

Apologetics Without Apology: Developing Arguments for the Existence of God from Business and Economics

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, the author offers the reader ways for the business practitioner to participate in Christian apologetics. Apologetics is defined. The purpose and tasks of apologetics is described. The author makes a case for the importance of Christian apologetics and introduces several tactics that offer potential for the Christian apologist. A table describes the potential opportunities to develop Christian apologetics for the context of business and economics. The article concludes with an introduction to the limitations of apologetics in the context of business and a call for further research in the application of Christian apologetics in business.

KEYWORDS: apologetics, agnostics, atheists, defending the faith, egoism, evolution, existence of God, business, economics, interdependence, relativism, skepticism, systems

INTRODUCTION

Chewning and Haak (2002) challenged Christian business scholars to think “[t]he practice of biblical apologetics will do more to aid in the development of a Christian (biblically-enlightened) world/life view than almost anything else one can do to nurture a Christian perspective on life” (p. 59). They presented a few case studies to help students learn how to defend their faith in the marketplace. They suggested that training in apologetics is a “better training tool than other methods” (p. 65). This means, for these authors, that a Christian scholar who helps students think Christianly in the marketplace “can do nothing better” (p. 67).

Chewning and Haak (2002) made other strong statements. “Biblical ignorance is the bane (killer) of integration. Biblical apologetics confronts and seeks to overcome biblical ignorance. Biblical apologetics provides the Holy Spirit an opportunity to use the Word of God to renovate the world/life view of the students” (pp. 67-68). One might ask, to what degree have Christian business scholars taken this challenge seriously?

Authors who promoted evangelism as a valid activity in the Christian marketplace include Silviso (2002), Gazelka (2003), MacKinzie and Kirkland (2003), Stevens and Banks (2005), Marshall (2005), and Bynes and Geer (2014). In spite of the strong emphasis in sharing the

Gospel and sharing personal religious experience in the marketplace, an area of emphasis that appears to have received little explicit attention for business practitioners is that of Christian apologetics.

PURPOSE STATEMENT & ORIENTATION FOR THE READER

The purpose of this paper is to offer the reader potential ways for the business practitioner to participate in the Christian apologetics process. In accomplishing this purpose, it is hoped that weight will be added to previous voices which have encouraged Christian business scholars to integrate this dimension of faith and work. For some business practitioners and some business scholars (including students), the work of faith integration may not be complete until the issues relevant to apologetics are addressed. Therefore, the author seeks to encourage readers to participate in the apologetic work of faith integration, without apology.

To accomplish its purpose, the author will address the following concerns:

- The definition, goals and tasks of apologetics
- The case for why Christian apologetics is important for business practitioners
- The need to contextualize Christian apologetics

- The contributions of business scholars to the work of apologetics
- Tactics that offer some potential for the Christian apologist in business
- The limits of Christian apologetics in the business context
- The implications for business scholars

DEFINITION, GOALS, AND TASKS OF APOLOGETICS

The word apology, as used in this paper, is not the same as the common use of the term when we mean that we regret something or we say we are sorry for something. The classical definition of “apology” is a reasoned justification for a position. Christian apologetics is more about defending a Christian worldview or justifying the reasonableness of religious faith.

In the middle of the 20th century, Richardson (1947) offered this definition: “Apologetics deals with the relationship of the Christian faith to the wider sphere of man’s ‘secular’ knowledge ...with a view to showing that faith is not at variance with the truth that these enquiries have uncovered” (p. 19). Closer to our time, Craig (1994) said, “Apologetics... is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith” (p. xi). What the reader might find interesting is that contemporary Christian apologists ignore or gloss over economics and business practice as a context that offers potential for apologetics.

When atheists, agnostics, and skeptics question the authority of the Bible, the problem of suffering, the validity of the biblical worldview for contemporary life, the existence of God, the resurrection of Christ, or the reality of other miracles, the Christian apologist attempts to answer those challenges. By answering them, the apologist hopes to reduce or eliminate the intellectual barriers to saving faith. When the Christian encounters someone who is a self-acknowledged egoist or relativist and who rejects moral absolutes and the moral authority of Scripture, the apologist has a legitimate work to do defending faith in a Supreme Moral Law-giver. Egoism is defined here as the normative belief that the standard of right and wrong conduct should be based on self-interest. As used here, relativism is defined as the normative belief that objective, universal moral principles do not exist in an absolute sense. Its claim is that any two cultures or people can hold conflicting views on what is moral, and both can be right.

What are the goals and tasks of apologetics? Apologetics has a preparatory function for evangelism. The ultimate goal of apologetics is the conversion of unbelievers, moving them to a commitment to Jesus Christ (Beilby, 2011, p. 32; Groothuis, 2011, p. 28, 39). But conversion is more than just emotional change of the heart. It also is an intellectual process involving cognitive assent to the truthfulness of certain propositions (Groothuis, 2011, p. 39). Taylor (2006) puts it this way: “[T]he aim of Christian apologetics is to cultivate Christian commitment among both believers and unbelievers by means of a relevant reservoir of reasons...” (pp. 20-21). This line of thinking suggests that apologetics is mainly centered on instrumental goals.

On the one hand, faith that accepts salvation completed by God in Christ alone is not mere intellectual assent to the truthfulness of certain propositions (James 2:19). Among other things, faith is the commitment of the whole heart, the whole being, to following Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:38; Mark 8:34; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9). On the other hand, there is a legitimate intellectual dimension to Christian faith. According to McGrath (1995), “[W]hat holds many people back from becoming Christians is a genuine lack of understanding of what Christianity is all about, or why it could have any relevance to their lives” (p. 7).

WHY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IS IMPORTANT IN BUSINESS

In this section, the author will discuss several reasons why it is important to apply apologetics to marketplace conversations.

Biblical Support for Apologetics

Scripture narratives provide evidence that apologetics was used by faithful followers of God in ancient times. When Moses confronted Pharaoh to demand the release of Israel, Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2; See also Exodus 9:16-17). Moses and Aaron attempted to persuade Pharaoh, in part, in response to Pharaoh’s claim. Others questioned the identity of Israel’s God or the moral authority of Yahweh (2 Chronicles 32:15-19; Job 21:15; Psalm 10:4-13; 53:1; Proverbs 30:9). King David saw his role, in part, as representing the moral authority of God to kings of other lands (Psalm 119:46). The

three Hebrew captives engaged in a form of defense of their faith in God when threatened by the punishment of the Babylonian king (Daniel 3:16-18). One might argue that Amos, the shepherd/business professional, engaged in apologetics as a prophet when speaking out against the cultural influences of his day that had undermined loyalty to the sign of God's covenant relationship with Israel (Amos 8). The egoist Sabbath-keepers of his day spent Sabbath hours plotting ways to cheat their customers. Early in the Apostle Paul's ministry, soon after his conversion, Paul vigorously defended the identity of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:22). We see Paul in action defending a theistic worldview among the Greek philosophers when he visited Athens (Acts 17). He also engaged in defense of his faith in the synagogue and in the marketplace (Acts 18:4, 28). We might see the whole Gospel of Matthew as an apologetic defense of the identity of Jesus Christ. Matthew draws upon Old Testament prophecy. He shows Jesus in action fulfilling prophecy. Narratives show Jesus answering the criticisms of the religious rulers of the day.

Apologetics is commanded in the Bible (1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3; Titus 1:9). "[All] Christians are called to do lifestyle apologetics. But only some Christians will be called to the task of developing arguments for the Christian faith and being on the front line of the dialogue between Christianity and the exponents of other belief systems" (Beilby, 2011, pp. 151-152). Beilby does not mention the marketplace as a context where other belief systems are dominant and the work of an apologist may not be the calling of every business practitioner. There are some Christians in business, however, who are at the front line of marketplace dialogue and who, if skilled in apologetics, may be effective in responding to other worldviews. In this, they can be a support to other Christians in business.

An additional note regarding lifestyle is warranted here. It can be argued that the consistent lifestyle of a believer, apologist or not, provides an important, visible expression of faith that the skeptic cannot wholly discount. Augsburger (2006), for example, says, "When witness is offered with nothing to authenticate it, it is a matter of words, fitly spoken and full of content, yet not a part of the actual context. Witness to faith that emerges from the action of faithful presence, concern, and service is congruent when the content spoken and the context experienced validate each other" (p. 176).

Apologetics and Evangelism

The importance of apologetics stems from its close relationship with evangelism. Some would use the term

"discipling" or "disciple-making" instead of evangelism. Instead of taking the reader's time to consider nuanced differences between the terms, the author will use the term evangelism since it is often used by apologists. The author will also consider evangelism as a process rather than a one-time event. As a process, the focus is on the role of humans who serve as ambassadors for God. Nothing in the paper suggests that evangelism, apologetics, or the process of bringing a person from unbelief to faith is solely the work of human agents. Ultimately, it is God's power that affects the depth of spiritual change referred to by speaking of a person coming to faith or repentance and belief.

Beilby (2011) says that apologetics and evangelism both "have a common general goal: encouraging commitment to Jesus Christ.... On this understanding, apologetics clears the ground for evangelism..." (p. 32). Groothuis (2011) says, "Apologetics can be used to remove or diminish intellectual obstacles that hinder people from embracing Christ as Lord; thus it serves as pre-evangelism..." (p. 28). McGrath (1995) agrees with these views.

Apologetics is one part of the larger process of evangelism, but it would be wrong to think of apologetics as occurring only at one time during the process such as "pre-evangelism." For some, considering the intellectual questions that are barriers to faith may occur earlier in the process. Such questions might arise at any point or at multiple points along the process. For this reason, the author resisted creating a visual illustration of an evangelism model that attempts to show where apologetics comes. The reader can consider whatever model of evangelism or disciple-making that best represents his or her tradition. Apologetics might be applicable to any parts in the model.

For some believers, the kinds of questions that apologists answer might arise much later after they have joined with a community of other believers. In other words, questions occur after we assume that the evangelism process is complete. The point is that the audience for apologetics is not just atheists and skeptics. Believers, too, sometimes have questions that need to be addressed. "In reality, apologetic conversations with skeptics and agnostics compose a relatively small percentage of the total number of actual apologetic conversations. It is far more common to have apologetic conversations with other Christians" (Beilby, 2011, p. 27; see also Groothuis, 2011, pp. 39-41). Therefore, apologetics is not only useful as an early step in the process of evangelism; it is also useful at other times during the life journey.

Context: An Apathetic, Diversion-prone, Secular Marketplace Culture

Occasionally “the world” is hostile toward God, but more often it is simply “indifferent to the existence and reality of God” (Gay, 1998, p. 13). McGrath also comments on the issue of relevance saying, “[W]hat holds many people back from becoming Christians is a genuine lack of understanding of what Christianity is all about, or why it could have any relevance to their lives” (McGrath, 1995, p. 7). Many in society may not really care what they believe about God or whether their beliefs are intellectually sound. This indifference, while promising as a salve against cultural intolerance, may be one of the greatest barriers to people seriously considering the claims of the Christian worldview.

The concerns of these experienced apologists regarding contextualization have a poignant application to the world of the marketplace and, more specifically, the context of business organizations. It might be argued that the cultures of many secular business organizations are indifferent to the reality of God. More than this, they are often openly hostile toward conversations about religion. Conversations about religion are still taboo in many secular organizations. This presents a major challenge to the Christian apologist. Added to this are the legal constraints that Christians face when desiring to talk about religion in the workplace.

Traditional apologetics attempts to respond to intellectual questions of skeptics. Perhaps a more pressing problem for those who work in the marketplace is that the marketplace lives as if religious faith is unimportant: if God exists, he is largely irrelevant. Instead of actively challenging the pillars of Christianity, many simply ignore it. While these persons may not be atheists per se, their lifestyle and thinking patterns render them essentially “practical atheists” (Gay, 1998, pp. 2-3). Keller (2008) sees contemporary culture in a similar light: “[R]esistance to authority in moral matters is now a deep current in our culture. Freedom to determine our own moral standards is considered a necessity for being fully human” (Keller, 2008, p. 46).

Pervasiveness of Egoism & Relativism

The pervasiveness of relativism in contemporary culture cannot be underestimated (Gay, 1998; Keller, 2008). Given the current perspective of post-modern business students attending Christian colleges (McMahon, Locke, & Roller, 2015), perhaps we should no longer be shocked that so many are egoists and relativists. Myers and Noebel

(2015) say that the fundamental question of ethics is “who makes the rules? God or men?” (p. 230) They assert that the difference between these two is not trivial. It is fundamental to the differences between worldviews. Relativism is at the root of the differences.

Dominant Theories of the Firm

With few exceptions, major theories of the firm are egoistic (from the perspective of the organization). It might be argued that these theories are potentially contrary to Scripture’s perspective on moral authority. Of course, this might be debatable. Few Christians have attempted to start such a debate by offering an in-depth review of these theories from the Christian or biblical perspective. Yet, these are some of the theories taught in Christian business schools and are, it might be argued, accepted as valid. Examples of the dominant theories are the following: The agency theory of the firm (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), neoclassical economic theory (Veblen, 1904), the resource-based theory (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984), the behavioral theory (Cyert & March, 1963), the evolutionary theory (Alchian, 1950; Chandler, 1992), the transaction-cost theory (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1971,) and the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984).

By way of example, representing what might be considered the dominant view of our day, a standard, popular principles of finance textbook used in some Christian business schools puts the matter in openly egoistic terms: “The goal of the firm, and therefore of all managers and employees, is to maximize the wealth of the owners for whom it is being operated” (Gitman & Zutter, 2011, p. 10). This idea is offered in the Brealey and Myers (2000) and Mansfield et al., (2002) texts as well. Yes, other stakeholders are acknowledged by these scholars and ethics is considered in such books, but briefly. The rest of the content of these and similar books speaks loud and clear, the *raison d’être* of business is primarily about building the “net present value” of future cash—i.e., wealth.

If Christian apologetics is an important function in the Christian community, and if apologetics is important for marketplace ministry, to what degree is it important for some Christians in business to become skilled in apologetics?

CONTEXTUALIZING CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Leading Christian apologists have largely glossed over or, in some cases, ignored economics and business as a

potential fruitful context for the work of defending the faith. At the same time, some of these apologists recognize the important influence that current culture has on the context for evangelizing. They also recognize the importance of contextualizing the defense of the Christian faith. McGrath (1992, 1995), a leading Christian apologist, says that the effective apologist is one who listens first and then offers resources tailored to the needs of the audience. He says that a skill the apologist needs is the ability to identify “the aspect of the gospel which is going to be of greatest importance to your friend [the skeptic].... All you are doing is working out which of the many facets of the gospel will be of particular relevance to their situation” (McGrath, 1995, p. 25). Contextualizing is also supported by Taylor (2006), Geisler (2013), Beilby (2011), and Groothuis (2011). With this direction in mind, what facets of the Gospel may be of greatest relevance to people in the marketplace? This question has largely been unexplored by apologists.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO APOLOGETICS BY BUSINESS & ECONOMICS SCHOLARS

Just as there have been few Christian apologists who have considered business as an important context for apologetics, few Christian business scholars have approached the topic of apologetics.

Publications of the Christian Business Faculty Association

A few scholars in the CBFA have encouraged Christian business faculty to engage students in discussions and, in so doing, combat notions that are antithetical to Christian thought. The contribution of Chewning and Haak (2002) to apologetics has been introduced in this paper. Other scholars are worth mentioning here. Depending on how broadly the term apologetics is defined, readers may think of other examples of authors who have essentially offered suggestions for an apologetic treatment of challenges to Christian faith.

McCormick (2004) offers a way to discuss Ayn Rand’s novel *Atlas Shrugged*, in which Rand portrays how egoism is the answer to mankind’s problems. Kellaris (2005) shows how instructors can use classroom demonstrations to illustrate proneness to circumstantial biases that can influence students’ ethical judgment. Such a teaching strategy can contribute to counteracting moral relativism. Hoover (2007) touches on some issues directly

relevant to apologetics in his article regarding teaching of ethics, giving illustrations of how to engage students in discussion about biblical themes at the same time as exposing them to some traditional hotly contested questions in ways that are relevant to students.

Shelton (2010) advocates introducing business students to the writings of C. S. Lewis. Doing so can be helpful in combatting relativism. A business ethics course seems to be one logical place for apologetics to be addressed, but it is not the only venue, as illustrated by some of the authors highlighted here. In the process of exploring the question of why God would create, Brown (2014) also comments on Hegel, arguably the father of postmodern relativism (Craig, 1994, p. 56; Schaeffer, 1998, p. 34), and the philosophical notion of spontaneous order, based on the theory of evolution, espoused by Frederick Hayek. Brown offers Christian theism as an alternative explanation for social spontaneity. Logue (1999) discusses the presuppositions that seem to be at the root of current university students. He encourages Christian business faculty with ways to confront shared values prevalent among some students which undermine Christian faith. More recently, McMahone, Locke, and Roller (2015) present the learning needs of postmodern business students that Christian business faculty meet when teaching faith and business integration. They provide examples of adjustments that may be required of Christian business faculty to meet these needs. Their work contributes to shaping the work of the Christian business instructor in a particular context. Implicit in their article, though the term “apologetics” is not used, is that Christian business instructors have a legitimate role in serving faith integration efforts by being apologists. Their challenge seems to be in close alignment with the purpose of this article.

Other Contributions to Christian Apologetics

The book, *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (Chewning, Eby & Roels, 1990) has some elements that one might characterize as apologetic. The book attempts to portray that a Christian faith perspective on business is reasonable and worthy of acceptance.

The work of other scholars contains elements relevant to apologetics to the degree that they represent the attractiveness of a Scriptural perspective on selected business topics. Examples include Novak (1981); Griffiths (1984); Nelson (1993); Lee (2011); Long (2000); Grudem (2003); Long, Fox and York (2007); and Wong and Rae (2011). Where these and other authors stop short of

apologetics is usually in the extended, explicit treatments of concerns of atheists, agnostics, and skeptics toward the biblical worldview.

The contributions of four scholars (Boulding, 1956; North, 1987; Richards, 2010; and Sandelands, 2003) come closer to the responses offered by Christian apologists. In the 1950s, economist Kenneth Boulding (1956) proposed the notion that systems (including economic systems) are hierarchical and that the suprasystem under which all other systems exist is best explained by what we would call today Christian theism. Boulding's ideas, which seem to lead to apologetic conversations, have largely been ignored rather than further developed or refined, even by Christian economists.

A generation later, North (1987) made one of the few contributions to the discussion of how applied economics and apologetics overlap. He attempted to show the weaknesses of modern economic theory to prove "that modern secular economics cannot possibly be valid, given the explicit presuppositions of modern economics" (North, 1987, p. xxxv). Economic emphasis on the impersonal nature of the market (which he says is a myth) results in avoiding our moral responsibilities. This is in stark contrast to the biblical view of "cosmic personalism" (North, 1987, p. 6).

If modern economists based their presuppositions on Darwinism, according to Richards (2010), this logically leads to a social order that lacks purpose. Richards disputed what he believed to be an invalid assumption that order naturally emerges from chaos, a foundation of Darwinism and modern economics. "But has modern science really discovered that order emerges from chaos? In fact, modern cosmologists have discovered just the opposite" (Richards, 2010, p. 222).

One of the most explicit attempts to argue for the existence of God comes in the essay by management scholar Lloyd Sandelands (2003). Sandelands attempts to "turn the table on that contemporary relativism that puts statements for and against God on the same moral and factual footing" (p. 168). At the same time, he illustrates one way to deal with a traditional challenge to the Christian worldview, namely, the existence of God. It is in the corporation that Sandelands sees evidence of the theistic God. He employs three arguments to reason inductively. Sandelands does not answer objections that might be launched from atheists. He positions his arguments within the traditional lines of inquiry/argument laid down by Thomas Aquinas. *First*, he believes God is implied in almost all of the management advice for practicing

managers. Economic behavior provides good illustrations of the dual nature of humans. "[O]ur most basic ideas of management predicate God" (p. 170). *Second*, the structure of organizations reveals a social order that suggests the existence of God. Hierarchy, and obedience to authority figures (as children to fathers) is an inescapable dimension of all organizing. This social phenomenon, Sandelands argues, "becomes an argument for God" (p. 171). *Third*, human interactions (love, play, individuation) in the life of organizations implies the existence of God. Individuation shows that humans are both individuals and interconnected with society. In Sandelands's mind, "Our individual freedom in society—our human ability to exercise free will within the confines of a social life—is very much a god-like power" (p. 174). In the end, Sandelands admits, "As a purely logical proposition, we probably cannot close the deal with God without that faith that welcomes truths that come by revelation in addition to those that come by rational empirical inquiry" (p. 175). Nevertheless, his attempts point the direction that others might take to address concerns relevant to apologetics.

STRATEGIES FOR CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS IN BUSINESS

Traditional approaches employed by Christian apologists (e.g., Beilby, 2011; Groothuis, 2011; Keller, 2008, pp. 134-147; McGrath, 1992) fall into one of the following strategies. Each of them, according to Beilby, contains strengths and weaknesses. Some apologists are "evidentialists." They attempt to show evidence of God's existence using facts and/or logic of reasoning to show that the biblical perspective is reasonable and justifiable. "Presuppositionalists" deal with the problems of presuppositions using logic and reasoning. They seek to begin with common ground shared with their critics and then attempt to show that the presuppositions of the Christian worldview are stronger than alternative assumptions. "Experientialists" appeal to personal religious experience as evidence of God. Humans, it is argued, experience a deep longing or emptiness that is filled when they have a religious experience. Others are "eclectic," preferring to use more than one approach.

Considering the traditional challenges lodged at the Christian worldview and the types of strategies that Christian apologists have traditionally developed, Table 1 offers for consideration a matrix describing some of the potential tactics for Christian business apologists to

employ and thereby to contribute to the larger, ongoing work of Christian apologetics.

What follows are examples of how business organizations and the marketplace itself might provide context in support of traditional arguments for the existence of God or argue for the plausibility that the biblical worldview on business and economics is superior to other humanly devised systems.¹

Argument Regarding the Origin of the Universe

Every element in the universe is either dependent on a prior action by other elements or is now dependent upon the element's relationship with other elements. This dependence can be logically traced back to an original cause. Entropy in physical systems shows that a first cause is plausible (Groothuis, 2011, pp. 225-228). Entropy in economics shows that without intelligent, purposeful action taken by persons, economic systems (and other social systems) move gradually toward entropy. From this understanding, it can logically be argued that the universe had a beginning and that it was created by a "first cause," which Christians argue is none other than God.

Humans also need anchors when grasping the purpose of their organization. Raelin (2006) says that one of the jobs of the leader is to give expression "to what members of the group or organization seek to accomplish in their work together.... Meaning-making can come from anyone in the group" (p. 65). Certainly, this is true within a work team as the team looks for a way to articulate what the team is doing or not doing or by "identifying what is missing or isn't happening" (p. 65). However, when it comes to the challenge of expressing the overall purpose of the organization within which each person and work team frames their own purpose, an anchor is needed which is beyond the confines of the team or the organization. It is the contingent, larger purpose which is the anchor for finding meaning. As the pathways of purpose are traced upstream, it is inescapable that we come to the issue of the purpose of the universe.

Every year, many new businesses are formed. These organizations come into existence because of intentionality and purpose that follow from concerted action by

Table 1: Potential Contributions from Christians in Business to the Work of Apologetics

	Support for Existing Apologetic Responses	Developing New Apologetic Responses
Arguing for the existence of God: Evidence from human economic experience (the "created order")	Providing illustrations and analogies potentially useful for arguments. Rationale: such examples will provide the business professional with a context and application readily understood by others in business.	Developing new arguments for the existence of God; offering evidence from economics and business that Christian apologists traditionally have ignored or glossed.
Arguing for the existence of God: Evidence from religious experience	Supporting traditional arguments based on religious experience.	Offering new arguments based on religious experience of Christians in business.
Supporting a biblical worldview and the authority of Scripture	Arguing for the superiority of the biblical worldview of economics, beginning with observable facts and offering a plausible explanation for these facts from a biblical perspective; alternatively, begin with commonly shared human goals of flourishing and argue that the biblical perspective is superior.	Offering new arguments for the authority of Scripture, the plausibility that the biblical perspective on business is superior to other perspectives; offering new answers to traditional challenges to the Bible's authority by pointing to economics and business.
Critiquing alternative worldviews	Providing additional support to critiques of alternative worldviews put forward by Christian apologists; critiquing presuppositions that are the basis of Darwinian economics or egoistic management assumptions; critiquing relativism and egoism as they are applied to business.	Developing new critiques of contemporary secular worldviews; developing new critiques of the dominant "theories of the firm."
Responding to challenges based on the problem of suffering	Contributing to traditional Christian apologetic responses with illustrations from business and economics.	Developing new responses to the problem of suffering based on economics and business.

other things or beings that already exist. Whatever comes into existence occurs because someone intends it to exist.

The Design Argument

This traditional approach attempts to argue from the beauty and complexity of nature back to an original Designer who had purpose in mind, i.e., Intelligent Design. Like other arguments, this argument is not an absolute proof of God's existence. Rather it is an attempt to show that belief in God is plausible, given all available evidence in nature. This author believes that illustrations of this can also be seen among social groups who exchange things of value in the marketplace.

Just as in the natural physical world where beauty exists, so also imbedded in social groups we see imbedded an aesthetic beauty in the fundamental paradoxes of group life (i.e., the individual/group tension and the short-term/long-run tension). It is plausible that these fundamental tensions resulted from the work of an Intelligent Designer rather from chance and adaptation. Adaptation does play a role as persons and leaders of groups make choices for adjusting the degree of emphasis on either the individual needs or, alternatively, emphasis on the community needs.

We see around us in the marketplace the presence of intelligent design and order everywhere. People make decisions for how to organize themselves for productive purposes. Leaders delegate to subordinates the authority to take actions which move the organization toward intended purposes. Human endeavors for achieving social and economic goals occur not by chance but by intent. Design comes only from intelligent beings who make plans, implement these plans, and then check to see to what degree purpose-filled goals have been achieved. These intelligent beings take responsibility to make adjustments when purpose-filled goals are not achieved to the desired degree. If both physical nature and social nature of economic behavior reflect purposeful design, this is a defensible argument that the universe must exist because of the presence of an Intelligent Designer.

Keller (2008) provides some "clues" (but not absolute proofs) from general revelation: the regularity of nature and beauty (pp. 134-147). Both suggest the existence of a theist conception of God. Both have potential support from the world of business and organizations. For example, the human tendency to establish standardized work procedures in order to achieve economic efficiency produces a regularity inside organizations that is, to a great degree, predictable.

The Argument from Demand

Humans are willing to place a value on the things they desire. When they are willing to exchange something of value for the things they desire, this creates what the market calls "demand." Humans may express demand for things outside themselves. Humans sometimes have desires for things that are beyond things in the marketplace, which no object, person, or human relationship can fully satisfy. One might argue then that there must exist something beyond the marketplace, beyond human experience, humans, and their relationships with each other that can satisfy this desire. The most plausible explanation for this is that it is a Supreme Being called God, who is there to satisfy the unfulfilled human desire. While we may not know everything about this Supreme Being that we want to know, we can at least surmise that God exists.

The Unseen But Believable

One of the challenges brought by atheists is that God cannot be seen. Since God cannot be seen, it is doubtful that he exists. The marketplace is filled with things that are unseen but that are believable. In technology we find many "things" that exist but cannot be seen with the eyes (without the aid of other technology): radio waves and other types of electromagnetic forces including microwaves, X-rays, protons, and polarization of light.

Moving into the arena of psychology we find other "things" that are invisible but clearly present: the sense of awe in the presence of beauty; biases in managerial judgment and decision-making; the feeling of attraction to an opportunity, a person, or a risk.

In economics, market forces are largely invisible when buyers and sellers consider the price elasticity of demand, the price elasticity of supply and their values. These "invisible hand" forces lead the players in a free market toward decision-making.

Considering the arena of social interaction in social groups such as business organizations, we find still more "things" that are invisible but are believed to be present: trust and faith in others, hundreds of paradoxes of organizational life, competitive and cooperative dynamics, price elasticity of demand, price elasticity of supply, and the sense of community in social groups inside and outside of work.

Systems theory

In systems theory we find several strands of thought pulled together from the human experience (some of which have been highlighted above) that suggest the

existence of something bigger and greater than what we observe (discussed in Cafferky, 2012). The human experiences of ability, adaptability, dependence, and transcendence (see Grenz, 1994, pp. 170-173) might help us understand some of why humans are never completely satisfied with what we can make and do on our own. Humans, it appears, are on a never-ending search for something that surpasses what we have as we continually shape and reshape our environment. We are dependent but our dependence is greater than what we can create in this finite world. This elusive fulfillment suggests that something greater than this world is necessary for deep, long-lasting meaning and purpose.

The Christian tradition takes a hierarchical view of open systems that allows for a context larger than what is considered in the traditional humanistic approach to physical and social sciences.

A Christian worldview includes the belief that life is lived within a divinely-created suprasystem that encompasses all human and physical subsystems. As such, it includes a theological parameter not measured directly by empirical science but nevertheless believed to exist as demonstrated in the recurring patterns of religious experience across many cultures and times. Because of this, the Christian worldview assumes a completely open system that embraces everything—including the existence of God.

This concept of hierarchy to systems is not new though it has fallen into disuse and has never been a part of the mainstream scholarly discussion of systems theory applied to organizations. When he proposed it in the 1950s as one classification of systems in a hierarchy, the economist Kenneth E. Boulding described these as “transcendental systems,” which were at the pinnacle of all other systems (Boulding, 1956, pp. 197-205). More recently, others using the frameworks of humanism have attempted to show the connection between religious beliefs and the systems at work in human existence (de Raadt, 1996, 1997, 2005, 2006; Eriksson, 2003; Gottfried, 1995; Scott, 1961).

LIMITS OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IN BUSINESS

Christian apologetics does not offer a perfect solution to all challenges lodged against the biblical worldview. Apologetics comes with inherent limitations which should be recognized.

Level of Skill Needed to be Effective

Becoming an effective apologist is not easy. For example, defending the Bible’s authority is difficult (Groothuis, 2011, p. 70). The intellectual skills needed to grapple with difficult philosophical problems require high-level critical thinking skills mixed with the skills of a logician. Assuming a scarcity of time, the more time spent developing abilities as an effective apologist, the less time is available for developing other skills, including business skills.

Presuppositions Require Faith

The theory of evolution, the foundation for Marxism, the premises of egoism, and other worldviews all require that the presuppositions be taken by faith. The same is true for the biblical worldview.

The Marketplace Not Always Conducive

Groothuis (2011) says that the best atmosphere for effective defense of the faith is “one in which there is silence and time to reflect and discuss things that matter most. This ambience should be as free as possible from distracting stimuli... and the hurried harried atmosphere of contemporary culture” (pp. 43-44). If Groothuis is on target, what hope is there that the marketplace is an appropriate setting for apologetics? In secular workplaces, religion is often a taboo subject for conversations. On the other hand, if the marketplace is the only place where some Christians interact with atheists and skeptics, what is the Christian in the marketplace to do in terms of apologetics?

CONCLUSION

Apologetics deals with the intellectual difficulties that people (believers and nonbelievers) have with the claims of Scripture. Should we expect some business professionals to become skilled at defending the faith when challenges are brought to them? If so, who will train these faithful Christians to be more effective in defense of the faith?

The purpose of this paper is to offer the reader potential ways for the business practitioner to participate in the Christian apologetics process. In furthering this purpose, it is hoped that weight will be added to previous Christian business scholars’ voices.

Personal correspondence between this author and a few leading apologists resulted, in all but one case, in the Christian apologist admitting that little or no thought had been given to economics or business. Perhaps eco-

conomic behavior, on the surface, seems to be too remote from religious experience or the concerns of atheists and agnostics. Are we as a faith community living such intellectually fragmented [rather than integrated] lives that the concerns of economics are not raised when we explore the intellectual challenges to Christian faith? In this regard, the dialogue between natural sciences and theology is far ahead of the dialogue between business and theology.

Some of the examples given in this paper may not, on the surface, appear compelling and practical for use in a marketplace that is apathetic toward God. They are presented here with the hope that more dialogue will take place regarding how and when such questions can be addressed and how apologetic responses can be crafted. Thus far, so little has been accomplished in this regard among business scholars and business practitioners it seems that opportunities still exist for improving upon those presented here. It will require a community of thinkers to carry forward this developmental work.

Are Christian business scholars to leave the task of managing doubt to the pastors, Bible teachers, religion professors, and religion classes? Christian natural scientists have not abdicated such a role. Business practitioners also have hard questions, some of which they may not feel comfortable raising with their pastor or theologians, particularly given the scarcity of pastoral resources. Yet, business practitioners carry these questions into the marketplaces of the world.

For their part, Christian theologians who have specialized in apologetics, with a few exceptions, lack in-depth training in economics and business. Also with few exceptions, business scholars do not have regular and sustained scholarly dialogue with theologians. Some of the traditional concerns of apologetics do not appear relevant to the concerns of business and economics. Economics may be viewed as peripheral by trained apologists to the central concerns of defending the faith.

Gills and Nash (2002) say that economics is the missing link in the Christian worldview (p. xi). Could it also be said that apologetics is the missing link in current emphases in marketplace ministries? Could it be that the economic perspective is an important missing link in the larger work of Christian apologetics?

To the degree that Christian business practitioners are exposed to apologetics in church, the business scholar can support this by showing how the biblical worldview for business is plausible. Some business professionals may not have heard of some of the leading Christian apologists cited here who have made the challenges and Christian responses intellectually accessible.

If economic issues are an important dimension of the Christian worldview and a relevant context for many people who work in the marketplaces of the world, this paper argues that apologetics must include economics. If this is valid, then apologists must not ignore economics. But if trained apologists are not trained in handling economic issues, then Christians trained in economics and business have a responsibility to dialogue with them, and even collaborate with them, to place economics as an important context for the work of an apologist.

During the last decade, the number of doctoral degree programs in business and leadership offered at Christian universities in North America has expanded. To what degree are doctoral students in Christian terminal degree programs in business exposed to the philosophical questions relevant to apologetics and the biblical foundations for business? Just as in the undergraduate curriculum and in the MBA degree curriculum, when we face the claims of Scripture and a cultural context largely devoid of solid biblical foundations, the choices that must be made regarding what is put in the curriculum and what is left out are excruciating. Additionally, if the Christian universities that offer terminal degree programs do not contribute to the progress which is needed in developing biblically based, Christian responses to the current challenges to the Christian worldview on business, who will do this? If Christian theologians with specialized training in apologetics are not taking the lead in advancing the conversation (or lack thereof) in the marketplace, who will? If Christian business scholars, so busy teaching secular business skills to students, do not help students with the biblical foundation for business, we let “the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

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FOOTNOTE

- ¹ Other arguments for the existence of God have been put forward by apologists. Some of these (for example, the Moral Argument and the Created Order Argument) are not addressed in this article.

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