



# In God's World, Business Done Right is a Blessing

## Part 1: God's World

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### Introduction:

In God's World, Business Done Right is a Blessing is the title of this series of foundational material developed by the Center for Christian Business Ethics Today (Center).<sup>1</sup> These business ethics foundation presentations are based on the material developed for the 2010 Business Ethics Today conference, which are contained in the book, *Business Ethics Today: Foundations*.<sup>2</sup> It is the Center's belief that business done right is a blessing to God's people. Today there are many who are challenging this notion, calling business evil. In this series, the Center endeavors to show how following God's calling and God's principles in business, is indeed a great gift to a community and a blessing to all.<sup>3</sup>

This is the first of a four part series. Part 1 covers God's world. Starting with the Bible as the source of revelation of God, this part explores the importance of understanding His attributes and that He is the creator and sustainer of the world in which business is conducted. Part 2 explores the principles of each man's calling, including a call to do business. One of the great blessings from the Reformation was the elevation of God's calling into every aspect of a community, rather than only *full-time ministry*. Part 3 considers the principles from God's

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<sup>1</sup> The Center was established in 2009 to address the need for the application of Christian principles to strengthen business operations. The Center's research shows that Christianity, as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, laid the foundations for the commercial world, as we know it today. The current movement of society across the world risks the abandonment of these business practices. To reinvigorate the study of founding business principles, the Center challenges those sharing God's calling to business to use God's Word and His principles to shape their engagement in business. Further information on the Center and its resources may be found at [cfcbe.com](http://cfcbe.com).

<sup>2</sup> Philip J. Clements, editor, *Business Ethics Today: Foundations*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2010, available at [cfcbe.com](http://cfcbe.com). [As of November 2010, available as Conference Papers].

<sup>3</sup> The title of this series uses the description of *business done right* rather than *doing business right* to emphasize that business is part of God's blessing, not just proper behavior. The Center holds that business cannot be *done right* without engaging in proper ethical practices. Therefore, the title is broader than just ethics; it includes the essence of business to a community in providing goods and services and in enhancing the community's standard of living.

revelation on doing business right. Since this is a foundational presentation, the framework is reviewed rather than each business practice. Part 4 analyzes the blessing that business done right is to a community.

Necessarily, each of these parts includes a discussion of the importance of the role of salvation in being able to both enjoy and be a part of God's blessing. The Center affirms the essential tenants of the faith as outlined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith (Confession)* and recommends it as a clear statement for those wishing to explore this important matter further. Because the Center is focused on the operational aspects of business, it does not stress evangelism. However, as Jesus commanded in Acts 1:8, we as Christians are to be witnesses of His redeeming work. 1 Peter 3:15 highlights that the Christian life will naturally create such a witness. Therefore, a Christian engaged in business done right should expect to stand out and thereby be a witness to God's goodness. As Peter says, such a witness will generate inquiry and thereby provide opportunity for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His saving work.

### **The source of God's revelation:**

Chuck Colson in "The Problem of Ethics: Why Good People Do Bad Things"<sup>4</sup> describes the need for understanding that ethics cannot be relative. He goes on to make the case "that without Judeo-Christian values at the root of society, society simply can't exist," citing Margret Thatcher.

The Bible is the source for these values. In the Reformation, Christians wrestled with the source of God's revelation. At that time, the Church, often known today as the Roman Catholic Church, held that it was the source of understanding God's revelation. Reformers adopted the view that only the Bible was the source of God's revelation, using the phrase *Sola Scriptura*<sup>5</sup>. The Reformers felt that each person needed to read and study the Bible in order to know his God. The importance of *Sola Scriptura* cannot be understated when we endeavor to understand the principles under which we are to look at the world. As Colson warns, a society without an anchor will not have consistent values.

The *Confession* in chapter 1 articulates the principles behind the Bible as the source of God's revelation to mankind. This chapter affirms that God's creation provides a measure of revelation, but that the Bible is needed to give the revelation for the "knowledge of God, His will, which is necessary unto salvation." The remainder of Chapter 1 sets forth the completeness of revelation, inerrancy and the role of Scripture in the Christian faith. The Center holds that the Bible remains the central anchor to understanding God and His world.

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<sup>4</sup> Contained in *Business Ethics Today: Foundations*, which can be found at [cfcbe.com](http://cfcbe.com).

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther and other Reformers develop the five *Solas* to clarify the basic tenants of the Christian faith. The five are 1. *Sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone; 2. *Sola fide*, by faith alone; 3. *Sola gratia*, by grace alone; 4. *Sola Christo*, by Christ alone; 5. *Sola Deo Gloria*, God's glory alone.

It is also clear that without the eternal anchor of the Bible, values and principles will change over time. The Bible gives man a consistent starting point upon which we can engage in our analysis and debate of what is right behavior. Without adopting a source such as the Bible, the debate on behavior degenerates into a “I said or I believe” – “You say or You believe” useless debate. While philosophy has endeavored to articulate universal principles to frame such a debate, it is clear that even philosophy cannot agree on the foundations.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the Bible provides the needed enduring source of principle.

There are other scriptures for other faiths, such as the *Quran*, *Book of Mormon*,<sup>7</sup> and the *Bhagavad-Gita*<sup>8</sup>. Each has a measure of distinction and a measure of consensus. Many argue for the consensus of faiths with the modern view of many paths to the same god. However, it is clear that the Bible stands apart from each of the other faith scriptures. The Bible describes God and His characteristics and His interaction with mankind in decidedly different terms.

The most important aspect of this difference is the explanation of man’s spiritual dimension, man’s propensity to do evil and God’s provision of a savior, Jesus Christ, raising the importance of man’s addressing his individual state while here on earth. While other faiths discuss evil and eternity, none provide a personal savior.

### **Who is God?:**

It is God’s world. Who then is God? Paul declares in Rom 1:18-20 that creation reveals the attributes of God. The *Confession* in chapter 2 nicely articulates the attributes of God and the Trinity. For our purposes here, we will explore the broader concepts of transcendence and imminence.

God’s transcendence incorporates His attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immenseness, holiness, absoluteness, immutableness, eternalness, spiritual nature, among other attributes. As we see below, God as creator and sustainer of all that is, transcends human comprehension and being. We shall also see that man tends to dodge the importance of God’s transcendence bringing Him down to man’s level. When we do this we lose the

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, an extended discussion on the merits or demerits of philosophy’s foundational principles is beyond the scope of the presentation.

<sup>7</sup> While the Church of Latter Day Saints argues they are within the bounds of Christianity, the Center defines Christianity as that faith found within the *Confession*. The saving role of Jesus Christ as described in the *Confession* is not within the tenants of Mormonism.

<sup>8</sup> Dominic Goodall, editor, *Hindu Scriptures*, London:Phoenix Press, 2005, presents an array of what are believed to be Hindu scriptures. It is useful to note the development of other faith theology and scripture structures tends to follow and adopt the theology structures of Judeo-Christianity. Hindu scriptures could be said to have started more as stories, than as revelations, and that using theology constructs has caused them to rise to a higher level of spiritual merit. In short, this is the conversion of an oral tradition based faith to a scripture based faith. Understanding this transition is quite important in understanding its implications on both cultural development and business practices.

blessing of seeing God in His power and majesty. Isa 6:1-8 and Rev 4 describe the throne room of heaven and the wonder of God. This is our God. It is this God that created us, loves us, saves us, and makes daily provision for us. When we make this God weak, we lose this blessing.

While God is transcendent, God is also immanent. God is present in His world and intimate in every aspect of the world. Col 1:15-17 describes that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all of creation. As we shall see, this includes us. Here we need to see the love of God. Rom 5:8 states the love of God magnificently with, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."<sup>9</sup> The immanence of God, as revealed by His love for us in providing for our salvation, is incomprehensible. That God loves us enough to come from heaven, becoming man, dwelling amongst us, dying for our sins, saving us,<sup>10</sup> and then working with us as we stumble towards heaven, should give us great comfort and peace. Yet, again man demeans this salvation and its assurance by adding works<sup>11</sup> and other elements for obtaining God's favor and salvation. The loss of the blessing of the free gift and the assurance of being with God forever means that we struggle to experience the presence of God on a daily basis. Part of the blessed state in the Garden of Eden was the ability to walk and talk with our God about all that is happening during the day.

Two questions summarize this section: "How big is your God?" and "How close is your God?" If you find that events of the world, the work place, and the family environment are overwhelming, it may be that your God is not the all-powerful, holy, righteous God of the Bible. If you feel a sense of hopelessness or purposelessness, it may be that your God is not the loving savior of the Bible.

### **God as creator of the world:**

As we consider doing business in God's world, it helps to recognize that it is indeed God's world. Too often business people feel that business is *just business*. Here we consider the question of, "Is it really God's world?"

In the Bible, God declares that He created the world and that everything in it is His. Gen 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth." Gen 1 goes on to explain that God created the world by speaking it into existence. That God, by His voice alone, created the universe brings to mind the question, "How big is your God?"

Cited above, Col 1:15 -17 says, speaking of Jesus,

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether

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<sup>9</sup> Unless noted otherwise the King James Version is the Bible translation used for this paper.

<sup>10</sup> See Phil 2:5-11.

<sup>11</sup> See Eph 2:8-9.

they be throne, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

But mankind struggles with the notion that God created the world. Rom 1:18-20 articulates this tension. God’s creation reveals His majesty and power, but man rejects this revelation. Some obvious examples of the creation revealing the hand of God are: The moon does not turn, but goes through cycles as it rotates around the earth. Man is debating the merit of a *big bang* event starting creation, but anyone who has participated in any kind of explosion knows that particles in an explosion rotate. The moon is a wonder, affirming Gen 1:16-19 that God made the moon in the fourth day of creation, setting it in the heavens to give seasons and light in the night. Another example is a paper cut as compared to a scrape in a rock. A paper cut generates blood and pain, but heals; generally leaving no trace. A scrape in a rock does not heal and will be there decades later. God commanded the Israelites to set up piles of stone to mark events such as the crossing of the Jordan. This pile would be there for generations as a testimony to God’s provision. The difference between life, a healing paper cut, and non-life, the scarred stone, affirms the work of God. Everyone has their own examples of the mysteries of heaven and earth that point to God’s creative work. For years movies and TV shows have given many examples, albeit often unintentionally. One of the latest TV shows illustrating this point is “Great Migrations” by the National Geographic Channel. So man sees the creative work, but rejects its testimony.

God claims ownership, even now. Some people claim that God created the world then gave dominion over to man and has withdrawn. Yet, Psa 24:1<sup>12</sup> and Hag 4:8<sup>13</sup> make it clear that God claims possession even today. Other passages are 1 Chor 29:10-20 and Acts 4:24. Man’s charge by God to have dominion over the earth is found in Gen 1:26-30. In this passage, the Trinity creates man in God’s own image and gives man dominion over the world. After the fall in Gen 3, the status of man’s dominion is widely debated. Unfortunately time does not permit a discussion on this topic. From the Center’s perspective, since God claims ownership and declares that He remains the sustainer and provider of all things, common sense says He has not withdrawn and is indeed to be acknowledged as a very present, immanent, part of creation.

### **God’s world is good:**

It is in God’s world that we do business, but what kind of world is it? Clearly we have to acknowledge that God’s world groans under curse of the judgment of man’s sin, see Gen 3:17-19. Yet the world that we do business in is still blessed and a blessing to all mankind.

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<sup>12</sup> Psa 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

<sup>13</sup> Hag 4:8 “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of hosts.”

In Gen 8:20-22 we hear God declare to Noah that He will preserve the earth's seasons, which are a blessing. The earth is productive. Jesus told the parable of the sower<sup>14</sup> who sows seed for harvest. In Jesus' parable He illustrates the problem of seed falling on various grounds and some being underproductive. But Jesus also notes that when the seed falls on prepared ground, a single seed produces some 30-fold, some 60-fold and some 100-fold increase. These are enormous returns on investment. One to thirty is great, but one to one hundred – fabulous. Those who are farmers know this kind of increase.

We who engage in other commercial activities struggle sometimes to see this increase. Given the current Great Depression, we are struggling even more. Space here is limited, so it is not possible to fully explore the implications of the blessedness of God's world, but we should keep in mind some principles:

1. This goodness benefits both the good and the bad. See Matt 5:45.
2. There is seasonality, even what we call business cycles – perhaps part of the curse. See Pharaoh and Joseph in the 7 good years and 7 lean years.
3. There are shocks, but there is promise of recovery. See Joel chapters 1 to 3.
4. There are abundances beyond our needs. See Luke 12:16-21.
5. God does bless us beyond our deserts. See the blessings to the Israelites as they enter the Promise Land.

It is a wonderful world that God has placed us within. We need to celebrate with Him His wondrous daily provision.

### **God as our creator/sustainer:**

As part of the creation, we belong to God. We are His created handiwork and owe to Him our full attention according to the purposes for which He created us. That God created us is nicely articulated in Psa 119:73 and Psa 22:9-10. Paul goes on to note that not only are we created at birth, but throughout our life God continues His creative activity. In Phil 1:6, Paul says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Jesus talked about God as our provider and sustainer. In Jesus' statements, the personal attention, or immanence, of God to our individual lives is extremely rich. Matt 6:25-34 talks of the importance of man as compared to a sparrow. Then Jesus affirms that God knows every hair on our head and is prepared to cloth us and provide food for us. Jesus sums up a challenge

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<sup>14</sup> Matt 13:3-9.

to not worry about tomorrow, for God will provide; enough are the worries about today. In Matt 7:7-11 Jesus directs us to come to God and ask Him to provide for our needs.

### **The problem of the fall:**

So mankind sees the creative handiwork of God, but rejects it. Mankind struggles with acknowledging God's provision from day to day as well. Why? Gen 3 records the fall, when man choose to disobey God's command. The *Confession* chapter 6 summarizes the theology of the fall of man and its implications. The *Confession* chapters 8 through 18 cover the theology of God's provision for man's redemption. Time does not let us explore this fully. The key we need to note here is that mankind is in a fallen state, rejecting God even today. This fallen state of rejection affects all of our activities and our thinking. By himself, Man is unable to turn back to God. God promised in Gen 3:15 to provide a savior and did fulfill that promise through the incarnation and death of His Son Jesus on the cross in payment for our sins. Each individual is called to believe in the work of Jesus. Such faith generates rebirth and life with God. This life with God is eternal, starting at the moment of belief. The reader is referred to the *Confession* and many other good materials that explain the way of God's salvation.

Paul in Rom 5:8-9 provides, "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The magnitude of the love of God and its focus on us individually, challenges our perspective on the transcendence of God adding to it a personal and immanent relationship that, as business people, we should study, appreciate and apply.

### **Conclusion:**

Two questions have been generated as we considered that we do business in God's world: "How big is your God?" and "How close is your God?" Business is an enormous distraction, consuming time and energy, delivering joy and frustrations at the same time. God, even God almighty, calls to us to come to Him, to find both the source of power to do what He has created us to do, including business, and to supply our needs, including those in our business. Search for God, rely upon God, because it is God's world in which we do our business.