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Gleanings

Christian Takes Advantage of Non-Christian



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Ever done business with a person who wears his Christianity on his sleeve? It can be an interesting experience. Consider, for example, the following story.

A swimming pool contractor was a prominent leader in his local church. In the workplace he was very vocal about his faith, passed out gospel tracts, and even had an ichthus symbol on his literature. After moving his company into a multi-tenant building, he decided to upgrade the lighting in his showroom. He hired an electrical contractor, another tenant in the building, to do the work.

The electrical contractor, though not a Christian, operated a highly reputable business, largely because he practiced the Golden Rule. He was happy to extend a fellow tenant credit and performed the work. The job was done on time, on scope, and on budget. The pool contractor was completely satisfied. The electrical contractor submitted his bill.

A few months went by and the bill remained unpaid; the pool contractor dodged the electrical contractor's collection efforts. Finally the electrical contractor made a personal visit to the pool contractor and expressed his frustration. The pool contractor contacted the landlord to complain about the electrical contractor's visit.

The landlord's relationship with the pool contractor was not good. The pool contractor was frequently late paying his rent plus routinely violated the landlord's sign and parking rules. Because of these issues, the pool contractor technically was in default under his lease agreement. Furthermore, the landlord uncovered the truth regarding the unpaid invoice. The electrical contractor asked the landlord to evict the pool contractor and offered to assume his lease.

The landlord, a Christian, was very grieved over the situation. He knew the electrical contractor had been mistreated. And he knew that, based on this experience, the electrical contractor took a dim view of working with, or for, professing Christians. Professing Christians mistreating non-Christians disparage Christ's name.

The apostle Paul told the Colossian believers that they were to conduct their work as Christ's representatives (Colossians 3:17). He also said that work was to be performed with sincerity of heart and submission to their bosses because their ultimate boss was God (Colossians 3:17-18). When anyone works as God's representative, righteousness will be the overarching value. And righteous people pay their bills on time.

But the pool contractor did not represent Christ well in his transactions with the electrical contractor. The question is why? What is the root issue?

May I suggest that the root issue is the pool contractor's bad theology. If you believe that spiritual reality drives physical reality, then you know that bad theology produces bad results. Likewise good theology produces good results.

What bad theology affected the pool contractor? Perhaps it was Greek dualism. The Greeks famously posited a dualistic theory of reality. Their thesis was that tangible physical reality was evil and intangible spiritual reality was good. This theory, in various forms, has been widely accepted up to current times,



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even in the professing Christian community.

Today the common paradigm of Christianity elevates the view of so-called spiritual callings such as pastors, evangelists, Bible teachers, missionaries, and so forth. These vocations are frequently referred to as “higher callings.” Conversely, callings to the workplace are commonly viewed as second-class callings.

Do you believe that your calling, assuming that you know it, is as important as Billy Graham’s calling? Be honest.

If you answered no, then you are, to some degree, dualistic. If God created the universe and declared it to be good, which he did, then he must value the universe. Furthermore, he created man as the highest order of beings to assert his rule and reign over the universe. And if God is sovereignly in control of his universe and creates with intent and purpose, then all humans are created individually and personally by God to bring forth his rule and reign. Therefore God creates each person with intent and purpose and calls each person to a worthy vocation. This truth was noted by the reformer Martin Luther and is part of the historic dogma of protestant Christianity, but somewhere along the way, it was lost.

According to Nancy Pearcy, in her book *Total Truth*, the Greek dualistic paradigm was emboldened in the eighteenth-century revivals known as the Great Awakening. Pearcy’s thesis is that narcissistic revivalists, who were rebelling against the Puritanism of their day, redefined Christianity. Instead of recognizing the divine mandate given to humans to bring forth the rule and reign of God, Christianity became simply a ticket to escape hell and, in the meantime, Christians seemed to live as if they had a license for workplace irresponsibility. In other words, by professing Christ as Savior, they had a ticket to heaven and could hunker-down, live as they wish, and wait until either Christ returned or took them home. Either way, they no longer saw value in workplace callings. The assumption was that workplace callings are not valuable to God. And if workplace callings are not valuable to God, then professing Christians who embrace dualism will treat their work accordingly.

Applying this to the pool contractor, it seems clear that he embraced dualism. He seemed to give no thought to how his actions at work reflected on Christ. His business was little more than a human attempt to evangelize; he was oblivious as to how his business practices were sabotaging his witness for Christ.

Greek dualism, in its various forms, is an enemy of biblical Christianity.

The biblical approach to work is holistic and therefore work is intended to be holy activity—a way that we worship and bear witness to the truth about Christ. All licit vocations are valued by God.

The values, principles, and practices that Christians adopt in the workplace reflect on Christ. May the Lord give us the grace to work with such excellence that his name will be glorified. If we work this way, then Christians will never take advantage of anyone, including non-Christians.

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