

## Dialogue III

### The Perceived Godly Stockbroker

Steve VanderVeen  
Hope College

*Vanderveen investigates how traits reflecting the character of God are related to selling success. Included is his research as to whether characteristics related to justice and love influence a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior; whether a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior influences her/his perceived trustworthiness, and whether a stockbroker's perceived trustworthiness influences a stockbroker's persuasiveness.*

#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

I grew up in a conservative family that attended a very conservative Christian church in a very conservative town. My grandmother, an immigrant, convinced me that stockbrokers were “crooks in three-piece suits.” When I graduated from high school, I chose a very conservative college because I desired to become a minister — to have a “holy” occupation.

But something happened during my senior year at college, and I started taking business classes. Before I finished graduate school, I accepted a job as a stockbroker — ironically, from a “crook in a three-piece suit.” When it became clear that the owner of the firm would be

banned for life from the financial services industry, I transferred to another firm. This firm had its share of interesting characters, including one of its founders, a godly man. Yet I was not totally convinced there was such a thing as a godly stockbroker.

From my experience, I was sure that a stockbroker who emphasized only one side of the story — that is, the side about how much money a client could make — while de-emphasizing the other side of the story — that is, how much a client could lose — would be the more financially successful stockbroker. I also believed that stockbrokers who were perceived to be trustworthy — perhaps because they looked trustworthy, like

grandparents or church deacons look — would have an easier time selling. Finally, I believed that trustworthy-looking stockbrokers who emphasized only the positive aspects of investments had an unfair advantage over those who discussed both the positive and negative aspects.

After six years in the business, completing the requirements for a master's degree, and losing my job as an options clerk due to a merger of brokerage firms, I landed a job as a college professor. Eventually, after experience, reflection, prayer, and more schooling, my occupation became a vocation.

Sometime later, a colleague and I decided to test some of my earlier hypotheses. We found, for instance, that a stockbroker who emphasized only the positive aspects of an investment was more persuasive than a stockbroker who discussed both the positive and negative aspects. We also found that the use of Christian symbols increased the perceived trustworthiness of the stockbroker. Finally, we found that a stockbroker emphasizing only the positive and using Christian symbols was perceived to be most trustworthy, whereas a stockbroker discussing the positive and negative and not

using Christian symbols was perceived to be least trustworthy, although not at a highly statistically significant level (Porter & VanderVeen, 1999).

In this study I investigate more specifically how characteristics that reflect the character of God are related to selling success. I investigate whether characteristics related to justice and love influence a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior, whether a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior influences her/his perceived trustworthiness, and whether a stockbroker's perceived trustworthiness influences a stockbroker's persuasiveness. In addition, I test whether this persuasiveness is positively or negatively impacted by a characteristic related to holiness.

### **Biblical Foundations**

Alexander Hill argues persuasively that “the foundation in Christian ethics in business is ... the changeless character of God.” Hill claims that we, even in business, “were originally created to emulate God” (Hill, 1997, p. 13). Thus, “behavior that is consistent with God's character is ethical — that which is not is unethical” (Hill, 1997, p. 14).

So what characteristics does God have that we are to emulate? Hill states that the divine characteristics of holiness, justice, and love are “repeatedly emphasized in the Bible” and have “direct bearing on ethical decision-making.” Holiness, Hill claims, is “single-minded devotion to God and absolute ethical purity” (Hill, 1997, p. 22). Holiness consists of four “primary elements: zeal for God, purity, accountability, and humility” (Hill, 1997, p. 23ff.). Zeal means that God must be our “highest priority;” purity means that we must be both “ethically pure” and “morally separate.” Of particular relevance to this study is the idea that we must practice “purity in communications:” we must not be willing to “breach a client’s trust,” but “communicate without guile, saying exactly what [we] mean.” In other words, we should not over-promise in a selling context by emphasizing only the positive aspects of an investment, because in doing so we may “breach a client’s trust.”

A second characteristic of God is justice. Hill claims that “[a]t its core, justice provides order to human relationships by laying out reciprocal sets of rights and duties for those living in the

context of community” (Hill, 1997, p. 34ff.). Hill argues that there are four “aspects” to justice: “procedural rights, substantive rights, merit, and contractual justice.” Of particular relevance to this study is the notion of merit, which “links the concepts of cause and effect. If Joan has worked very hard (cause) ... she may be entitled to a high salary (effect). ... The moral issue is not whether Joan should be paid more, but whether she really ‘earned’ her full salary” (Hill, 1997, p. 40). Hill claims that “Christian merit permits disparity in the distribution of wealth and accolades so long as procedural rights (due process and equal protection before the law) are protected and substantive rights (such as basic provision for the poor and fair compensation for efforts) are honored” (Hill, 1997, p. 41). Of particular relevance to this study is the perception that people who start off poor and work their way to the top of the economic ladder are more worthy of their wealth than those who are “born with a silver spoon” in their mouths. In particular, a person who grew up poor and learned the needs of the rich seems more deserving of becoming a successful investment advisor than a person who grew up rich

and had no subcultural status barrier to overcome.

A third characteristic of God is love. According to Hill, Christian love has three prominent aspects: “empathy, mercy, and self-sacrifice” (Hill, 1997, p. 48). Self-sacrifice is the more relevant aspect for this study and is defined as “the willingness to give away the very rights that justice bestows” (Hill, 1997, p. 51). Specifically, one

practices grace when one gives up what one deserves for the good of someone else. If, for example, someone poor

became rich through hard work and then became poor again to better serve those less fortunate, we would probably consider this behavior Christ-like.

What Hill does not do is relate the characteristics of God to characteristics of success in the business world, such as the success characteristics of trustworthiness and persuasiveness. Trustworthiness is an important component of credibility, and credibility is usually seen as an important component of persuasiveness (see, for example, Mowen &

Minor, 1998, p. 315ff.). This paper attempts to bridge the gap between Christian ethics and business success in the context of selling investment advice.

### Methodology

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to determine whether a stockbroker who reflects the characteristics of God will be perceived to be more Christian, whether a stockbroker

who is perceived as more Christian will be perceived to be more trustworthy, and whether

a stockbroker who is perceived as more trustworthy will be more persuasive. At the heart of this study is whether a stockbroker who reflects the characteristics of love (in terms of making a sacrifice for others) and justice (in terms of meritorious behavior) will be perceived to be more Christian. In addition, the purpose of this study is to test whether a stockbroker’s persuasiveness is influenced by the characteristic of holiness (in terms of purity in communication), such that unholy behavior by a perceived trustworthy stockbroker is most



*... use of Christian symbols did increase the perceived trustworthiness of the stockbroker ...*

persuasive, relative to the other combinations.

The current study was an extension of the Porter and VanderVeen (1999) study, a study which borrowed its methodology from research done in the area of marketing communications. In that study, 129 business undergraduates in a Midwestern Christian college were given a booklet containing a role-playing exercise. Students were used because they are “consumers who, like all humans, can be manipulated by particular stimuli” (Porter & VanderVeen, 1999, p. 458).

In the role-playing exercise, students read one of four versions of a story and answered a number of questions. The four versions were created by varying two factors, each with two levels.

Factor 1: The stockbroker EITHER had Christian symbols in her office OR did not have.

Factor 2: The stockbroker EITHER explained both the positive and negative aspects of the investment, OR she explained only the positive aspect.

In that study, Porter and VanderVeen (1999) found that the use of Christian symbols did increase the perceived

trustworthiness of the stockbroker and that the stockbroker emphasizing only the positive aspects of an investment was more persuasive. They also found an interaction: the stockbroker who used Christian symbols and who discussed only the positive aspects of an investment was perceived to be most trustworthy, whereas the stockbroker who did not use Christian symbols and who discussed both the positive and negative aspects of an investment was perceived to be least trustworthy.

In the present study, 94 business undergraduates in a Midwestern Christian college were given a booklet containing stories and questions. As in the previous study, they were to assume they were visiting a stockbroker after inheriting \$50,000.

In the Porter and VanderVeen (1999) study, students read a story in which they were to notice a picture on the wall. In one-half of the cases, the picture contained a Bible verse from Proverbs; in the other one-half of the cases, it did not.

In this study, students read one of six versions of a story and answered a number of questions. The six versions were created by

varying three factors, each with two levels (see Appendices).

In all sets of factors, students read about seeing a framed newspaper clipping on the wall of the stockbroker's office. In one-half of the scenarios, the newspaper story was about a sacrifice (love): the investment adviser gave up living in her high-rent neighborhood and moved into a "low-rent, crime-infested neighborhood, inviting neighbors into her home and helping children enhance their reading, writing, and math skills." In the non-sacrifice scenario, there was no mention of where the stockbroker lived or what she did for others.

A second factor was a manipulation of effort, or the "justice" factor. In one-half of the scenarios, the stockbroker grew up poor and became successful after learning about the needs of the rich. In the other scenarios, the stockbroker "was born with a silver spoon in her mouth" and did not have to learn the needs of a different subculture.

A third factor was a manipulation of purity in communication, or the "holiness" factor. In one-half of the scenarios, the stockbroker did not practice purity in communication: she over-promised by emphasizing

only the positive aspects of the investment. In this scenario she talked about the Market Select Equity Index Fund and its exceptional performance of nearly 20% per year. In the other scenarios, the stockbroker did not practice guile: she talked about both the positive and negative aspects of the investment. In this scenario she mentioned that 10% was a more realistic annual return and that stocks are risky investments and could actually decrease in value. While it is true that the "holy" scenario simply lowers performance expectations, practicing purity in communication reduces the risk of breaching a client's trust in the long-run: clients will trust stockbrokers whose advice exceeds performance expectations more than they will trust stockbrokers whose advice fails to reach performance expectations.

Thus, in the present study, six versions were created by varying three factors, each with two levels.

Factor 1: The stockbroker EITHER made a sacrifice of love by moving to better serve others OR she did not (love).

Factor 2: The stockbroker EITHER exhibited meritorious

behavior by growing up poor and earning her success OR she did not (justice).

Factor 3: The stockbroker EITHER exhibited purity in communication by giving both the positive and negative aspects of the investment OR gave only the positive aspect (holiness).

A word about the purity-in-communication manipulation: In the Porter and VanderVeen (1999) study, the range between the “average” return (38%) and the “realistic” return (8%) was 30%. In the present study, the range between “average” return (20%) and the “realistic” return (10%) used in the purity-in-communication manipulation is 10%. In other words, in one-half of the scenarios, students were told the performance of the fund would be 20%. In the other one-half of the scenarios, the students were told the performance had been about 20% but 10% was more likely. In the Porter and VanderVeen (1999) study, the “purity gap” (30%) may have been so large that students began to question the trustworthiness of the stockbroker. In the current study, the “purity gap” was smaller with the hope that students would not question the trustworthiness of the

stockbroker, in order to show that investment advisors can practice “impurity in communication” without having what they say impact their perceived trustworthiness — at least in the short term. This would be a realistic scenario, particularly when investment advisors are paired with novice investors.

Following the story, students answered a number of questions. One question related to the persuasiveness of the stockbroker (“How much would you likely invest?”). This was followed by a number of questions utilizing seven-point Likert scales. These questions measured how trustworthy the stockbroker was perceived to be (“She seems trustworthy”), how Christian her actions were perceived to be (“She acts like a Christian”), how meritorious the stockbroker was (“She expended much effort to get to where she is today”), and how much the stockbroker sacrificed (“She is sacrificing little for her neighbors” — reversed scored). The last two questions were meant to measure the impact of the justice and love factors, respectively.

### **Hypotheses**

Hill defines love as the sacrifice of something earned for

the sake of others. He defines justice as getting what one deserves. Thus, stockbrokers who are perceived to earn their success by expending much effort to overcome some obstacle and then give up what they earned for someone else will be perceived to be more Christian than stockbrokers who didn't expend much effort (because they didn't overcome some obstacle) and didn't give up anything for anyone. Therefore,

**H1:** Stockbrokers who exhibit the characteristics of love in terms of sacrifice will be perceived as more Christian than stockbrokers who do not.

**H2:** Stockbrokers who exhibit the characteristics of justice in terms of meritorious behavior will be perceived as more Christian than those who do not.

**H3:** Stockbrokers who exhibit the characteristics of love and justice will be perceived as most Christian, whereas stockbrokers who do not exhibit the characteristics of love and justice will be perceived as least Christian.

Because trustworthiness is a characteristic of God (see, for example, II Samuel 7:28) related to His holiness, and Christians are

to emulate God, those who are perceived to be Christian ought to be perceived as trustworthy. In addition, Porter and VanderVeen (1999) found that stockbrokers who utilize Christian symbols were perceived to be more trustworthy, indicating a relationship between perceived Christ-likeness and trustworthiness. Therefore,

**H4:** Stockbrokers who are perceived as Christian will be perceived as more trustworthy than stockbrokers who are not perceived to be Christian.

Because trustworthiness is an important characteristic for product endorsers (see, for example, Mowen & Minor, 2001, p. 149), those who are perceived to be trustworthy will be persuasive. Therefore,

**H5:** Stockbrokers who are perceived as trustworthy will be more persuasive than stockbrokers who are not perceived to be trustworthy.

Finally, intuition and experience as a stockbroker indicate that emphasizing the positive aspects of an investment is more persuasive than discussing both the positive and

Table 1

**MC1: Perceived trustworthiness**

Type of Story	n	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Holy	47	4.55	1.24	n.s.
Not holy	47	4.55	1.42	

the negative aspects of an investment, at least in the short-run. Therefore,

**H6:** A stockbroker who does not exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication will be more persuasive than a stockbroker who does.

In addition, there should be an interaction: perceived trustworthy stockbrokers who do not exhibit holiness should have an advantage over less trustworthy stockbrokers who exhibit holiness in terms of purity of communication. Therefore,

**H7:** Perceived trustworthy stockbrokers who do not exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication will be most persuasive, while less trustworthy stockbrokers who exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication will be the least persuasive.

**Results**

The first manipulation check (see Table 1) was intended to demonstrate that a stockbroker could discuss both the positive and negative aspects of an investment without negatively influencing her/his level of perceived trustworthiness. An independent samples t-test, a common method of testing means with ordinal data in consumer research, indicated that the purity-in-communication manipulation had no effect on perceived trustworthiness ( $t = 0.00$ ;  $df = 92$ ; not significant).

In other words, unlike the Porter and VanderVeen (1999) study, the purity-in-communication manipulation did not influence the perceived trustworthiness of the stockbroker.

The second manipulation check (see Table 2) was intended to determine whether the manipulation of meritorious behavior worked. Students did perceive that the stockbroker who

went from “rags to riches” exhibited more effort in her life (and therefore “earned” her financial success because she had to learn to “understand the needs of the rich”) than did the stockbroker born “with a silver spoon in her mouth” ( $t = 3.20$ ;  $df = 92$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

The third manipulation check (see Table 3) was intended to determine whether the manipulation of sacrifice of something earned for the sake of others (love) worked. Students did perceive that the stockbroker who moved into a “low-rent, crime-infested, old neighborhood, inviting neighbors into her home and helping children” did sacrifice more than the stockbroker who

did not move and help her neighbors ( $t = 7.00$ ;  $df = 92$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

The first hypothesis (see Table 4) tested whether stockbrokers who exhibit the characteristics of love in terms of sacrificing something for their neighbors would be perceived as more Christian than stockbrokers who do not. This hypothesis was confirmed ( $t = 6.06$ ;  $df = 92$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

The second hypothesis (see Table 5) tested whether stockbrokers who exhibit justice in terms of meritorious behavior would be perceived as more Christian than those who do not. This hypothesis was not confirmed ( $t = 0.30$ ;  $df = 92$ ; not significant).

Table 2

**MC2: Perceived effort**

Type of Story	n	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Just	44	5.06	1.24	0.00
Unjust	50	4.18	1.42	

Table 3

**MC3: Perceived sacrifice**

Type of Story	n	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Love	46	5.43	1.29	0.00
Not love	48	3.66	1.15	

Table 4

**H1: Perceived as Christian**

Characteristic	n	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Love	46	5.04	1.07	0.00
Not love	48	3.81	0.89	

Table 5

**H2: Perceived as Christian**

Characteristic	n	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Just	44	5.31	1.18	n.s.
Not just	50	5.04	1.37	

The third hypothesis (see Table 6) tested for an interaction: it tested whether stockbrokers who exhibit love in terms of sacrificing something for others and justice in terms of meritorious behavior would be perceived as most Christian and stockbrokers who do not exhibit love and justice would be perceived as least Christian. This hypothesis was partially confirmed: stockbrokers not exhibiting love and justice were perceived as least Christian ( $F = 7.08$ ;  $SS = 1957.00$ ). However, stockbrokers who exhibited love but not justice were perceived as most Christian. This latter result was not expected.

The fourth hypothesis (see Table 7) tested whether

stockbrokers who are perceived as Christian would be perceived as more trustworthy than stockbrokers who are not perceived to be Christian. To test this hypothesis, two tests were used. First, a Pearson correlation test was performed using data from the question “She acts like a Christian” and the question “She seems trustworthy.” The Pearson’s correlation coefficient measures the strength of linear association between two variables. Being perceived as a Christian and level of perceived trustworthiness are highly correlated (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.64;  $n = 94$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

Table 6

**H3: Perceived as Christian**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Just	44	4.55	1	0.18
Not just	50	4.28		
Love	46	5.03	1	0.00
Not love	48	3.83		
Love & just	20	4.90	1	0.00
Not love & just	24	4.21		
Love & not just	26	5.15		
Not love & not just	24	3.42		

Table 7

**H4: Perceived as trustworthy**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Christian	41	5.41	0.92	0.00
Not Christian	20	3.00	1.29	

Table 8

**H5: Persuasiveness (amount invested)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Trustworthy	27	\$22,851	\$12,262	0.00
Not Trustworthy	41	\$12,085	\$ 9,477	

Table 9

**H6: Persuasiveness (amount invested)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Holy	46	\$18,870	\$12,841	n.s.
Not holy	47	\$18,032	\$12,403	

Second, scores for the question “She acts like a Christian” were split into two groups around the median score (omitting the median scores) in order to create two mutually exclusive groups. Those scores below the median indicated that the stockbroker was not perceived to be Christian, while those above the median indicated that the stockbroker was perceived to be Christian. This test confirmed the hypothesis: stockbrokers perceived to be Christian (versus not Christian) were perceived to be more trustworthy ( $t = 8.37$ ;  $df = 59$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

The fifth hypothesis (see Table 8) tested whether stockbrokers who are perceived as trustworthy would be more persuasive than stockbrokers who are not perceived to be trustworthy. To test this hypothesis, the same two tests were performed in the same manner. Being perceived as trustworthy is highly correlated with persuasiveness in terms of dollars the students were willing to invest (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.42;  $n = 93$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

Student scores for perceived trustworthiness were then split into two groups around the

median score, so that those scores below the median indicated that the stockbroker was not perceived to be trustworthy, while those above the median indicated that the stockbroker was perceived to be trustworthy. Measured in terms of the amount of money students were willing to invest, this hypothesis was confirmed ( $t = 4.07$ ;  $df = 66$ ; significance [one-tailed] = 0.00).

The sixth hypothesis (see Table 9) tested whether a stockbroker who did not exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication would be more persuasive than a stockbroker who exhibited holiness. This hypothesis was not confirmed: type of communication used did not influence amount of dollars invested ( $t = 0.32$ ;  $df = 91$ ; not significant).

However, there was an interaction between perceived trustworthiness and holiness. The seventh hypothesis (see Table 10) tested whether perceived trustworthy stockbrokers who do not exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication would be most persuasive, while stockbrokers not perceived to be trustworthy who do exhibit holiness would be the least persuasive. This hypothesis was partially

confirmed ( $F = 8.80$ ;  $SS = 27,590,250,000$ ): perceived trustworthy stockbrokers who did not exhibit holiness in terms of purity in communication were the most persuasive, but stockbrokers not perceived to be trustworthy and who exhibited holiness were not the least persuasive in terms of dollars invested. This latter result was not expected.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This last test suggests that stockbrokers who are perceived to be trustworthy but who in reality may not be holy could be persuasive, at least in the short

run. This suggests that managers and consumers should be wary in situations where investment advisors are paired with novice investors, as people (at least college students) seem particularly vulnerable to less-than-pure communication, or communication that could potentially “breach a client’s trust.”

This finding seems consistent with experience. Salespeople have a tendency to oversell, particularly when they are paid on commission. Salespeople who exhibit Christian characteristics have a greater opportunity to

Table 10

### H7: Persuasiveness (amount invested)

Characteristic	n	Mean	DF	Sig.
Holy	34	\$14,907	1	0.06
Not holy	34	\$19,807		
Trustworthy	27	\$22,645	1	0.00
Not trustworthy	41	\$12,069		
Holy & trustworthy	13	\$17,076	3	0.02
Not holy & trustworthy	14	\$28,214		
Holy & not trustworthy	20	\$12,738		
Not holy & not trustworthy	21	\$11,400		

oversell because people trust them. But people that do oversell are sometimes made accountable by the market. Novice investors would be wise to ask salespeople how long they have been in business and what percentage of their original customers are still with them.

Overall, this study demonstrates that stockbrokers who exhibit love in terms of sacrificing something that rightfully belongs to them for the sake of others will be perceived as more Christian than those who do not. It demonstrates that stockbrokers not exhibiting love and justice will be perceived as least Christian, relative to the other combinations. This study shows that stockbrokers perceived to be Christian will be perceived as more trustworthy than those who are not. It shows that stockbrokers perceived to be trustworthy will be more persuasive than those who are not perceived to be trustworthy. Finally, this study demonstrates that stockbrokers perceived to be trustworthy and who are not holy in terms of purity in communication will be the most persuasive, relative to the other combinations. Clearly, this study indicates that stockbrokers perceived to be godly can be

successful — and dangerous, at least in the short-run.

However, there are important caveats to consider. For instance, there are concerns in terms of external validity. Would the results hold if the students were not from a private Christian college? Would the results hold if the consumers were more sophisticated than college students? Would the results hold over time? How easily can perceptions be influenced, and how strongly are perceptions held? Wouldn't the test be more valid if real stockbrokers and real investors were used?

We know that generally we have to make trade-offs between internal and external validity. It is very hard to control “noise” when experimenting with real people in real situations. However, we do know that college students are people, and people can be influenced by stimuli. We also know that college students are similar to other types of investors who are novices and who have to depend on perceptions when making important decisions. In some ways, college students are even more prudent, given their skepticism, than senior citizens. Anecdotally, it has been my experience that some senior citizens want to rebuild their

“nest egg” so desperately that they make themselves vulnerable to “unholy” financial services people.

On the other hand, we should ask whether describing only the positive (versus the positive and negative) aspects of an investment (or any other product) is practicing purity in communication. The reason we might ask this question is because we tend to oversell ourselves and our products in everyday life, whether it be when we ask for a raise, construct a resume or curriculum vita, sell our used car, recruit students, etc. Is emphasizing only the positive aspects of whatever we are selling misleading? Is it misleading if the people we are communicating with expect us only to tell them the positive (cf. Hill, 1997, p. 120ff.)? Is such communication holy and acceptable to God even if it is within the “rules of the game?” Where should we draw the line?

Thankfully, in the long run perceptions and reality seem to merge. God did create the world with mechanisms of accountability: a stockbroker cannot continuously oversell without suffering some consequences. Over time, because God did create the world

with mechanisms for truth, the truth eventually is revealed (cf. Hill, 1997, p. 18). This means that it is better to be a “real” Christian than a “perceived” one, and it is better to keep a client’s trust than to oversell.

It has been 15 years since I left the brokerage business. I still hear wonderful things about Mr. Buys, a founder of the second brokerage firm I worked for. Even though he was a great role model, we have a higher standard to measure up against. We must, regardless of the consequences, strive to be holy, just, and loving.

### **Steve VanderVeen**

Professor of Management  
Department of Economics,  
Management, and Accounting  
Hope College  
41 Graves Place  
Holland, MI 49422  
616-395-7574  
vanderveen@hope.edu

### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>The author gratefully acknowledges the comments of anonymous reviewers and Dr. Todd Steen.

### **REFERENCES**

Hill, A. (1997). *Just business: Christian ethics for the marketplace*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Mowen, J.C., & Minor, M.S. (1998).  
*Consumer Behavior* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle  
River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mowen, J.C., & Minor, M.S. (2001).  
*Consumer behavior: A framework*.  
Upper Saddle River, NJ: McGraw-Hill.

Porter, B.E., & VanderVeen, S. (1999). Does  
honesty pay? Some empirical evidence.  
*Christian Scholar's Review*, 28(3), 452-465.



## APPENDIX A

### Stimulus Exhibiting Love (in terms of sacrificing for others), Justice (in terms of meritorious behavior), and Holiness (in terms of purity in communication)

#### Please read the following:

Assume you have just inherited \$50,000. You have decided to invest the money, but are still unsure how much to invest and where to invest it. After some investigation, you are interested in possibly investing some or all of the \$50,000 in an equity index fund. To receive professional advice, you visit a local financial services firm. After stopping by the receptionist's desk, you are ushered into a financial advisor's office and told that she will be with you shortly. While waiting for her, you notice a framed newspaper clipping on the wall that describes the financial advisor in the following way:

#### *Local Financial Advisor Nominated for National Achievement Award*

Growing up poor didn't provide the nominee with many positive educational experiences concerning how to invest in the stock market. Although she didn't understand the needs of the rich, she understood the needs of the poor. Now that she is a successful investment advisor overseeing \$100 million in assets, she understands both. And she is doing something about it. Instead of living in a high-rent urban high-rise, she has recently moved back into her low-rent crime-infested old neighborhood, inviting neighbors into her home and helping children enhance their reading, writing, and math skills. ...

Upon her return, and after a brief discussion of your financial goals and aversion to risk, she advises the following:

“The Market Select Equity Index Fund invests in stocks, and stocks have historically outperformed most other investments. The Market Select Equity Index Fund had exceptional performance in the 1990s, averaging nearly 20% per year. Virtually all equity index funds of this type did well in the 1990s, but this return is not expected to continue — around 10% is more realistic. In fact, stocks are risky investments, and it is possible that the Market Select Equity Index Fund could decrease in value.”

## APPENDIX B

**Stimulus *Not* Exhibiting Love (in terms of sacrificing for others), Justice (in terms of meritorious behavior), and Holiness (in terms of purity in communication)**

**Please read the following:**

Assume you have just inherited \$50,000. You have decided to invest the money, but are still unsure how much to invest and where to invest it. After some investigation, you are interested in possibly investing some or all of the \$50,000 in an equity index fund. To receive professional advice, you visit a local financial services firm. After stopping by the receptionist's desk, you are ushered into a financial advisor's office and told that she will be with you shortly. While waiting for her, you notice a framed newspaper clipping on the wall that describes the financial advisor in the following way:

*Local Financial Advisor Nominated for National Achievement Award*

She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and learned to understand the needs of the rich. Now that she is a successful investment advisor overseeing \$100 million in assets ...

Upon her return, and after a brief discussion of your financial goals and aversion to risk, she advises the following:

“The Market Select Equity Index Fund invests in stocks, and stocks have historically outperformed most other investments. The Market Select Equity Index Fund had exceptional performance in the 1990s, averaging nearly 20% per year.”