
Broadening the Business Discipline: Teaching the History of Business in the Faith Tradition

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to unite key business principles with theological insights for faculty within faith-based institutions of higher education. The purpose of this content is to illustrate what a classroom aiming to reflect on faith identity, commercial activity, and the history between them could be for prospective faculty. People of faith, like everyone else, are active participants in a business-dominated world. Developing a clear understanding of how the business world runs and, more importantly, having our faith perspective define and dictate how we conceive and behave within this world is the primary intent of such a class.

INTRODUCTION

While no shortage of metaphors has been suggested over time to describe God, it was Douglas Meeks who offered a rather unique description for the creator of the universe: “Economist.” Meeks, in his seminal text on faith and economic matters, writes: “My claim is that, according to the faith shaped by the biblical traditions, the metaphor Economist is a decisive and fully appropriate way of describing the character and work of God” (Meeks, 1989, p. 2).

Upon reading this, some may hesitate. Business metaphors are seldom used in theological dialogue or description. When they are, they tend to evoke an array of different reactions. Some — such as liberation theologians — believe that pairing faith doctrine and orthodox economic discourse is tantamount to idolatry (Sung, 2007). Others may invoke

the Protestant “ethic of vocation,” which assumes that “the task of the Christian is not to question or critique existing social structures, such as economic or political practices” (Camp, 2003, p. 179). Suffice to say, there can be quite a difference of opinion when it comes to conceptualizing the faith life with business-minded reflection or activity.

The purpose of the course we are proposing to construct is to think carefully about how we unite key business principles with theological insights for people within the Christian faith tradition in a way that avoids these common refrains. People of faith — like everyone else — are active participants in a business-dominated world. Developing a clear understanding of how the business world runs and, more importantly, having our faith perspective define and dictate how we conceive of this world and behave within its confines is the primary intent of such a course. Yet to

properly achieve this aim, it is important to recognize the congruence between human essence (faith) and human activity (business).

To do this, we propose three dimensions to the course. First, it is first necessary to spend time reflecting upon the Christian narrative and, specifically, our anthropological makeup. Second, the class will explore what it means to not only participate in business activity, but to engender redemptive business practice. Finally, on a more practical level, we will explore case studies of both historical and modern-day examples illustrating faithful pictures of Christian practice in a business context. In the forthcoming sections, we will describe each of these dimensions in greater detail, followed by a closing section on pedagogical considerations for a class of this nature.

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PRODUCTIVE AND RELATIONAL ACTIVITY

As Samuel Gregg of the Acton Institute rightly points out, “Conclusions about who we are as human beings inevitably shape our views about everything” (Gregg, 2014). Christians believe that there is a design, an order, to our reality. Specifically, the Christian faith tradition asserts that essence precedes existence (Genesis narrative: “And God said...”; “and God saw that it was good”).

Serious philosophical questions of teleology can be traced back to Plato and other classical thinkers, but the point to be made is that there is a “form” of human excellence when an agent lives and lives well (or lives *rightly*). This is confirmed by Jesus himself, whose Sermon on the Mount included the command to “be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The term that translates here into perfect is *telios*, originating from the Greek idea of *telos*: a thing’s purpose, end, or goal. This is not perfect in the sense of being faultless, but of living within the calculated design of the designer.¹ In other words, being *telios* is living the way you were meant to live. Naturally, this notion presupposes that some forms of living are superior to others, and thus the pursuit and realization of human excellence is intricately tied to the essence of what it means to be a human.²

So, man has an essence. But what is the nature of that essence? An interesting starting point to address this question comes from the realm of philosophy (though it ends with a theological assertion). It was the German philosopher Friedrich Hegel who, upon taking notice of the Genesis narrative, proposed the following question: “If God is all-

sufficient and lacks nothing, how does he come to release himself into something so utterly unequal to him?” (as cited in Cohen, 2000, p. 83). In other words, why did God create a world — and a people to inhabit this world — if he is indeed all-sufficient?

The late political philosopher Gerry Cohen provides a lucid exposition of the various answers to this question. An important answer came from Hegel himself, who suggested that God is insufficient without a creation to confer his *god-ness* upon him: “Without the world,” he writes, “God is not God” (as cited in Cohen, 2000, p. 83). Implicit in this account is the acceptance that man is created in God’s image. That is to say, “God is the subject and man is the predicate” — one of the orthodox points established in Genesis and found throughout the biblical narrative (Cohen, 2000, p. 93). This point was challenged by some of Hegel’s own students, sparking a line of reasoning suggesting that God is actually made in man’s image (Cohen, 2000, p. 93). This resonated with many, including a young Karl Marx, eventually contributing to his understanding of *alienation*.

Asking *why* God had to create and inhabit a world may be an interesting philosophical exercise, but it risks dismissing substantive reflection as to *what* creating and inhabiting a world tells us about God (an arguably more important consideration). In other words, in God creating the world and human beings, asking, “*What* does this tell us about God and His nature?” is the more appropriate theological inquiry. For in answering the “*what*” we may gain new clarity and perspective as to the question of “*why*.”

Among other things, the Genesis narrative reveals two important characteristics about God. First, he creates. He produces. He is, in this sense, active. Second, he is relational. Not only does God create, but he relates to his creation. He is not passive in a relational sense, but participates in the life of his creation. Obviously, the most robust expression of this participation was God among man in the form of man — Jesus. This provides us with our first assumption: *God is productive and relational*.

If one should accept this line of thinking, it provides helpful insight as to who we are as image-bearers of God (*Imago Dei*). In considering and reflecting upon the attributes of God, what does this tell us about mankind? What does this tell me about myself? Related to this, John Mueller offers some helpful insight from his book *Redeeming Economics*:

Jesus once noted (as an astute empirical observation, not divine revelation) that since the days of Noah and Lot, people have been doing — and presumably will continue to do for as long as there are humans on earth — four kinds of things. He gave these examples: “plant-

ing and building,” “buying and selling,” “marrying and being given in marriage,” and “eating and drinking.” In other words, we human beings produce, exchange, give (or distribute), and use (or consume) our human and nonhuman goods. (Mueller, 2010, p. 18)

Similarly, Oxford economist and minister Donald Hay once wrote: “From creation we derive three elements. Man is personal, with the capacity for making real choices and for entering into relationships. Man is a steward of the creation, to care for it and to obtain from it those things which he needs for his existence. Man exercises his stewardship through work” (Hay, 1989, p. 122).

These everyday attributes and activities can appropriately be understood as economic activities. That is, these activities relate to our choices regarding the mobilization, use, and distribution of scarce resources (both material and immaterial). This provides us with our second assumption: *Human activities are inherently economic in nature.*

From here, we can draw the congruence between assumption #1 and assumption #2. We see that God is productive and relational. We see that mankind produces, exchanges, gives, and uses. To produce and create is, obviously, productive activity. To exchange, give, and use is to exercise a form of relating or relationship. It is man relating with man, with institution, and with material. Thus, we may responsibly arrive upon our third assumption given our first two: *In producing and relating (economic activity), mankind is both demonstrating and participating in God’s nature, provided that he or she does so in a manner that glorifies God.* If this is accepted, it should have profound implications for how we conceive of our faith life and our faith activity.

To summarize, to “take hold of the life that really is life” (I Tim. 6:19), we must recognize that living well, and not merely existing, is related to living within the essence or design of our creator. As image-bearers of God, understanding who God is provides direction as it relates to understanding our own nature. As we have argued, part of that nature is bound up in creative work and relational commitments. With this anthropological makeup in mind, the implications for business become more evident.

After spending time in the course reflecting upon our anthropology as humans created in God’s image, we will move on to explore what it means to engender and participate in redemptive business practice.

REDEMPTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICE

After discussing our Christian anthropology, our desire is to illustrate opportunities that speak not only to reflective

work (reflecting the creator) or productive work (creating positive outcomes), but *redemptive* work — work that redeems kingdom attributes to the marketplace.³ To redeem is to “take back,” restore, or recover a particular essence, or arrangement, that has otherwise been lost. Conceptualizing redemptive business practice can take on several forms; we here propose one such approach.

The manner by which we suggest introducing redemptive business practice is three-fold in nature. The first step would be to describe a particular issue, or concern, that is of relevance to any well-functioning society. Specifically, it would be a concern that could at the very least be addressed through various business mechanisms (markets, production, entrepreneurial innovation, etc.). Second, we would describe how the understanding and application of business principles could functionally address this issue or issues. Finally, we would want to think carefully with the class about what it would look like to not only help, but redeem, in our implementation of business practices.

We shall here illustrate this three-fold approach by dwelling on the concept of scarcity. Scarcity, defined and described on the first page on nearly every economics textbook, is the concern of having infinite desires in a world of finite resources. Or, in more general terms, scarcity could be summarized by simply saying “there isn’t enough to go around.” Some of our most contentious societal problems can be traced, in some way or another, back to scarcity. Specifically, we highlight three: the problem of justice, production decisions, and social maladies. Let us consider each in turn.

Justice

To illustrate why scarcity is a concern, we may invite students to imagine a pie presented before a group. If the group is large enough (say 20 people), then dividing the pie can become very difficult. Assuming everyone desires some of the pie, the pie’s size becomes an issue. Because of this, the group must concern themselves with a new set of questions: How much pie should each person get? Should every person even get a piece? How will we decide who deserves the pie?

These questions represent a philosophical tradition evident throughout human history: *Justice*. To give someone justice means to “render unto them their due” or — in more simplistic terms — it means to give them what they deserve (Plato as cited in Bloom, 1991). But here is the dilemma: How does one determine what someone deserves? As the reader is probably aware, there is no shortage of controversy as it relates to answering this question. For simplicity, we refer to this as *the problem of justice*.

Returning to our example, there are different ways of thinking about who deserves some of the pie (and how much). Should pie be distributed equally? Should the pie be distributed based upon need (the person who would gain the most satisfaction from the pie)? Should the pie be distributed based upon merit (the person who earns the pie)? Should impartial measures be used to determine distribution? Should we create a bidding process in order to achieve the most efficient distribution?

To make the argument even more complicated, replace the word “pie” with “water,” “a good education,” “clean air,” etc. With limited resources in our world, the concern of scarcity leads to problems of justice. Moreover, fixing these problems becomes difficult as they are often mired in political and philosophical differences. To summarize, scarcity raises questions about distribution, and determining how goods, services, and resources should be distributed. Unfortunately, many have referred to problems of justice as “incommensurable” — or, more to the point, unsolvable, as there is no clear answer as to what a person deserves in a world of finite resources (Sen, 2009, p. 15).

Production Decisions

Beyond the problems of distribution, scarcity is constantly forcing us to determine the best use of our resources. At first glance, this may not seem problematic. However, each of our decisions will inevitably impose a cost. When someone makes a particular decision about the work he or she will choose to do, this means he or she must give up, or forego, other alternatives. Furthermore, there is a price for giving up an alternative.

For example, suppose a farmer chooses to plant seed corn across his fields in a particular year. By virtue of using his fields for seed corn, this means that he has chosen *not* to plant other crops (beans, wheat, etc.). It also means that he cannot use the field for recreation or any other non-farming use. Why? Because his land is *scarce*. He only has so much of it, and therefore he (if “rational”) will choose to use it in a way that he expects to maximize profits.

On a larger scale, we can see many problems with production decisions. A common example given in economic textbooks is that of wheat and tanks. We could use our productive forces to make more food across the country (wheat), but this means that we must produce less of something else that may be valuable for society (tanks). Conversely, we might produce more tanks, but we would have less wheat (because our land and our labor are scarce). Or consider income. We could use our money to buy goods and services we want and need today, but this means we will have less money saved for the future. Or, if we save

money for the future, that is less money that we can spend in the present.

To summarize, the problems with production decisions are the problems of choosing how to best use our productive activity. Whatever it is we choose, we are forced to forego other alternatives, and this imposes costs upon us. We might say that scarcity, therefore, is always *costing* us.

Social Maladies

So far, we have provided examples exploring how scarcity can create concerns in distribution decisions (i.e., justice problems) as well as issues in how we choose to use our resources, including time (i.e., production decision problems). Unfortunately, these problems can create notable, negative outcomes: poverty and conflict.

To be clear, eradicating the concern of scarcity would not necessarily remove the problems of poverty and conflict. On some level, people will always be impoverished (emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and morally). Further, history has made clear that conflict is certainly possible even among conditions of abundance. For our purposes, however, we look specifically at poverty and conflict arising from a lack of resources and opportunities.

Poverty is a terribly complex phenomenon. But whatever else we might say about poverty, we can say that there are some that have and some that do not have. One author describes it well, “Scarcity limits what we can do. Because of this limit, it is necessary to establish priorities so that we can make decisions. And when we establish priorities, there will always be somebody...that will not be taken care of” (Sung, 2007, p. 106).

To provide an example for students, much has been written over the last decade as it relates to water and scarcity. Approximately 75 percent of the world’s water is used for irrigation, which is important for food production. The other 25 percent is required for industry and personal use. However, each year, the world population grows by about 80 million people, which is outpacing our current supply of fresh water. The result? “Competition for water exists at all levels and is forecast to increase with demands for water in almost all countries” (United Nations, n.d.). If the population is growing faster than fresh water can be supplied, then individuals, villages, or even countries will not have an adequate amount of the water they need for irrigation, commerce, or personal use. Moreover, water is not simply a luxury item — it is *required* to lead a healthy, productive life. It is for this reason that the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, n.d.) declared that “water scarcity is an issue of poverty.”

In addition to poverty, arrangements where some people have and others do not are a natural recipe for conflict,

a belief that reaches back a long way. For example, 17th-Century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes believed that “competition for scarce resources was unquestionably the most important source of human conflict” (Wilkinson, 2005 p. 5).

It is difficult to disagree with Hobbes in this sense. Whether it is children fighting over toys, co-workers in a project, our recent “Occupy Wall-Street” demonstrations, or even third-world environments, any arrangement where some people’s needs are met and others’ needs are not will create tension. Moreover, there is an abundance of research to support this belief.⁴ To return to the example of water scarcity, one expert suggested that “conflicts over water are as old as recorded history” (Goering, 2012). Water aside, shortages have incited aggressive behavior from biblical times to the present. To summarize, scarcity creates problems in poverty, and poverty — or not having enough — is a recipe for conflict.

Addressing the Problems of Scarcity: The Business Mechanism & Productive Activity

Scarcity — in some way, shape, or form — will always be present. There is a force, however, that can serve to reduce its effect: *work*. In other words, our work activity can make a contribution to growth and development in a way that fends off the threat of scarcity. Scarcity is the concern of not having enough; production is the solution of creating more. Proverbs 14:4 describes this simple philosophy well: “Where there are no oxen, there is no grain; abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.” In other words, when we work, we produce, and our needs are satisfied. Or as *The Message* translation puts it, “No cattle, no crops.” No activity, no output.

How does our productive activity address the aforementioned concern of scarcity? Let us return to our pie example where we must split a small pie among 20 people. In this situation, the problem of justice becomes acute: How do we determine who gets some of the pie? How much? Based upon what criteria?

Imagine, however, that the pie increased to the size of a small swimming pool. Or, more realistically, that we had 10 pies (as opposed to just 1). Now, considerations in distribution — while still important — tend to lose their sting. There is an ample amount of pie to go around to satisfy the desires of those present.

Returning to our example in production decisions — the food or safety dilemma (wheat vs. tanks) can be solved — in many ways — by expanding our output in each. For example, if we increase labor, land, or technology, we produce one thing and forego *less* of the other thing. This

reduces the “cost” of our decision. Thus, increased productivity minimizes the effect of scarcity in how we choose to use our time and resources.

One example of this has been access to medicine. According to the World Health Organization, only one-third of the world’s population has adequate access to essential life-sustaining medicine and medical treatment opportunities (Bate & Tren, 2006). As you can imagine, this means paying money for access to medicine in poorer countries requires giving up an array of other important resources which the money could have been used to purchase (education, food, shelter, etc.). However, medical developments, innovative technologies, and enhanced distribution methods are changing this pattern. While there is much work to be done, new medical tests and procedures are now available at affordable prices in countries, towns, and villages desperately in need of medical access. One recent example has been provided by Harvard Chemist George Whitesides (2010), who has created medical diagnosis devices the size of postage stamps at virtually no cost. With productivity enhancements such as these, the “costs” of our decisions are lowered.

Finally, productive activity plays a vital role in how we address poverty and conflict in society. Intuitively, if there is more to “go around,” then each person’s needs (but not necessarily wants) will be met. Moreover, having enough will help to reduce patterns of conflict occurring from arrangements with limited goods and unlimited desires.

Recently *Bloomberg Businessweek* published an article in which they asked a panel of experts how they would address the water supply and management problem occurring throughout the world. Among other things, they spoke about large-scale “desalination” programs throughout the world (removing salt from ocean water for domestic use), rainwater harvesting systems, lake water extraction, and other alternatives such as fixing water-pipe leaks and shifting consumer-psychology for how they think about water usage (“How the Experts,” 2013).

Point to be made: these are real solutions to address the problem of water shortage evident in the world today. Moreover, these solutions require ideas, design, and implementation through the collaboration of people, places, and things. The work being done to address water shortages is productive activity that makes a very real and lasting contribution across the globe. This will help lift many out of places of poverty, and furthermore, it will reduce conflict or the potential for conflict in a multitude of settings. Increasing the water supply is just one example. In reality, there are thousands upon thousands of examples where productive activity through our work and labor has made a real and lasting contribution.

Not Simply Business Activity, but Redemptive Activity

Scarcity creates problems. However, we have argued that work activity, production, and growth can “ward off” the problems that scarcities tend to create. This, we might say, is a business solution. However, these contributions can also serve to be a very visible act of worship.

Helping may be in the DNA of believers, but people of faith play a redemptive role in their activity as well. This does not mean “take back” as a means to steal from someone. Rather, it simply means that when a group does work that is consistent with the things important to God, Christians should see that work as redemptive. In other words, Christians can recognize work activity — whether it is spiritual or secular — as making a kingdom contribution and labeling such activity appropriately.

For example, while Christians can help to reduce the aforementioned problems caused by scarcity through their productive activity, how we understand and conceive of scarcity and production is of equal importance. By having a proper conception of these matters, people of faith might provide a more holistic approach to the idea of work activity and its eventual contribution. Specifically, we want to give attention to two ideas, both related to productivity, that Christians can redeem and redefine in a more faithful way. These include how we think about scarcity as well as the limits of innovation.

Redeeming Scarcity

We have already sought to give attention to the concern of scarcity. Moreover, we defined scarcity under its usual terms: unlimited desire in a world of limited resources. As we discussed, growing our resources can help to offset the sting of scarcity. However, as Christians, we must recognize another key attribute to this equation: *unlimited desire*. In other words, limited resources aren’t the only problem; rather, unlimited desire is equally, if not more, problematic than the problem of limited resources. To go a step further, many would argue that limited resources are not a problem, and that scarcity only has teeth because of our unlimited desires. One statistic that supports this came from the United Nation’s Human Development Report. In 1998, they made the astonishing claim that the additional cost of achieving and maintaining universal access to basic education, health care, adequate food, and sanitized water for every single human being on the planet was only 40 billion dollars — a mere one-quarter of one percent of our current GDP in the United States (United Nations, 1998).

Unlimited desire, or what many call insatiability, means we will never be satisfied. To think otherwise is to overestimate human nature. Desire, and more specifically,

the “desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16-17) are not spoken of highly in the Christian faith tradition. In other words, it is not our desire, *per se*, that is to be condemned, but the kind of desire we are cultivating within and among ourselves. As Methodist Bishop Will Willimon (1990) writes, “The church is a school of desire, teaching us what things are worth wanting, what desires are worth fulfilling” (p. 80). This sharply contrasts with the pursuit of material items — or our desire for more and more stuff, which “is closely related to idolatry in biblical thought” (Hay, 2004, p. 71). We need only recall Christ’s parable of the seed, where the seed falling among the thorns yields no grain because “the cares of the world, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word” (Mark 4:7-19).

In addition to possessing a more faithful perspective of desire, Christians should also recognize that scarcity is an earthly problem that God is not subject to. Because of this viewpoint, Christianity will always “call into question the deepest assumption of modern economics, namely, scarcity” (Meeks, 1989, p. 171). In a world marked by limited resources, contention, and despair — we appeal to a God of abundance, cooperation, and hope.

If scarcity is a problem, then our production — our contribution — is a means to address this problem. However, Christians must also recognize that scarcity is just as much a problem of unlimited desire as it is a problem of limited resources. To be a person of faith is to desire appropriately and to appeal to a God of abundance who “calls his own sheep by name” (John 10:3), knows our needs (Matthew 6:8), and will meet those needs “according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). In this sense, by having appropriately ordered desire (*ordo amoris*), we redeem or restore our desire to align with human excellence as God intended. In other words, our desire becomes a function of our essence as a Christian.⁵

Redeeming Innovation

As stated earlier, productive activity and creative innovation have not only advanced the number of goods and services per person in modern societies, but they have created a more advanced, sophisticated, and convenient world. To provide an example, National Public Radio’s business and economics show *Planet Money* once posed the following question: “Would you rather be rich in the year 1900, or middle-class now?” Interestingly, over two-thirds of the respondents chose “middle-class now” (“Would You Rather,” 2010).

For our purposes we are less concerned about the “correct” answer to this question, but rather, we point to this as

an example of our extraordinary leaps in innovation. The very fact that one would have to consider such a question is strong evidence for the tremendous amount of productive innovation amassed over the last century. Economist Tim Taylor says there is a lesson to be learned in the “Rich 1900 or Middle-Class now?” question: “The force of economic growth over time has given middle class people in America...things that would have been regarded as miracles a century ago. And having access to those miracles is worth an enormous amount” (“Would You Rather,” 2010).

As Taylor’s quote makes clear, our labor — coupled with creativity and technological ingenuity — makes our innovative progress seem nothing short of miraculous. In spite of this, an important question remains: Is innovative progress the same as moral progress? Innovative activity has made us better cars, phones, medicines, bridges, airplanes, etc. — but has it made us better people?

This question is not new. For example, at the close of 2009 and in the wake of the worst financial crisis in the United States since the depression era, the authors writing for *The Economist* took stock of the term “progress” and its contemporary definition. Despite the financial meltdown, one might expect a ready defense of our innovative activity. After all, this is still the most prosperous century on historical record. An historical survey of past periods of economic, scientific, and technological prosperity have no parallel when compared to our present context, and this alone is reason enough, it might be argued, for pause when considering the distribution of blame in the wake of the financial crisis. In short, we may encounter problems, but our growth — our *innovation* — is worth the cost.

However, in *The Economist*’s 2009 article, which was titled “The Idea of Progress: Onwards and Upwards,” this was not the inevitable conclusion reached. Indeed, amidst centuries of increased efficiency in producing food, science, industrial growth, technological innovation, and gains in overall wealth among both rich and poor nations, such “material progress” has failed to deliver emotional satisfaction, overall happiness, and social solidarity. Rather, the author writes, one of the more visible outcomes of our “prosperity” is the attrition of life around us: “The forests are disappearing; the ice is melting; social bonds are crumbling; privacy is eroding; life is becoming a dismal slog in an ugly world” (“The Idea,” 2009). Citing the philosopher Susan Neiman, the article suggests that our behavior should not be shaped by power, material wealth, etc., but rather by what is “right” despite the inconveniences that accompany the pursuit of this ideal. Moral, not just material, development, the author contends, is a more appropriate measurement of progress and prosperity.

Christians should applaud Neiman’s view, as it is a clear expression of what those in the faith tradition have understood for centuries: the problem of sin. Sin, or its Greek expression of *missing the mark*, is not a problem that can be solved through creative work, productive activity, or technological innovation. It is a spiritual problem. It is a problem, writes Paul, of the *flesh*: “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want” (Gal. 5:17).

With this in mind, Christians must continually recognize and communicate the difference between productive activity that allows individuals in society to live *well* and God’s life-transforming spirit that allows a person to live *whole*. True progress, just as *The Economist* authors recognized, must also account for our change as people in moral and ethical terms — not simply changes in the things we create and consume.

To summarize, individuals across the world have made, and still can make, positive contributions to society through their work activity. But, we argue, people of faith must enhance this understanding of contribution by recognizing and espousing the fact that our moral development and advancement is not a matter of production (we don’t produce and innovate ourselves into better people) but submission to a life-altering relationship with God. This is what it means to redeem innovation.

Redemptive business practice is important because it does not merely recognize our productive activity as “Christian” because it supports ministry or simply helps people as a Christian ideal (as important as this may be). Rather, redemptive activity is ministry in itself. It is a robust expression of our essence as an image bearer of God where we can creatively act within and upon the world in a way that redeems or restores Kingdom values.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Novak (1996) argued that individuals should live out their spiritual lives in the midst of their business activities and that it is even possible to find spiritual fulfillment in the midst of one’s vocation (Novak, 1996). Fortunately, we can draw our attention to several helpful examples where individuals or faith communities have achieved this claim. After dwelling on our anthropological makeup as Christians and further exploring how business practice can be redemptive, it is natural to invite students to study and reflect upon those who have gone before us who have successfully

embodied these beliefs and incorporated them into their productive activity.

Such an overview would preferably be done using a method of case studies. Bruner (2003) posited that using case studies creates an atmosphere of deep learning and builds a capacity in the learner for critical thinking. Furthermore, this affords students the opportunity to have both subject and practice become integrated in their mind. We will here highlight some of the proposed examples of intersection to be explored in this course. It should be noted that these examples could begin in the Old Testament, but we shall start with the biblical New Testament personalities leading up to and through contemporary examples. The case studies below are not exhaustive, but they are introduced as examples that could be explored in great detail so as to achieve the course aims.

New Testament

Paul differentiated himself from Peter by working outside of formal ministry so as not to burden the churches he worked among. First, Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he worked around the clock in order to avoid being an encumbrance to the church (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Second, the book of Acts describes Paul's work in tent making (Acts 18: 2-3). Third, Paul even encouraged the leaders of the church in Ephesus to be useful by working with their own hands (Ephesians 4:28). Thus, God seemingly removed the possibilities of individuals ever being able to accuse Paul of being a "bloodsucker" or "profiteer" rather than the type of person who would lay down his own life in honor of the Savior.

Other examples of business activity outside of Paul are found in the New Testament. First, the aforementioned example of Aquilla and Priscilla, who were involved in the trade of tent-making, also hosted a church in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19). They had a center of ministry through which they disciplined Apollos, another important New Testament character influential in the growth of the Church (Acts 18: 26). Finally, Lydia, an early convert, who is also mentioned in the book of Acts, was a merchant selling purple cloths (Acts 16:14). Many have even speculated that she was instrumental in establishing a house church in her city (Suter, 2003).

Nestorians

The spread of Christianity followed the trade routes of the Silk Road, and many argue that Christianity not only coexisted with business, but rather that they both fed off of each other to spread to the east (Suter, 2003). This can primarily be seen through the work of the Nestorians who

were passionate in sharing their faith but who supported themselves primarily through business practice (Owens, 2006). The Nestorians were involved in trading along the Silk Road, but they also were engaged in work as artisans, physicians, and stewards (Suter, 2003).

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, was actively involved in starting many businesses, specifically "innocent trades" that were deemed to be useful to society and not related to the military. The businesses they were involved in starting ranged from metal production and whaling to medicine and chocolate. One of their main influences was to bring integrity to the business arena, as those doing business with the Quakers knew they could be trusted. This reputation led to the birth of very large modern businesses such as Barclays Bank, Cadburys, and Western Union. Their focus in the 19th century was not on profit alone, but also on the living conditions of their employees, the establishment of hospitals and schools and addressing important social issues such as the slave trade (Quakers in the World, n.d.).

The Moravians

The Moravians operated under the idea that businesses would support their missionary activities. Their principle goal in establishing a multitude of businesses was to support their outreach to other European settlers in America as well as Native Americans and inhabitants of the West Indies (Engel, 2009). They were intentional about operating their businesses in accordance with their biblical philosophy. At the same time, they were also concerned about making a profit in order to support their missionary endeavors. According to Engel (2009), many business owners even travelled for short times to the mission field. One of their goals in operating the business was for the local people in the area to see the dignity of work. Zinzendorf, one of the greater leaders of the Moravians (Ryoo, 2010), believed that through the operation of businesses the Moravians would have a natural interaction with the people that they were trying to reach, as well as be a tangible way of providing economic benefit in the societies in which they were living (Tucker, 2004).

Basel Mission Trading Company

The Basel Mission Trading Company operated in India under the principle that profits were not the main goal of the company, rather it was to be genuine examples of Christians working wherever they were located. In fact, the workers for the company were trained in theology as well

as in a trade (Eldred, 2005). Eldred further points out that the founders of the Basel Mission Trading Company felt that the strongest witness to outsiders, beyond mere words, was the kind of life they led. Based on this belief, the workers viewed their business conduct as missional in nature. Through the company, the workers started many businesses. For example, the company operated a tile factory in India where they had success in creating a high-quality product. Some attributed this success to locals who had adopted an admirable work ethic, ethical and humane labor practices, and the observance of other pietistic practices (Johnson, 2009). In India alone, the company employed over 3,500 Indians in 1913 thus affording them the opportunity to have enormous Christian influence (Tucker, 2004).

William Carey

The father of modern missions, William Carey, used multiple business-type projects in India. He began by working in an indigo factory and learned the language there (Tucker, 2004). He then did other things throughout his career in India such as work as a cobbler, a factory owner, the founder of a printing business, and a university professor. All of this was done as means to establishing his work and ministry there (Johnson, 2009).

Contemporary Examples

There are many other companies that can be studied to understand how the founder's Christian beliefs impacted his or her company and the larger communities in which it operated. For example, in Israel, Galtronics is a company aiming to have a witness where there is none, provide work for believers, and to produce a product that will benefit the local economy (Crowell & Crowell, 2003). Additional companies that might be studied and discussed in class are Hobby Lobby, Chic-fil-A, ServiceMaster, Interstate Batteries, and Tyson Foods. Finally, where applicable, those developing a course such as the one proposed in this paper can discuss their personal experiences in starting and/or managing businesses in North America and/or on other continents.

The benefit of the student being exposed to this broad history of the intersection of Christian Faith and business is an opportunity to study and reflect upon the diversity of motives for those involved. The apostle Paul, as evidenced by the biblical narrative, arguably sought to enhance his credibility by not being a burden to those to whom he was ministering. In contrast, the Moravians and Nestorians appeared to see business as somewhat of a tool to do ministry in their field of influence, while the Basel Mission Trading Company and, more recently, Galtronics viewed their work in and of itself to be missional.

ADDITIONAL PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In our own implementation of the course, we have discussed titles such as "A History of Business and the Faith Tradition," "Enterprise and the Christian Faith Tradition," or "An Inquiry into Christian Faith and Commercial Activity." While certain texts may be useful in the course, we do not here propose a particular text (rather, our material would likely come from an amalgamation of scholarship relating to the subject matter).

A variety of approaches can be used while encouraging students to reflect on their views of Christian responsibilities in the business arena and their choices of vocations. This paper does not attempt to offer an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point for the discussion. A combination of techniques are recommended to help students understand on a personal level the concepts and themes of this class.

In the first section of the course, the ideas are developed that humans have an essence; that is, we are created in the image of God and our productive work and relational commitments are a form of active participation in God's nature. An assignment related to this content would be to ask the students to reflect on the work that God does. In what ways do we see this manifested in our world? How do we work in a way that reflects God's nature? Where do we see God "work" in the Bible (e.g., the Genesis account)? Does God still work today? The goal of this assignment is to be a starting point for the discussion about how we conceptualize the expressions of faith and work in our modern world.

As the course moves into the redemptive work section, our goal is help students experience and understand the concepts so that they may begin to look for similar opportunities in their professional lives. To continue the aforementioned example in Sections 3, 3.1, and 3.2, scarcity can easily be understood in the abstract. When reading an economics book about production functions, it is clear that increasing one input such as tanks inevitably leads us to reduce other production opportunities such as wheat. While this tank versus wheat tradeoff might never be directly applicable for many (if not most) of our students, they should nevertheless understand that their choices have consequences and that there are tradeoffs between, for example, having cleaner air (but relatively low crop yields) by using horses to plow fields versus using diesel-powered equipment on much larger tracts of land. Or, similarly, students could be asked to write out a list of their own choices on a daily basis and the opportunity costs of each of those choices. When dollar values are applied, it becomes increasingly evident that scarcity is always costing us. From here, we could potentially ask students, "How might growth, therefore, lower those costs?"

Scarcity in production problems can be taught by asking the students to determine where money (say \$100,000) is going to be donated. You can manipulate the situation in a variety of ways. For example, money can be split between 3 charities, only one charity, or to more than one charity, but you determine the donation amounts (\$70,000, \$20,000 & \$10,000).

Using the pie example to teach justice in a classroom can be as simple as serving pizza. Order less than is needed to feed your students and have a discussion about how to best meet everyone's needs. Another approach is to remove chairs from the classroom so only a portion of the students have a seat. After this, class would be taught as usual before reviewing and reflecting upon what has happened. (A similar example is provided by University of Chicago Economist Allen Sanderson with students and classroom seats — see Sanderson, 2010.)

Teaching the concept of social maladies is a bit more abstract. In part, it involves teaching students to refocus on the problem being solved or creatively remove constraints. An effective way to illustrate this point is to ask teams of students to build a Lego car. Give each team a specific kit with instructions. In the second iteration, remove parts from one of the kits. This will create conflict for parts much like conflict for water rights or other scarce resources. Only one team can have everything they want. In a discussion about what to do next, guide the students to build a car that does not necessarily follow the directions. In this iteration, the teams can share parts or envision a car that is different from the original solution. Doing so will allow both teams to construct cars that work. A discussion about removing constraints can be administered by asking students “what if” questions as they relate to real world issues they are concerned about. As an example, what if there was a low-cost method to educate people in remote villages on efficient water use? How would this change the problem?

Finally, the case study approach is an effective way to help students develop their critical thinking skills and to reflect upon pictures of successful faith-work integration initiatives. These cases, as outlined in Section 4.0, present three different perspectives on the motivation for why work takes place in a faithful setting: to reduce a burden, utilize business as a tool to do ministry, reflect the essence of our creator through redemptive business practice, and/or perform work to “fund Christian activities such as foreign missions.” After reading and discussing these case studies across time, the students will then be challenged to identify organizations today that exhibit one or more of these motivations. These will then be discussed in a classroom setting as a way of sharing the depth and breadth of organizations

that carry on a faithful approach to work. Further, students could be invited to reflect on non-Christian work that is, by virtue of their activity, engaged in a variety of Christian themes. In other words, are there non-Christian companies or personnel whose work is inherently Christian? If so, why?

As we wrap up the course, we want students to think carefully about their future work prospects, and what, specifically, might make that particular work redemptive. A reflection paper or online discussion can be an effective way to help them pull together their thoughts and build off those of their classmates.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, we can reflect the attributes of our Creator through our activity (business activity included). Moreover, our activity can enact positive social, economic, and environmental change. However, as people of faith, we can conceptualize our activity in a redemptive way, and thus, restore Kingdom attributes to the very settings we engage within today's modern marketplace. Indeed, to do so would be fundamentally Christian.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Otherwise it would have included the Greek word for blameless: *amemptos*.
- 2 It is important to note here too the numerous verses that make a distinction between living (existence) and life that is a function of living the way one should live (John 10:10; I Timothy 6:19).
- 3 This concept was introduced and discussed in Brown & Wiese, 2013.
- 4 I would point readers to Alain De Botton's work relative to “Status Anxiety” or Richard Wilkinson's research on inequality and violence. See De Botton, 2005 and Wilkinson, 2005.
- 5 Term used by Augustine meaning “order of love.”

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