



Editor's Note: On September 27, 2013, the Center for Christianity in Business at HBU invited two well respected experts on Christian apologetics, Nancy Pearcey and Dr. Wallace Henley, to participate in a dialogue on worldviews at a luncheon gathering of business people. What follows is an edited excerpt of this enlightening discussion, moderated by Dr. Rick Martinez of HBU. It is presented here for the benefit of the general community of believers in the marketplace.

Martinez: Why is worldview such an important issue for business, and why, specifically, is the biblical worldview important?

Henley: Because a worldview is a big packing box that contains: Vision, Values, Mission, Goals, and Objectives. Worldview is at the heart of the formation of corporate culture, the

inner drive of a company, and its "name" in and before all its environments.

The need for the biblical worldview becomes clear when we realize the alternative worldviews. To mention a few:

Marxism - While a mix of Marxist and free enterprise thought would seem as contradictory, there are subtle forces driven by socialist-leaning progressivism that pop up occasionally in people like George Soros, Warren Buffet, and especially former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg.¹ The thrust of socialist and Progressivist influence within a business is to drive corporations to be instruments of an egalitarian philosophy.

Nihilism - Here there is no overarching meaning or purpose for anything. The impact of this worldview

is to drive the corporation to strong-arm markets and obliterate competition. The corporate culture will be one that goes beyond winning at any cost to a passion to create destructive environments that the business then seeks to exploit for profit. For example, the porn and illegal drug industries are completely nihilistic.

Existentialism - The existentialist will do whatever is necessary to survive in the moment and forget long term consequences. The 2008 financial collapse was brought on by existentialist attitudes in vital institutions in both the public and private sectors. We could also say that the federal government's fiscal policies—as well as that of many states—are existentialist.

Eastern mysticism - This worldview prevails in much of Silicon Valley and the information industry. The Googleplex tries to create a Nirvana-like environment where its whiz kids can get in touch with themselves, the universe, or whatever. This is an attempt to mingle mysticism and the cyberspace, creating a virtual Nirvana. This worldview drives corporations to create virtual worlds into which they seek to drive us deeper and deeper. But actually they create an environment that makes us shallower and shallower. Nicholas Carr's book, *The Shallows*, explores this in depth (pun intended).

Martinez: What are some of the Big Picture questions we need to wrestle with first, to make sure we have the right biblical tools in hand before we get down to practical questions?

Pearcey: Before we get into specific strategies, I'd like to talk about some of the reasons we can find it difficult to apply our Christian convictions in the realm of work. Some of them are attitudes inside the church, and some are barriers set up outside by a secular culture.

What are the attitudes we encounter inside the Christian world? You might say there are two versions of Christian thinking on the subject of work and business - We can call them the Genesis 1 version and the Genesis 3 version.

Let's take the Genesis 3 version first - that's the passage where we read about the fall into sin. So this approach is the classic revivalist message: you're a sinner, you need to get saved. Applied to the wider world, it tends to foster a sharp sacred/secular division. Business is essentially a secular arena, and the main reason it's good for Christians to be out there in the world of business and industry is to evangelize, to be a witness to the gospel, and to make money to give to missions.

What's missing in that approach is that it does not give a biblical view of work itself - a sense that business can be a spiritual calling, a vocation - a conviction that biblical truth applies to the workplace, to management, marketing, and financial policy, etc.

The Genesis 3 approach has an ark mentality - the world is on the path to destruction, so ultimately our pur-

The Panelists



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Wallace Henley is the author of more than 20 books, including the best-selling *Globequake* (Thomas Nelson, 2012). As a leadership consultant, he has conducted leadership conferences in 22 countries. Previously a domestic policy aide in the Nixon White House and staffer in the U.S. Department of Justice and House of Representatives, Henley is currently a senior associate pastor at Houston's Second Baptist Church and an adjunct professor of Worldview Studies at Belhaven University. Henley attended Southwestern Seminary, Trinity Theological Seminary, and holds an honorary doctorate from Encourager Seminary, New Delhi, India.



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pose is to save people out of the world and get them on the ark going to heaven. There is little sense of a spiritual calling even in so-called “secular” professions like business, and if work takes up most of our waking hours, then it means a huge part of life is sealed off from what matters most to us. We are not going to experience the joy and power that God promises us in Scripture.

Martinez: If that’s the Genesis 3 version, what’s the Genesis 1 version?

Pearcey: The other way of thinking about work starts with Genesis 1 - with creation instead of the fall. In the account of creation, we read the first job description - a job description given to the entire human race: “be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth.”

Be fruitful did not just mean raise families - it also means all the other social institutions that historically grow out of the family - school, church, business, government. So the verse means to develop the entire social world.

The second phrase, subdue the earth, means develop the natural world - be creative in harnessing natural resources: Plant crops and process the fiber into clothing; take wood and string and make musical instruments and the arts; take sand, silicone, and make computer chips; take polymers and make plastics and synthetic fibers.

Theologians sometimes call this the cultural mandate, because it means God has called us to build cultures, civilizations. Of course, with the entrance of sin into the world, humans fell off the track, and in salvation we are put back on the track. But what’s the track? What was God’s original purpose in creating the human race? Our original purpose was to be creative in developing God’s entire creation - to cultivate the garden.

We can think of this as the difference between special grace - the grace of salvation - and common grace or providence - the way God upholds and cares for all of creation. As his people, we are called to be agents of God’s special grace by bearing the gospel message of salvation, but we are also called to be agents of God’s common grace - to join in his work in sustaining and caring for all of creation. That’s the cultural mandate.

So in the Genesis 1 view, the work of the entrepreneur or the business manager is not second-class work compared to the minister or missionary. It’s an act of obedience to the cultural mandate - a way to fulfill God’s original purpose in creating the human race in the first place.

Martinez: I would guess that the Genesis 3 version sounds more familiar to most of us.

Pearcey: That’s the version most churches teach. A survey done several years ago by a Notre Dame sociologist asked people how Christianity should affect the world of work and business. The only thing most respondents could think of was injecting devotional activities into the workplace, like prayer meetings or Bible studies. Many stressed their own moral witness on the job. In fact, honesty was the single factor most often

mentioned (listed by more than one out of three evangelicals). A Baptist woman said, “If you [are honest], most everything will take care of itself.” How’s that for an economic policy?

What’s missing in these responses? The understanding of Christianity is limited to devotional activities. Not one of those surveyed talked about a biblical perspective on the work itself, or the need for a biblically informed approach to management or marketing theory. None of them talked about how a Christian might analyze economic theories by biblical principles or their work as service to God or as fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate in Genesis 1.

Here we’ve put our finger on a major reason people have difficulty with the very idea of applying Christianity to the workplace - they think it means quoting Bible verses in the boardroom or asking secular coworkers to pray with you, or some other kind of devotional activity. They do not realize a Christian worldview applies to work in all sorts of different dimensions.

Once we had a guest speaker, a mainstream newspaper reporter, came to the World Journalism Institute when I was there. He was a Christian himself, so what he told our students took us by surprise. He said, “When you enter the newsroom, you have to leave your faith behind. You can’t bring a Christian perspective into your reporting.” It turned out what he meant is you can’t quote John 3:16 in the secular newsroom.

But there is much more to being a Christian in the media. We all know too well how much the media can spin the news. With every news story, reporters make dozens of decisions based on their personal views and values: which stories to pursue; who they choose to interview; which quotes they select for the article; how much space they give to a topic; whether the tone of the story is critical or sympathetic; whether it is featured on the front page or gets buried in the back, etc. It is impossible to report the news without some interpretive framework. If a Christian perspective is ruled out, then secular perspectives are going to rush in to fill the vacuum.

Martinez: What are some good examples of ‘values’ and ‘morals’ commonly affirmed in the world of commerce that could in fact compromise a believer’s integrity and corrupt his/her worldview surreptitiously?

Henley: Let me just address two broad categories of ‘values’ and ‘morals’ prevalent in today’s culture and workplace.

Equivalency - moral values are seen as subjective and of equal validity since they are true for the individual holding them. A subtle twisting of Descartes’ famous aphorism, “I think, therefore, I am,” is now, “I behave, therefore I am right.”

Egalitarianism - In this view people should be guaranteed equal opportunity, but they should also be given equal outcomes. This penalizes the productivity of a committed employee through ‘leveling’, an attempt - now often helped by government policy - to see to it the worker with a substandard work ethic and product enjoys the same outcomes

as the seriously committed employee. Egalitarianism is a theme in much of American public education, and it is inevitable that it would seep into the business world.

Martinez: Can we drill it down more, examples from the Genesis 3 version, perhaps?

Pearcey: Let me give you a story about one of my own sons. When my son was a teenager, he worked at a Christian bookstore. The staff decided to run a raffle as a marketing gimmick. But when the winning name was pulled, it turned out to be a customer who did not shop there often. Now the staff had hoped to use the raffle to reward one of their favorite customers. So they decided to rig it. They sorted through the names in the bowl until they found a customer they liked, and declared her the winner.

The bookstore staff were sincere in their Christian faith. But had they thought through how biblical ethics apply to the way they ran their business? Did they really think cheating is an acceptable way to run a business for those who claim to be disciples of Jesus? Or does business belong in the “secular” realm where Christian principles don’t apply - where you play by a different set of rules; where the bottom line is attracting customers and being financially successful?

Consider another example. A man underwent a dramatic conversion experience, and eventually rose to leadership in a Christian ministry. But secular ways of doing business were so ingrained that he resorted to them without even thinking. For example, to impress the public, he used well-known statistical tricks to shade the numbers and make his ministry seem far more effective than it really was. How common do you think this is? The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary has published some pretty shocking numbers: “250 of the 300 largest international Christian organizations regularly mislead the Christian public by publishing demonstrably incorrect or falsified progress statistics.”² Why? In order to attract more donor dollars.

Business and ministry leaders like these are not always intentionally corrupt or evil. Most are sincere in their Christian commitment. But they are so trapped in the sacred/secular split that they literally do not recognize unethical behavior when it occurs in so-called secular realms such as business, marketing, advertising, legal contracts, and so on. Here’s another surprising statistic, also from CSGC, that “Trusted church treasurers are embezzling each year \$16 billion out of church funds, but only 5% ever get found out. ...Annual church embezzlements by top custodians exceed the entire cost of all foreign missions worldwide.” What do these numbers show? The sacred/secular division produces people with a saved heart but a secular mind - and secular moral decisions.

Martinez: How can we recover a biblical worldview on work and business?

Henley: First, connect the dots. Jesus said the test that distinguishes true and false prophets is the fruit. Without

violating restrictions on religion in the workplace, we need to teach corporate management and employees the link between worldview and outcome, and the fact that there are indeed worldviews that produce greater fruit both for the enterprise and the host community than others.

Second, employ a Matthew 13:33 strategy. Jesus said the Kingdom is like leaven, which a woman placed in a lump of dough, and it stayed there until the whole was leavened. There are three dynamics at work here:

Penetration - the insertion of Kingdom values into the ‘lump of dough’ (the corporation)

Permeation - the ‘natural,’ non-forced advance of Kingdom values into the whole of the corporation, summed up in three vital business components: customers, employees, finance.

Precipitation - this is catalytic transformation. As the other two dynamics operate, transformation is precipitated, and is not coercive, but embraced.

Third, practice incarnational ministry that inspires the 1 Peter 3:15 question: “...sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

Martinez: Earlier Nancy mentioned there are barriers put up by the secular society against bringing a Christian perspective into the workplace. What are these barriers?

Pearcey: The secular world really has its own version of the sacred/secular divide; they just don’t call it that. They call it the fact/value split: It’s the assumption that empirical facts are really the only form of truth or knowledge, and they are neutral or value free. Values are not really considered a form of truth any more. After all, they cannot be stuffed into a test tube, or studied under the microscope. So they have been reduced to something merely personal and private - literally whatever you value - your personal preferences. Now, this is not the way most religious people use the term “values.” When they talk about “defending Christian values,” they mean objective moral and religious truths.

So the central strategy in the secularist playbook is to deny that there can be such a thing as objective moral and religious truths. You might say if science is defined as “value free,” then values are defined as “fact-free” - they are no longer rooted in the objective world. This is the unquestioned assumption in the universities today, taught without discussion in college textbooks. Alan Bloom, who wrote the bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind*, put it this way: “Every school child knows that VALUES are relative. [They] are not based on facts but are mere individual subjective preferences.” Every school child “knows that because it is taught all through the public education system.

So what happens when you as a Christian seek to bring biblical values into the workplace? Everyone around

you, with their secular education, responds as though that is not a legitimate thing to do - that you're imposing your private, personal preferences. Imagine you present your view on some issue, no one will say "That's just science, that's just facts, don't impose it on me." Instead they will say "Those are just your values, don't impose them on me."

So the fact/value split functions as the intellectual gatekeeper - it determines which ideas are allowed in the public arena, and which are ruled out of bounds. Once that happens, then arguments on the detail level simply have no traction. In principle they do not belong at the table of public discourse.

Shortly before he died, the actor Christopher Reeve spoke at Yale University about embryonic stem cell research. He said "When matters of public policy are debated, no religions should have a seat at the table." Notice he did not bother to weigh whether particular religious viewpoints on the subject might be right or wrong - no, none of them should be allowed in the debate in the first place. Why not? Because private preferences should not be allowed to shape public policy. It is a powerful means of excluding a Christian perspective in the public arena, whether in politics or in the business world.

Martinez: Why is the Protestant ethic good for business (cf. Max Weber)? Is this ethic still being overtly affirmed today?

Henley: Even in today's intensely charged atmosphere of political correctness and litigation, there is pragmatic affirmation of Weber's theory, developed in the early 20th century to explain the disparity between work and productivity between Europe's Protestant and non-Protestant societies.

For example, Harvard researchers Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary had conducted studies on the relationship between belief and economic growth on 59 countries between 1981 and 1999. Their study concludes that "What really stimulates economic growth is whether you believe in an afterlife -- especially hell."³ According to the authors, "Our central perspective is that religion affects economic outcomes mainly by fostering religious beliefs that influence individual traits such as honesty, work ethic, thrift and openness to strangers... For example, beliefs in heaven and hell might affect those traits by creating perceived rewards and punishments that relate to 'good' and 'bad' lifetime behavior."⁴

Another example comes from a truly surprising source. Avowed atheist Matthew Parris wrote a much-circulated op-ed piece entitled "As an atheist I truly believe Africa needs God" that appeared in the Times of London in January, 2009. Parris, raised in Malawi but left there as a young man, went back to the country he had known as Nyasaland after 45 years and visited a British charity which the Times promoted. After observing the effectiveness of Christian charities, or NGOs, Parris said his experience:

"refreshed another belief: one I've been trying to banish all my life ... It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my world view, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God....Now a

confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. ... [and] only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it."⁵

Martinez: Christianity is growing around the world, and many of us here are involved in multinational corporations. How can we be more effective globally?

Pearcey: By recognizing the transforming power of the Christian worldview. The problem is that many people in the global south now self-identify as Christians - but they are not living out a biblical worldview. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Africa was less than 10% Christian. Today it is 40-50%, and as high as 70-80% Christian in some countries. Yet many of these societies are marked by poverty, disease, illiteracy, malnutrition, injustice, and violence.

What went wrong? The problem is that missionaries imported the same Genesis 3 version of Christianity - with its sacred/secular split - around the globe. What happens is that after worship on Sunday, people go home and live like pagans. A businessman who accepts bribes becomes a Christian, but continues to accept bribes. A corrupt government worker becomes a Christian, but continues his corrupt practices. A husband who beats his wife (which is far too common in some societies) becomes a Christian, but continues to beat his wife. Even pastors beat their wives.⁶

The solution is a Genesis 1 version of Christianity that says it's not just about getting to heaven; it's not just about an inspiring worship service; it is meant to give principles to guide you in your family, your work, the way you run your society - to solve issues of poverty, corruption, and injustice.

Here's an example. In Guatemala, the Pokomchi Indians are farmers and they are among the poorest of the poor. The traditional religions in the region are animistic - they teach that nature is filled with spirits that are much more powerful than you are, which creates a passive, fatalistic mindset. People have the sense that if you're poor, you will always be poor - there's no use trying to better your life.

A generation ago, missionaries came and many Pokomchi accepted Christ. But they stayed poor. They knew they were saved, they were going to heaven, but they did not think being a Christian involved any special calling for THIS life. They were converted in their religion but not in their worldview - they were still passive and fatalistic. When secular development organizations came in and built things like schools, latrines for sanitation, etc., the Pokomchi did not use any of the expensive projects that had been built. They had not changed their life practices, or their attitudes. They were still passive and fatalistic.

Finally a young Peruvian pastor came to the Pokomchi in the early 1990s, and he began to teach a biblical worldview. He taught that we are created in God's image to be creative, and to exercise stewardship and dominion over THIS world, not just wait for the next world. A case in point is the Pokomchi did not have effective storage for their crops - it kept being eaten by rats. The pastor taught them that the biblical principle of stewardship empowers them to be active instead of passive over nature, that they are called to be creative because they were made in the image of the Creator. The farmers then developed a new method of grain storage. The food supply began to increase, and this was the beginning of their climb out of poverty. What they discovered is that a Christian worldview opens up a whole new perspective on life, that it allows you to live for God not just on Sunday but all through the week.

Notes

¹ For more insights see Theodore Dalrymple, *Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses* (Ivan R. Dee, publishers, 2007.)

² David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), Table 1-1, p.3.

³ See <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/31/arts/faith-can-enrich-more-than-the-soul.html>.

⁴ Barro, Robert J. & Rachel M. McCleary, "Religion And Economic Growth Across Countries," *American Sociological Review* 5 (2003): 760.

⁵ See: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/matthew_parris/article5400568.ece.

⁶ Reports from the Disciple the Nations Alliance: <http://www.disciplenations.org/>