



July 2012

# Nature is Prior to Us: Applying Catholic Social Thought and Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology to the Ethics of Stakeholder Prioritization for the Natural Environment

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## Recommended Citation

Driscoll, Cathy A.; Wiebe, Elden; and Dyck, Bruno (2012) "Nature is Prior to Us: Applying Catholic Social Thought and Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology to the Ethics of Stakeholder Prioritization for the Natural Environment," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics*: Vol. 3 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/jrbe/vol3/iss1/3>

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## INTRODUCTION

Most stakeholder theories have developed to the point in which the natural environment is given stakeholder status. However, some academics and practitioners continue to be reluctant to include the natural environment as one of the firm's *primary* stakeholders, even though the natural environment has attained legitimacy as a primary stakeholder outside the business community.<sup>1</sup> The literature suggests that there are two main reasons for this. First, most models continue to be bounded by overly narrow economic rationality and traditional political influence. Second, stakeholder models have largely been anchored in a social-only paradigm. In this paper, we show how Christian social thought and theology can be applied to help management scholars and practitioners prioritize the natural environment as a primary organizational stakeholder.

We advance the discussion of a spiritual and ethical perspective of stakeholder thinking that has potential to limit further deterioration of the natural environment. Our discussion is grounded in the faith of Christianity, drawing upon Catholic Social Thought (CST) and Anabaptist-Mennonite theology (AMT). We first build upon the work of Helen Alford and her colleagues who have argued that CST principles can provide an ethical framework for stakeholder thinking and practice.<sup>2</sup> We review the literature on CST and stakeholder thinking, including some work on the ethical underpinnings of stakeholder theory and the natural environment as a stakeholder. We acknowledge that CST is not well known outside of Catholic institutions and suggest some ways to begin to translate this approach outside the framework of a religious context.

In order to show that these ideas are not limited to CST, we demonstrate the considerable overlap between CST and Anabaptist-Mennonite theology on these matters. The similarities between these two faith traditions are all the more striking and suggestive because of their differences in history (e.g., when the Anabaptist tradition began during the Protestant Reformation, it faced significant conflict with the Catholic church) and size (e.g., while there are over a billion Catholics, there are less than 2 million Mennonites in the world). Here we draw

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<sup>1</sup> Cathy Driscoll and Mark Starik, "The Primordial Stakeholder: Advancing the Conceptual Consideration of Stakeholder Status for the Natural Environment," *Journal of Business Ethics* 49 (2004): 55-73.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Alford, "Stakeholder Theory," (paper presented at the Sixth International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education. Pontifical University of St Thomas, Rome, 2006). <http://www.stthomas.edu/CathStudies/cst/conferences/thegoodcompany/Finalpapers/Alford%2007.10.06%209.00.pdf> (Accessed November 24, 2009); and Helen Alford and Yuliya Shcherbinina, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Common Good," in *Business, Globalization and the Common Good*, ed. Henri-Claude de Bettignies and François Lépineux (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009), 63-82.

especially on the work of Bruno Dyck and his colleagues, who have argued that AMT points to the natural environment as a primary stakeholder, and whose empirical work lends support to the suggestion that practitioners who embrace hallmark values associated with AMT do in fact treat the natural environment as a primary stakeholder.<sup>3</sup>

Both CST and AMT point to the application of Christian ethics to social issues of today, and looking at these faith expressions together can strengthen our understanding of the vitality of the Christian tradition regarding the natural environment and our relationship to it. That said, we do not mean to suggest that this emphasis on the natural environment is unique to Christian traditions. For example, we note that emphasis on the natural environment is also evident in Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Indigenous spiritual traditions, and acknowledge that a similar analysis could be done with an even wider representation of faith traditions.<sup>4</sup>

Because our discussion is based on particular faith perspectives, some might question its validity in addressing business issues. Although Cavanagh argues that religion has “historically not been a significant resource for business ethics,”<sup>5</sup> we note that this has not always been the case. Epstein points out that the teachings of the world’s religions have informed and been an integral part of public life in the marketplace for millennia.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Western business practices have their roots in Christian faith.<sup>7</sup> More recently, scholarly reviews have suggested that spirituality and business have become increasingly linked in the past two decades,<sup>8</sup> that faith at work is being increasingly accepted in

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<sup>3</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder, “Management, Theology and Moral Points of View: Towards an Alternative to the Conventional Materialist-Individualist Ideal-Type of Management,” *Journal of Management Studies* 42, 4 (2005): 705-735; Bruno Dyck and J. Mark Weber, “Conventional and Radical Moral Agents: An Exploratory Look at Weber’s Moral-Points-Of-View and Virtues,” *Organization Studies* 27, 3 (2006): 429-450; Bruno Dyck, “From Airy-Fairy Ideals to Concrete Realities: The Case of Shared Farming,” *Leadership Quarterly* 5 (1994a): 227-246; and Bruno Dyck, “Build in Sustainable Development, and They Will Come: A Vegetable Field of Dreams,” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 7, 4 (1994b): 47-63.

<sup>4</sup> Todd Albertson, *The Gods of Business: The Intersection of Faith and the Marketplace* (Los Angeles, CA: Trinity Alumni Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Gerald F. Cavanagh, “Spirituality for Managers: Context and Critique,” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 12, 3 (1999): 190.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin M. Epstein, “Religion and Business – The Critical Role of Religious Traditions in Management Education,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 38 (2002): 95.

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner’s, 1958).

<sup>8</sup> Lake Lambert III, *Spirituality, Inc.: Religion in the American Workplace*. (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

corporate America,<sup>9</sup> and that the teachings of a variety of faiths intersect with the marketplace.<sup>10</sup>

While spirituality is increasingly part of, and studied in, the workplace,<sup>11</sup> and even though work is “an integral part of our spirituality”,<sup>12</sup> we acknowledge that religion seems to remain a taboo for many in the workplace,<sup>13</sup> and for those examining the workplace.<sup>14</sup> One reason for this may be the general secularization of Western society. Weber, writing in the late 1800s, already noted the secularization of the Protestant work ethic and the movement away from religion as a source for doing business:

The capitalist system...no longer needs the support of any religious forces, and feels the attempts of religion to influence economic life, in so far as they can still be felt at all, to be as much an unjustified interference as its regulation by the State.<sup>15</sup>

Cox, writing in 1965, suggested work had been emancipated from its religious character.<sup>16</sup> Assisting the antagonism against religion in business may be the separation of state and religion in the U.S.<sup>17</sup> Cavanagh suggested, referencing Stephen Carter’s *The Culture of Disbelief*, that outright hostility to religion is infrequent, but religion is often trivialized and relegated to the personal realm. Moreover, based on Carter’s analysis, Cavanagh observed that “religion is an essential part of most people’s lives, and...they depend on religious values and beliefs in both personal and public actions.”<sup>18</sup> Religious antagonism in the

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<sup>9</sup> David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Todd Albertson (2009).

<sup>11</sup> James E. King, Jr., “(Dis)Missing the Obvious: Will Mainstream Management Research Ever Take Religion Seriously?,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 17, 3 (2008): 214-224.

<sup>12</sup> Ian I. Mitroff, “Do Not Promote Religion under the Guise of Spirituality,” *Organization* 10, 2 (2003): 375.

<sup>13</sup> Ian I. Mitroff (2003).

<sup>14</sup> James E. King (2008).

<sup>15</sup> Max Weber, trans. Talcott Parsons (1958), 72.

<sup>16</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 167. Quoted in Edwin M. Epstein (2002), 91.

<sup>17</sup> Edwin M. Epstein (2002), 94.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993). Quoted in Gerald F. Cavanagh (1999), 188.

workplace, then, seems to be directed toward its expression in the public rather than the personal realm.

One problem with dismissing religion as a source for enlightened direction in the workplace, however, is related to what it is replaced with. For example, it has been oft-noted and eloquently argued how modern society has de-emphasized its faith traditions and replaced them with managerialist ethics and norms.<sup>19</sup> Such ‘secular orthodoxies,’ such as the ideologies of Marxism and Free Enterprise Capitalism, are no “safer” and lack the long history and holistic worldview associated with centuries-old faith traditions and wisdom.<sup>20</sup> In addition, when religious faith or spirituality are based within an organization, or within one’s self, it lacks reference to an independent “transcendent other” that would lower the chance of it being co-opted by mainstream thinking.<sup>21</sup> Steingard is unequivocal:

There exists a powerful, almost ineluctable force in management to reduce all new ideas and issues into a narrowly defined managerial paradigm concerned with instrumentality, efficiency, material gain, domination, individual power, resource exploitation, globalization, control, and so on...<sup>22</sup>

In the same vein, Giacalone and Thompson assert that the worldview of business is organization centered—that is, organizations are at the core of human existence. In business schools we then go on to

teach students to perpetuate business’ importance and its centrality in society, to do so by increasing wealth, and to assume that by advancing organizational interests, they advance their own and society’s overall best interests. Our education is framed to teach them that virtually every facet of what they do is essentially economic...only in the background are other stakeholders and positions discussed, although generally within this economic context.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For example, see Jesper Kunde, *Corporate Religion: Building a Strong Company Through Personality and Corporate Soul* (London: Prentice-Hall, 2000); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); and Stephen Pattison, *The Faith of the Managers: When Management Becomes Religion*. (London: Cassell, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> See Edwin M. Epstein (2002), 94.

<sup>21</sup> Lake Lambert, III (2009), 48.

<sup>22</sup> David S. Steingard, “Spiritually-Informed Management Theory: Toward Profound Possibilities for Inquiry and Transformation,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 14, 3 (2005): 231.

<sup>23</sup> Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson, “Business Ethics and Social Responsibility Education: Shifting the Worldview,” *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 5, 3 (2006): 267.

The “venerated profit-driven, materialistic values are hegemonic”<sup>24</sup> to the extent that even values and ethics are only valid if they can be shown to contribute to profitability. This transmogrification of ethical discourse<sup>25</sup> is but one strand of business subsuming all things to the profit motive. For example, Bartunek and Spreitzer noted that the meaning of ‘empowerment’ changed radically when adopted by management. Initially developed in religion with the meaning of sharing real power with the poor and disenfranchised, empowerment was taken up by sociology and expanded to include social movements. In moving to education, psychology and social work, the word shifted in focus to the notion of human welfare. As it moved into management, however, the word took on the primary meaning of fostering productivity (and, concomitantly, reducing supervisory costs). Moreover, this meaning then began to be utilized in other disciplines, and the original meaning of sharing real power with the disenfranchised significantly declined.<sup>26</sup> Similar trajectories might be evident in people becoming ‘human resources’ or ‘human capital’, and in sustainability becoming more about the survival of the firm and its access to resources than about the well-being of the Earth.

Stemming this force is very difficult. Even those with a religious faith foundation can be coopted by business organizations’ emphasis on profit, control, and instrumentality so that their expression of faith becomes warped and damaging.<sup>27</sup> For those with a vaguely defined personal spirituality, the organization is more than willing to provide meaning—even ‘ultimate’ meaning—and thereby ipso facto become their ‘religion’: “Work organizations often act as if they are secular religions espousing edifying cosmologies and encouraging faith in transcendent missions.”<sup>28</sup>

Giacalone and Thompson have advocated fundamental change—a change away from the dominant organization-centered worldview toward a human-centered worldview encompassing the “best of the human condition.”<sup>29</sup> We suggest, however, that this is not enough. Rather, what is needed is grounding in a

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<sup>24</sup> Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson (2006), 269.

<sup>25</sup> Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson (2006), 268.

<sup>26</sup> Jean M. Bartunek and Gretchen M. Spreitzer, “The Interdisciplinary Career of a Popular Construct Used in Management: Empowerment in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 15, 3 (2006): 255-273.

<sup>27</sup> Marjolein Lips-Wiersma, Kathy Lund Dean, and Charles J. Fornaciari, “Theorizing the Dark Side of the Workplace Spirituality Movement,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 18, 4 (2009): 288-300.

<sup>28</sup> Blake E. Ashforth and Deepa Vaidyanath, “Work Organizations as Secular Religions,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 11, 4 (2002): 359.

<sup>29</sup> Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson (2006), 270.

theocentric worldview,<sup>30</sup> which in the case of this paper, is two particular Christian worldviews. However, before we present these alternative Christian worldviews, we will first present a brief review of the literature on stakeholder theory, in particular focusing on normative stakeholder theory, stakeholder legitimacy, and the natural environment as a stakeholder.

### THE STAKEHOLDER CONCEPT

Stakeholder theory concerns the nature of the relationships between organizations and their respective stakeholders and the processes and outcomes of these relationships for organizations and their stakeholders.<sup>31</sup> A great deal of scholarly work has been done in the area of stakeholder theory since Ed Freeman redefined stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.”<sup>32</sup>

From a strategic or instrumental perspective, the firm identifies and prioritizes stakeholders based on the attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency.<sup>33</sup> Most stakeholder literature suggests that stakeholder legitimacy is grounded in pragmatic evaluations of stakeholder relationships rather than in normative assessments of moral propriety.<sup>34</sup> For example, Barney, arguing from a resource dependence theory perspective, asserted that “[t]o be a stakeholder, a party must make important resources (such as labor, money, and loyalty) available to a firm.”<sup>35</sup> This approach focuses on the “self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences” and has been referred to as “exchange legitimacy” or “influence legitimacy.”<sup>36</sup> This instrumental view parallels most power-dependence and resource-exchange approaches to firm-

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands, “Getting Right with Nature: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, and Theocentrism,” *Organization & Environment* 18, 2 (2005): 141-162.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas M. Jones and Andrew C. Wicks, “Convergent Stakeholder Theory,” *Academy of Management Review* 24, 2 (1999): 206-221.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, (Boston: Pitman Press, 1984), 46.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood, “Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts,” *Academy of Management Review*, 22, 4 (1997): 853-886.

<sup>34</sup> See Howard E. Aldrich and C. Marlene Fiol, “Fools Rush In? The Institutional Context of Industry Creation,” *Academy of Management Review* 19 (1994): 645-670.

<sup>35</sup> Jay B. Barney, *Gaining and Sustaining Competitive Advantage* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 43.

<sup>36</sup> Mark C. Suchman, “Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches,” *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1995): 578.

stakeholder relationships. According to Mitchell, Agle and Wood, in most stakeholder models found in the management literature “[l]egitimacy gains rights through power...”<sup>37</sup> Power in this case means the ability to influence the economic well-being or survival of the firm. Banerjee lamented the fact that managers continue to be bounded by an idea of legitimacy that has an economic basis and that does not genuinely address ecological and societal concerns. As a result, managers emphasize the “business case for stakeholder management.”<sup>38</sup>

Normative stakeholder theory, on the other hand, focuses on defining the basis of stakeholder legitimacy, whether it is risk, property rights, or moral claims.<sup>39</sup> Moral legitimacy is based on normative approval and the rightness or wrongness of organizational actions.<sup>40</sup> For example, Donaldson and Preston described a ‘social contract’ between business and society and argued that “stakeholders are identified through the actual or potential harms and benefits that they experience or anticipate experiencing as a result of the firm’s actions or inactions.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Nature as Stakeholder*

Although Donaldson and Preston suggested that no *a priori* prioritization of stakeholders exists, other scholars have asserted that various aspects of the natural environment<sup>42</sup> can and should be considered as one or more primary stakeholders of the firm.<sup>43</sup> For decades scholars from a variety of disciplines have

<sup>37</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997), 870.

<sup>38</sup> Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, “Whose Land Is It Anyway? National Interest, Indigenous Stakeholders, And Colonial Discourses: The Case of the Jabiluka Uranium Mine,” *Organization & Environment* 13, 1 (2000): 3-38.

<sup>39</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997).

<sup>40</sup> Howard E. Aldrich and C. Marlene Fiol (1994); Mark C. Suchman (1995), 576.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Donaldson and Lee E. Preston, “The Stakeholder Theory of the Corporation: Concepts, Evidence, and Implications,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, 1 (1995): 86.

<sup>42</sup> For purposes of this paper, the natural environment encompasses the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, ecosystem processes, and all human and non-human life forms.

<sup>43</sup> See for example: Damien Bazin and Jerome Ballet, “Corporate Social Responsibility: The Natural Environment as a Stakeholder?,” *International Journal of Sustainable Development* 7, 1 (2004): 59 – 75; Rogene A. Buchholz, *Principles of Environmental Management* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993); Cathy Driscoll and Mark Starik (2004); Nardia L. Haigh and Andrew Griffiths, “The Natural Environment as a Primary Stakeholder: The Case of Climate Change,” *Business Strategy and the Environment* 18, 6 (2009): 347- 359; Simon D. Norton, “The Natural Environment as a Salient Stakeholder: Non-Anthropocentrism, Ecosystem Stability and The Financial Markets,” *Business Ethics* 16, 4 (2007): 387-402; Robert A. Phillips and Joel Reichart, “The Environment as Stakeholder? A Fairness-Based Approach,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 23, 2 (2000): 185-197; Paul Shrivastava, “Ecocentric Management for a Risk Society,” *Academy of*



emphasized the moral standing of the natural environment.<sup>44</sup> Under an eco-sustainability paradigm, the relationships among nature, society, and economy are emphasized, such as those relationships among nature, equity, and development; and legal and moral claims are made on behalf of the natural environment.<sup>45</sup> Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause extended Donaldson and Preston's "social contract" to a "natural contract with the biosphere," to represent the interactive relationship between business organizations and the natural environment.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, in the physical world, all things human, including our organizations, exist in nature and consist of nature.<sup>47</sup>

However, traditional stakeholder theory has failed to recognize the Earth and its surroundings as a legitimate primary stakeholder with intrinsic worth.<sup>48</sup> According to Mitchell, Agle and Wood, nature's claims are often seen as legitimate; however, the natural environment has not been treated as salient to managers unless other dominant stakeholders exercise their power to support the natural environment or unless managerial values lean 'naturally' in a green direction.<sup>49</sup> More recently, Norton argued that the firm should consider the natural environment a primary stakeholder because of the essential nature of ecosystem stability for the proper functioning and structuring of financial markets.<sup>50</sup> Haigh and Griffiths also advanced the case for nature as a primary stakeholder, but, like

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*Management Review* 20, 1 (1995): 118-137; Param Srikantia and Diana Bilimoria, "Isomorphism in Organization and Management Theory," *Organization & Environment* 10, 4 (1997): 384-406; Mark Starik, "Should Trees Have Managerial Standing? Toward Stakeholder Status for Non-Human Nature," *Journal of Business Ethics* 14, 3 (1995): 207-17; Jean Garner Stead and Edward Stead, "Ecoenterprise Strategy: Standing for Sustainability," *Journal of Business Ethics* 24, 4 (2000): 313-329.

<sup>44</sup> See for example: Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988); Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballentine, 1970; Original work published in 1949); Ronald E. Purser, Changkil Park, and Alfonso Montuori, "Limits to Anthropocentrism: Towards an Ecocentric Organization Paradigm?," *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1995): 1053-1089; Holmes Rolston, III, *Conserving Natural Value* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> For example, Paul Shrivastava (1995).

<sup>46</sup> Thomas N. Gladwin, James J. Kennelly, and Tara-Shelomith Krause, "Shifting Paradigms for Sustainable Development: Implications for Management Theory and Research," *Academy of Management Review* 20, 4 (1995): 898; Thomas Donaldson and Lee E. Preston (1995).

<sup>47</sup> Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992).

<sup>48</sup> Cathy Driscoll and Mark Starik (2004); Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997); Roderick F. Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Free Press, 1987); Mark Starik (1995).

<sup>49</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997).

<sup>50</sup> Simon D. Norton (2007).

Norton, approached the stakeholder issue from a strategic rather than a broader moral or ethical perspective.<sup>51</sup>

### CST, AMT, AND STAKEHOLDER THEORY

The Catholic Christian theocentric worldview, based in a long established faith tradition with a very long history, has the power to stand against the cooptation of the organization-centric worldview of business. Akin to AMT,<sup>52</sup> this power derives in part from the faith tradition's primal narrative which becomes the story of those who adhere to the faith. Subsequent derivative narratives, also embraced by the believing community, explicate the "power and authority [of the primal narrative] in the life of the ongoing community which is removed in time from the primal events."<sup>53</sup> This history, and memory, becomes the basis of a future that is subsequently prevented from becoming self-serving and undisciplined. In other words, the history and the witness of the believing community in the past points to what we can continue to expect to see from God in the future.<sup>54</sup>

This includes reconciliation with, and care for, the created order: "Humankind is given the responsibility to care for and sustain the God-created order, with a view to the ongoing life on Earth and future posterity. All creation, not just humankind, is part of the moral order."<sup>55</sup> McCann described the promise of an interdisciplinary merging of CST and the field of business ethics. According to CST, business and managers hold responsibilities related to the world's social problems, and the dominant purpose of business is the common good of all peoples.<sup>56</sup> Helen Alford and her colleagues have suggested that CST can contribute to improving our understanding of stakeholder thinking by deepening the ethical underpinnings of stakeholder theory.

According to Alford, we have progressed to a place where the "stage of the stakeholder" has replaced the "culture of the customer."<sup>57</sup> However, in order to synthesize conflicting stakeholder claims, Alford believes that we need to deepen the ethical roots of stakeholder thinking beyond the "business" or

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<sup>51</sup> Nardia L. Haigh and Andrew Griffiths (2009).

<sup>52</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005).

<sup>53</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible Makes Sense* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 54.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Brueggemann (1977), 80.

<sup>55</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005), 723.

<sup>56</sup> Dennis P. McCann, "On Moral Business: A Theological Perspective," *Review of Business* 19, 1 (1997): 9-15.

<sup>57</sup> Helen Alford (2006), 1.

“enlightened” case that continues to dominate stakeholder practice and theory. According to Alford, the business case empties the stakeholder idea of meaning because it treats stakeholders as mere means to an economic end and is therefore no different from the “culture of the customer” where everyone is seen as being a customer, again a mere means to an economic end. She has suggested that a Kantian “respect for persons” approach which sees stakeholders as having rights to be respected is a better starting point, but that it too is limited in its individualism and is susceptible to the exercise of power.

A coherent application of this individualistic stakeholder logic would lead a manager to decision paralysis, for the approach itself cannot either prioritize the claims of stakeholders, which would be one way of giving help to managers, nor does it provide a guiding principle by which such priorities could be attributed...Almost inevitably, the interests of the most powerful are going to win out.<sup>58</sup>

Alford also sees limitations in the social contract approach due to its abstract nature and the ‘exchange’ baggage that accompanies the contract metaphor. Similarly, an AMT approach points to the importance of treating others with dignity as an end in itself, and how this is set against the individualistic and instrumental views that characterize dominant stakeholder theory.<sup>59</sup>

According to Alford, CST brings an anthropological focus but one that goes beyond the limits of individualism by focusing on the interaction between individuality and relationship. CST holds that human beings are simultaneously individual and being in relation with others, together with and under God, thus going beyond individualism.<sup>60</sup> As human beings, we transcend our individuality by seeking out relations with others and subordinating our good to the good of the whole.

CST’s way forward involves thinking of the business as a community, with the criterion for deciding between stakeholders being what concrete, practical decision would contribute most to the common good in which all the stakeholders of the firm share.<sup>61</sup>

This relational aspect of stakeholder management is also evident in AMT:

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<sup>58</sup> Helen Alford (2006), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005).

<sup>60</sup> Helen Alford and Yuliya Shcherbinina (2009).

<sup>61</sup> Helen Alford (2006), 6.

Anabaptists' renunciation of materialism and individualism is best represented by the notion of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness), which 'was the term early Anabaptists used for submission to the will of God and the community, downplaying the *individual* striving and acquisitiveness of *materialism*'... Rather, Anabaptists argued that the only way people could be 'saved from the self-destructive tendencies of selfishness or egotism' was by yieldedness to God expressed in a community of believers....<sup>62</sup>

### *CST, AMT, and Nature as a Stakeholder*

According to Alford, conventional stakeholder theories treat the environment either as one claimant among employees, customers, suppliers, and competitors, or as a "trumping" stakeholder. Hoffman and Sandelands challenge the Cartesian basis of these positions, suggesting that both an anthropocentric environmentalism and an ecocentric environmentalism are fraught with the subject/object dichotomy, and thus are "inadequate for meeting our needs in the world today."<sup>63</sup> Instead, they posit a theocentric position based in Catholic theology in which both humanity and the environment are seen as co-created equals. CST does not *undervalue* humanity within nature nor does it *overvalue* humanity at the expense of nature. The natural environment remains always as God's Creation—a creation God proclaimed to be good. However, as CST holds, the environment is also a common good for humanity. The encyclical, *Octogesima Adveniens*, draws attention to the "ill considered exploitation of nature" and how human beings are "at risk of destroying [Earth]" and in turn becoming "the victim of this degradation." Further, the environmental crisis is "a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family."<sup>64</sup> The Bishop's Synod in 1971 provided additional evidence that the church was becoming more aware of the environmental movement and the idea of sustainability in sharing resources with future members of the human race.<sup>65</sup>

Three of the primary and permanent principles of the Roman Catholic Church doctrine are dignity of the human person, the common good, and solidarity, all of which coalesce as we consider the natural environment. This is not unlike the AMT approach described by Dyck and Schroeder which suggests that the overarching goals to guide management are grounded in the four creation mandates described in the book of Genesis: to manage creation in a God-like

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<sup>62</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005), 714.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands (2005), 142.

<sup>64</sup> Paul VI., Encyclical Letter *Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action)* (May 14, 1971), n. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World)*," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 351.

manner, to foster community, meaningful work, and creation care.<sup>66</sup> Both AMT and CST approaches to ecological concern recognize our interdependence and need for solidarity. Solidarity includes the mutually dependent relationship between human beings and the natural environment. We all share in a common destiny and this requires “an effort and commitment on the part of all.”<sup>67</sup> The idea of respect for life encompasses respect for justice and it means realizing the limits of resources and the “need to respect the integrity and cycles of nature.”<sup>68</sup>

Dignity of the human person, the common good, and solidarity are evident throughout CST and AMT. For example, from an AMT perspective managers have a moral obligation and duty to treat all stakeholders with dignity, particularly stakeholders who are unable to articulate their own interests or rights, such as the natural environment.<sup>69</sup> Coming from a CST perspective, Crow describes how “[t]he natural environment is an integral member of the interdependent web that solidarity demands each human to acknowledge and honor.”<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, as Pope John Paul II noted, exploitation of the Earth not only for industrial but also for military purposes and the uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long term authentically humanistic plan often bring with them a threat to man's natural environment, alienate him in his relations with nature and remove him from nature.<sup>71</sup>

Many of the papal encyclicals have acknowledged humanity's dependence on the natural environment for our most basic of needs and the primary status of the common good over individual rights. Take for example, the following excerpt:

The Earth, though divided among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all: for there is no one who does not live on what the land brings forth.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005).

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II., Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern)* (December 30, 1987), n. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, n. 26.

<sup>69</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005), 727.

<sup>70</sup> Kelly Q. Crow, *Catholic Social Teaching and the Caux Round Table: Possibilities for Partnership*. (Caux Round Table, n.d.), 10. [www.cauxroundtable.org/view\\_file.cfm?fileid=130](http://www.cauxroundtable.org/view_file.cfm?fileid=130) (accessed November 27, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> John Paul II., Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis (On the Redeemer of Man)* (March 4, 1979), n. 15

<sup>72</sup> Leo XIII., Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Workers)* (May 15, 1891), n.7.

Pope John Paul II similarly described “the endless interdependence between human beings and their environment.”<sup>73</sup>

Although traditionally the Roman Catholic Church used a narrow anthropocentric lens to assess environmental problems, these ecological problems have more recently been described as being an “anthropological error”.

We have forgotten God’s gift of Creation to all of us and His Purpose for Creation. We are cooperators in the work of Creation but have become tyrants of nature and rebels against God’s plans.<sup>74</sup>

The ecological crisis is closely linked to “excessive” and “disordered” consumption.<sup>75</sup> All humans are admonished that they must be conscious of their responsibility to future generations and that each species uniquely contributes to the balance of nature.<sup>76</sup>

In *Caritas in Veritate*, we are reminded that “nature is prior to us” and that

[r]educing nature merely to a collection of contingent data ends up doing violence to the environment and even encouraging activity that fails to respect human nature itself.<sup>77</sup>

The interconnectedness of human ecology and environmental ecology is obvious and emphasized.

Nature, especially in our time, is so integrated into the dynamics of society and culture that by now it hardly constitutes an independent variable. Desertification and the decline in productivity in some agricultural areas are also the result of impoverishment and underdevelopment among their inhabitants. In other words, “[o]ur duties towards the environment are [inherently] linked to our duties towards the human person.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> John Paul II., *World Day of Peace Message* (January 1, 1999), n. 10.

<sup>74</sup> John Paul II., Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus (On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum)* (May 1, 1991), n. 37.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 37.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 38.

<sup>77</sup> Benedict XVI., Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) (2009). [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) (accessed November 27, 2009), Ch. 4, 48.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 4, 51.

Other scholars have discussed the family aspect of humans and nature.<sup>79</sup> According to Hoffman and Sandelands, “[s]haring the same father, they relate as siblings in love and mutual respect.”<sup>80</sup> Drawing on CST, Hefner referred to plants and animals as “fellow citizens in the commonwealth of the natural world.”<sup>81</sup> Kadaplackal describes the Earth as “a friend who needs our care and concern” and describes God, humans and the natural world as “partakers in the creative activity.”<sup>82</sup>

In other places, there is more direct biblical justification for the role of nature. According to CST, the Bible provides clear and strong ethical direction not to ‘use and misuse’ the natural environment.<sup>83</sup> Donahue relates how in Genesis (1:1-2:4a) we are told to revere and praise nature, not exploit it, and that we are to remain in solidarity with inanimate and animate worlds.<sup>84</sup> According to Donahue, “[a]lienation between the Earth and humans is ... a result of sin.”<sup>85</sup> This rarely used word in our contemporary culture refers to activity that misses the mark of God’s law, and is cited as the ultimate cause of the degradation of the planet. The ancient biblical text of the prophet Hosea, after listing a litany of immoral activities, points to the result:

Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. (Hosea 4:3)

In the Gospels, Jesus is quoted as saying:

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<sup>79</sup> Francis Kadaplackal, “ ‘Created Co-Creator’ as a Source of Inspiration for a Sustainable Corporate Environmental Responsibility. (Working Paper, Leuven, Belgium: Katholieke Universiteit), 1-14. <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/thegoodcompany/Finalpapers/Kadaplackal%20Final%20pa.pdf> (accessed November 27, 2009); Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands (2005).

<sup>80</sup> Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands (2005), 151.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Hefner, “Human Being: Questioning and Being Questioned,” *Zygon* 39, 4 (2004): 733.

<sup>82</sup> Francis Kadaplackal (n.d.), 12.

<sup>83</sup> John Paul II., Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern)* (December 30, 1987), n. 34; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)* (March 25, 1995), n. 42.

<sup>84</sup> John R. Donahue, “The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching: Will This Engagement Lead to Marriage?,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 16; see also Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005).

<sup>85</sup> John R. Donahue (2005), 17.

What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches. (Luke 13:18-19)

Jesus' listeners would have been aware that "Rabbinic tradition forbade the sowing of mustard in gardens" because it is a weed whose seeds germinate as soon as they hit the ground.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the parable's emphasis is on deliberately doing things that may reduce the farmer's own productivity-maximization (e.g., planting weeds would limit the number of vegetables that the farmer could grow in his garden for himself or for sale), but which serve the needs of the greater creation (e.g., providing a haven for birds). In our contemporary world, this parable challenges the primacy of bottom-line thinking and of maximizing productivity and material wealth for the individual. Rather, the managerial character of God is evident in the actions of people who recognize that they are connected to a larger cosmos, and whose actions treat that cosmos with respect, even if this undermines the profit-maximizing nature of mainstream management.

Finally, in *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops described the necessity of a new ecological ethic. That is, we must hold in trust the resources for future generations.<sup>87</sup>

These CST views are not inconsistent with AMT, as summarized in Dyck and Schroeder's description of the biblical mandate related to creation care that was quoted earlier in the paper: "Humankind is given the responsibility to care for and sustain the God-created order, with a view to the ongoing life on Earth and future posterity. All creation, not just humankind, is part of the moral order."<sup>88</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our goal has been to advance the discussion of a spiritual and ethical perspective of stakeholder thinking in an effort to develop a stakeholder model that limits further deterioration of the natural environment. We have considered how Catholic social thought and Anabaptist-Mennonite theology can be seen as important resources for stakeholder thought and management. Forbes and Jermier suggested that overall there has been little development in the field of management on "alternative paradigms, worldviews, images, and metaphors

<sup>86</sup> Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol 8. (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 124; Bruno Dyck and Glenn R. Sawatzky, "Does the Kingdom of God Support Contemporary Management Theory, or Call for Alternatives?" (paper presented at the Academy of Management, Management Spirituality and Religion Division, August 2010).

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Catholic Bishops. *Economic Justice for All*. (1986), n. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005), 723.



capable of releasing people and other elements of nature from domination.”<sup>89</sup> In this paper, we have incorporated CST and AMT as alternative perspectives on stakeholder theory.

Insofar as these views represent alternatives to the dominant paradigm, we offer them boldly. Naughton and Bausch, citing Michael J. Buckley, argued that distinctiveness should not be “ruled out in the name of pluralism.”<sup>90</sup> CST and AMT provide bases from which business academics can contribute to broader pluralism in management theory and practice. In addition, the engagement of CST and AMT with business education can broaden discussions that take place in both business schools and schools of theology. According to Naughton and Bausch, the Christian tradition “recontextualize[s] the role of profits, efficiency, property/ownership, work, productivity, wages, quality, and so forth.”<sup>91</sup>

Although we have argued that a CST/AMT basis has an important contribution to make with regards to how scholars and practitioners think about the natural environment, we do not claim that the CST and AMT views we present regarding the environment are unique among the world’s religions, nor that they hold all the answers to ethical stakeholding thinking and practice. In particular, we are quick to note that many of the world’s religious leaders have addressed the need for humans to reduce their impact on nature, and many of the Roman Catholic and Anabaptist-Mennonite arguments on social justice and human economy are common to the other Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Islam. Moreover, many of the ideas expressed here are similar to the intimate and sustainable relationships many Aboriginal peoples have with nature. For example, according to CST all species and inanimate beings have been designed for the common good of past, present, and future generations. Some indigenous spirituality posits that the natural environment, not the firm or its managers, is the central metaphor.<sup>92</sup> Rather than our owning the resources of the Earth, we borrow it from our ancestors and must protect it for future generations. Moreover, Buddhism’s emphasis on the unity of the human family, the interdependence of all things, and the rights of future generations overlaps greatly with our discussion of CST, AMT, and nature as a stakeholder.

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<sup>89</sup> Linda C. Forbes and John M. Jermier, “Language, Organization, and Environment: An Introduction to the Symposium on the Death of Nature,” *Organization & Environment* 11, 2 (1998): 181.

<sup>90</sup> Michael J. Naughton, and Thomas A. Bausch, “The Integrity of a Catholic Management Education,” *California Management Review* 38, 4 (1996): 131.

<sup>91</sup> Michael J. Naughton, and Thomas A. Bausch (1996), 124.

<sup>92</sup> Gail Whiteman, “Poems from James Bay [Poetry],” *Organization & Environment* 10, 2 (1997): 186-193.

What would a stakeholder theory look like that was built on human dignity, the common good, and solidarity? At the outset, following Alford and her colleagues,<sup>93</sup> we need to move stakeholder discussions forward based on the ethical inadequacy of the “business” and “enlightened” case for stakeholder management. No longer should profits take priority over the integrity of the natural environment. We also need to move beyond the idea that environmental sustainability can only be accomplished if we find ways to make being ‘green’ pay. More importantly, we must avoid the very basis of this thinking which stems from extreme anthropocentrism, together with an organization-centric worldview, which are entrenched within conventional management theory and practice.<sup>94</sup> Without the movement we are proposing, stakeholder management is impoverished in terms of its sacred, human, and relational aspects.<sup>95</sup>

Extending Alford and colleagues’ work on a CST approach to nature as a stakeholder, which is based on a theocentric relationship between humans and nature, we suggest several ways to raise awareness of the relation and interconnectedness between the firm and nature as a stakeholder. Foundationally, the business firm must strive to balance stakeholder rights in a way that acknowledges both the common good (with the common good applying to all people, including future generations), and humanity’s mutually dependent relationship with the natural environment (solidarity). Achieving this balance would dignify both ecology and humanity.

#### *Dignifying Ecology: Nature as Primary Stakeholder*

Within the CST/AMT approach to stakeholder thinking, the natural environment is honored as a primary stakeholder. The creation of nature is prior to the creation of humankind, and in fact humankind is part of nature. In the biblical narrative, nature is evaluated by God as “good” and ultimately, together with humanity, as “very good.” This goodness is at least in part exemplified in its prolific abundance as well as in the intricate interconnectedness and coexistence of all aspects of nature, including humanity. Honoring and taking care of nature is an important facet of the biblical mandate in our relationship with nature. It is to be tended and taken care of. Nature is not a stakeholder for humans to misuse or abuse, such as when it is taken for granted or made into merely one among many stakeholders. Thus, contrary to Donaldson and Preston’s assertion that no *a priori*

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<sup>93</sup> Helen Alford (2006); Helen Alford and Yuliya Shcherbinina (2009).

<sup>94</sup> Ronald E. Purser, Changkil Park, and Alfonso Montuori (1995); Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson (2006).

<sup>95</sup> Helen Alford (2006); Robert A. Giacalone and Kenneth R. Thompson (2006); Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands (2005).

prioritization of stakeholders exists,<sup>96</sup> we believe that the normative core of stakeholder theory must acknowledge the priority of the natural environment among organizational stakeholders.

#### *Dignifying Humanity: Humans as Created Co-Creators*

CST and AMT also illuminate the human role in creation. They assert that humankind participates in God's plan for Creation, which God pronounced good. Made in the image of God, humans are also creators, or better, co-creators with God. As co-creators, under the authority of God, we too are to create that which is good.<sup>97</sup> As created co-creators we are part of God's creation as is nature, and thus we are not to abuse it but rather nurture and sustain it. Then, by extension, just as human beings are individually seen as 'created co-creators',<sup>98</sup> so can business be seen as a 'created co-creator' and in this way contribute to protecting and promoting environmental sustainability. Unfortunately, conventional business has abrogated this sacred honor and duty. Business has to accept responsibility for its role in contributing to what John Paul II referred to as the "environmental emergency" we find ourselves faced with.<sup>99</sup> The wealth of developed nations has come at the cost of abusing the Earth's resources and exploiting developing nations. Scientific consensus on the deteriorating state of the environment, society's awareness of it, and human connections to this deterioration continue to increase. However, by embracing CST's emphasis on human dignity, the common good, and solidarity, and by embracing the honored role of created co-creator, this tide of destruction can be reversed.

#### *Solidarity: Humility and Reconciliation*

CST/AMT perspectives suggest that management scholars and practitioners should explicitly treat the human and non-human natural environment as one or more primary stakeholders, towards enhancing the effectiveness of relationships between organizations and the natural environment. A stakeholder theory built on dignity, the common good, and solidarity, would incorporate both ecological and social sustainability criteria. However, the careful crafting of such criteria and the creation of codes of conduct in and of themselves may not be enough, even if conscientiously implemented. For example, Whiteman notes that the interface of corporations and Indigenous peoples is still

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas Donaldson and Lee E. Preston (1995).

<sup>97</sup> Bruno Dyck and David Schroeder (2005).

<sup>98</sup> Philip Hefner (2004).

<sup>99</sup> Reuters. Tourism Must Respect Environment, Pope Says. [www.cnn.com/2002/TRAVEL/NEWS/06/25/environment.pope.reut/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2002/TRAVEL/NEWS/06/25/environment.pope.reut/index.html) (accessed July 5, 2002).

fraught with tension and misunderstanding in spite of attempts on the part of corporations at being more sensitive.

From the high Arctic to the high desert to the Amazonian jungle, Indigenous Peoples seek justice, and do not usually think that natural resource development on their lands provides this. In fact, many perceive such development as fundamentally unjust, despite the proliferation of corporate codes on social responsibility, and detailed programs for stakeholder relations and community consultation.<sup>100</sup>

Critical to mutual dignity, achieving the common good, and the experience of solidarity with nature and other people is humility and development of reconciled relationships. Humility comes with embracing the knowledge that we are created, under God, and that we are co-created with other people and the natural environment. There is also the need to restore and nurture relationship with nature and others. Whiteman, for example, describes the notion of justice as based in relationships in the teaching of Indigenous Peoples:

‘We are all related’...and this truth of relatedness forms the backbone of healing. Just as harm occurs when we are not mindful of how we are related, so are we healed as we live more mindfully of our relatedness.<sup>101</sup>

The Christian words for this are repentance and reconciliation.

The exercise of humility and restored relationship also applies to the land. Business’ organization-centric worldview tends to transform “place,” with all of its relations, into “space,” an abstraction that can be filled with whatever might be needed at the time. For example, outsourcing of production to lower cost countries may be efficient but ignores the loss and degradation of community and humanity through plant closures as well as the degradation that comes from exploiting very poor working conditions overseas. Conversely, the exercise of dignity, common good, and solidarity means the restoration of place with all of its relatedness.

The work of humility and reconciliation is not easy. It requires strenuous work to be in harmonious relationship with the ‘other’, whether that ‘other’ is people, groups, or the land itself. For example, both Whiteman and Hall documented the unintended profound difficulties incurred in the interactions between those imbued with the Western culture and Indigenous Peoples (with the

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<sup>100</sup> Gail Whiteman, “All My Relations: Understanding Perceptions of Justice and Conflict Between Companies and Indigenous Peoples,” *Organization Studies* 30, 1 (2009): 101.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

latter receiving the greater proportion of suffering and degradation).<sup>102</sup> Being reconciled to the land, something which seems more straightforward, is also not so easily accomplished. It requires time and commitment. Whiteman and Cooper and Hall have reported profound changes to their psyche after actually having been on the land for an extended period of time.<sup>103</sup> Being on the land over time facilitates bringing one into relation with the land and its rhythms, leading to the growth of dignity, the sense of the common good, and solidarity with the land and its vast inhabitants.

### *Changing Managers: Imbuing Stakeholders with Salience*

Embracing and fostering dignity, the common good, and solidarity, with all of its implications, will take significant work. These foundational values are not simply about vaguely compassionate feelings towards disadvantaged or marginalized people far away from us, but rather about a firm commitment to the common good of all humanity, creation, and future generations. In order to foster a much greater sense of mutuality and relatedness, it is important that relationships with the environment and with groups and communities are explicitly and assiduously developed.

For example, most people working in the upper echelons of corporations are far removed from those impacted by their decisions. One way of beginning to break that isolated disconnectedness in relation to the environment is to work directly with those who have intimate knowledge of the land and its ecosystems. Environmentalists have begun to advocate working with large corporations in order to bring ecology into the corporate office, thereby allowing corporate decision makers to gain a vital sense of the land and being in relation to the land and its ecology.<sup>104</sup> While this ‘second hand experience’ may not be optimal, it can have profound effects. For example, the great American photographer, Ansel Adams was deeply moved by the majesty of the mountains in the western United States. Speaking of Yosemite, California, he said: “I think I came closer to really living than in any other time of my life, because I was closer to essential things.”<sup>105</sup> His commitment to nature infused his photographs, which he subsequently used to convince a very skeptical U. S. Congress to set aside and preserve vast natural areas as national parks. Likewise, environmentalists’

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<sup>102</sup> Gail Whiteman (2009); Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

<sup>103</sup> Gail Whiteman and William H. Cooper, “Ecological Embeddedness,” *Academy of Management Journal* 43, 6 (2000): 1265-1282; Edward T. Hall (1983).

<sup>104</sup> Vern Peters, The King’s University College (2009), personal communication.

<sup>105</sup> John Szarkowski, *Ansel Adams at 100* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 13.

commitment to nature is able to impact the corporate office. Their first hand experience and love for the environment can bring much greater understanding and commitment to the environment in the corporation. Further options for fostering connectedness to the environment might include eco-retreats for managers, and requirements for managers to hold meetings in the locations where strategic and operating decisions will impact the natural environment. Related to this, Boswell reported how business people who spend time with society's marginalized people tend to become more socially responsible.<sup>106</sup>

It may prove more difficult, however, to break the disconnectedness with groups and communities. For example, Whiteman provides a sense of how even our best intentions may in fact create barriers for Indigenous Peoples:

While most corporate decisions are made in the boardroom, traditional indigenous decisions are made outside in the land... Consultants using large formal meeting spaces may exclude elders and traditionalists who may not be able to travel from remote areas (or have the funds to do so), who may not be comfortable in such settings, or who may not perceive these as legitimate locations for making decisions about natural resources.<sup>107</sup>

Entering into real relationships with people requires a great deal of humility and willingness to listen as well as a commitment to reconcile relationships when difficulties and disputes arise.

As Mitchell, Agle, and Wood noted, managers' values differ and therefore they are an important moderator in the relationship with stakeholders.<sup>108</sup> Embracing and implementing CST/AMT requires a manager that is spiritually transformed since management is not neutral but rather a "system of power and privilege."<sup>109</sup> CST/AMT counters power with humility, and counters privilege with the sharing that comes with dignity, common good, and solidarity through reconciliation. Indeed, a transformed manager exercising CST/AMT is able to shape organization-stakeholder relationships in surprising ways. For example, in Mitchell, Agle and Wood's stakeholder salience model, it is those stakeholders with power who demand attention.<sup>110</sup> However, a spiritually transformed manager seeking dignity, the common good, and solidarity, could *give* power to powerless stakeholders (such as the natural environment), thereby *making them salient* for the organization.

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<sup>106</sup> Jonathan Boswell, *Community and the Economy* (New York: Routledge Press, 1990)

<sup>107</sup> Gail Whiteman (2009), 109.

<sup>108</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997).

<sup>109</sup> David S. Steingard (2005), 231.

<sup>110</sup> Ronald K. Mitchell, Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997).

The approach to stakeholder thinking being described here can bring about change in social and ecological justice. What are some examples of the interconnectedness of human ecology and environmental ecology? How is dignity of humanity connected to dignity of nature? For example, biofuels that are being grown commercially on large monoculture plantations for energy usage among wealthy countries are resulting in the loss of land for traditional agriculture, food, and human dignity in communities in the Global South.

How are human and non-human stakeholder impacts interconnected? For example, in a large meat company how are employees (injury rates, fair wages), customers (quality controls, food safety, food security), animals (treatment at all stages), and water and air systems (waste and various emissions) interconnected in our understanding of dignity, respect, and common good? A large meat company would also need to consider small-scale farmers, local small-scale food production companies, and future generations as primary stakeholders. The purpose of the company must be seen as connected to feeding the world in an authentically sustainable way that preserves land, community, and biodiversity for future generations. For example, the largest meat companies in the world are currently pushing meat consumption globally and swamping European and Asian markets with U.S.-raised meat. Is this contributing to the common good of all people, or rather in greater global food insecurity and environmental problems? Stakeholder thinking requires a deeper understanding of dignity and respect and how environmental stewardship is tied to dignity, as well as to solidarity with the common good of all Creation.

We assume the same for other, marginalized stakeholders. Thus, a possible research area would be the study of similarities between other marginalized stakeholders, such as future generations, elderly, children, disabled, and developing countries. The stakeholder – natural environment relationship has some obvious ties to the topics of endangered human species, environmental racism, and intra- and inter-generational distributive justice, as well as to environmental scarcity and violent conflict.<sup>111</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The task before us to seek ways of translating spiritual CST and AMT principles into ethical stakeholder principles provides a large agenda for future research and business practice. It calls for further and deeper dialogue between CST and AMT on the one hand, and stakeholder theorists and business practitioners on the other. How can CST and AMT (as well as other religious traditions) be brought to the

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases," *International Security* 19, 1 (1994): 5-40.

table to help managers reconcile their organizations' relationships with people and nature? In contrast to conventional management thinking, in which the manager is typically placed at the center of the contractual relationship between a business organization and its stakeholders,<sup>112</sup> how might God become the central metaphor of stakeholder thinking<sup>113</sup> such that the stakeholder relationship becomes the center of the relationship between the firm and particular stakeholders?<sup>114</sup> How might the idea of created co-creator be translated into practice by business firms?<sup>115</sup>

Happily, there are some examples of such integration taking place. For example, Crow has shown how the Caux Round Table business stakeholder principles apply CST to the secular business world.<sup>116</sup> In addition, there are over 750 businesses in the Catholic Focolare movement who are part of an "Economy of Communion" project that is trying to put a CST approach into practice, and this has prompted businesses to pay more attention to creation care.<sup>117</sup> A more specific instance of this sort of integration is evident in the Shared Farming movement (akin to Community Supported Agriculture), where Anabaptist-Mennonite entrepreneurs started a way of farming that gives tangible expression to treating both land and people with dignity. The idea of Shared Farming is compellingly simple: people purchase 'shares' of a farm's organically-grown produce directly from the farmer, and pick it up weekly during the harvest season. This model, which respects the land and develops healthy relationships between rural and city people, has been replicated on dozens of other farms.<sup>118</sup>

In conclusion, every organization has a relationship with the natural environment as a stakeholder. Through research, dialogue, and practice, we believe we can begin to change the nature of that relationship to a mutually loving relationship in a Creator. We believe that stakeholder theory can be, should be, and needs to be built on the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and the common good.

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<sup>112</sup> Charles W. L. Hill and Thomas M. Jones, "Stakeholder-Agency Theory," *Journal of Management Studies* 29, 2 (1992): 131-154.

<sup>113</sup> Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands (2005).

<sup>114</sup> See for example, Lorna Gold, *New Financial Horizons: The Emergence of an Economy of Communion*. (Hyde Park, NT: New City Press, 2010).

<sup>115</sup> Francis Kadaplackal (n.d.).

<sup>116</sup> Kelly Q. Crow (n.d.).

<sup>117</sup> See Lorna Gold (2010), 147.

<sup>118</sup> Bruno Dyck (1994a); Bruno Dyck (1994b).