

A Change Leadership and Management Research Discussion and Analysis on the Religiosity and Spirituality in Philosophical Organizations: The Sustainability Case of Religious Freedom and the Satanic Temple

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Organizations and Governments need to critically experience the change management processes to understand and build planned organizational change models. Throughout these processes, religiosity and spirituality play a pivotal role in broadening our scientific understanding about the key philosophies of sustainable change leadership. This study builds onto these arguments while presenting a strong case of religious liberties, especially through the lens of The Satanic Temple (TST) alongside contextualizing the application of change.

The manuscript successfully delineated the process of change management and philosophical sustainability by conducting large scale literature reviews and theoretical analyses characterized by micro and macro understandings of a variety of contextual variables and research ideas. Broadly, these included exploring the boundaries of political pressures and human rights, investigating the different perspectives of engines of change in society, bridging the gaps between political and socio-legal viewpoints of religiosity and spirituality, analyzing key roles played by TST in business and society, considering multiple outlooks of effective change communication in organizations and governments, and eventually examining the sustainability dimensions of effective change management.

Keywords: change management, communication, business, society, The Satanic Temple, religiosity, spirituality, leadership, sustainability, mental health, psychological wellbeing

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There have been much debate and many decisions in the political and legal aspects from and within the viewpoints of governments, organizations, executive leaderships, and research bodies that have some of their pedigrees in religious doctrines (and perhaps in spiritual leadership and philosophies as well) (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Donnelly & Whelan, 2020; Drucker, 2012; Fox, 2018; Jena, 2021; Lowery, Duesing, & Beadles, 2014; Sprinkle, Danielson, Lyng, & Severud, 2021; Weaver & Agle, 2002), especially, perhaps, from the leaked US Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v Wade*, and the “Parental

Rights in Education Bill” that was signed into law in Florida that put limitations on US citizens based on religious doctrines (Diaz, 2022; Gerstein & Ward, 2022). This act of work brings religion back into the political and legislative debate after being theoretically separated from government in the modern era (Fowler, Olson, Hertzke, & Den Dulk, 2018; Onwuegbuchulam, 2019; White & Gregorious, 2019).

While the 1973 decision on *Roe v Wade* had been upheld as precedence for many decades, a decision that serves as the cornerstone for many women’s rights, it was reconsidered recently by a Supreme Court that determined that it is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives (Gerstein & Ward, 2022). However, this is worrisome as many State elected officials are unapologetically religious and often appeal to their political bases’ tendencies, especially regarding the “pro-life” movement which has deep ties to Catholicism from its conception (Dochuk, 2015; Laylock, 2020). However, there are apparent issues with the likely repeal of *Roe v Wade* as federal protection of abortion rights and the legal decision authority being left with the States as there are multiple laws being considered across the nation to restrict access to safe and legal abortion with Texas and Oklahoma restricting abortion at 6 weeks and conception respectively (Gutmacher Institute, 2022). This recent trend towards rebuilding the legal bridge between Church and State has not been smooth as the political landscape has become more heated and derisive (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Barrett, 2002; Donnelly & Whelan, 2020; Drucker, 2012; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018).

First, it should be acknowledged that abortion is healthcare as many women can be forced to give birth under strict State laws even if it threatens their life. Furthermore, multiple studies indicate that the inability to afford abortion care places pregnant individuals further into poverty and harms their health as well as the wellbeing of their current and future children (Fowler, Olson, Hertzke, & Den Dulk, 2018; Robles-Fradet, 2020). In the midst of all this turmoil, an unlikely organization entered the political-religious debate: The Satanic Temple (TST). While the notion of TST is provocative (Hashemi, Marzban, Sebar, & Harris, 2020; KrishnaKumar & Neck, 2002; Jena, 2021; Lowery, Duesing, & Beadles, 2014), the organization has been rebelling against the politically religious culture sharing some of the same privileges afforded to other religions (Fowler, Olson, Hertzke, & Den Dulk, 2018; Laylock, 2020).

Not to be confused with the Church of Satan, founded by Anton LaVey in the 1960s and resulted in a political Satanic Panic and served as a unifying force and rekindled the Christian vote, TST is its own religion with fundamental tenets. The Seven Tenets are:

- ❖ One should strive to act with compassion and empathy toward all creatures in accordance with reason.
- ❖ The struggle for justice is an ongoing and necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions.
- ❖ One’s body is inviolable, subject to one’s own will alone.
- ❖ The freedoms of others should be respected, including the freedom to offend. To willfully and unjustly encroach upon the freedoms of another is to forgo one’s own.
- ❖ Beliefs should conform to one’s best scientific understanding of the world. One should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit one’s beliefs.
- ❖ People are fallible. If one makes a mistake, one should do one’s best to rectify it and resolve any harm that might have been caused.
- ❖ Every tenet is a guiding principle designed to inspire nobility in action and thought. The spirit of compassion, wisdom, and justice should always prevail over the written or spoken word. (TheSatanicTemple.com)

As written and practiced, TST is not a theological group but rather a spiritual religion, perhaps linked with the idea of sustainability in religiosity and spirituality at workplaces and during other productive activities and events (for more details, please refer to Laylock, 2020; Sprankle, Danielson, Lyng, & Severud, 2021), that promotes scientific, rational, and bodily autonomy. Drawing parallels to mainstream religious morals while focusing on the nation’s perceived challenges, TST’s mission is to encourage benevolence and empathy, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense, oppose injustice, and undertake noble pursuits promoting social and religious justice (TheSatanicTemple.com). Regardless of the intentions of TST, there is no denying that invoking the name of Satan is a controversial issue that

while raising attention and interest can lead to political backlash and an equal uprising in the majority religions (Laylock, 2020; Sprankle, Danielson, Lyng, & Severud, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL RESEARCH AGENDA

Political Presence and Human Rights – Is Change Inevitable?

As previously stated, TST is a relatively new organization designed to take advantage of a program offered within the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) with the aim of strengthening religious and social outreach initiatives (Gregorious & Hedenborg White, 2019). Since this office primarily aided Christian churches to enter the public sphere following the attrition of other government-funded programs, TST tested the status quo and the impartiality of the system through their beliefs.

Following decades of unchallenged “soft secularism” and court cases advocating for religious freedom for citizens to corporations that subsequently infringed on women and LGBTQ rights, TST sought to engage with the system to test whether the faith-based initiative would apply to non-Christian religions (Gregorious & Hedenborg White, 2019). Today TST is pursuing ongoing campaigns to keep the temple engaged in noble pursuits: mental health, protecting children from corporal punishment at school, supporting addiction recovery, fighting for TST members’ religious liberty, religiosity, spiritual leadership, and most notably religious reproductive rights (Gill, 2001; Laylock, 2020; TheSatanicTemple.com). While TST is in litigation over increased restrictions and laborious procedures required by certain States that impose laws on access to abortion, it should also be noted that abortion is healthcare somewhat connected with religiosity and spirituality in a political and legal context (Robles-Fradet, 2020). There has been ample publicity about this issue as well as political campaigns that bring the topic of abortion and LGBTQ rights to the forefront of debate, with religious doctrine interpretations and spiritual philosophies leading to restrictions on human rights (Donnelly & Whelan, 2020; Fox, 2018).

Engines of Change Leadership and Religiosity

The wheels of progress are generally slow in terms of engines of change as most of these issues are settled in the court (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Lowery, Duesing, & Beadles, 2014). The court of opinion is much more accessible, and TST can build traction and support while offering their unique point of view into the religious debate over on social media (Laylock, 2020). As a relatively new nationwide religion, TST had a lot of ground to cover and following their OFBCI application, they went to work getting the message out there in similar channels that other religions utilized. TST led a promotional campaign by joining the Adopt-A-Highway program which provides community service cleaning up the sections of roads, established of their first official chapter, and finally developed an after-school program called “After School Satan” in direct opposition to Christian “Good News Clubs” (Gregorious & Hedenborg White, 2019).

However, the movement really took off when TST in 2014 pursued a high-profile campaign to place a statue of the goat deity Baphomet, an idol that is significantly linked to TST, outside the Oklahoma State Capitol. The State of Oklahoma had sparked this initiative when it was decided that a monument to the Ten Commandments was to be placed at the same location (Gregorious & Hedenborg White, 2019). TST crowdfunded the funds to build the Baphomet statue successfully, however, Oklahoma State elected to not go through with the decision to the Ten Commandment monument. TST instead gifted the statue to another State that had a similar Ten Commandment monument at the Arkansas State Capitol and therefore demonstrated wisdom and peace of decision-making (Gregorious & Hedenborg White, 2019).

Why Change Now? A Business Management Ethics Perspective

The recent rise and engagement from TST implies that there are some members of the public that are frustrated with how politics and religion have become entwined, causing a new organization to cast a light upon the Church and State issue the nation faces. While religious organizations and spiritual societies and establishments do not fit the mold of corporations and businesses that adapt to market trends and shareholder interests, they can be much impacted by politics (Drucker, 2012; Fowler, Olson, Hertzke, &

Den Dulk, 2018; Fox, 2018; Gill, 2001; Jena, 2021; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Laylock, 2020; Vaggione, 2005). While TST is heavily vocal and active in the campaign for reproductive rights, they have been silent on the recent issue of gun control following frequent mass shootings recently. However, this is a testament to the integrity of the organization to be a champion for individual rights, and not an organization that was built to support one party's political agenda (Laylock, 2020; TheSatanicTemple.com).

There are many factors at play here with why TST has chosen to not comment on other political issues, one likely factor is that they are still a relatively small and new organization, and this issue has traditionally played out in the political arena alone. While religions are held up as moral institutions with high ethical standards (Jhamb & Carlson, 2020; Weaver & Agle, 2002), they appear to be only politically advantageous when discussing visceral issues (White & Gregorius, 2019) such as reproductive rights. This allows TST to be able to remain unnoticeably silent on this issue, while other corporations may have to make quick and decisive actions to cut ties with organizations that support or promote divisive issues. After the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, many corporations "cut their ties with the National Rifle Association (NRA) ... to show their disagreement with the NRA's pro-gun values (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022). Although politics and religious equality drove TST into existence, its influence is limited by their own mission and vision statement (Laylock, 2020).

An interesting moment occurred at the last NRA convention where the topic of gun control was also side-stepped, displaced instead by concerns for the nation's mental health (Lozano & Colvin, 2022). While mental health has a big role in mass shootings, there does not seem to be a clear way forward for to address this issue nationally or internationally, at least as of now.

The Strategic Purpose and Vision of Change in Business and Society

TST has done a great job recruiting from the millennial and Gen Z population and that is in large part due to its purpose and mission and the social landscape of today. However, there is a sincere and magnetic appeal to working for a company or organization that has a purpose that aligns with one's own values and belief systems (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022). Religion claims to have various functions in society (generally somewhat mixed with spirituality and spiritual leadership beliefs) such as it gives meaning and purpose to life, reinforces social unity and stability, serves as an agent of social control, promotes psychological and physical well-being, and may motivate people to work for positive social change (Green & Elliott, 2010; Hashemi, Marzban, Sebar, & Harris, 2020; University of Minnesota Research, UofM, 2016; Vaggione, 2005). TST claims to be much the cause of a schism within Modern Satanism as it was the result of one as its purpose was to improve upon the Church of Satan as a "competitor" non-theistic religion (TheSatanicTemple.com). The sole purpose or the mission of an organization is the communication of why it exists or what need it is fulfilling in a clear and understandable manner (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022).

On a public pamphlet, the TST describes its mission to facilitate the communication and mobilization of politically aware Satanists, secularists, and advocates for individual liberty. The mission of TST is to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people. We embrace practical common sense and justice ... We believe that this is the hope of all mankind and the highest aspiration of humanity (TheSatanicTemple.com). When comparing this mission to the purpose of religion in a society, it fulfills that mission while providing for those that do not subscribe to the supernatural theology of other religions (Laylock, 2020). Effectively TST responded to the trend of the decline of theistic religion in the United States by providing an alternative non-theistic religion to engage the secular population socially and politically. This tactic is explained as reshaping the value proposition where an organization utilizes a "purpose-driven approach" to grow into new populations (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022).

Effective Change Communication and Spirituality

Once an organization has established a mission, it has to be communicated effectively and clearly with transparency in action and through all available channels of effective communication (Barrett, 2002; Belias, & Koustelios, 2014; Drucker, 2012; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018). TST mainly relies on word of

mouth (sometimes EWOM, depending on contextual factors) since the organization is still less than a decade old, and even though it has international presence, there are only 45 established congregations worldwide. How an organization engages with its desired populace in the beginning and throughout the implementation cycle is important, and thus, communication plans must encompass contingencies (Barrett, 2002; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022; Sprankle, Danielson, Lyng, & Severud, 2021).

Since its conception, TST has been the focus of media attention resulting in the production of a documentary “Hail Satan?” by Penny Lane and the academic book *Speak of the Devil: How the Satanic Temple is Changing the Way We Talk About Religion* by Joseph Laycock (2020). As the movement gains recognition that aids in distinguishing them from other Satanic groups, TST can be offered more opportunities to engage with the media and espouse their mission and purpose. TST has been quite strategic in how they communicate their messages using the “underscore and explore” method where they focus on the very basics and fundamentals but engage employees in dialogue to identify obstacles and misunderstandings that need to be addressed through advocacy projects, litigation, and media engagement (Laycock, 2020; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022; Sprankle, Danielson, Lyng, & Severud, 2021). In this method, the public and congregation members stand in for “employees” as the target for rhetoric.

THE SATANIC TEMPLE AND SUSTAINED CHANGE – WHAT HAS FALLEN AND WHAT HAS NOT? (DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS)

As previously mentioned, TST is in direct opposition of not only theistic religions but The Satanic Church as well. In a research article on TST’s website, it is explained that while The Satanic Church gained popularity and recognition in the years following its conception in the 1960s, it has fallen off due to poor coordination, inconsistent messaging, contradictions, and lack of support. Seeking to learn from the mistakes of The Satanic Church and to develop a sustainable organization, TST has established a core ideology and advocacy platforms that all align with its values (Laycock, 2020).

The development and identification of a core culture, that is maintained and strengthened through initiatives and engagements, results in stability, standardization, and a culture that sticks or maintains changes and their contribution to performance (Belias & Koustelios; 2014; Fowler, Olson, Hertzke, & Den Dulk, 2018; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2022; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018). TST maintains a public discourse on religions’ purpose in government and society while providing non-theists a way to engage in the societal purpose of religion through furtherance of social and justice progression. It may be too early to tell if TST is sustainably managing change, but if they stay the course and are able to correlate actions with their core culture, they may be around for good.

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