On the Reciprocal Relationship between Faith and Management

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Abstract

This article describes the complex reciprocal relationship between faith and management. Firstly, faith-based organizations have to be managed. Some management methods will foster the faith; others will affect the faith negatively. Each faith group will have to look for management methods suited to the specific faith of that group. Secondly, faith has an influence on management. This can happen implicitly or by intention. An example of the latter is when managers just copy concepts from a faith group because of their success, without necessarily sharing their faith. Or it happens when believers want to implement the standards of their faith at work. The concept faith@work can be problematic if it is a single-faith approach within a secular work environment because it might lead to injustice. Due to the reciprocal relationship between faith and management, we can discover the re-entry of religious terms or concepts: these terms originate in Christian faith, enter the management sciences and from there re-enter the Christian faith. The examples "servant leadership" and "vision" show the subtle change of meaning that occurs when words wander between the two worlds, thus becoming "false friends" to the faith group.

Keywords: Economic Theology, Faith-based Organizations, Faith@work, Servant Leadership, Vision.

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1. A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP

This special issue is entitled "Faith and Management", and this article provides a bird's-eye view of the complex relationship between faith and management. Each influences the other, and in addition, sometimes the influence of one field on the other comes back like a boomerang. The intention of this article is not to study a certain issue in detail but to provide a survey of the reciprocal relationship between faith and management. Thus this article contributes to the area of "economic theology", defined as "the study of the forms of interactions between theological imaginaries on the one hand, economic thought and economic-managerial practices on the other, both past and present" (Schwarzkopf, 2021, p. 4).

Section 2 is on the influence of management on faith-based organizations. Where does management foster faith, and where does it affect faith negatively? Section 3 is on the opposite influence: How does faith influence management science and management practice, either indirectly or by intention? Then section 4 discusses two examples of re-entry, where terms or concepts from religion have entered into management concepts, and from there influenced faith-based organizations.

The intention of this article is to make the mutual influence transparent. I will give examples of each kind of influence. Given the wide scope of this article, the choice of literature can only be eclectic. Since my personal background is in Christian theology and Christian FBOs, the majority of my examples will be from this faith tradition. This is admittedly a limitation. On the other hand, the management sciences originated in the Western world and are still very much dominated by Western-oriented scholars. Since this part of the world was and still is strongly influenced by the Christian worldview, the mutual influence between Christianity and management science is especially strong.[1]

This article stresses the reciprocity of the relationship between faith and management. Dyck (2014, p. 25) explicitly studied one direction, the effect of religion on management. The *Routledge handbook of economic theology* (Schwarzkopf 2021) in turn looks at both directions, "theological concepts and their economic meaning" (part 1) and "economic concepts and their theological anchoring" (part 2).

2. MANAGING FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS
2.1 Good Management Helps Faith Groups to Grow and to Remain Viable
Basically this section is about "organizing God's work" (Harris 1998). In general, a faith-based organization (FBO) is an organization which has a mission linked to a certain faith; its values are based on that faith; and its members are usually from that particular faith group. According to Ferris (2005), faith-based organizations can be characterized.

> …by having one or more of the following: affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values. (Ferris, 2005, p. 312)

Often, a new faith or a new congregation comes to life through a charismatic person and starts as an unstructured movement. The founder generation does what needs to be done. However, when the movement starts to grow, it needs to be structured, and management processes have to be installed – like in any other growing movement.

A typical example is provided by the early Christian church (New Testament, Acts 6:1-7). The Christian movement had started in Jerusalem and attracted more and more people. In the beginning there were Hebrew Jews and Grecian Jews. Unfortunately, the widows among the Grecian Jews were overlooked in the daily distribution of food. This led to complaints. Apparently, the apostles' workload was too high, and they accidentally overlooked this group. The solution was to select seven deacons who would distribute the food, so that the apostles could focus on their responsibility as spiritual leaders. This example from early church history is in line with Greiner's observation about crises in growing organizations. Tasks have to be delegated, and then management processes have to be implemented (Greiner, 1998). In this case a simple management method helped the faith group to cope with a growing number of disciples.

Five centuries later, Saint Benedict wrote rules for living and working within a religious community (Benedict 1981). This Rule of Saint Benedict can be regarded as the first handbook on Christian leadership and has greatly influenced Western monasticism.

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[1]Pattison (1997, p. 172 footnote 10) indicates that it might be worthwhile to write a comprehensive history of the interaction between Christianity and management.

It is a truism that all FBOs have to be managed, but the degree of management might differ from faith group to faith group. For example, the Methodist Church, as its name suggests, is known for clear structure, whereas the Brethren movement used to be more skeptical of structure and tried to avoid management where possible. Sometimes Christian groups see a tension between management and the work of the God's Spirit.

2.2 Special Management Methods for Faith-based Organizations

It must be asked whether a FBO should be managed in the same ways as any other profit or non-profit organization, or whether the faith of the members should influence on the selection of management tools.

First of all, the faith usually has an influence on the mission statement of the FBO. What is it for? Why was this FBO founded? Usually the mission of the FBO is derived from the faith it is based upon. Sometimes a narrative from the faith tradition becomes a leitmotif for their work. For example, a painting depicting the parable of the Good Samaritan hangs in the entrance hall of the Mbesa Hospital in Southern Tanzania (Mbesa Hospital 2022).

But as rightly stated by Flessa (2023) it is not only about "what the FBO does" but also "how the FBO does it". One would expect from FBOs that they behave coherently with their religious values, whether one agrees with their values or not. The above-mentioned characterization of FBOs ends with the statement that "decision-making processes are based on religious values" (Ferris, 2005, p. 312). The influence of the faith on the decision-making process can result from ethics or from spirituality. For example, Gehra (2009) did an empirical study in 32 Benedictine monasteries in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. He investigated the influence of the Benedictine faith and spirituality on personnel management and daily economical decisions.

Decision-making in an FBO usually starts with an ethical evaluation of the alternatives. It may be that after this ethical filtering, there are still some alternatives possible. Let us assume that from an ethical point of view the remaining alternatives A and B are equally good (or equally bad). How does faith influence the decision after the ethical evaluation has been carried out?

Here the question of spirituality might become relevant. Is there a "divine interaction" that would lead to alternative A instead of B? Although many organizations claim to be "faith-based", often the spiritual elements are left out in their daily decision-making processes. The German Protestant author Kusch (2017, p. 4) notes that the management tools used in Christian organizations are often "atheistic". It is like a "book-cover spirituality" (Kessler, Knecht & Marsch, 2021, p. 188): one prays in the beginning and at the end of a meeting but then spirituality is abandoned for the rest of the management meeting. Kusch (2017) therefore suggests 45 tools for integrating spirituality into popular management tools. Kessler, Knecht and Marsch (2021) present case studies on three international Christian FBOs and their attempt to bring spirituality into their decision-making process, the Jesuits, the Salvation Army, and the Wycliffe Global Alliance.

2.3 Some Management Methods might Affect the Faith

Although it is clear that FBOs must be managed, it must also be noted that not every method will fit into the context of an FBO. Some management tools will foster the faith, especially if one explicitly integrates the values and the spirituality of that particular faith (section 2.2). But in some cases, management methods might have negative effects on the practice of the faith or even, in the long run, on the doctrines of the faith. For this reason, Webster (1992) is very critical of church marketing. Is it legitimate to sell the gospel like a product? Would such an approach change the content of the gospel?

To illustrate the possible negative consequence of a management method which is applied uncritically, let us look at a typical system of compensation for salespersons. Their salaries often depend on their sales figures. Someone might get the idea of applying this method to a pastor's salary (I know church people who have had this idea!). They argue that a pastor is, among other things, responsible for marketing the gospel. However, according to Christian doctrine, no human being can bring another human being to faith. This is illustrated by a metaphor: human beings can plant and water, but only God gives growth (New Testament, 1 Corinthians 3:7). Thus the idea of giving an incentive to the pastor for each new convert would contradict the fundamental belief that only God's spirit can create faith. (Unfortunately, there are indeed pastors or evangelists who regard evangelism as business and become multimillionaires. They abuse religion in order to amass wealth!)

Generally spoken, management methods are good to improve on efficiency. But for many church members the congregation is like a family. For them relations are more important than results, and some management methods could change the atmosphere of a congregation to their disadvantage.

2.4 Conclusion

From these examples it can be deduced that some management methods are not suited to certain FBOs because they would affect or even change the faith. FBOs should critically evaluate any management methods they are considering as to whether they will foster or negatively affect their faith. They should especially look for methods which allow them to integrate the ethics and the spirituality of their faith.

3. FAITH INFLUENCING MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Obviously, faith has an influence on management theory. We can distinguish between three variants of influence. The first sort of influence "just happens". It is not intentional, it happens simply because the word view of the dominating faith system has an influence on the managers or the management scholars. In other cases the influence is intentional. Here we can again distinguish between two sorts. In the first, management people copy tools or processes from a faith group even though they do not necessarily share the faith of this group, because the tools have proven successful. In the second, believers of a certain faith explicitly want their business and management style to be shaped by their faith. In the following sections the three variants are described: implicit influence, intentional copying from faith, and implementing faith.

3.1 Implicit Influence

I will discuss three examples where faith has implicitly influenced management or economics studies. A well-known example in economics is Adam Smith's metaphor of the "invisible hand" in his inquiry about the wealth of the nations, published in 1776 (Smith, 1976, p. 456). There is a lot of debate about this metaphor (e.g. Rothschild, 1994; Oslington, 2012; Hill, 2021). Although Rothschild (1994) opts for an ironic understanding, the majority of Smith's reader assumes that the invisible hand refers to a divine hand (Oslington, 2012, p. 430). Oslington (2012, p. 432) argues that this metaphor is rooted in Calvin's doctrine of providence, mediated through the Presbyterian Church which dominated Scottish life in the eighteenth century.

Probably the most prominent work on the influence of religion on economics is the famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which was published in 1905 by the German sociologist Max Weber (2000). Weber argues that Protestantism in its ascetic forms like Calvinism was a driving force in the rise of market-driven capitalism (Weber, 2000, p. 53). Irrespective of whether one agrees with Weber's conclusions, it must be acknowledged that Weber's book had a great influence. Since Smith's metaphor of the invisible hand and Weber's

book have already been discussed at length in other places, I will move on to an example where the Christian influence has received less attention.

Let us have a look at Douglas McGregor and his famous distinction between *Theory X* and *Theory Y* for leadership, which goes back to the 1950s (McGregor, 1985). "McGregor stressed the fundamental importance of dealing with the human side of enterprise" (Heil et al., 2000, p. 4). He noticed that leadership styles of managers are affected by the way they look at their subordinates. Theory X and Y represent different views of human beings. Leaders who – implicitly or explicitly – share the assumption of theory X that people are lazy, will try to motivate people by extrinsic factors (the "carrot-and-stick" method). Theory Y assumes that human beings are intrinsically motivated to work and thus need a different leadership style from "command and control". Since 1960, Theory Y has become an implicit basis of modern leadership concepts, which is stated by the leadership expert Bennis: "Just as every economist, knowingly or not, pays dues to Keynes, we are all, one way or another, disciples of McGregor" (McGregor, 1985, p. vi). (Note the religious language of discipleship!)

In management literature, theory X is often identified with Taylorism. This is true, but it is not the full truth. There is also a strong religious element in it. McGregor himself gives a little hint:

> The assumption has deep roots. The punishment of Adam and Eve for eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was to be banished from Eden into a world where they had to work for a living. (McGregor, 1985, p. 33)

A look into McGregor's life reveals more about the Christian influence. McGregor grew up in a family that was strongly influenced by Calvinism. His grandfather founded the McGregor Institute, a missionary station in Detroit. Douglas' father became director of the institute. McGregor's widow wrote about her father-in-law: "Dad held strong religious beliefs" and he was very pessimistic "in respect to man's potential goodness and strength, which Doug continued to challenge in his work and writings" (Bennis and Schein, 1996, p. xi). By establishing theory Y, Douglas McGregor challenged the religious belief of his father. McGregor once mentioned in a private talk that theory Y might be an avoidance mechanism for his own rebellion (Weisbord, 1987, p. 115). So there is provably a strong influence of Calvinistic faith in the establishment of theories X and Y. McGregor identified theory X with Christianity because of the religious context in which he grew up.

Other authors argue that the biblical teaching is much closer to theory Y than to theory X (Kessler, 2007). No matter whom you agree with, this example shows how faith can implicitly influence leadership. The German author Rothlauf (1999) has a section about the influence of religion on leadership behavior with examples from Buddhism and Islam.

3.2 Copying from Faith by Intention
A prominent example of management copying methods from FBOs is the book *Selling the dream* by the former Apple marketing specialist Kawasaki (1991). Kawasaki's idea is that salespersons can learn from evangelists and their enthusiasm because their goal is to get people to believe in their product or idea (p. vii). According to Kawasaki (p. 4) "evangelism is the process of selling a dream". His whole book is structured around evangelism, and Kawasaki became famous as Apple Chief Evangelist. Kawasaki was impressed by the methods of some Christian evangelists and adopted them for Apple. As far as we know, Kawasaki did not show any interest in the Christian faith as such. Kawasaki's approach found many followers, so that today the job title "technology evangelist" is very common in the IT industry.

The British theologian Pattison claims that "management is a kind of religion" (Pattison, 1997, p. 5). His evidence for this statement falls into three categories: firstly, the faith assumptions of

management (pp. 28–34), secondly, the religious style and order of management (pp. 35–38), and finally, the use of religious language in management theory and practice: "The overtly religious nature of management reaches its apotheosis in some of the language that is used. Here evangelical revivalism appears to have unbridled sway" (Pattison, 1997, p. 39). Pattison refers to the religious terms "vision", "mission statements", and "doom scenarios". One could also add "evangelists" and "metanoic organizations" (Kessler 2017). Pattison explains this phenomenon with the history of management science. Management as a discipline started in the US, which is very much influenced by Protestantism (Pattison 1997, p. 47). Unlike the European churches, no religious denomination in the US had an official link to the state. Various religious groups had to compete with each other to attract new members, thereby establishing a marketplace of faith. Religion had to be marketed – and thus religious activity was seen as a good preparation for business (p. 48). The historical analysis of Moore (1995) showed that already in the 18th and 19th centuries there was a reciprocal relationship between business and religion in the US. Religious leaders borrowed commercial practices to promote religion, and business leaders learned from religious leaders to promote commerce.

> US management gurus like Tom Peters who charge people high fees to attend 'revival' meetings at which … they basically tell people what they already know. The modern management guru seems to imitate his nineteenth century forebears in almost every detail – even down to providing the souvenirs and follow up materials that Moody and Sankey sold to their enthusiastic audiences. (Pattison, 1997, p. 49)

Still, today the religious language in management parlance is often quite irritating to European academics. Neuberger (2002, pp. 196–197) especially mocks the religious language in writings about charismatic and transforming leadership.

Another example of copying from FBOs is the practice of ascribing to business leaders the attributes of spiritual leaders like "saints" (Alvesson, 2011) or "priests" (Hatch, Kostera & Kozminski, 2005; Ruth, 2014). A modern hagiography is created in which management gurus and successful CEOs take a role borrowed from the saints of the Catholic or Orthodox church. (Is it because there are no saints in the Protestant tradition that the management authors, often socialized by Protestantism, look for saints in the management context?)

3.3 Implementing Religious Values and Spirituality in Management

In the examples of the previous section the motive for copying from FBOs was simply the success of these concepts in faith groups. The authors did not intend to implement faith in the workplace. In this section we will look at those who explicitly want to implement religious values and/or spirituality in the normal workplace. Thus it is not about Christian management of a Christian organization or Buddhist management of a Buddhist organization (the topic of section 2.2), but about *Christ@work*, *Buddhism@work* (Marques 2012) etc.

Historically, the influence of Christianity on management has been very strong. Today, many religions contribute to management study. In a study, Dyck (2014) summarizes what the five religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam have to say about management in secular management journals. Dyck introduces a distinction between religious views that would support mainstream management and those that aim to liberate management from the mainstream (p. 30). Examples of recent publications are Ng (2019) about servant leadership from a Buddhist perspective, and Sinha (2021) about the contribution of the Indian Vedanta to management ethics. Zweifel and Raskin (2008) show a Jewish perspective on business leadership. In the following I again focus on Christian approaches, partly because of my personal background and partly because of their dominance in history.

Mele and Fontrodona (2016) argue that "Christian ethics applied to economics and business has a long tradition". Several Catholic theologians, including some Popes, contributed to this. For example, the Catholic authors Alford and Naughton (2001, p. 212) offer a "Christian spirituality at work" by implementing Christian social principles in modern organizations.

There are several contributions from the evangelical stream of Christianity. Evangelical approaches are often characterized by a strong missionary zeal. Many contributions are either authored by Americans or at least influenced by the American evangelicalism. For example Jones (1995) recommends learning from Jesus as CEO. The entrepreneurs Knoblauch and Opprecht (2003) tried to bring the idea of "kingdom companies" (2022) to the German-speaking countries. The idea of the kingdom-companies approach is not only to learn from Jesus, but to act as if God/Jesus *were* the real CEO.

In their survey of spirituality in the workplace, Mitroff and Denton (1999) discovered five models. The above-mentioned "kingdom companies" would fit into the category of religion-based organization with the mission of taking over one's company for Christ (pp. 57–75). Although Mitroff and Denton advocate spirituality in the workplace, they distance themselves from such a single-faith approach (p. 8).

Indeed, the single-faith approach in a secular workplace brings several ethical conflicts. It is fully reasonable and legitimate for FBOs to require that the staff members with leadership responsibilities be members of that particular faith group. But one should be careful about transferring this principle to the secular workplace. Although advocates of *faith@work* argue that *faith@work* will enforce ethics and moral values, a single-faith approach might even lead to injustice, as described by Marques (2012):

> In workplaces, particularly, the exhibition of one religion especially by leading individuals can quickly create inhibitions among workers who maintain other beliefs, … Consequently, it could lead to alienation and the well known and highly despised in- and out-group situation, whereby adherents to the leader's religion would become part of the in-group, and all others would remain in the out-group. (Marques, 2012, p. 541)

I live in a part of Germany that is strongly influenced by the Protestant pietistic movement. In our area, with a radius of 70 km, there are several family businesses owned and run by committed Christian businessmen (yes, men only). On the one hand, these family businesses are known for high ethical standards and reliability, and they are quite successful. On the other hand, it is an open secret that in order to get promoted to the inner circle of leadership, one should belong to the specific Christian denomination to which the CEO belongs.

In a pluralistic, multi-religious society we cannot allow a single-faith approach in the workplace. We have to aim for a multi-faith approach at work, and we have to ensure that an employee who does not share the leader's faith is disadvantaged. Lips-Wiersma et al (2009) mention further possible negative implications of the workplace spirituality movement.

3.4 Provisional Summary

It has been shown that the relationship between faith and management is indeed reciprocal. The following diagram is a summary of the different links, as discussed in sections 2 and 3:
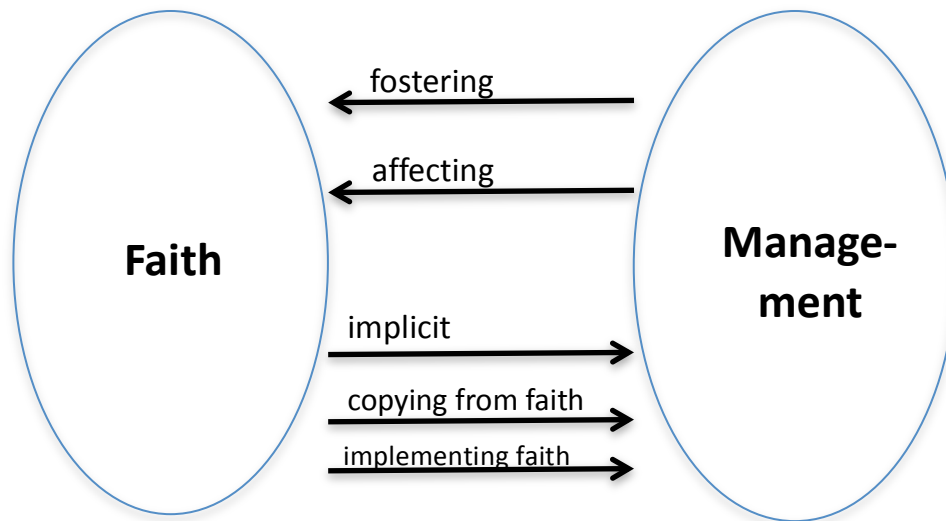

FIGURE 1: Five links between faith and management.

4. RE-ENTRY OF RELIGIOUS TERMS

So far we have studied some links leading from management to faith (section 2) and some leading from faith to management (section 3). It becomes even more complex if a term from one area is transferred to another area and then returns to the first. As a term wanders between the worlds, its meaning might change, and this might lead to some confusion. This effect will be illustrated by the terms "vision" and "servant leadership", which appear both in Christianity and in management literature.

4.1 The Concept of "Servant Leadership"

The idea of a leader with the attitude of a servant has a long history in both the Jewish and in the Christian faith. For example, Moses and King David are regarded as two great leaders in the Old Testament, and both leaders are praised for their humility (Old Testament Numbers 12:3) and their serving attitude (Exodus 31:32; 2 Samuel 23:14-17). In the New Testament Jesus himself taught his disciples that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26, English Standard Version). Obviously, this Bible verse could be a starting point for the theory of servant leadership.

However, the term "servant leadership" is used neither in the Bible nor in Christian literature until 1970. This term became known through the writings of Robert Greenleaf (1977) who published an article "The servant as leader" in 1970. Greenleaf wrote for a secular audience. And although he himself belonged to the Quakers, a special Protestant community (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 29), it was not the biblical stories that gave Greenleaf the idea of servant leadership but a novel written by German author Hermann Hesse (1877-1962). (It must be noted that Hermann Hesse grew up in a pietistic household and, although he drew many ideas from Hinduism and Buddhism, the influence of his Christian heritage is strong in his writings.) Due to Greenleaf's writings, the notion servant leadership has become quite popular among both scholars and practitioners. There is a separate chapter on it in Northouse (2019, pp. 347–390). As the list of contributors in Bouckaert and van den Heuvel (2019) shows, servant leadership is discussed by atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Hinduists etc.

After Greenleaf, the term "servant leadership" also entered the literature on Church leadership (e.g. Böhlemann & Herbst, 2011, Detje, 2017). The challenge is now the following: servant leadership is a concept that can easily be traced back to the Bible, even though the Bible does not use the term. It became popular in the management world, and from there it entered Christian literature. Christians who read the term "servant leadership" in a text might automatically identify it with the New Testament teaching on servant leadership. But it is very likely that the author of the text has an interpretation in mind that is different from the Christian understanding.

Although Greenleaf was a Quaker, his understanding is slightly different from the New Testament teaching. Both concepts hold that a leader should be a servant to his or her people. But according to the New Testament a Christian leader is first of all a servant of Christ (1 Corinthian 4:1), putting God in the first place and obeying God rather than other human beings (Acts 5:59). Greenleaf does not mention this vertical aspect of serving. But obedience to God might be an important issue in situations where church members ask for something that would contradict the divine command. Thus the faith group should be critically aware of the meaning of a word used by an author, even if it sounds familiar.

4.2 The Term "Vision"[2]

The word "vision" is one of the most popular management terms of today, being almost omnipresent in current management talk. Many ask for "visions", "vision statements", and "visionary leadership" (e.g. Nanus, 1992; Menzenbach, 2013). "Vision" is often connected with charismatic leadership and transforming leadership. According to Kiefer and Senge (1981, p. 9) "the notion of a vision for an organization has not been common to management parlance" until 1981. Shipley (2000) did an extensive study of the origin of vision and visioning in planning. He also states that "talk of vision became wide-spread after" the mid-1980s (p. 225).

The idea of vision was popularized by the management bestseller *Leaders* by Bennis and Nanus (1985). These two authors interviewed 90 managers and then deduced four key strategies for successful leadership, the first key strategy being "attention through vision" (p. 87). Leaders should have a clear vision of the future state of their organization, and this has to be an attractive and realistic image. Vision used to be a spiritual term, and Bennis and Nanus saw a clear link to spirituality: "by focusing attention to a vision, the leader operates on the emotional and spiritual resources of the organization" (p. 92). Not many management publications mention a link between vision and spirituality.

Originally, the word "vision" was connected to religion and spirituality, meaning a divine or at least spiritual revelation, mediated by prophets, seers and shamans (Hoheisel, 2005, p. 1127). These visions sometimes referred to the future and sometimes not. In the Bible we find examples of both types. Nehemia's vision of a new wall around Jerusalem referred to a future state (Old Testament, Nehemia 2:12.17.18). But Peter's vision on the roof was just a divine teaching lesson for him (New Testament, Acts 10:9-17a). The Bible also warns against false visions proclaimed by false prophets.

Today we encounter three different meanings of the term "vision"

1   Spirituality, religion: Divine revelation
2   Psychology: Sign of illness, madness
3   Management literature: Description of a future state

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[2]The discussion in section 4.2 is partly drawn from (Kessler, 2017).

It is interesting to trace the re-entry of the term "vision" into church vocabulary. Church leadership, a sub-discipline of practical theology, is naturally influenced by management sciences. Thus the word "vision", originally church language, then adopted by management theory, re-entered church vocabulary. One exponent of modern church leadership is the American Willow Creek Church with its leadership conferences allover the world. Bill Hybels, its well-known founder, gives vision first place on the list of characteristics leaders should have: "A leader's most potent weapon: the power of vision" (Hybels, 2002, p. 29). The German theologians Böhlemann and Herbst (2011, pp. 31–36) also emphasize the importance of vision for church leadership.

The problem is now the following: people use the word "vision" in the church context but it is not clear in which sense they use it. Do they refer to a vision in the biblical sense of a divine revelation (meaning no. 1), or to the type of vision described in management literature (meaning no.3)? Of course, one could easily deal with this side effect by specifying the sense in which one is using the word "vision". But as a church consultant, I have noticed that pastors sometimes play around with this confusion of terms. They develop a vision as described in management theory (3), but by adding Bible verses to the vision, they create the impression that this vision is actually of divine origin (1). Then the use of the term "vision" becomes manipulation.

It is also interesting to note that in the Western world the value of a vision is sometimes justified with a quote from the Old Testament book of Proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, King James Version). This reference occurs in the church context, but, also in the public sphere (Shipley, 2000, p. 227). In a society with a strong Judeo-Christian tradition, an appeal to the authority of sacred is meant to convince people of the need and the power of a vision. However, this is actually an abuse of scripture, as the proverb refers to the original meaning of vision as divine revelation, not as a future state to be envisaged. The translation of the New International Version, "When there is no revelation", would protect against this confusion.

4.3 Becoming "False Friends"

So actually, when the terms "servant leadership" and "vision" re-enter the Christian world, they are a bit like "false friends". The words sound familiar but they may not be identical with the biblical concept or biblical meaning.
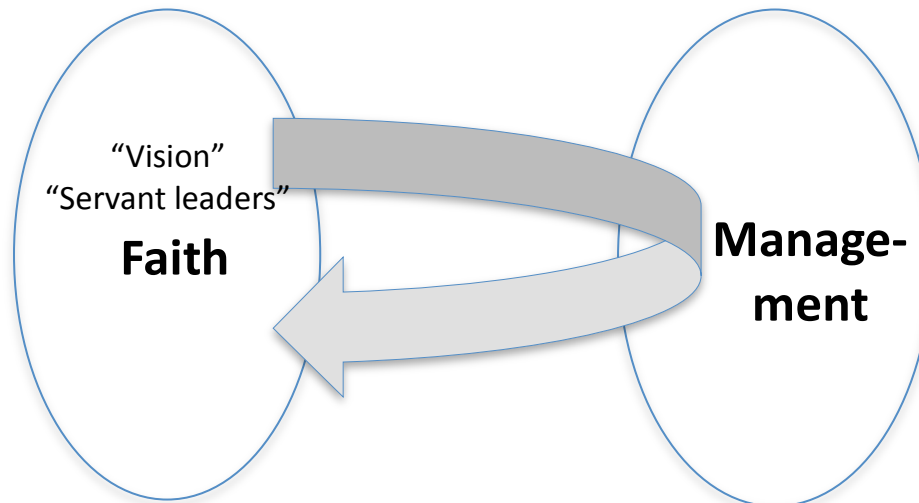

FIGURE 2: Re-entry of religious terms.

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Of course, these are not the only religious terms re-entering the area of faith. Another famous term is "mission", which was originally understood as the Christian mission. Today it has become a standard term in management theory and FBOs, like any other organization, formulate their specific mission. However, it seems to me that this re-entry is as confusing at the terms "vision" and "servant leadership". A fourth example would be the term "hope" which has a strong root in the Jewish and Christian bible. It was then taken up in Fry's theory of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2016, p. 4), which is in turn used by some FBOs. However, so far, it has not yet become as prominent as the terms "servant leadership" and "vision".

5. CONCLUSIONS

This article has discussed the complex reciprocal relationship between faith and management. For historical reasons the links between Christianity and management science are especially numerous. In general, there is fruitful exchange between faith and management. The two disciplines can learn from each other, and bringing ideas from one discipline to another is often stimulating, fostering new ideas.

However, I have argued that at least three links must be viewed critically: Firstly, management methods are not neutral; they might affect an FBO in a way that it does not comply with that particular faith. Secondly, although I see some merits in faith at work, a single-faith approach should be avoided in a secular workplace, as it might lead to injustice. Thirdly, if terms from one area are transferred to another area and then re-enter the first area, these terms may have changed their meaning, thus becoming "false friends".

As a practical consequence it should be noted that manager of FBOs should critically reflect, which management methods would fit to their specific context. I also think that more research should be done on the specific challenges of managing FBOs because there two perspectives meet together, the earthly and the heavenly perspective. And this meeting-point gives a creative tension that is worth exploring.

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