

## Chapter Seventeen

### TRUE WEALTH

#### HOW DID STEWARDSHIP BECOME SPIRITUALITY?

**I**n [chapter 5](#) I shared the tragic story of Sheela—the little girl starved to death by her parents. Some experts say that forty thousand children will die today from chronic malnutrition and all the diseases associated with it. Tonight around 1.2 billion people will go to bed hungry. A decade ago that was a tragedy; today it is a scandal, because for the first time in history we possess the knowledge and technology to prevent starvation.

Why are some nations so poor and others so rich? Why do you suppose most wealth is so persistently one-sided? Why do some appear selfish and others incapable of generating wealth? These questions have long divided individuals and nations along ideological fault lines. Yet, for the sake of curiosity, if not compassion and fairness, we must ask: Is there some other vision of wealth—a true inner wealth—that might be more instructive and persuasive for our future? Do cultural beliefs and values condemn whole cultures to poverty? Should the inner wealth—a culture’s ability to create material wealth—be shared across cultures?

#### **MORE PRECIOUS THAN DIAMONDS?**

The birth of modern industrial capitalism was celebrated in 1851 at the first World’s Fair in Hyde Park, London, in a specially constructed Crystal Palace. In part, the fair was a celebration of the fact that England was the world’s

first industrial nation and ruled an empire on which the sun never set. Nations such as Russia, Austria, France, and Japan—rich in art and culture—displayed their magnificent works of art. The chief exhibit from India was the Kohinoor, one of the world’s largest diamonds. It was set in Queen Victoria’s state crown on becoming Empress of India.

To Europeans, the United States was still the New World. They considered it uncivilized. It didn’t even have a king! Americans had little wealth to display at the time. They did not even fill the space they had rented. The British press, proud of England’s cultural superiority and global dominance, ridiculed the American exhibit as “the prairie ground.” America’s chief contributions to the fair were two humble horse-driven reapers, one invented by Cyrus McCormick and the other by Obed Hussey.<sup>1</sup> Cultural critics thought them rather primitive, and in 1851 the *London Times* mocked the reaper as a cross between a flying machine, a wheelbarrow, and an Astley chariot. In comparison to the fruit of older European countries, the American exhibit indeed appeared primitive and barren—even ridiculous; an expression, at best, of the Puritan preference for function over beauty.

The British public was more practical than its press. After a trial run in bad weather, an international jury estimated that McCormick’s reaper was capable of harvesting twenty acres a day. The day after the trial, the American “prairie ground” was thronged by more people than was the Kohinoor diamond. The McCormick reaper quickly came to define the very shape and tempo of mechanized agriculture and free market economy. In industrialized countries 2 to 5 percent of the population now cultivates more land than was plowed when most people spent their lives growing food.

No one disputes that McCormick (along with the inventiveness of American culture) transformed agriculture and the world. What cultural factors produced such inventors? McCormick and many others like him were products of a theological, spiritual, moral, and legal climate produced by the Bible. It is not possible to explain their humanitarian inventiveness, pursuit of wealth, business practices, and commercial success without understanding their biblical worldview.

## **A PECULIAR SPIRITUALITY**

My people in India did not lack creative genius. They erected great monuments to gods and goddesses and built palaces for kings and queens. But our worldview did not inspire these same engineering skills to be directed toward labor-saving devices. My personal interest in McCormick is rooted in the fact that his widow, Nancy McCormick, financed the building of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute in my hometown, Allahabad, on the banks of the river Yamuna. My brother studied in this institute and, for a few years, I cycled there every Sunday afternoon to study the Bible.

Between 2002 and 2006, from two to twenty thousand people— mostly Hindus—gathered there every Sunday for spiritual fellowship. This is significant because one of the holiest Hindu sites in India— the confluence of the holy rivers Ganges and Yamuna—is less than three miles from the Institute. As mentioned in [chapter 12](#), practically every important Hindu holy man has come to this confluence during the last two thousand years; so have most politicians and wealthy merchants. Not one of them, however, ever started an institution to serve poor peasants.

The Agricultural Institute, now a Deemed University, was established by Sam Higginbottom, a professor of economics in my alma mater.\* He saw the plight of the peasants, returned to America to study agriculture, forged links with McCormick’s family, and returned to establish this institute. His purpose was to inject into Indian culture McCormick’s spirit of loving one’s neighbors enough to attempt to alleviate their suffering.

Love is not a common ethical principle of all religions. No Hindu sage did anything like Sam Higginbottom did, because in order to be spiritual, the learned pundits had to separate themselves from the peasants, not serve them. The hallmark of Indian spirituality was detachment from worldly pursuits like agriculture. Therefore, the spiritually “advanced” in my country treated the toiling masses as untouchables.

McCormick’s reaper reinforces the point made in an earlier chapter—that necessity is *not* “the mother of invention.” All agricultural societies have needed to harvest grain. But no other culture invented a reaper. Most cultures met this need by forcing into backbreaking labor those who were too weak to say no—landless laborers, servants, slaves, women, and children. McCormick struggled to find a better way. The driving force in his life becomes apparent when you notice that he gave substantial portions of his

income to promote the Bible through several projects including newspapers\* and the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago, which was renamed the McCormick Seminary.

Cyrus was born to a Puritan couple, Robert and Mary Ann McCormick, in 1809, in a log cabin in Rockbridge County, Virginia. His Scotch-Irish ancestors came to America in 1735 with little more than a Bible and the teachings of the Protestant reformers John Calvin and John Knox.

These reformers had embraced the Hebrew ideal of the dignity of labor. In addition, reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, introduced to the European mind the radical biblical idea that the calling or vocation of a peasant or a mason was as high as that of a priest or a monk. Every believer was a saint and ought to fulfill his or her vocation for the glory of God. In the words of sociologist Max Weber:

But at least one thing [in the Protestant mind-set] was unquestionably new: the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. This it was which inevitably gave every-day worldly activity a religious significance, and which first created the conception of a calling in this sense. . . . The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass the worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling”<sup>2</sup>

Cyrus McCormick didn't like harvesting with a sickle or scythe. Had he lived before the Reformation, he might have escaped the drudgery of toil by going to a university or becoming a priest. This was normal in Orthodox and Catholic cultures. Even St. Thomas Aquinas—perhaps the greatest theologian of the last millennium—justified the tradition by advocating that while the biblical obligation to work rested upon the human race as a whole, it was not binding on every individual, especially not on religious individuals who were called to pray and meditate.\*

The McCormick family rejected that medieval idea to follow the teachings of Richard Baxter (1615–91), the English Puritan theologian, scholar, and writer, who believed that God's command to work was unconditional. No one could claim exemption from work on the grounds that he had enough wealth on which to live. Baxter wrote, “You are no more excused from service of work . . . than the poorest man. God has strictly commanded [labor] to all.”<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that this work ethic, which made England and America different from Italy or Russia, was biblical—not Puritan per se.

Quakers, like McCormick's rival, Obed Hussey,\*\* shared the same worldview. This biblical work ethic, later called the "Protestant work ethic," was driven into Cyrus from childhood. Both his friends and critics acknowledged that he was a workaholic\*\*\* with an indomitable perseverance and a bulldog's tenacity. McCormick's passion for focused work made him very wealthy, but his work ethic was a product of his religious culture, not his desire for wealth.

The West's rapid economic progress began when it adopted the materialistic spirituality of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). For it is in Genesis that God declares the material universe to be good. Many ancient worldviews, such as India's, had looked upon the material realm as intrinsically evil—something to be delivered from. Christian philosophers who studied the Bible noted that sin resulted in a breakdown of the relationship between God, man, and nature. The most influential exponent of this insight was Francis Bacon, who had a profound impact on the American mind.<sup>4</sup>

McCormick was nurtured on the biblical idea that through godly and creative work human beings can roll back the curse of sweat and toil and reestablish their dominion over nature. To repeat, my ancestors did not lack intelligence, but our genius was expressed in a philosophy that taught us to worship nature instead of establishing dominion over it. Economic development involves not worshipping but harnessing natural resources and energy for human consumption, albeit with foresight and a sense of stewardship.

Francis Bacon's exposition of the Bible instilled a non-fatalistic philosophy in England and America. It implied that the future could be better than the past. As explained in previous chapters, this Hebrew concept was born in Israel's collective experience of God. When God intervened in human history to liberate them from their slavery in Egypt, the Hebrews learned that God could change their destiny for the better. And since men and women were created in God's image, they, too, could forge a better future for themselves through creative efforts.

This belief became an integral feature of modern Western culture and proved to be a powerful economic asset that would set the West apart from the rest of the world. While other cultures sought magical powers through

ritual and sacrifice, the West began cultivating technological and scientific powers. McCormick's grandparents, like most European Puritans who fled from religious persecution to the liberty of America, interpreted their experience as being similar to that of the Israelites being set free from the bondage of slavery.

An important aspect of Moses' mission was to teach God's law to the Israelites. A cornerstone of this teaching was that while wickedness makes some individuals rich, it impoverishes entire nations. According to the Bible, a nation is exalted by righteousness.<sup>5</sup> Cyrus's forefathers believed that the blessings of righteousness were not exclusive to the Jews. God chose Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth. All true believers, they reasoned, were God's chosen people. Therefore, it is wrong for God's beloved to accept poverty as their fate. Even if one's poverty were a result of sin, either one's own or one's ancestors, it was possible to repent and receive God's forgiveness and the power to live a righteous life. It is not surprising, then, that within a century after Thomas McCormick's arrival in Philadelphia, his grandson's family owned an estate of twelve hundred acres.

Cyrus's family owned slaves, as did so many others of their time. They were products of their era and could have purchased more human labor to bring in their harvests. One difference the Bible made was that it demanded the McCormicks work just as hard as any of their slaves. We know that by the age of fifteen, Cyrus had despaired of seeing people slave in the fields. That's when he resolved to build upon his father's failed attempts to find a better method for harvesting grain.

### **SPIRITUALITY OR GREED?**

The 2010 movie *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* powerfully shows how secularism confuses ambition and greed. Ambition is good, but it becomes greed when separated from moral absolutes. Greed is a destructive part of human nature. It brought to India not only Europeans, but also the Aryan and Muslim invaders. Greed explains the loot of Alexander the Great and Nadir Shah, but not the creativity of industrial capitalism. Pioneers of modern economic enterprise, such as Cyrus McCormick, did want to make money, but they were inspired by something nobler.

Adam Smith had observed—as do some of today’s ecological economists—that the universe has been so structured by its Creator that in seeking their self-interest, creatures help to maintain a grand economic balance. We may strive to make money in our self-interest, but if we do so within the boundaries of moral limits, then the Creator’s invisible hand turns our labor into a matter of public good.

In traditional cultures, including mine, people who had wealth hid it, gambled it away, or displayed it by building castles, cathedrals, or mausoleums. In contrast, McCormick’s biblical upbringing encouraged him to save and reinvest his wealth in expanding his business for the glory of God and the blessing of human beings. Saving money sounds simple, but it was revolutionary. In most cultures, in most periods of history, making and saving money was a dangerous affair. It attracted both robbers and rulers, and the two were not very different. Tax collectors did not get a salary. They had to rob peasants to sustain their militia to collect taxes. Absence of a rule of law eliminated the option of banking, forcing my ancestors to hide their meager savings in the fields, walls, or floors.

The Bible created a very different culture; it inspired and enabled the habit of saving and reinvesting. This helped McCormick’s factory become one of the earliest mega-industrial enterprises in America. By the time of the 1851 World’s Fair, Chicago newspapers were echoing the common perception that the McCormick factory was the largest of its kind in the world, saying things like, “McCormick conquers nature to the benign end of civilization and brings bread to the mouths of the poor.”<sup>6</sup>

Wealth accumulation via hard, creative work; saving; and reinvestment was a modern habit and a key feature of capitalism. In McCormick’s hands, it made other agricultural innovations possible, empowering farmers to turn America into the breadbasket of the world. Contrary to Marxist theory, McCormick did so not by exploiting others but by liberating slaves and laborers from mindless toil and by enhancing human productivity through machines. A farmer using McCormick’s reaper saved one hundred dollars for every dollar he spent on his machine.

McCormick began producing his reaper at home—as was the case with most medieval industry. But when the demand for his product grew, he subcontracted other blacksmiths to make his reaper under license to him. He



soon found that some of the blacksmiths were producing substandard reapers and thus damaging his reputation. When their contracts expired, he decided to produce all of his reapers under one roof where he could effectively supervise the work and ensure quality control. The factory system made it possible for workers to specialize and excel in one or more aspects of the job.\*

Buying raw materials in bulk from a single supplier and having them delivered to one location also helped McCormick to cut costs. He built his factory on the banks of the Chicago River so that boats could bring in the raw materials and then deliver the finished product. The volume of production at the factory justified the installation of a 30-horsepower steam engine that became the wonder of Chicago. Later, McCormick played a very important role in bringing the railway line to Chicago—a line that served everyone’s interest.

## **SPIRITUALITY AND ECONOMICS**

How could a devoutly religious man amass a fortune of ten million dollars—a huge sum in those days? Didn’t Jesus say you cannot serve both God and money?<sup>7</sup> How could McCormick be both devoted to Christ and dedicated to making money?

The contradiction is resolved when we realize that almost two-thirds of Jesus’ parables in the Gospels are about money. They are not about rituals, meditation, mystical experiences, asceticism, or what many call “spiritual” disciplines. Christ’s parable of the talents, for example, is a helpful key in understanding McCormick’s apparently contradictory passions to serve Christ and make money. More than a hundred years before Adam Smith, John Lilburne had used this parable to teach free market economy.

According to Jesus’ parable, the kingdom of heaven “will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents also made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.” When the master returned, his response to both of those who had



invested and made a profit was, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” But the man who hid his one talent out of fear was called “wicked.”<sup>8</sup>

Such teachings of the Bible helped McCormick’s religious tradition equate spirituality with stewardship. In fact, the word *economy* comes from the Greek word *oikonome*—which means “to manage a household with care and thrift.” The English New Testament translates *oikonomos*—meaning “one who manages a household”—as *steward*, an Anglo-Saxon word that originally meant the “ward” or “keeper of a sty or cattle.” For McCormick, turning five thousand dollars into ten thousand dollars was being a good steward, which, on Jesus’ own authority, was synonymous with being spiritual.

Economics has become such a complex subject that our age confers Nobel Prizes on economists and routinely gives six-figure salaries to financial analysts. Therefore it could sound incredible that our complex system of capitalism was created by the Bible’s simple parables. Nevertheless, McCormick was a simple man with a simple faith, and simple men and women like him made America great.

The point can be illustrated by another example: Fra Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli (1446–1517), a fifteenth-century Franciscan monk in Venice, first described capitalism’s double-entry bookkeeping system.\* Without this kind of accounting, a business cannot chart its profits or losses. It cannot find ways to minimize expenses and maximize income. It cannot plan for growth, nor can it know with certainty when it is best to fold up a particular venture.

Pacioli wrote on the science and theology of mathematics.<sup>9</sup> He explicitly recommended that people should begin all their economic transactions in the name of God. The double-entry bookkeeping system is vital not just for private entrepreneurs, but is crucial to the wealth of a nation. American and European economies appear to be headed for major disasters because they have chosen to incur huge losses and debts.

Pacioli was a contemporary of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506). Almost a century before Columbus, Chinese admiral Zheng launched a naval expedition of 317 ships with twenty-eight thousand men. The largest of these ships was 400 feet long and 160 feet wide. In contrast, the *Santa Maria*, the

ship on which Columbus sailed in 1492, was only 85 feet long. The *Nina* and the *Pinta* were even smaller. The Chinese vessels had water tanks to ensure a supply of fresh water for a month or more. That expedition tells us that in some aspects of shipbuilding and sea travel, China was centuries ahead of the West. Her ships ruled the Asian seas, at least for a few years. Despite such awesome sea power, the Chinese failed to profit from it.

Couldn't they have colonized Europe, or at least Asia and Africa? They could have. But they could not even sustain their shipbuilding. An important factor behind their failure was that the Chinese did not keep account of their expenses and their income. The impressive Chinese vessels carried valuable cargo such as silk, porcelain, strange animals, jewels, and exotic foods and plants to enrich the Chinese pharmacopeia. But these treasures were not meant to serve the Chinese people. Instead, as Professor Landes pointed out, they were used to enhance Chinese prestige in the context of gift giving.<sup>10</sup>

The desire to impress barbarians could not feed the tens of thousands of shipbuilders, sailors, and soldiers involved in the expeditions. Nor did it help their families and relatives back home. This cultural trait—elevating prestige before profits—helped put the Chinese so far down a financial hole that they had to abandon shipbuilding and oceangoing altogether. At that time the farthest they traveled was Africa. The first Chinese ship to arrive in Europe was in 1851, for the first World's Fair, where McCormick displayed his reaper.

The power of Christ's parable becomes apparent when we realize that the mentality of preferring prestige over profits is a problem that has continued to plague nations into our own times. The unprofitable mega projects of the communist countries drove their nations to bankruptcy. They worked for the glory of the state, not for the glory of God. For them the state was the ultimate authority, and those who worked for the state were not required to give an account of how they used national resources, either materials or personnel. That mentality produced poverty, which in turn produced the revolt led by the Solidarity movement in the 1980s. The revolt began among the workers in the shipyard of Gdansk, Poland, and it triggered the collapse of communism—one of the most brilliant economic ideologies of the modern world.

One reason behind communism's failure was its refusal to accept the

notion of private property rights, especially intellectual property rights. The communist countries vested all property in the state—which had the right to steal from its citizens. But states do not invent. People invent, provided their intellectual property is safe from private or public infringement.

Russia, a superpower, was reduced to bankruptcy because the state deliberately rejected one of the Ten Commandments—“You shall not steal.” In the name of collectivization, it took away citizens’ property. They had to work not for themselves or their children, but for their (secular) god—the state. America, on the other hand, succeeded because it had an inventive culture where people like McCormick could succeed. The Bible generated such a moral climate in America that inventors and investors could defend their rights without recruiting militia or bribing officials. That is very difficult in most nonbiblical cultures even today.

Even if it is true that five centuries ago imperial China slid back economically because it did not operate on biblical principles of stewardship, what about the success of nonbiblical nations, such as modern Japan, China, and India?

### **JAPAN, CHINA, AND INDIA**

Japan and contemporary China and India illustrate my thesis equally well. Let us focus on Japan, since it was the first Asian country to overtake Europe. Europeans reached Japan in the middle of the sixteenth century, just after the Reformation had begun to transform Europe. The Europeans impressed the Japanese, especially with their guns and technology. They were anxious to learn the foreigners’ secrets. As David Landes pointed out, learning from others had been one of the strengths of Japanese culture.<sup>11</sup> Much of their language, writing, silk work, ceramics, printing, painting, furnishings, and religion came from China, some of it via Korea.

Learning from others did not make the Japanese feel inferior, because they always improved upon what they learned. The Japanese soon improved on the European guns and in the process mastered related skills. Japanese sages quickly learned that in Europe eyeglasses had doubled the scholarly output of European monks and increased the productivity of skilled workers. They also learned to make watches because watchmaking had been the greatest

achievement of mechanical engineering in Europe. Imitating and improving the making of guns, eyeglasses, and watches laid the foundation of mechanical skills in Japan.

But the Japanese adopted more than European science and technology. Many Japanese also adopted Christianity, the “European” religion. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, between three hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand Japanese, including many from the ruling class, had converted to Christianity. Some converted out of conviction; others sought better terms for trade. Some used their conversion as a means to ferret out technological secrets. Portuguese and Spanish sailors, merchants, and soldiers, however, did not make good missionaries. Their arrogance turned the Japanese rulers against Christianity. As a result, Shogun Ieyasu banned Christianity from Japan in 1612.

In 1616 all foreign merchant vessels—except those from China— were barred from ports other than Nagasaki and Hirado. Japan was totally off-limits to the Spanish and Portuguese in 1624 and 1639 respectively. In 1637, the Japanese people were not allowed to leave their country. During 1637 to 1638, nearly thirty-seven thousand Christians were massacred at Shimabara alone. Interestingly, following the tragedy, guns were all but banned in Japan. Gunsmiths were put out of business, and all weapons were rounded up and melted. The resulting metal was fashioned into an enormous statue of the Buddha.

The British terminated all trade with Japan. Only the Dutch continued to trade with the Land of the Rising Sun. But even they were not allowed to enter the mainland. They were restricted to just two streets on the artificial island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay. Holland became Japan’s only connection to the West. By the 1720s some Japanese individuals realized that the policy of virtual isolation was unwise. Europe was advancing rapidly, and Japan needed to learn all it could from it.

Those in power were persuaded to allow secular books from Holland to enter the country. Japanese scholars called *Rangakusha* were assigned to study those books. Some powerful and influential Japanese objected to the change in policy, so the *Rangakusha* had to tread lightly. One *Rangakusha* in particular, Otsuki Gentaku, the author of *Ladder to Dutch Studies*, defended his profession. Dutch learning is not perfect, he argued, but if we choose

good points and follow them, what harm could come from that? It took almost another century for Japan to realize that while it was stagnating, Europe was growing rapidly. Finally, in 1867, the new Japanese emperor Meiji reopened the major Japanese ports for global trade.

The *Rangakusha*, the technicians, and the forward-looking bureaucrats became the new revolutionaries. Foreign experts and technicians were hired as consultants. Japanese delegates were sent to Europe and America to learn all they could about everything. In October 1871, Prince Iwakura Tomomi headed a delegation that included innovators like Okubo Toshimichi. This distinguished Japanese delegation visited factories, forges, shipyards, armories, railways, and canals on two continents. It did not return until two years later, in September 1873. They were laden with the spoils of learning and on fire with enthusiasm for reform. Japan became the first non-Western nation to begin the process of imitating and improving upon Western science and technology, economic philosophy and infrastructure.

Contact between the West and Japan has run the gamut of commerce, conversion, tragedy, competition, and peace. The strength of the Japanese culture is its willingness to learn from the success of the Protestant nations. Even the Catholic and Orthodox Christian nations were slow to learn the principles of economic development from nations transformed by the Bible. The Japanese penchant for learning, modifying, and nurturing is a cultural norm that was applicable to more and more complexity and quality.

After World War II, Japan invited American Dr. W. Edwards Deming, the leading expert in the quality revolution, to teach them how to improve on quality.<sup>12</sup> Today, Japanese products, competitiveness, and quality are second to none. Japan brought its inherent cultural strengths to bear on its economy. The Japanese economy began to flounder in the twenty-first century because it has not yet found the spiritual resources to deal with corruption in high places. In addition, nonobservance of the Sabbath resulted in the neglect of the family. Office and factory workers worked for six days, and on the Sabbath they attended company related parties.

Frustrated and insecure wives decided that they did not want to have children if they had to bring them up by themselves. Fewer children meant an aging population. That has now become the most serious concern for the future of the Japanese economy. Japan recognizes the problem and has

invested more on robotics than almost any other nation. Robots can increasingly do a lot of things. The problem is that they are a poor substitute for children because they don't pay into the social security system. Be that as it may, for decades Japan did better than India or China because those nations envied and hated the West. Some Asian nations demanded aid, but India was too proud to learn from the West as Japan did. Our fortunes began to change only after we realized that humility is a virtue.

We cannot understand Japan without understanding Holland and its impact on Japan. Before the Reformation, Roman Catholic Churches were open seven days a week in Holland. The devout went to the church whenever they wanted to meet with God. They would light their candles, kneel, and pray. After the Reformation, the Church leaders decided to lock their churches on Sunday nights. Not because they became less religious, but because they became more religious.

Reformers learned from the Bible that the church was not the only place to meet with God. If God had called you to be a woodcutter, then on Monday morning you ought to meet with God in the forest. If he had called you to be a shoemaker, then on Monday morning he expected you to meet with him on the workbench. If he had called you to be a homemaker, you needed to serve God while taking care of your window plants. This made Dutch homes beautiful and eventually impacted Japanese homes.

When a shoemaker begins to make his shoes for God, he does not use substandard material or workmanship. He does not cut corners; his work is of the highest standards. This biblical doctrine of *calling*, rediscovered during the Reformation, was at the root of Holland's excellence. Japanese workmen had to compete against it and learn to outdo it. Some sociologists argue that the modern world is a product of the biblical doctrine of "vocation" or calling.<sup>13</sup>

Why has the Japanese economy begun to stagnate now? Why are the prime ministers of Japan forced to resign one after another under charges of corruption? Many observers feel that Japan has gone as far as a nation can by imitating biblical economic principles. To move to the next level, it has to find spiritual resources to become an open, transparent, trustworthy, moral society. Otherwise the wealthy in Japan will save more of their money in Swiss banks, rather than invest within Japan. Likewise, if the Bible was the

force that kept corruption down in Europe and America, then its rejection now is bound to increase corruption, destroying the moral climate required for the success of men like McCormick.

*Integrity is not a natural, universal human trait. An economic system built on trust is bound to collapse without the spiritual resources that served as its foundations.*

## SPIRITUALITY THAT SAVED INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

Cyrus McCormick was not merely an inventor; he was also an innovative marketing strategist. His goal was to make the best and most affordable reaper available to as many people as possible. Following the teachings of the Bible as expounded by Luther, Calvin, and other reformers, McCormick believed that the business of selling his reaper was God's will for his life. So he strove to become the best salesman possible. *The Dictionary of American Biography* records that McCormick was among the first to introduce the use of field trials, guarantees, testimonials in advertising, cash, and deferred payment.<sup>14</sup>

McCormick invited farmers to take the reaper in May, before the harvest, without paying for it. Over the summer, his salesmen would train the farmers how to use the machine. During the harvest, McCormick's salesmen were readily available with spare parts. The farmers didn't have to pay for the reaper until December—when they were sure that the reaper was cost-effective. Deadlines for payment were routinely extended if a farmer was unable to pay on time. Little wonder Mr. McCormick became extremely popular with his customers. No inventor in the Middle Ages had advertised his product or promoted his services the way McCormick did.

The issue of honesty in advertising and marketing is becoming important in the West. There are hundreds of pieces of legislation that require honesty, but the human heart seems to be far more ingenious than the legislators. In McCormick's religious culture, integrity in marketing came from within and was reinforced by the society. Science and technology do not drive evil out of our hearts. In fact, technology can increase our capacity for evil. Identity theft and the abuse of Internet banking are very good current examples of sin in the human heart. America went on to produce many successful innovators-



cum-businessmen because its culture was shaped by the gospel that deals with the inner problem of sin.

Bill Gates is currently the richest man in the world. His success is not simply because he is a great inventor-businessman. China and India have equally gifted individuals. If India failed to produce a Bill Gates, then it is because our markets have been filled with pirated copies of his software. He couldn't have succeeded without a relatively moral culture built by the gospel. In our domestic economies, black-marketers tend to make more money than honest businessmen. America takes for granted what the Bible has done for its economy. The consequences of changing Wall Street's motto from "In God We Trust" to "In Greed We Trust" are apparent even to Hollywood scriptwriters.\*

### **THE BIBLE, WOMEN, AND ECONOMY**

Cyrus's mother, Mary Ann McCormick, exercised strong and efficient management of their farm. She created and maintained order while her husband, Robert, provided inventiveness and leadership. Working as a team, Mary Ann and Robert were able to more than double the wealth they had inherited from their parents. Cyrus and his wife, Nancy, were also an effective team. Nancy proved an efficient aid to her husband's career. Cyrus was able to manage a constantly growing business, travel the globe to promote his reaper, fight endless legal battles to protect his patent rights, and take on religious, political, and publishing responsibilities because of his wife's support. She had a "practical mind, keen perception, and rare charm." They were partners.

After Cyrus's death, Nancy took charge of the firm. In her elder years she supported the Presbyterian economist-turned-agriculturist Sam Higginbottom in establishing the Allahabad Agricultural Institute, now recognized by the Indian government as a university. The institute passed on the blessing of agricultural development to some of the poorest people in the world. (My stepmother served as a doctor in the public health clinic at this institute.)

The Puritans who migrated to America are often criticized for their biblically derived strict sexual ethic and rigid family values, including their opposition to divorce. Yet their belief system created America's moral and

family infrastructure on which to build its national wealth. Educational opportunities and the status of women substantially determine the poverty or wealth of the nation. An increasing number of Americans are rejecting the Bible and depriving themselves of the spiritual resources necessary to sustain monogamy. The glamorization of the single-parent family is condemning an increasing number of American women and children to poverty.

A powerful factor in McCormick's success was the stable base of political and personal liberties in America. The next chapter will explore the source of Western freedom—the secular myth and the historical truth.

\* In India colleges function under a university chartered by the Government. *Deemed University* is a status of autonomy granted to high performing institutes and departments of various universities in India. I did my Intermediate studies (grades 11 and 12) at Jamuna Christian College, a part of Ewing Christian College, in Higginbottom's time. Now independent, it is still located across the river from the Agricultural Institute.

\* The modern press is a product of the Puritan revolution in England, and a substitute for the biblical institution of the prophet. A century ago, most newspapers in America were Christian.

\* During the Middle Ages religious individuals were paid to sit the whole day and pray for the souls of their deceased relatives. In Hindu and Buddhist cultures, peasants provided for ascetics who did nothing besides meditate.

\*\* Hussey patented his reaper in 1834 but lost the marketing race to McCormick.

\*\*\* The term "workaholic" is used only in a negative sense today. However, even our leisure-driven age accepts that no one excels in a given field and becomes a distinguished scientist, athlete, inventor, or businessman without working harder than her or his peers.

\* That is not to ignore the fact that many "modern" factories became dehumanizing prisons that gave no room for creativity or personal pride in craftsmanship. From a biblical perspective, sin affects and corrupts all human endeavors. Most governments in most periods of history have been oppressive, yet anarchy is no solution to that problem. Likewise, the factory system survives because it is redeemable.

\* Fra Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli, *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni et Proportionalita* (Venice 1494).

\* "In Greed We Trust" appears on a dollar bill at the end of the movie *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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2. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 80.
3. Richard Baxter, *Baxter's Practical Works*, vol. 1 (Letterman Assoc., 2007), 115.
4. See for example, George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006).
5. Proverbs 14:34.
6. William T. Hutchinson, *Cyrus Hall McCormick: Seed Time, 1809–1856* (NY: Century, 1930), 271.
7. Matthew 6:24.
8. Matthew 25:14–30.
9. His book was called *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni et Proportionalita* (Venice, 1494).
10. David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1998), 94.
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12. Rafael Aguayo, *Dr. Deming: The American Who Taught the Japanese About Quality* (NY: Fireside, 1991).
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14. *The Dictionary of American Biography* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946).