WHAT IS (CHRISTIAN) CULTURAL RENEWAL?
Part 3

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Why Christians don't renew culture
- Common approaches to culture
- Reasons for failure - *dualism*

Why Christians should renew culture
- The **concept** of a Christian world-view- what is it?
- The Biblical **bases** for a Christian world-view - why do we have it?

How Christians can renew culture
- The **alternatives** to a Christian world-view- what are the other, rival world-views?
- The **content** of a Christian world-view - what is *in* it? what does it consist of?
- The **application** of a Christian world-view - how does the CWLV apply to each basic area?

<u>Where</u> do we go from here? - *Cultural leadership development*

Review - *Why Christians don't renew culture.*

1) 'Dualism'--it separates the spiritual/sacred off from the rest of life. The results: **a)** Wrong belief #1-the only way to truly serve God is through evangelizing, discipling. The church and ministry is good and untainted, while the secular world is bad and polluting. **b)** Wrong belief #2- Faith is a means to individual spiritual peace and strength but is not as a comprehensive interpretation of reality that affects everything we do. Dualism 'seals off' personal beliefs and faith from the way we actually live and work in the world.
2) "Dualism" and Legalism are related. When you don't grasp the gospel of grace, you tend toward a Pharisaical obsession with 'ritual purity' or 'cleanness.' Since we are saved by the purity and rightness of our lives, it encourages people to stay very much within the church where we don't have to deal with unbelievers. **b)** The Bible doesn't give exact details about how to be a Christian artist or business person. The "everything black or white" world of legalists cannot cope with that *not* knowing what <u>the</u> exactly right Biblical position is on everything.
3) The opposite of 'dualism' is 'world-viewish' Christianity. Christianity is not simply a set of beliefs to be held in order to save my individual soul. It is also <u>an interpretation of (and a distinct way of understanding) everything in the world, in life</u>. It must bring a distinct perspective on human nature, right and wrong, justice, beauty, and character.

Review - *Why Christians should renew culture.*

1) The *Biblical view of creation* tells us that the material world is *real, important,* and *good.* God does not only save souls by his Holy Spirit, but also renews the material world by his Holy Spirit (See Psalm 104, especially v.30.) A major part of God's work is his delight in continuing to care for, sustain, cultivate, and grow the creation (Psalm 65:9-13; 145:21; 147:15-20.) If *he* does both saving of souls and caring for material creation--how can we say that preaching is 'the Lord's work' but farming or art or banking is not? God is also an artist and an investor in the material world.
2) The *Biblical doctrine of the 'kingdom'* tells us the alternative to God's rightful rule is to be controlled by an idol-an alternative king, god, hope, salvation, or ultimate value. Every heart puts forth something other than God as the ultimate basis of psychological identity--success, family, romantic love, human approval. Every society or field also puts forth something other than God as the ultimate value and goal of corporate life--financial profit, individual rights or happiness, human reason, group power. This always leads to breakdown-psychologically, socially, physically, culturally, and spiritually. There is no neutrality--everyone is operating out of an implicit or explicit view of the world that makes sin or some created thing *the* problem with life and some created thing being *the* main solution or hope to improve things. Thus we can bring redemption into even the 'secular' aspects of life by thinking out what it means to reject idols and do work that makes God, truth, self-giving love, community the new 'ultimate values.'
3) The *Biblical teaching on common grace* tells us that everyone has basic knowledge of God which, though suppressed, continually bears down on our consciousness (Rom 1:18-25.) So every cultural product is the result of a 'dialogue' between the knowledge of God and the sinful desire of the heart to produce idols. The 'world-viewish' Christian engages every artifact of culture by expecting and discerning both a) signs and witness to beauty, justice, grace, love, and truth, <u>and</u> b) idolatrous distortions--whether the author is a believer or not! While the overt idolatry is often lessened in the work of a Christian, a non-believer with greater natural gifts can bear more powerful witness to the truth. For example, every truly great, well-told story bears powerful witness to the fact that we are not accidents, that life has meaning and purpose.

<u>HOW</u> CHRISTIANS CAN DO CULTURAL RENEWAL -
Part 1 - Understanding Alternate World-views

If Christians want to live in the world according to a Christian world-view, they must first learn to discern the alternate world-views that are operating all around them. *All* work and action grows out of a world-view, out of particular faith commitments about the nature of reality. No one is 'neutral.' World-views are already at work in your field of work. You must discern them.

One of the ways to grasp what a 'world-view is' is to think of it as a 'story'--not just any story but a foundational story about the nature of life.

<u>UNDERSTANDING 'WORLD-STORY'</u>

- It has been the consensus of a remarkable amount of study over the last 20 years (and this crosses the lines of 'liberal' and 'conservative' thinking) that *you can't make sense of a fact unless you place it into a narrative structure,* i.e. a story-line, a plot moving toward resolution.
- What is a story? "Little Red Riding Hood took her grandmother some goodies" is not a story. "LRRH took was going to her grandmother to bring her some goodies, but a big bad wolf tried to eat her"-- is. There must be a plot, characters, a drama. A story consists of:
  - Some movement toward a goal that is good and meaningful--a 'mission,' a 'good,' a purpose.
  - Some barrier to be broken through or some problem that needs to be resolved in order to accomplish the mission.
  - Protagonists seeking to get to the goal, and antagonists seeking to prevent it.
- An example of the need to put an event in a narrative structure: Sept 11. Everyone *had* to spin out a narrative structure-a story-and then show how the attack fit <u>in</u> that story. There was no way to even talk about it otherwise. There's no meaning without narrative.
  - Narrative #1- "America's sins are finally coming home to it." In this story America is the antagonist and the world's oppressed are the protagonizers. The mission--America must repent, and here is the opportunity! It's last chance. (Conservative version: "--and so God is removing the protection to teach us a lesson." Liberal version: "--and so the chickens of our oppressive policies are coming home to roost.")
  - Narrative #2 - "We are Good and they are Evil". In this story America is the protagononist and the terrorists are the antagonists. The mission--is preserving individuals' freedom to live as they choose. They are evil because they are violent and oppress people, especially women.
  - Narrative #3 - "Through all this death there can be a resurrection". In this story the antagonist is death and destruction (as much as the terrorists) and the protagonists are we who have suffered. The mission--that despite the horror, we can become a better city than we were before. We can become a better country than we were before. We can be both humbler as Americans and yet prouder to be Americans. The 'victory' of the protagonist is not simply military but more complex and spiritual.
- Now-what we have been calling 'world-view' is really the functional *macro*-story of the world that operates at the root of a person's life. What is the *world's* story? This is an answer to the questions:
  - **Purpose-of life or the universe.** Why is there something rather than nothing? Why are we here? What are the main things we should be doing or living *for?* This is 'the mission'--an assumption about the ultimate 'good,' the highest value.
  - **Problem-with human nature.** What is the main thing wrong with us? Why are things not the way they should be? Why aren't we realizing our purpose? Who are the antagonists-the 'bad guys' or forces hindering us?

- **Resolution-the agent of salvation.** What is the main way to resolve or fix it what is wrong? How can we break-through the barrier? Who are the 'good guys'--the forces that will help save us?
- Everyone has some kind of 'working theory,' however rough, that answers these questions. These working theories are 'world-views' or 'world-stories.' What follows are a number of prominent world-views in Western society today.

PROMINENT ALTERNATE WORLD-STORIES.
These 'clusters' are world-views that share a similar view of the universe, but have more divergent views of the main problem and agent of salvation.]

- **TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS 'CLUSTER'**
  - *Platonism.*
    - *The* **Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) The physical world is shadowy and flawed but the <u>real</u> world is the non-material realm of Forms and ideals. The purpose of life is to know and live in accord with the perfect realm of ideals.
    - *The* **Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) The soul is good, but the body is bad. Even within the soul, the emotions/desires (tied greatly to the bodily desires for comfort, food, sex) often war against the reason, which, if it is properly educated, is fixed on the realm of the Forms. The problem is that the body and its passions too often wins over Reason, which understands justice, truth, the good, and beauty.
    - *The* **Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) a) Solution #1-we must educate humans so that their reasons are completely triumphant over their bodies and appetites. b) Solution #2 -we must put the most educated, the philosophers, in charge of society.
  - *Eastern Pantheistic Monism.*
    - *The* **Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) The material universe is an illusion, as is our own individual self and ego. All is One, and the purpose of life is to realize our one-ness with everything else and the cosmos and return to it.
    - *The* **Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) Because we are under the illusion of individuality, we crave to meet our ego-needs, which creates brings about much suffering.
    - *The* **Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) We must extinguish our ego-needs through a transformed consciousness (of our one-ness with everything.) We must live lives of unselfish love and compassion. When we reach perfect consciousness we cease to be re-incarnated and pass into the All-soul.
  - *Other traditional religions (Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, much Christianity)*
    - *The* **Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) Traditional folk-religion believes that there are two worlds, the eternal and the temporal, and that this one is the less important. Life here is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.' Our real purpose in this life is to be tested by God as to whether we will live a good life or not and to prepare for eternity.
    - *The* **Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) Our problem is human sin and lack of virtue. Because we do not live the good lives we should, the world has its problems.
    - *The* **Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) With divine help, and the help of the religious community, we make our greatest moral effort to become the good and virtuous persons that will help the world, our family, and will prepare us for the next world.

- **NATURALISTIC CLUSTER**
  - *Scientific Naturalism.*
    - *The* **Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) History is a linear movement linked by cause and effect but with no particular purpose. There is no reality beyond the

physical. Everything is the product of evolution, of natural selection, survival of the fittest. Everything about us is there because it helped us survive--that is the 'purpose' of life, if we may talk that way.

- **The Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) The problems of the world--war, poverty, racism, psychological unhappiness--are basically due to an inability to adapt to the environment. may have scientific solutions (there are no other.)
- **The Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) Empirical investigation and scientific implementation can eliminate many human problems, but in the end the process of evolution moves us 'ahead' into greater human 'fitness.' The weak are eliminated.

- *Psychodynamism.*[1]
  - **The Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) Though it assumes the scientific world-view of naturalism, it also has roots in 'Romanticism,' which stressed the ultimate purpose of individual freedom and discovering our inner self and passion.
  - **The Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) Like Plato, Freud saw human beings as made up of basic primal desires for pleasure ("Id") and an understanding that these desires must be limited to live in society ("ego" "super-ego".) But this view sees unloving and repressive families and societies as more to blame for the imbalance between the desires-and-conscience, between individual and society.
  - **The Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) If problems are mainly due to past traumas (especially in childhood)--a lack of love, affirmation, or repression of natural instincts--then the solution is therapy, becoming conscious of our true desires, and fulfilling them as much as possible, only stopping when you infringe on the freedom of *others* to do the same.

- *Marxism.*
  - **The Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) Marx shared the naturalistic view of the universe, but he believed the key to human history was economics. Economic power is the real determinant of how everything else in a society is structured. Claims about spirituality, aesthetics, ethics--are all, in the end, all 'come down' to efforts for or maintenance of economic power. The purpose of life is economic liberation.
  - **The Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) The individual's problems are all, really, economic/social problems. Individual consciousness is determined by social and material well-being (therefore, usually 'false.') The main problem in life is that the means of production are not shared by all--they are controlled by a small group.
  - **The Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) There can be no individual freedom unless there is complete, equal sharing of the means of production. Healing then comes through politics and government, nationalizing all land, finances, and manufacturing. The new society is 'from each according to ability, to each according to need.'

- **ANTI-REALISM CLUSTER**
  - *Existentialism.*
    - **The Purpose** (What is the universe all about?) There is no God and so everything is permissible. There are no absolute or objective values or 'given' purpose in life. This means you are radically free. This view disagrees that we are determined by biological, historical, or economic forces. The purpose is to grasp our freedom.
    - **The Problem** (What is wrong with human nature?) The great problem facing us in this situation is that we have to *decide* who we want to be and how we want to live. We cannot look to tradition, or hope to 'discover' this--we must create it completely.

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[1] A catch-all phrase for contemporary individualistic psychology growing out of Freud.

- *The* **Solution** (What is the agent of salvation?) The solution is to accept our radical freedom, and *create* meaning by fighting meaninglessness--by going down to a 'never-ending defeat' resisting disease, death, suffering, sadness, poverty, etc.
- *Post-modernism.*
  - *The* **Purpose.** (What is the universe all about?) This agrees (with naturalism) there are no objective values but it says no objective knowledge (even scientific) of the 'real' world is possible at all. Properties of objects are creative human projections. This agrees (with existentialism) we are free to create our own reality, but it says we cannot do this as individuals. All 'truth' is socially constructed in communities. Our purpose then is to be in solidarity with others in community.
  - *The* **Problem.** Community identity unavoidably defines itself over against 'not-us' or 'the other.' This marginalizes and oppresses. All truth-claims are really just power plays for your own group.
  - *The* **Solution.** To undermine and deconstruct all truth claims and 'meta-narratives' by unmasking them as socially constructed efforts to maintain power. Through de-construction we groups in power to share with those out of power.

- **CHRISTIAN GOSPEL CLUSTER**
  - Below, we lay out some of the basis of 'the Christian world-view,' but it is more accurate to call even Christianity a 'cluster' of (Christian) world-views.
    - First, Christians do not agree on the relative emphasis and importance of various Biblical doctrines. This leads to smaller but noticeable differences between the way Catholic, Reformed, Baptist, etc Christians produce culture.
    - Second, Christians do not agree on how the church is to relate to the culture around it. (Some of this is based on doctrinal differences, above, such as the relative views of natural revalation/common grace.) This leads to significant differences too:
      - Some churches (Brethren, Mennonite, 'Anabaptist,' many other independent churches) have taken a strictly *Christian counter-cultural* approach. They see little or no 'grace' outside of the Christian community. They believe that the church is not called to transform culture directly but to form counter-cultures that bear a witness and change society (if at all) through modeling. This can lead to cultural dis-engagement, however.
      - Some churches (many Protestant state churches of Europe, Roman Catholic church, Protestant fundamentalists) have taken various forms of a *Christian over-cultural* approach. (Ironically, this also does not see much 'grace' outside of the Christian church.) They believe that we should seek to make the government explicitly Christian, basing law on explicitly Biblical principles. This can lead to cultural combativeness and 'cultural war' mentality, of course.
      - Some churches (mainline Protestant in Europe and North America) take a *Christian of-cultural* approach. They see lots or even *more* of God's revelation out in the world, especially among movements of liberation. These movements set the agenda and the church supports and gets involved and interprets them for others. These churches of course almost completely 'mirror' the liberal-progressive edge of culture. This can lead to cultural capitulation/assimilation.
      - Some churches (especially Protestant evangelical) take a completely *Christian flooding culture* approach. This body of churches focuses almost completely on evangelizing and discipling individuals. The idea is "if enough people become Christians, the society will just change." But there is no guidance given to Christians as to how Christianity would make a difference in the way they consume goods, spend their money, relate to people of other races, approach gender roles, etc etc. Culture is not addressed overtly (though such churches implicitly tend to support conservative/ traditional culture.)
      - The above four approaches are by far the most typical responses of the church to culture. A fifth approach that (I hope) will emerge is one that:

- First, includes a strong emphasis on counter-cultural Christianity like the first approach, but does not make it the exclusive witness to culture.
- Second, includes a strong emphasis on evangelism and church planting, but believes that discipleship *includes* helping many Christians work (not just within the counter-culture) but out in their fields in a distinctively Christian manner. Encourages Christians to excel in their fields.
- Third, recognizes the power of common grace/natural revelation and therefore believes Christians and churches must and can make common cause with others to work for the common good.
- Fourth, puts Christians into not just counter-cultural but also cultural leadership. These leaders do not simply impose Christianity. They believe a truly just society is one that recognizes the value-laden and commitment-driven nature of all knowledge and all institutions.
  - e.g. 'Secular' schools teach secularism, for example, a particular faith-commitment to the nature of reality. Scientific naturalism, however, should not have a claim to privileged position over other world-views. Public funds should not be used exclusively to teach only secularism, only Protestant Christianity, etc, in nationally established institutions.
  - This does not have to lead to the fragmentation of public life. Given common grace, there will be much overlap in all human efforts to live with justice and peace in the world. Communities of faith should have the social and intellectual space to work out of their particular convictions, and through conversation, debate, and negotiation work for the common good with one another.
- Third, each of us is part of a human culture, and when we become believers the gospel 'comes in' and radically alters but does not eliminate the particular viewpoint of our native race/culture.
  - The Biblical view of human cultures is complex: a) each reflects the image of God in its particular gifts, and yet b) in their present forms all cultures are based on idolatries. When the gospel 'enters' a culture it both challenges and affirms, it both retains and rejects.
  - Lamin Sanneh _Translating the Message_ insists that only Christianity does not decimate an indigenous culture's story, but rather a) enters it, b) cleanses it of distortions, demonic and idolatrous elements, and c) resolves its unresolved story lines in Christ.
  - As a result, Christians from different human cultures share the profoundest unity through their common faith, and yet there are valid cultural subsets within the overall consensual commitments of the Christian world-view.
  - (Some have posited that, just as we need four gospels--somewhat different though not contradictory perspectives--to give us the true picture of Jesus, so we need Christians from different cultures to do justice to the fullness of truth in the gospel.)
  - The concept of the gospel as the 'Good Story', the *Godspell,* has enormous implications for communicating the gospel in every culture. See 1 Cor 1:22-25. Jesus *is* the power that Jewish culture sought and it *is* the wisdom that Greek culture sought. Greek Christianity and Jewish Christianity are, then, two complementary and yet somewhat different things. Sanneh compares Christianity with modernity, Islam (totalizing metanarratives), post-modernity (no metanarratives), and the gospel. He says that Christianity is the most affirming of African tribal cultures. This again has implications for artists, because it shows how Christianity tends to transform and resolve rather than simply oppose different cultures.
  - The English word "gospel" comes from the Middle English word *Godspell* that derives from two old English words--"good" and "spell" [*story*]. In Old English, 'to

tell a story' was 'to cast a spell'! We all know of the power of a great story to almost literally 'cast a spell' on us. The Gospel, then is <u>The</u> Goodspell--the greatest of all stories with the ultimate power possible. It was the story that casts the ultimate spell of joy and changes your whole life. It was <u>the</u> story that all other joy-bringing, spell-casting, heart-shaping stories only pointed to. And it *is* the world's story. When it enters any culture, it resolves and completes its partly-true story with the gospel.

SUMMARY

	Naturalism	Anti-Realism	Traditional	Christianity
Purpose	None	Liberation	Moral goodness	Knowing God and grace
Problem	Lack of fitness	Oppression	Sins	Sin: self-salvation
Solution	Self (knowledge)	Self (liberation)	Self (effort)	Christ and his grace
Guide	No abs values	Community based	Tradition based	Divine revelation
Art:	Abstract	Self-expression	Didactic	*Word Made Flesh*
	look for universals	activism vs oppression	teach the truth	

IDENTIFYING WORLD-STORIES.

- We said that everyone must have a 'working theory' of a) the purpose of life, b) the problem with people, and c) what to do about it. But few people have an internally consistent, well-worked out 'philosophy of life.' Most people are eclectic piece their working world-view together from various sources.
- If Christians cannot learn to discern 'alternate world-stories' in their surroundings, their own Christian faith can be 'sealed off' from their actual life and behavior.
  - All the world-views mentioned above embody truth and have roots in reality (otherwise they would not be workable or useful for their adherents at all.) Because everyone of them has <u>some</u> overlap with Christianity, it is quite possible for a Christian believer to be taken in by it. We can subscribe to Christian beliefs, but in our vocational or personal life operate out of the individualism and materialism of the newer world-views, or out of the moralism and dualism of traditional world-views.
  - How does this happen? As mentioned above, great and compelling stories that we read or watch embody macro-stories or world-views and 'cast a spell' on us. Christians immersed in the media, music, and movies of popular culture will adopt the naturalism and/or anti-realism behind those stories unless
    - through thoughtful world-viewishness they learn to distinguish truth from error in cultural products/artifacts.
    - within the Christian community we continually think out the implications of the gospel story for every issue in our culture and for every part of life.
- Some practical observations on the prominent world-stories/views:
  - "Platonism" and other forms of traditional religion (the older world-views) are seen as indistinguishable from Christianity by most people. But there are enormous differences because traditional religion/Platonism embraces "salvation-by-works".
    - This is why traditional people have a sentimental view of things--denying the radical nature of sin and the inability of people to just be good by their own efforts.
    - Traditionalism expects sentimental stories and depictions of life--assurances that we don't need radical grace every moment, that if we try, we can be all we need to be. Thus it exalts tradition, family, and moral values and behavioristic lists as the way to be saved. It divides the world very, very distinctly into moral and immoral people.
  - "Naturalism" became a powerful cluster of world-views after the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Its power has waned somewhat, especially the more 'pure' form we called

"scientific naturalism." It is still the dominant world-view in the natural sciences and also, probably in the business world. It puts all its emphasis on empirical 'hard' data. No other basis for action is allowable. It works to break down all issues and problems into a set of rational causes with practical solutions through the application of some sort of technique.

- "Anti-realism" and post-modernism has become dominant in the humanities, the arts, and even, to a degree, in the media. This is a rather new and still developing 'mood.' Like modernity, post-modernity does not believe in objective moral values, but post-modernity does not even believe in objective empirical facts. Some believe that, therefore, post-modernism can only borrow from other world-views. It borrows its concern about power from Marxism, its desire for spirituality and community from traditional religion, its skepticism about moral absolutes from naturalism.

- Every one of us needs to discern the permutations and combinations of these world-views that dominate in our fields of vocation. We need to be able to look at the trends and practices that are influential and ask 'from what macro-story about reality does this come?' Basically a Christian's job is to look things world-viewishly and decide a) what to keep as good and filled with common grace, b) what to reject as just too unsalvageably distorted, c) what to revise, rename, reshape. This is true of everything from the 'method-acting' approach for actors to the latest leadership theories being touted at Harvard Business school. Are you thinking 'world-viewishly' about your work? Are you asking questions like:
  - What worldview(s) are predominant in my profession?
  - What are the underlying assumptions about meaning, morality, origin, destiny?
  - What are the idols? What are the 'bogeymen'? what are the hopes? What's the 'story line' of the culture in which I live?
  - How do those worldviews effect both the form and content of *my* work? How can I not just work with excellence but with Christian distinctiveness in my work?
  - What parts of the dominant views/theories are basically in line with the gospel and which I can agree with and use?
  - What parts of the dominant views/theories are basically irresolvable without Christ? How can Christ 'finish the story'? Where, in other words, must I challenge my culture?
  - What opportunities are there in my profession for serving a) people, b) society, c) to witness to Christ?

These are profound questions and there is almost no one with the 'answers'. They have to be worked out in community.

CASE STUDY - Business (a very brief look)

- What world-view or views have influence in the world of business?
  - Many studies have shown how 'scientific naturalism' has had a very powerful influence on business and business practices. Jacque Ellul in particular has warned about the influences of the Enlightenment and the idolatry of *'technique.'* That is:
    - Everything in business is commodified, quantified, reduced to the most measurable thing--dollar value. Cost-benefit analysis is extremely rational and (seemingly) an objective way to make decisions.
    - All issues and problems in a business must be seen to have a set of rational causes, analyzed through empirical data, that are subject to practical solutions through some techniques. (Jim Collins' book *Good to Great* is a great example of naturalism. Most of the book is a) wisdom and even b) moral reasoning--namely, that humble servant leadership is better than ego-centric, domineering leadership. But everything he says has to be cloaked in the garb of 'hard data' and 'empirical research.' No other basis for decision is possible. When one poor CEO said that she didn't *have* the humility the "Level 5 Leadership" model [notice the word 'model'?] required, Collins' answer is almost comically ambivalent. The answer is a *moral and relational* answer, not an empirical and technical answer. No technique can create humility.

- However, though naturalism/rationalism still is probably the deepest-set world-view operating in business, there are other world-views at work in the average business environment today.
  - Christians should rejoice in a racially and culturally diverse work environment. That fits in well with the Biblical vision of future 'shalom.' But if you ever get formal training for cultural sensitivity or 'diversity' you may find it heavily rooted in post-modern anti-realism, identity politics, and old fashioned cultural relativism.
  - Much training and many consultants helping business people deal with stress or achieve life-balance will draw on Eastern meditation techniques based in pantheistic monism. For example, Christian meditation entails *filling* the mind with truth about Jesus--while eastern monism entails *emptying* the mind.
- What is the 'bottom line'--the ultimate value, 'the *good*'--in a business? In the dominant ideology today the ultimate, non-negotiable, controlling value is "profit" and therefore "economic efficiency." Ultimately, everything the company does it does to maximize economic efficiency and profits for the owners. The business may a) contribute to local community charities, b) promote ethical behavior among its workers and managers, and c) try to be sensitive to worker needs, concerns, and morale--but it does all of these things as a means to the end of making more money. They are only done in order to promote long-term profits. Thus whenever there is a *real* choice to be made between profit and a) community/neighborhood interests, b) ethical principles, or c) worker needs, it is "profit" that always wins. That is the 'bottom line,' and thus the ruling factor--the idol.
- What would happen to a company that was operated on the principle of being a 'sign of the kingdom'?
  - One of the signs of the kingdom is helping the company's broader community and neighborhood flourish. Another is promoting personal character such as integrity and love. Another is promoting the whole welfare of its workers so they flourish not only professionally but also personally. (All of these stem from kingdom of God as *"shalom"*-comprehensive flourishing.)
  - What if these things were ends and not means? And what if then making a profit was the means not the end? (In other words, we *must* make a profit in order to promote the welfare of our community and our workers. If we don't make a profit how can we create jobs, produce products that really meet human needs and make world better, or help workers grow?) Yet what if the profit was only the means to the end, not the end?
  - From the outside there might not be immediately noticeable differences between a company run according to these kingdom values and some other very well run company. But inside the company the differences would be quite noticeable. Good stewardship means efficiency, but there would be a noticeable lack of adversarial relationships, a lack of any sense of being exploited, an extremely strong emphasis on product quality, and an ethical environment that goes 'all the way down', even when high ethics mean a loss of money.
  - To be a "Christian in business" then means much more than just being honest or not sleeping with your co-workers. It even means more than personal witnessing and holding a Bible study at the office. Rather, it means thinking out the implications of the gospel and God's kingship for your whole work-life.

"The gospel of Jesus points us and indeed urges us to be at the leading edge of the whole culture, articulating in story and music and art and philosophy and education and poetry and politics and theology a worldview that will mount the historically rooted Christian challenge to both modernity and post-modernity, leading the way into the post-postmodern world with joy and humor and gentleness and good judgment and true wisdom. I believe we face the question: if not now, then when? And if we are grasped by this vision, we may also hear the question: if not us, then who? And if the gospel of Jesus is not the key to this task, then what is?" -- N.T. Wright, The Challenge of Jesus