

Good Work with Toil: A Paradigm for Redeemed Work

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ABSTRACT

Management research in the disciplines of Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management and Industrial / Organizational Psychology focuses on creating the optimum equilibrium between people and their work contexts. In this paper we use the Christian themes of creation, fall and redemption as a framework to analyze current management theories, and to prescribe further perspectives on the nature and meaning of work. Concepts derived from creation and fall are used to evaluate the paradigms undergirding most management theory. We propose another paradigm drawn from the Christian theme of redemption, which provides a coherent approach to work that recognizes the tension between good work as it was intended at creation, and work that has been marred by the fall – i.e., “toil.”

Good Work with Toil: An Ideology of Redeemed Work

Management scholars within the disciplines of Organizational Behavior (OB), Human Resource Management (HRM or HR) and Industrial / Organizational (I/O) Psychology seek to study and promote employee productivity and welfare within organizations. While there are differing foci across these three disciplinary areas, nonetheless, their researchers and practitioners strive for equilibrium between the needs of employees and employers. Given this charter, it would be reasonable to expect that these fields would have deeply articulated philosophical roots regarding the nature of humanity, its social and physical systems and the meaning associated with good work. Yet, historically, apart from a perfunctory nod to Weber's identification and analysis of the Protestant work ethic¹ on one hand, and the self-referenced, agency theory² on the other, there has been little articulation of the underlying assumptions

¹ Weber, Max, Talcott Parsons, and R. H. Tawney. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1930.

² Agency theory reflects the relationships between a principal and agent (a.k.a. an organization and employee) who attempt to engage in cooperative behavior but have different goals and different attitudes toward risk. Agency theory assumes that people are self-interested and risk averse with bounded rationality so that an organization's policies and pay system must be shaped to motivate people to give up their own goals and pursue their organization's goals. See Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review." *Academy of Management Review* 14 (1989): 57-74.

associated with management scholarship,³ and even less still that has been developed from an explicitly faith-informed perspective.⁴

This lack of perspective has consequences for furthering both management theory and practice since the ideology or philosophical orientation associated with management research has important consequences for theory development, the nature of hypotheses, the format of the research methodology, the interpretation of study results, the organization of research within the larger prevailing worldview,⁵ and ultimately, the practice of management and the quality of work life in organizations. The nascent work in Management, Spirituality and Religion and Positive Organizational Scholarship has begun to fill the gaps in a generally materialist orientation towards management research by emphasizing the non-materialist, transcendent and relational role that work has to play in connecting employees with a higher sense of purpose or meaning in life. However, with the lack of a common philosophical or theological framework, this research tends to use individual subjective experience as its criterion for determining what is good work. Although we do not argue with the value of work providing opportunities for subjective well-

³ Brief, Arthur P. and Walter R. Nord. *Meanings of Occupational Work: A Collection of Essays*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1990.

⁴ Benefiel, Margaret. "Irreconcilable Foes? The Discourse of Spirituality and the Discourse of Organizational Science." *Organization* 10 (2003): 383-391; Mitroff, Ian I. and Elizabeth A. Denton. *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

⁵ Daniels, Denise, Randal S. Franz, and Kenman Wong. "A Classroom with a Worldview: Making Spiritual Assumptions Explicit in Management Education." *Journal of Management Education* 24 (2000): 540-561.

being or a personal sense of meaning, we do make the case that Christian theology can lead to the development of a more nuanced and objective approach to addressing work ideology beyond a generally positive and subjective orientation. The purpose of this paper is to draw upon the Christian themes of creation, fall and redemption⁶ to draw parallels with theories found in current management literature, and to articulate the meaning of good work⁷.

Our approach to work draws heavily on writings by Neo-Calvinist theologians who advocate a role for Christianity in all spheres of human life. Along with other writers,⁸ we emphasize the importance of understanding (1) God's activity at creation; (2) The impact of the fall on the creation, including both people and institutions; and (3) God's subsequent redemption of the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This perspective suggests that redemption is not only spiritual and future-oriented, but physical and present in

⁶ Kuyper, Abraham and James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 1998.

⁷ Within our framework work can be a noun, verb and adjective. Consequently the use of the word work includes, 1) work activities, 2) work outcomes, 3) the context of work such as organizational structures and policies and 4) characteristics of workers themselves. Unless noted, the word "work" refers to of the systemic integration of these four uses.

⁸ Hollinger, Dennis P. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002; Plantinga, Cornelius. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002; Walsh, Brian J. and J. Richard Middleton. *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984; Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.

the here and now. It is through redemption that humanity is given the opportunity once again to co-create with God. According to theologian Al Wolters “redemption is a comprehensive salvage operation, the goal of which is nothing short of recovering all of life as it was meant to be lived according to God's creational design from the very beginning” (p. 3).

God’s good creation, as described in the first two chapters of Genesis, has been disrupted by the fall described in chapter three. In the New Testament, the death and resurrection of Christ begins the process of redemption from the fall for both humanity as well as physical creation. According to Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837 – 1920), the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross extends over all of life—no area is exempt from its impact, *all of life is to be redeemed*, it is not restricted to the sphere of church or of personal piety.⁹ This redemptive process does not open inward the gates to the Garden of Eden, allowing people to reenter God’s original creation; instead the gates are thrown open outward allowing us to work with God and continue the process of creation. To this end Christians are charged, through their activities to be co-workers with God to bring restoration and redemption to all of the present creation.¹⁰

There are three important implications of this theology for the examination of work. First, this perspective does not separate spiritual and secular life realms, proposing instead that redemption extends to all of life including work. Secondly, as a result of the fall both humanity and the nature of work as found in creation changed; however both can move toward redemption. Third, this perspective rejects a dualism between a perfected and timeless spirituality in the

⁹ McGoldrick, James Edward. *God's Renaissance Man: The Life and Work of Abraham Kuyper*. Auburn, Mass: Evangelical Press, 2000.

¹⁰ Dennison, William. D. "Dutch Neo-Calvinism and the Roots for Transformation: An Introductory Essay." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (1999): 271-291.

heavenly realm which was manifest in creation, versus the fallen world in which we live. Rather, redemption theology conveys a tension: people live and work in an imperfect, fallen world and yet this world and our work carry the hope of redemption.

In this paper, we use creation and fall characteristics found in Genesis to describe the underlying assumptions associated with work found in most management theories. We then suggest another framework that seeks to reclaim the goodness in the creation story yet reflects the tension in working out the hope of redemption in a fallen world.

Work at Creation

A Theological Perspective

At creation as reflected in the Genesis account, people are made in the image of God and this act of creation is described as an act of work which God deemed to be very good¹¹. Creation affirms human nature and work itself as good. Because humanity is made in the image of God who is portrayed as a worker, work is seen as good and is blessed by God. As people engage in work they are capable of reflecting back to each other the image of God. Creation provides the standard for evaluating work as well. That is, God has modeled “good work.” As Dorothy Sayers wrote, “man, made in God’s image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing”.¹²

The first and second chapters of Genesis are rich with material regarding human nature and work:

Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created

¹¹ Genesis 1:31.

¹² Sayers, Dorothy L. *Creed or Chaos?* 1st American ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949. p. 46

man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:27-31a)

Finally, in Genesis 2:2, the creation story ends with the first mention of the word work.

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

At least seven characteristics of work can be inferred from the creation account: the first three correspond to the work itself, and the subsequent four correspond to people as workers. First, since God's actions are defined as work, the creation story validates work as a positive action. The activity of work, be it physical or mental, is good and intended to provide satisfaction and joy.¹³

The second characteristic of work, its outcome, can be seen when God delights in "his work which he had made." The end to which God's work is directed is good, and it results in God's expression of pleasure. The purposes to which work is directed are important.

Thirdly, the context of work, or the workplace is good. In the partial retelling of the creation story in Chapter 2, God sets creation in place ex nihilo, but creates man from the earth itself. God uses the ground – the context of his work, i.e., his workplace – to continue the process of creation. In this case, the workplace provides the opportunity for both the creation of humankind and the growth of trees:

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The

¹³ Graves, Stephen R. and Thomas G. Addington. *The Fourth Frontier: Exploring the New World of Work*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000.

LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. (Genesis 2: 7 – 9a)

The remaining four characteristics of work in this passage are associated with people who engage in work. First, people are created by God and exist in the image of God. God is portrayed as one who works – therefore, people live out aspects of God’s image when they too engage in work. Theologian Karl Rahner wrote that the spiritual aspects of being human are part of being created by God.¹⁴ So workers themselves have inherent dignity because they are created in God’s image.

Next, people are co-workers with God and they are invited to participate in creative activity which accomplishes God’s purposes. According to John Calvin and later Puritan thought, work is an opportunity for the expression of creativity, which is inherent in human beings who are created in the image of God.¹⁵ God commands Adam to 1) “be fruitful and increase in number,” 2) “fill the earth and subdue it,” and 3) “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” The idea of people and God as co-workers is also stated in Psalm 8:6 where the writer noted, “You made [mankind] ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” When people engage in work, Martin Luther claimed that they were doing the provisional work of God. “By working we

¹⁴ Rahner, Karl. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*.

London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1978.

¹⁵ Ryken, Leland. *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure*. Grand Rapids,

MI: Baker Books, 1995.

actually participate in God's ongoing providence for the human race"¹⁶ Third, God gives people volitional will as part of creation.¹⁷ Men and women have the freedom to make choices as noted in Genesis 2:16-17 where God tells Adam, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..."

Finally, being made in the image of God, people are relational creatures with the capacity to relate to both God and other human beings. As each person within the God-head relates to the other persons of the Trinity, humans too have the capacity to relate to God. As God desires to be in relationship, people too are designed for relationship with others. Theologian Millard Erickson wrote that our ability to know and to be known reflects our likeness to the image of God.¹⁸ And because we have volition we can freely enter into relationships with both God and fellow human beings.

Work, as illustrated in the creation account, is more than these individual parts. In Genesis 1, God reflects back five times that the individual acts of creation are good. In this very goodness the "creator creates creation."¹⁹ But at the end, in verse 31, God notes that creation is *very good*. God has brought the totality of creation into harmony.²⁰ Hartley wrote that there are

¹⁶ Hardy, Lee. *The Fabric of this World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990. p. 47

¹⁷ Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983-1985.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982. p.17

²⁰ Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. 1st English ed. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961; Morris, Henry Madison. *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and*

four implications for this “very good”: 1) what came into being functions precisely as God had purposed; 2) that which had been created contributed to the well being of the created order; 3) the new creation had aesthetic qualities - that it was pleasing and beautiful; and 4) it had a moral force, advancing righteousness on earth (Job 38:12-13).²¹ Hartley ends by writing that everything – including the work that Adam and Eve were given to accomplish – was beautiful in a setting of complete harmony.

An Academic Perspective

Many current management theories reflect a worldview that is consistent with the concepts found in the scriptural creation account. Beginning in the early to mid 20th century the Human Relations School which included work by Mayo, McGregor, Herzberg, Likert, McClelland & Argyris, tended to view humanity as full of potential, self-directed, efficacious, and both capable and willing to work. Management only needed to create the appropriate work environment so that workers would be positively motivated by both appropriately structured extrinsic rewards and their own intrinsic sense of self to increase their productivity for the good of their organization.²² This positive approach to human nature and work is most recently

Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976; von Rad, Gerhard. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.

²¹ Hartley, John E. *Genesis. New International Biblical Commentary. Vol. 1*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, p. 50.

²² O'Connor, Ellen S. "The Politics of Management Thought: A Case Study of the Harvard Business School and the Human Relations School." *Academy of Management Review* 24 (1999): 117-131.

exemplified in Positive Organizational Scholarship which emphasizes ideas of “goodness“ and positive human potential that can be nurtured through the design of work and organizational structures²³ Similarly, recent scholarship within the realm of Management, Spirituality and Religion explicitly acknowledges the positive nature of humanity and work.

As shown in Table 1, a sampling of some common management theories demonstrates a clear reflection of the seven creation characteristics.²⁴ The first three are connected with the idea that “work is good.” More specifically, the activity and outcome of work and the workplace itself are all good. The last four creation characteristics are associated with the nature of workers, including their inherent dignity, their role as co-creator with God, their volitional will, and their identity as relational beings.

Table 1

Creation characteristics and commensurate management research

Creation Characteristics	Management Research
<i>Work is good</i>	
1. Work activities are good	Job Characteristics Model Empowerment P-E fit
2. Work outcomes are good	Stakeholder Theory Social Enterprise/Social Business
3. The workplace is good	Service Climate Appreciative Inquiry
<i>Workers are good</i>	
4. Workers have inherent dignity	Empowerment Trust Psychological contracts spiritual well-being spiritual intelligence
5. Workers are co-creators with God	Competence (Empowerment; SDT);

²³ Cameron, Kim S., Jane E. Dutton, and Robert E. Quinn. *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003.

²⁴ The management theories and examples used in this paper are illustrative and not exhaustive.

	Vocation
6. Workers have volitional will	Autonomy (Empowerment; SDT) Servant Leadership Authenticity Transcendent Action
7. Workers are relational beings	Relationships (Empowerment; SDT) Teamwork Interpersonal and Procedural Justice Other- Orientation Forgiveness Relatedness

The first creation characteristic is that the activity of work is good. There are many management theories that have underlying assumptions and/or findings consistent with the idea that work activity is good. Several theories imply that work activity is good because it influences workers' well-being, and allows people to act in ways that are consistent with their own sense of self.²⁵ Over 50 years ago Psychologist Frederick Herzberg²⁶ showed that employees are intrinsically motivated to engage in work which they perceive to be meaningful. Later, Psychologists Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham demonstrated that employees who could identify the significance of their work for co-workers, their organization and the world

²⁵ Avolio, Bruce J. and William L. Gardner. "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership." *Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 315-338; Peterson, Richard A. "In Search of Authenticity." *Journal of Management Studies* 42 (2005): 1083-1098; Russell, Joyce E. A. "Promoting Subjective Well-being at Work." *Journal of Career Assessment* 16 (2008): 117-131.

²⁶ Herzberg, Frederick. *The Motivation to Work*. 2d ed. New York: Wiley, 1959.

outside of their organization, were more motivated and satisfied than those who could not.²⁷

More recently, the literature on empowerment also stresses the importance of developing knowledge, skill, abilities or other attributes (KSAOs) in order to develop a sense of empowerment and meaning.²⁸ Person – Environment Fit research reflects the extent to which individuals perceive a fit between the requirements of their work environment and their beliefs, values and behaviors such that their work validates their sense of self.²⁹ In each case, the activities of work can determine a sense of meaning and well-being.

The second creation characteristic of work is that its outcome can be good. Rather than simply a focus on productivity or bottom line concerns, several recent management approaches have highlighted the importance of having good work outcomes for their own sake. Stakeholder theory, for example, is concerned with the shareholders of an organization, but also customers, employees, community, and the environment (among others). This approach is one in which the outcomes of work are understood to be much bigger than financial alone. And more recent management approaches have advocated for micro-finance endeavors, social enterprises, or

²⁷ Hackman, J. Richard and Greg R. Oldham. "Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60 (1975): 159-170.

²⁸ Spreitzer, Gretchen M. "Social Structural Characteristics of Psychological Empowerment." *Academy of Management Journal* 39 (1996): 483-504.

²⁹ Edwards, Jeffrey R. and Abbie J. Shipp. "The Relationship between Person-Environment Fit and Outcomes: An Integrative Theoretical Framework." In *Perspectives on Organizational Fit*, edited by Cheri Ostroff and Timothy A. Judge, 209-258. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2007; Gardner, Howard, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon. *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

“social business,” where profit and social good are both explicitly identified as important work outcomes.³⁰

The context of work as good is the third creation characteristic, and this idea too is reflected in management literature. For example, Schneider, Wheeler and Cox’s definition of a service climate suggests that employees will deliver excellent service to customers when the organization provides them with the resources (logistical, administrative, equipment, and managerial support) to deliver effective service and when the organization treats them as it would want them to treat customers.³¹ Likewise, the organizational change model, “appreciative inquiry” is based on the supposition that organizations have positive potential that can be unleashed by empowered workers.³² And finally, workplaces are good when they can be structured to allow for non-material individual spiritual development.³³ Beginning with the

³⁰ Yunus, Muhammad and Karl Weber. *Creating a World without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*. New York: Public Affairs, 2007.

³¹ Schneider, Benjamin, Jill K. Wheeler, and Jonathan F. Cox. "A Passion for Service: Using Content Analysis to Explicate Service Climate Themes." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 77 (1992): 705-716.

³² Srivastva, Suresh and David L. Cooperrider. *Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thought and Action in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

³³ Giacalone, Robert A. "A Transcendent Business Education for the 21st Century." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 3 (2004): 415-420; Raymond F. Paloutzin, Robert A. Emmons, and Susan G. Keortge. “Spiritual well-being, spiritual intelligence and healthy workplace policy.” In *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*,

seminal book by Mitroff and Denton³⁴ titled, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, writings that have a broader focus on spirituality in the workplace have examined how the design of work and workplaces can provide opportunities to enhance personal meaning and a sense of transcendence in the workplace.

The last four creation characteristics relate to the worker. First, workers have inherent dignity and worth by virtue of being created in God's image. This concept is reflected well in theories associated with trust³⁵ and psychological contracts.³⁶ Similarly, MSR research in spiritual well-being and spiritual intelligence reflects the idea that workers have an inherent spiritual nature which can be both developed and expressed in the workplace.³⁷

edited by Robert A. Giacalone and Carol L. Jurkiewicz, 123-136. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2003.

³⁴ Mitroff et al., "A *spiritual audit*."

³⁵ Kramer, Roderick M. and Tom R. Tyler. *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996; Tyler, Tom R. "Trust within Organisations." *Personnel Review* 32 (2003): 556-568.

³⁶ Schalk, René and Denise M. Rousseau. "Psychological Contracts in Employment." In *Handbook of Industrial, Work and Organizational Psychology, Volume 2: Organizational Psychology*, edited by Neil Anderson, Deniz S. Ones, Handan Kepir Sinangil, and Chockalingam Viswesvaran, 133-142. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002.

³⁷ Giacalone et al., "*Handbook*."

The components of competence, autonomy, and relatedness found in self-determination theory (SDT) span the last three characteristics of workers.³⁸ Perceived competence, or self-efficacy specific to one's work, is a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill.³⁹ Both notions of competence and self-efficacy emphasize the importance of human cognition and action in work. Writers on spirituality have stressed work as a vocational calling⁴⁰ to serve the (somewhat nebulously defined) “divine” and thus continue the work of the individual’s own reflection of the divine through his or her job.⁴¹ Each of these approaches has parallels with the scriptural themes of humans as co-creators with God.

The construct of autonomy, which is “feelings of personal volition towards activities that are congruent with one’s sense of self,”⁴² aligns with the creation characteristic of volitional will.

³⁸ Ryan, Richard M. and Edward L. Deci. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-being." *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 68- 79.

³⁹ Gist, Marilyn E. and Terence R. Mitchell. "Self-Efficacy: A Theoretical Analysis of its Determinants and Malleability." *Academy of Management Review* 17 (1992): 183-211.

⁴⁰ In the MSR literature, the notion of calling is not always – or even usually – referring back to Luther and Calvin’s conception of all work as a form of vocation given by God (see Bainton, Roland Herbert. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: New American Library, 1950 and Hardy, “*The fabric*.”

⁴¹ Neal, Judi. "Work as Service to the Divine." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 (2000): 1316 – 1334; Wrzesniewski, Amy, Clark McCauley, Paul Rozin, and Barry Schwartz. "Jobs, Careers, and Callings: People's Relations to their Work." *Journal of Research in Personality* 31 (1997): 21-33.

⁴² Ryan et al., “*Self-Determination Theory*,” p. 74.

Autonomously functioning individuals experience more meaning in their work when their work activities are seen as emanating from their own choices. Other management theories also rely on the idea of volitional will. Employees practicing volitional will can freely choose to lead through service and thus model and motivate others to servanthood.⁴³ Management Professors Thomas Bateman and Christine Porath characterized transcendent behavior as autonomous actions that lead to changes in organizational behavior and structures which further optimize employee and organization well being.⁴⁴ In each of these examples, work behaviors that are self-determined are important and necessary for the development of well-being.⁴⁵

Lastly, research on team work has shown the benefits of cohesive relationships to team satisfaction, output and organizational effectiveness.⁴⁶ Procedural and interpersonal justice research has established that when people are treated with dignity and respect, they are more

⁴³ Greenleaf, Robert K. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

⁴⁴ Bateman, Thomas S. and Christine Paorath. "Transcendent Behavior." In *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, edited by Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton and Robert E. Quinn, 122 – 137. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003.

⁴⁵ Deci, Edward L. and Richard M. Ryan. "Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-being: An Introduction." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9 (2008): 1-11.

⁴⁶ Kozlowski, Steve W. J. and Bradford S. Bell. "Work Groups and Teams in Organizations." In *Handbook of Psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 12.*, edited by Walter C. Borman, Daniel R. Ilgen and Richard J. Klimoski, 333-375. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

likely to accept decisions which may have negative personal implications.⁴⁷ Psychologist David Myers has shown that relatedness to others is a powerful predictor of subjective well being,⁴⁸ while significant attachment to others across the life span has been shown to have important mental and physical health implications.⁴⁹ Building community is also an important theme running through the MSR literature.⁵⁰ More specifically, practicing forgiveness leads to broader and deeper relationships at work⁵¹ and mitigates negative outcomes in the presence of difficult organizational choices such as layoffs.⁵²

⁴⁷ Tyler, Tom R. "Trust within Organisations." *Personnel Review* 32 (2003): 556-568; Cropanzano, Russell, Deborah E. Rupp, Carolyn J. Mohler, and Marshall Schminke. "Three Roads to Organizational Justice." In *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management, Vol 20.*, edited by Gerald R. Ferris, 1-123. US: Elsevier Science/JAI Press, 2001.

⁴⁸ Myers, David G. "The Funds, Friends, and Faith of Happy People." *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 56-67.

⁴⁹ Feeney, Judith and Patricia Noller. *Adult Attachment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

⁵⁰ Conger, Jay Alden. *Spirit at Work: Discovering the Spirituality in Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.

⁵¹ Park, Nansook and Christopher Peterson. "Positive organizational studies: lessons from Positive Psychology." In *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, edited by Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton and Robert E. Quinn, 14-48. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003.

⁵² Bright, David S., Kim S. Cameron, and Arran Caza. "The Amplifying and Buffering Effects of Virtuousness in Downsized Organizations." *Journal of Business Ethics* 64 (2006): 249-269.

In summary, the constructs, theories, and ideas from management research in these examples reflect the creation characteristics of work contained in the Genesis account. The net result of these empirical findings is a directive to managers to design jobs so that individuals are more fully empowered (often through self-managed teams), to provide opportunities for employees to build relationships with co-workers and other stakeholders, and to convey information that helps employees understand how the end-user is served through their employment. These characteristics of work are not only important because of the empirical evidence concluding that they lead to improved productivity and worker well-being, but they are important because they parallel God's intention of how humanity should function in its work.

Work after the Fall

Ironically, even as recent research has emphasized the goodness of humanity, there is a burgeoning interest within management in studying what is often called the “dark side” of organizational behavior where behavior or withholding of action by an individual or group is detrimental to one, many or the entire organization.⁵³ While the positive creation characteristics of work resonate with much of management science, these “dark side” characteristics of work and workers also resonate because the creation characteristics that God designed at creation no longer function as intended; the nature of the world is tainted with human sin as a result of the “fall.”

A Theological Perspective

⁵³ Fox, Suzy and Paul E. Spector. *Counterproductive Work Behavior: Investigations of Actors and Targets*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005; Griffin, Ricky W. and Anne O'Leary-Kelly. *The Dark Side of Organizational Behavior*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

In the story of the fall, Adam and Eve's disobedience results in their separation from God and a world that no longer reflects God's purposes at creation. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:20, "Creation was subjected to futility." After the fall, the human experiences of life and work became different from what God intended at creation. God's image is still imprinted upon humanity, but that image has been distorted. Sin distorts the nature of work itself. Adam and Eve are told that because of their disobedience to God, the ground they work will be cursed and their own work will be full of pain and toil:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. (Genesis 3: 17)

The nature of work is diminished and separated from its transcendent goodness. Sin mars the relationship people had with God, and impacts their role as co-creators. Rather than submitting to God's authority, Adam and Eve try to assume God's role, giving in to the tempter's words that "you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5). The concept of stewardship, or taking care of creation, becomes less meaningful without acknowledgement of God's authority over creation. Instead of acting as caretakers and stewards of God's creation, the primary organizing principle of human behavior becomes self-interested domination rather than the mutuality of relationships.⁵⁴

Historically, it has not been unusual for the Christian Church to teach that at the fall, the positive attributes of work found in creation,⁵⁵ and particularly any positive connotations

⁵⁴ *The Interpreter's Bible 1. [General Articles on the Bible, General Articles on the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus].* u.a: Abingdon Press, 1952; Wolters, "Creation Regained."

⁵⁵ Hardy, "The Fabric."

associated with physical labor which served as a synonym for toil, were totally destroyed. The influential 18th century minister and commentator Mathew Henry provides the following puritanical interpretation of the meaning of the fall:

*Labour is our duty, which we must faithfully perform; it is part of man's sentence, which idleness daringly defies. That uneasiness and weariness with labour are our just punishment, which we must patiently submit to, since they are less than our iniquity deserves.*⁵⁶

However, examination of the text suggests that the work given to people by God in creation has not been destroyed rather, work has been disrupted.⁵⁷ The Hebrew word for toil (כצע 77) does not literally refer to physical labor but to sorrow, and the Hebrew word frequently translated as toil corresponds to the same word that is translated as pain (כצע) in other biblical texts (e.g., Genesis 3:16). Toil is not synonymous with physical labor but to that which is toilsome or sorrowful.⁵⁸ Unlike later Western philosophy, the Genesis text does not distinguish between emotions of the mind and actions of the body; pain, sorrow and toil are the same concept. So toil as sorrow represents disordered work separated from its intent at creation.

The characteristics of good work found in creation are all tainted by the fall. Christian Ethics Professor Gilbert Meilaender has been critical of a view that over-romanticizes the positive role of work without also taking into consideration the implications of work within a sin

⁵⁶ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Tappan, NY: F.H. Revell, 1925, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis. 1-15. Word Biblical Commentary*; v. 1. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.

⁵⁸ U. A. "The *Interpreter's Bible*."

filled world.⁵⁹ First, the activity of work itself is full of sorrow. Second, the outcome of work is not always positive, or what was intended. The teacher in Ecclesiastes wrote “What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). Likewise the context of work – in Genesis the soil – is cursed. Paul wrote in Romans 8:22 that the *whole* of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

The four characteristics of humanity in creation are also disordered as people either willfully reject their creation roles or find that because of their sinful, limited capacity, they do not always act in ways that are commensurate with God’s will. Workers reject their own inherent dignity. Adam and Eve are compelled to cover themselves and hide from God. Second, workers reject their co-creation role. In the Biblical narrative people create the tower of Babel for their own edification in order to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4) rather than working in partnership with God. Third, rather than practicing volition, people are prone to personal enslavement and self-deception. Jesus said, “everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). Noting this type of enslavement Paul wrote “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate” (Romans 7:15). Human nature is no longer perfect given its transgressions, distortions and short fallings and is subject to self-deception.⁶⁰

Lastly, the fallen nature of humanity leads to the propensity of elevating self over other, and the consequence is distorted relationships. Cain with Abel, Jacob with Esau, David with

⁵⁹ Meilaender, Gilbert. *Working: Its Meaning and its Limits: The Ethics of Everyday Life*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.

⁶⁰ Plantinga, “*Engaging God’s World*”; Wolters, “*Creation Regained*”; Smedes, Lewis B. *A Pretty Good Person: What it Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude, and Integrity, Or, when Pretty Good is as Good as You can be*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990.

Uriah, and Annanias and Saphira with the early church all demonstrated a predilection toward self-interest with sometimes deadly results. As the prophet Isaiah wrote “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). This self-interest leads to domineering and instrumental relationships as people attempt to “leverage” relationships as transactions to accomplish their own purposes. Plantinga noted that as a result of the fall, sin moves beyond the individual to create waves and cultures of devastation and corruption.⁶¹

An Academic Perspective

While OB, HRM and I/O Psychology theories and research, for the most part, continue to reflect a positive bias toward the activities and outcome of work along with the characteristics of workers, there is an increased understanding that people bring goals, values, emotions and personality characteristics to the workplace that are not always consistent with or optimal for the goals of their organizations.⁶² Further, there is an awareness that organizations can foster mass unethical behavior either through their cultural norms or through weak control systems.⁶³ Subsequently, research is growing that documents and tries to explain counter-productive or deviant behavior in organizations. As shown in Table 2, some of the variables being studied as “dark side” attributes have been in the literature for decades (e.g. job stress; role conflict and overload; absenteeism & tardiness). But others have arisen more recently as concerns with workplace violence and unethical financial reporting have regularly headlined news over the past

⁶¹ Plantinga, “*Engaging God’s World.*”

⁶² Hogan, Robert and Robert B. Kaiser. "What we Know about Leadership." *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2005): 169-180.

⁶³ Clarke, Frank L., G. W. Dean, and K. G. Oliver. *Corporate Collapse: Regulatory, Accounting, and Ethical Failure.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

decade. Fox and Spector wrote that these “dark side” behaviors can be grouped into two categories: characteristics of the workplace and individual employee characteristics.⁶⁴ These two categories map to the fallen characteristics of work and the nature of humanity.

Table 2
Fall characteristics and commensurate management research

Fall Characteristics	Management Research
<i>Work is toilsome</i>	
1. Work activities are toilsome.	Job Stress Role Conflict and Overload
2. Work outcomes are toilsome.	Corporate Malfeasance Unethical behavior
3. The workplace is toilsome.	Discrimination Sexual Harassment
<i>Image of God in workers is marred</i>	
4. Workers reject their own inherent dignity	Absenteeism Tardiness Substance Abuse
5. Workers reject their co-creation role with God	Aggression Sabotage
6. Workers do not practice volitional will	Compensation Agency Theory Transactional Leadership
7. Self-interested workers create instrumental relationships.	Politics Extreme impression management.

As shown in Table 2, as people perceive less meaning in their work, their reported rates of alienation, job stress, role conflict and overload increase.⁶⁵ Each of these characteristics reflects work activities that have become toilsome. The result of work can also create sorrow as management, with little to no external accountability for its actions, enhances its own bottom line

⁶⁴ Fox et al., “Counterproductive.”

⁶⁵ Volf, Miroslav. *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.

at the expense of other stakeholders.⁶⁶ Natural resources are exploited for corporate gain, or customers and other stakeholders are inadvertently or intentionally hurt through products that were brought to market illegitimately. In the case of MCI, Enron, Tandy, Countrywide Loans etc., the financial standings of customers, employees and other stakeholders are devastated due to corporate malfeasance.

The workplace itself can also become toilsome. Large, established companies with entrenched bureaucracies can be so stifling that it is difficult to create innovative products when customers are ignored and departments will not work together.⁶⁷ Likewise, power plays occur in organizations where those with less power are subject to harassment and discrimination.⁶⁸

The behavior of fallen people also creates toil at work. Workers reject their own dignity engaging in self-destructive behaviors ranging from unexcused absenteeism and tardiness to substance abuse.⁶⁹ Workers reject the skills and abilities gifted to them as co-creators with God, instead engaging in destructive behavior toward the company and stakeholders conducting

⁶⁶ Pinter, Brad, Chester A. Insko, Tim Wildschut, and Jeffrey L. Kirchner. "Reduction of Interindividual-Intergroup Discontinuity: The Role of Leader Accountability and Proneness to Guilt." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93 (2007): 250-265.

⁶⁷ Dougherty, Deborah and Trudy Heller. "The Illegitimacy of Successful Product Innovation in Established Firms." *Organization Science* 5 (1994): 200-218.

⁶⁸ Sutton, Robert I. *The no Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One that Isn't*. New York: Warner Business Books, 2007.

⁶⁹ See Fox et al., "*Counterproductive*," and Griffin et al., "*Dark Side*," for a more complete listing of negative activities at work.

corporate sabotage, intentionally damaging workplace property and products, negatively affecting their companies' reputations, or otherwise subverting work.⁷⁰

Employees reject their own volitional will and any sense of intrinsic motivation so that management must create strong corporate policies, procedures and compensation systems to adequately motivate employees. Agency theory,⁷¹ transactional leadership⁷² and psychological contracts⁷³ assume that workers will engage in specific behaviors related to their roles at work only to the extent that it provides them with an adequate payoff.

Lastly, workers reject being relational assuming that others are instrumental to their own agenda. This tendency is clearly seen in research that examines organizational politics and / or

⁷⁰ Folger, Robert and Daniel P. Skarlicki. "A Popcorn Metaphor for Employee Aggression." In *Dysfunctional Behavior in Organizations: Violent and Deviant Behavior*, edited by Ricky W. Griffin, Anne O'Leary-Kelly and Judith M. Collins, 43-81. US: Elsevier Science/JAI Press, 1998; Ambrose, Maureen L., Mark A. Seabright, and Marshall Schminke. "Sabotage in the Workplace: The Role of Organizational Injustice." *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes* 89 (2002): 947.

⁷¹ Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory."

⁷² This leadership approach assumes that leaders are powerful to the extent that they can provide something of value to their followers. Hence, leadership is fundamentally transactional in nature. If I am a leader, I will provide you with something you want so that you will be willing to obey me. See Bass, Bernard M. "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision." *Organizational Dynamics* 18 (1990): 19-31.

⁷³ Rousseau, Denise M. *Psychological Contracts in Organizations: Understanding Written and Unwritten Agreements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995.

extreme impression management behavior in which successful managers are trained to use political skill to make favorable impressions or manipulate the behavior of others to advance their own career aspirations.⁷⁴

Management research that aligns with fall characteristics reflects the fact that work is constantly veering toward the sorrowful. This research is put into practice when organizations attempt to limit the toilsome aspects of work by creating ever more HR policies or codes of ethics that allow for little discretion on the part of workers or managers. While workers may chafe under such systems where rules seem to multiply at an ever increasing rate, these policies are based on a paradigm of human nature that makes sense both from an empirical and theological basis. Unfortunately, this paradigm is only part of the picture because it is inconsistent not only with a creation view of people, but also with research that demonstrates that people have inclinations toward positive change even when they are influenced by negative events.⁷⁵

Redeeming Work

These two worldviews, consistent with creation and fall, underlie much of management literature. On the one hand there are management theories, models, and concepts based on a very positive view of work and workers, and on the other, there are approaches that underscore the negative. So how do we synthesize these different paradigms with research that leads to such different interpretations of work and worker? While in some ways opposites, each of these sets of theories is consistent with a Biblical perspective, and this creates a tension: People are made

⁷⁴ Blass, Fred R. and Gerald R. Ferris. "Leader Reputation: The Role of Mentoring, Political Skill, Contextual Learning, and Adaptation." *Human Resource Management* 46 (2007): 5-19.

⁷⁵ Cameron, "Paradox."

in God's image, but that image has been marred. Work is designed to provide joy and inherent meaning, yet it has become toilsome. People are neither the perfectible creatures portrayed in creation characteristics nor the self-interested employees who must be regulated by strong HR policies due to their fallen nature. Work that reflects God's intent for creation can exist for employees and their organizations but toil will also occur alongside the best of human work.

However, recognizing the existence of the tension between creation and fall does not reflect the sum of theological thinking regarding work. The goodness of creation was not obliterated by the fall; rather characteristics of creation have been distorted and shadowed by it.⁷⁶ Neither approach is consistent with a more complete Christian theology that includes not simply creation and fall, but also the third theme of redemption.

A Theological Perspective

Redemption is the action of God reconciling creation back into relationship with him through the person of Jesus. In the fall, humanity uses its volition to turn its back on God and its role as co-creators. Redemption offers the restoration of the co-creator role through the redeeming work of Christ "for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). This redemptive movement in Scripture is characterized as something that is "already – not-yet".⁷⁷ The work of redemption has begun through Jesus' death and resurrection and provides hope for a renewed earth, but humanity has not yet experienced the full mitigation of the effects of the fall.

⁷⁶ Plantinga, "Engaging God's World"; Wolters, "Creation Regained."

⁷⁷ Moltmann, Jürgen. *Theology of Hope; on the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* [Theologie der Hoffnung.]. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Redemption goes beyond an individual's body and soul. It addresses reconciliation with others, the structure of organizations and the larger social and physical systems that house organizational life.⁷⁸ According to theologian Cornelius Plantinga,

*God wants to save social systems and economic structures too. If the management/labor structure contains built in antagonism, then it needs to be redeemed. If the health care delivery system reaches only the well to do, then it needs to be reformed. The same goes for the hostile relationships of race, gender, or class. The same goes for proud and scornful attitudes among heterosexuals toward homosexuals. Landlord and tenant, student and teacher, husband and wife . . . Everything corrupt needs to be redeemed, . . . The whole natural world, in all its glory and pain needs the redemption that will bring shalom.*⁷⁹

An Academic Perspective and Agenda

Rather than choosing to emphasize the positive characteristics of work consistent with the creation characteristics or promoting organizational policies that attempt to constrain the toilsome aspects of work, we propose an academic agenda that seeks to harmonize the research associated with creation and fall characteristics, along with the understanding that both work and workers can serve a redemptive role in the world. We propose three aspects of redeemed work, which when taken together offer a theology-driven, forward-looking, and normative approach to management rather than the data-driven, backward looking, description of management practices associated with the creation and fall characteristics: 1) Redeemed work is objectively

⁷⁸ Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.

⁷⁹ Plantinga, "Engaging God's World."

meaningful; 2) Redeemed work recognizes that people are created in God’s image; 3) Redeemed work seeks to minimize toil.

Redeemed work is objectively meaningful.

To begin, redeemed work occurs when the outcome to which the work is directed is consistent with God’s purposes; that is, redeemed work is objectively meaningful work. Philosopher Joanne Ciulla wrote that meaningful work consists of work that is morally worthy in which people directly help others or create products that make life better for people.⁸⁰ More specifically meaningful work either commits to furthering the work of creation or seeks to redress the nature of the fallen world. Furthering the work of creation involves providing the goods and services that are needed for human flourishing.⁸¹ The recent interest in social ventures and “social business” are consistent with redeemed work.⁸² More and more organizations are attempting to veer their mission toward making a positive difference for their stakeholders and the world.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ciulla, Joanne B. *The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work*. New York: Times Books, 2000.

⁸¹ VanDuzer, Jeffrey, Randall Franz, Gary Karns, Kenman Wong, and Denise Daniels. “It’s not your business: Christian reflections on spirituality and business.” *Journal of Management Spirituality and Religion* 3 (2006): 348-365.

⁸² Yunus, “*Creating*.”

⁸³ Jill C. Bradley, Arthur P. Brief, and Kristin Smith-Crowe. “The ‘good’ corporation.” In *The People make the Place: Dynamic Linkages between Individuals and Organizations*, edited by D. Brent Smith, 175-224. New York: LEA, 2008.

Meaningful work redresses the fallen world. Healing, providing justice and righting wrongs are types of work that are redeeming because they address problems that exist due to the fallen nature of creation. Providing justice would not have been necessary at creation because the world was just; likewise, healing is not necessary apart from the effects of the fall. Any work that addresses the deficiencies and brokenness resulting from the fall is redeeming work because it moves us in the direction of wholeness. This type of redeeming work attempts to back-fill and fix that which was disordered and undone at the fall.

Redeemed work recognizes that people are created in God's image.

The second aspect redeemed work evaluates the conditions associated with work. Does the design of work recognize the image of God across all employees? Given this image of God, employees deserve to be given moral autonomy, treated with dignity and respect and engaged in a corporate culture that values honesty, fairness and justice. Additionally, there is a subjective component to the design of work such that organizations value the uniqueness of the image of God in each employee, providing opportunities for employees to work in a way that allows for personal meaning, the experience of the transcendent, the use of life experiences, and personal values through the products they create and services they offer without expectations of instrumentality.⁸⁴

Redeemed work seeks to minimize toil.

Redeeming work is more than just engaging in meaningful work, or recognizing the image of God in those doing the work. Both of these ways of redeeming work fail to address the

⁸⁴ Britt, Thomas W., Amy B. Adler, and Paul T. Bartone. "Deriving Benefits from Stressful Events: The Role of Engagement in Meaningful Work and Hardiness." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 6 (2001): 53-63.

fact that because our work occurs in a fallen world it will contain toil. Writings on vocation may be overly positive in this respect. For example, Hardy wrote that pursuing vocation as a spiritual quest includes ascertaining one's concerns, skills and interests and spiritual gifts from God and finding transcendent meaning by exercising those gifts for the sake of others.⁸⁵ Similarly, the writer Frederick Buechner wrote, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."⁸⁶ However, we argue that the third aspect of redeemed work is the recognition that people daily work with toil and like the objective and subjective conditions of work, the third aspect of redeeming work calls for minimizing the toil that is now part and parcel of the experience and outcome of work.

One of the ways to minimize toil is to recognize that it exists, and that the experience of toil may be part of vocation. Conducting the work of redemption with God does not negate the fact that people who are created in God's image are still bounded by sin, and prone to self-deception and self-interest. Good work occurs with toil; they both exist simultaneously in some quantity in all workplaces. Simply acknowledging this tension changes one's perspective and can be redemptive. For example, in academia, faculty must repeatedly grade multitudes of papers often on the same topic, participate in time consuming faculty governance meetings or give students low grades. In business, managers must lay off employees, give performance feedback to poor performers, spend time at planning off-sites or deny a raise. Yet who feels skilled at laying off employees? Who had deep gladness when they realize that a student has plagiarized? Who has not experienced the tedium of meetings, reading e-mails or grading hundreds of papers

⁸⁵ Hardy, "*The fabric.*"

⁸⁶ Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking; a Theological ABC*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973, p. 95.

at the end of a term? Nevertheless, if people are not willing to view this toilsome work as part of their calling in a fallen world, the result can be increasingly toilsome work. A redeemed perspective on work recognizes that every vocation incurs some level of risk, discomfort and even suffering⁸⁷ and an unwillingness to enter into that suffering can lead to greater toil.

Research has shown that innovation and positive change are more likely to happen in organizations where there is recognition of the positive and toilsome aspects of work, or the good and flawed nature of people. Organizations and their members who view themselves in exclusively positive terms are most prone to hubris and threatened by organizational change.⁸⁸ However, organizations that recognize their own flaws as opportunities for learning, change, grace and gratitude rather than shame and self-abasement are also more likely to work in community to make pro-social changes around them.⁸⁹

Likewise, toil is minimized as we willingly admit to our own sins, flaws, weaknesses and limitations, both known and unknown. People are woefully unaware of gaps in their own self-

⁸⁷ Neafsey, John. *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

⁸⁸ Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House, 2006; Tangney, June Price and Ronda L. Dearing. *Shame and Guilt. Emotions and Social Behavior*. New York: Guilford Press, 2002.

⁸⁹ Emmons, Robert. "Acts of Gratitude in Organizations." In *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, edited by Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton and Robert E. Quinn, 81-93. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003.

knowledge.⁹⁰ Wisdom is, in part, knowing that one does not know and that knowledge is fallible. Or in other words, “the more one knows, the more one realizes the extent of what one does not know.”⁹¹ St. Paul is characteristic of this wise self-knowledge when he wrote “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate” (Romans 7:15). Humility, as a form of wisdom, includes an openness to concede mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge and limitations in a way that is not a form of self-abasement, humiliation or low self-esteem.⁹²

Workplaces are fragile systems where mistakes and errors are inevitable. But workplaces are redemptive when they acknowledge the possibility of these mistakes, and take steps to build a culture that corrects them. Organizations that practice error management recognize that errors will occur yet shape their culture so that errors are quickly reported and detected, that negative error consequences are effectively handled and minimized, and that learning occurs.⁹³ These organizations are more profitable because they “learn from errors, are more apt to experiment,

⁹⁰ Dunning, David. *Self-Insight: Roadblocks and Detours on the Path to Knowing Thyself. Essays in Social Psychology*. New York: Psychology Press, 2005.

⁹¹ Weick, Karl E. “Positive Organizing and organizational Tragedy.” In *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, edited by Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton and Robert E. Quinn, 66-80. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003. p.71.

⁹² Morris, J. Andrew, Céleste M. Brotheridge, and John C. Urbanski. "Bringing Humility to Leadership: Antecedents and Consequences of Leader Humility." *Human Relations* 58 (2005): 1323-1350.

⁹³ Keith, Nina and Michael Frese. "Effectiveness of Error Management Training: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93 (2008): 59-69.

and are more likely to innovate.”⁹⁴ For example, organizations that foster open downward communication, acknowledge ambiguity, disengage from negative entrapment and do not accept silence as consent are more likely to rebound from episodic tragedies⁹⁵ and organizations that are more likely to innovate are also more likely to be change agents that make a difference.

A second way that toil can be minimized is through cognitive reframing, claiming a broader view of vocation and / or emphasizing personal growth. Toilsome work is reframed when the people are able to expand their perspective on what their work is about. Robert Greenleaf, a longtime manager at AT&T and an advocate of servant leadership in organizations, made the point that one of the most significant tasks of an organization is to communicate a meaningful vision to its people. He wrote, “[A] serious lack of vision is a malady of almost epidemic proportions among the whole gamut of institutions that I know quite intimately.”⁹⁶ And yet, when the vision is provided – when the perspective changes – toil is reduced. The psychology and management literature is replete with examples of this phenomenon. Former CEO of Service Master, William Pollard, shared how the work habits and job satisfaction of a hospital’s janitors changed when they were persuaded that their work contributed to the healing process of sick people rather than simply cleaning floors and toilets.⁹⁷ Soldiers returning from

⁹⁴ van Dyck, Cathy, Michael Frese, Markus Baer, and Sabine Sonnentag. "Organizational Error Management Culture and its Impact on Performance: A Two-Study Replication." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90 (2005): 1228-1240.

⁹⁵ Weick, “*Positive Organizing*.”

⁹⁶ Greenleaf, Robert K. and Larry C. Spears. *The Power of Servant-Leadership: Essays*. San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1998, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Pollard, C. William. *The Soul of the Firm*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Bosnia showed greater resilience to the extent that they were able to perceive their work as meaningful.⁹⁸

Good work with toil can be valued for the opportunities to experience social benefits. Building relationships through perseverance, forgiveness, trust and extending grace most likely occur in situations that are fraught with toil. People who confront trauma are more likely to develop increased self-reliance, empathy, better relationships and more robust coping skills.⁹⁹ Additionally, personal growth can occur in the midst of toil. Theologian and Human Development specialist James Fowler wrote that infrequent and intrusive life events such as divorce, death, birth or illness serve as catalysts to disorient current self-schema and motivate a person to adopt a more complex and nuanced understanding of life's moral and spiritual meaning.¹⁰⁰ Research by Psychologists Robert Hogan and Robert Sinclair suggests that positive changes in adult character formation can only occur in the presence of major life events where past patterns of behavior are no longer effective, leading to a reevaluation of one's sense of

⁹⁸ Britt et al., "*Deriving Benefits.*"

⁹⁹ Folkman, Susan and Judith Tedlie Moskowitz. "Coping: Pitfalls and Promise." *Annual Review of Psychology* 55 (2004): 745-774; Holahan, Charles J. and Rudolf H. Moos. "Life Stressors and Mental Health: Advances in Conceptualizing Stress Resistance." In *Stress and Mental Health: Contemporary Issues and Prospects for the Future*, edited by William R. Avison and Ian H. Gotlib, 213-238. New York: Plenum Press, 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Fowler, James W. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984.

———. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

self.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins wrote that CEO's of consistently high performing companies tend to have great personal humility which was often born out of difficulty.¹⁰²

Conclusion

It is in the already – not yet framework that we interpret what redemption means for work. A worldview informed by a theology of redemption will include not only an evaluation of creation and fall characteristics of work but will call for an evaluation of the purpose of work, the impact of the work on workers, and efforts to recognize and mitigate toil within work. Until redemption has been completed in the fullness of the Kingdom of God, there will always be good work with toil. Never the less, this work may be redeemed.

¹⁰¹ Hogan, Robert and Robert Sinclair. "For Love or Money? Character Dynamics in Consultation." *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 49 (1997): 256-267.

¹⁰² Collins, James C. *Good to Great: Why some Companies make the Leap--and Others Don't*. New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001.