

The Christian Worldview in the Classroom

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Introduction

In a Strategic Management class, small groups of students were given the assignment of analyzing an industry based on the Christian Worldview. They first gave their interpretation of God's **creational** norm for the industry. Next, they explained how **fallen** humans have misdirected the industry away from God's intentions. This usually includes mention of how industry participants have directed the industry away from serving others, to serving themselves. Finally, the students tell the class how they would seek to **redeem** the industry if they entered that industry upon graduation from their Christian College.

The student groups were free to analyze the industry of their choice, but professor approval was required. Professor approval was not intended to keep students away from more difficult social issues, quite the opposite. The groups were encouraged to analyze industries that the students were aware of, and familiar with. That would include industries where they consumed goods. Also, the professor did not want the students to analyze industries that had previously been analyzed by other groups.

The Christian Worldview

In *Creation Regained*, Albert Wolters clearly lays out the three part framework of the Christian worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption. He describes **creation**:

Creation is God's daily work of preserving and governing the world, which cannot be separated from His act of calling the world into existence. God's rule of law is immediate in the nonhuman realm but mediate in culture and society. In the human realm men and women become coworkers with God; as creatures made in God's image they too have a kind of lordship over the earth, are God's viceroys in creation. The creational law is crying out to be positivized in new and amazing ways. We are called to participate in the ongoing creational work of God, to be God's helper in executing to the end the blueprint for his masterpiece.

Wolters description of the **fall** contains the following ideas:

Anything in creation can be directed either toward or away from God- that is, directed either in obedience or disobedience to his law. To the degree that these realities fail to live up to God's creational design for them, they are misdirected, abnormal, distorted. To the degree that they still conform to God's design, they are in the grip of a countervailing force that curbs or counteracts the distortion. God never lets go of his creatures, even in the face of apostasy, unbelief, and perversion. Every area of the created world cries out for redemption and the coming of the kingdom of God.

Redemption is characterized as:

Redemption means restoration- that is, the return to the goodness of an originally unscathed creation and not merely the addition of something supracreational. Business must no longer be relegated to the secular world, but must be made to conform again to God-honoring standards. In connection with our theme of re-creation it is particularly striking that all of Jesus' miracles (with the one exception of the cursing of the fig tree) are miracles of restoration. Thus, redemption is a freeing of creation from the shackles of sin and evil and a reinstatement of creaturely living as intended by God. What was formed in creation has been historically deformed by sin and must be reformed in Christ.

Strategic Management

There is an inherent tension between strategic management and divine guidance. Strategic Management is the alignment of an organization with its environment. This definition makes the assumption that humans can determine their own fate by planning carefully enough. Faith is integrated with learning in the Strategic Management discipline in the scripture from Proverbs 16:9 "In his heart a man makes his plans, but God guides his steps." The Christian Worldview exercise is important for Christian College seniors who are making their plans for entering the real world. The Christian Worldview Exercise helps prepare them to allow God to guide their steps in the industry they choose.

The Students

The axiom is true, "You don't know it until you can teach it." When seniors apply the Christian worldview and present it to their fellow students, they gain a great understanding of both theory and practice. The students are often more demanding of their fellow students than the professors are. Students in the audience have asked very meaningful questions of the presenters. And, the presenters are rigorous when questioning the audience.

We are called to be salt and light to the world. That means all of the world. We are not instructed to form Christian ghettos that shield us from the world. We are commanded to be in the world, but not of the world. Historically, Christians have abandoned entire industries because they were considered to be un-redeemable. Wolters says no industry is without redemption.

Bob Briner wrote in *Roaring Lambs* about growing up as a writer in a Christian community where none of the church elders encouraged him to go to Hollywood and work in the movie industry. Christians had abandoned the industry, and so, it had "gone to hell in a handbasket" as you might expect it to. If Christians don't add "salt and light" to an industry, it's certain to be taken over by non-Christians who will direct it to their own fallen purposes. Because of Briner's call for action, and many other Christian leaders who saw the movie industry sliding into an abyss, the Council for Christian

Colleges and Universities created a Hollywood film studies center. Students from any of the 105 CCCU institutions can spend a semester studying in the film industry. That has produced a “salt and light” that God will use to redeem the industry to His original creational intention.

The well-quoted scripture that largely supports the missionary zeal of many Christians, “Go ye into the world, making disciples of all nations” is often mis-interpreted. Apparently the verb tense is not exactly correct. It’s supposed to be translated, “As you go.....” That delivers an entirely different challenge to all of us. We don’t have to be missionaries to do missionary work. As we go about our lives, no matter what industry we join, we are to redeem the industry back to God’s creational intention with the help and support of the Holy Spirit.

Industries Studied

Student groups have analyzed numerous industries using the Christian Worldview. This section highlights some of the more meaningful analyses.

Auto manufacturing

The students who analyzed the auto industry made a presentation that was very interactive with their fellow classmates. They began by asking, “Why does God want us to have cars?” After a long silence, a student from the audience tentatively asked, “So we can go to church on Sunday?” The presenters jumped on the humble suggestion, “And what do you use your car for?” Another long silence ensued, during which the students must have been thinking about all the non God-honoring ways they had used their cars.

While I intend for the students to analyze the industry, not the consumers, they were on a good track, so I let them pursue it. “What kind of car do you drive?” the leader asked, and then proceeded to poll the entire class of 40 students. They drove some very expensive cars. The presenting group made the very impactful point that many people drive an automobile for much more than transporting themselves to do God’s will. Much of auto ownership contributes to ego satisfaction.

“But back to the industry,” the student presenter encouraged. “If you graduated and went to work in this industry, what would you do to redeem it?” They presented the idea that a Christian Worldview car salesman would not try to “sell up” and get a customer into a loan that would be difficult for them to pay. A dissenter emerged in the audience. “I’m just meeting the person’s need,” he complained. “As a salesman, I’m going to sell the customer what he wants to buy.” It was time for the professor to interject, “If you act no different than your colleagues who graduate from the College of Business at the University of Texas, or Texas Tech, then why did you attend Baylor?” A meaningful conversation erupted about relativism and about the Christian’s duty to form culture, not to be formed by it.

Dieting

God created our bodies as “temples” that could be physical examples of His perfection. When students participate in recreation, they are “re-creating” themselves, or redeeming their bodies to a closer resemblance of God’s intentional design for them. God made all types of foods possible for his creation to live happily. Dieting can be seen as a means of eating that is closer to God’s intended design for us. There are different cultural views on the subject. Diet Coke in Europe is labeled “Coke Light” because “diet” indicates a medicinal use. The idea is that there must be something wrong with you if you are “dieting.” There is something wrong with most humans: We don’t eat the good food God intended for us to eat. This gives rise to the diet industry. God probably intended for us to be on a permanent diet but eating properly.

Humans have re-directed the diet industry from physical health to ego satisfaction. Advertising in this industry obviously says nothing about their customer’s bodies being “temples.” The ads center on ego satisfaction and acceptance from others. The message very clearly is that customers of their diet schemes like themselves better and are liked by others better, because they have a more attractive body. God’s acceptance of us should totally overshadow physical shape. God loves us in all shapes.

Redemption could be sought for this industry by doing the same things: Instructing and encouraging people to eat and exercise to produce a better physical body. But the purpose needs to be redirected from self and human satisfaction to being satisfying to God. That is the greatest satisfaction.

Movies

The industry began with Thomas Edison’s invention of the kinetoscope in 1889. God may have intended for the industry to present values and morals to society through entertaining stories.

The industry has fallen from its original intention as writer, directors, and producers have shown violence, sex and drug use in their films. Most movies encourage sinful values and morals.

The industry could be redeemed by Christians who infiltrate the industry and change the morals and values lessons from sinful to God-honoring. Simply changing minor contexts of stories can have a positive, redeeming effect. If characters were shown living normal lives, the industry would improve. Normal people go to work, spend time with their nuclear family, and go to church. Those value representations would help to redeem the industry.

Retail Clothing

Genesis 1:31 says “God saw all that he had made, and it was good...” In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no clothes, but they were unconcerned about it. It was only after the Fall when they noticed they were unclothed. Thus, is God’s original intention for us to be nudists? We don’t think so. Clothes provide more than the necessity of covering the body out of a sense of guilt. They provide warmth in the winter, shade us from sun in the summer, and provide sanitation necessities. God wants us to have

clothes, because Genesis 3:21 reads, “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” The question is, “What kinds of clothing does He want us to have. And how should the industry conduct itself in a God-honoring way?”

The industry is fallen by making clothes that are seductive, and clothes that have obscene pictures and sexual innuendos. Mostly, however, the industry is fallen because it encourages covetousness by its consumers. “The clothes make the man” infers that a man (or woman) cannot be “made” without a certain style of clothes. The Christian Worldview is that humans are “made” (created) by God for a certain purpose, and that purpose can be accomplished without stylish clothes.

The retail clothing industry could be redeemed by the production of clothing that covers the body and glorifies God. The students in this presentation wrote, “Create and sell clothes you would wear if you were sitting with God face to face.”

Cigarettes

God created the tobacco plant, along with many other plants that can be use for good or ill. The tobacco plant can find positive uses as a food source. The first cigarette was accidentally created by the Egyptians in 1832. One can only surmise that an unwanted fire burned some tobacco and someone decided it smelled good. God probably did not intend for humans to smoke tobacco. Corinthians 6:19-20 reads, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”

The industry is fallen in a number of ways. Just processing tobacco for smoking purposes creates a product that is addicting, harms the user’s health, and consumes money. There is also good evidence that cigarette manufacturers add chemicals to make their product more addicting. Although they deny it, it’s rather obvious that many of their marketing campaigns are targeted at children. One-third of smokers will die from a smoking related disease. Seventy percent of smokers have tried to stop.

The student group disagreed with Wolters. “The only true redemption would be the destruction of the entire tobacco industry. God is in no way glorified through the use of cigarettes.” A long discussion ensued, in which the student group invited their fellow student smokers to tell why they smoked. “Being cool” and “acceptance” were the biggest factors. Those can be easily reckoned with by the Christian Worldview that maintains we should find acceptance by our unconditional acceptance and love from Jesus Christ. The more interesting answer was that cigarette smoking is relaxing. There is some evidence that the motions: Handling the cigarette, taking deep breaths, the action of doing something to occupy the hands and mouth, are all soothing and comforting to the smoker. If that’s the reason, then perhaps the industry could create other items that would fill the same need.

Horse Racing

God may have allowed the creation of the industry as a social entertainment, and for people to enjoy the beauty of the horses that God had created.

This discussion could also be directed toward the entire issue of competition. In a fallen world with limited resources, there will always be competition. The Christian Worldview encourages competition of the nature that is aligned with Colossians 3:23 “Whatever you do, work at it as unto God.” Limited resources and a call to perfection will always produce competition. I once asked an auto historian if he knew when the first auto race took place. “Right after they made the second car,” he responded.

Games of chance represent the fallen nature of humans. While there is no direct Biblical command not to gamble, there are many suggestions that it is wrong. First, gambling has a zero-sum outcome. For someone to win, someone else has to lose. That violates the “Do unto others” command. Second, humans have a tendency to make gambling their god, and we are supposed to “Have no other gods before me.” Third, it’s not good use of resources, because it represents bad stewardship of God’s provision. Fourth, gamblers put their faith in an unknown outcome that does not trust in God’s providence. Outside of gambling, there are many examples of over-competitive trainers drugging horses, over-training them and using them only as “sport” which does not honor God’s intention for animals. We are supposed to manage God’s creation, not take advantage of it.

The students in this case made the same mistake that many groups did: They called for stricter regulation of the industry. This was a teachable point. I was not encouraging the students to reform the industry, I was encouraging them to redeem it. They are charged to do what’s right, no matter what the outcome. As new employees in an industry, they cannot be made responsible to transform an entire industry, but they can be made responsible to act in line with their Christian Worldview. This industry could be redeemed by improving treatment of the horses as fellow “creatures” (they were created by God) and by the elimination, or at least scaling down, of gambling.

Soft Drinks

Some reports indicate the industry was created as an alternative for hard liquor. If that’s true, then perhaps the industry could be seen as a less-threatening alternative to alcohol. Mineral waters have some health and perhaps medicinal qualities. Dr. Pepper was originally designed as a mild laxative, and Coca-Cola’s name arises from the use inclusion of trace amounts of cocaine in early recipes. Clearly, the soft drink industry arises out of good intentions for medicinal use and thirst quenching.

Currently, soft drinks often accompany and support the drinking of liquor, so the industry has the same fallenness problem the alcohol industry has. Second, there are deleterious health effects: Obesity, caffeine addiction, and calcium deficiency often accompany heavy consumption of soft drinks. Finally, the industry uses lifestyle and sex appeal to sell its products. This puts the industry in the category of cultural and societal negatives.

Redemption is possible, as it is with all industries. The industry offers low calorie substitutes of soft drinks, as well as sport drinks and bottled water. Drinking fluids is a

creational need that will always have to be satisfied. How the industry satisfies the need is a good example of Wolter's encouragement to move all of creation in a redemptive direction, back to God's creational design.

Alcoholic Beverages

God created grapes, wheat, barley, hops and the many fruits that can be used to make alcoholic beverages. They are certainly sources of food and nutrition. Also, fermentation allows for the production of cheese and many other foods that are improved by the process. His good intention could have been to use alcohol as an anesthetic, a relaxant, and a hygienic. There even could be an argument that God intended alcohol to be a recreational beverage, to make people feel better. There is growing evidence that small amounts of red wine reduces heart disease.

Fallen humans have re-directed the use of alcohol to satisfy their own selfish desires. Forty to fifty percent of all auto accidents are alcohol related. The total cost of alcohol abuse is estimated at almost \$140 billion annually. Aggressive marketing to young people is an example of the fallen nature of the industry. It is estimated that children see 100,000 television ads for beer before the age of 18.

There may be evidence of redemption in the industry. If God really intended for alcoholic beverages to increase human satisfaction, then an argument could be made for reasonable amounts of consumption. Anheuser-Busch has spent over 12% of their advertising funds over the past 18 months on its "Know when to say when" campaign that encourages responsible drinking. Alcohol awareness organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the International Center for Alcohol Policies could be seen as redemption factors. They are following Wolter's advise to not destroy the industry, just redeem it to God's creational intent.

Personal Computers

The computer may have been created by God to allow humans to improve their lives via more efficient communication and to increase their ability to maintain intellectual assets.

The students making this presentation misplaced the blame: They pointed out the improper use of personal computers by consumers, like hacking identity theft, and internet pornography. That would only be true if the industry designed computers especially for those purposes. It's very possible that the industry is designing computers for God's creational intentions, but consumers are using them for fallen purposes.

The students also missed the redemption possibilities for the industry. They assumed that more education about computer literacy and better protective information firewalls would solve the problem. The students were pointing their fingers at others, not at themselves. I wanted them to describe how they would redeem the industry by using the Christian Worldview. Education does not redeem people, nor do firewalls. Redemption is obtained by Christians acting in ways that honor God, so the Holy Spirit can change the thoughts and behaviors of humans.

Hybrid Vehicles

This industry could have been created to reduce environmental destruction, and to reduce humans dependence on oil. On that second point, the students were probably referring to national dependence, but I interpreted it as human dependence.

Since this is a relatively new industry, the students surmised that the fallen nature of humans had not affected it yet. The Devil usually doesn't need that much time, but in fact, it's difficult to find fault with the industry, especially compared to the traditional internal combustion engine industry for whom the hybrids are seen as a substitute. If they are seen as part of the auto industry, they have the same fallenness problems that industry suffers from.

Having not identified a unique fallen nature, the group struggled for redemption advice. They closed by hoping for a concentration on the original purpose and keeping the industry practical.

Chocolate

The Mayans called chocolate, "theobroma cacao" meaning "food of the gods." Chocolate has the same creational design as other foods. Psalms 128:2 says, "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." This indicates that God intended for humans to enjoy eating the food they had earned via their labor.

Over-consumption of chocolate led this group to lump chocolate in with other sinful indulgences, and they quoted 1 Peter 4:3 "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." We had a good discussion about the movie, "Chocolate" in which chocolate is a metaphor the forbidden apple. We concluded that too much of any good thing is bad, and that the industry really could not be held responsible for making their product so desirable that people wanted to consume it in large amounts.

The redemption analysis was rather weak by this group. They cited some research which states that chocolate can reduce bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase the good cholesterol (HDL).

Athletic Shoes

Shoes have been used as foot protection since the beginning of mankind. The industrialization of the Western economy around the early 1900's produced a leisure class that had more time for sports. In 1920, Adi Dassler began making shoes for sports events in France. God would certainly intend for humans to have physical protection from injury while "re-creating" our physical bodies.

As athletic shoes climb above the \$100 mark, they lose their functionality and become more of a fashion statement that satisfies the psychological ego of the consumer. There is

also evidence that the industry's push for lower labor costs can lead to the exploitation of low-cost workers in developing nations.

Redemption could be obtained by selling the product, not the image. God wants us to exercise, and He wants us to be protected from harm will doing so. He does not want us to gain our self-esteem from the type of athletic shoes we where.

Fitness Centers

Spas were originally intended to promote relaxation. With that intention, the industry abides by God's desire for humans to relax. Over time, the industry has morphed into an exercise-based fitness industry, where customers "re-create" themselves. Both of these intentions seem to be ordained by God.

The industry is fallen via the poor management of many fitness centers that produces poor stewardship of goods. There are some cases of deceptive advertising and perhaps entrapment of customers into long-term contracts that don't serve the consumer fairly. There is also some encouragement of the use of supplements and performance-enhancing drugs.

The students making this presentation recommended education and regulation to clean up the industry. They missed the point about the Christian's worldview purpose, which not to enact good education and regulation. The purpose is to redeem the industry by applying a Christian Worldview to the industry.

Cell Phones

Cell phones can bring people closer together. We believe God wants us to communicate and build relationships with each other, and cell phones can do that very effectively.

There are some intensive competitive sales tactics that have damaged the industries reputation to some extent. Many auto accidents can be attributed to the use of cell phones while driving. Even worse, the train bomb that killed hundreds and allegedly changed the political landscape in Spain was set off by a cell phone. However, auto accidents and train bombs were not designed by the industry. Those are examples of consumers mis-using the product that was made by the industry for a very Godly intention.

Education and legislation were suggested as redemption for the cell phone industry. The students missed the point: The Christian Worldview does not require those changes. It requires a change from within, by the salt and light provided by Christians working in the industry.

Bass Boats

Fishing is a "re-creational" activity, so when fishing recreates humans to the perfect intention God had for them, it is a God-ordained activity. Bass boats also aid in the harvesting of God's creation for human consumption. Being in nature enables humans to admire God's magnificent creation.

Fishing can be fallen when it crossed the line from harvesting God's natural resources to exploiting them. There is some evidence that boat engines pollute lakes and streams, and this would be seen as not God-honoring. Fishing can become an addiction, and in that case, it becomes a god to the fisherman.

Christians could encourage a catch-and-release program that would keep the fisherman on the harvesting side and away from the exploitation side. These students just can't avoid making laws. This group suggested: EPA laws for limiting water pollution, governmental management of public waters, and fishing limits. Students easily get attracted to law based solutions that are not redemptive.

E-Commerce

The industry was created to increase efficiency of the sales and delivery of goods. Exchange of goods and services makes our lives better, and it's easy to assume that God wants us to do that. The industry has increased competition, which eventually favors consumers. Also, E-Commerce has made the world "smaller" which probably is God-ordained.

Many users of E-Commerce have turned this good creation that serves others into a bad system that serves only themselves: Identity theft, gambling and pornography travel along the same communication media that were designed for well-meaning material. However, the industry cannot be held responsible. This is another example of users mis-applying God's creation.

The students called for greater regulation and more sophisticated encryption of private information. Students often see the solutions to the world's problems based in education and law. They did make two good points: A Christian in this industry could use the medium for fellowship and increased stewardship of goods and services.

Conclusion

Students are quite adept at finding a good purpose for an industry. The most frequent error they make is to assume a chronological pattern. They explain that an industry started on a good path, then was misdirected. The students often need to be reminded that "the devil never takes a day off." He works not only to mis-direct industries away from God's intentions over time, he sometimes even encourages humans to create new industries that dis-honor God. But, as Wolters points out, no industry is totally evil. It is simply missing the redeeming direction that can be supplied by Christians expressing their worldview in the industry.

Fallen aspects are easy to find in any industry. While this may seem like the easiest part of the analysis, it's not. Students often identify fallenness that is caused by consumers of the industry, not the industry itself.

Redemption is quite often recommended through education and legislation. Students need to be reminded that God is not sending them into the world to educate and make

laws. He is sending them into jobs and industries as salt and light representations of doing right, which includes servant leadership: Others come first, I come second. Companies and entire industries can be redeemed to their original, God-honoring purpose by the effect of Christians exhibiting a Christian Worldview in the marketplace.

Many students who have spent four years at a Christian College and are taking Strategic Management as their last course need a “final direction point” toward how they will effect the world they are about to enter. Students who take part in the analysis of an industry based on the Christian Worldview are better prepared to join faith with practice after integrating faith and learning in this exercise.

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