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Gleanings

Do Business with Heathens or Christians?

A recent Barna survey asked the question, Would you rather do business with an organization that supported the Christian faith? The results were 37 percent said yes, 58 percent were ambivalent, and 3 percent said no.

In a *World Magazine* article (link at the bottom), writer Tony Woodlief stated that he threw in his "lot with the agnostics and atheists," which he identified as the group that opposed doing business with organizations identified with the Christian faith.

Here are Mr. Woodlief's two reasons for his position as stated in his own words:

"The first is that when I need a burst pipe mended, I need someone who plumbs because he believes doing it well is the best way to put food on his table—not someone who believes that having his own plumbing business is the best way to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, I want a business that exists because the market has rewarded it for good performance."

"The second reason I avoid these businesses is because Scripture tells me not to sue my brother in court. At least if I hire a heathen, I can rake him over the legal coals if he does a shoddy job."

Mr. Woodlief assumes that Christians will not deliver excellent value propositions because they are just using business as a way to evangelize. To continue with his example, if the plumbing company is in business simply to evangelize, then the company will probably not deliver an excellent value proposition. Such a company would operate under a dualistic view of reality.

A dualistic view of reality is a worldview that minimizes the value of physical reality and, therefore, physical work. This means that work outside the spiritual realm has no real significance other than as a tool to make money and perhaps to evangelize. In this paradigm, the only work activities that have eternal value are those associated with spiritual reality, such as, church work, missions, and parachurch ministries.

A holistic view of reality is a worldview that recognizes value in physical work. In fact, physical work is seen as an extension of spiritual reality. Since God made everything, then it is reasonable to assume that He values everything. And since God, the Creator, is a spirit being, physical reality comes from spiritual reality. This suggests that everything is ultimately rooted in spiritual reality. Therefore at the root level, all physical work is spiritual. Furthermore, God made man to rule His physical universe. The work of managing and mastering God's creation is therefore divinely ordained—it is holy work and to be performed with excellence. Taking this view of reality into a business will produce an organization with a world-class value proposition.

If the plumbing company operated based on a holistic view of reality, then the company would recognize that it exists to glorify God and would deliver an excellent value proposition. Consequently, Mr. Woodlief's assumption would then be invalid.

Another assumption made by Mr. Woodlief is expressed in his preference to "hire a heathen." If by his phrase he is referring to people who do not embrace Christianity, then he assumes that such organizations can deliver excellent value propositions independent of God. This is a naturalistic or deistic presupposition.

Naturalism is the worldview that assumes there is no spiritual reality. This is the atheistic and agnostic view. The theistic version of naturalism assumes God exists but is not involved in His creation; this is known as deism. Deism and naturalism look at the physical world in similar ways, that is, what happens in the physical realm has nothing to do with God.

Organizations that operate based on either a naturalistic or deistic view assume that there is no divine intervention in the workplace. Those who hire such organizations make the same assumption though they



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Naturalism and deism are inconsistent with a biblical worldview. Biblically the physical universe is a tangible manifestation of underlying spiritual reality. Note what King Solomon said about the connection between spiritual and physical reality:

- The wages of the righteous bring them life, but the income of the wicked brings them punishment. Proverbs 10:16
- A man cannot be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted. Proverbs 12:3
- A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. Proverbs 12:10
- He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. Proverbs 21:21

As you can see from these texts, righteousness is connected to prosperity and good stewardship, and conversely wickedness is connected to punishment and cruelty.

If you believe this testimony of Scripture, then an organization that does not embrace biblical values and principles is in rebellion against God. It is operating contrary to the will of God and is therefore in a state that could be described as wicked. Such an organization cannot produce enduring excellent value propositions. At best, it can have short-term success, but at any time calamity could come upon the organization and those it serves. Why then would one hire an organization like this?

Clearly anyone who understands this connection between spiritual and physical reality would seek to hire organizations that embrace holistic Christianity. These are the only ones that can and will produce enduring excellent value propositions.

How does one identify such organizations? Don't look at their words or symbols (i.e., the fish symbols or slogans), look at their actions. The truth is revealed in how organizations function. Their reputation is the most important asset. Note the words of Solomon:

- A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1

Another desirable trait is going the extra mile to deliver great value propositions. Such organizations are willing to sacrifice money to serve others well.

Also, look for organizations that treat all people (employees, customers, and vendors) according to the Golden Rule.

Now as to Mr. Woodlief's second reason for not doing business with Christians, he wants to be able to sue anyone who performs "shoddy work." Recognizing the biblical mandate against suing fellow believers, he argues that he must "hire a heathen" to maintain the option to sue.

His assumption is that the judicial system will render justice based on biblical standards. However, settling disputes through the legal system is problematic because the system is moving progressively away from biblical thinking. Therefore justice becomes elusive. Note Solomon's words:

- When the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding; but when the wicked perish, the righteous thrive. Proverbs 28:28

A justice system that is not firmly grounded in a biblical worldview is tantamount to the wicked rising to power. This is indeed the reality in the United States. One cannot assume, therefore, that the judicial system will render justice. True justice only comes from the Lord.

So in the final analysis, if you believe that there is a connection between physical and spiritual reality as described above, then the "hire a heathen" approach is not wise.

As to the question of doing business with an organization that identifies with Christianity, one must discern whether or not the organization's view of Christianity is dualistic or holistic. If dualistic, the value proposition of the organization will be problematic. If holistic, the value proposition will be excellent, as evidenced by their actions. Organizations that practice a holistic view of Christianity will deliver enduring excellent value propositions because they recognize that they are working for the Lord and not for men.

<http://online.worldmag.com/2011/02/18/a-christian-approach-to-business/>

All Scripture references are from the New International Version.

Training for Work and Life from a Biblical Worldview

Your Need	Training Venue	Information (click on date)
Finding Your Purpose in Life	Seminar : Strategic Life Alignment	Coming soon
More Help Finding Your Purpose in Life	Seminar : Strategic Life Alignment Alumni Event	July 2011
Biblical Principles in the Workplace	Seminar : Biblical Principles of Selling	April 2011
	Webinar : Biblical Principles of Selling	June 2011
	Webinar : Financial Management II	March – May 2011