



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

Just Business

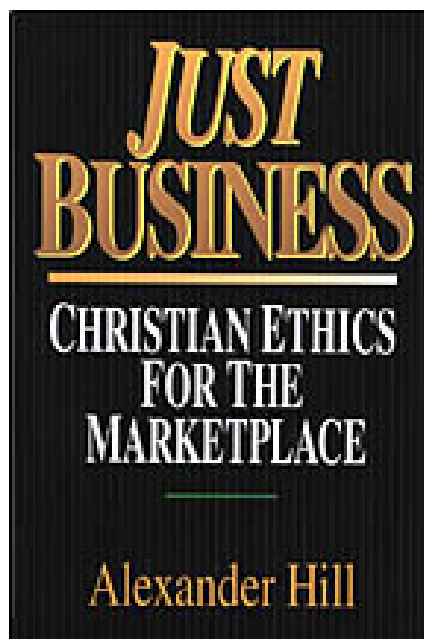
Alexander Hill

Businesses in some circles are frowned upon, among them, Christians. It is an arena plagued with corruption, bribery, tax evasion in the legal sense. Greed and covetousness, leading to other immoral or illegal practices in a moral sense. In the wake of Enron and Arthur Anderson, the skeptics points their fingers again and say, "it proves to be true."

It doesn't prove that business is an ungodly activity. These failures are reflections of the fallen nature of mankind and a need for a Holy, Just and Loving Saviour, in need of redemption, both of the people and of the environment, in and through the people of God. All the more we need to have Christians who brings holiness, justice and love to the people and the workplace who needs it desperately. It is a call not of disengagement but rather engagement.

Alex Hill was a professor at the school of business and economics at Seattle Pacific University before taking on the role of President for the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship—USA. In the play of the word 'just', Alex brings forth brilliantly the two worldview which a Christian can engage in the business world. Is it just business, or Just (as in justice) business.

Alex established the three funda-



mentals of holiness, justice and love from a biblical perspective. He also brings forth several false exits which many Christians today falls into and put forth in the third part several areas of application. What I like about the book is that it provides at the end of each chapter a case study for discussion.

Even for those who are Not in business directly, this book provide some principles as Christians engage their companies, departments, institutions, the public square and concepts of what makes a holy, just and loving policy. Sometimes even within the context of a local church.

The call is not one of disengagement but redemption.

By Timothy Liu

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Of the Heart and Mind

He was one of us

Most of us has probably caught the news of a self indoctrinated terrorist that was arrested, splashed across the headlines. Baffled by how a well educated lawyer turned lecturer at a local poly could have subscribed to such ideologies, ministers, politicians and religious leaders came forward to register their dismay and caution on a new term in Singapore society; 'self-radicalization'.

But this isn't new. Consider the sarin gas attack in Tokyo under the leadership of a half blind, self professed messiah with a following of very well educated people. Scholars, academics, psychiatrists and analysts scramble to find answers, explaining the phenomenon. Are there lessons we can learn, even from our own Christian history?

I propose that there is firstly a lethal combined effect of the modern and post-modern world. In the modern, enlightenment period, Christians proposes that we can derive absolute truth and doctrine by mere metaphysical derivation. Robert Greer in his book 'Mapping Postmodernism' speaks of an imperialistic approach to theology. This resulted in the thousands of denominations we have today. Post-modernity brings about a reaction to this way of approaching truth and theology by privatizing truth as what is defined by individuals.

Secondly, our institute of higher learning, our Universities,

by its' definition, seeks unity in diversities, no longer do so. Where is the Renaissances man, the Newton, Pascal and Galileo of our days; men and women who are both well informed in God's words and their sciences? A friend of mine mourns the loss of the Renaissances man today and our universities as nothing more than glorified vocational schools. Even in churches, we so separate faith and other 'worldly' pursuits that we are now in a dire need to find any frame of reference to integrate faith and work/ life/society etc.

Thirdly, in a multimedia rich environment of parallel processors, multi-tasking environment, information overload age, we barely have time to view the information, images and sound-bites presented to us, we rarely have time to first understand the messages and secondly to reflect on the underlying assumptions and values from which those messages present. News reporters mixes facts with opinions (passing off as facts).

Fourthly, we have also lost an ability to think critically because we have been in a cultural and educational system where we readily accept authority and find answers at the back of assessment books.

Finally, there is a lack of civil and meaningful discussion whether in churches or public squares about sensitive matters either suspected of being unfaithful by doubting or unsettling reli-

gious harmony by being contentious. There is therefore no mutual accountability through community.

Am I surprise therefore such a well 'educated', high flyer in our midst happens to be a self-radicalized religious fanatic? No, and it is just a matter of time more will follow. It may not be a muslim the next time.

I believe the real solution for Christians is to recognize that the strength of the modern era tells us there is an absolute truth and post modernity tells us to be humble and learn to contextualize. We also need to understand that we cannot impart knowledge without the building of character; 'to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God.' We also need to remove the sensationalization of news and media that polarizes perspective. Remember, many of newsmakers' objective is not to inform but to sell newspapers and coverage. Truth seeking must be done not in a ghetto but in true reverence and humility through genuine dialogs, seeking the greater good. The Real theologizing, as proposed by Tite Tienou in the book *Globalizing Theology* speaks of doing theology in community, not only within a global context, seeing fundamental principles emerging, but also applying within the local context (among the local communities).

The way to start the process is from within our own ranks, integrating faith and life, critical self evaluation of worldviews and seeking truth in community.

By Timothy Liu

Eyes in a Darkened Room

Just Follow Law

Jack Neo has done it again. Tacky as it may be, few have the guts to write and film social commentaries about the Singapore life as he has. I wonder where has the Christians gone to in making creative, entertaining and yet thought provoking films or media pieces? Many who saw the movie reflects upon the movie's sentiments and characters.

I like the Chinese title better which translates, 'Days in the Civil Service'. The setting is a fictitious Work Allocation Service (WAS) of a government ministry. Tanya Chew is a typical fast ladder climbing scholar, high IQ, low EQ director in her dealings with fellow colleagues and subordinates. Lim Teng Zui a widower with a daughter works as an Events Assistant technician who is barely making ends meet. In a freak accident, they 'exchanged' bodies, forced to live the life of the other. So the story goes...

There were several scenes that captured my attention and imagination. One of which was the flying arrows in the midst of an e-mail war among department heads, launching arrows through the office, people ducking to avoid getting hit, some got shot and finally landing on the CEO's desk. Believe it or not, I have had similar thoughts in my mind sometimes when I received e-mails or when sending e-mails relating to work. (sigh)

The other was when Teng



Zui and his fellow technicians in front of the ATM waiting for payday at midnight. I remember back at my first job, I was literally handed an envelop of cash at the end of the month from accounting. It really felt like the fruit of my labor. Now we just see numbers going up and down in our bank accounts. Somehow, we lose a sense of reality. Transactions in cash gives us a better sense of how much we are actually spending than credit cards, GIRO and NETS.

Also in the movie, WAS motto was 'Enthusiasm, Effectiveness, Efficiency.' In most workplaces today, enthusiasm from the bottom rung of the corporate structure speaks, "Huh??? Siao Ah?" (What? Are you crazy?). Effectiveness? Non-existence. Efficiency? More attributed to automation. We have become a people

in general who are passive, apathetic and mechanical. In Jack Neo's argument, I believe he is trying to tell us that "Such mottoes are a joke."

Introspectively as Christians, we consider how we work, how we spend our time, how we define purposes and direction in our lives, the attitude we bring to our workplace, and seriously ask of ourselves, "Who do you serve? God or Mammon?" (See Matt 6:24). Many traditional interpretation of this particular challenge points to services within the church and away from 'worldly' activities? The 'storing of heavenly treasures.' But this is taken out of context by which Jesus talks about daily living on earth for everyone who hears of him, going about his daily 'business'. Sermon on the mount speaks of god pleasing earthly living with a view of the coming kingdom.

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Kingdom Building at the Workplace

Coming Events

18 Jul (7:30pm) - Crossings.

Introduction to new series for young grads on student to work life.
Orchard Rd Pres Church -
Dunman Basement Room 7.

10-14 Aug East Asia Graduates' Conference Seoul, Korea

Contact Simon at gcsing@gcf.org.sg to register.

For more information check our web-site.



Questions to ponder

- 1) Consider and share with your group about difficult situations at the workplace. Do you find similar situation as you have in the movie?
- 2) What is the typical reaction or solution that your colleagues or bosses have to offer?
- 3) Take some time to read through The Beatitudes in Matt 6. In what ways can some of these principles apply in those situations described in 2).
- 4) In what ways can you begin to redeem your workplace.

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