

## Dialogue I

### The Compatibility of Christianity and Business

Brian E. Porter  
Calvin College

*Dr. Porter examines the compatibility of Christianity and business and offers insight on how Christians can use their faith to face the challenges of today's ethically-complex business world.*

#### Introduction

Though there have been writings disputing the notion, Christianity and business are still thought by many to be incompatible. This paper explores what cultivates this perception of incompatibility. Examples of suspect business practices and the conventional thoughts on integrating Christianity and business are discussed. This paper offers new insights into the integration of Christianity and business that may help to diminish the perception of incompatibility.

It is proposed that Christianity and business, for one who is a Christian, are inseparable for at least two reasons. First, though there may be different opinions as to how it is accomplished, one who is a Christian should integrate one's faith, to some degree, in all aspects of life, including when

participating in business. As an illustration, it is discussed that it is possible for a Christian to resolve the tension arising from the fact that in business, *deceit* or *bluffing* are sometimes commonplace, a task seemingly at odds with Christianity.

Second, virtually all people, including those who are Christians, participate in business either directly or indirectly. Thus, by God's design, one who is a Christian is unable to completely segregate one's Christian faith from business. Given this foundation, the paper then discusses the other challenges in business that confront one who is a Christian, the transforming ability of Christ within business, and the inherent virtues of business.

#### Perception of Incompatibility

*Christian capitalism is an oxymoron. Jesus Christ did not*

say one thing to support capitalism, but he said many things in opposition to it. How can anyone possibly say they are following the one who said, "sell what you have and give it to the poor," as they amass wealth and work the system to take welfare from the poor (Trappenberg, 1995)?

Though not held by all, the sentiments of Trappenberg are not unique. Trappenberg speaks for many with the opinion that it is inconsistent for a Christian to participate in capitalistic business with a clear conscious. As will be discussed in this paper, this thought does not appear to be totally unfounded. Further, one can find both Christians and non-Christians who concur with Trappenberg.

Previous writings by Christians have not always adequately addressed the concerns of Trappenberg and others. For example, *Business Through The Eyes of Faith*, one of the most heralded books by the Christian College Coalition, implies that the thoughts of Trappenberg are archaic (particularly if one is a Christian) and do not warrant scrutiny. The authors of *Business Through The Eyes of Faith* concede that

centuries ago, Christians were skeptical of integrating Christianity and business, but today Christians are wiser and do not have such reservations. As evidence for the first premise, the authors provide quotes by St. Jerome, "A merchant can seldom if ever please God," and St. Augustine, "Business is in itself evil." The authors, however, do not advocate the thoughts of these two saints, and they quickly dismiss, without support, the saints' proclamations as dated and falling on deaf ears in today's world (Chewning et al., p. 4).

The unsubstantiated suggestion that today's Christians no longer look upon business with condemnation, or at least with suspicion, is probably partially accurate. Circumstantial observation does give the impression that Christians do not blatantly condemn business as heretical. Homosexuality, abortion, the role of women in the church, and many other issues are more prominent and disputed with greater fervor by the church than is the acceptability of Christians in business.

A recent conversation with a Christian businessperson, however, revealed that she, and others like her, often feel estranged from the church and

lack affirmation. This businessperson stated that she is confident that she is performing the work God has selected for her, but others in the church do not completely embrace the business profession as a work of God. The irony, she added, is that she is consistently asked to make substantial monetary contributions to the church and other Christian organizations. It is a joy for her to give, but she finds it inconsistent that the ones who are suspicious of her business profession seem to have no difficulty receiving money obtained through her business dealings. It is her belief that if the church does not approve of her profession, a profession that she practices with a clear conscious and without regret, it is incorrect for the church to accept money earned from her profession. The church should not be different than certain other non-profit organizations, such as the American Cancer Society, which have refused donations because the money was obtained in a manner that did not fit with their ethical standards ("Funds Raised For Cancer Shunned By Recipients," 1997). Even the Pharisees were careful not to accept money that they felt was obtained in a compromising

fashion (Matthew 27:6). This same viewpoint was echoed by many businesspeople that attended a recent business conference intended for those who are Christians. The fall *CBFA Newsletter* (Bates, p. 2) further substantiates that even among Christian college faculty, there are some that do not perceive business as a proper profession for Christians.

### **Support For Incompatibility**

Regardless of one's sophistication or understanding of Christianity and business, most everyone is aware that the central tenets of Christianity are love, justice, mercy, and humbleness (Matthew 22:37-40, I Corinthians 13:11, Micah 6:8). Those who assert that Christianity and business are not compatible often do so on the basis that they fail to see these principles being practiced with consistency in business. To them, proclamations such as "goodness and dignity are inherent characteristics of business and that Jesus being a businessperson was part of what expressed his perfection as a human being" (Schneider, p. 113), or "...success will frequently accrue to the individual or firm who puts others first and possesses the Christian

virtues of integrity, justice, and, yes, even love” (Logue, p. 51), are nonsensical. Though this paper will argue that being a Christian and participating in business are not mutually exclusive, insight is gained by understanding the basis of contrary viewpoints. When Christians refuse to recognize and address the improprieties that sometimes exist in business, which appear to be in disagreement with Christ’s teachings, this serves to fuel the cynicism that abides within many. Therefore, it is useful to examine a few of the issues that precipitate some people to think Christianity and business are not compatible.

Some people question the justice of the ever-widening income inequality that has produced a chasm between top and bottom that is much wider than it was 25 years ago (Bernstein, 1997, p. 66). Though this trend may now be shifting, in the 1980s, families in the bottom fifth moved down the economic ladder by 4% while the upper fifth scored 60%-plus gains (Bernstein, 1996, p. 90). For many, this problem is epitomized

in events such as the \$70.4 million golden handshake awarded to former Disney President Michael Ovitz upon his departure from the company in December 1996 after working at Disney for a mere 14 months (Orwall, p. B3).

Those who are skeptical of integrating Christianity with business sometimes contend that mercy is apparently absent when Robert Allen, former CEO of AT&T, and Albert Dunlap (nicknamed “Chainsaw Al”), CEO of Sunbeam and former CEO of Scott Paper, place

thousands of employees out of work through massive layoffs. The

absurdity, for many, is that stock prices sometimes increase on the news (or even the rumor) of someone else’s misfortune of being laid off. Even companies praised as practicing Christian justice such as Herman Miller (Chewning, et. al, p. 28), a manufacturer of fine office furniture, have resorted to *right sizing*.

It seems that advertising occasionally neglects goodness and dignity when questionable methods are employed to

persuade and coax people. It can be disturbing to many when they read reports such as Prudential Insurance being found guilty of “grossly negligent conduct” when documents were destroyed implicating agents who had misled customers into buying more expensive life insurance policies (Scism, p. B8).

Integrity seems lacking when beer companies deny marketing to underage consumers but evidence indicates otherwise. According to a recent study, Miller (Philip Morris), Molson, Coors, and Budweiser (Anheuser-Busch), advertised on programs where 65%, 52%, 51%, and 46% of the viewing audience was under 21 years of age (Beatty, p. B1).

The tobacco industry has also confessed to similar improprieties. After years of steadfast denials, one small player, the Liggett Group, recently confessed that cigarettes are addictive and carcinogenic and that manufacturers had targeted youths under age 18 in their marketing (France et al., pp. 34-36). Other larger players, following the lead of the Liggett Group, have made similar confessions and have made legal settlements. Many experts, however, including Gary Black, a

tobacco analyst at investment firm Sanford C. Bernstein & Co., believe that the tobacco companies have orchestrated very lucrative settlements. Many prominent economists assert that “Tobacco will simply pass along the costs to millions of addicted customers and reap the rewards of higher stock prices” (Phillips and Hwang, 1997).

Recently, there has been an outcry from many who contend that workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa sometimes labor for subsistence wages to produce products that enable Westerners’ lives to be more comfortable and fashionable. Medea Benjamin, director of Global Exchange, discussing Nike (a company often criticized for allowing abuses in developing countries), describes conditions as repressive in countries where Nike chooses to outsource (China, Indonesia, and Vietnam). “The minimum wage in Indonesia of \$2.46 a day covers only 90% of basic subsistence needs for one person, and Vietnamese Nike workers earn \$1.60 a day, while three simple meals cost \$2” (Benjamin, 1997). Granted, Nike contests such accusations, and for an objective party it is sometimes difficult to know what is right.

***...being a Christian and participating in business are not mutually exclusive...***

There appears, however, to be no justification for insufferable acts upon children such as Iqbal Masih, who at the age of four was chained to a loom in Pakistan and forced to make carpets, some of which were exported to the United States (“Pakistani Recounts Years of Forced Labor,” 1994). For many people, businesses that engage in such practices are void of love, the fundamental element taught by Jesus to his followers (Matthew 22:37-40).

It is necessary to note that there are also counterexamples where business is associated with decency, such as the management of Starbucks coffee which listened to protests concerning the alleged contracting of Guatemalan coffee pickers at \$0.02 a pound for coffee that was sold in its stores for \$8.00 a pound. In response, Starbucks came out with a code on working conditions, wages, child labor, and the local environment that could change the coffee industry (Browder, 1996). Clearly, however, as demonstrated by the examples given in the previous paragraphs, those associated with business are possibly, on occasion, less than virtuous. Even if one does not agree entirely, one can understand why some people might question

the compatibility of Christianity and business.

### Support For Compatibility

Though the preceding examples raise legitimate concern and lend reasoning for why some are skeptical of the compatibility of Christianity and business, one is unable to make definite conclusions based entirely upon anecdotal evidence. This paper further examines Christianity and business and presents other equally plausible suppositions. The paper does not argue that the examples provided in the previous section are just or unjust, simply that they do not preclude one who is a Christian from participating in business.

One conjecture is that Christianity and business are compatible on two distinct grounds: (1) For one who is a Christian, one’s faith is all consuming and should, to some degree, penetrate all areas of life, including business, (2) In both a broad and narrow definition of the term *business*, it is extremely difficult for one to remove oneself entirely from business. To assist this exploration, we will examine *bluffing*, an aspect of business that may not be conspicuously compatible with Christianity.

### Plausible Interpretations of Integration

There are many aspects of business that may appear in conflict with one who is a Christian. For illustrative purposes, one such contention will be examined further. Other questionable issues could be studied in a similar fashion. Specifically, it will be analyzed how the friction can be resolved for one who is a Christian yet participates in business where

*Carr...argues...that one’s private morality...should be removed from business.*

there is often a necessity to tell half-truths, bluff, or even lie.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a conflict given that both Jesus and Paul include deceit with other evils such as theft, murder, and adultery (Mark 7:21-13). Jesus repeatedly condemns the Pharisees for not practicing what they preach (Matthew 23:1-7). James instructs us that special attention should not be given to those with wealth and power (James 2:1-4).

For one who might not be convinced that business occasionally requires a form of deceitfulness, Albert Carr’s timeless and intriguing article *Is Business Bluffing Ethical?* is very persuasive. Carr, however, argues

passionately that one’s private morality (e.g., religious beliefs) can and should be removed from business. Carr parallels business to the game of poker where deception and bluffing are simply norms of the game: “Ethics of business are game ethics, different from the ethics of religion” (Carr, p. 144). Carr quotes Henry Taylor, the British

statesman who contended that “falsehood ceases to

be falsehood when it is understood on all sides that the truth is not expected to be spoken” (Carr, p. 143) and maintains that this is an accurate description of not only poker but also business.

Carr provides many examples of *ethical bluffing*. The role of a defendant’s attorney is to get her client off, not to reveal the truth. Each day countless business-people feel constrained to say *yes* to their bosses when they secretly believe *no*, and this is generally accepted as a permissible strategy when the alternative might be the loss of a job (Carr, p. 143). Most interviewees typically strive to put their best foot forward while concealing their weaknesses.

Although sound business strategy does not always contradict ethical ideals, the businessperson that intends to be a winner must have a game player's attitude. Carr believes that if a businessperson allows herself to be torn between a decision based on business considerations and one based on her private ethical code, the psychological consequences may be severe (Carr, p. 149).

For those who advocate the compatibility of Christianity and business, there are at least two viable responses to Carr's discussion of business bluffing. One position is to concur with Carr. That is, bluffing may not be an acceptable trait in all areas of one's life, but bluffing is permissible in business, including by those who are Christians. It could be argued that the Bible does contain several instances of bluffing, indicating that bluffing is not only permissible, it is biblical. Sarah practices a form of bluffing when she pretends to be Abraham's sister, allowing Abraham to be treated well and not killed (Genesis 12:13, Genesis 20:2). Joseph, accomplishing a bluff equal to that of a seasoned poker player, pretends to not recognize his brothers and speaks harshly to them (Genesis 42:7) while turning

his back to conceal his tender weeping (Genesis 42:24). Joseph even practices entrapment (an act that even a poker player might deplore) by placing silver in his brother's sack to give the appearance of thievery (Genesis 42:25). Rahab's ability to bluff saves the lives of two spies that she has hidden when they are sought by the king of Jericho. When the king of Jericho demands to see the spies that Rahab has hidden, Rahab convinces the king that she knows little about the spies and that they have fled the city (Joshua 2:1-14). These are only a few examples of the numerous occurrences contained in the Bible of godly people bluffing. Consequently, one can arguably defend the position that bluffing is a permissible Christian trait, and bluffing in business by one who is a Christian is not incompatible or inconsistent.

A second viable and more stringent position, however, would be to disagree with Carr. One might contend that bluffing, in most instances, is a violation of Christian principles. Therefore, the integration of Christianity and business forbids one who is a Christian to bluff in business. Even for those who embrace such a position, most would probably

agree that there are exceptions. For example, bluffing and deception are sometimes virtuous, as was the case in World War II when some noble people hid Jews and deceived Nazis in order to protect the lives of the people they were hiding. Occasionally, businesspeople may also have opportunities to perform such righteous acts of bluffing and deception: the main protagonist, Schindler, of the movie *Schindler's List* is one example. Schindler bankrupted his company as he continued to hire workers from the Nazis while refusing to produce instruments of war in his factory. Virtuous bluffing and deception, however, may be the exception rather than the rule, and, other than the rare anomaly, a follower of Christ possibly should not practice such deceptions.

This is a difficult position, for as Carr astutely observes, Christians that condemn business bluffing are often the most avid participants of the game. Carr recounts the story of a businessperson who claimed to have the highest ethical standards, yet practiced bluffing in many areas, including advertising a product in a way that gave it the appearance of being better than it actually was and hiring a lobbyist

to persuade a state legislature with questionable methods.

The Bible provides abundant support to challenge Carr's fundamental position. Again, both Jesus and Paul include deceit with other evils such as theft, murder, and adultery (Mark 7:21-23, Romans 1:29-32). Granted, this interpretation of integrating Christianity and business is often more difficult and less appealing because it may be prohibitive to business success (Porter and Vander Veen, 1997). This difficulty, however, may simply give credence to its validity because it concurs with Christ's teaching that "small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14).

It should be noted that this position does not assert that one who is a Christian should not participate in business. It simply argues that it may be more difficult and success may be more elusive. But again, this is also biblical in that Jesus promised that those who follow Him do not belong to the world and will be hated and persecuted by the world (John 15:18-21).

Though there are many aspects of business that may be or may appear to be in contradiction with Christianity, this does not

preclude one who is a Christian from participating in business. As has been illustrated with the issue of *business bluffing*, there are at least two positions. One position is that, after careful examination, the conflict is nonexistent (hopefully with biblical support), and there is no reason for a

Christian not to participate in business. A second position is that though there may be a

conflict, the conflict can be resolved by not participating in this aspect of business or by changing this aspect of business. Therefore, a Christian is permitted to participate in business, albeit participation is often with a handicap (e.g., without the privilege to bluff). A similar type of analysis can often be performed for other issues that are contentious to the compatibility of Christianity and business, such as those described in an earlier section of this paper (e.g., wage inequities, downsizing, advertising, exploitation of labor in developing countries).

### **The Extensiveness of Business**

To this point, it has been conjectured that though there may

exist many aspects of business that oppose or appear to oppose Christianity, this does not preclude one who is a Christian from participating in business. It will now be discussed that even should one wish to remove oneself completely from business, this would be an extremely

difficult task.

First, it should be addressed that even the desire to not participate in

business may not be appropriate. Proper motivation might be that one believes God's plan for oneself is to be a mechanic, plumber, physician, professor, or any such profession that has a primary function, in a conventional sense, other than business. Improper motivation, on the other hand, might be a Christian who does not want to be associated with the *evils* of business such as layoffs, wage inequities, labor exploitation, or money (the Bible clearly warns of the dangers of money; Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 19:23-24, Luke 6:24, etc.). However, since all areas of life and all occupations have problems and have been touched by sin (Romans 5:12), Jesus does not ask that one remove oneself from the world,

but rather to not conform to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:2). Christians should be involved in all areas, including business, so as to be salt to the world (Matthew 5:13, Mark 9:50, etc.) and to not hide their light (Mark 5:14-16). Jesus himself did not avoid those who are sinful (Mark 2:15-17), calling those who are Christians to follow His example. These sentiments are echoed in the following Confession of Faith contained in the *Psalter Hymnal*:

*The rule of Jesus Christ covers the whole world. To follow this Lord is to serve him everywhere, without fitting in, as light in the darkness, as salt in a spoiling world (Psalter Hymnal, p. 1033).*

Therefore, if a Christian chooses not to enter business because it is tainted by the world, one's motivation may not be biblically grounded, and the reasoning may be weak.

However, should one still wish to abstain from business, it is unclear as to how this can be accomplished given the fact that business is directly or indirectly related to most professions and touches practically everyone's personal life. Children buy candy,

adolescents have paper routes, adults buy and sell automobiles, homes, and invest for retirement. Even death is a highly business-oriented event. Decisions must be made regarding the price and quality of the funeral, casket, and vault to be purchased. Taken to the extreme, monks who attempt to shun the world often are still unable to escape business. There is still food, clothing, and shelter to be purchased, and possibly the occasional record deal to negotiate, that is if one is a Benedictine Monk of Santo Domingo de Silos! As Lunn and Klay write:

*...whereas Mother Teresa's "welfare" deeply depends on the well-being of those she ministers to and Donald Trump's is more narrowly private, both will consider buying supplies before their price increases if given the opportunity (Lunn and Klay, p. 157).*

Naturally, Mother Teresa participated less than Donald Trump, but she did not completely elude business.

It can be argued that Jesus did not disdain business, but embraced it. As a carpenter (Mark 6:3) for a portion of his life, Jesus probably practiced business.

Jesus' ministry with his disciples made use of money and commerce as is evidenced by the need to appoint Judas as treasurer of the funds (John 13:29). Even Christ's tomb was arranged and prepared through trade by Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea (Matthew 27:57). Parables that Jesus told, including the parable of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1-16), the landowner (Matthew 21:33-40), and the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), often involved businesspeople. In addition, the people that Jesus called as disciples, the ones close to Jesus, and the ones who followed Jesus had professions directly or indirectly related to business. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all fishermen (Matthew 4:18-21), Matthew collected taxes (Matthew 9:9), Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14), and Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).

Thus far, this paper has proposed two ideas: (1) It is not incompatible for one who is a Christian to participate in business, and (2) Most people have little alternative but to participate in business, either directly or indirectly. Should these premises be credible, one might postulate that business, by

its very nature, may be a part of God's creation and that God has created us to not only participate in business but to transform business.

### **A Complex Calling**

Assuming business is indeed a Christian calling, one in which all participate either directly or indirectly, how then should those who are Christians embrace this calling? Certainly the motivation of one who is a Christian should be to serve the Lord (Ephesians 6:7, I Corinthians 10:31). This alone, however, is not an adequate measurement. Motivation is an elusive objective in that we often know very little about our true beliefs and desires. The Bible warns that some people who profess to be Christians and believe they are serving the Lord may be mistaken. Though these people proclaim God as Lord, God will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Business begs a multitude of questions and it is often difficult to postulate as to God's will in regards to these questions. Is there any type of advertising and promotion that receives God's approval? Is it wrong to hire a celebrity to endorse products? Is

it proper to use psychological pricing (e.g. intending that the consumer will perceive \$299 as "about \$200")? How much should employees be compensated? Should benefits be extended to significant others and not only spouses? God's plan for business is not always obvious, and even with wisdom, prayers, and maturity, the mind of God may not be discernable.

Though Christians often seek answers within the Bible, the Bible is sometimes troublesome. Since it does not specifically address all business situations, the teachings may occasionally appear contradictory, and many teachings are difficult. For example, does I Corinthians 6:5, "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" teach that a businessperson should never take a delinquent or unscrupulous customer to court? Proverbs 17:8, "A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds," and Proverbs 17:32, "A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice," may send conflicting messages to a businessperson seeking the Bible's teaching

concerning joining a political action committee, hiring a lobbyist, or paying grease money to foreign officials. In regards to employee layoffs, what biblical teaching, if any, is applicable? Is it the teaching of John 11:50, which could be interpreted as giving approval for the layoff of a few people to keep the entire business from perishing, or the teaching of Matthew 18:12, which could support the position that not one employee should be lost? Further, how is it possible, for one who is a Christian, to survive in the competitive arena of business, if Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:39-42 is implemented?

*But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*

There are no simple and obvious answers. Those who are Christians have a daunting task in business, particularly those who

choose the harsh road and attempt to integrate all teachings of Christ, including those that are difficult. Those who are Christians and sincerely wrestle with integrating Christianity and business are worthy of support and prayer.

### Christ's Transforming Power

The transforming power of Christ through Christians has the potential to accomplish greatness for God's kingdom in all areas of business. Chewning et al. (p. 210) proposes three questions that a Christian should ask prior to entering a certain business. Does the product/

service do something positive? What is the product's/service's primary intention? Does the product/

service use resources efficiently? A caveat, however, is that because God's ways are so far above ours, and often beyond our comprehension (Isaiah 55:9), these questions are fine suggestions, but are only a narrow basis through which to gain some insight. It is impossible to irrefutably determine God's will from these three subjective

questions alone. For some situations, many other questions should be explored, while in some situations, even these three simple questions may prove too restrictive.

For example, a Christian must be careful not to avoid certain businesses needlessly. Christians sometimes select a certain industry, such as tobacco, and categorize it as ungodly. When examined closer, however, though there may be degrees of sinfulness, no business is above reproach. For example, the athletic apparel industry that outsources labor to developing

countries, sometimes at subsistence wages while paying athletes enormously to seduce children into

thinking their self-worth is dependent upon wearing fashionable athletic apparel, is arguably just as sinful.

As previously discussed, no area of life is free of sin, and to avoid a certain business, so as to not be associated with its *evils*, may be contrary to the will of God. Almost all industries are in need of Christ's transforming

power and there may exist only a few businesses that a Christian should avoid priori. Possibly, only those businesses that have no redeeming aspect should be beyond consideration for Christians.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, certain businesses, though considered suspect by the criteria of Chewning et al., may be permissible if the motivation is to transform and redeem the business for the kingdom of God. Jesus, who sought to transform the sinners of the world (Luke 5:30) serves as an example to Christians to "transform both business and the world beyond" (Smith and Steen, p. 38).

Christians, with God's guidance, have the potential to find positive solutions that reduce the widening disparity of income. Grieved by employees harmed by layoffs, Christian managers will search and pray for alternative solutions before such actions are taken. Christian manufacturers and consumers will love children in developing countries and be aware that they are God's children. Because of this love and awareness, Christians will strive to pay these workers at least a fair wage so as to help increase their standard of living. Christians will reject any aspect of deceitful marketing, including that which encourages

consumers to covet. The transformation that is possible by God working through Christian's participation in business is formidable.

### Enhancing The Virtues of Business

Although some negative stereotypical notions of business may be deserved, arguably there is also much inherent goodness within business, and Christians should enhance these virtues. Business organizations generate work and employment for individuals. For those who believe that "The Bible describes work as central to who we are as human beings" and "A biblical perspective on work acknowledges the integral role of human work in God's created order for His World" (Ward, p. 7), then the creation of employment is consistent with God's will. In addition, the commendable byproducts of employment are almost unlimited. Positive self-worth and a sense of usefulness are increased when one works. Work allows people to explore, utilize, discover, and expand the gifts and talents God has given them. From work, people are able to provide food, shelter, and clothing for themselves, their families, and those who are less fortunate.

In addition to employment and its merits, businesses often provide services or products that contribute and improve the lives of people. Farmers grow food to eat, truckers transport products to where they are needed, retailers provide a place for people to conveniently shop, teachers educate, and manufacturers build products ranging from jets that allow families to be together to wheelchairs to help the disabled. The inherent goodness of business and its positive ramifications provide further reasoning for Christians to celebrate and find joy when they participate in business.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to further dispel the belief still held by many that Christianity and business are not compatible. As a starting point, insight was obtained by discussing specific examples of less than virtuous aspects of business and recognizing that business is not above reproach and that it is understandable why many have difficulty accepting the compatibility of Christianity and business. The first premise proposed was that, though there may be different interpretations of how it is accomplished, one who

is a Christian should, to some degree, integrate one's faith in all areas of life including business. The specific example of integrating one's faith in business where *deceit* or *bluffing* is almost obligatory was examined. The second premise proposed that virtually everyone participates in business to some degree, either directly or indirectly. Thus, by the very nature of creation, Christianity and business may be compatible. It was recognized that practicing business is sometimes difficult, and knowing God's will is not always simple or possible. Business, however, provides wonderful opportunities for transformation. Further, business has tremendous virtues for which a Christian can delight in participating.<sup>3</sup>

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>One might argue that telling half-truths or bluffing is not limited to business, but is a necessity for all professions and areas of life.  
<sup>2</sup>To avoid simplicity, examples of businesses without redeeming aspects are not provided. A litmus test for determining which businesses, if any, are without redeeming aspects does not exist, nor will there be a consensus among Christians.  
<sup>3</sup>The author would like to thank the editor and three anonymous referees for their invaluable comments that assisted in making this a much stronger paper.

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