

*The Journal of
Biblical Integration
in Business*

JBIB

a publication of



The Statement of Purpose

The **JBIB** serves as a refereed forum for discussing faith-learning-life links in business. It is committed to the proposition that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17). Faculty and business practitioners are encouraged to share their perspectives on how to best equip college students to live out their Christian faith in the workplace. The **JBIB** is published by the Christian Business Faculty Association with underwriting support from Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio.

Fall 2001

ISSN 1527-0602

Publishing Rights Notice

The **JBIB** grants the right, under fair use laws, for articles to be copied and disseminated for educational use. Articles so disseminated should prominently note **JBIB** as the source. The following citation would be appropriate:

<author>, <article title>, <issue>,

Journal of Biblical Integration in Business

(a publication of the Christian Business Faculty Association)

The **JBIB** is indexed by the Christian Periodicals Index (CPI).

Contents

Editor's Perspective

<i>Going Back to the Classroom</i>	1
Sharon G. Johnson, Editor	
Cedarville University	

Dialogue I

<i>Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible: A Hermeneutic Guide</i>	9
Monty L. Lynn and David Wallace	
Abilene Christian University	
<i>Applying an Interpretive Framework for Insights on Asset Management: A Response to "Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible"</i>	41
Brad Lemler	
Grace College	
Murray Young	
Colorado Christian University	

Article

<i>Business Students' Perceptions of Shifts in Core Values of American Culture: A Report from the Trenches</i>	49
Jae Min Jung and James Kellaris	
University of Cincinnati	

Dialogue II

<i>Let Justice Flow Like a River: International Business and The Book of Amos</i>	64
Alec Hill	
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	
<i>International Business and Social Justice: A Response to Hill</i>	83
Brian E. Porter	
Hope College	

Dialogue III

<i>Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business</i>	88
Kent W. Seibert	
Wheaton College	
<i>Reply to Seibert's "Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business"</i>	109
Calvin Fields	
Belhaven College	

Dialogue IV

<i>A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration: Assimilating the Mind of Christ</i>	114
Richard C. Chewning	
John Brown University	
<i>A Response to Richard Chewning's "A Dozen Styles of Integration"</i>	152
Calvin Fields	
Belhaven College	

Case Study

<i>Left Behind: The Case Study</i>	156
Michael E. Cafferky	
Quincy Valley Medical Center	

Best Practices

<i>Economic Applications to the Bible or "Dad, My Bible has some Economics in It"</i>	196
Brad Stamm	
Cornerstone University	
<i>The "Senior Blessing" at Abilene Christian University's College of Business Administration</i>	201
William Fowler and John D. Neill	
Abilene Christian University	
<i>Integrating Economics and Christianity</i>	214
Eric Elder	
Northwestern College	

Book Reviews

<i>Guidelines for Manuscripts for the Journal of Biblical Integration in Business</i>	219
Sharon G. Johnson, Editor	
Cedarville University	

Journal of Biblical Integration in Business

Cumulative Index 1995-2000	223
----------------------------------	-----

Editor's Perspective

Going Back to the Classroom

Sharon G. Johnson, Editor
Cedarville University

I taught my first class in 1973 as a graduate assistant in the doctoral program at Florida State University. This year will mark my 28th year as a college teacher. By now I thought I had pretty much “mastered” things, in the sense of knowing what to expect from my students and myself. But this last academic year was different in two ways. First, I returned to the classroom as a student. Second, my oldest child went through his first year in college. Both experiences had unusual impacts in different ways, and I was reminded of some important principles related to our work as Christian professors.

Becoming a Student Again

In the first case, I returned to the classroom as a student myself. I entered a 40-hour training regimen for a program called CASA—Court Appointed Special Advocate. CASA volunteers are appointed by the local juvenile court as special investigators in cases of young children whose

parents or guardians are involved in such matters as child abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer investigates all the circumstances surrounding such a case and brings to the court the “voice” of the child—a report on what the volunteer believes to be in the best interest of the child. The training involved four weeks of seminars taking place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and most of the day on Saturdays. There were reading and writing assignments and an end-of-course “exam” in the form of a day-long simulation. I am now applying my learning “on the job.” This experience reminded me:

1. It is easy to become comfortably fitted into my present Christian surroundings, doing good things, but separated from a very real world. I love academics—I felt so long before I became a teacher. I love the reading, the research, the writing, the instructing, the developing of classes, and even *sometimes* grading. But the academic world

can be very closed and protected. It is a world of titles and structure, a world where students mostly sit and listen to teachers who mostly talk and make assignments. I entered the CASA program for a variety of reasons, but one of the main reasons was the realization that unless I made a conscious effort otherwise, I would rarely, if ever, have any contact with non-Christians and the world in which many of them live. So, this was one very small step back to reengaging a world where the tests are not “Scantronable,” because they are tests of the struggle between good and evil, between poverty and capitalism, between accountable choices and unimaginably painful circumstances.

2. Excellent teachers bring passion and experience into the classroom. During our training, a number of people from various public and private agencies and organizations which are related to the juvenile justice system spoke to our training class. Many were extraordinary teachers. They spoke with different accents, and some were not as “polished” as some with “Dr.” in front of their name, but they communicated with passion and precision. They used concrete examples in a way that can only come from

those who have “been there, done that.” They spoke with credibility and commitment, and I was both instructed and motivated as they touched both my head and my heart. The challenge of which I was reminded was not just the need to bring to my classroom a degree of emotional fervor, but also the need to bring concrete, experiential credibility to the classroom. For me that means being very current and involved in the activities of my field of expertise through consulting, reading, and personal research. Effective professors build on their own personal experience, and that of others, to communicate to students a legitimate sense of the professor’s having “been there, done that.”

But That’s My Son You’re Talking About!

I worked hard as an undergraduate and graduate student and earned fairly high grades. Classroom performance was one of my highest priorities. I had few other interests than academic achievement.

My son’s entry into higher education has been challenging to me in many ways because *he* is not *me!* He has his own sense of identity and priorities, he approaches the classroom in a

different way than I did, and he has interests that are broader than mine were. The result of all of this is that his grades, while certainly not deplorable, were not quite up to my expectations.

I had assumed that anybody who wanted to could get an “A” or a “B” in class—it was just a matter of effort. I had assumed that teachers would provide students a variety of ways to demonstrate their mastery of the material in recognition of the different learning styles of students. And, I had assumed that low grades were a sign of either indifference or indolence.

It was easy to make all those assumptions as long as the students involved were someone else’s children. But teaching and learning have become much more up-close and personal now that it’s “my son you’re talking about!”

Another Learning Curve

It has been a good first year in ways that I never expected it to be. My son and I have wrestled through a variety of issues ranging from dorm life to Internet use. Because he attends the university where I work, we have been able to have a regular morning breakfast time and another lunch time each week to

talk. We have debated university rules, chapel speakers, the need for liberal arts courses, and why teachers give hard tests. We have discussed matters of equity and the basis upon which someone should select one teacher to take over another. I have visited his dorm room fairly often, and we have had his friends over for dinner to our house. I have, I would summarize, seen “the good, the bad, and the ugly.”

I know that my son has grown significantly this first year in college as he has learned so much from his teachers, his friends, and university staff. But I also have been learning from him. Let me capture some of this as principles I want to remember as a professor.

1. Students are very unique in their approaches to learning. Therefore, we professors should consider providing adequate variety in our course and assignment design and delivery to allow for different learning styles and previous work/academic experiences.

In most of my son’s classes, teachers did not provide a variety of different assignments for students. Mostly it was three to four exams. Now, I know that large classes mitigate against

some assignment types (papers, for instance). But all professors can seek creative ways to provide students some options about how they display their mastery of the material in class. In some cases, I knew that some of the teachers my son had were using the same approach to their class that they had used for the last 10-20 years. Our obligation goes beyond mere delivery of knowledge. Our challenge is to continuously seek creative ways to both reach and teach our students.

2. Teachers are competing for the interest and time of students. While I believe that what I teach is really inherently important and that my assignments are truly sacrificially valuable, my students make their own judgments about these matters. Part of my role as a professor is to “market” my course to students. Now, don’t get all upset! I don’t mean that we have to “discount” our courses to “cater” to students. I mean that we must face the reality that we have to compete with all the other things that pull at our students’ attentions and actions. As a professor I need to make sure that I find ways to clearly, compellingly, and continuously communicate to my students why my course matters and why the

assignments I am asking them to do are both reasonable (in light of course objectives) and reachable (in light of their abilities). Each term is another chance to offer enough value to get students to “buy into” my course.

3. Some of the most significant impact we have on students is unplanned and uncharted. Students sometimes tell me at the end of my course that they “learned more than their grade shows.” There have been times when I really hoped that was so, given the grade they earned! More seriously, I now know in a new way that this is so. In talks with my son, he was able to articulate new understandings and perspectives about a broad number of matters that will never be reflected in the specific grades he earned in a course. He learned, among other things, that some people have to study harder than others to get the same grade, that sometimes our best efforts fall short of success, that in the long run who you are becoming as a person is just as important as what you know as a student, that submitting to authority is frequently a challenge, that some teachers are more interesting than others, that life is very complicated, and that scientific

“truth” is more ephemeral than many people commonly believe. These are wonderful lessons but are lessons learned in ways that will ultimately be measured only by a life well-grown and well-lived rather than by a score on an exam or a paper.

About This Issue of the JBIB

With this issue of the **JBIB**, we are pleased to announce that we are now being indexed in the Christian Periodical Index. The original suggestion came from Dr. John Delivuk, systems librarian at the McCartney Library at Geneva College. The Association of Christian Librarians requested a full run of all back issues. I am informed by other sources that we are likely to pick up several subscriptions from various libraries because of this.

This 2001 issue of the **JBIB** focuses much of its attention on the “art and science” of biblically-based teaching and scholarship. As usual, the writers and review board members have “teamed up” to provide articles that are provocative, engagingly articulate, and well-researched. It has been a joy as editor to see how this issue has come together through the efforts of so many committed and talented people.

Monty Lynn and David Wallace from Abilene Christian University have teamed up to write *Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible: A Hermeneutic Guide*. The paper suggests ten principles for rightly understanding and applying biblical material to the fields of business and economics. With Monty from the department of management sciences and David from the department of Bible, missions, and ministry, the paper also models out the wonderful cross-department synergies possible in our Christian colleges and universities.

Brad Lemler (from Grace College) and Murray Young (from Colorado Christian University) provide a valuable “dialogue” response to Lynn and Wallace’s article by applying the Lynn-Wallace model to land tenancy issues as described in the book of Leviticus.

James Kellaris and Jae Min Jung, from the department of marketing at the University of Cincinnati’s College of Business Administration, provide a research-based look at *Business Students’ Perceptions of Shifts in Core Values of American Culture: A Report from the Trenches*. The manuscript provides significant insights about the

values of today's college students and proposes some intriguing possibilities for future research involving both secular and Christian college/university campuses. Some of our CBFA members may wish to follow up with Kellaris to investigate possibilities for further collaborative efforts.

Alec Hill, a good friend to many in the CBFA, has authored the challenging article *Let Justice Flow Like a River: International Business and The Book of Amos*. The discussion of the integration of biblical perspectives and international business practices is certainly timely in an increasingly globalized business world. We are sorry to see Hill leave his post as dean of the School of Business and Economics at Seattle Pacific University—his leadership was instrumental in helping the School of Business and Economics obtain the prestigious accreditation by AACSB. However, we also rejoice in his new position as president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. We hope that he will continue to have time to write both books and articles. Brian Porter (Hope College) offers a useful dialogue as he explores some of the implications of Hill's article

relative to ethnocentric tendencies and the character of bribes.

Kent Seibert, a long-valued member of the **JBIB** Review Board, has authored the wonderful paper *Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business*. The paper reviews some of the literature on organizational socialization and then offers a discussion of spiritual principles for maintaining one's identity and values in the face of organizational socialization pressures. The principles are derived from Scripture and illustrated by the life of Daniel. Calvin Fields (Belhaven College) offers an accompanying dialogue that touches on the issues of socialization, contingency theory, and language while pushing the reader to consider seriously the teaching implications of Seibert's paper.

We are delighted to present Richard Chewning's article *A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration: Assimilating the Mind of Christ*. This article is a departure from some of the more theologically-oriented pieces we have been privileged to publish in the past. Chewning's purpose is to both broaden and deepen our understanding of the variety of

approaches that can come under the broad umbrella of "biblical integration in business." Like Hill, Chewning is also making a career transition, leaving Baylor University's Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business and coming as a distinguished scholar in residence at John Brown University. Chewning will be working with JBU's faculty development efforts and will be involved with the Donald G. Soderquist Center for Business Leadership and Ethics. Accompanying Chewning's article is a thoughtful dialogue response from Calvin Fields (Belhaven College), which offers a particularly useful overview of Chewning's piece.

Michael E. Cafferky, chief financial officer and chief operating officer of Quincy Valley Medical Center in Quincy, Washington, has contributed the intriguing case study *Left Behind: The Case Study*. All those who have read LaHaye and Jenkins' book series or have seen the movie will find this behind-the-scenes look at the effort to move the book series from print to the movie screen a wonderfully instructive case on the dynamic interaction between biblical concerns and business efforts.

Many of the articles in this issue of the **JBIB** are accompanied by "responses" written by members of our review board. This "dialogue" dimension of the **JBIB** is valued by many of our readers. We look forward to publishing your "response" pieces to articles which appear in previous issues of the **JBIB**. Consider this a personal invitation from the editor to send in your responses for print!

We are privileged to launch a new space in the **JBIB** "town square" of discussion, focusing on "Best Practices." In this area, we will publish pieces that focus on successful efforts at both Christian and secular campuses to knit together business education efforts with biblical principles and perspectives. Brad Stamm at Cornerstone University shares some of the creative classroom approaches he used in his economics classes to help students see more clearly the connection between the Bible and business. William Fowler and John Neill discuss the "Senior Blessing" event at Abilene Christian University's College of Business—a unique effort to offer business seniors a day of both celebration and commitment. Eric Elder of Northwestern College recommends the book

The Clashing Works of Economics and Faith for integrating economics and Christianity.

This issue of the **JBIB** also includes a list of our current review board members (if you are interested in joining the board, e-mail me at johns@cedarville.edu), *Guidelines for Manuscripts* (we always are looking for the opportunity to work with both experienced and inexperienced writers to turn manuscripts into publishable articles), and a cumulative 1995-2000 index of **JBIB** articles (thanks to the readers who e-mailed me and suggested we do this).

This 2001 issue of the **JBIB** will soon be available in PDF form at the official CBFA Web site (cbfa.org). The 1995-2001 issues are available at the Web site. Paper copies of past issues are available at a nominal cost. And, we will be pleased to send a complimentary copy of the current (2001) issue to anyone who contacts us. If you have a colleague who would benefit from reading the **JBIB**, please contact me, and I will see that the material is sent.

As always, my heartfelt thanks goes to:

• The officers of the CBFA for their support and encouragement

• The review board for their thorough and thoughtful support of the **JBIB**'s effort to offer a distinctively high quality peer-reviewed forum for publishing

• The authors for their willingness to move through the editing and revision process with both grace and zeal

• The public relations team at Cedarville University under Roger Overturf's able leadership and Kara Steinman's absolutely indispensable technical editorship

• The staff and faculty of the department of business administration at Cedarville University whose support and example are a constant encouragement

• And, finally, to the CBFA for extending me the privilege of acting as editor for the **JBIB** since 1994—it is a responsibility that I never take for granted and that I hold as a sacred trust.

If you discover mistakes in this issue, the responsibility is solely mine. If there be any praise, may it be offered to God alone, for it is by His grace that the **JBIB** was created and is sustained.



Dialogue I

Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible: A Hermeneutic Guide

Monty L. Lynn and David Wallace
Abilene Christian University

Lynn and Wallace suggest ten hermeneutic principles for integrating the Old Testament into modern-day commerce. They also provide an impressive list of related verses and resources for further study.

Abstract

The application of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) to modern-day commerce can be daunting due to differences between ancient and contemporary contexts. The accuracy of biblical integration in business, however, may be enhanced by attending to certain guidelines of interpretation and application. After describing four models of integration, ten hermeneutic principles are suggested under the categories of Beginnings—The Exegetical Process, Broadening the Focus—Theological Reflection, and Applying the Text—Hermeneutic Implications. These ten principles are related to issues of commerce where appropriate. Sources for further in-depth study are suggested as are Hebrew Bible passages dealing with business and economic themes.

Introduction

Commerce and wealth creation are not of modern origin. They are ancient activities, stretching back to the beginning of recorded history. Far from being value-neutral, a culture's commerce—its political economy, merchant trade, and outlook on work and money—is, in practice, deeply imprinted with values and ethics. Thus, it is not surprising that the Hebrew Bible—which reaches back more than 4,000 years to tell the story of Yahweh and Israel—speaks to business issues. This “Old Testament” includes narrative and instruction on topics such as wages, poverty, labor, stewardship, economic transactions, and possessions (see Appendix A on page 35).¹

Many Christians today desire for their business practice to be biblically informed. But how should ancient Scripture be

applied to today's business? The question is not primarily about the errancy or origin of the ancient text, although these issues are relevant and important to the question at hand. Rather, the primary issue is one of hermeneutics or interpretation. A deep well of biblical hermeneutics exists, but too few biblical integrationists seem to draw from it today.

Our aim is to extend writing on hermeneutics (cf. Beadles, 1998; Chewning, 1998) by providing principles of biblical interpretation that aid business scholars and practitioners in applying Hebrew Scripture to their thought and practice. These principles will be drawn from scholarly and popular sources and will be discussed with an eye toward economic and business scholarship. Because integration is not a venture to be engaged in casually, we begin by considering various benefits and cautions in biblical integration.

Biblical Integration Benefits

For several reasons, the marriage of Hebrew Scripture to commerce can be attractive for a business practitioner or scholar confessing Judeo-Christian faith.²

Bringing the two realms of faith and work together engenders an integrity of life that is missing when work is punctuated by faith but not transformed by it, or when one attempts to divide his or her life into segregated domains of work and worship. Sometimes faith not only promotes work practices, it fuels them. And at other times, Scripture appears to call disciples to distinctly different business practices, interpersonal relations, and social activism. Both of these directions entail a shift from society's management and economic norms, and both suggest that the biblical text speaks to the Christian in business today. There is no evidence suggested in Scripture that a dualistic, Greek model of life exists where the mores and practices of secular life are secluded from an antiseptic sacred life (cf. Sherman & Hendricks, 1987). Such is a modern and artificial invention.³

Perhaps the clearest example of faith-business integration comes from biblical narrative itself. Many of the individuals recorded in Scripture served as artisans, agriculturalists, judges, and national leaders—Abraham, Jacob, the wife of noble character, Joseph, David,

Deborah, Moses, Noah, and others. Their decisions, actions, and leadership are in small part recorded in the biblical record, sometimes with divine commentary, sometimes not. They themselves are *de facto* examples of the people of God at work.

But why the Hebrew Bible? Many Christians view it as divinely inspired, but as the "Old" Testament—one superceded by a "New" Testament. Furthermore, Israel's ancient economy was pre-capitalist—what would it have to say that is relevant in modern economies and governments? Since the only Bible the first century church had was the Hebrew Scriptures, they were then and indeed remain today a guide to individual and collective discipleship, "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16-17) in all aspects of life. The Hebrew Scriptures show God's nature and express his will for humankind. They contain rich veins of narrative demonstrating life in covenant relationship with God and with one another.

Cautions

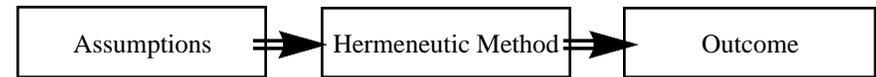
When integration is poorly executed, contemporary culture

and personal biases tend to mold biblical understandings. Four thousand years of the Judeo-Christian story is replete with the dangers of departing from or contaminating God's Word. In modern times, Christianity is littered with examples of the Bible being used to christen imperfect economic systems, oppressive wage scales, workaholicism, slavery, and extreme corporate loyalty. We need not look further back than to the Chicago business community of early 20th century America (Heidebrecht, 1989, p. 4), where:⁴

the religious views [that leading businessmen] espoused were fundamentally shaped by their business experience and their social outlook as the wealthy elite of the city. They created what might be called a businessman's religion. Such a faith was pragmatic, activist, and geared to measurable results. It was a Protestantism that above all else was efficient.

Honest intentions and noble causes are insufficient inoculations against the distortion of Scripture. Indeed, applying a labor and business lens to hermeneutics lends itself to

Biblical Integration Influences



distortion. A business lens is generally applied not to understand an ancient text, but to seek commentary on contemporary economic practice or theory. For instance, modern scholars and practitioners might inquire what Scripture says about capitalism and socialism, yet ignore the major biblical theme of covenant (cf. Olyan, 1996). Thus, it is a hermeneutic much closer to liberation theology or feminist theology—that is, one with an agenda—rather than a purely historical or literary study. If approached from that vantage point, Scripture is likely to be distorted—if not the meaning of a sole passage, then the voices of other Scriptures are muted.

The alternative to poor exegesis and distorted application is not the avoidance of integration. A two-story house with separate secular and sacred floors, although a fairly common worldview, is not biblical but is the product of poor integration itself (Walsh & Middleton, 1984). An additional rub comes when one realizes that—central for both Jews and Christians—genuine faith is expressed *actively* and in community with others, not merely in thought (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1989; Pava, 1997). As Elton Trueblood has said,

“Abstract and unembodied Christianity is a fiction.” Thus, action, not just carefully crafted systematic theology, is required for true biblical integration to occur in business.

In sum, integration is not only inevitable for phenomenological reasons—we cannot stand outside ourselves—it is also desirable because God’s work is expressed in all of life, on human hearts and not on tablets of stone. Biblical integration is an inescapable, sobering, and exhilarating undertaking, requiring a careful handling of the biblical text, a critical eye toward culture, and a humility of spirit.

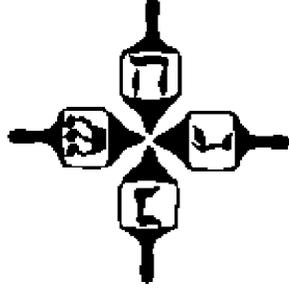
Models of Hebrew Bible Integration

Before proceeding to the details of hermeneutics, we pause briefly to address some important boundaries surrounding the task. Hermeneutics deals largely with the *methods* of interpretation. In part, however, the hermeneutic approach is chosen based on the reader’s *assumptions* about the text. For example, if one questions the biblical authority of a text, he or she is likely to treat it differently in the interpretative process and reach a differing *outcome* compared to someone who has a high regard for a text’s

biblical authority (see Figure 1). Scripture-business integration itself already presumes that one sees value in both biblical literature and business. So some assumptions are already eliminated (e.g., that business and Bible are mutually irrelevant—one has absolutely nothing to say to the other). But the remaining assumptions one can hold about Scripture and commerce can range widely on several dimensions. While it is not our primary focus, these differential assumptions and outcomes are important to address since they confound the hermeneutic puzzle.

After informally surveying scholarly and popular business integrationist literature that incorporates Hebrew Scripture, we find that most integration efforts can be collapsed into one of four general categories. We present these in Figure 2 (next page) using the image of a Jewish toy—a four-sided dreidel with each side representing one model of biblical integration outcomes and assumptions.

The first camp of scholars and practitioners tend to approach Scripture as command or law, prescribing *practices* in antiquity, some of which may continue today. Those holding this view (e.g., Levine, 1987; Pava, 1997) typically have a high view of biblical authority and a primary concern for orthodoxy or right belief. For a second group of practitioners and scholars, Scripture offers timeless justice, ethics, and wisdom *principles*, especially in the minor prophets and the book of Proverbs (e.g., Gorringer, 1994; Zigarelli, 1999). The primary concern in this school of thought is orthocardia, or having the right heart. A third set of integrationists commonly use narrative or stories of *persons* as a springboard for discussing contemporary issues, much like one might use characters from any literary source (e.g., Baron, 1999; Hambley, 1987; Visotzky, 1998). For these, the focus rests on behaving effectively in contemporary settings. The fourth model differs from the other three



Outcomes		Assumptions and Emphases			
Label	Description	Scripture Favored	Primary Concern	Biblical Authority	Era in Focus
Practices	Transplant ancient individual and collective forms, laws, and practices today	Law	Orthodoxy	Important	Ancient
Principles	Identify ancient principles of ethics, justice, and wisdom applicable today	Proverbs and minor prophets	Orthocardia	Somewhat important	Timeless
Persons	Use biblical characters as a springboard for discussing modern managerial and organizational behavior	Narrative	Orthopraxy	Mildly important or not important	Modern
Phenomena	Apply business and economic theory to explain the biblical record	History	Scholarship	Irrelevant	Ancient

in that it reverses the integration—rather than examining ways Scripture may be integrated in business today, it focuses on ways business and economic theory might explain Israel’s ancient development and organization economically (e.g., Boer, 1998; Glass, 2000; Muth, 1997). In other words, it focuses on biblical *phenomena*.

These schools of thought are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they could respond to the same issue, simply from different angles. For example, take the instruction that Moses communicated forbidding Israelites from keeping a needy person’s coat overnight as collateral for a pledge (Deut. 24:10-13). From the *practice* view, one might research the technical aspects of the teaching and consider how the law should be applied today. From the *principles* view, one might look for an ethical rather than legal precept and apply it to a variety of social justice applications. The *persons* view might focus on the lessons learned from the leadership style of Moses, a human leader. Finally, from the *phenomena* view, one might use economic or financial theory to address whether the lack of collateral

would yield an economically sustainable system of loans.

These are not the only integration models in use, and there is considerable diversity within each. Perhaps that’s what the four models portray best—that there is a divergence of approaches for applying Hebrew Scripture within contemporary economic and management thought and practice. A considerable portion of disagreement among scholars, however, may exist because of differences in assumptions about the nature of Scripture and one’s approach to it. Once these assumptions are recognized, one may proceed to considering principles that will help illuminate the text—that is the hermeneutic process.

Hermeneutic Principles

Because a reader might examine a text from a variety of religious traditions, business disciplines, and individual perspectives, hermeneutics is clearly not an optic that always refracts one meaning from the same textual beam. The reader of Scripture will always come to the task of interpretation with unavoidable presuppositions and personal interests. The challenge for the interpreter of Scripture,

however, will involve submitting these interests to the light of Scripture, rather than demand that Scripture be shaped to personal preconceptions.

One may ask, “Why can’t the text simply be taken at face value, without complicating the interpretative process with hermeneutics?” If one has not experienced it, it is hard to convey the amount of illumination shed by scholarly work or the amount of modern bias without it. Approaching the text without examining it, other passages, or oneself, is almost sure to result in a distortion of Scripture. For those not reading in the original Hebrew, the Bible they read is already the product of intense reading and interpretation. Even if our reading does not distort the original message of a passage, we are likely to emphasize certain passages that speak to our own cultural experiences and ignore other passages that do not. Without a systematic approach, the process of identifying, interpreting, and applying texts is uninformed subjectivity. On the other hand, in-depth study of a text does not violate a presumption of scriptural authority or divine guidance; indeed, it more fully respects it.

We suggest that ten hermeneutic principles can guide one to interpret and apply Hebrew Scripture with greater accuracy (see Figure 3). These principles provide a basic framework for understanding and applying the Hebrew Bible to a business concept or milieu. The process involves three basic steps of attempting to discover what the text meant in its ancient context, reflecting theologically on the principles that might transcend the ancient context, and applying the theological insights to a contemporary setting. These principles emphasize the historical and literary nature of textual analysis and the need for careful theologizing, but they also give assent to the insufficiency of integration without the involvement of the Holy Spirit and active application of integration. Finally, it should be noted that the principles and sources used intentionally draw upon and respect a diversity of religious traditions and perspectives. We begin with exegesis.

Stage 1: Beginnings— The Exegetical Process

The work of exegesis is intended to reach an informed understanding of the text in

Hermeneutic Principles for Hebrew Scripture

Beginnings—The Exegetical Process

- Principle #1: Admit personal interests and cultural biases.
- Principle #2: Begin with a good translation of the text.
- Principle #3: Examine the historical and cultural context.
- Principle #4: Give notice to the genre.
- Principle #5: Realize that exegesis is an ongoing process informed by the Spirit.

Broadening the Focus—Theological Reflection

- Principle #6: What does one learn of God from this text?
- Principle #7: How does my exegesis relate to other Scripture?
- Principle #8: How do my theological conclusions differ or accord with the traditional understanding of other believers?
- Principle #9: Does my theological conclusion represent integrity and humility?

Applying the Text—Hermeneutic Implications

- Principle #10: What implications does this passage have for people today, including myself?

question. It is a systematic way of drawing out meaning from the text. While the process may vary as methods are compared in the discipline of biblical exegesis, most exegetes would concur on some of the basic principles involved. We offer five in this category.

Principle # 1: Admit personal interests and cultural biases.

Any student of the Hebrew Bible will come to the text with subjective interests and personal experience. One cannot “objectively” stand outside his or her own world—whether it be their faith experience, their vocation, or academic interests. In fact, these interests should be

celebrated because they likely are what prompt the reader to the text in the first place. However, once admitted, these interests must not control or steer the exegetical process. Approach the text from what *it* has to say rather than what you are seeking. Keep an open mind and beware of personal and cultural biases. “We must resist letting our own traditional interpretations become the authority so that we elevate them as idols, convincing ourselves that they are divine and unchangeable just because we can cite chapter and verse” (Childers, Foster, & Reese, 2000, p. 163).

The question “Does Scripture teach about managing?” presumes an artificial separation between an individual’s self and the role of manager. Because Scripture does not promote a dualistic view of sacred and secular human nature, the Bible necessarily speaks to the behavior of managers. Moreover, if certain occupations are excluded from biblical instruction, how can a person in that role know how to be faithful to God at work? But actually, because the starting place is wrong, the answer will be wrong. We need to read the text asking first “What is the message this text speaks?” rather than stretching the textual canvas by

first asking “What does this passage say about business?”

The goal is not to baptize business and economic concepts or create a legal identification of God-approved economic systems. Jewish and Christian ethics cannot fully endorse any particular economic system, management practice, or leadership style. Minimum wage, for instance, may be argued as promoting communal charity. But minimum wage may also elevate unemployment among the poor. As Pava (1997, pp. 79-80) states, “Judaism’s ideals are aspirational but certainly not quixotic.” Hebrew Scripture generally offers values for the Christian, not endorsements.

Principle # 2: Begin with a good translation of the text.

While some might have knowledge of the original language, most interpreters will rely on the comparison of several good translations. Preferable are the standard translations that rely on insights from a committee of translators, rather than one person’s translation or paraphrase. The New International Version and the New Revised Standard Version are examples of two generally accepted translations. Still, subtleties of meaning are often lost when translating from

one language to another. To more richly mine the nuances of a Hebrew or Aramaic text, biblical commentaries and lexicons may be useful (see Appendix B on page 38).

Principle #3: Examine the historical and cultural context.

Although the books of the Hebrew Bible are anonymous and may have undergone layers of transmission and editing to reach their final canonical form, they did not arise in a vacuum. Scripture has emerged out of diverse cultural, social, religious, and historical contexts. These contexts may vary within individual books and certainly vary across several centuries in ancient Israel as one reads the Torah narratives, or the wisdom literature of monarchical Israel, or the sermons of the prophets in post-exilic Israel. While the precise original setting is not always discernable, the conscientious interpreter will seek to understand the historical setting being described in the text or the situation out of which the text arose.

The expanse of time and culture stretching between ancient and modern includes enormous differences in political economy and commerce. When casual

readers underestimate the incongruence, they both draw inappropriate parallels to contemporary life and miss a text’s richer meaning. In Hebrew Scripture, one reads of accountants, inns, loans, wealth, crafts, and trade. And Israel indeed was situated by busy trade routes, Mediterranean shipping, and fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Yet these often are mistakenly taken as contemporary equivalents.

Over the Hebrew Bible’s dozen centuries, slavery, nomadic life, subsistence agriculture, centralized estate holdings (*latifundia*), and indentured labor (by the eighth century) were the norm. Goods were generally bartered (sixth century), and most merchants were foreigners (I Kings 10:15). Money is absent from the biblical record until the fifth century (Ezra 2:69). A Jewish trading class is unknown until the second temple period in the time of Nehemiah (fifth century), when diaspora Jews had learned trade methods from Phoenician and Greek businessmen, primarily operating open bazaars (Ezekiel 7:12-13). Inns (Gen. 42:27, KJV) were locales where tents could be spread in Eastern hospitality (no furniture, food, or concierge), and

accountants (Isaiah 33:18) just counted. It is not until the time of the writing of the oral law—the Mishna (second century AD)—that an ordered, patterned, political economy based on trade among extended households had been surpassed by a larger market

transaction system (cf. Gottwald, 1993; Glass, 2000; Lockyer, 1969; Neusner, 1999).

Much debated passages on usury (e.g., Exodus 22:25-27; Deut. 23:19-20) provide a classic example of how a passage can be distorted easily by uprooting it from its original setting in Scripture and planting it in today. No-interest loans between Israelites were prescribed in Exodus 22:25, perhaps because default on a loan might result in a farmer or herdsman losing his ability to make a living, or perhaps it was to support covenant relationship among each other. Lending with interest was allowed if the borrower was a foreigner (Deut. 23:20), perhaps because borrowers were foreign merchants who did not have their livelihood to lose by offering collateral, or perhaps to minimize

association with Canaanites, or perhaps because of a different ethic for foreigners, or interest was common practice among foreigners (for an extended discussion of usury, see Elder, 1999). Burbank (1999, p. 18) offers yet another contextual explanation:

Much debated passages on usury ... provide a classic example of how a passage can be distorted easily ...

Where in [Old Testament] time, no one would borrow except in time of need, people and organizations now borrowed to make more money through investing in productive resources, through expansion, and for convenience in ways that were never anticipated in the ancient economies. As modern capital markets developed, lending for productive business purposes far outstripped lending for charitable purposes to help the poor or needy. ...

The point is that these contextual explanations significantly alter the interpretation of usury. Childers, Foster, and Reese (2000, pp. 162-163) summarize the point well:

... we cannot properly honor the text's authority unless we're

honest about the distance separating us from the text. We are not the original audience of the biblical text, nor is it essentially a book of ordinances immediately portable into our setting. From this standpoint, the problem of "silence" touches all of Scripture, since no verse of it was originally composed directly to address the needs of a 21st century church. ... The distance of language, history, culture, and the fact that we are indirect recipients of literary texts originally aimed at someone else all create a gap between us and the text. We shouldn't resent the gap, since this is how God has chosen to speak to us through Scripture. Nevertheless it is often into that gap that we pour our biases and preconceptions, using the text in ways that depart from its spirit.

While these contextual insights do not always present a single explanation of a text, they do shed considerable light on passages addressing usury and interest. Without insights such as these, we are much more prone to distort the text's meaning. This is an especially critical point for Christians who view the Hebrew Scriptures much like the New Testament—as a single collective witness pointing

to the Christ, rather than multifaceted in culture, time, setting, and purpose (Gillingham, 1998, pp. 27-33).

Principle #4: Give notice to the genre.

The Hebrew canon's three divisions (Torah, Prophets, and the Writings) and the English canon's equivalent (Law, History, Wisdom and Poetical, and Prophecy) alert the interpreter to a diversity of genres.⁵ The interpreter must avoid "flattening out" Scripture, as if Scripture were of one literary type, since each genre is written for a different purpose and is interpreted by different rules (cf. Sandy & Giese, 1995). Among the many genres that have been identified within the Hebrew Bible, a few of the more prominent ones dealing with economic issues are narrative, law, prophecy, and wisdom.

Much of the Hebrew Bible is narrative in its form. The purpose of narrative is not simply to relate that something happened. Rather, these compelling stories are selected to show God at work in His creation and among His people. The narratives describe the great community stories of ancient Israel and their pilgrimage as the people of God. Often, we

learn of the lives of individuals, some admirable and others not, who play a part in the wider narrative of God's redemptive history and his covenant people. As stories, the biblical narratives are always selective, limited in focus, and incomplete. While the interpreter may incline to "read between the lines," to allegorize, or to extrapolate heady doctrine from a simple story, the genre of narrative in the Hebrew Bible is for the selective theological purpose of revealing God and his purposes. Care should be taken to avoid reducing the narrative to simple moralization or expanding a passage considerably beyond its meaning (Moberly, 1998).

Often Hebrew Bible narrative includes biographical material. Because biographies speak powerfully in business, many have been written about biblical characters (e.g., Baron, 1999; Hambley, 1987; McKenzie, 2000; Pava, 1997; Visotzky, 1998). Most biographers acknowledge their subject's humanity. Indeed, self-recognition of faults can be a key asset in leading. Certainly we can learn from men after God's own heart, but we need to avoid creating heroes out of biblical characters by canonizing their lives. Beadles (1998, p. 114) says it well:

Unfortunately, many times what we represent as biblical principle is really biblical illustration. Biblical illustration apart from biblical principle has no warrant or authority. If we find a narrative passage which illustrates that an Old Testament character planned, and then argue from that passage that the Bible teaches the management principle of planning, we have failed in our task. Apart from commentary in the narrative itself (or elsewhere in the Bible), we cannot be sure that the action itself is one that is to be recommended.

Thus, just because scarcity existed after the fall or David called for national vision or Moses delegated doesn't mean we can magnify the notion and do justice to Scripture. In many of these cases, all the author accomplishes is to correlate Scripture with trendy management techniques rather than let Scripture guide, direct, and speak.

As one reads the Hebrew Bible, one also encounters a substantial amount of legal material. In fact, many business-related texts are found in the Torah among the laws of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and

Deuteronomy (see Appendix A on page 35). These laws are in the context of ancient Israel's covenant with God and their response to His deliverance. They are not intended as a list of rules and regulations by which the nation earns redemption, but a means of responding to the God who had delivered. The laws serve as a means of deepening a relationship with Him and facilitating a relationship with the covenant community.

Form critics have been especially insightful in helping the reader understand this genre by identifying "apodictic laws" (such as found in the Decalogue), which state paradigmatic and general absolutes, and "casuistic laws," which demonstrate how an apodictic law may be applied in conditional cases. The interpreter of legal material in the Hebrew Bible will be challenged especially by the latter category as one attempts to identify the "case" under consideration in the specific law and the basic principle which the case illustrates. Ancient "case law" may or may not find a parallel for the Christian today. Other scholars (e.g., Hays, 2001) argue that distinctions between moral, civil, and ceremonial laws are arbitrary and that for the

Christian, Mosaic law—including the Decalogue—should be read with an eye for principles, much like narrative text:

The Old Testament legal material does not appear in isolation. Instead, the Mosaic Law is firmly embedded in Israel's theological history. It is an integral part of the story that runs from Genesis 12 through II Kings 25. The Law is not presented by itself, as some sort of disconnected but timeless universal code of behavior. Rather it is presented as part of the theological narrative that describes how God delivered Israel from Egypt and then established them in the Promised Land as His people (p. 24).

Both of these approaches honor the moral teaching of the law, their difference lying in how literally the text is applied. More will be said on the place of law for the Christian in the final hermeneutic step.

Another prominent genre within the Hebrew Bible is the prophetic literature which contains collections of oracles or sermons. While the contemporary reader may tend to think of a "prophet" as one who foretells the future, the prophets were most

often spokespersons for God in matters of a present context rather than a future one. The challenges for the modern interpreter when reading the prophets are several. The material is often poetical in its literary form with certain distinctive oracles in the form of a lawsuit, a lament, or a woe oracle. At times, the historical context is not easily discernable. The books are not always in chronological order, so the reader may feel as if he or she is reading some preacher's sermon files in no particular order. However, the challenge is well worth the effort as the prophets urge their hearers and modern readers to integrate their faith and their covenant identity with their lifestyle. These spokespersons for God warn against syncretism and the compartmentalization of worship and ethics. The business ethicist will find much on which to ruminate in the great preaching of the prophets (cf. Burch, 1991).

Another category or genre to mention in the study of the Hebrew Bible is the wisdom genre. Although this genre appears in other books, three books are considered primarily in the wisdom category: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, with the latter two in dialogue with Proverbs on the limits of wisdom.

Although the Wisdom Literature may be generally defined as teaching which advocates seeing life from God's perspective, the genre is particularly subject to misunderstanding. A proverb, for example, is a pragmatic generalization on the structures of life representing tendencies, not a rule to which there is no exceptions. In dialogue with Proverbs, the wisdom of Job and Ecclesiastes insists that one can never understand or unravel all the mysteries of life by applying limited practical wisdom.

Within the wisdom genre itself, the reader is warned to understand the text within limits. Zigarelli (1999) notes that superficial interpretation and application of Proverbs to business is especially tempting due to the seemingly short nature of the genre: Complex human interactions "cannot be reduced to a sound bite, much less half a proverb! When one attempts to do so, though, the potential for misunderstanding and subsequent damage is enormous" (p. 22). Proverbs 26:7 states, "Like a lame man's legs that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool." When misused, proverbs can be powerless.

In sum, the interpreter wants to avoid the leveling out of genre.

Scripture is not "like a box of materials to rummage through" (Childers, et al., 2000, pp. 158-159):

... when we treat Scripture like a jumbled box of materials, each piece useful but none more important than any of the others, we blind ourselves to the fact that Scripture has a center of gravity and that individual passages have a literary context. Not much of Scripture fits the category of "rules."

Yet, that is how we treat the text when genres are disregarded.

Principle #5: Realize that exegesis is an ongoing process informed by the Spirit.

The interpreter must avoid presuming that a single, precise meaning from every text is possible. In some business disciplines, research is approached as if there are single, correct responses.

But to approach a passage of Scripture as if it has a single meaning and that that meaning can be deciphered by the reader is a proud boast and one that denies the value of the community of

faith, the movement of the Holy Spirit, and the potential for growth oneself. Approach the text humbly and with recognition of multiple voices, perspectives, and tools. "Reading the Bible should lead us to tremble and to wonder, not to set our jaws with audacious certainty" (Childers, et al., 2000, p. 164):

The person who truly seeks the Lord will find him, as Jesus promised (John 7:17). Only those willing to take a step of faith and invest themselves in his message would be able to understand him (Matthew 13:10-17). ... By contrast, consider the Pharisees whom Jesus criticized. They were experienced and mentally sharp. They had the Word and knew it well. They were masters of the exegetical methods of their day, the same methods used by Jesus and Paul and

Matthew. But typically their attitudes were poor and the spirit of their

community was sour, so their Bible reading went wrong (p. 167).

Scriptural discernment is not merely a scholarly pursuit or academic endeavor. Paul

A proverb ... is ... not a rule to which there are no exceptions.

reminded the Corinthian Christians (I Cor. 2:14) that the Holy Spirit helps them understand spiritual matters: “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It was the Spirit who guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13) and the Spirit’s gift of love that would “abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight” so the Philippians could “discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-10). As Jesus was taught by God (John 8:28b; 12:49; 14:10), so we should “follow his example ... never relying only upon our own wisdom or knowledge or ability, but always, to the best of our ability, also letting the Father teach us ...” (Cook, 2000, pp. 32-33). For most readers of the Word, this has more to do with maintaining a humble, joyful, and childlike attitude than a mystical experience.

Stage 2: Broadening the Focus—Theological Reflection

As one moves from the work of exegesis to doing theology, a broadening of focus occurs.

The interpreter can now engage in the practice of theological reflection utilizing four basic principles, each stated as a question.

Principle #6: What does one learn of God from this text?

What theological insights emerge from the text that transcend the original context? What does one come to know about God or human reality that remains true for all times? Scripture is essentially theological in nature, a revelation of God. Again we return to the model of Scripture: Do we approach the text as a management textbook or do we let it approach and speak to us? Management practice and economic policy can be biblically informed only by respecting biblical perspectives that originate in the biblical text. Johnson (1988, p. 19) summarizes it thus:

While the Bible represents the primary source for building a Christian philosophy of management, it is not the exclusive source. ... The Bible makes no claim for itself as an encyclopedia. It does not contain all the knowledge a Christian manager will need. What it does

contain is the dear expression of God’s will in the most important areas of our lives: our relationship to God and our relationship to other people. Its truths and values act as the core of the Christian management philosophy.

Principle #7: How does my exegesis relate to other Scripture?

Theologians of the Hebrew Bible have long debated what the “center” of Old Testament theology might be (cf. Gillingham, 1998; Hasel, 1991). While some have championed a single theme, others have recognized several. Pava’s (1997) extraction of themes, for example, is threefold: (1) God as the ultimate source of values; (2) the centrality of community; and (3) men and women (in community) can transform themselves. Nevertheless, one’s exegesis is further tested when it is compared to the teachings of other passages. “The continuing lack of consensus as to the center of Old Testament theology offers ironic evidence for the diversity of theologies in that book and the error of attempting to construct a systematic theology directly from it” (Levenson, 1993, p. 56).

But agreement on overarching biblical themes need not impede

interpretation. There is a significant difference between building a theology on a single verse and interpreting a verse as the theological summit for a book which is undergirded by a network of thematically unified passages. Too often business-Bible integration has done the former shoddy construction rather than carefully and accurately building the latter. Zigarelli (1999, pp. 24-25) offers an example from Proverbs, a book which would seemingly have self-contained pearls of wisdom:

“A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds,” declares Proverbs 17:8. Without further investigation of the biblical teaching on bribery, one might conclude based on this verse that bribery is not only sanctioned by Scripture, but it is advanced as a means to success! But that conclusion opposes the plain teaching of many other Scriptures, both in Proverbs and in other books of the Bible. ... Since so many other passages speak of bribery as a transgression, Proverbs 17:8 should be interpreted consistently. ... Just as one piece of evidence does not indicate a trend, one

proverb does not constitute a scriptural principle.

Being in tension with core theology does not always indicate a misguided exegesis. Remember, much diversity resides in the Hebrew Bible.

Principle #8: How do my theological conclusions differ or accord with the traditional understanding of other believers?

“The message that the Hebrew Bible conveys to any community is necessarily in large measure a function of the tradition in which it is contextualized” (Levenson, 1993, p. 56). A simple threefold emphasis on orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthocardia (Clapper, 1997) emphasizes holistic integration. But one tradition may not fully illumine all three applications. The history and thought of various traditions may illumine portions of a text or a biblical concept which remain in the shadows of a single tradition’s light, just like uninformed subjectivism leaves many corners of a room dark. Often other perspectives can be identified through commentary series, publishing houses, and periodical series that grow from the roots of

a given Christian or Jewish tradition.

Principle #9: Does my theological conclusion represent integrity and humility?

Again, we return to the ever-present question of personal and cultural bias. Does my theological understanding of the text result from exegesis or eisegesis? Are my conclusions formed primarily from Scripture speaking or from my own cultural template and personal biases being imposed on theological

Biblical integration is incomplete without putting biblical concepts into action.

reflection? Research suggests that the stronger the attitude regarding an object, the stronger the possibility that belief-bias will occur (Lynn, 1987). As Porter (2000, p. 71) states:

Because we see through a glass darkly (I Corinthians 13:12), and because the Bible is often an enigma, we must tread softly, acknowledging that differing interpretations of God’s Word are possible and equally plausible, even when utilizing the whole counsel of God.

Stage 3: Applying the Text—Hermeneutic Implications

Biblical integration is incomplete without putting biblical concepts into action (Lynn & Keyes, 1999). Thus, the final stage entails acting on the exegesis and theological reflection.

Principle #10: What implications does this passage have for people today, including myself?

While the work of “hermeneutics” begins with solid exegesis and includes competent theological reflection, the process is not complete until the interpreter applies the text to the contemporary reader. The hermeneutical process culminates as one seeks to discover what practical implications a text might have for one’s own culture, community of faith, or individual life.

Guided by exegetical and theological considerations, the integrationist will ask how Scripture impacts his or her own life and business thought and practice in a practical way. What is different about my life, the Christian community, and society were we to be transformed by this passage?

Hauerwas and Willimon (1989, p. 21) sound a reminder

that Christianity is active, requiring personal and communal action:

The theology of translation assumes that there is some kernel of real Christianity, some abstract essence that can be preserved even while changing some of the old Near Eastern labels. Yet such a view distorts the nature of Christianity. In Jesus we meet not a presentation of basic ideas about God, world, and humanity, but an invitation to join up, to become part of a movement, a people. By the very act of our modern theological attempts at translation, we have unconsciously distorted the gospel and transformed it into something it never claimed to be—ideas abstracted from Jesus, rather than Jesus with his people.

This final hermeneutic step raises a knotty issue for Christians and the Hebrew Bible—to what degree does “Old Testament” have authority with the follower of Christ (Kaiser, 1983; Wright, 1995; Holladay, 1995)? Perhaps even more acutely, how does Old Testament law apply to a disciple of Christ? Since debates have raged over the centuries on this issue (Avis, 1975) and much

ink has been spilled by integrationists on usury, the year of Jubilee, and the Sabbath, easy answers which address all of Christendom are not to be had. But for those who argue that the Mosaic covenant should be interpreted in light of Jesus' life and teachings ("principlism"), the second hermeneutic orientation (Figure 2, page 14) and the hermeneutic principles already discussed may provide a useful approach. Basically, law is interpreted much like narrative. Since this is such an important point, we conclude with a lengthy quote by Hays (2001, p. 26) whose treatment offers an excellent explanation of applying the law to Christians:

To give the Mosaic Law a greater authority over the Christian's moral behavior than that of the other parts of the Old Testament narratives is to create a canon within a canon. Likewise to say that the legal material should be interpreted in the same manner as the narrative material certainly does not diminish the divine imperative of Scripture. When the disciples picked grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees accused them of violating the Sabbath Law (Mark 2:23-28), for reaping on the Sabbath was

prohibited in Exodus 34:21. However, Jesus justified this apparent Sabbath violation by citing a narrative passage in I Samuel 21:1-9. In essence, the Pharisees criticized Him with the details of the Law, but Jesus answered them with principles drawn from narrative.

Conclusions

Several of the principles above coax the integrationist to balance between dissecting Scripture into smaller and smaller bits and looking for an axis or theme around which Scripture rotates (Gillingham, 1998, p. 27). Interpreting Scripture can be enhanced by a humble combination of literary, historic, and theological approaches. Gillingham states (1998, p. 45):

... no one approach can presume it is superior to the others and that the integration of all the different ways of reading is the only reasonable way forward. The historical approach prevents us from universalizing biblical theology from the particular local situations; the literary approach prevents us from particularizing the theologies too much without our own settings, without due concern for the wider issues; and the theological approach allows

us to give due weight to the way in which texts have had meaning in the life of different communities. ...

Discerning theology is much like searching for the holy grail of leadership or investments advice—one may search for a single answer or technique but instead discovers multiple approaches, perspectives, and perplexities. The process confirms the core of Hebrew Scripture teachings—that God is the source of truth and direction, not ourselves. Nevertheless, careful exegesis and application can help us more accurately understand biblical perspectives today within business contexts.

We conclude with the words of two authors—one modern scholar and one ancient. Moberly (1998, p. 24) reminds us:

The purpose of good commentary on, and exposition of, the text of Scripture should be to leave ourselves not with something other than that text, but rather with the text itself better understood and better able to be appropriated. For it is in and through the words of Scripture that we especially expect the Holy Spirit to speak to us and to direct and shape our lives.

Perhaps inspiring Moberly's thoughts, God issues a call to his children to hear and understand (Isaiah 55:1-3a):

*Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and
without price.
Why do you spend money for
what is not bread,
And your wages for what does
not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and
eat what is good,
And let your soul delight
itself in abundance.
Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live.*

Monty L. Lynn

Chair, Management Sciences Dept.
Abilene Christian University
ACU Box 29325
Abilene, TX 79699
915-674-2593, FAX 915-674-2507
lynnm@acu.edu

David Wallace

Associate Professor of Bible
Abilene Christian University
ACU Box 29437
Abilene, TX 79699
915-674-3791, FAX 915-674-6852
wallace@bible.acu.edu

ENDNOTES

¹The “Hebrew Bible” or “Hebrew Scriptures” are the first 39 books of the Christian Bible, generally referred to by Christians as the “Old Testament.” Because of their historical peculiarities, we will restrict our discussion to the Hebrew Scriptures even though some hermeneutic principles are germane to the New Testament and other texts as well.

²We are assuming the reader’s comfort with faith-business integration generally. For all scholars trained in theory-driven empirical research, integration raises questions of epistemological legitimacy. Some additionally question whether the rushing waters of a “pervasive capitalist ethos” dim the notice of certain themes in Scripture (e.g., Gottwald, 1993).

³Although it was a pre-capitalist society, work and faith were integrated for Jewish priests who had to judge the value of livestock and houses (Leviticus 27:9-15; Ohrenstein & Gordon, 1992) and for rabbis who came on the scene in the post-exilic period, not as professional clergy but as blacksmiths, brewers, herders, and other tradesmen who also studied Torah and were respected for their teachings. Combining faith with work has a patristic and rabbinic history.

⁴Interestingly, trade unions had their own Protestant-rooted view against the corporate worldview (Fones-Wolf, 1989).

⁵Literary analysis envelops but is not limited to genre. It also includes consideration of elements such as the forming and editing of the text and motivations of ancient translators and editors (cf. Ryken, 1993).

REFERENCES

Aberbach, Moshe (1994). *Labor, crafts, and commerce in ancient Israel*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University.

Avis, Paul D.L. (1975). Moses and the magistrate: A study in the rise of Protestant legalism. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26, 149-172.

Baron, David, with Pasdwa, Lynette (1999). *Moses on management: 50 leadership lessons from the greatest manager of all times*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.

Beadles, Nicholas A., II (1998, Fall). Biblical integration in business: A trip through the looking glass? *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 109-123.

Boer, Roland (1998). Western Marxism and the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 78, 3-21.

Burbank, Kershaw (1999, October). *A Christian perspective on microenterprise loans and the payment of loan interest*. Proceedings of the Christian Business Faculty Association Annual Conference, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX.

Burch, Bruce (1991). *Let justice roll down: The Old Testament, ethics, and Christian life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Chewning, Richard C. (1998, Fall). Biblical orthodoxy requires the S.N.A.P. of Scripture. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 78-93.

Childers, Jeff W., Foster, Douglas A., & Reese, Jack R. (2000). *The crux of the matter: Crisis, tradition, and the future of churches of Christ*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press.

Clapper, Gregory S. (1997). *As if the heart mattered: A Wesleyan spirituality*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Press.

Cook, Gene R. (2000). *Teaching by the Spirit*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Books.

Elder, Eric (1999). The biblical prohibition against charging interest: Does it apply to us? *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 32-42.

Fones-Wolf, Ken (1989). *Trade union gospel: Christianity and labor in industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Gillingham, Susan E. (1998). *One Bible, many voices: Different approaches to biblical studies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Glass, Zipporah G. (2000). Land, slave labor and law: Engaging ancient Israel’s economy. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 91, 27-39.

Gordon, Barry (1989). *The economic problem in biblical and patristic thought (Supplement to Vigiliae Christianae, Vol. 9)*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Gorringe, Timothy J. (1994). *Capital and the kingdom: Theological ethics and economic order*. Maryknoll, NY: SPEC/Orbis Books.

Gottwald, Norman K. (1993). Social class as an analytic and hermeneutical category in biblical studies. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 3-22.

Hambley, Harold W. (1987). *Joshua: A model for leadership*. New York, NY: Carlton Press.

Hasel, Gerhard F. (1991). *Old Testament theology: Basic issues in the current debate* (4th ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Hauerwas, Stanley, & Willimon, William H. (1989). *Resident aliens: Life in the Christian colony*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Hays, J. Daniel (2001). Applying the Old Testament law today. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 158, 21-35.

Heidebrecht, Paul Henry (1989). *Faith and economic practice: Protestant businessmen in Chicago, 1900-1920*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Holladay, William L. (1995). *Long ago God spoke: How Christians may hear the Old Testament today*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Johnson, Sharon (1988). *Values-driven people: A Christian approach to management*. Dallas, TX: Probe Books.

Kaiser, W. (1983). *Toward Old Testament ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academic.

Levenson, Jon D. (1993). *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and historical criticism: Jews and Christians in biblical studies*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Levine, Aaron (1987). *Economics and Jewish law: Halakhic perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ/New York, NY: KTAV/Yeshiva University Press.

Lockyer, Herbert (1969). *All the trades and occupations of the Bible: A fascinating study of ancient arts and crafts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Lynn, Monty L. (1987, October). *How strong beliefs bias reasoning: An exploratory model*. Presented to the Religious Research Association Annual Meeting, Louisville, KY.

Lynn, Monty L., & Keyes, Darren J. (1999, October). *Microeconomic development as active biblical integration*. Christian Business Faculty Association Annual Meeting, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX.

McKenzie, Steven L. (2000). *King David: A biography*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Moberly, Walter (1998). *Can Balaam’s ass speak today? A case study in reading the Old Testament as Scripture*. Cambridge, UK: Grove Books.

Muth, Richard F. (1997). Economic influences on early Israel. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 75, 77-92.

Neusner, Jacob (1999). *The Mishna: Social perspectives*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Ohrenstein, Roman A., & Gordon, Barry (1992). *Economic analysis in Talmudic literature. Rabbinic thought in light of modern economics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Olyan, Saul M. (1996). Honor, shame, and covenant relations in ancient Israel and its environment. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 115, 201-218.

Pava, Moses L. (1997). *Business ethics: A Jewish perspective (Library of Jewish Law and Ethics, Vol. 21)*. Hoboken, NJ/New York, NY: KTAV/Yeshiva University Press.

Porter, Brian (2000, Fall). God’s immutability: Business implications and the uncertainty of Scripture—A response to Richard Chewning’s paper. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 69-72.

Ryken, Leland (1987). *Work and leisure in Christian perspective*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.

Ryken, Leland (1993). *Words of delight: A literary introduction to the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Sandy, D. Brent, & Giese, Ronald L., Jr. (1995). *Cracking Old Testament codes: A guide to interpreting the literary genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Sherman, Doug, & Hendricks, William (1987). *Your work matters to God*. Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS.

Sider, Ronald J. (Ed.) (1997). *For they shall be fed: Scripture readings and prayers for a just world*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.

Smith, Galen P., & Johnson, Sharon G. (1997, Fall). Faith-learning integration in economics. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 46-57.

Visotzky, Burton L. (1998). *The road to redemption: Lessons from Exodus on leadership and community*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Walsh, Brian J., & Middleton, J. Richard (1984). *The transforming vision: Shaping a Christian worldview*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (1995). *Walking in the ways of the Lord: The ethical authority of the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Zigarelli, Michael A. (1999). *Management by Proverbs: Applying timeless wisdom in the workplace*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.



APPENDIX A

Selected Hebrew Scripture Passages Dealing with Business and Economic Related Topics

Assets, Preservation of:	22-24; 9:6-7; 32:1-3, 15-17; 42:1-7
Exodus 21:18-36	
Leviticus 19:19, 23-25	Jeremiah 7:1-15; 22:13-19;
Deuteronomy 20:19-20; 22:9-10; 25:4	33:14-15
Bribery:	Lamentations 3:34-36
Proverbs 15:27; 17:23; 21:14; 28:6	Ezekiel 18:5-9
Cheating:	Amos 5:21-24
Leviticus 19:13, 35-36	Micah 3:1-4, 9-12; 4:1-4; 6:6-8
Deuteronomy 25:13-16	Zechariah 8:14-17
Proverbs 11:1; 13:23; 20:10	- <i>God</i> : Exodus 23:1-3
Creation, nature, and natural resources:	Deuteronomy 10:17-19; 32:4
Psalms 65:5-13; 145:15-16	Job 34:18-19
Debt and credit (also see Usury):	- <i>Law</i> : Exodus 23:6-8
Proverbs 22:7, 26-27	Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20
Distribution of resources:	Psalms 94:20-23
Numbers 26:52-56	Proverbs 28:21
Harvesting laws:	Isaiah 10:1-4
Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22	Amos 5:10-15
Deuteronomy 24:19-22	- <i>Worship</i> : Isaiah 1:10-17; 58:1-10
Ruth 2:1-9	
Jubilee, Year of (also see Sabbatical year):	Money:
Leviticus 25:8-34; 25:35-55	Exodus 21:33-34; 22:16-17
Justice (see also Oppression):	Leviticus 27
Leviticus 19:11-18	Deuteronomy 14:24-26
II Samuel 11:1-4, 6, 14-15; 12:1-7	- <i>Excessive</i> : Deuteronomy 17:16-17
I Chronicles 18:14	- <i>First fruits</i> : Exodus 22:19; 24:26
Psalms 9:7-12, 18; 89:8, 14; 94:1-15; 96:10-13	Leviticus 22:30; 23:9-28; 34:19
Proverbs 16:11-12; 28:3; 29:4, 14, 26	Deuteronomy 12:17-18; 15:19-22
Isaiah 1:21-26; 5:8-13, 15-16,	Obedience and abundance (see also Justice):

Exodus 26:12-13
Leviticus 26:3-5, 14-16
I Chronicles 1:11-12
Job 31:16-25
Psalms 12:1-4; 37:22-26; 112:
1-5, 9
Proverbs 8:17-21; 10:22; 11:25-
26; 15:6; 22:4; 28:27; 31:10,
13-25
Ecclesiastes 5:19

Oppression (see also **Justice**):

Deuteronomy 23:16-17
Job 22:5-9; 24:1-12, 19-22
Psalms 72:1-4, 12-14;
103:6-7; 144:11-15
Isaiah 32:6-8
Jeremiah 21:11-12; 22:1-5;
33:14-16
Amos 4:1-3
Micah 2:1-10
Zephaniah 3:1
Zechariah 7:8-14
- *Exile in Egypt*:
Exodus 3:7-10; 6:2-9

- *God sees suffering*:

Exodus 3:7
Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Ecclesiastes 4:1

- *Punishment of oppressors*:
Genesis 15:12-14

**Ownership, possessions, and
wealth:**

- *Complacency*: Deuteronomy
6:4-12; 8:1-20; 32:15
Proverbs 30:8-9
Ezekiel 7:20
Hosea 10:1-2; 13:4-8
Haggai 1:1-11
- *Complaint*: Numbers 11:4-
20; 21:4-9
- *Dangers*: Proverbs 11:28; 13:8;
18:10-11; 28:11

Ecclesiastes 5:10-12
- *Death*: Psalms 49:5-14, 16-20
- *Dishonesty*: Proverbs 20:17;
21:6; 22:16
Isaiah 3:1, 13-25;
10:13-19
Jeremiah 5:7-9, 26-29
Ezekiel 16:35-50; 22:23-31
Hosea 12:7-9
Amos 8:4-8
Micah 6:9-15
Habakkuk 2:5-12
- *God's*: Exodus 19:5
Deuteronomy 10:14
I Chronicles 29:10-14
Psalms 24:1; 50:10-12; 82:8
Ecclesiastes 3:13
- *Unjust acquisition*: I Kings
21:1-19
- *Value*: Psalms 37:16;
119:36-37
Proverbs 11:7; 15:16-17;
16:16, 19; 19:1; 22:1;
23:4-8; 28:6

Poverty and the poor:

I Samuel 2:2-8
Job 5:11-16
Psalms 10:2-18; 12:5; 35:10;
68:5-6; 69:30-33; 109:30-
31; 113:5-9; 140:12; 146:
1-10
Proverbs 15:25; 17:5; 28:8
Isaiah 11:1-4; 26:5-6; 29:17-21;
61:1
Amos 2:6-8
- *Mistreatment*: Exodus 22:21-
24; 23:9, 12
Leviticus 19:32-34
Deuteronomy 27:19
Psalms 41:1-2; 72:1-4, 12-
14; 82:1-5

Proverbs 14:31; 21:13;
22:9, 21-23; 23:10-11;
29:7; 31:8-9

Provisions by God:

Isaiah 55:1-3
- *Possessions* (see **Ownership,
possessions, and wealth**)

Rest/Leisure:

Exodus 20:8-11
Numbers 28:18, 25, 26
Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 3:11-13;
5:18-19

Sabbatical year (see also **Jubilee**):

Exodus 23:10-11
II Chronicles 36:17-21
Nehemiah 10:28-31
Jeremiah 34:8-17
- *Debts*: Leviticus 15:1-11
- *Land*: Leviticus 25:1-7
- *Slaves*: Leviticus 15:12-15

Safety and injury:

Leviticus 24:19

Salvation:

- *The coming kingdom*:
Micah 4:1-4

**Serving others out of joy and
gratitude:**

Deuteronomy 24:17-18

Slander:

Leviticus 19:16a

Tithing:

Genesis 28:20-22
Leviticus 27:32
Deuteronomy 14:22-29;
26:12-13

Usury:

Exodus 22:25-27
Deuteronomy 23:19-20
Nehemiah 5:1-12
Psalms 15:1-5
Ezekiel 18:5-18

Wages:

Leviticus 19:13
Deuteronomy 24:14-15

Wealth (see **Ownership,
possessions, and wealth**):

- *Ill-gotten*: Proverbs 10:2; 13:8;
21:6; 22:1; 28:8
- *Investment*: Proverbs 11:24-25;
13:11; 21:5; 23:6-7;
- *Wisdom*: I Kings 3:9-13
Proverbs 10:4; 14:24;
24:30-34

Work:

- *as a Calling*: Exodus 3-4;
31:1-6; 35:30-35
Psalms 78:70-71
Amos 7:14
- *as Creation ordinance*:
Genesis 1:26
- *as Curse*: Genesis 3:17-19
Ecclesiastes 2:11, 18, 22-23
- *Divine and human cooperation*:
Nehemiah 6:9, 16
Psalms 90:16-17
- *of God*: Genesis 2:2
Psalms 19:1; 121
- *Laziness*: Proverbs 6:6-11;
11:16; 13:4; 14:23;
20:13; 23:21; 24:30-34;
28:19
- *No hierarchy of occupations*:
I Samuel 11:5
Psalms 78:70-72
- *Useless work*: Eccl. 4:4-8, 13-14
- *Work ethic*: Exodus 20:9
Deuteronomy 5:13
Proverbs 31:10, 13-25

Note: Some headings and passages are adapted from Sider (1997), Zigarelli (1999), and Ryken (1987). See them for additional passages and commentary.

APPENDIX B Recommended Sources

Hebrew Bible Exegesis and Hermeneutics

Baker, David W. (1996). Reading the Old Testament: Tools and techniques. *Ashland Theological Journal*, 28, 87-111.

Brown, Francis, Driver, S.R., & Briggs, Charles A. (n.d.). *A Hebrew and English lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Dockery, David S., Mathews, Kenneth A., & Sloan, Robert B. (1994). *Foundations for biblical interpretation: A complete library of tools and resources*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Fee, Gordon D., & Stuart, Douglas (1993). *How to read the Bible for all it's worth: A guide to understanding the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Gillingham, Susan E. (1998). *One Bible, many voices: Different approaches to biblical studies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Goldingay, John (1987). *Theological diversity and the authority of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Goldingay, John (1994). *Models for Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Hayes, John H., & Holladay, Carl R. (1982). *Biblical exegesis: A beginner's handbook*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.

Hays, J. Daniel (2001). Applying the Old Testament law today. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 158, 21-35.

Holladay, William L. (1995). *Long ago God spoke: How Christians may hear the Old Testament today*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Kaiser, W. (1983). *Toward Old Testament ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie.

Morgan, Robert, with Barton, John (1988). *Biblical interpretation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ryken, Leland (1993). *Words of delight: A literary introduction to the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Sandy, D. Brent, & Giese, Ronald L., Jr. (1995). *Cracking Old Testament codes: A guide to interpreting the literary genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Steck, Odil Hannes (1998). *Old Testament exegesis: A guide to the methodology*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

Stuart, Douglas (1984). *Old Testament exegesis: A primer for students and pastors* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.

Hebrew Scriptures on Business and Justice

Baron, David, with Padwa, Lynette (1999). *Moses on management: 50 leadership lessons from the greatest manager of all times*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.

Burch, Bruce (1991). *Let justice roll down: The Old Testament, ethics, and Christian life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Dempsey, Carol J. (2000). *Hope amid the ruins: The ethics of Israel's prophets*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press.

Ryken, Leland (1987). *Work and leisure in Christian perspective*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.

Sider, Ronald J. (Ed.). (1997). *For they shall be fed: Scripture readings and prayers for a just world*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.

Visotzky, Burton L. (1998). *The road to redemption: Lessons from Exodus on leadership and community*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (1995). *Walking in the ways of the Lord: The ethical authority of the Old*

Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Zigarelli, Michael A. (1999). *Management by Proverbs: Applying timeless wisdom in the workplace*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Rabbinic Thought and Business

Cardozo, Nathan T. Lopes (1997). *The written and oral Torah: A comprehensive introduction*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Levine, Aaron (1987). *Economics and Jewish law: Halakhic perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ/New York, NY: KTAV/Yeshiva University Press.

Ohrenstein, Roman A., & Gordon, Barry (1992). *Economic analysis in Talmudic literature. Rabbinic thought in light of modern economics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Pava, Moses L. (1997). *Business ethics: A Jewish perspective (Library of Jewish Law and Ethics, Vol. 21)*. Hoboken, NJ/New York, NY: KTAV/Yeshiva University Press.

Economics, Trade, and Business in Ancient Israel

Aberbach, Moshe (1994). *Labor, crafts, and commerce in ancient Israel*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University.

de Vaux, Roland (1961). *Ancient Israel: Its life and institutions*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Glass, Zipporah G. (2000). Land, slave labor and law: Engaging ancient Israel's economy. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 91, 27-39.

Gottwald, Norman K. (1993). Social class as an analytic and hermeneutical category in biblical studies. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 3-22.

McNutt, Paula (1999). *Reconstructing the society of ancient Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Dialogue I

Applying an Interpretive Framework for Insights on Asset Management: A Response to "Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible"

Brad Lemler
Grace College
Murray Young
Colorado Christian University

Conceptual and Operational Background

A common approach for Christian educators when seeking to integrate faith and learning is to seek "biblical solutions" to problems facing and created by corporations. Lynn and Wallace (2001) offer a framework for reversing this sequence. They advocate ten hermeneutic principles conveniently grouped into three sequential steps.

Beginnings—
The Exegetical Process
Broadening the Focus—
Theological Reflection
Applying the Text—
Hermeneutic Implications

This paper explores the scriptural concept of land tenancy as described in Leviticus 25.

By applying the tri-fold model of Lynn and Wallace, we are able to gain insights and raise questions. Both are useful in accomplishing the educational process.

It has been our experience that students have a significant interest in wealth accumulation, especially in "real property." This may be because owning a home is seen as an important step toward full adulthood. Or, it may be that published lists of the "most wealthy persons" perk their (or their parents') interest in land tenancy. But whatever the reason, we have found real estate transactions make more intuitive the key concept of "investment" with dimensions of saving, risk, time value of money, and appreciation, and that asset use, division, and ownership are pedagogically powerful constructs.

Step One: Beginnings—The Exegetical Process

Land was an integral part of Israel's faith—it was central to Yahweh's promise to Abraham. The promised land was the explicit objective of the exodus from Egypt and was the focus of the major historical traditions of Israel extending from Joshua to David (Wright, 1988, p. 860). Though the land was both promised by and a gift from Yahweh, ownership of the land remained with Yahweh with the Israelites holding the land as stewards or agents. Thus, all issues regarding division, tenure, and use of the land had moral or ethical significance, and they were determined within the parameters of Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel.

One important provision regarding the division, tenure, and use of the land tenancy was the year of Jubilee detailed in Leviticus 25. However, to understand the year of Jubilee, one needs to understand both the Sabbatical year and the creative activity model that Yahweh provided. The accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 describe six days of creative activity followed by a seventh day of rest. Yahweh not only rested on the seventh day, He blessed it and made it holy

(Genesis 2:2-3). This provides a model for human beings, Yahweh's image bearers. Not only are we to model our Creator by engaging in creative activity, we are also to model Him by resting from creative activity.

The Sabbatical year calendar applies this seven-period cycle to years, not days. Thus, the Sabbatical calendar requires that six years of working the land be followed by a year where the land is allowed to rest. The calendar for the year of Jubilee is based on the Sabbatical year calendar. After a period of seven Sabbatical years (49 years), a year of Jubilee takes place. Thus, a year of Jubilee takes place every 50 years, or once in a typical person's lifetime. Beyond rest for the land, the Sabbatical year was also a time for release of debts and/or release of pledges for debt and for the release of slaves. Tying back to the land, the release of debts in the Sabbatical year was primarily concerned with agrarian debt related to the use of land (Wright, 1988, p. 858).

The concepts of freedom and restoration are integral to the year of Jubilee. Individuals were freed from the burden of debt, and all land was returned to its family of ancestral inheritance. Regarding

the year of Jubilee provisions, Wenham (1979, p. 317) notes that "The main purpose of these laws is to prevent the utter ruin of debtors," while Hartley (1992, pp. 424-425) notes that "The primary reason that these laws have been incorporated into the legislation on the year of Jubilee is that debt was the greatest internal threat to the social foundation of the equality of all Israelites."

The freedom and restoration that takes place in the year of Jubilee is in some respects a freedom and restoration of "last resort" for persons whose family members failed in their responsibility to redeem both a) their relatives who had fallen into slavery and b) land that their relatives had lost. Here "family" has three levels: the tribe, clan, and father's house. The tribe was the primary unit of social and territorial organization in Israel. There was one tribe for each of the 12 sons of Jacob, with Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, taking the place of Joseph. Between the tribe and the father's house came the intermediate unit of the clan. The clan was both a unit of recognizable kinship and a unit of territorial identity. The father's house was the level of family

organization with which an individual Israelite had the strongest sense of inclusion, identity, protection, and responsibility. The father's house was essentially an extended family, and it typically included between 50 and 100 people. The responsibility of redemption, detailed in the role of kinsman-redeemer, extended beyond the father's house to the clan (Wright, 1982, pp. 761-769).

Step Two: Broadening the Focus—Theological Reflection

The previous discussion of the year of Jubilee evidences the importance of inheritance of land in the governing framework that Yahweh provided for Israel. And just why did Yahweh place such great importance in an inheritance in the promised land? The answers to this question are several.

First, in an agrarian economy, such as that of Israel, land is a necessary resource for sustaining life. If a family has claim to a tract of land, that family has the ongoing, continuing potential for sustaining life. Note that a claim to a tract of land is a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for sustaining life. Raising crops from a tract of land is contingent on other factors, including effort

invested by the family and favorable weather conditions.

The return of land to the family of original inheritance during the year of Jubilee ensured that no family would be permanently estranged from the resource necessary for sustaining life. The functioning of the kinsman-redeemer provisions as Yahweh intended would minimize the number of times when the year of Jubilee provisions would be necessary. Additionally, the open harvesting provisions of the Sabbatical year and the many exhortations to care for the poor, the fatherless, and the widow were intended to sustain families temporarily without a claim to a tract land.

It seems evident, then, that Yahweh employs a perspective that today would be called “stakeholder-based.” That is, the Scripture recognizes multiple constituents with sometimes conflicting claims to scarce resources. Stated specifically,

Timeless Truth A: Yahweh desires that all people be provided with the resources

necessary for sustaining a reasonable standard of living.

Timeless Truth B: Yahweh expects that people will be wise stewards of the resources they are entrusted with.

Timeless Truth C: Even when necessary resources are provided and those resources are used wisely, factors beyond the control of individuals can result in economic calamity. In situations such as this, Yahweh desires that those with plenty provide for those in need.

The precepts of Leviticus 25 also recognize issues of loyalty and trust. In an agrarian economy where land could not be permanently bought or sold,

the extended family unit was preserved. Land, a necessary resource for sustaining

life, is not a mobile resource. Hence, members of an extended family unit remained committed to the same tract of land. But, ownership of the land and control of factors such as weather, pestilence, and disease remained with Yahweh. This served to foster and perpetuate an attitude of trust and dependence on

Yahweh. For those who wished to place their trust in material possessions, returning land to the family of original ancestry in the year of Jubilee thwarted attempts to accumulate massive land holdings. Additionally, for those who wished to place their trust in their own skills, there was the ever-present risk that factors beyond human control—factors such as weather, pestilence, and disease—could significantly diminish any harvest, reinforcing the reality that human beings are totally dependent on Yahweh. Stated specifically,

Timeless Truth D: Yahweh values the preservation of the extended family unit.

Timeless Truth E: Yahweh desires that His children look to Him, not to His creation or human wisdom and skill, as the ultimate source of fulfillment, security, and provision.

Step Three: Applying the Text—Hermeneutic Implications

The business world of the 21st century differs radically from the agrarian economy of ancient Israel. Thus, while the land tenancy laws that Yahweh provided for ancient Israel have little if any application to the

modern business world, the timeless truths that underlie those land tenancy laws remain valid and relevant. In a pedagogical context, guidelines for applying these timeless truths to the modern business world would appear as follows.

The Information and Technology Economy

With change taking place at an increasing pace, the modern economy depends more on human or intellectual capital than it does on physical capital. Thus, human or intellectual capital has a relatively short service life. This leaves the typical member of the work force in a tenuous position. An individual’s capacity to earn an income depends on the extent to which the individual possesses marketable human or intellectual capital, while skills that are marketable one day may be obsolete the next. Individuals are faced with the necessity of continually upgrading their skill sets. Failure to do so could easily leave an individual unemployed.

Income Safety Net

Though unemployment benefits generally provide for individuals who find themselves unemployed, what is needed is an improved system for keeping skill

sets current and for retraining individuals with suddenly obsolete skills. And while the extent to which this system would be supported by the public and private sectors remains to be determined, individual firms that desire to operate in consonance with biblical principles can develop ongoing continuing education programs that keep the skill sets of their employees current. Beyond the desire to operate in consonance with biblical principles, continuing education programs of this sort offer the real potential of providing an economic benefit to the firm. This may explain much of the continuing education currently in place.

Resource and Employment Mobility

Closing a plant or transferring production from one location to another can have a devastating impact on a community, as opportunities for earning income are removed from the community. At the same time, individuals in the community to which production is transferred now have expanded opportunities for earning income. To what extent are the needs and interests of employees served or exploited? And, to what extent are

provisions made to assist employees in the necessary transition? Discussion that builds on the foundation of Timeless Truths A, B, and C is likely to deepen student thinking and sharpen participants' sensitivities. And, if a higher level of involvement is sought, a structured debate with some students delivering pro and con arguments (with rebuttals) and others acting as judges has been found to be a powerful teaching device.

Disruption of Family Life

As business enterprises have expanded from local to regional to national to international in scope, the potential for the breaking of employee loyalty bonds increases. A promotion or change in positions in a local enterprise need not require a geographic relocation of the family. Such is often not the case in regional, national, or international enterprises. Indeed, in enterprises of this sort geographic relocation of the family is expected.

But, if an enterprise desires to operate in consonance with biblical principles, how can it increase family stability in employee location decisions? One answer may lie in the use of

technologies like the Internet and cellular communication to enhance preservation of the extended family unit. Students typically have clear views on whether employees should accept or turn down a transfer (and seek employment at another firm) to enhance family stability and preserve the extended family unit. For either scenario, discussion based on Timeless Truths D and E is potentially evocative.

How (Much) Do I Trust?

One could view the increased instability of the business environment as a positive change with regard to Timeless Truth E. Given the reality of the residue of the fall that remains in all of Yahweh's children, one's faith is most likely to remain vital, active, and growing in an environment where that faith is stretched, i.e., where one has no choice but to trust Yahweh. Given the realities of the modern business environment, one is aware of the folly of placing ultimate trust in the implicit promise of lifetime employment with any firm. Likewise, given the ever-increasing volatility in asset markets, one is aware of the folly of placing ultimate trust in any investment portfolio.

Conclusion

We have attempted to illustrate the pedagogical power of the Lynn and Wallace approach to understanding and using Scripture. Using timeless truths implicit in the land tenancy laws of the Pentateuch, we have sought to apply them in a culturally relevant way to the modern business world. Yet, with what degree of success?

If one is seeking specific, definitive policies and recommendations, we have made but a modest contribution. If, though, as Lynn and Wallace contend, the emergence of clear questions is often more valuable than the appearance of simple answers, then our efforts may be judged as satisfactory. But your views, as readers and teachers, are as yet unknown to us. So, we invite you to dialogue, to experiment, and to refine. Whether by e-mail, fax, or telephone, let us explore together the richness of the Word and the students God has given to us.

Brad Lemler

Professor of Business
Grace College
200 Seminary Drive
Winona Lake, IN 46590
219-372-5100, ext. 6092
lemlerbk@grace.edu

Murray Young
Dean, School of Business
Colorado Christian University
180 South Garrison Street
Lakewood, CO 80226-7499
303-963-3168
myoung@ccu.edu

REFERENCES

- Hartley, J.E. (1992). *Leviticus, word biblical commentary*. Dallas, TX: Word Books.
- Lynn, M.L., & Wallace, D. (2001, Fall). Doing business with the Hebrew Bible: A hermeneutic guide. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*.
- Wenham, G.J. (1979). *The book of Leviticus: The new international commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Wright, C.H.J. (1982). Family. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume Two*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 761-769.
- _____. (1982). Year of Jubilee. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume Two*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1025-1030.
- _____. (1988). Sabbatical year. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume Four*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 857-861.



Article

Business Students' Perceptions of Shifts in Core Values of American Culture: A Report from the Trenches

Jae Min Jung and James Kellaris
University of Cincinnati

The authors report their findings of a cultural perception survey given to business students in 1993 and 1999. They compare the results of the two surveys and discuss what the findings reveal about our changing culture.

Introduction

Culture exerts an undeniably pervasive influence on individuals and the groups they comprise (Stackhouse, et al., 1995). It provides not only the context for all forms of human exchange, including business transactions, but the rules and means by which exchanges are conducted as well. Indeed, culture's reach extends to virtually every facet of our worldly existence. Consider that because the very language in which we *think* is culturally determined, even our most private thoughts can be influenced by culture—perhaps in ways that escape our conscious awareness. Hence, culture would seem a critically important topic for study, particularly among

Christian business educators who seek to prepare students for the challenges of careers in a dynamic—and increasingly hostile—cultural environment.

Roughly speaking, culture is to societies what personality is to individuals: a constellation of fundamental, defining traits. Unlike personality traits, however, which are God-given and relatively enduring, cultures are “man-made” and prone to change over time (Henderson & Robinson, 1999).

A culture can be characterized in terms of its products (e.g., music, literature), material artifacts, customs, beliefs, and other traits. But among the most important distinguishing traits of any culture are its “core values” (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961).

Core values are widely accepted, general beliefs shared by members of a culture (Rokeach, 1973). They define a culture by providing members with a set of common beliefs and behavioral guidelines and thereby shape individual behavior and lend direction to social interaction (Hawkins, et al., 2001).

Historically, American core values are rooted in biblical Christianity (Schaeffer, 1983). During the second half of the 20th century, however, volatile social forces and notorious, pivotal events effected dramatic shifts in American core values. Witness an erosion of the Protestant work ethic, the tendency to hedonism and sensual gratification, a decline in respect for society's traditional institutions, increases in materialism (Belk, 1985), and philosophical relativism (Knight & Bauer, 1998). In summary of these trends, Colson (1997, p. 278) writes:

American culture today largely rejects the very concept of truth. False ideologies and even neo-pagan religions are multiplying. The only way Christians can withstand these cultural forces is to be rooted in God's Word ... only Christians

steeped in biblical knowledge can defend the faith in our age of relativism.

The study reported here examines these macroscopic shifts closer to home, through the eyes of business students—our students—at the large, secular university where we teach and live out our calling. And although the findings are not statistically representative of any general population, we believe they provide a useful glimpse from the “trenches” of the late 20th century “culture wars.” The study also illustrates a method that can be replicated in any classroom to introduce students to the topic of cultural values and/or motivate discussion on shifts in the values underlying cultural trends and their impact on contemporary business.

Method Overview

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed in two time periods, 1993 and 1999, to students enrolled in an introductory marketing course at the University of Cincinnati. The questionnaire contained scales representing various dimensions of cultural values and other measures. Respondents

were instructed to indicate their perceptions of current American cultural values by circling appropriate numbers on each scale. Next, they were asked to indicate their predictions of trends for each core value. Our analysis summarizes responses for each time period, compares responses across time periods, and tests predictions made in 1993 using the 1999 data. We also explore the data for evidence of gender differences in perceptions of cultural values and ability to predict trends.

Samples

The sample for time period 1 ($t = 1$) was drawn during the winter term of the 1992-93 school year. It consisted of 95 ($N = 95$) students enrolled in an upper-level, undergraduate marketing principles course at the University of Cincinnati Administration, taught by one of the researchers. Fifty-seven (60 percent) were male, 38 (40 percent) female. Most (80 percent) were between the ages of 20 and 23, inclusive; the median age was 22. Thirty students (31.6 percent) were pursuing major concentrations in marketing, 58 (61.1 percent) in other areas of business

administration, and seven (7.4 percent) in non-business majors.

The sample for time period 2 ($t = 2$) was drawn during the fall term of the 1999-2000 school year at UC/CBA. Two hundred twenty-seven students were surveyed in a marketing principles course. A usable sample of 217 ($N = 217$) students remained after eliminating cases with missing or aberrant data. One hundred thirty-nine (64.1 percent) were males, 78 (35.9 percent) females. The distribution of ages and majors was similar to $t = 1$ (median age = 21, mean = 21.9 years; 35 percent marketing majors, 59 percent other business majors, 6 percent non-business majors).

To assess the comparability of the samples, we cross-tabulated both gender and major with time period and found no statistical associations (Chi-squares < 1), i.e., the samples are statistically identical in terms of these characteristics. We also compared the mean ages of the two samples and found the $t = 1$ students were statistically older ($t = 2.77$, $p < .05$ two-tailed) due to the presence of slightly more “non-traditional” male students during the earlier period. The average age of the males was 22.7 years in 1993 and 21.7 years in 1999.

Survey findings should be interpreted in terms of this minor age difference across time periods.

Measures

The first section of the questionnaire contained 17 seven-point semantic differential scales adapted from multiple published sources—primarily Rokeach (1973) and Hofstede (1985); also Munson and McIntyre (1979). Interested readers are encouraged to consult Hawkins, et al. (2001) for a useful treatment of the cultural values represented in this study.

Value scales were preceded by written instructions to "... please indicate your perception of **current American cultural values** by circling an appropriate number on each of the scales provided below." Supplementary verbal instructions were offered by one of the researchers (in both time periods) to clarify the requirements of the task. The scales were labeled as follows: "active/passive," which refers to the emphasis placed on physical activity, i.e., doing vs. merely being; "material/non-material," which refers to orientation to wealth and possessions vs. relationships, knowledge, and experiences;

"hard work/leisure," referring to the value placed on work for its own sake vs. work as a necessary evil to gain leisure time; "postponed gratification/immediate gratification," which refers to deferring rewards vs. living for the moment; "sensual gratification/abstinence," which refers to the tendency to indulge in pleasures of the flesh vs. self-denial; "humorous/serious," which refers to the utility a society ascribes to lightheartedness, smiling, and play; "maximum cleanliness/minimum cleanliness," which refers to the extent to which cleanliness and its correlates (e.g., hygiene, tidiness) are valued and actively pursued beyond levels required for health; "performance/status," which refers to the basis for a culture's reward system; "tradition/change," which refers to the value placed on preserving the past vs. promoting progress; "risk-taking/security," which refers to how society regards those who take chances vs. those who are cautious and risk-averse; "problem-solving/fatalistic," which refers to a proactive vs. passive stance vis-à-vis exogenous events; "individual/collective," which refers to the value placed on initiative vs.

cooperation; "romantic/non-romantic," which refers to the value placed on sentiment vs. dispassionate approaches; "adult/child," which refers to the priority accorded children; "competition/cooperation," which is the extent to which a culture values performing better than rivals vs. forming productive alliances; "youth/age," which refers to the value placed on the merits of youthfulness vs. those of experience; and "masculine/feminine," which refers to the degree to which a society is dominated by males vs. females and the attendant values of achievement orientation vs. relationship orientation (nurturing, caring).

The first label in each pair represents the high value (7). It is important to note that the scales were used to measure students' perceptions of American cultural values, not necessarily their own personal values. The intercorrelations among scale items at each time period are depicted in Table 1 (next page).

The second section of the questionnaire directed respondents to "please return to the 'cultural values scales' on the previous page. Read each one again. This time, however, indicate the direction in which

you think each value is shifting over time by drawing an arrow next to each number you circled. For example, if you believe a given value is moving toward the right end of the scale, draw a ▶ by the number you circled; use a ◀ arrow to indicate shifts to the left end of the scale; and a ▼ to indicate 'no change over time.'" Predictions of increases on the seven-point scale were coded as +1, predictions of decreases as -1, and "no change" as zero.

The questionnaire concluded with some items to facilitate sample description and comparison (gender, year of birth, major in school) and a single-item, seven-point "knowledge about American culture" scale, with endpoints labeled "very extensive knowledge (7)" and "very limited knowledge (1)."

Results

1993 Survey

Descriptive results for $t = 1$ appear in Table 2 (page 55). It is interesting, albeit it disheartening, to note the relatively high levels of perceived material and sensual gratification values (both means = 5.6 on seven-point scales), as these stand in sharp contrast to biblical values of non-materialism (Matt. 6:19-20) and abstinence (I Cor. 6:12-20;

Table 1

**Intercorrelations Among Value Scale Items
At Time Periods t = 1 (1993) and t = 2 (1999)**

American Core Values	Scale item numbers (refer to value labels in left column)																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Active(7)/Passive(1)	-																
2. Material(7)/ Non-material(1)	.09	-															
3. Hard Work(7)/Leisure(1)	.17		-														
4. Postponed Gratification(7)/ Immediate Gratification(1)	.32	-.22		-													
5. Sensual Gratification(7)/ Abstinence(1)	.29	.08			-												
6. Humorous(7)/Serious(1)	.07	-.35	.41														
7. Max. Cleanliness(7)/ Min. Cleanliness(1)	.06	-.11	.35		-												
8. Performance(7)/Status(1)	.12	.33	-.15	-.27													
9. Tradition(7)/Change(1)	.03	.08	-.18	-.26		-											
10. Risk-taking(7)/ Security(1)	.16	.07	.03	.14	.28		-										
11. Problem-solving(7)/ Fatalistic(1)	.02	-.05	.01	-.00	.13			-									
12. Individual(7)/ Collective(1)	.17	-.02	-.03	.12	.14	.06			-								
13. Romantic(7)/ Non-romantic(1)	.17	-.04	.19	.11	-.04	-.05				-							
14. Adult(7)/Child(1)	.25	-.40	.39	.42	-.03	.21	.29				-						
15. Competition(7)/ Cooperation(1)	.17	-.25	.26	.42	-.12	-.01	.25					-					
16. Youth(7)/Age(1)	-.16	-.08	-.03	.20	-.07	-.11	-.14	.04					-				
17. Masculine(7)/ Feminine(1)	-.08	.05	.14	.23	-.18	.08	.17	.11						-			
	.38	-.19	.18	.11	.17	.21	-.06	.35	-.21								
	.23	-.02	.22	.15	.13	.22	-.02	.27	-.08								
	.25	-.02	.25	.14	-.10	.09	.25	.36	-.06	-.00							
	.22	.00	.23	.14	.02	.01	.33	.37	.11	.21							
	-.00	.35	-.08	-.08	.11	.08	-.12	-.21	-.26	-.06	.04						
	.03	.06	.05	.04	.08	-.02	.06	-.05	-.02	.19	.04						
	.22	-.01	.10	.13	.07	.09	.14	.22	.18	-.06	.28	-.04					
	.09	-.06	.09	.12	.07	.07	.30	.20	.16	.06	.23	.10					
	-.03	.02	-.13	.00	.19	.15	.10	-.02	.00	.11	.22	.28	.08				
	.10	.05	.06	.16	-.02	-.02	.21	.17	.09	.04	.14	.10	.20				
	-.12	.40	-.24	-.09	.18	.12	.07	-.43	-.07	-.13	-.12	.38	-.15	.09			
	-.00	.13	-.06	.01	.03	.07	-.21	-.12	.00	.16	-.17	.24	.02	.04			
	.08	.19	.11	.02	-.00	-.04	.12	-.14	-.16	-.02	.06	.02	.08	-.05	.19		
	.03	.01	-.06	-.01	.10	.26	-.09	-.12	-.00	.04	-.01	-.05	-.01	-.22	.16		
	-.10	.13	.07	-.07	.20	.11	-.09	.03	.24	-.01	-.04	.06	.04	.09	.14	-.03	
	.03	-.01	-.02	-.07	.25	.11	-.07	-.07	.04	.08	.05	.04	.11	.08	.27	.12	

Cell entries are Pearson correlation coefficients for t = 1 (above) and t = 2 (below).
Shaded coefficients are statistically significant (p < .05 two-tailed).

II Tim. 2:22). Note also the relatively low level of perceived “postponed gratification,” which stands in contrast to the values expressed in the parable of the prodigal son, whose desire for

immediate gratification proved ruinous (Luke 15:12-14).

The predictions of students at t = 1 concerning the direction of change in cultural core values are also reported in Table 2. Overall,

Table 2

**Students’ Perceptions of American Values:
1993 (t = 1) vs. 1999 (t = 2)**

American Core Values	Mean (t = 1)	Predicted Shift (t = 1)	Mean (t = 2)	t-value	1993 Predictions confirmed?
Active(7)/Passive(1)	4.55	+	4.79	-1.82*	✓
Material(7)/Non-material(1)	5.58	0	5.99	-3.86**	no
Hard Work(7)/Leisure(1)	4.39	0	4.30	-0.53	✓
Postponed Gratification(7)/ Immediate Gratification(1)	2.66	0	2.67	.05	✓
Sensual Gratification(7)/ Abstinence(1)	5.62	0	5.83	-2.21**	no
Humorous(7)/Serious(1)	4.77	0	4.94	-1.42	✓
Max. Cleanliness(7)/ Min. Cleanliness(1)	4.67	+	4.96	-2.12**	✓
Performance(7)/Status(1)	3.38	+	3.32	.23	no
Tradition(7)/Change(1)	3.79	-	3.76	-.01	no
Risk-taking(7)/Security(1)	3.79	0	4.18	-2.35**	no
Problem-solving(7)/ Fatalistic(1)	4.47	+	4.61	-.91	no
Individual(7)/Collective(1)	4.80	-	4.74	.49	no
Romantic(7)/ Non-romantic(1)	4.29	0	4.50	-1.39	✓
Adult(7)/Child(1)	4.57	0	4.85	-1.81*	no
Competition(7)/ Cooperation(1)	5.34	0	5.32	.22	✓
Youth(7)/Age(1)	4.51	0	4.73	-1.18	✓
Masculine(7)/Feminine(1)	4.78	-	4.65	.56	no

** two-tailed p < .05
* two-tailed p < .10

students predicted increases in active (vs. passive) orientation (69.6 percent), the tendency to value maximum cleanliness (57.6 percent), to value an individual's performance over their status (50.5 percent), and a problem-solving orientation vs. fatalism (53.8 percent). Students predicted decreases in individualism (55.4 percent), masculinity (56.5 percent), and tradition (57.6 percent). As for the other dimensions, either no shift in values was predicted or the "vote" was evenly split such that the median change equaled zero.

1999 Survey

Descriptive results for $t = 2$ appear in Table 2. Several interesting changes are observed, including significant statistical increases in active (vs. passive) orientation, adult (vs. child) orientation, materialism, risk-taking, romanticism, and sensual gratification. We also observe a marginal increase in our national obsession with physical cleanliness.

Among these shifts in perceived cultural values, perhaps the most noteworthy is the nine percent increase in materialism over a six-year span, which brings the value less than 9/10ths of a point short of the high end-

point of the scale. The students' daily immersion in the study of commerce no doubt colors their perceptions of materialism in our culture; nevertheless, the longitudinal comparison across comparable groups suggests the possibility of a substantive change.

Decreases are observed in individualism (i.e., shift toward collectivism), tradition, and postponed gratification (i.e., shift towards immediate gratification). However, these changes are not statistically significant.

Interestingly, we observed an increase in students' self-reported knowledge about American culture, from 4.4 in 1993 to 4.9 in 1999 ($t = -3.9$, $p < .01$), despite the slightly younger sample in the later time period. We suspect this could indicate a deeper immersion or interest in popular culture among college students over time. The finding may also be due to increasing exposure to agents of enculturation, such as television, cinema, and popular music.

The data collected in 1999 allow us to test the predictions made by students in 1993. As Table 2 shows, about half (47 percent) of the predictions were supported. Only two of the major (statistical) shifts were

accurately predicted: increases in Americans' active (vs. passive) orientation and tendency to maximum cleanliness. The other accurate predictions simply anticipated stable values, i.e., "no change." Surprisingly, the majority of students did not anticipate the observed increases in materialism, sensual gratification, risk-proneness, or adult orientation.

Men vs. Women

Next, our analysis compared the responses of males and females within time periods and examined gender differences in ability to predict shifts across periods. Results of this analysis are summarized in Table 3 (page 58).

Only one significant gender difference is observed in 1993. On average, the males perceive American culture to value humor to a greater extent as compared to the females' perceptions. Other perceptions are remarkably congruent.

In 1999 the gender gap widens. Four significant gender differences are observed. Interestingly, the "humor gap" has closed. Females' mean humor scores increased to attain statistical parity with those of the males. On average, however, male students perceived

American culture to be more adult-oriented, more prone to competition (vs. cooperation), and more masculine; female students perceived American culture to value cleanliness to a greater extent. There are also marginal gender differences (p -value $< .10$) in perceptions of tradition vs. change (males view society as more change-oriented) and romanticism (females view society as more romantic). Nevertheless, the genders shared statistically similar perceptions on 11 items—roughly 65 percent concordance.

Male and female students made identical predictions concerning trends on 14 of 17 aspects of cultural values. In the three instances where males and females disagreed, the males made correct predictions in two of the cases (concerning the stability of problem-solving orientation and masculinity). Both genders made unsupported predictions concerning the risk-taking/security dimension; neither group anticipated the shift toward risk-taking.

In summary, as a group the male students in 1993 correctly predicted the trend (+/- shifts or stability) for about 59 percent of the cultural values studied in 1999; the females' predictive

Table 3

Gender Differences in Students' Perceptions of American Values and Their Ability to Predict Shifts

American Core Values	***1993 Means***			***1999 Means***			Predictions	
	Males n = 57	Females n = 38	t-value	Males n = 139	Females n = 78	t-value	Males (✓ = correct)	Females
Active(7)/Passive(1)	4.51	4.61	-.37	4.78	4.82	-.27	+✓	+✓
Material(7)/Non-material(1)	5.49	5.71	-1.09	5.95	6.08	-1.06	0	0
Hard Work(7)/Leisure(1)	4.32	4.50	-.77	4.25	4.40	-.85	0✓	0✓
Postponed Gratification(7)/ Immediate Gratification(1)	2.77	2.50	1.03	2.65	2.71	-.28	0✓	0✓
Sensual Gratification(7)/ Abstinence(1)	5.56	5.70	-.65	5.86	5.77	.79	0	0
Humorous(7)/Serious(1)	4.98	4.45	2.21*	4.93	4.97	-.31	0✓	0✓
Max. Cleanliness(7)/ Min. Cleanliness(1)	4.58	4.82	-.89	4.80	5.26	-2.91*	+✓	+✓
Performance(7)/Status(1)	3.47	3.24	.77	3.42	3.13	1.39	+	+
Tradition(7)/Change(1)	3.81	3.76	.15	3.63	4.00	-1.86	-	-
Risk-taking(7)/Security(1)	3.82	3.74	.31	4.23	4.09	.79	0	-
Problem-solving(7)/ Fatalistic(1)	4.44	4.53	-.38	4.55	4.71	-1.07	0✓	+
Individual(7)/Collective(1)	4.93	4.61	1.05	4.79	4.64	.73	-	-
Romantic(7)/ Non-romantic(1)	4.26	4.34	-.28	4.40	4.68	-1.70	0✓	0✓
Adult(7)/Child(1)	4.74	4.32	1.62	4.96	4.64	2.16*	0	0
Competition(7)/ Cooperation(1)	5.25	5.47	-.81	5.50	5.03	2.75*	0✓	0✓
Youth(7)/Age(1)	4.47	4.55	-.26	4.68	4.83	-.77	0✓	0✓
Masculine(7)/Feminine(1)	4.79	4.76	.11	4.85	4.28	3.76*	0✓	-

* two-tailed $p < .05$

success rate was slightly less, at 47 percent. However, it should be noted that because males comprised a majority of the sample, their responses had more influence on the results. An examination of predictive ability *within* genders (i.e., ability of (fe)males to predict responses of (fe)males) reveals that both male and female groups made accurate predictions concerning their own group about half the time (nine of the 17 dimensions).

Discussion

In summary of these findings, 1999 respondents perceived American culture as more active, materialistic, valuing sensual gratification over abstinence, concerned with maximum cleanliness, risk-prone, and adult-oriented as compared to the earlier period. Respondents in 1993 accurately predicted cultural value changes on slightly fewer than half (47 percent) of the value dimensions. As for gender gaps in perceptions of cultural values, several notable differences were observed. The 1993 survey showed that men tended to view American society as less serious. The 1999 survey showed that women tended to view American society as more concerned with cleanliness, and men perceived it

as more adult-oriented, competitive, and masculine.

Implications for Christian Business Educators

There are several important and disturbing trends revealed in this study that would seem to warrant special attention from Christian business educators. We would like to focus here on two: the perceived changes 1) towards greater materialism and 2) away from abstinence toward sensual gratification. Our data suggest that, in the eyes of our student respondents, American society moved towards more materialistic values during the six-year span examined in this study. Jesus repeatedly warned against the pursuit of materialism, as illustrated in parables of the rich man and the beggar (Luke 16:19-31) and of the rich fool (Luke 12:17-20). Our data also suggest a perception that American society has moved away from "abstinence" towards "sensual gratification," which is contradictory to biblical values as reflected in admonitions to abstain from sinful desires (I Peter 2:11) and unchastity (I Thessalonians 4:3).

Notably, according to our data, materialistic values seem to be positively correlated with

sensual gratification during the first time period ($r = .33, p < .001$ at $t = 1$; r positive but not significant at $t = 2$). The Bible consistently warns against the vanity of pursuing materialistic life (James 1:11) and gratifying the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16) and urges us to abstain from sinful desires (I Peter 2:11) and self-indulgence (Luke 12:17-20). Further, Scripture directs believers to live a spiritual life that will reap eternal reward (Galatians 6:8). In the parlance of social science, materialism and self-gratification appear to be different empirical manifestations of the same higher-order construct, i.e., human weakness or simply “sin.”

Christian business students who sincerely pursue the admonition to “seek first the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33) may find themselves “strangers in a strange land” in an increasingly materialistic and gratification-seeking society. They may experience “culture shock” as they enter the secular business environment or, worse yet, may fall prey to the pitfalls of materialism and sensual gratification themselves. As Logue (1999) vividly points out, students at Christian colleges are not

immune from the ravages of postmodernism.

Therefore, educators in Christian colleges and universities should be particularly attentive to these trends and provide their students with appropriate counsel, guidance, and preparation. For example, a class session, workshop, colloquium, panel discussion, or chapel could be devoted to the topic of materialism. Students could be challenged to consider the following questions: What is materialism? What are its root causes and consequences? What is the current trend? What is the conceptual distinction between materialism and material prosperity (Proverbs 13:21)? How does materialism manifest itself in society? In our own lives? What can we do as (future) Christian business professionals to recognize and avoid the moral pitfalls of materialism? And what is our responsibility to address the social causes and consequences of materialism? Analogous questions can be posed concerning sensual gratification and other cultural trends.

These issues could also be addressed in the context of a business ethics seminar, wherein students could examine trends in the “real world” and develop

biblically-grounded ethical criteria for use in their careers. Ideally, such a seminar would draw on the resources of the Christian business community to gain perspectives from seasoned professionals who have struggled with (and resolved?) problematic issues stemming from the tension between cultural pressures and biblical values (Nash, 1994).

The scales used in this study could also be applied in the classroom to introduce students to the topic of values and their assessment. They can be used to allow the individual student to assess his or her personal values as well as their perceptions of cultural values. This would permit an instructive comparison of disparities between personal and cultural perspectives, which could be used to motivate class discussion.

Study Limitations

Although this study yielded some interesting findings, its design imposes limits to interpretation and poses some questions that present opportunities for further research. Among the limiting factors are the size and nature of our sample. Small samples impose limits to generality, and convenience samples may not be highly

representative. Moreover, the scales selected for inclusion in the surveys are not an exhaustive inventory of cultural values. There are numerous ways to characterize any culture and its core values. The values represented in the survey are selective, not in any sense comprehensive. The cross-sectional longitudinal design of the study also presents some hazards to the interpretability of the findings. An underlying assumption is that the passage of time is responsible for the changes observed, when in fact the passage of time is correlated with numerous events, any of which may contribute to the findings. Moreover, we did not follow a single group across time; rather, we compared two cross-sections across periods. The groups were comparable in many respects; however, the age difference indicates that the groups were similar but not perfectly matched across time periods. Finally, our study explored changes in students’ perceptions of cultural values without investigating the underlying causes responsible for these changes.

Findings must be interpreted cautiously with these limitations in mind. The limitations can also

be viewed as opportunities for further research on the topic of cultural values.

Opportunities for Further Research

It would be interesting to examine perceptions of a larger sample of non-business students, students from different regions, and students from Christian colleges in future studies. It would be interesting to compare the perceptions of business vs. non-business students and those of students at Christian vs. secular institutions. It should also be useful to measure the religious affiliation and commitment of respondents. Our study did not examine the relationship between perceptions of cultural values and religious involvement/commitment. We expect that ideological orientation and commitment to spiritual life should moderate perceptions of cultural values, but this remains an issue for future efforts. (Collaborative effort anyone?)

It should also be interesting to measure core values from two perspectives in a single study: the respondent's own personal values vs. his or her perception of the culture's values. This would provide an opportunity to explore

“perceptual gaps” and to assess how the congruity or incongruity of one's own values with those of the dominant culture shapes various aspects of social existence, such as business careers.

Importantly, positivistic research that describes and explains cultural values from various vantage points must be balanced with normative approaches that offer a biblical perspective on how we as Christian business educators should respond in both Christian and secular college settings. We would enthusiastically invite comment in this vein from our colleagues at other colleges and universities.

Concluding Comment

This study has attempted to provide a glimpse from the “trenches” of the late 20th century “culture wars.” It documents a view of shifting American cultural values from the perspective of future business leaders attending a large, secular university. We do not hold the findings to be statistically representative of any general population. Nevertheless, we believe they reflect a viewpoint worth noting and present ample evidence of formidable

challenges, as the culture continues to drift away from biblical values.

Jae Min Jung

Doctoral Candidate

James Kellaris

Associate Professor

Department of Marketing

University of Cincinnati

Cincinnati, OH 45221-0145

513-556-7100

FAX 513-556-4891

jungje@email.uc.edu

REFERENCES

- Belk, R.W. (1985). Materialism: Trait aspects of living in the material world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(3), 265-280.
- Colson, C., & Morse, A. (1997). *The burden of truth*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale.
- Hawkins, Del I., Best, Roger J., & Coney, Kenneth A. (2001). *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy*. New York, NY: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.
- Henderson, D.W., & Robinson, H.W. (1999). *Culture shift: Communicating God's truth to our changing world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Hofstede, G.H. (1985). The interaction between national and organizational value systems. *The Journal of Management Studies*, 22(4), 347-357.
- Gluckhohn, F.R., & Strodtbeck, F.L. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Knight, R.H., & Bauer, G.L. (1998). *The age of consent: The rise of relativism and the corruption of popular culture*. Spence Publishers.
- Logue, N. (1999, Fall). Student culture and Christian business programs in the 21st century: Accommodation or Transformation? *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 204-221.
- Munson, J.M., & McIntyre, S.H. (1979). Developing practical procedures for the measurement of personal values in cross-cultural marketing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16, 48-52.
- Nash, L.L. (1994). *Believers in business*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Schaeffer, F.A. (1983). *How should we then live: The rise and decline of Western thought and culture*. Good News Publications.
- Stackhouse, M.L., McCann, D.P., & Roels, S.J., with Williams, P.N. (Ed.). (1995). *On moral business: Classical and contemporary resources for ethics in economic life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Steenkamp, J-B.E.M., Hofstede, F., & Wedel, M. (1999). A cross-national investigation into the individual and national cultural antecedents of consumer innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(2), 55-69.



Dialogue II

Let Justice Flow Like a River: International Business and The Book of Amos

Alec Hill

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

Using real-life examples and the words of Amos, Hill addresses five issues of international business ethics and morality: belief in universal moral minimums, emphasis upon group accountability, insistence upon professional holiness, concern for the disenfranchised, and conviction that powerful economic interests must respect the integrity of political and legal systems.

*Only in special circumstances is it right to do in Rome
as the Romans do.*
—Norman Bowie

*Bread for myself is a material problem: bread for other people
is a spiritual problem.*
—Nikolay Berdyayev

*If the whole structure and organization of an economic system is
such as to compromise human dignity,
to lessen a man's sense of responsibility
or rob him of any opportunity for exercising personal initiative,
then such a system ... is altogether unjust—
no matter how much wealth it produces.*
—Pope John XXIII

*[You have violated a] treaty of brotherhood ...
you trample on the poor ... you ... take bribes ...
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!*
—Amos

At first glance, an attempt to link the Old Testament book of Amos with modern international business may seem quixotic. After all, the prophet lived in an agrarian society nearly three millennia ago. His nation's entire gross national product was probably worth less than the total assets of a single multinational corporation today. Deeper analysis, however, reveals that many of his themes are highly relevant to current global business practices.

Amos was not a member of the professional clergy, but rather a layman who engaged in horticulture, husbandry, and commerce. As such, he spoke with familiarity regarding the common issues of daily life. In addition, he was clearly well-versed in international affairs. A native of the southern nation of Judah after the division of Solomon's empire, he traveled north to deliver stinging rebukes to the kingdom of Israel and six surrounding nation-states. Prosperous, smug, and enjoying relative political strength vis-à-vis its neighbors, Israel was not responsive to his message. As one author notes, "The people saw that they were bigger and better than any nation around them."¹

Amos addresses five issues which pertain directly to the practice of international business today: belief in universal moral minimums, emphasis upon group accountability, insistence upon professional holiness, concern for the disenfranchised, and conviction that powerful economic interests must respect the integrity of political and legal systems.

1. Universal Moral Minimums Must Be Met

Double Standards

Drilling off the coast of Africa, a multinational oil company segregates its Western and Angolan workers. Whereas 30 of the Westerners live comfortably on the rig with gourmet food, baths, and a game room, 120 Angolans dwell on another floor in comparable space and are tacitly not permitted in the Westerners' quarters.

Medical attention also differs widely. If a Westerner loses a finger, a helicopter rushes him to a mainland medical facility. On the other hand, an Angolan worker with a similar malady has an amputation operation performed by a medic on the rig. Westerners wear red coveralls and Angolans gray. If a worker

*falls into the turbulent sea, the bright red is much easier to spot for a rescue. Angolan government officials periodically visit the rig, enjoy a first-class meal, and depart. Concerns about the disparity in living, working, and safety conditions have never been raised.*²

Cultural relativism posits that each social group defines its own moral code. What is morally “right” in one nation may be “wrong” in another. For instance, while it would be inappropriate for Americans to permit racial discrimination or disparate safety standards on an oil rig in the United States, such behavior might be acceptable in Angola. Needless to say, the theory provides great moral latitude for transnational corporations.

Amos is remarkably forthright in his rejection of such ethical relativism. Joining other Old Testament prophets—such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, and Obadiah—he teaches that all societies, not just the covenant people, are subject to universal moral minimums. Observes a theologian, “Amos is a universalist. He proclaimed Yahweh’s activities within the history of all nations ... He believed that these nations

should recognize God’s sovereign control over them.”³

In particular, Amos holds six Gentile countries—Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab—morally accountable. Rather than utilizing the covenant as the ethical baseline, he refers to several moral minimums such as common sense of morality, conscience, and international treaty rights below which no group should venture.⁴ As such, he charges non-covenantal peoples with violating basic human rights: “disregarding a treaty of brotherhood,” “stifling all compassion,” committing sins, exploiting others for economic gain, and perpetrating crimes against humanity.⁵

Suffice it to say, Amos would deem cultural relativism as an ethical paradigm to be clearly deficient. Any ideology that posits ultimate moral authority in cultural groups rather than in God is theologically abhorrent. As the ultimate judge of all peoples, the Lord is the final arbitrator of what is right and wrong. An attempt by the Syrians, for example, to defend brutality against neighbor states under the guise of custom would be summarily rejected.⁶ Yahweh, not Syrian mores, establishes moral standards. It is sufficient to say that Amos’

stirring cross-national moral comparisons would be an anathema to cultural relativists. His analysis of the Angolan oil rig case would commence with neither a review of Western or Angolan customs, but with the divine imperatives of equal treatment of the affluent and the poor. His belief in a common moral language would put him at loggerheads with those who rely solely upon cultural norms.

During the first half of the 20th century, cultural relativism garnered much support in Western philosophical circles. As it became more apparent, however, that the theory led to moral chaos, many voices—both religious and secular—began to call for the creation of a “common morality.” After the horrors of World War II, the desire to form an international canon governing shared values such as promise-keeping, respect for persons and property, avoiding harm to others, and providing mutual aid took on new impetus.⁷ In 1949, the United Nations issued its Declaration of Human Rights which enumerates universal rights guaranteed to the people of all nations. Echoing Amos’ call for a “covenant of brotherhood,” the Declaration speaks of the “spirit of

brotherhood.” Moral minimums include equal protection under the law, due process, non-discrimination, a minimal standard of living, and security in the event of unemployment.⁸ Recently, when nations such as China, Iran, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) challenged the notion of universal rights as a threat to their national sovereignty, America’s Secretary of State smartly retorted, “We cannot let cultural relativism become the last refuge of repression.”⁹

International business leaders have also attempted to develop a universal framework for conduct in the global marketplace. One such initiative is the Caux Round Table. Bringing together corporate leaders from Europe, North America, and Asia—including companies such as Siemens, the Chase Manhattan Bank, Canon, Matsushita, and 3M—the group has identified two overarching principles. First, all businesses must respect human dignity, and second, they should seek the common good. The Round Table’s mission statement reads: “Business can be a powerful agent of positive social change ... It has a role to play in improving the lives of customers, employees, and

shareholders ...”. In particular, business leaders are called to be truthful, keep promises, not condone bribery, compete fairly, improve employee living conditions, avoid discriminatory practices, take reasonable safety precautions, disclose all relevant information to investors, and respect intellectual property rights.¹⁰ Amos would no doubt applaud this list.

The Levi Strauss Company is a positive case in point. About a decade ago, the company developed “Global Source Guidelines” to define standards expected of suppliers, including specifications for maximum hours, prison labor, employee safety, environmental protection, and child labor.¹¹ When Levi auditors first visited suppliers’ plants, nearly half of the existing contracts were terminated. Among these was a Mariana Islands supplier who forced 1,200 Chinese and Filipino women to work 74 hours per week in a guarded compound.¹² A senior Levi vice president noted an unexpected side-benefit of the terminations: “This enabled us to focus more efficiently on our remaining supplier base.”¹³ Levi’s

guidelines have subsequently been adopted by Reebok, Sears, and Wal-Mart.¹⁴

It is important to note that when Amos deals with the people of Israel and Judah, the moral floor is raised. In other words, while all societies (and presumably all transnational corporations) are expected to meet universal ethical minimums, covenant people are held to a higher standard. This is particularly clear in Amos’ call to professional holiness, social justice, and compassion towards the poor, which are topics discussed below.

2. Groups Are Morally Accountable

Making a Killing in the Market

H.B. Fuller Company, based in Minnesota, manufactures adhesives, sealants, and coatings. The company has been criticized for marketing practices relating to two of its products sold in Latin America. First, it continued to sell lead-based paints south of the border as recently as 1995 even though they were banned in the United States in 1978 because of brain damage caused in children.

Amos’ oracles are replete with group accountability and God’s judgment.

*Second, its product Resistol, a shoe glue, has become the drug of choice for many street children in Central America. The result, irreversible harm to the brain, has led to a call to alter the product either by changing chemicals or by adding mustard gas to make sniffing an unpleasant experience. Despite pledges to act quickly, Fuller made no changes for more than four years.*¹⁵

Business ethicists are divided as to who bears moral responsibility when a corporation misbehaves. Who, for example, is culpable for the harm caused to Latin American children by H.B. Fuller products? The executive management team? Board of directors? Marketing division? Chemists? Shareholders? How far does such accountability spread in a large company where many employees have little, if any, knowledge about the details of work in other divisions? For example, should a part-time H.B. Fuller janitor be held morally responsible for harm caused to a Honduran?

Amos’ oracles are replete with group accountability and God’s judgment. Collective sins of various nation-states—ranging from war crimes to slave

trading—are categorically condemned. Punishments are also distributed collectively, particularly in the form of urban destruction and exile. Nations are addressed both as wrongdoers and as recipients of God’s wrath. The treatment of Tyre is typical:

*This is what the Lord says: “For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses.”*¹⁶

In addition, Amos holds individuals responsible for their actions. Kings, government officials, and judges bear particular scrutiny. For example, in his diatribe against Moab, Amos first recites the collective punishments—fire, destruction, and war—and then focuses upon the leadership: “I will destroy her ruler and kill all her officials with him,” says the Lord.¹⁷ Individuals are held fully accountable while serving as agents.

Ethicist Richard De George describes two divergent approaches to group moral responsibility.¹⁸ First, the

“Moralistic View” contends that groups—such as nations and companies—are morally responsible for their actions. Likewise, individuals who make unethical decisions are personally accountable. According to this view, moral culpability is held both collectively and distributively. By way of illustration, responsibility for the atrocities committed in World War II would be borne both by the entire German nation as well as by the individuals who carried them out. At first glance, Amos would clearly fit within this school of thought. The second perspective, the so-called “Organizational View,” posits that a corporation is not a moral being, but a mere legal fiction. As such, it is illogical to speak of the H.B. Fuller Company as acting morally or immorally. Corporations simply lack the capability to operate in the realm of ethics. Likewise, corporate employees are not morally accountable because they act as agents, not on their own behalf. So long as their acts are legal—and selling Resistol and lead-based paint in Latin America was certainly within the bounds of law—they should not be condemned. Rather, as agents, they should be praised for

increasing the company’s return on investment. For obvious reasons, Amos would reject this approach.

Jesuit ethicist Manuel Velasquez seeks middle ground between these two views. He argues that while individuals always have moral responsibility for their actions, it is a fiction to talk of corporate accountability. For example, when Union Carbide employees negligently permitted toxic gas to escape from their chemical plant in Bhopal, India, killing 2,000 and injuring another 200,000,¹⁹ Velasquez would not hold Union Carbide ethically responsible. It is simply not a moral being. Only those employees who were directly responsible for releasing the poison can be deemed culpable. Thus, while he would hold individual Nazis accountable for their atrocities, he would exculpate the German housewife who knew nothing of the death camps. Likewise, he would deem it erroneous to speak of collective German guilt. He concludes:

It is only by way of a convenient fiction that acts performed by others are conventionally attributed to the corporation ... It violates our moral principles to impose blame

*and punishment on those in whom a wrongful act did not originate.*²⁰

How would Amos react to Velasquez’ viewpoint? No doubt he would disagree with the notion that only individuals—and not groups—may be deemed morally culpable. As noted above, God’s judgments and the resultant punishments are collective in nature; no indication that nation-states should be regarded as “convenient fictions” is provided.

Though it would be easy to terminate the discussion at this point, two qualifications exist. First, there is a significant difference between moral and compensatory responsibility.²¹ By way of analogy, an abusive father bears his own sins, but the effects of his actions—public embarrassment and private fear—are borne by every family member. In a similar manner, while innocent shareholders and ignorant employees may not be morally responsible for immoral corporate behavior, they are still economically impacted by the fallout.

From this perspective, Amos could be interpreted to read that God’s judgment falls upon nations because of poor choices of their leaders. While moral culpability resides upon the elite,

the ill effects of their bad choices fall upon everyone in the group. For example, Union Carbide’s misbehavior led to lawsuits, bad publicity, governmental fines, falling stock prices, and layoffs. In this sense, everyone was held accountable. To say that someone has compensatory responsibility, however, is quite different from concluding that he or she has moral guilt.

Second, Amos introduces the concept of a “remnant.” In a rare note of hope, he points to a future time when God would return a segment of the Jewish exiles who would “call upon the name of the Lord” and have their land restored. While everyone would feel the effects of God’s judgment, some would return and prosper. In this way, Amos subtly segregates individuals from the group.²²

Using these two qualifications, it is possible to contend that Amos would not hold the H.B. Fuller janitor or the Union Carbide shareholders morally culpable for corporate actions. However, caution is urged on this point. The fact that it was common knowledge that H.B. Fuller continued to market its glue in Latin America without changing its odor raises the ethical bar. If the janitor knew or

should have known of the harm being caused, a stronger argument for personal moral responsibility exists. Granted, the relative powerlessness of the individual and the fact that all organizations are tainted by sin makes assignment of individual guilt imprecise at best. However, Amos' sense of group moral accountability must not be underestimated. By focusing upon the individual, Western ethics often miss the Eastern emphasis upon collective guilt. Clans, companies, and nations are viewed quite differently from this perspective.

3. Practice Professional Holiness

Killed by Conscience?

For five years, Eli Black was CEO of United Fruit, a large multinational corporation. He was also an ordained rabbi, the descendant of ten generations of rabbis. Among other things, he used his executive role to improve the lot of poor farm workers in Third World nations by raising their wages to nearly six times that of competitors and by significantly upgrading their housing. He was also highly regarded by his New York City staff as a kind and highly principled manager.

After initial success during his tenure as CEO, United Fruit experienced a series of unexpected problems. A major hurricane caused significant crop damage, and several Latin American nations sharply increased their banana taxes. Nevertheless, it came as a great shock when Eli Black jumped 44 floors to his death. A writer for "The Wall Street Journal" queried: "Can a sensitive person with high moral standards survive in an uncompromising financial world?"

Three days later, two senior vice presidents disclosed that Eli Black had approved a \$2.5 million bribe to a Latin American official in an attempt to reduce the banana tax. At the time, such payments were not illegal.²³

A cynic might ask if Eli Black would be alive today if he hadn't tried so hard to integrate his personal and professional lives. Rather than feeling guilty about having dual moral standards, the cynic contends, Black should have accepted the fact that the marketplace tolerates nasty choices such as the payment of bribes. Author Albert Carr goes so far as to pity religious employees who misguidedly attempt to bring their spiritual

values to work. Not only is such integration hopeless, Carr argues, but ultimately harmful to those who attempt to do so.²⁴

In a similar vein, oil baron John D. Rockefeller was taught at an early age to separate the personal and professional realms of his life. On the one hand, influenced by his devout Baptist mother, Rockefeller developed a strong personal religious ethic. He taught Sunday school and donated nearly half a billion dollars to a countless variety of worthy causes—

to missionaries in China, the University of Chicago, a retreat for migratory birds, and war victim relief. On the other hand, his shrewd father taught him to win at any cost in business, once boasting, "I cheat my boys every chance I get. I want to make them sharp."²⁵ His eldest son learned his lessons well. Ruthless in business, he gave kickbacks to railroads, violently suppressed labor unrest, and bribed competitors' employees to give him inside information.²⁶ He resolved this apparent contradiction by compartmentalizing his life into two separate spheres. As one author sarcastically observes, Rockefeller was a "conscientious Christian who struggled to end

the livelihood of his every rival."²⁷

Amos confronted similar attitudes in his day. On the one hand, members of Israel's business class were quite religious: they regularly attended temple services, tithed, made sacrifices faithfully, and diligently observed the Jewish festival calendar.²⁸ On the surface, they

This religiosity was only skin deep ... Their real love was profit, not piety.

appeared to be quite devout, faithful adherents of the Hebrew faith.

This religiosity was only skin deep, however, and had no real impact upon their business practices. Their priorities were clear: even during temple services, they focused not upon the Lord, but on their next business transaction. Amos mockingly portrays them as thinking, "When will ... the Sabbath be ended so that we may market wheat?"²⁹ Their real love was profit, not piety. Worse, they used false weights and measures, supplemented their legitimate products with useless fillers, and, like Rockefeller, mercilessly crushed their debtors. Contrary to

the Old Testament law which humanely required debtors' coats to be returned before nightfall, Israel's business class kept such necessities until all debts were paid. They even attended temple services wearing debtors' garments. In turn, they forced the poor into slavery over the smallest amounts owed—"they sell ... the needy for a pair of sandals."³⁰

Amos demands holiness in business practices—no cheating, no exploitation, no dual morality. God expresses his contempt and wrath for those who separate their religious and professional lives—"I hate, I despise your religious feasts ... I will not accept [your offerings]. ... Away with the noise of your songs!" Instead, God seeks those who "hate evil, [and] love good"³¹ in the rough and tumble of daily life in the marketplace. His desire is nicely summarized in one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s favorite passages: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"³²

As such, Amos would vehemently disagree with Albert Carr. A life which compartmentalizes faith into one category and the marketplace in another is inconsistent with God's purposes. Amos condemns such

ethical schizophrenia and calls for holy living in every aspect of life. The marketplace is not a "moral sanctuary,"³³ a place exempt from God's expectations. Rather, it is an environment in which the Lord places great significance. While the business leaders of Amos' day assumed that faithfulness to religious traditions was their chief obligation, he reversed the priority—without holiness in one's professional life, fellowship with the Lord is impossible. Notes one author, "God requires just and righteous living as a prerequisite of worship."³⁴

Amos would no doubt applaud modern companies such as AES Corporation, the world's largest privately owned electricity company, which attempts to apply a higher set of ethical norms to the marketplace. Observes AES Chairman Roger Sant:

*We want to debunk the idea that you could be a dirty rotten scoundrel in business and yet be a saint at home. We want to elevate people's behavior at work to a higher moral plane.*³⁵

In a similar vein, AES President and CEO Dennis Bakke strives to find a holistic unity in his personal and professional life. Notes Bakke, "The mission of the

company is to give glory to God by stewarding the resources of the world ... That's our calling."³⁶ So compelling is the leadership team's commitment to four core values—social responsibility trumps profit, integrity is never to be compromised, all stakeholders must be treated fairly, and the company should be a fun place to work—that the Security and Exchange Commission required AES to provide the following unusual disclaimer in its initial prospectus:

*If the company perceives a conflict between its values and profits, the company will adhere to its values even if it means a diminishment of profits or foregone opportunities.*³⁷

Amos' call to the integration of personal and business ethics is demonstrated in one of his visions. Near the end of his book, the prophet sees the Lord standing next to a wall with a plumb line.³⁸ The plumb line symbolizes God's covenantal expectations; the wall represents Israel's compliance with these expectations. Unfortunately, its wall is crooked and hence subject to destruction. Notes a commentator, "God's plumb line exposes the true state of his

people ... He is testing their moral character and faithfulness."³⁹ It is sufficient to say that the Lord is not pleased with those who practice dual morality. All of life—including behavior in the marketplace—will be judged. Holiness in business will be rewarded, and impure dealings will be sanctioned.

4. Be Sensitive to the Poor *Death for Sale*

*Tons of toxic wastes have been dumped by Western nations in western Africa. For example, five European ships recently unloaded highly dangerous wastes containing, among other things, PCBs. The workers were not told of the danger. Most wore thongs and shorts. For their work, they were paid \$2.50 a day. In a similar situation, the government of Guinea-Bissau agreed to bury 15 million tons of toxic waste from European pharmaceutical companies and tanneries. The payment of \$120 million was nearly the equivalent of the gross national product.*⁴⁰

Amos has no patience for those who take advantage of the disenfranchised: "you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land."⁴¹

One biblical scholar paraphrases Amos to say, “the powerful push them around, control their lives, determine how they will live, and deprive them of their rights.”⁴²

Wealth created by exploitation is thoroughly condemned. Many large homes had been constructed with funds acquired unethically through deception, usury, and corruption of the legal system. Amos warns, “You trample on the poor ... Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them ...

You oppress the righteous ...

you deprive the poor of justice ...”⁴³ Little ambiguity exists in his message: leaders are duty-bound to not harm the poor.

Though Amos’ main thrust is to condemn exploitation, he also attacks wasteful luxury in the face of great need. He chides upper-class women of Israel:

“I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,” declares the Lord. Hear this word, you cows of Bashan ... you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, “Bring us some

drinks!” The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: “The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.”⁴⁴

Bovines of the Bashan region were renowned for their girth.⁴⁵ In using this image, Amos points to the relative prosperity of the affluent in contrast to the poor, who could be purchased for a pair of shoes.⁴⁶ In this, Amos echoes fellow prophet Ezekiel, who noted that one of Judah’s major sins was being “overfed and

... Amos would be critical of international firms that impose avoidable harm on innocent third parties.

unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.”⁴⁷

It follows that the prophet would praise groups, such as pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co., that improve the lot of the poor. After investing millions of dollars developing the drug Mectizan, Merck scientists realized that the product’s best use was to prevent river-blindness. In Africa alone, 340,000 people had been blinded by the disease and another 85 million were at risk. In some

villages, the majority of adults over the age of 45 were without sight. Merck faced a moral dilemma: while the potential users lacked sufficient funds to make the purchase, the need was great. The company continued to test Mectizan and eventually gave it away free to health organizations. This unprecedented generosity has been met with universal acclaim.⁴⁸

Likewise, Amos would be pleased by the values of the Freeplay Group, a South African company that manufactures self-powered radios. Rather than relying on traditional energy sources such as electricity and batteries, Freeplay’s radios utilize a hand-crank to wind an internal generator. A half-minute of winding produces up to an hour of playing time. While the company markets its radio to First World markets at full price, it has set up a foundation to distribute them at cost in rural Third World areas. Many villages have no reliable source of electricity, and reliable batteries are not available. In addition, Freeplay has established partnerships with Third World radio stations to provide educational programming. Quips the company’s CEO, “I’m no great humanitarian. I suppose I’m an

accountant with a vision.” Freeplay’s supporters include Jimmy Carter and Nelson Mandela.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Amos would be critical of international firms that impose avoidable harm on innocent third parties.⁵⁰ He certainly would not countenance the callous disregard for human life in the dumping of toxic wastes in Africa. At minimum, warnings should have been provided to the workers and adequate storage facilities provided. The rights of Africans to safe living and working environments were clearly violated. Return on investment and “legality” are not the only issues involved. All stakeholders, especially the poor, must be included in the decision-making calculus. Laments Kenya’s minister of the environment:

There is no question that the industrial nations and the companies which are manufacturing these things are guilty of promoting and sponsoring dangerous chemicals in countries where they think people don’t care.⁵¹

Likewise, Amos would be displeased with the continued

distribution of the painkiller Dipyron in Mexico, which found its way into Mexico for 14 years after it had been banned in the United States because of its scientifically documented impact in causing a fatal blood disorder.⁵² Nor would Amos approve of the apathy demonstrated by Western toy manufacturers towards their suppliers' overcrowded Asian sweatshops. A recent fire in Bangkok resulted in nearly 200 deaths—the worst industrial fire in history. Simple safety precautions such as providing fire extinguishers and cleared safety exits were not taken. Several large Western companies—including Toys “R” Us, J.C. Penney, Fisher-Price, Hasbro, and Gund—had their toys fabricated at the factory. Had they followed Levi Strauss' example in hiring auditors to enforce even minimal safety standards, the outcome would have been quite different.⁵³ Or consider Nike, which, as of 1996, contracted with Indonesian suppliers that did not enforce child labor laws and forbade workers to organize. One author wryly speculates that Michael Jordan receives more income per year for endorsing Nike shoes than all the Indonesian workers earn collectively for making them.⁵⁴

Of course, in an imperfect world the range of abuses fits on a wide spectrum. Where exactly should the line be drawn? Take, for example, Unocal's decision to contract with the Myanmar government to help build a \$1 billion pipeline across the nation. Critics of the deal allege that the project will provide cash to prop up a corrupt and brutal regime, displace several ethnic groups, and destroy a large rain forest. Unocal, on the other hand, points to the economic benefits the project will generate for the nation and the moral leverage it will have with the government.⁵⁵

Amos would no doubt have several questions. How significant are the risks to the poor? Are revenues from the pipeline likely to be used to improve public health or to line bureaucrats' pockets? What is the likelihood that the regime will use the revenue stream to purchase more weaponry to suppress its own people? Has Unocal factored the poor into its decision-making calculus? In other words, the prophet would insist upon consideration of their rights, needs, and aspirations.

5. Powerful Economic Interests Should Facilitate the Integrity

of Political and Legal Systems *Dialing for Dollars*

When Kenya became an independent nation in 1963, it was regarded as Africa's shining economic star. One of the first American companies to invest was Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. Over the years, however, governmental corruption has begun to take its toll. Special “licenses” became the norm and “contributions” to public causes such as education were required. In practice, these funds were rarely accounted for and went into the private bank accounts of Kenyan politicians.

One Western banker observes, “I don't know of any American businessman here who isn't completely demoralized.” Notes an economist, “Corruption may have reached a critical mass ...”. Firestone has followed the lead of other companies by cutting its ownership share to 19 percent. Many others have simply left the country. International investment has dropped from \$6 to \$1 billion over the past two decades.⁵⁶

Paying bribes to influence government officials is certainly nothing new. Amos pulls no punches in his condemnation of the corruption of his day:

“You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. ... Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.”⁵⁷ Judges in Israel perverted the impartiality of the judicial system by awarding judgment to the highest bidder. Business leaders were among those paying bribes. As one commentator observes, “The wealthy made a concerted effort to control and manipulate the legal process to the advantage of social interests instead of justice.”⁵⁸

Bribery is dangerous to a society not only because it stacks the deck against the disenfranchised, but, as in Kenya, it also destroys incentives to compete on quality and price, undermines market predictability, and corrupts the political process. In a recent “Corruption Index,” nations ranked as among the worst in business ethics—Nigeria, Pakistan, Kenya, Bangladesh, and Russia—are also among the poorest countries in the world. This comes as no surprise: investment, both internal and foreign, dries up in the face of official corruption.⁵⁹ As one author notes, “The best foreign assistance which developed nations can provide ... is the

systematic refusal to engage in bribery or to yield to extortion.”⁶⁰

Vietnam provides another negative example. While economic growth has been rapid in recent years, long-term prospects are questionable. An overly complex taxation system—14 different rates on import duties and 16 on turnover taxes—opens the door for bureaucratic graft. Bribery is rampant. Local officials regularly ask up to 15 percent for “quick processing” and “favorable treatment.” Obtaining business licenses can take up to two years, and political channels are often the only mode of appealing adverse decisions.⁶¹ Such practices could greatly stunt Vietnam’s vast potential.

Bribery is prohibited by virtually every nation.⁶² However, only a few nations—including the United States—prohibit their companies from making under the table payments overseas. Several American firms, such as General Dynamics and Motorola, have developed ethical codes which aspire not only to meet the laws of the host nation and the United States, but to operate with full integrity in all settings.⁶³ Amos would laud such corporate codes for being consistent with a universal moral minimum.

Dealing in nations where bribery is common requires what one author calls “moral imagination.” Coca-Cola, for example, turned down repeated requests by Egyptian officials for secret payments. Instead, the company sponsored a tree planting program in Cairo and in the process earned sufficient political capital to be exempted from mid-level bureaucratic pressures.⁶⁴ It is important to note that Coca-Cola retained control of the program funds, enabling it to avoid a situation similar to the vague “contributions” formula practiced by public officials in Kenya.

Conclusion

The prophet Amos serves as an important voice in articulating the biblical call to social justice. For nations outside the Hebraic covenant, he sets a moral minimum below which no group or individual should venture. For those under the covenant, the minimum is raised—mere avoidance of harm to others is insufficient. An affirmative duty exists to live holy lives and to regard the disenfranchised as significant stakeholders in any decision. As such, Amos’ message is highly relevant in today’s global marketplace.

Alec Hill
InterVarsity Christian
Fellowship/USA
6400 Schroeder Road
P.O. Box 7895
Madison, WI 53707-7895
608-274-9001
FAX 608-274-7882
info@ivcf.org

ENDNOTES

- ¹Gary Smith, *Amos: A commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), p. 212.
- ²Ronald Green, *The ethical manager* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 293-295.
- ³Max Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1989), pp. 61-64.
- ⁴Thomas Finley, *The Wycliffe exegetical commentary on Joel, Amos and Obadiah* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), pp. 133-124.
- ⁵Amos 1:3, 6, 9 & 13. All citations from the *New International Version of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985).
- ⁶David Hubbard, *Tyndale Old Testament commentaries: Joel and Amos* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), p. 128.
- ⁷Max Stackhouse, Dennis McCann, Shirley Roels, and Preston Williams, *On moral business* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 767.
- ⁸T. Donaldson and P. Werhane, p. 76.
- ⁹Charles Krauthammer, Why please world’s thugs with second-tier rights? *The Seattle Times*, June 21, 1993, p. A18.
- ¹⁰Charlene Solomon, Putting your ethics to a global test, *Personnel Journal*, January 1996, pp. 66-74. Joe Skelly, The rise of international ethics, *Business Ethics*, March/April 1995, pp. 2-5.
- ¹¹C. Solomon, p. 159.
- ¹²T. Donaldson, p. 54.
- ¹³S. Black, Ante up, *Bobbin* (September 1996).
- ¹⁴David Bollier, *Aiming higher* (New York: AMACOM, 1997), p. 348.
- ¹⁵S. Malamud, H.B. Fuller: A different record home and abroad, *Business and Society Review*, Number 96, 1996, pp. 51-52 and T. Donaldson and P. Werhane, p. 24.
- ¹⁶Amos 1:9-11.

- ¹⁷Amos 2:3.
- ¹⁸R. De George, Can corporations have moral responsibility? *University of Dayton Review*, Vol. 5, Winter 1981-82, pp. 3-15.
- ¹⁹Joseph Desjardins and John McCall, *Contemporary issues in business ethics* (Bonn: Wadsworth Publishing Co.), pp. 537-538.
- ²⁰Manuel Velasquez, Why corporations are not morally responsible for anything they do, *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, Spring 1983, pp. 1-4, 6-17.
- ²¹Velasquez, p. 14.
- ²²G. Smith, p. 274.
- ²³Oliver Williams and John Houck, *Full value: Cases in Christian business ethics* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 141-146.
- ²⁴A. Carr, Is business bluffing ethical? *Harvard Business Review*, January 1968, p. 143.
- ²⁵G. Steiner, op. cit., 27.
- ²⁶Ida Tarbell, *The history of the Standard Oil Company, Vol., 1*, (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963, original in 1904), p. 99.
- ²⁷G. Steiner, op. cit., 333.
- ²⁸Amos 2:6-8, 4:4, 5:21-24.
- ²⁹Amos 8:4-5.
- ³⁰Amos 2:6-8.
- ³¹Amos 5:15.
- ³²Amos 5:24.
- ³³Albert Konrad, Business managers and moral sanctuaries, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Volume 1, 1982, pp. 195-200.
- ³⁴G. Smith, p. 187.
- ³⁵Phyllis Berman, *Throwing away the book*, Forbes Web site (www.forbes.com.html).
- ³⁶Ibid.
- ³⁷Ibid.
- ³⁸Amos 7:7-9.
- ³⁹Smith, pp. 234-235.
- ⁴⁰P. Werhane and T. Donaldson, p. 62.
- ⁴¹Amos 8:4.
- ⁴²G. Smith, p. 84.
- ⁴³Amos 5:11-12.
- ⁴⁴Amos 3:15-4:2.
- ⁴⁵Doug Stuart, *Word biblical commentary, Volume 31, Hosea-Jonah* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), p. 332.
- ⁴⁶Amos 2:6.
- ⁴⁷Ezekiel 16:49.
- ⁴⁸D. Bollier, p. 280.
- ⁴⁹C. Dahle, Industry that can improve people’s lives, *Fast Company*, April 1999, pp. 168-176.
- ⁵⁰Norman Bowie, The moral obligations of multinational corporations, *Problems of International Justice* (1988).

⁵¹John Matthews, Kenneth Goodpaster, and Laura Nash, *Policies and persons: A casebook in business ethics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1991), p. 554.

⁵²Christopher Scanian, Trade of toxic products abroad is a windfall for U.S. companies, *Seattle Times*, June 5, 1991, p. A2.

⁵³B. Herbert, U.S. bears responsibility for industrial exploitation, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, December 29, 1994, p. A13.

⁵⁴Gerald Cavanagh, *American business values with international perspectives* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 18.

⁵⁵Scott Rae and Kenman Wong, *Beyond integrity: A Judeo-Christian approach to business ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), p. 106.

⁵⁶UPI, Kenya corruption overwhelms investors, *Los Angeles Times*, 1992.

⁵⁷Amos 5:12, 15.

⁵⁸G. Smith, p. 167.

⁵⁹C. Kurtis, World full of trouble, *International Business* (July 1997), pp. 12-18.

⁶⁰R. Green, p. 304.

⁶¹Alec Hill, Vietnam offers opportunity, but not for the faint of heart, *Puget Sound Business Journal* (May 26, 1995), p. 17.

⁶²S. Rae and K. Wong, p. 94.

⁶³Linda Trevino and Katherine Nelson, *Managing business ethics* (New York, NY: Wiley & Sons, 1995), p. 275.

⁶⁴T. Donaldson, p. 62.



Dialogue II

International Business and Social Justice: A Response to Hill

Brian E. Porter
Hope College

Alec Hill's "Let Justice Flow Like a River: International Business and The Book of Amos" is an excellent contribution that challenges businesspeople to improve the standards in which international business is conducted. Hill uses the book of Amos as a foundation for five principles: 1) universal moral minimums must be met (i.e., reject cultural relativism), 2) groups are morally accountable (i.e., guilt by association), 3) practice professional holiness (i.e., the same moral code should exist for both business and personal actions), 4) be sensitive to the poor, and 5) powerful economic interests should facilitate the integrity of political and legal systems (e.g., bribery should be avoided).

Hill is straightforward in his writing, and his propositions seem biblically on target relative to other Scripture. As Chewing wisely exhorts, one should properly interpret Scripture by

"allowing the Bible to speak for the Bible."¹ That is, "We should examine the meaning of a particular passage of Scripture in the light of all the other passages of Scripture that speak to the same subject," and "Whenever possible, bring at least three passages of Scripture to bear on any pronouncement of truth in the areas involving faith and learning."² Though Hill primarily references the book of Amos in his writing, he could have easily referenced other books of the Bible. There are at least two other passages of Scripture, other than those found in the book of Amos, that support each of Hill's five principles. Given that a common element of Hill's five principles is social justice, numerous passages of the gospels permeating with the teaching of love³ are applicable.

It is appreciated that several of Hill's examples pertaining to international commerce indicate how organizations have fallen

short on the five principles. One can often learn a great deal from another's shortcomings. Hill's examples are pointed and penetrate the reader's consciousness. For example, Hill's reporting about workers on Angolan oil rigs, where double standards are shamefully practiced, is disturbing and convicting. Unfortunately, the injustice that Hill describes is common. Many commodities other than oil are obtained unethically in international commerce. Hill could have just as easily written of cocoa and coffee beans, both often harvested by child slave labor,⁴ or diamonds, which are routinely delivered to developed countries through a supply chain involving international criminality, including the amputation of hands,⁵ or gold, where the policies of at least one mining conglomerate encourage workers to travail in impoverished conditions and separate from their families for months at a time.⁶

At least two aspects of Hill's paper are worthy of further attention. First, though surely not the author's intention, the tone of the paper may be construed as ethnocentric. That is, one might deduce from the paper that the business practices of North

America, in particular those practiced in the United States, are a benchmark for ethicality and result in greater social justice. Second, Hill's use of bribery in developing countries as a primary example of unethical behavior may in itself indicate the difficulty of completely separating oneself of the biases of cultural relativism and parochialism.

The U.S. Should Emulate Others

Four of Hill's examples (for his five principles) directly or indirectly imply that ethical standards in the United States are superior to those of the comparison country. *American oil rig workers are treated better than Angolan workers. Lead based paints are legal in Latin America, though illegal in the United States since 1978. A United States executive is driven to suicide due to unethical Latin American business practices. American businessmen are completely demoralized by the corruption in Kenya.*

The truth is, the United States is far from exemplary. Many statistics that rank countries pertaining to justice place the United States in an unenviable position. The United Nations'

State of the World Report lists the United States as the richest country on Earth (based on GDP per person), yet the country with the highest poverty level among major industrial nations (ranked 17th).⁷ Relative to life expectancy or infant mortality, the United States ranks 25th, behind almost all rich countries and a few poor ones.⁸ For the richest and most powerful country in the world's history, and the one for which Christianity has the greatest influence (two out of every three American adults report making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and about 85 percent call themselves Christian), these statistics are distressing.⁹

Granted, business is not the sole contributor to these discouraging facts, nor is it the total solution. However, it would appear that businesses in countries other than the United States are better implementing certain aspects of Hill's five moral principles. Businesspeople of the United States should humbly be the student of other countries, not always the instructor, of how to conduct business justly.

One possibility is to emulate Japan in helping to narrow the economic divide that currently exists and continues to grow.

In the United States between 1979 and 1997, the average income of the richest fifth of the population increased from being nine times the income of the poorest fifth to around 15 times their income.¹⁰ Just as we have benchmarked Japan's expertise in the past (e.g., TQM and JIT), we should do the same for executive compensation. The consequences could potentially improve the plight of many living in the United States. Bezruchka argues that one reason the Japanese have the highest life expectancy in the world (3.5 years greater than the U.S.) is because Japanese CEOs make only 15 to 20 times what entry-level workers make, not the almost 500-fold difference that exists in the United States.¹¹

An absurd executive compensation system that contributes to a growing chasm between the have and have-nots is but one aspect of business in the United States that may be considered unjust by people of other countries. Europeans are often dumbfounded at the lack of basic benefits provided to employees in the United States. In Europe, employees typically receive six weeks annual vacation, full health care, extensive paid maternity and paternity leave, affordable and

quality day-care, free early childhood education, inexpensive higher education, and work weeks of less than 40 hours to allow more time with one's family. These are but a few of the benefits that most Europeans consider basic rights and yet are virtually nonexistent in the United States.

Bribery in the United States

Ironically, the examples that Hill uses to support his fifth principle, *powerful economic interests should facilitate the integrity of political and legal systems*, may implicate Hill of violating his first principle. Hill denounces bribery in developing countries (e.g., Nigeria, Pakistan, Kenya, Bangladesh, and Russia), writing that it is "dangerous to society" and that it "stacks the deck against the disenfranchised." Hill's accusation is not new. Bribery has long been a contentious issue when dealing with certain lesser-developed countries, and most businesspeople in the United States would concur with Hill that it is an unethical means to conduct business.

However, Hill fails to realize, or at least mention, that indirect bribery is rampant in the United States in the form of lobbies,

campaign contributions, and political action committees. AT&T alone made political contributions of \$2.12 million in 1998.¹² In the United States, the deck is also stacked against the disenfranchised and is dealt in favor of large organizations. For the most part, powerful economic interests are violating Hill's fifth principle. Rather than facilitating the integrity of the political and legal systems, powerful economic interests routinely navigate and pervert these systems to their advantage. Is it possible that, in God's eyes, the sophisticated bribery practiced in the United States is more sinful than the direct bribery practiced in some other countries?

When Hill condemns direct bribery in developing countries, yet fails to recognize the veiled bribery in the United States, it may be due to a cultural relativism or parochial paradigm. As Christ instructed on at least two occasions, it is much easier to see faults in others rather than in oneself.¹³

Final Thought

This brief response is not meant to undermine the important contribution made by Hill's paper. On the contrary, Hill should be lauded in that his paper does not

rationalize or excuse the current state of business. He accurately observes that Christian businesspeople are not promoting social justice sufficiently, are accountable, and should do better. Rather, this response is meant to strengthen Hill's exhortation and notch the bar even higher for Christian businesspeople so that, though justice will unfortunately never flow like a river, it can at least trickle a little stronger.

Brian E. Porter

Associate Professor, Department
of Economics and Business
Hope College
Holland, MI 49422-9000
FAX 616-395-7490
porter@hope.edu

ENDNOTES

¹Chewning, R.C., Biblical orthodoxy requires the S.N.A.P. of Scripture. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, Fall 1998, pp. 78-93.

²Ibid.

³For example, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).

⁴Slave labor taints chocolate industry, *Holland Sentinel*, June 24, 2001, p. A11.

⁵Report of the United Nations Sierra Leone Sanctions Committee Expert Panel, December 2000.

⁶Schoofs, M., African gold giant finds history impedes a fight against AIDS, *The Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2001, p. A1.

⁷U.N. among its peers, U.S. posts highest poverty level, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 9, 1998, p. A6.

⁸Bezruchka, S., M.D., Is our society making you sick? *Newsweek*, February 26, 2001, p. 14.

⁹Prothero, S., Bookshelf: Church spires and minarets. *The Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2001, p. A16.

¹⁰Does inequality matter? *The Economist*, June 16, 2001, p. 9.

¹¹Bezruchka, p. 14.

¹²Peddling influence, *Cable World 12*, No. 4, January 24, 2000.

¹³Matthew 7:3-5 and Luke 18:9-14.



Dialogue III

Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business¹

Kent W. Seibert
Wheaton College

Seibert highlights the positives and negatives of organizational socialization in business and looks to Daniel for biblical responses. He then presents the implications of these biblical principles for Christians.

Clearly to fit into the corporate world, many people have to submerge at least some of their values. Those who can't get "in alignment," as senior managers are wont to say, end up calling themselves "entrepreneurs," "consultants," or just plain "unemployed."

This quote, appearing in *The Wall Street Journal* (Lancaster, 1997), illustrates the kind of pressure to conform to corporate life that people in the business world face. This pressure is especially strong on company newcomers as the organization works to transform "outsiders" into "insiders" through the process of socialization. The pressures to conform are intensified when the newcomer is young and

inexperienced. Recent college graduates embarking on their first full-time professional jobs are a prime example. The purpose here is to discuss a biblical response to organizational socialization in the marketplace. In particular, attention will be given to the recent Christian college graduate who is about to begin a business career. The primary question of interest is, how does this person maintain his or her identity and values as a Christian when they collide with the socialization pressures of a secular business organization?

This paper is organized as follows: After introducing the socialization challenge faced by new graduates, the literature on organizational socialization in business will be briefly summarized. Positive and

negative aspects of socialization will be highlighted. This will be followed by the core of the paper—a discussion of scriptural principles for maintaining one's identity and values in the face of organizational socialization pressures. These principles will be derived from Scripture and then illustrated by the life of Daniel. Finally, the implications of these principles for Christians will be explored.

Presumably most Christian business graduates are seriously committed to living their faith in all areas of their life, including their professional lives in the marketplace. But the reality is that their ideals will be severely challenged by the socialization processes of most businesses. At a superficial level, graduates are aware that this will happen. They realize their faith will be tested in the "real world." Based on my experience with graduating seniors and recent alumni, few, however, appreciate the tremendous strength and subtlety of the forces they will face. Many appear to be woefully unprepared for this.

Organizations do not overtly announce that newcomers will be "socialized." They *do* talk about things like probationary periods, orientation, and training, but the

powerful socialization processes embedded in these activities are left unstated. Indeed, some employees undergo these experiences unaware that they are being socialized (Schein & Ott, 1962). Being influenced yet being unaware that one is being influenced is the most insidious form of power that can be exercised over a person (Lukes, 1974). With maturity and experience can come awareness, but that is no guarantee against conformity. Even executives admit that they struggle with this. Nash (1994, p. 262) quotes one of the participants in her study of evangelical CEOs:

Max De Pree was keenly aware of the subtlety of the co-option process that his ability to be successful in business unwillingly invited: "One of the problems of going from being Christian to being in a secular context is there is a reasonable temptation to adopt a secular standard. It happens without thinking about it. Unless somebody articulates something different, you are going to adopt a secular standard without even thinking about it."

If it is tough at the top of a company, it is even harder at the

bottom. Consider what new graduates experience when they join Accenture,² a leader in the consulting industry who recruits extensively from colleges. Groups of new hires receive a minimum of eight hours of training each day for their first six weeks. A glossy recruiting brochure exclaims, “We typically reinvest approximately \$200 million per year on training” and invites the recruit, “You are here. At the beginning. Where the future is what you make it.” This intensive orientation and training is designed not just to teach job skills, but also to *socialize* the newcomer into the Accenture way of thinking and behaving.

Smaller firms usually have shorter and more informal socialization experiences than Accenture; however, *every* company, for reasons that will be described below, socializes its newcomers.³ Faced with socialization pressures that will attempt to transmit secular business values to newcomers, Christian graduates need more specific direction than the standard advice to be “in the world but not of it.”⁴ They need increased awareness of the underlying dynamics of organizational socialization processes, and they

need specific strategies for handling socialization pressures in ways that enable them to maintain their mission of impacting the marketplace for Christ.

Scholarly Literature on Organizational Socialization

Van Maanen (1978, p. 19) defines organizational socialization as “The structuring of the experiences of an individual-in-transition by others in an organization in order to direct and control the individual’s behavior.” Through it an organization seeks to inculcate new members with the values, expected behavior, and social knowledge required for assuming an organizational role (Louis, 1980).

New employees are potentially most likely to disturb the existing beliefs and customs of an organization because they are the least familiar with them (Hebden, 1986; Jones, 1986), hence the need for the company to engage in “people processing” (Van Maanen, 1978) in order to help newcomers “learn the ropes” of the organization (Van Maanen, 1982). Newcomers are initially viewed with some suspicion by the organization as being “outsiders.” Will they fit in? Will they be able to adapt to

become one of us? It is only when newcomers learn the organization’s accepted ways of thinking and acting that existing organizational members accept them as “insiders” and thus legitimate members of the organization (Jones, 1983).

The great strength of collective human action is that it enables people to accomplish more than they could ever accomplish working alone. A major weakness, however, is the accompanying loss of individuality. Argyris (1957) some time ago documented the way the structure and culture of formal organizations tend to stifle individuality and initiative and produce passivity and dependence in individuals. At about the same time, Whyte (1956) wrote his classic book *The Organization Man*, from which the term “company man” was derived. Whyte bemoaned the conformity that was commonplace among members of large organizations. Such conformity thrives in organizations to this day, with socialization processes being a primary cause.

The power of organizational socialization to create the individual in its image cannot be underestimated. Van Maanen & Schein (1979, p. 231) describe it

this way: “Like a sculptor’s mold, certain forms of socialization can produce remarkably similar outcomes no matter what individual ingredients are used to fill the mold.” In extreme cases, employees can even become “cultured.” Some firms exert such strong controlling influence on their employees that they demonstrate characteristics of cults (Arnott, 2000).

Research indicates that socialization has its greatest impact when people first join an organization (Van Maanen, 1982) and when they are at the early stages of their career (Morrison & Hock, 1986; Schein, 1978). Someone who is brand new to a particular organizational setting typically is cautious and experimental in the personal values he or she expresses (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In contrast, people who have been members of the organization for some time feel more comfortable being more independent in their value expression. Of course, by then the person is so much a part of an organization that his or her values have already been significantly shaped by the organization.

As it has been described so far, some might conclude that socialization is an inherently

malevolent phenomenon, stripping people of their individuality and, for Christians, threatening their core values. Such a conclusion would be in error. Although there is a real danger that socialization can have harmful effects, a certain amount of socialization is necessary if people are to work collaboratively in organizational settings.

From an organization's perspective, socialization is an important means for getting diverse individuals to work together. However, it also has important functional qualities even for the individual. Socialization helps facilitate the newcomer's adjustment to a new and unfamiliar setting. Research demonstrates that organizational socialization reduces newcomers' uncertainty and anxiety and clarifies expectations (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). It helps smooth the transition from outsider to insider.

Socialization is thus a necessary fact of organizational life. It also is something that can be done in ways that actually promote values consistent with Christianity. The ServiceMaster company provides an example of this. Although the company is a secular business, it strives to operate according to Christian

values. The company is also deeply committed to educating and developing its employees. It deliberately socializes its new employees, but that socialization is based on the biblical principles of servanthood, integrity, and honor to God (Pollard, 1996). ServiceMaster demonstrates that *what people are being socialized to become* is an important criterion for evaluating any particular socialization process.

Another crucial aspect of organizational socialization is the issue of specifically how organizations go about the socialization process. What is now considered a landmark study of organizational socialization practices by Van Maanen & Schein (1979) resulted in a typology of socialization practices. According to the typology, organizational socialization practices vary along six dimensions: Collective vs. Individual, Formal vs. Informal, Sequential vs. Random, Fixed vs. Variable, Serial vs. Disjunctive, and Divestiture vs. Investiture. These are defined in Table 1.

Jones (1986) contends that, when taken together, the first socialization strategy in each pair of Van Maanen & Schein's typology produces an *institutional* orientation in newcomers,

Six Dimensions of Organizational Socialization Practices (from Van Maanen & Schein, 1979)

Collective vs. Individual – The degree to which individuals are socialized alone or as members of a group. Group processing provides more powerful socialization.

Formal vs. Informal – The degree to which the setting for socialization is segregated from the normal work context and the degree to which a person's role as a recruit is overtly publicized.

Sequential vs. Random – Whether socialization occurs through a series of pre-established, identifiable stages or with no set sequence being followed.

Fixed vs. Variable – The degree to which newcomers possess knowledge of the transition timetable for socialization and whether or not they all move according to the same timetable.

Serial vs. Disjunctive – The degree to which experienced organizational members personally groom those newcomers who will assume similar roles.

Divestiture vs. Investiture – The degree to which the socialization is set up to either dismantle or confirm the *incoming* identity of the individual.

whereas the second strategy produces a more *individualized* orientation. The institutional orientation encourages obedience and conformity, with the result that newcomers assume existing organizational roles in the way they are presented to them by the organization. In contrast, an

individual orientation encompasses greater latitude for individuality and for shaping one's own role in the organization. Microsoft is an example of a company whose socialization produces more of an individual orientation in newcomers (George & Jones,

1996). That is not to say that a noticeable amount of conformity is still not demanded; no doubt a “Microsoft way” of behaving exists. It simply means that a greater value is placed on individual creativity in the expression of organizational roles.

In contrast to Microsoft is Accenture (described earlier). Its socialization is clearly designed to produce an institutional orientation. Newcomers are processed as a group (Collective) at the company’s corporate training facility (Formal). All recent college graduates are subjected to the same six-week training program (Fixed; Sequential). Existing employees play a key role in the training, impressing upon newcomers what will be expected of them on the job (Serial). Lastly, there is an emphasis in the training on remaking the newcomer’s identity in the Accenture image as opposed to reinforcing the identity he has brought into the firm (Divestiture). This institutional approach is a highly effective way to indoctrinate newcomers into the Accenture way of doing things.

An important empirical investigation by Ashforth & Saks

(1996) examined the effect of socialization strategies on business college graduates of the 1990s. Their research again demonstrates the pervasive impact of organizational socialization on newcomers. They found the institutional socialization strategy to be associated with lower amounts of role innovation. This strategy induced newcomers to conform to established goals and methods and thus maintain the status quo of the firm. It also led to higher amounts of “organizational identification.” Organizational identification refers to the extent to which an individual defines herself in terms of her organization. Thus, institutional socialization induces newcomers to define themselves in terms of their organizational membership, binding their self-concept with the identity of their firm.

An important yet potentially troubling contribution of Ashforth & Saks’ research is the discovery that socialization impacts not just role performance but also the very core of a person. They found that institutional socialization was positively related to “person change.” It encourages newcomers to internalize and accommodate to organizational norms, provoking changes in

attitudes, beliefs, and even personality. Prior research assumed socialization stopped short of affecting stable personal characteristics like fundamental beliefs and personality. Ashforth & Saks found that even these things were susceptible to certain types of socialization.

A Biblical Response to Organizational Socialization

What can we learn from Scripture about this important issue? An inductive approach will be taken here by starting in Scripture and then moving to general principles of business (Johnson, 1996). The analysis will begin in the New Testament and then move to an illustration from the Old Testament.

The New Testament and Organizational Socialization

We should not be surprised that the New Testament does not directly address “organizational socialization,” since this concept is a construction of modern social science. Scripture does, however, directly address the more basic issue of conformity to the world. This is a core theme throughout the Bible and one that has been the subject of much writing, both theological (e.g., Niebuhr, 1951) and practical

(e.g., Kraybill, 1978). It is clear that Scripture calls believers to resist conformity to the world (e.g., Rom. 12:2). The socialization that occurs in a secular business firm can be considered one specific form of conformity to the world since it involves molding employees into an image that is desired by a secular organization.

A danger of worldliness is that it can lead to unfruitfulness (Matt. 13:22). The primary purpose of believers is to glorify God, and this occurs when they function as salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus teaches that salt and light need to maintain their basic character and purpose in order to be useful. But how does salt keep its saltiness and light shine unobstructed? The Bible provides a two-fold answer: the believer is to simultaneously resist the world and submit to God. A worldly life is repeatedly contrasted with a process of spiritual transformation or sanctification (e.g., Rom. 12:1-2; John 17:17). If secular socialization pressures are one way the world seeks to influence believers, then resisting worldly pressures and pursuing spiritual growth are the appropriate response.

Examining two of the passages that most explicitly address the issue of the believer's relationship to the world provides further insight into this issue. Romans 12 begins by encouraging believers to sacrifice their personal interests for those of God through the process of sanctification (v. 1). Paul continues: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (v. 2a, NLT). The first half of the verse refers to external behavior; the believer is called to *not* conform to the ways of the current age. The Phillips translation is: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold." But it is not enough just to resist the world; believers must also move toward Christlikeness.

The second half of the verse involves the believer's mind. The believer's thinking or mind (*noos* in the Greek)—the control center of a person's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Witmer, 1983)—is to be changed or transformed. "Transformed" (*metamorphousthe* in the Greek) is in the present passive imperative in the original text, indicating that the transformation is an ongoing process (Witmer,

1983). Just as worldly influence is ongoing, so must be a believer's spiritual transformation. But whereas the world works on a person from the outside-in, the Christian's transformation is to be from the inside-out (which is also implied in the meaning of *metamorphousthe*).

The contrast between the external influence of the world and the inner transformation of the believer is also presented in John 17. This passage is more specific about how to not conform to the world while at the same time becoming sanctified. Jesus is praying at the end of his ministry for his disciples and for the believers who will succeed them. Verses 14-21 are especially relevant to our discussion. Jesus indicates that believers are "sent ... into the world," yet are "not of the world" (v. 18, 16). They are no more of this world than He is, and because of this the world hates them. At the same time, the Lord asks the Father *not* to take them out of the world. Rather Jesus prays that the Father would "protect them from the evil one" and "sanctify" them (i.e., set them apart for the service of God) (Tenney, 1994).

Sanctification is presented in this passage as involving four elements. First is the truth of

God's Word (v. 14, 17), second is *prayer* (v. 15, 20), third is the *unity of believers* (v. 21), and fourth is *Christ's own sanctification* (v. 19) (i.e., His sacrificial acceptance of the cross, which is necessary for humanity's redemption, but also serves as the supreme example of service to the Father) (Tenney, 1994). These four elements, then, are central to the transformation and sanctification of the believer. Earlier in His discussion with the disciples (chapter 16), Jesus also talked about the Holy Spirit. Here as well as elsewhere in the New Testament it is clear that the Holy Spirit also plays a central role in the sanctification of believers.

These passages from Romans and John go a long way toward describing how the believer is to simultaneously resist the world and submit to God. Seven principles are apparent. First, Christians are called to sacrifice their personal interests in favor of God's interests (Rom. 12:1; John 17:19; Phil. 2:5-8). Christ's sacrifice becomes the model for our living sacrifice. Second, the Christian is enjoined to disown

the world's standards (Rom. 12:2). The believer's outward lifestyle should be different from that expected by the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. Third, there is the call to constantly renew the internal control center of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Rom. 12:2). "Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day" (II Cor. 4:16, NLT). Fourth, believers are commanded to feed on God's Word (John 17:14, 17). God's Holy Word changes believers and separates them from the world.

Additional principles are equally important. Continuing the list begun above, the fifth is to pray for God's protection from the evil one, but not to be removed from the world (John 17:15). Believers must depend on God to protect them from harmful influences. Sixth, Christians are called to unite with fellow believers (and with God) (John 17:21; Rom. 12:4-8). Jesus did not intend for us to try to resist the forces of the world alone nor to grow spiritually without others. Finally, believers should not expect to be well-

But it is not enough just to resist the world; believers must also move toward Christlikeness.

actions (Rom. 12:2). "Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being

received by the world (John 17:14; Rom. 12:12). Non-conformity will often produce negative consequences from the world. These principles are summarized below in Table 2.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list. The New Testament includes several other disciplines (e.g., fasting, giving, service, worship) that a believer should practice to grow spiritually. The best antidote to worldly influences is growth in *all* areas of spiritual living. But the above seven principles are apparent in two key passages directly addressing how to avoid conformity, and as such they represent an excellent place for believers to begin. They also suggest how believers should respond to the specific form of worldly influence that is the focus here, namely organizational

socialization. It is best responded to through a combination of resistance to the world and submission to God in the ways just described.

An Old Testament Illustration: Daniel

Caution must be taken when using Old Testament narratives for business integration purposes. The book of Daniel was *not* written to provide biblical business principles. Attempting to find them there represents faulty hermeneutics (Fee & Stuart, 1993). The fundamental purpose of the first half of the book of Daniel is to show God's power and sovereignty over Gentile nations during the exile and His plan for preserving His chosen people (Archer, 1994). Nevertheless, as long as a narrative's primary purpose and

context are understood, and as long as it is used to *illustrate* rather than define integrative principles, Old Testament narratives can provide integration insights (Beadles, 1998). This is the approach taken here, with integrative principles having been first identified in other appropriate passages.

Recognizing that he lived in a time and culture very different from ours and that he was placed in an organization against his will, Daniel still provides a good illustration of the process of organizational socialization and a believer's response to it. Daniel was taken captive along with many other exiles to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar. There he and three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) worked in Nebuchadnezzar's court as advisors.

The narrative clearly describes the intentional and intensive worldly socialization (in the sense that it was not of God) to which Daniel and his friends were subjected. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that a number of promising young exiles undergo three years of formal "training" (Dan. 1:5). They were processed as a group, taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans, and given new

names that contained the names of false Babylonian gods and that eliminated the reference in their Hebrew names to the God of Israel (Pentecost, 1985). The exiles were teenagers (which is a period of significant susceptibility to social pressures) and were offered the best local food from the king's own kitchen. This socialization process seems to mirror the institutional orientation described earlier. Specifically, it is apparent how the collective, formal, fixed, serial, and divestiture nature of their socialization experience was effectively designed to remake their identities into Babylonians.

How did Daniel and his three friends respond to the socialization pressures they faced? The narrative suggests that they struck a delicate balance between rejecting Babylonian culture and conforming to it. The young men did accept Babylonian formal education (and in fact excelled as students), learned and spoke the language, and, at least to some degree, used their new names—Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is also clear that Daniel developed close personal relationships with both Nebuchadnezzar and one of his successors, Darius. Daniel

Table 2

Scriptural Principles for Responding to Organizational Socialization

1. Sacrifice personal interests for God's interests.
2. Disown the world's standards.
3. Constantly renew one's mind.
4. Feed on God's Word.
5. Pray for God's protection.
6. Unite with fellow believers.
7. Do not expect to be well-received by the world.

worked very conscientiously and effectively on the behalf of his pagan superiors. These are all clear indications of engaging the socialization they experienced. But while they were decidedly in the world of the Babylonians, they were also clearly not of it. There was still something very Jewish about these young men.

This is most readily seen in their refusal to conform to local religious laws that directly violated their commitment to the God of Israel. In doing so, they illustrate two of the principles described earlier (see Table 2). Specifically, they sacrificed their personal interests for God's, and they disowned the world's standards. Daniel's three friends were thrown into a blazing furnace for refusing to worship a statue that Nebuchadnezzar made. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions for refusing to stop praying to God. And all three young men refused to defile themselves by eating food that did not conform to the dietary laws of the Torah (Lev. 11; Deut. 14) and which probably had been prepared in connection with a pagan religious ceremony (Archer, 1994). In taking a stand on these issues, the men also accepted that their non-conformity would not endear them to the world (principle seven).

The narrative also illustrates the sixth principle: Unite with fellow believers. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood apart *together* in their eating habits, in facing the furnace, and in prayer. Prayer, the fifth principle, was essential to Daniel. We learn that while Daniel worked for Darius it was his normal custom to pray three times a day. He did not flaunt this behavior (he did it in his room), but neither did he hide it, praying before an open window. And he persisted even under the threat of being thrown to lions. Earlier, when faced with death if he could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel's response was to pray and to ask his three friends to pray also. Immediately after the meaning of the dream was revealed to Daniel, he offered a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. Daniel's dependence on God is demonstrated in his reliance on prayer and in the way he regularly credited God for his abilities and accomplishments. Daniel fully understood that God was the hero; he was merely an instrument.

In Daniel 9:1-2 we read that Daniel was "studying the writings of the prophets" (NLT). Thus Daniel also demonstrates the fourth principle: Feed on

God's Word. The text is silent, however, on the third principle: Renewing one's mind. No specific illustration of this activity is provided. But that makes it no less important when we remember that Old Testament narratives are useful in illustrating principles but not establishing them.

The basic implication of the Daniel narrative with respect to handling organizational socialization is that the forces of the world ultimately have no power to thwart God's plans and that God will support believers who depend on Him in the midst of worldly pressures. Daniel also nicely illustrates how several specific principles can be applied in responding to socialization pressures, as discussed above. One illustration from the Daniel narrative deserves elaboration.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to eat food prepared in the king's kitchen because doing so would violate a direct scriptural command. Their motivation was obedience to God. But their behavior had an additional secondary benefit. It effectively provided counterpressure to their socialization experience. To do it, Daniel and his friends together had to take an immediate stand

against a worldly pressure and *for* a godly value. They would have had to eat during the very first day of their training. Acting as they did set them apart immediately from everyone else. Standing apart early is helpful because it is easier to initiate a behavior in the first place than it is to change a behavior once a particular course of action has been undertaken.

Four characteristics of behavior that make it binding, that is, that commit a person who acted in a certain way to continue acting that way in the future, are explicitness, irrevocability, volition, and publicity (Salancik, 1977). The young men's dietary choice initially met three of these four criteria (and ended up meeting the irrevocability criterion as well once a ten-day trial period became permanent). Eating the way they did provided a tangible and ongoing reminder to themselves and others that they were still Jews. And since they were successful in accomplishing it, it made future attempts at non-conformity more plausible.

Finally, the manner in which Daniel went about asserting himself on this issue was significant in getting the Babylonian official to comply with his request. Daniel made no

demands of his superiors, rather he asked permission. When the official resisted, Daniel proposed a ten-day trial period. Daniel left it to the official to make the final decision based on the results of the trial period. Rather than being adversarial, Daniel worked with the official in order to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. His creativity and flexibility in approaching the issue helped avert a compromise. Thus Daniel's dietary action not only demonstrated his faithfulness to God, but was also an effective counter-socialization move as well. Socialization cannot be entirely resisted—newcomers do need to “learn the ropes.” But they do not need to be strangled by them. Socialization can often be experienced without compromising core values and with allowing for some expression of individual preferences, if those preferences are expressed in a respectful way.

In Daniel we see a remarkably effective example of being in the world but not of it. Daniel was socialized enough to work productively for pagan kings. It is clear that he “work[ed] for the peace and prosperity of Babylon.” These words were Jeremiah's advice to

the exiled Jews (Jer. 29:7), and they were modeled effectively by Daniel. However, it was also always clear to those who knew Daniel that he never became a Babylonian. His primary identity, values, and purpose remained intact. Daniel was able to work

The best guard against ... socialization influences is to be growing in one's relationship with the Lord.

with a worldly system in order to stand, at least in crucial areas, *apart* from that system. As such he provides a useful illustration of a believer's response to socialization in business.

Unraveling the Socialization Knot

The analysis presented here has important implications for Christians entering the marketplace.⁵ The opportunities there to advance Christ's Kingdom are substantial. But, as is the case with all secular professions, the marketplace offers significant challenges to the Christian who desires to serve God there. Consider the following advice: “... During the first year you do have to act like the company man or woman to a

large extent. ... It is just the way you break in” (Holton, 1991). This is typical of much of the world's advice to the new graduate. While much of Holton's advice is useful to business graduates, including the Christian graduate, believers must be suspicious of wholesale absorption of a company's ideals.

The best guard against succumbing to socialization influences is to be growing in one's relationship with the Lord. The seven principles presented earlier in this paper provide a minimal list of disciplines in which the believer in the marketplace should be engaged. Recent graduates would also benefit from increasing their awareness of the prevalence of socialization pressures. It is impossible to resist an influence without awareness that it is happening. If this paper does nothing but increase people's sensitivity to socialization influences, it will have served a useful purpose. Daniel was certainly aware of the deliberate attempts to influence him. Not all companies are so deliberate about socializing newcomers, but *all* organizations do exert socialization pressures. Often these pressures are quite subtle, but the careful observer

can notice them. Becoming aware of attempted influence efforts is a vital step to developing a response to those efforts.

God wants Christians to perform at their best in the workplace (Colossians 3:23). It is important to realize that a person does not have to be completely socialized and sell out to negative organizational values in order to be a high performer at work. High performance and maintenance of one's commitment to the Lord are not mutually exclusive, as Daniel clearly demonstrates. Indeed, pursuing excellence in one's performance will bring respect, which could lead to acceptance of idiosyncrasies that might make it more possible to openly live one's values.

Daniel nicely illustrates being in but not of the world. He also demonstrates that it is possible to be simultaneously *transformational* (i.e., working to redeem secular systems) and *countercultural* (i.e., offering an alternative to the prevailing secular model). Niebuhr's (1951) classic book, *Christ and Culture*, is relevant here. Niebuhr relates Christianity's major theological traditions to ways Christians have sought to relate to the world, or culture, in which they live.

How recent graduates relate to the world of business can be considered a small subset of the larger question Niebuhr addressed. Implied in Niebuhr's analysis is that the fifth approach of relating to culture—with Christ as the transformer of culture—is the best, if admittedly not perfect, strategy. Reflecting the reformed thinking of Calvin, Niebuhr's view proposes that the believer lives “in awareness of the power of the Lord to transform all things by lifting them up to himself” (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 195).

Phillips & Okholm (1996) have argued that while this view was persuasive in the early 1950s when Niebuhr was writing, it is less so in today's post-Christian America. They state that it makes less sense today to try to overtly transform a culture that is essentially un-Christian. They propose instead an approach that *combines* elements of Reformed and Anabaptist theology. They have not abandoned transformation, but they see it being accomplished by different means. The church should seek to transform culture not by using the means of the prevailing culture, but by existing faithfully as the church in the world, supported by a community of like-minded believers. As they

say, “The church is to be *both* transformationist *and* countercultural, but it is to be the former *by being* the latter ... ” (Phillips & Okholm, 1996, p. 284).

This approach seems to offer much to the issue of responding as a Christian to organizational socialization in business.⁶ Anabaptist theology emphasizes helping believers relate to secular institutions in which they are involved without capitulating to the spirit of those institutions. “Anabaptists expect faith to conflict with the activities and priorities of the world rather than to be a natural complement, and they are concerned about the tendency of the believer to be bought out by the lure of success and power that the world offers” (Halteman, 1990, p. 12). At the same time, recent Anabaptist ideas take a more outward-looking view. There is more emphasis on the infiltration of secular structures (as opposed to simply modeling alternative Christian values) in order to bring some measure of redemption to those structures (Halteman, 1990).

This perspective provides hope that believers can not only resist secular socialization pressures, but also exert godly influence on those pressures.

By being salt and light in the workplace (as Daniel was), faithful believers can produce good works which bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16). Christians can make their faith relevant to their daily business experiences, and doing so can make a difference in their firms.

Balancing the demands of being transformational *and* countercultural is not something that is best done in isolation. Rather, association with like-minded believers is necessary. This provides the person who would resist socialization pressures with a source of guidance, accountability, and support. According to the Anabaptist economist Halteman (1995, p. 183): “The best defense against a sellout to the world is a community of faith that articulates a doctrine of nonconformity to the world and then encourages its members to be faithful even when the costs are high.” Recall that uniting with fellow believers against worldly pressures was one of the biblical principles illustrated by Daniel and his friends.

Not surprisingly a key predictor of the long-term faithfulness after graduation of Christian college students is whether they participate in a

Christian community that provides mutual support and accountability (Garber, 1996). Empirical evidence of the importance of community to nonconformity in business is also provided by Nash (1994) in her study of evangelical CEOs. Nash found that those CEOs who were able to integrate their faith with the demands of business formed *fellowship groups* with like-minded CEOs that functioned primarily as support groups. This, along with *prayer*, much of which occurred through these groups, was the major bulwark of these CEOs against the secularity of the marketplace.

Of course, it is important to remember that Christians who take a stand at work based on their faith may suffer despite being exceptional performers. They may be subjected to ridicule, passed over for promotions, or even terminated (recall the quote at the beginning of this paper). Wayne Alderson, the Christian executive who transformed a steel mill's productivity and labor-management relations by implementing the values of love, dignity, and respect, met with just such a fate despite his outstanding performance record (Sproul, 1980). There may also come a

time when a believer decides he needs to leave a firm in order to maintain his integrity as a Christian. A believer's ultimate allegiance is to the Lord.

Finally, when faced with socialization pressures, a believer should obviously not compromise on direct violations of biblical mandates. But what about issues that are more gray? There are no easy answers here. Instead, this requires a process of discernment, which should include seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit (through prayer and Scripture) and from mature believers. Grappling with such issues should not be seen as a burden, but as a stimulus to inner spiritual growth and outward fruitfulness.

Conclusion

A Christian response to organizational socialization in business requires spiritual maturity and practical finesse. Totally absorbing socialization pressures is unacceptable, but so, too, is total resistance of those pressures. Newcomers need to learn the ropes. But Christian newcomers need to be careful not to get strangled by those very same ropes. The key is to find that middle ground which allows one to operate as a part of an organization without

compromising one's mission to be salt and light to a needy world. In the end, everyone submits to something. The only question is, to what do they submit?

The more fully graduates submit to the Lord and His purposes for their lives, the less they will be drawn to submit to the alluring power of organizational socialization.

Kent W. Seibert

Department of Business
and Economics
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL 60187

Kent.W.Seibert@Wheaton.edu

ENDNOTES

¹The author would like to express appreciation to the following people for their significant input into the development of this paper: Bruce Howard, Alan Jacobs, Stan Jones, Ward Kriegbaum, Jim Mathisen, and the anonymous **JBIB** reviewers.

²The information on Accenture's (formerly Anderson Consulting) socialization practices is based on discussions with former partners, current young employees, and a company recruiting brochure titled "Total Future: The Whole Story About Consulting Career Opportunities."

³The focus of this paper is formal socialization at the organizational level. It should be noted that sub-groups within organizations also exert socialization pressure, some of which may oppose and some of which may reinforce formal pressures.

⁴Although this exact phrase does not appear in Scripture, its meaning is most readily apparent from John 17:16, 18. This important biblical idea is explored later in the paper.

⁵The biblical analysis also has implications for the scholarly literature on organizational

socialization. Five stand out. One, the implicit assumption of the literature that socialization is a good thing deserves to be critiqued more thoroughly than it has. Two, as the work force becomes increasingly diverse, value conflicts between individuals and their organizations will probably become more common. The impact of such dynamics on socialization needs to be examined. Three, Daniel's example counters the prevailing belief that a high degree of organizational identification is necessary in order for employees to work the hardest for their company. Do contemporary examples exist that parallel Daniel's experience on this issue? Four, value expression at work has only recently begun to be researched (e.g., Briscoe, 1996; Nash, 1994). To my knowledge no research currently exists exploring the important intersection of organizational socialization and personal value expression. Five, more scholarly attention needs to be given to the reactions individuals have to socialization. What individual differences exist in how people react to socialization pressure? What do newcomers see as the benefits and liabilities of different types of socialization experiences?

⁶It is important to note that students who study business in school begin the process of socialization to the business world during their formal education. This has significant implications for Christian business faculty. Are we simply transmitting the world's value system vis-à-vis business to our students or are we providing theologically sound alternatives as well?

REFERENCES

Archer, G.L. (1994). Daniel. In K.L. Barker & J. Kohlenberger (Eds.), *NIV Bible commentary, Volume 1: Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Argyris, C. (1957). *Personality and organization*. New York, NY: Harper.

Arnott, D. (2000). *Corporate cults: The insidious lure of the all-consuming organization*. New York, NY: AMACOM.

Ashforth, B.E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 20-39.

Ashforth, B.E., & Saks, A.M. (1996). Socialization tactics: Longitudinal effects on newcomer adjustment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(1), 149-178.

Beadles, N.A. (1998, Fall). Biblical integration in business: A trip through the looking glass? *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 109-123.

Briscoe, J.P. (1996, June). *Influences upon personal "value expression" at work: An empirical study*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Advances in Management, Framingham, MA.

Fee, G.D., & Stuart, D. (1993). *How to read the Bible for all it's worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Garber, S. (1996). *The fabric of faithfulness: Weaving together belief and behavior during the university years*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

George, J.M., & Jones, G.R. (1996). *Understanding and managing organizational behavior*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Halteman, J. (1990). An Anabaptist approach to economic systems. *Association of Christian Economists Bulletin*, 16, 6-13.

Halteman, J. (1995). *The clashing worlds of economics and faith*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

Hebden, J.E. (1986, Summer). Adopting an organization's culture: The socialization of graduate trainees. *Organizational Dynamics*, 54-72.

Holton, E. (1991). *The new professional: Everything you need to know for a great first year on the job*. Princeton, NJ: Peterson's Guides.

Johnson, S.G. (1996, Fall). Biblical integration in business: A proposed model. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 1-5.

Jones, G.R. (1983). Psychological orientation and the process of organizational socialization. *Academy of Management Review*, 8, 464-474.

Jones, G.R. (1986, June). Socialization tactics, self-efficacy, and newcomers' adjustments to organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 262-279.

Kraybill, D.B. (1978). *The upside-down kingdom*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

Lancaster, H. (1997, March 25). Before taking a job, ensure your values match your boss's. *The Wall Street Journal*, p. B1.

Louis, M.R. (1980). Surprise and sense making: What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, 226-251.

Lukes, S. (1974). *Power: A radical view*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

Morrison, R.F., & Hock, R.R. (1986). Career building: Learning from cumulative work experience. In D.T. Hall & Associates, *Career Development in Organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nash, L.L. (1994). *Believers in business*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Niebuhr, H.R. (1951). *Christ and culture*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Pentecost, J.D. (1985). Daniel. In J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Phillips, T.R., & Okholm, D.L. (1996). *Welcome to the family: An introduction to evangelical Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Pollard, C.W. (1996). *The soul of the firm*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Salancik, G.R. (1977). Commitment and the control of organizational behavior and belief. In B.M. Staw & G.R. Salancik (Eds.), *New Directions in Organizational Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Schein, E.H. (1978). *Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Schein, E.H., & Ott, J.S. (1962). The legitimacy of organizational influence. *American Journal of Sociology*, 67, 682-689.

Sproul, R.C. (1980). *Stronger than steel: The Wayne Alderson story*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Tenney, M.C. (1994). John. In K.L. Barker & J.R. Kohlengerger (Eds.), *NIV Bible Commentary: Volume 2 – New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Van Maanen, J. (1978, Summer). People-processing: Strategies of organizational socialization. *Organizational Dynamics*, 19-36.

Van Maanen, J. (1982). Boundary crossings: Major strategies of organizational socialization and their consequences. In R. Katz (Ed.), *Career Issues in Human Resource Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E.H. (1979). Towards a theory of organizational socialization. In B.M. Staw (Ed.), *Research in Organizational Behavior (Vol. 1)*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Whyte, W.H. (1956). *The organization man*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Witmer, J.A. (1983). Romans. In J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*. USA: Victor Books.

