

**Motivation from a Christian Perspective**  
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**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to explore motivation from a Christian perspective and its implications for relationships between management and consumers, managers and employees, and stockholders and managers. The contribution of this paper is twofold: first, it provides a brief review of the literature on motivation as it appears in college business-related textbooks. Second, it introduces a philosophical framework and a Christian perspective of motivation and discusses implications for motivating consumers, managers, and employees.

This paper is relevant because a Christian perspective on motivation is missing from college textbooks. Business textbooks that do address this phenomenon merely assume that religion is a manifestation of culture; however, we contend that religion influences culture and culture, in turn, influences behavior. Therefore, a better understanding of motivation, particularly from a Christian perspective, is vital.

To aid this understanding, our paper summarizes what is presented on motivation in college textbooks; then, it examines motivation from a Christian perspective and discusses implications for the relationships between management and consumers, managers and employees, and stockholders and managers. More significantly, it offers a theoretical, Christian framework on which to discuss motivation from a Christian perspective.

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to explore motivation from a Christian perspective and its implications for relationships between management and consumers, managers and employees, and stockholders and managers. Prior research on motivation has been from a variety of disciplines, including Management, Psychology, and Sociology. For the most part, all significant research has been from a secular position. From a Christian perspective, the majority of writing on motivation has been mostly anecdotal and discussion orientated. Further, there has been little synthesis between the two streams of “secular” and Christian motivation research.

The contribution of this paper will be twofold. First, it will provide a brief review of the literature on motivation as it appears in college business-related textbooks. Second, it will introduce a philosophical framework and a Christian perspective of motivation and discuss implications for motivating consumers, managers, and employees.

**Why This Paper is Relevant**

A Christian perspective on motivation is missing from college textbooks. Business textbooks that do address this phenomenon merely assume that religion is a manifestation of culture. That is, a response to certain cultural needs, such as the need for moral order, the need for role models, the need to belong, the need for esteem, and the need for self-actualization (e.g., Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs).

We agree that culture does influence religion, but we also contend that religion influences culture. Religion (in this case Christianity), culture, and behavior are interconnected. The Bible instructs that one's faith should motivate one to live like one's creator (e.g., Colossians 3:8-11). Scripture also teaches that one should reach one's God given potential and serve God by serving others (e.g., Matthew 25:35-45). How one responds to these decrees (i.e., be a reflection of God, reach one's God given potential, serve God by serving others) will influence culture. Culture, in turn, influences behavior. Therefore, a better understanding of motivation, particularly from a Christian perspective, is vital.

Here we study motivation from two perspectives and discuss implications for at least three sets of relationships: the relationship between managers and consumers, the relationship between managers and employees, and the relationship between stockholders (owners) and managers. First, we summarize the research done on motivation relating to these three sets of relationships as presented in college textbooks; then, we examine motivation from a Christian perspective and discuss implications for these relationships. We begin by looking at consumer motivation.

### **Consumer Motivation from a Textbook Perspective**

Motivation can be defined as:

an activated state within a person that leads to goal-directed behavior. . . . Motivation begins with the presence of a stimulus that spurs the recognition of a need. . . . If the stimulus causes an actual state of being to diverge from a desired state of being, a need results (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 78).

Needs are categorized as “expressive” or “utilitarian” and “innate” or “learned.”

Expressive needs occur when the consumer senses a gap between social, ego, or aesthetic

ideals and reality; utilitarian needs occur when consumers have to solve “basic” problems. Innate needs are those “genetically programmed” into consumers, such as physiological needs: eventually consumers will feel hungry and tired; otherwise consumers learn needs through conditioning and socialization processes. Needs can be “aroused” physiologically, emotionally (for example, by an advertisement that portray men and women in “feverish, all-consuming intensity”), or cognitively (for example, by an advertisement that provides reminders) (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000, p. 76). When needs are satisfied, consumers experience positive affective states.

However, one general rule about motivation is that needs are never fully satisfied; “they continually impel actions designed to attain or maintain satisfaction.” Furthermore, as needs become satisfied, new and higher-order needs emerge “that cause tension and induce activity;” finally, consumers who achieve their goals “set new and higher goals for themselves” (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000, p. 70) and people who cannot obtain a specific goal may find substitute goals or adopt certain defense mechanisms out of frustration such as aggression, rationalization, regression, withdrawal, repression, etc.

Abraham Maslow proposed that people have five basic levels of needs, which range from lower-level “biogenic” to higher-level “psychogenic” needs; more specifically, these needs can be thought of as physiological (for example, food, clothing, etc.), safety (for example, order, stability, routine, control, health, etc.), social (for example, love, affection, belonging, etc.), esteem needs (for example, self-acceptance, success, independence, prestige, reputation, status, etc.), and self-actualization, or reaching one’s full potential. In theory, the lowest level of unsatisfied need “felt” by a

consumer motivates her/him toward the goal of satisfying that need; when this need is satisfied, a higher need emerges until the lower level need is perceived again.

Maslow's ideas are typically discussed in terms of consumer and employee motivation perspectives. In terms of consumer motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs served as the foundation for SRI Consulting's Values and Lifestyle Systems, which, in essence, assume that self-actualization is dependent upon income.

There are also parallels between Maslow's work and the work of David McClelland. McClelland focused primarily on higher level, learned needs: the needs for achievement, affiliation, power, and novelty. The need for power, or the desire to control one's environment, can be related to Maslow's safety need or to Maslow's ego need, since self-esteem may come for exerting power over others; the need for affiliation can be related to Maslow's social need; the need for achievement can be related to Maslow's ego or self-actualization needs; and, the need for uniqueness, or the need to perceive ourselves as different and original, could be related to Maslow's esteem need.

From a marketing perspective, dealing with four needs is simpler. But from a Christian perspective, don't we also have needs for faith, hope, and love? Doesn't faith and hope produce action guided by love (cf. I Corinthians 13:13; I Thessalonians 1:3)?

Given the above definition of needs, marketers know that needs can be learned through conditioning, which can help marketers "lead" consumers to engage in such behaviors as "responding more positively to advertisements, developing positive attitudes toward brands, purchasing more in grocery stores and restaurants, and purchasing more with credit cards" (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 80).

One type of conditioning is classical conditioning, in which a previously neutral stimulus (called the conditioned stimulus, or CS) is repeatedly paired with the

eliciting stimulus (called the unconditioned stimulus, or UCS). In such a pairing, the CS needs to occur prior to the UCS so that it predicts the UCS. After an number of such pairings, the ability to elicit an unconditioned response is transferred to the CS. The response elicited by the CS is called the conditioned response (CR) (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 80).

For instance, buying elicits positive affect. Through many pairings of a credit card (and its logo) with buying, consumers get conditioned to feel good (and feel like spending) when they see a credit card logo (Feinberg, 1986). Likewise, when “liked” music (versus disliked music) was paired with a pen, the pen paired with the liked music was chosen significantly more frequently (Gorn, 1982).

A second type of conditioning is operant conditioning, in which “the frequency of occurrence of a particular behavior is modified by the consequences of the behavior” (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 82). Operant conditioning relies on the use of “reinforcers:” “positive reinforcers” are rewards for “appropriate” behavior such as a earning savings bonds through credit card purchases; “negative reinforcers” involve the “removal of an adverse stimulus” such as the cost of hospitalization which can be “avoided” through the purchase of medical insurance; a “secondary reinforcer” is a “previously neutral stimulus that acquires reinforcing properties through its association with a primary reinforcer” (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 83) such as a brand name which becomes associated with a product that performs well (primary positive reinforcer); finally, a “punisher” is “any stimulus whose presence after a behavior decreases the likelihood of the behavior recurring” (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 84) such as poor service.

A third type of conditioning is vicarious, or observational, learning, in which people learn patterns of behavior from watching the effects of reinforcers and punishers on other people. The person observed is called the “model,” and effective models have

been shown to be physically attractive, credible, successful, similar to the observer, and seen as overcoming difficulties and then succeeding (Manz and Sims, 1981).

The above have been called “general” theories of motivation; below are what some call “midrange” theories because they explain a “narrower” facet of human behavior. One midrange theory is called opponent-process theory, which says in some situations such as drug addiction, cigarette smoking, jogging, playing video games, etc., people have an immediate positive or negative emotional reaction to a stimulus, followed by a second emotional reaction that is opposite to that initially experienced. In other words, a jogger experiences pain in warm-up, but pleasure in cool-down; but a drug addict or an over-leveraged credit card user experience pleasure before pain. Unfortunately, to combat the feeling of pain, credit card users and drug addicts go out and make another purchase.

The process of pleasure before pain can be facilitated through the use of “priming,” which occurs “when a small amount of exposure to a stimulus (e.g., food, playing a video game, or navigating the Internet) leads to an increased drive to be in the presence of the stimulus” (Mowen and Minor, 2001, p. 88).

Related to opponent-process theory and credit card use is the need consumers have to maintain optimum stimulation level, which states that consumers have a preferred amount of physiological arousal, either low or high; Mountain Dew, for example, seems to be directed at those who want to maintain a high stimulation level.

A third midrange theory is the desire to maintain behavioral freedom, or the theory of psychological reactance. People react negatively when they perceive their freedom of choice is taken away. Psychological reactance has been used to explain the

failure of New Coke to the “retirement” of 8 colors from Crayola’s 64-crayon flip-top box.

### **A Christian View of Consumer Motivation**

Before we discuss a Christian view of consumer motivation, it is necessary to talk about philosophy and assumptions, for such things influence our analysis. The philosophy on which this analysis of motivation is built is based on “the basic motifs of creation-fall-redemption-consummation that are unfolded historically within the drama of biblical revelation” (Spykman, 1992, p. 10). These motifs assume that

in creation God covenanted his kingdom into existence. After the fall, God renewed the covenant with a view toward the coming of his kingdom. The ultimate goal is the restoration of all creation in the renewed earth. Thus, the original covenant stands forever as the abiding foundation and norm for life in God’s world. Similarly, in the beginning God created his kingdom – “the heavens and the earth,” the realm over which he rules. Mankind, then, as servants of the King, rebelled; but God came back, renewing his kingdom in a proleptic way through Israel, and then reestablished it decisively with the coming of King Jesus. The kingdom, therefore, now stands as a settled reality securely anchored in God’s past acts of salvation as an abiding, present, coming reality, and as an assured hope based on the promise of a future fully restored reality (Spykman, 1992, p.11).

This philosophy, as any philosophy, makes certain assumptions. First, does the science of motivation relate to Scripture, and, if so, how? In other words, is the norm for motivation located in the Bible or in science? If the norm for motivation is located in the Bible, then the only text necessary is the Bible; if the norm is located in humanity, then there is little need for the Bible.

The answer is that the norm for motivation is located in both places, for it is located in the Word of God which is revealed in creation, in Scripture, and “reaffirmed in

the redeeming work of Christ” (Spykman, 1992, p. 75). This is consistent with the term *sola Scriptura*, for:

The affirmation of *sola Scriptura* does not mean that Scripture is God’s only revelation. This was not the original meaning of this byword as coined by the sixteenth century Reformers. For clearly Calvin, Luther, and others held that God reveals himself in creation and in Christ as well as in Scripture. Moreover, their appeal to *sola Scriptura* was not meant to deny the importance of church traditions, theology, philosophy, the church fathers, or the sciences and arts. All these have their rightful place in the life of the Christian community. The question, however, is this: By what unimpeachable standard is Christian faith to be evaluated? What is our central criterion of judgment? The answer is *sola Scriptura*, which, in the ablative case, means “by Scripture alone” (Spykman, 1992, p. 77).

Thus, college text books are to be evaluated by Scripture. For instance, are they consistent with the story of creation-fall-redemption-consummation? Are they consistent with the biblical needs of faith, hope, and love?

Second, in addition to the assumption that the norm for motivation is located in the Word of God as it is revealed in creation and in Scripture and in the redeeming work of Christ, one could also assume that the norm for motivation will be everlasting.

The creational Word remains God’s first Word for the world. It is also his lasting Word. . . . The Paradise created, and lost, will be regained and fulfilled. The plan of redemption is not a different plan, replacing the original plan of creation. The original blueprint still holds. Redemption is, as it were, a “mid-course correction” (Spykman, 1992, p. 87).

If the norm for motivation is everlasting, then our job as Christian scholars has purpose.

Christian scholarship . . . is . . . called to discern the norms of God’s creational Word for our life in his world, illumined and directed by his Word in Scripture, under the regal authority of his Word incarnate, so that thus we may learn to “lead every thought captive in obedience to Christ” (Spykman, 1992, p. 84).

Third, assuming there are everlasting creational norms for motivation and we can locate them, one will be able to assess what went wrong and what is the remedy (cf. Colson and Pearcey, 1999, xiii). According to this Christian philosophy, it is a matter of structure/function and direction.

God brought forth a “cosmos,” a normatively structured, orderly world, not a “chaos.” In the beginning, therefore, the structures *of* creation answered fully to the divinely ordained structures *for* creation. But this was not the end of the story. The well-structured creation was also given a history, which involved active functioning, a dynamic opening up of the well-ordered potentials built into the creation (Spykman, 1992, p. 157).

In addition,

Willing obedience to this life-enveloping, love-impelling, shalom-embracing framework of law and order brings with it freedom, righteousness, and joy. It enables us to become all we are meant to be. This good order for creation holds for all our live relationships. It defines our manifold callings. . . . This cultural mandate [Genesis 1:26-31] lays its claim on us both as a benediction and a command. . . . It delineates in a typically biblical way the potentials for every human enterprise as well as the limitations on it (Spykman, 1992, p. 179, 180).

Finally,

Despite the effects of the fall, God by his preserving grace maintains this structural feature of the human makeup and its ability to function freely. . . . What then about the impact of sin on our will? It, too, became totally depraved, that is, radically misdirected and disoriented. Structurally and functionally we are what we always were; but directionally nothing is the same. Our wills, too, are now “so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good.” . . . We are burdened with an “enslaved freedom” – unless liberated and redirected by the life-renewing grace of God (Spykman, 1992, p. 333).

Therefore, according to this philosophy, we and all of creation were created structurally sound with certain functional purposes and created with the freedom to use these structures and purposes either in obedience to God or in obedience to some “intruder.” We chose not to obey God and therefore all of his good structures and

functions were misdirected away from his glory. To redirect the structures and functions of creation, God sent his Son and his Spirit. To redirect ourselves and the rest of creation in these “in between times” of “intense rear-guard skirmishes” and to “walk in the newness of life,” we have to, as it were, hand in our old armor. This is “discipleship.” This is “costly grace,” but such “discipleship means joy” (Bonhoeffer, 1979, p. 25). Thus, we, through Adam, misdirected what is structurally and functionally sound concerning consumer motivation, in what way has it been misdirected, and what can be done to redirect it?

One thing that can be done is for us to redefine and reclassify what we mean by needs. God created us with needs and that he created us with the freedom to direct our behavior to satisfy these needs. Already in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve had physiological needs and were free to choose from among “every seed-bearing plant” and “every tree that has fruit on it” to meet their need for food (Genesis 1:29, 2:16). Adam and Eve also had social needs, as Eve was created because “no suitable helper was found” (Genesis 2:20). But Adam and Eve also had a need for safety, esteem, and self-actualization, which was misdirected, for why else did they eat of from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:6)? Adam and Eve could have turned toward God and relied on the security of his hands; they could have felt good about themselves had they continued to “fill the earth and subdue it” in way that was obedient; they could have reached their God-given potential had they not looked toward the Serpent. They were created with needs (structure) so that they would worship something (function) but then misdirected their obedience.

In other words, we were created with the need to have faith in someone or something and to believe certain underlying presuppositions, to have hope in someone or something or no hope at all, and to love and be loved. From a creation-fall-redemption-consummation perspective, we misdirect our actions because our presuppositions are wrong, we put our hope in the wrong people and things, and we refuse to accept God's love so that we might direct our love to him.

Thus, we were created with innate needs, both expressive and utilitarian. We, the authors, prefer to think, however, that these innate needs function at a subconscious level, and that the "needs" we "learn" through socialization are really wants, or satisfiers of needs (see, e.g., Kotler, 1994, p. 7). For instance, we need food, we learn to want not only hamburger, but a Big Mac. We have social needs and therefore we learn to want not only clothes that show we belong, but an Arrow shirt. We need to reach our potential, and what we want is money to get us there. What we should want is Christ, for we can never reach our potential without him. Nor can we really have hope. We must redirect our wants and make them Christ-centered or we will never experience self-actualization or shalom.

Maslow offers us cheap grace. To Maslow, "Salvation is a by-product of self-actualizing work and self-actualizing duty" (Maslow, 1998, p. 9); salvation comes from "hard work and total commitment to doing well the job that fate or personal duty calls you to do, or any important job that "calls for" doing" (Maslow, 1998, p. 8). College textbooks don't offer us grace at all, only materialistic slavery disguised as freedom. The old armor is hollow.

McClelland, for example, discusses our needs for achievement, affiliation, power, and novelty. But to what ends? In the context of creation-fall-redemption-consummation, McClelland's theory is legitimate. However, the need for achievement should be directed toward sacrificing oneself to the will of God in order to help bring his "already" but "not yet" kingdom; the need for affiliation should be directed at having "help-mates" and working as a body (e.g., I Corinthians 12); and, the need for power and novelty should be directed at pursuing our unique purpose according to our special gifts.

Given the philosophy of creation-fall-redemption-consummation, we can see that we live between Redemption and Consummation, between Christ's death and resurrection and his return. We have to put on the "gospel armor;" but first we must take off the old. Our model is Christ. Since the rest of the world continues to wear the old armor, "intense rear-guard skirmishes" continue. If we are to be imitators of Christ, then we will be "poor in spirit," we will "mourn," we will be "meek," we will hunger and thirst after righteousness," and we will be "persecuted" (Matthew 5; see Bonhoeffer, 1979). How, for example, are we going to sell that Arrow shirt? How are we going to tell consumers that Christmas shopping at Hudson's, particularly if we work for Hudson's, won't bring us true comfort and joy?

The philosophy of creation-fall-redemption-consummation adds important context to other theories of consumer motivation as well: all theories of motivation can be thought of as reflecting God's good creation, if not in direction, in structure and function. Therefore, the opponent process theory could be thought of a reflection of living faith in God in a fallen world, because initially there is the pain of "warm up" followed by the joy of discipleship, a discipleship based on hope. Here what Paul says:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of the God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God poured out his love into our hearts by his Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Romans 5: 1-5).

Pleasure before pain in a fallen world is a reflection of misdirected faith and hope.

The “path of least resistance” and “the easy way out” are generally the wrong paths.

From a Christian perspective then, the practice of “priming” is questionable, because it reflects the wrong philosophy.

On the other hand, feeling pain before feeling good could be a form of operant conditioning. The ultimate direction for operant conditioning, the ultimate reinforcer, is joy which comes from discipleship. The inappropriate direction and the inappropriate reinforcers are those that may bring temporary pleasure and which might actually limit freedom, such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, etc. Only in the new creation, it seems, will pleasure come before pleasure, and that pleasure will be joy.

Similarly, classical conditioning can be good if it is directed at helping someone want something positive. For instance, churches could and do use favorite “rock and roll” tunes of a particular segment (UCS) of the population and change some lyrics and play this music in church (CS), thus creating a positive attitude (CR) toward church. Martin Luther, for instance, used “secular tunes recast in a religious context” (<http://classicalmus.hispeed.com/articles/luther.html>). In this way, then, classical conditioning could be used to influence people to want something that could ultimately satisfy their needs, for “man does not live on bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). Classical conditioning, in other words, is a good structure; the difficulty is in redeeming its

direction. We must ask: What is its intended function and for what is it being used for (directed at) now?

Likewise, modeling can promote positive behavior, for it is its function. Still, God did not intend for us to be robots. Even though people are attracted to physically attractive, credible, and successful models, Christ was described as having “no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). At the same time, it is interesting to note that an effective model is one who is seen as overcoming difficulties and then succeeding. As the Apostles’ Creed states: “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into [Hades]. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven.” Of course in heaven, there may be no more difficulties to overcome.

We too can be effective models, for we are all called to overcome difficulties as we “work out our own salvation” (Philippians 2:12) and serve as ambassadors of God’s coming kingdom. For Jesus said:

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5: 38-42).

To make things more difficult for us, so that we can later share the joy of hope, Jesus said: “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:1).

### **Employee/Manager Motivation from a Textbook Perspective**

Though relatively young, management is a much older field than consumer behavior; therefore, before looking at specific motivation theories in management, it is

important to look at various perspectives in management and their underlying assumptions regarding “the set of forces that cause people to behave in certain ways” (Griffin, 2000, p. 272).

For instance, in the early 1900s emerged two distinct schools of what we now know as the classical management perspective: scientific management and administrative management. Scientific management concerned itself with improving the performance of individual workers; for example, Frederick Taylor worked to develop a science for each element of a particular job, to replace “rule-of-thumb” methods passed down by the workers themselves with no interference from management, “scientifically” selected employees according to mental and physical abilities (we would consider him “racist” today because of his view of immigrant labor), supervised employees to ensure they followed the prescribed methods, and continued to plan the work, using the workers to get the work done, and splitting “thinking” from “doing.” Douglas McGregor would later consider scientific management representative of Theory X.

Administrative management, on the other hand, focused on managing the entire organization. For example, Henri Fayol was the first to articulate the management functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Max Weber was an early articulator of the bureaucratic model of organization which is based on “a legitimate and formal system of authority” (Griffin, 2000, p. 158). The bureaucratic model promoted a distinct division of labor, a consistent set of rules, a hierarchy of positions, impersonal and appropriate social distance between managers and employees, and recruitment and advancement based on technical expertise.

In terms of the earlier discussion of motivation, the classical perspective of management assumes that employees are motivated primarily by economic considerations; that is, it assumes employees are motivated by higher wages so that they can meet their biogenic needs. This goes for managers as well, for they will undertake “scientific studies” only because they increase productivity, which increases profits.

In contrast to the classical perspective which tends to keep employees at arms-length, the behavioral management perspective attempted to embrace their thoughts and feelings, because the behavioral perspective “argued that workers respond primarily to the social context of the workplace” (Griffin, 2000, p. 14). Abraham Maslow is a strong representative of this perspective as well as Douglas McGregor, and both Maslow and McGregor are foundational for understanding contemporary behavioral science in management (e.g., organizational behavior).

According to McGregor, Theory X and Theory Y model reflect two extreme belief sets that managers have about their workers. Theory X is a relatively negative view of workers and is consistent with the views of scientific management. Theory Y is more positive and represents the assumptions that human relations advocates make (Griffin, 2000, p. 14).

Theory X, in other words, assumes the average human has an inherent dislike for work and, among other things, values security above all. Theory Y assumes that humans can find work to be a source of satisfaction. Theory Y assumptions lead to management on the basis of intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards. In Maslow’s terminology, what motivates workers (and managers) today is psychogenic needs (Hardy, 1990, pp. 157, 158, 159).

A third major perspective of management, the quantitative perspective of management, is not explicitly concerned with employee motivation though, depending on

the model employed, may incorporate a set of assumptions. Likewise, the systems perspective, or the view that organizations are systems consisting of inputs, transforming processes, and outputs, and the contingency perspective, or the view that “appropriate managerial behavior in a given situation depends on, or is contingent on, a wide variety of elements” (Griffin, 2000, p. 18) are not concerned with motivation per se.

Predictably, we desire to delve deeper into the behavioral perspective because of its strong focus on motivation. Within this perspective there are content perspectives on motivation, process perspectives on motivation, and reinforcement perspectives. In terms of content perspectives there are the theories by Maslow, McGregor, McClelland, and Herzberg. Frederick Herzberg theorized that “people’s satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by two independent sets of factors – motivation factors and hygiene factors” (Griffin, 1999, p. 275). Note again that basically we are discussing another form of biogenic and psychogenic needs. According to Herzberg, the process of motivation consists of two stages:

First, managers must ensure that the hygiene factors are not deficient. Pay and security must be appropriate, working conditions must be safe, technical supervision must be acceptable, and so on. By providing hygiene factors at an appropriate level, managers do not stimulate motivation by merely ensure employees are “not dissatisfied.” Employees whom managers attempt to “satisfy” through hygiene factors alone will usually do just enough to get by. Thus, managers should proceed to stage two – giving employees the opportunity to experience motivation factors such as achievement and recognition [through job enrichment] (Griffin, 1998, pp. 275, 276).

Instead of asking “What factors or needs motivate people?,” process perspectives on motivation ask “Why do particular options get chosen?” and “How do people evaluate their satisfaction?” Expectancy theory suggests that motivation depends on how much people want something and how likely they are to get it; for instance, it theorizes that

people will judge the probability that their effort will lead to high performance, and that their effort will lead to a specific outcome, and depends on how attractive a particular outcome seems to people. In other words, expectancy theory uses wants as motivators and how hopeful workers are that they can attain these wants.

Equity theory, in contrast, suggests that people judge whether they are being treated fairly against whether they think those around them are being treated fairly; more fundamentally, it suggests that what is important is whether people have faith that the system is fair. If, for instance, they think those around them are getting better outcomes with less input, they will reduce their input or ask management for higher outcomes.

A third process perspective on motivation is goal setting theory, which holds that by setting goals for people, managers will be able to influence their behavior. Because reinforcement theories in management are similar to reinforcement theories in marketing (consumer motivation), we will not discuss them here. Again, people need to achieve; the question is what way will management direct them? And, in what way will shareholders direct managers?

As can be seen, motivation theories in management are similar to motivation theories in marketing: both are based on the foundation of Maslow's theory. To meet their biogenic and psychogenic needs, workers, consumers, and managers learn wants. Marketers can teach consumers to want certain things through conditioning and modeling. Managers can likely do the same thing to workers. In addition, managers can teach employees wants by setting goals or by taking advantage of what employees already want as well as by moderating the system or situation in which workers work.

Yet motivation ultimately rests on needs. While Maslow's theory is probably the best-known theory of motivation, has great intuitive appeal, and provides some insight into motivation, its validity is questionable (Hall and Nongaim, 1968). Though the validity of Maslow's theory is questionable, we propose that some truths can be gleaned from this popular theory.

For instance, people in business know that, when doing business with developing countries, they will typically encounter lax environmental standards relative to developed countries. Certainly, this is not because people in developing countries do not value clean air and water. Rather, most people in developing countries are on the bottom rung of Maslow's need hierarchy and are foremost concerned with satisfying the most basic (i.e., physiological) needs of food, shelter, clothing, and drink. To attract businesses to developing countries, so that the people might have a job and satisfy their basic needs, environmental laws are compromised. Another truth that might be extracted from Maslow's theory would be relevant to Christian missions (a non-profit business), and supporters of Christian missionaries. When evangelizing people, it is useful to understand that spiritual ideas (e.g., salvation) are at the high end of Maslow's hierarchy. Thus, people with unfulfilled lower level needs (e.g., an empty stomach, a violent and unsafe place to live) must have these needs satisfied before they will be concerned with higher level needs (e.g., the good news of God's grace).

One trait that makes Maslow's theory invalid is its decidedly anti-Christian character.

What Abe has done is to make what was religious, mystical, or supernatural natural – to give man ownership over his human potentials rather than have them arrogated by the by the temporal nonhuman institutions which as times science, business, and the church have been. . .

. Two big things Abe gave to all of us: the art and science of becoming more fully human and the democratization of the soul (Bennis, p. xiii).

In other words, Maslow's ideas presuppose self-actualization without God.

Armed with this philosophy, he wonders "What happened?" and seeks answers to the questions: "How good a society does human nature permit?" and "How good a human nature does society permit" (Bennis, pp. ix and Maslow, 1998, p. xxii)? In fact, the original title to the book Maslow on Management was "Eupsychia," defined as "the culture that would be generated by 1000 self-actualizing people on some sheltered island where they would not be interfered with," like some Garden of Eden or new creation.

The people of this culture are selfless, for the work they do is "simultaneously a seeking and a fulfilling of the self" (Maslow, 1998, p. 9); they are needed, for they are useful; they are called (by whom we do not know); they are trustworthy, responsible, accountable (to whom we don't know either), they want to learn, they prefer to work, they are McGregor's Theory Y people; they feel like they're in a love relationship; they feel like they belong (ultimately, to whom?), and they have a healthy and stable self-esteem (Maslow, 1998, pp. 11, 14, 15, 16).

People in this culture become selfless because they live in a culture that promotes selflessness; in other words, they live in an enlightened economy, an economy where everyone is assumed to be trustworthy, informed of facts and truth, and impulsive achievers; they live in an economy where there is no "dominance-subordination hierarchy," where everyone shares the same ultimate managerial objectives, where there is good will and synergy such that by pursuing their self-interest they are simultaneously and automatically benefiting everyone else, where the rich man is defined as one "who is very generous or who has given away a good deal," where everyone has the "ability to

admire and not fixated on a safety level need (which makes people anxious and defensive), and, among other things, where everyone “prefers to be a prime-mover rather than a passive helper” (Maslow, 1998, pp. 21-29). All the utopian and eupsychian and ethical and moral recommendations that must be made for enterprises in such a culture will improve everything in the situation; *and this includes profits* (sic) (Maslow, 1998, p. 50).

So why, then, do we have Enrons and Worldcoms? Why aren't things as they could be? Maslow explains that

The forces which tend to make for regression are, for instance: scarcity of goods (not enough to go around); cessation of prepotent basic need gratifications (or threat to these gratifications); antisnergistic organizations or laws; anything that increases fear or anxiety; loss or separation of any kind for the person leading to grief or bereavement; change of any kind for those people who are prone to anxiety or to fear; bad communications of various kinds; suspicion; denial in the sense of denial of truth; dishonesty, untruth, lying, vulgarization of the truth, confusion of the lines between truth and falsehood; loss of any of the basic need gratifications in the world; e.g., freedom, self-esteem, status, respect, love objects, being loved, belonging, safety, physiological needs, value systems truth, beauty, etc (Maslow, 1998, p. 53).

In other words, Maslow contends that we don't live in utopia because our basic needs aren't being met. So why aren't they being met? The reason is that though humans are inherently good, they somehow get twisted.

All the good human qualities, perhaps, are inherent in all human beings, at least at birth, and are gradually twisted or lost. This is to say that human evil is an acquired or reactive kind of response to bad treatment of the individual (Maslow, 1998, p. 104).

Why do humans get twisted? Because they lack better “men” and better groups.

The better man and the better group are the causes and effects of each other and the better group and the better society are the causes and effects of each other (Maslow, 1998, p. 97).

Ultimately, humans get twisted because they lack good management and good accounting systems. Good managers increase the health of the workers they manage and good accounting systems account for important intangibles that help good managers manage and develop people.

They do this in two ways: one is via the gratification of basic needs for safety, for belongingness, for affectionate relationships and friendly relationships with their informal groups, prestige needs, needs for self-respect, etc; the other is via the gratification of the metamotivations or the metaneeds for truth and beauty and goodness and justice and perfection and law, etc (Maslow, 1998, p. 95).

And,

I'm going to dictate some time soon my thoughts on how stupid our present accounting systems are because they leave out practically all the important personal, psychological, political, educational intangibles. . . (Maslow, 1998, p. 100).

But again, the

healthier the workers are to start with, the more they profit psychologically from enlightened management and the healthier they become; that is, the healthier people have broader shoulders and can take a heavier burden of anxiety, stress, responsibility, depression, and threat to self-esteem, and actually use all of these for good purposes; i.e., for strengthening themselves (Maslow, 1998, pp. 95, 96).

So why aren't workers healthier to start with? What is the source of this "twisting?" If the source is in "men" and "groups," how does it get there? Where does it come from? Maslow has no answer. And if Maslow doesn't know where it comes from and how it got there in the first place, how can he know how to fix it such that he can create eupsychia?

To summarize, Maslow's theory be more valid if it were explained in the context of creation-fall-redemption-consummation and the structure and direction format. His theory make more sense if it discussed that needs are part of the good structure but wants

get misdirected by sin and only redirected in and through Christ. His theory would be more valid if he included God in the process of self-actualization.

### **A Christian View of Employee/Manager Motivation**

Fundamentally, Maslow and others see religion as a manifestation of culture, as something created by humans to meet a safety or power need. But from the standpoint of the creation-fall-redemption-consummation philosophy, culture is a manifestation of religion, for culture is a human response to the revelation of God's Word in creation, in Scripture, and affirmed in the redeeming work of Christ (Spykman, 1992; see also VanTil, 1972). Therefore, the good that is in people originates in Christ, as well as the good that is in Maslow, McGregor, and the other motivation theorists and their theories. In addition, the movement toward goodness is also due to the work of Christ. What Maslow describes in terms of human potential will only occur after Consummation.

Therefore, from a Christian perspective, Christian managers need to be realistic: they will have employees that seem to fit the assumptions of Theory X, they will have other employees that seem to fit the assumptions of Theory Y, they will have employees that seem to fit the assumptions of both, and they will have employees who seem to flip-flop between sets of assumptions depending on the day, week, or month because, although created good, all creation experiences the effects of sin.

But what motivates managers? Are managers themselves motivated by biogenic or psychogenic needs? According to Drucker, managers seem to be motivated by biogenic needs for the scholars assume that managers are interested only in "enlightened psychological despotism." In other words, they want to be authoritarian for that brings them security.

Drucker notes that the industrial psychology writers of today “use terms like ‘self-fulfillment,’ ‘creativity,’ and the ‘whole man.’ But what they talk and write about is control through psychological manipulation.” Management is not longer a matter of controlling people on the basis of their economic needs, but their psychological needs. By becoming an indispensable servant of the employees in their search for “self-fulfillment,” the manager actually become their master. . . According to Drucker, the psychology-based approach to management ought to be rejected because it violates a basic ethical imperative: respect for other persons (Hardy, 1990, pp. 162, 163).

Maybe the reason managers are assumed not to respect workers is because they themselves are not respected. For instance, in non-Christian writings, appealing to one's greed has probably been the most highly touted motivation technique. Made infamous by the protagonist Gordon Gekko in the movie *Wall Street*, simply put, *Greed is Good*. Most introductory texts to the business disciplines extol the virtues of stock options to motivate CEOs. However, the recent turmoil in the markets and scandals in business are creating a groundswell of discontent regarding this unbridled capitalistic approach to motivating people by greed.

Another thing that's stupid is the idea that we don't have to regulate anything because the invisible hand of the market will take care of what needs to be done. Certain supposedly pro-business policies coming out of our nation's capital--saying that the market system is working and all we have to do is leave everyone alone--aren't really pro-business at all. They're pro-greed, which isn't the same thing (Sloan, 2002, p. 37).

Many are now realizing that motivating by appealing to greed may not only be wrong according to management theory, but also immoral. Alan Greenspan preached this sentiment recently, that corporate greed can be blamed for Wall Street's recent woes, while giving his semiannual report on the economy to the Senate Banking Committee.

At the root was the rapid enlargement of stock market capitalizations in the later part of the 1990s that arguably engendered an outsized increase in opportunities for avarice. An infectious greed seemed to grip much of our business community. It is not that humans have become any more greedy

than in generations past. It is that the avenues to express greed had grown so enormously (Waters, 2002, p. 34).

At the very least, motivating by appealing to greed often leads to immoral actions. Certainly, greed is not in line with Christ's teachings. As evidenced by the illegalities that are now being revealed in many businesses (e.g., Enron, Tyco, Quest, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, etc.), some executives, when their greed is appealed to (e.g., the possibility of obtaining unfathomable amounts of income via stock options), commit deplorable acts and have no concern for the thousands of lives that they hurt. For example, Jeffrey Skilling and Ken Lay of Enron, are multimillionaires while their former employees have had their entire retirement savings wiped out. As Warren Buffet, the acclaimed investor stated in a recent interview, there should be a special place in hell for executives that become rich at the expense of their employees and shareholders.

Christ's teaching regarding wealth is pointed regarding the recent escapades in business. Christ states to the rich young man "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Matthew 19:21). However, the young ruler went away sad, because he had great wealth and Jesus turned to his disciples and said "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." When Jeffery Skilling was asked, in a congressional hearing, if he might be willing to share his vast millions with his former employees (i.e., those that are now without jobs and a retirement savings), he replied, absolutely not, I earned my money. Christ's teachings, regarding where we should place our treasures, stand in stark contrast to the actions of so many business being motivated by wealth.

Do not store up yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21).

Unfortunately, though the Bible is clear regarding its condemnation of wealth and its harmful impact on people, the church (i.e., Christians in general) has ignored these *difficult* teachings of Christ. The church has been very selective (i.e., biased) in how it reads and interprets the bible, embracing some unclear teachings (e.g., homosexuality is a sin) while ignoring obvious teachings (e.g., wealth and the unbridled pursuit of wealth is largely immoral). As David Waters writes, "Too bad. Even corporate robber barons go to church. Bernie Ebbers, former WorldCom CEO, teaches Sunday school and helped raise \$1 million at Easthaven Baptist Church." Waters (2002, p. 34) admonishes that

In this age of Wild West capitalism, the church can't be prophetic if it's not talking about profits. The church can't sit quietly, eyes closed, hands folded, while some of its own members get rich--not just by making profits but by faking profits.

We concur with Waters that the church has been unnaturally mute regarding Christ's teachings on wealth and the means in which business use wealth to entice and motivate. Naturally, it is not easy to preach against greed when someone like Bernie Ebbers is in one of the pews and is helping the church raise \$1 million. However, to reduce its hypocrisy, the church must echo the sentiments of civil rights legend Joseph Lowery when he recently preached:

We have deserted the good spouse of spirituality. We are shacking up with the prostitute of materialism and greed. It is producing offspring with congenital defects: sexism, racism, addiction to drugs violence, economical and political exploitation (Waters, 2002, p. 34).

There have been previous discussions by Christians pertaining to motivation. For example, Chewning et al., (1990) devote an entire chapter of their book, *Business Through The Eyes of Faith*, to the topic of motivation. They write that there are two fundamental questions that need to be asked. First, what is the basis for Christian motivation? Second, what forms of motivation are appropriate for us to use in motivating people (Chewning et al., p. 170)? The authors of this paper concur that these are two fundamental questions worth exploration. However, what we offer is a philosophical framework with which to answer these questions.

What then should be the proper Christian perspective of motivation? We contend that a truly Christian perspective on motivation requires a paradigm shift from present conventional thought. Two traits of Christianity and should serve as catalysts are *servicing* and *suffering*. The reason has to do with our philosophical framework: creation, fall, redemption, consummation.

According to this philosophy, God “brought forth a normatively structured orderly world” and “willing obedience to this life-enveloping, love-impelling, shalom-embracing framework” brings “freedom, righteousness, and joy.” But sin impacted our will and caused it to be radically “misdirected and disoriented” (Spykman, 1992, pp. 157, 179, 180, 333). Christ, however, is reclaiming his creation, and we are to follow his lead and be his “agents of renewal.” Christ didn’t just save our souls, he saved us body and soul.

According to this philosophy, we also know that God reveals himself in creation as well as in Scripture, and that this is “affirmed” by the work of Christ. Creational revelation tells us that we have needs, the ultimate need being to become what we were

met to become. As agents of renewal then, it is our job to become what we were met to become and to help others do the same.

In McGregor's terminology, we are biased toward a Theory Y perspective. But because of sin, we are also biased toward a Theory X perspective. Given our new "gospel armor" and our desire to serve and work for the Lord, we should be more biased toward Theory Y in the way we work and in the way we manage others. If we believe the Bible, work is not our salvation, as Maslow says, but work is a response to our salvation for we want to obey God's command to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28) and to go into the world and make disciples and teach them to obey what Christ has commanded (Matthew 28: 16-20). In other words, we want to work and the money we get paid should be relatively unimportant.

Our response is to serve. As the Heidelberg Catechism says, there are only three things we need to know to have the joy of the comfort of knowing that we "belong body and soul" to Christ: that we have sinned, that Christ has redeemed us from our sin, and that we are to serve (Q&A 2).

When we write of serving we contend that this would be true serving, not the pseudo-serving that is often performed and written about in servant leadership. We believe that the servant leadership, as currently practiced in many organizations, is as Drucker proposes, a matter of controlling people according to psychological despotism (Hardy, 1990, pp. 162-163). True servant leadership would place the needs of others above one's own, including the need to be all God intended us to be, for only by helping others reach their potential will we reach ours. Practically speaking, as long as the leader is receiving compensation, no worker should be discarded. It is inconsistent for a

Christian leader, practicing servant leadership, to lay off an employee to reduce expenses when that Christian leader's compensation could be reduced instead.

Such sacrificial behavior will lead to physical and emotional suffering. But “blessed are the poor.” Suffering, then, might be seen as another Christian trait that is relevant when discussing motivation from a Christian perspective. For example, in the New Testament, the word *suffer* appears at least 29 times. In most instances, it seems that the bible teaches that suffering is inevitable for Christians. That is, it is something we should expect and if we do not suffer, we should be concerned that we are not truly following Christ and Christ’s teachings. A few of these scriptural passages are as follows:

...seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us (Romans 8:17-18).

For it has been given to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. . .(Philippians 1:29).

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil (1 Peter 3:16-17).

But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but should glorify God with that name (1 Peter 4:15).

For what credit is there if you endure when you sin and are beaten? But when you do good and suffer, if you endure, it brings favor with God (1 Peter 2:20).

We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope (Romans 5:4).

The above teachings provide some help in answering the question, what is the short-term result of Christian motivation? Because we can never know with certainty

when we are pleasing or displeasing God<sup>1</sup>, suffering might be one indicator of the extent to which we are doing God's will, just as profits are an indicator that we are meeting some wants. We contend that it is easier and more profitable to meet wants than it is to meet needs, particularly the needs of all our neighbors.

The idea that true serving and suffering are motivators from a Christian perspective, represents a paradigm shift from previous research, but then so is our philosophical framework. Christ suffered in bringing forth his kingdom. As imitators of him, won't we do the same?

### **Conclusion**

Our intent in this paper is to explore motivation from a Christian perspective. We are also trying to find synthesis between "secular" and Christian motivation research. Our contribution is applying the philosophical framework of creation-fall-redemption-consummation to the literature. We believe that what is missing is the idea that God reveals himself in creation and in Scripture and has affirmed this in the redeeming work of Christ incarnate. Therefore, what "secular" writings on motivation provide us, as long as they are consistent with Scripture, is ideas about the underlying structure of human motivation as well as how motivation and motivation research has been misdirected. We hold, for instance, that humans have been created with needs and ultimately the need to become what God intended for them to become. We believe that even though we won't be truly "self-actualized" until the new creation of heaven and earth, we nonetheless must strive to help ourselves and others reach our potential so that we can do the good works that God has set out for us in advance to do (Ephesians 2:10). This means, for instance,

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<sup>1</sup> "...Lord, Lord didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?' Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!'

that we have to help people want what they should want. Because we are in between redemption and consummation, between the “already” and “not yet” times, and because we want to work, we will experience both physical and emotional suffering. Not only does suffering build character (Romans 5:4), it may also be a sign that we are living a Christ-imitating life, just as profits may be a sign that we are meeting consumer wants. Eupsychia will be the culture of heaven. We may only see glimpses of it now.

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