)earned disengagement." True voice is rooted in a fundamental appreciation of the other's person-ness—i.e., we care about what they are saying because they matter.

Of course, increased involvement can lead to heightened expectations such that employees (or other stakeholders) become disappointed when they are not consulted before a decision is taken, or they start demanding that their interests be given priority, or they take their "voice" outside the firm via whistle-blowing (Graham, 1986) and/or unionizing activities (McCall, 2001). For example, a "customer-first" culture has seeped into higher education such that students often express dissatisfaction — not with themselves, but with the school — when they do not get the grade they want or feel like the instructor is demanding

too much or is inflexible in scheduling assignments around her other activities (Franz, 1998; Svensson & Wood, 2007). When individual voices undermine the attainment of the collective mission, then the pendulum has swung too far. Conversation and dialogue are key mechanisms by which organizational commitment and institutional change are fostered (Oster, 2009), but a relational community respects both individual and collective interests — and holds them in dynamic tension (Cafferky, 2010).

Relational & Personal Leadership: "Embodiment" or Facilitating Connection With The Group

How do people have personal relationships with organizations? Here is where a reframed understanding of leadership could be helpful. Rather than the leader setting the tone, defining tasks, assigning goals, and/or serving as role-model, the leader personifies and embodies the organization — i.e., becomes the personal "face" of the organization. To the extent that I forge a relationship with the leader, I generalize those feelings to the whole organization (Eisenberger, et al., 2010). The leader's task is to facilitate the establishment of personal connections with the followers and thereby mediate their connection to the organization (c.f., Cafferky, 2010). Rather than maintaining a respectful distance, relational leaders strive for intimate familiarity (DePree, 1989). Knowing one's followers requires allowing one's self to be known. This is a two-way street.[16] Authentic leadership demands leaders become individuals for the people they are leading.

This affective, interpersonal dynamic echoes important themes in the area of leadership studies: i.e., the Leader-Member Exchange model's focus on relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and the "individualized consideration" and "person-oriented" behavioral models (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1994) as well as the intellectual and inspirational engagement of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Related ideas of charismatic and visionary leadership (House, 1976; Conger & Kanungo, 1987), personal integrity (Kouzes & Posner, 1993), and trust (Covey, 2006) also resonate with a more relational, personal, and redemptive understanding of reality.

By connecting with people's deeply held values and providing a compelling vision that captures their imagination or connecting with individuals as people such that they feel connected to the cause, or at least to the other people, leaders (and hence organizations) are able to foster strong bonds with their members. And once forged, such bonds are more likely to endure the vagaries of economic fluctuations. And while trust can be "efficient" in elimi-

nating layers of oversight and legal compliance, it can be abused (Covey, 2006). And once broken, trust is often more difficult to rebuild than it was to establish in the first place as the track record of violation must be redressed. But as documented by the Organizational Citizenship literature (e.g., Organ, 1988), true alignment and personal connection often results in followers being willing to work hard and sacrifice for the leader (and organization).

Of course, there is a potential downside of followers becoming too attached to a particular leader such that their connection is with the person rather than with the enterprise. We see this sometimes in churches, where a cult of personality grows around a particular pastor such that when that pastor leaves there is a dramatic decline in attendance. In a similar fashion, employees might develop a truly personal relationship with the leader such that their identification with the enterprise is jeopardized if that specific leader should leave. Customers often become loyal to a favorite salesperson or service-provider (e.g., doctor, sales rep, or hair-dresser). In these cases, the personal relationship overshadows their professional role such that the interaction takes on a whole new character. When work-related interactions lose their impersonal character, they become rich with meaning and full of reciprocal obligations, and they lose their interchangeable character.

The danger of facilitating connection, of being personal and relational with co-workers (or other stakeholders), and of building community within the enterprise is that it is more painful and disruptive when such relationships end. But then, such relationships are comparatively more meaningful, life-giving, and enjoyable all along the way. And that is a price worth paying. To ban personal relationships at work because they are messy would be akin to saying that in order to avoid the pain of grieving the loss of a loved-one, one should choose to never love at all. Pain is the price of being personal. Forging personal relationships is sometimes painful because it hurts when they are gone. And it is disruptive. So it is somewhat understandable when business people might want to avoid such entanglements in order to facilitate smooth exchanges and easy transitions. But this ignores what is lost along the way when we create painless, lifeless, impersonal organizations.

There is much more work to be done, but hopefully these brief discussions of how the "missing" theological constructs might inspire new thinking about management topics have piqued your interest and whetted your theological imagination.

SUMMARY

If God is redemptive, communal, personal, and relational, and man is a reflection of God, then the organizations we create and the managerial systems we enact are poorer for our neglect of these realities — i.e., our organizations are lonelier, meaner, more fragmented, and dysfunctional for ignoring the "missing" theological constructs. Existing management models are not wrong, but they are incomplete. Christians have valuable insights to contribute to the management conversation. This paper merely begins to consider how four theological concepts might inform management practice; there are many questions to answer, hypotheses to articulate, and procedures to work out before we have full-fledged new models of management. An essay like this raises more questions than it answers, but hopefully that is an indication that a rich vein of ideas has been uncovered.

As a theological "practitioner" (i.e., someone who lives with, rather than studies, theology), I know I have barely scratched the surface of theological insight into these profoundly important constructs. But as a management practitioner, I am also acutely aware that our current management models and organizational presuppositions are struggling to handle the stress our modern, global, commercial enterprises exert upon them. New systemic problems and scandals arise almost every day. The world needs new managerial ideas; it needs Christian management scholars and practitioners to design organizations that reflect the reality we know to be true.

ENDNOTES

1 One can see the themes of opportunism in Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), guile in Transaction-Cost economics (Williamson, 1975) and apathy in Theory X/Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). To be sure, there have also been exceptions to these themes — e.g., Elton Mayo's famous Hawthorn Studies, Peters and Waterman's "Search for Excellence," and more recently, all manner of "positive" and "sustainable" studies—which highlight the human and super-organizational aspects of business. But such concerns often get marginalized in the single-minded pursuit of profit and productivity.

2 While I would contend that these are vitally important theological constructs for Christians, I do not assert that they represent an exhaustive list of theological truths.

3 And note that God does not solve the problem of sin by declaring all-out war on evil or by eradicating people from the face of the planet — although He came close to doing this with Noah. He repeatedly chose to build and woo a chosen people into relationship. Finally, Christians believe that God sent his son, Jesus, to put things right once and for all by sacrificing himself for the sake of humanity's sin. How God chooses to act in history speaks volumes about what God is like.

4 Of course here is where, depending upon one's faith tradition, very different conceptions of God unfold. This is in part due to the inclusion, or not, of different parts of Scripture, but also in keeping with the traditional emphasis on different aspects of God's nature/character. As a Protestant Christian, I embrace the Old and New Testaments and view Jesus as the fullest revelation of God to humanity. Those from different faith traditions might not agree with the following theological constructs, but they represent a pretty mainstream version of Protestant theology.

5 Interestingly, many of the high-tech "killer apps" entail facilitating human connection — communication (cell phones), email, Facebook, Twitter, eHarmony, etc. Perhaps these products are so popular precisely because they tap into a fundamental aspect of human nature.

6 The Jews expected a Messiah, a savior, someone who would restore Israel's independence and usher in a new golden age of prosperity. He wasn't supposed to be a heretic! Jesus was not the Messiah the Jewish people were expecting, and ultimately, the religious leaders sentenced him to death for his blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-66).

7 Without a community to provide meaning, direction, and context, isolated individuals readily default to their narrow self-interest for guidance and direction.

8 I.e., economics, evolution, psychology, political science, etc.

9 While such models might initially be embraced only by those who share our worldview assumptions and faith commitments, to the extent that they represent a more accurate way of conceiving the world, we should not be surprised when they provide useful, experientially validated, new ideas which might eventually find a welcome home in the broader academy (i.e., "all truth is God's Truth").

10 It should be noted that the list of managerial topics is by no means comprehensive. One could easily add many more rows to Table 1.

11 Given such an objectivist, mechanistic model, no wonder people feel disengaged and alienated from the companies they work for. Also explains the long history of the participative and inclusiveness efforts aimed at trying to manufacture some kind of connection between the people and the enterprise (Drucker, 1954; Likert, 1967; Ouchi, 1981; etc.).

[12] See the Organizational Citizenship Behavior literature for more on this topic (e.g., Organ, 1988).

[13] Worker cooperatives exhibit many of the characteristics of a membership model. The primary difference is where in cooperatives each *person* gets a vote, in a corporation each *share* of stock gets a vote. Corporations are objects governed by owners; cooperatives are associations managed by members. Both can be designed to disperse responsibility and share outcomes.

[14] The concept of "branding" also resonates with a kind of communal identification with a company and/or its products. People — in this case, customers — choose to associate themselves with a firm's projected image and/or values, such that they feel like they become part of something larger than themselves. Indeed, the propensity of people to self-identify with a company or sports team by wearing their team jersey or logo-cap, or the phenomenon of "liking" or "re-tweeting" someone else's product, comment, or website all attest to the fundamental desire to be associated with something beyond themselves.

[15] Notice also the redemptive dynamic — i.e., to resolve dissatisfaction is to heal/restore relationship. But beyond restorative, there is something life-affirming and creative about seeing and respecting the sacredness of people and actively engaging in community with them.

[16] We are all wary of one-way data-gathering in order to inform some instrumental interaction; this disingenuous "relationship" marketing (or management) is nothing less than blatant manipulation. The fact that it masquerades as "personal" and "relational" makes it especially insidious.

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