

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF BUSINESS FOR CHRISTIANS IN A PRIMAL RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

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INTRODUCTION – A CHANGING SITUATION AND NEED

Evangelical missions, while evangelising and establishing locally-rooted churches, often gave inadequate attention to an applied theology of business, or work, to enable their church members to develop sustainable economic ventures. Thus, the communities they served have not been well equipped for transitioning into the globalised and interdependent economic world of today. There were many reasons for this. Missionaries, themselves, often kept away from business or trading activities, as these were seen as a distraction from their higher calling. But they were necessarily involved in purchasing, trading, and importing, to sustain their lifestyles. Thus, their examples and teaching on economic matters were sometimes confusing, if not contradictory to local people. Their teaching said that business, and the love of money, were temptations to turn us away from the more important matters of our relationship with God. But a good proportion of missionary time and effort was necessarily devoted to acquiring the basics needed for living, and clearly depended on access to finance and economic know-how. The missionaries' own attitudes to work and business had often been "caught" rather than "taught" from the Protestant Christian setting in which they were raised in their home cultures. These often assumed the place and value of the "Protestant work ethic", rather than including teaching about work, as a necessary aspect of basic Christian discipleship. As missionaries,

trusting Christ as Saviour and Lord was the highest priority, and there was a real concern not to encourage any idea that our “work” makes us acceptable before God. So, faith and work were often contrasted, so that the value of manual or business work was either downplayed, or ignored, in instruction on Christian living. When Ossie Fountain wrote, in 1966, looking at whether business programs helped or hindered church life in the CMML¹ areas, he concluded, “if a mission station places too great an emphasis on economic activities, it does not truly reflect what Christ intended the gospel to be”.² That fairly reflected the view of most CMML missionaries at that time.

In the first generation of the church in Papua New Guinea, after World War II, that was not too great a problem at first. The newly-arrived Christian missions worked primarily in rural or village localities, where subsistence farming provided a basic lifestyle, although tropical diseases and malnutrition were endemic in many areas. This meant converts continued their subsistence living, with little need for economic change. But that situation has disappeared. Even the most remote villages today are surrounded by, and are usually involved in, commercial mining, forestry, fishing, agricultural and/or oil exploration ventures, which are part of global economic systems. Traditional subsistence lifestyles have radically changed, and economic questions are now of primary social, communal, and ethical importance. The church is still a major, if not the major, agency for guiding change in many such settings, so inadequate teaching on economic and financial matters is now a serious concern, and a priority challenge.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISSUE – CHURCH AND MISSION BUSINESS VENTURES

There is, however, another side to mission and economic development. Alongside the gap in teaching, missionaries initiated several ventures into

¹ CMML = Christian Missions in Many Lands, the official name under which Christian Brethren missionary work was registered with the PNG government, when it began working in PNG in 1952. Present-day Christian Brethren churches in PNG were established through the work of CMML missionaries.

² O. C. Fountain, “Religion and Economy in Mission Station-Village Relationships”, *Practical Anthropology* 13-2 (March-April 1966), pp. 49-58, quote from p. 58.

business activity. These were not always successful or sustained. They were always well meaning, and usually intended to benefit the missionary effort, and local people. We can trace such efforts in Papua New Guinea back to the London Missionary Society's work at both the eastern end of Papua, particularly on the island of Kwato, and in the Papuan Gulf in the early 1900s. As an example of what were called "industrial missions" in the Papuan Gulf, the LMS missionary, F. W. Walker, established *Papuan Industries Ltd.* This company took over coconut plantations, with copra production as the foundation of the business. Unable to raise enough money to make the business sustainable, despite some initial promise, the venture did not last.³ At the eastern end of Papua, Walker's LMS colleague and friend, Charles Abel, made similar attempts, both at plantation work, and various kinds of vocational training and business during the last decade of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century. Again, the success was only partial, and uneven. Abel tried again after World War I on the island of Kwato. The *Kwato Extension Association* gave training in vocational skills to support the desired business ventures. But, again, inadequate capital meant only partial business success.⁴ The Kwato Mission, which grew from this initiative, however, has made long-term contributions to the training of tradespeople, who have found employment across the whole of PNG, up to the present.

Later in the 20th century, the Lutheran Mission started a range of businesses, notably *Lutmis Shipping*, trading around the coastal ports of PNG; and *Namasu* (Native Marketing and Supply), the mission-initiated and locally-owned cooperative trade store chain. This was heralded in the late

³ Russell Smith, "The Place of the Market in Mission", MTh dissertation, Auckland NZ: Laidlaw Graduate School, 2010, pp. 75-100; F. W. Walker, *The Papuan Industries Ltd., Its Progress and Aims*, London UK: LMS, 1908; Ross M. Weymouth, "The Gogodala Society in Papua New Guinea and the Unevangelized Fields Mission, 1890-1977", PhD thesis, Adelaide SA: Flinders University of South Australia, 1978, pp. 64-89; Tony Austin, *Technical Training and Development in Papua 1894-1941*, Pacific Research Monograph Number One, Canberra ACT: ANU, 1978, pp. 50-103.

⁴ Smith, "Market in Mission", pp. 83-95; David Wetherell, *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission of Papua New Guinea, 1891-1975*, Melbourne Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1996.

1960s as “New Guinea’s largest indigenous-owned company”.⁵ *Namasu* provided the backbone of the trade-store and coffee-marketing supply lines, which developed as the highway network extended from the coast into the Highlands of PNG. A number of Evangelical Alliance-related churches and missions developed similar business projects, such as *Menduli*, the United Church Southern Highlands business arm; and *Pasuwe* (Papuan Supply and Welfare) of the Unevangelized Fields Mission (Asia Pacific Christian Mission – now Pioneers) and Evangelical Church of Papua. Ross Weymouth explains, “(*Pasuwe*) was established in 1969 by the UFM out of the existing mission-supply and trade-store operations, as a non-profit organisation. Prior to this, the mission had run a trade store on each of the mission stations. (*Pasuwe*’s) main aims were: ‘to provide for the Papua New Guineans’ Christian training, medical and educational facilities, general welfare services, and training in professional, commercial, and industrial skills’ ”.⁶

The patterns of development, and the flourishing and decline of these business programs, deserve careful study, to inform present and future possibilities for business development. How these mission/church initiatives related to, and were influenced by, the transitions in the nation’s retail industry generally might also be instructive. The transition of retail business from the hands of the long-established Pacific trading companies (such as Burns Philp, Colyer Watson, and Steamships), through the period of increasing migrant Chinese influence, to the diversification of small, PNG-owned businesses today, could also clarify trends, and highlight significant factors.

The Christian Leaders’ Training College’s economic support programs contribution to the dairy, cattle, and poultry industries in PNG is another example. But the CLTC support story has not yet been written or analysed. CLTC’s focus on producing income to meet part of the theological education costs for the College’s students is a distinctive factor in its commercial

⁵ I. J. Fairbairn, W. Fugmann, G. Sankoff, *Namasu: New Guinea’s Largest Indigenous-owned Company*, New Guinea Research Bulletin No 28, Canberra ACT: ANU Press, 1969.

⁶ Weymouth, “Gogodala Society”, p. 263, citing *Light and Life* (October 1973), p. 4.

involvement. It has also modelled a pattern of locally-generated support for Christian ministries to the successive generations of students studying on its Banz campus. CLTC also gave birth to the short-lived Alliance Training Association (ATA), with programs in trucking, saw-milling, and timber products. Again, ATA offers significant lessons and warnings in its different attempts to build viable diversified business with limited, and ultimately inadequate, capital resources. ATA has, however, made an ongoing contribution, since some of its trade trainees are still running successful transport businesses.

Within particular missions and churches, such as the Christian Brethren churches and CMML, a number of specific ventures, mainly local in extent, await analysis to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and why they declined and closed. Both expatriate and local perspectives on projects, such as, BMB (*Bia Mogo Bulene* – The Helper) at Koroba, the World Vision agriculture projects, or Paradise Furniture at Lae, would be helpful for forward planning. There might also be valuable insights if we compared those short-lived ventures with the long-term success of Christian Books Melanesia in its retail and publishing business.

Both these historic aspects – the gap in missionary teaching about work or business, and the range of only partially-successful ventures into mission or church-based business – deserve further analysis and evaluation to guide present and future church-related economic ventures.

TOWARDS SOME BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

We turn now to suggest some areas of biblical teaching, which offer a foundation for encouraging church members to take a lead in the economic development of their societies.

We make an important assumption: to chart an appropriate course through the present-day business challenges will require a transformation of worldview presuppositions. We will need to clarify, and either endorse or transform, traditional primal religious beliefs influencing the transition into the present-day world of business, commerce, and global economic interdependence. Alternative Western secular approaches do not offer the

necessary, integrated, holistic worldview. Such integration will retain the benefits of traditional perspectives, and give proper attention to spiritual needs and realities. An integrated biblical foundation will also enable us to make informed choices about the aims and purposes of any business, or commercial ventures. Not having such an accompanying integrative worldview may have been a significant reason why some business attempts failed in recent decades in PNG.

Where, then, as Christians, do we start when seeking a biblical foundation for constructing a sound approach to business and economic involvement?

FOUNDATIONAL BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO BUSINESS

The record of God's self-revelation at creation is an appropriate starting place.

THE LIVING GOD IS A WORKER HIMSELF

The very first pages of the Bible present God as the Creator, making things, shaping, forming, designing, ordering, and evaluating His work (Gen 1). One of the particular roles of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was to gift human craftspeople with the knowledge, abilities, and skills to create, fashion, and design buildings, utensils, garments, and ornaments for the Tabernacle, in which His people would meet with God (Ex 31:1-11). Such skills of craftsmanship are one essential requirement for business enterprises. When God became human, in Jesus of Nazareth, He sanctified, and gave particular dignity to, manual labour. Jesus showed this by being born into a worker's family, and growing up as a carpenter's son, who followed his father's trade (Mark 6:3). So, as the most basic reason, we will want to be involved in business, because this is one way we can be like our Maker God, who, Himself, is a creative worker.

THE CREATED WORLD ABOUNDS WITH INTRINSIC VALUE AND IS GOOD IN GOD'S SIGHT, FULL OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The works of God's creating hand have worth and value to God their maker. We are to value and respect the dignity of the created world, because it

expresses the mind and will of God. Creatures and the creation are not to be worshipped, but neither are they to be abused or exploited. Nor are they to be feared, since they are not, in themselves, gods or spirit powers. Rather, they have their own proper place in the ecology of the universe. Each species, “according to their kind”, has inherent powers of reproduction and intuition to live and flourish. Moreover, as we shall develop further, later, creation and other creatures are good gifts from God. They are entrusted to us, as humans, to care for, and responsibly manage. All the creatures and resources of the universe are essential parts of the environment, within which we know and serve God. The resources of the universe are vast, not limited. They are abundant, given for us to explore, discover, and use wisely. Many primal societies have believed there is only a limited amount of good in the world. They say we can only gain access to it when we carefully follow the tribal laws (*lo*), and rituals the ancestor spirits gave us. Moreover, if one tribal group has more than another, it is said they have used some spiritual power to steal what should be equally available to every tribe. But, while there are limits to the non-renewable resources on the earth (like oil and gas), humans have only discovered, and are only using, a small proportion of the riches God has provided for all humanity to enjoy in the physical world around us. Papua New Guinea has never had a shortage of good resources in its environment. This wealth of potential resources provides incentive to constructively utilise them through business ventures.

These first two points present a significantly different understanding of the nature of material things, and where they fit in the cosmological order, from traditional Melanesian primal religious thought. These two points are also very different from the assumptions of the secular worldviews in the West. The Bible tells us God Himself is a creative worker, who has provided us with a rich abundance of good resources in the universe to discover and enjoy, so that we can become productive workers like Him. This is a sound basis on which businesses can develop.

AS CREATURES, MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE, HUMANS ARE CREATIVE WORKERS

Our basic human identity, and our value as persons, come from being made in the image of God. Humans reflect and represent our maker God within

His creation. Thus, as part of that image-bearing reality, we are workers by nature. We have inherent abilities to think, plan, and design. Like our God, we are able to make, form, and shape things from and with the raw materials and active forces of the physical world. Humans are business-capable creatures in a universe inviting good exploratory business.

HUMANS RECEIVE THE RESOURCES OF THE WHOLE WORLD AS A GOD-GIVEN TRUST TO MANAGE RESPONSIBLY, IN OBEDIENCE TO THE ORIGINAL “CULTURAL MANDATE”

Humans are the crown of God’s creation. God expects us to work with, and to look after the physical creation. God gives, or entrusts, His creatures, and all the potential of the creation, to humans, to guard, protect, and “keep”, or conserve. This is not a licence to exploit, or dominate and use to excess, the resources of our planet. Rather, we are to make good use of it, to develop, and wisely make it productive, as a trust from God, for the good of our fellow creatures, and for the good of future generations. The Bible explains that, as humans, we will give an account to God about the way we have fulfilled this responsibility for the resources God entrusts to us. This is explained in the first commands God gave to the first human beings, as recorded in Gen 1:28-30; 2:15, 19-20. These instructions are called the “cultural mandate” for humanity. They indicate that our human purpose is to bring the material and cultural world under ordered control, to organise and regulate it, and name, care for, sustain, and make it productive.

BUSINESS IS A KEY PART OF THE ORIGINAL MANDATE AND IS EXPRESSED VARIOUSLY IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

This “cultural mandate” in the first two chapters of Genesis speaks about our human responsibility for the created world, and the creatures in it. It says: “Be fruitful, increase (multiply) . . . fill the earth . . . subdue it . . . work it, take care of it, . . . name them”. We need to think about what these commands involve.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth means we are to live to the full, as people developing all our human capacities for thinking, speaking, and communicating. We are to develop our capacity for learning, and all kinds of knowledge, for art, music, drama, and imagination. We are to flourish

and discover all we are able to do, personally, and as societies. We are to enjoy the full range of our competencies. Multiplying also means reproducing: exploring all the possibilities of parenting, of family life, of extended family, clan, tribe, and community life. This involves social organisation, political activities, leadership structures, intergroup relationships, and international affairs. Being fruitful, then, means not sitting and doing nothing, but studying, exploring, experimenting, evaluating, and improving our world. It means growing, and fully developing all these areas of human life.

Subduing the earth, working and caring for it, and naming the creatures involve the whole human enterprise of exploration, discovery, manufacture, and invention. In other words, all of both the theoretical and practical realms of science, technology, ecology, geography, physics, zoology, biology, agriculture, horticulture, economics, business, commerce, etc. These are our God-given human responsibility. For humans to do what these commands require, we need to organise ways of sustaining our lives together. We need to produce and share the materials and products necessary to thrive and flourish in our different communities. Once different peoples have settled in different areas, with different access to the range of resources needed for humans to flourish, we have to develop some means of trading with each other. In this way, we can access the materials we need to sustain life, and to develop further. Therefore, trading, marketing, and businesses became an essential part in humans fulfilling this original cultural mandate.

But many different patterns of business and trading have been developed in different cultures.

In the Appendix, we compare two of these approaches to business: a gift- and relationship-based *wantok* business, and a commodity- and capital-based market business. We are not suggesting one of these is right and the other wrong. They are just different, and both work well in different situations. When God created humans in His image, He created us with the ability to develop distinct cultures, with varying approaches to every aspect of life. Our example in the Appendix shows that one or the other cultural

understanding of business and economics may be better suited to a particular business situation. Thus, a group, considering setting up a business, needs to work out which kind of cultural approach to business is better able to meet the needs and opportunities they are considering.

BASIC GUIDELINES FROM THE COMMANDMENTS FOR CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN BUSINESS

If we compare a Christian business to a well-constructed house, then we now consider the strong walls that are built on the “foundations” we have laid in the previous section. Strong “walls” are vital to enclose the business safely, and protect it from collapse or failure. We find these “safe walls” for a “business house” in the biblical commandments, and these, too, apply to businesses in any cultural setting.

The Ten Commandments are pointers to the good life for God’s people. Commandments are never sufficient to bring us into the good life God planned for us. We must have faith in Christ for that. But the Commandments were given to point the way to Christ and to prepare the way for the fullness of life, which is available only in Jesus Christ (John 10:10). Some of the commandments are like signposts, marking the way, not only to the good life, but also to good business practice.

THE 4TH COMMANDMENT – BALANCING REGULAR WORK AND TIME FOR REFRESHING WORSHIP (EX 20:8-11; DEUT 5:12-15)

This fourth commandment lays a strong foundation for good business practice. Here is the secret to a productive, good life (*Dispela tok i makim tru bilong pasin bilong gutpela sindaun*). Businesses can only succeed if both employers and workers give a full week of reliable work each week. This what Ex 20:9 requires. Consistent, regular work from the whole team is the first essential for a good business. No business will succeed if some of the staff take two days off this week for a funeral, then another couple of days next week for a marriage, then another day off a fortnight later to go hunting. Before this commandment says anything about times for rest, it says: “six days you shall labour and do all your work”. Having a day for rest only makes sense when we work for the rest of the week. The Bible takes for granted that a commitment to a well-ordered work-life is the

proper, normal thing for us to do. In 2 Thess 3:10-12, Paul is quite clear: “We gave you this rule: Anyone who is unwilling to work shall not eat. We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy, they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.” So, the first clue this commandment gives, in pointing towards a successful business, is the expectation that staff will be on time, do a full day’s work, every day, each week. This is a real challenge to employees and employers alike, both in Western cultures and in Melanesian culture. But, if there is a “secret” to business success, this is where it starts.

The same commandment also stresses that good businesses give proper, regular times of rest and refreshment for their staff and equipment. Proper rest means time for spiritual renewal and worship, as well as physical refreshment. The Sabbath pattern of one day’s rest in seven recognises the basic needs of our human bodies, minds, and spirits. We cannot keep giving out in fruitful work without time to pause, and be restored as whole people. This command to keep one day in seven free from work is not a harsh law, imposing a heavy duty on us. Jesus clarified this when He said, “The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The rhythm of regular work and rest is a gift from God for our human fulfilment. It is the pattern God Himself followed in the creation (Ex 20:11). The wise business manager knows the workplace is a happier and more productive place when people follow this rhythm. The chief thing about this command is keeping this well-ordered pattern of regular work and rest, not the particular day on which the rest is taken. Good businesses, then, care about the whole person of the workers, and do not exploit, or take advantage of them. A good Christian business will provide both definite expected weekly work times and daily working hours, as well as rest times and holidays. When employers fulfil their duty in regard to giving proper rest times, then we can expect the workers to fulfil their part and work consistently and regularly for the proper hours each week.

THE 8TH COMMANDMENT – RESPECTING OWNERSHIP AND VALUING WORK DONE (EX 20:15; DEUT 5:19)

The command, “Do not steal” also has an important application in the business world. It reminds us that all the materials, products, and equipment we use in a business have been designed and produced through someone else’s ideas, time, labour, and, usually, expense. The work materials also now belong to someone else, or to the business, who have spent time, effort, and expense to procure them. What we make with our ideas, our skills, our abilities, and our resources is special in God’s eyes. We are producing things to serve and honour Him. Therefore, the products we make have special value to God, and before others. This is why our personal and communal possessions are to be protected, respected, and looked after. The command requires us to respect the value of other people’s effort, and of their ownership of property. Theft and stealing do not respect another person’s rights to own what they have properly made, or earned, or purchased. We should reimburse, or pay back, those who have used up their effort, time, and expense to make the goods available. This is still true when the goods are owned by, or on behalf of, a group to which we belong. Every community has its own rules for granting permission for members to use the group’s possessions. Not gaining that permission in the proper way is stealing. So is wasting materials, wilfully destroying property, borrowing equipment without intending to return it, and wrongly recording quantities used on a job. These are all forms of theft, which destroy trust between workers and management. Theft like this can easily cause financial difficulties for the company. Eph 4:28 warns that the Christian way is not to steal, but to work, so we can earn sufficient to be able to help others in need.

The command not to steal also calls for fair wages and adequate working conditions. Employers can steal from their employees, if they do not provide proper conditions for work. In passages like Eph 6:5-9 and Col 3:22-4:1, the Bible stresses these principles, when it instructs “masters” to properly care for their “slaves”. In biblical times, the “master” filled the role of an “employer” in modern society, and “slaves” can be compared to “employees”. The command not to steal protects both our right to own personal property, and for our work to be properly valued. Reliable business requires a workplace where there is no stealing.

THE 9TH COMMANDMENT – RESPECTING WORDS USED AND PROMISES MADE (EX 20:16; DEUT 5:20)

Lying, telling only half the truth, exaggerating, making promises you never intend to fulfil are examples of the “false witness” this command condemns. Using deceitful words to entice someone to do what you want, spreading rumours or false stories about others, or signing papers you know are incorrect: all these are also forbidden by this command for a Christian business. Eph 4:15 and 25 are wise guidelines for business practice: “speak the truth in love”, “each of you must put off falsehood, and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all one body”. Dishonesty destroys trust. But trust is the necessary foundation for all business transactions. Businesses are like “bodies”, we often call them “corporate bodies”. So, as Eph 4:25 says, if you cannot rely on the promise a member of the body gives, then everyone gets hurt. This warning about false witness also includes what we say in our bookkeeping and financial accounts. False figures are just as wrong as false words, and equally destructive in business. Jesus’ advice is best: “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’, or ‘No’, anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matt 5:37). Nothing is more important in business than to be able to trust the word and promise of the business people with whom you work.

THE 10TH COMMANDMENT – CONTROLLING IMPROPER DESIRE, AND RESPECTING CONTRACTED RELATIONSHIPS AND OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY AND PRODUCTS (EX 20:17; DEUT 5:21)

Coveting (greedily desiring for ourselves) the possessions of others is wrong. Like the eighth commandment (against stealing), the tenth (against coveting the possessions of others) is protecting the proper value of what belongs to us, or what we produce through our work. Notice the things we are commanded not to greedily desire, and think of the present-day equivalents in business: “Do not covet your neighbour’s wife”, says plainly that seeking sexual favours from relatives of staff has no place in business. “House or land” (Deut 5:21) included the living place and business place in Bible times. Land was the business resource, which could be made profitable. So, we should not try to deceitfully get for ourselves the business assets, which rightfully belong to someone else. The “male or female slaves” were the

workforce of Bible times. So, here is a warning against enticing to your business someone in whom their present employer has invested training, trust, and responsibility. This is a particular problem at this stage of business in PNG. There are only a few well-educated, experienced business people. But we should properly negotiate with their business owners when we have any desire for one of their workers to come and work for us. Just pulling them away with offers of better pay is a form of coveting that this command forbids. Doing this spoils business plans, and steals the previous hard work and trust others have invested in their workers. In Bible times “the ox or donkey” were the “tools” or “equipment” needed to make the person’s business productive. So, again, enviously using underhanded ways to get another business’ equipment or special tools is forbidden. These listed persons or things are only examples. The command ends, “Do not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbour”. Open honesty is essential in all business dealings: there is no place for selfish greed, deceit, or trickery.

We could go on to show how all ten of the commandments have valuable business lessons, but these four are especially important to surround and protect good business. We do well to ponder where and how they need to be worked out in our own business attitudes and behaviour.

COMMON CONCEPTS AND COMMITMENTS ESSENTIAL FOR CHRISTIANS IN BUSINESS

As well as these foundational teachings and “safe-wall” instructions, the scriptures give some key concepts and attitudes, which are like the ceiling and roof of the “business house”, completing its framework, and tying it together for good business.

A KEY BIBLICAL TERM FOR A BUSINESS PERSON – RESPONSIBLE MANAGER OR STEWARD

The Bible describes Christian workers as stewards, or responsible managers. Responsible managers give an account to God about the way they have fulfilled the trust He has put in them by giving them all the earth’s resources, to develop for His glory, and for human good. Joseph is one of the best biblical examples of a responsible manager or steward (Gen 39-50). Joseph showed that this way of describing a leadership role applies in the world of

government and business, just as much as in church leadership. Reliability, trustworthiness, open integrity, compassion, and faithful accountability are the qualities Joseph's life demonstrates. These are the marks of a good manager. Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27) builds on those ideas. The parable reminds us that we are each trusted with a measure of competence, ability, and resources be developed to the full. We fulfil this trust for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow humans. Jesus again stresses accountable responsibility, which such a trust brings. Paul adds to this in 1 Cor 4:1-5, where he says faithfulness, and knowing who our true judge is, are the most important ideas in this responsible-manager concept.

Thinking of business as responsible management also reminds us that we receive the gifts of resources, abilities, opportunities, and accountability, as members of communities – our families, tribes, and wider societies. While we have a personal responsibility to fulfil the trust God puts in each of us, He also expects us to fulfil our management roles as partners in His family and His body. Therefore, our relationships with our *wantoks* and wider communities are also vital, as we exercise care for creation, and responsibly serve each other and God with all our gifts and abilities. Christian businesses recognise they have a social responsibility for the welfare of the community, and not just a responsibility to make profit for the individuals in the business. A Christian business, therefore, in its purpose statement, will give special attention to identifying the social benefits it seeks to meet. The business will set out how it aims to improve the health, education, and communal well-being of its societies. The New Testament teaching that we are all members of the body of Christ, each with our own contribution to make, and each needing the contribution of all others, can be applied to the “body corporate” of the business world, too.

BUSINESS, LIKE ALL WORK, IS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE AS A “VOCATION” OR “CALLING” FROM GOD

Christians understand work as a vocation – a calling – in which we fulfil the will of God for us personally. This gives added incentive to the quality, standards, and motives for our work. At times, in the history of the church, people have gained the idea that only those who are serving the church as

ministers, pastors, or full-time workers are doing God's work. But, at the time of the Reformation, that was seen to be very wrong. The Reformers rediscovered the biblical teaching that God calls – or gives a vocation to – every believer. He calls us all to follow Christ, and He calls us all to serve Him in our daily lives, through our regular occupations. For many of us, that means we are called to serve Him in business. This sense of work as a “vocation” (the Latin word for “calling”) gives our daily occupations dignity and proper respect. As Paul reminded the Colossian Christians: “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . . Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col 3:17; 23-24).

This is good news for many Christians in Melanesia. We, too, have often had the wrong idea that only work in the church, or for the church, is God's work. Sometimes we were told that we should not make money in ordinary work, we should show our love for God by serving Him in Christian church work. God does call some people to do this. But He calls many more to serve Him in ordinary occupations, in all different kinds of work. He desires us to show His love in those workplaces as our lives and work habits serve our workmates. He wants us to work so well that we improve the quality of the work, and give honour to God by being the best workers we can be. This pleases God, and is the normal way to earn money to care for our families, and to be able to give to support the work of the church. We need to rediscover the dignity and honour of serving Christ in the workplace.

For Christians, These Basic Human Business Capacities and Responsibilities are Enhanced and Confirmed as Part of our Service and Worship for our Redeemer

The “cultural mandate” was part of God's gift to all humans as part of God's work as Creator. We have seen that the mandate gives all humans opportunities and responsibilities. Those who know God, not only as Creator, but also as Saviour, have extra reasons for wanting to serve God through all we do, including our business lives. Eph 2:8-10 reminds us that God, by His undeserved grace, has saved us, so that we can become

committed to good work. When we have received His free salvation, which cost us nothing, but cost our Lord Jesus His life on the cross, God remakes us for His original purpose: so that we can do His will, and do good in our world. So, we are responsible to work, because we are human beings made in God's image. That is true of all humans, everywhere. But, when we know we are also new creatures, remade by the love and kindness of God, then our work becomes doubly important. For Christians, giving our best in developing a high-quality business, or doing our best to make the business, of which we are part, become a better business, are ways we can say thank you to God for His gift of new life and salvation. I once heard Robert Laidlaw, the well-known Christian business man, after whom Laidlaw College (where I work in New Zealand) is named, say, in a sermon on Christians in business: "When I look down the newspaper lists of jobs available, why don't I see on every job advertisement the words, 'Christian preferred . . . Christian preferred'? If we really appreciate what Christ has done for us at Calvary, then we Christians should be the most-committed, hard-working employees in the country. So, every sensible boss would want to employ Christians! Why isn't that happening?" Are Christians known as the best workers in your area? If not, why not?

A Reminder About How We Use the Bible for Business Guidance

As we seek to serve God in our daily business, we need to take care in the way we use the Bible to guide our business life. The scriptures often give more than one perspective on the same question. We have to learn to hold these different perspectives together, and in balance. As just one example, *there is always an inherent tension between two aspects of the management or stewardship responsibility we have just mentioned.* On the one hand, as we have just noted, we are responsible to serve, care for, and sustain our *wantoks*, communities, and nation. Indeed, we have a duty to support our fellow humans, wherever they are in need, right around the world. We saw that one key purpose and goal of business is to fulfil this social responsibility. So, we will want to share business profits with our extended families, as soon as we can, to help meet their many needs, like health and education costs. But, on the other hand, we are also directly accountable to God not to neglect, or abuse, or waste, the potential in the resources He entrusts to us. As creative image-bearers of God, we are expected by God to

find the potential in our land, our minerals, our store of cultural knowledge, and our intellectual abilities. We need to create and develop new materials and articles, using the potential we have discovered in God's gifts. But, to do this, we need to keep some funds (capital) for this research, and the development of new products. If we give away all our income, as soon as we earn it, to meet our social responsibilities, we will never have the funds to develop new products, or to improve the business, to ensure it grows and lasts. Unless we reinvest enough money into developing the business, we will not be able to ensure it has a secure future. So, that means avoiding quickly passing on all the income to help others. We must hold back enough of the profits to make sure the business becomes strong and secure. Finding the balance between these two aspects of serving God in our business is not easy. It means we have to educate our relatives and families, so that they also want the money to be there for development, and for sustainability. This will mean learning not just to demand all the income be distributed as soon as it is available. The parable of the "talents" in Matt 25:14-30 emphasises this aspect of developing the full potential of what God has entrusted to us. The parable also implies we should plan well for longer-term results, in the way we use our resources. Stimulating a long-term view of business processes, by not just adopting a "get rich quick" way of thinking, is part of the challenge facing business processes in PNG.

Making Money is not Wrong

These common concepts of: a business person as a responsible manager; business work as a calling or vocation; the added incentive to excellence in business, because we know the Redeemer; and the reminder to hold together all that the Bible says on particular business issues, are helpful clarifying concepts for moving into business as a Christian. We can also add, that *earning money through honest, upright hard work is not wrong, nor is it giving in to temptation, when we work hard for proper wages*. The bible does not teach that money is evil. 1 Tim 6:10 says, "the *love* of money is the root of all kinds of evil". If we only desire more and more money, then we will fall into temptation, as 1 Tim 6:9 says. But, as we go into business and work well for a good wage, if our motives and desires are to please God, and to help our own communities, then that is the way to bring glory to God. Money, itself, is neither good nor bad. It is what we want it for, and the way

we use it, that make money either good or bad. The Christian way is to see earning money as part of our service and worship to God.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES FOR CHRISTIAN BUSINESSES

We now need to emphasise what has been suggested in all we have said so far. To run a successful business, we need not only business knowledge, skills, and technical ability. Even more important, are the following character patterns, attitudes, and habits. These are the characteristics that anyone entering our “business house” should see displayed in all they find in our business practices.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To participate productively in the global business world today, we must be able to trust our staff, our business clients, our accounting staff, and the various other officials or agents, with whom we work in the business. The necessary foundation is not there for a business to work well, without openness, mutual respect, and knowing we can trust the word and promises of all we serve or depend on. But, if we are to trust others, then they must find us worthy of their trust, too. So trust works both ways – we expect it in others, and we must prove trustworthy in every way ourselves. This two-sided character quality of trusting and being trustworthy is basic for good business.

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Speaking and doing the truth at all times is the next mark of a successful business person. Honesty is always the best policy in the business world, where “you can be sure your sins will find you out”. Honesty with the governing board, with staff, customers, suppliers, and also ourselves, when problems or difficulties arise, gives strength to any business. We join this quality with integrity: the attitude which means we are consistently open and transparent. This means never accepting a bribe, or twisting the facts to manipulate others for our own advantage, never using deceitful measures, or untrue reporting to turn decisions in our own favour. Keeping our motives pure, and “walking in the light” is sound biblical advice in business practice (Phil 1:9-10; 1 John 1:5-7). Integrity calls us to not cover up the truth, and

not hiding, or hiding from, problems that need attention. There are times when an employer needs to “not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing” (Matt 6:3), when, for instance, you are at the early stages of a project, and you need more information, or need to do more testing before making your plans or product known. But that does not mean being deceitful or twisting the truth. The wrongdoing of Ananias and Sapphira was their lack of integrity, not their decision to only give a part of their income to the apostles. They were always free to do that, as Peter said. But they were lying to God the Holy Spirit when they tried to make the church think they had given all the proceeds of their property sale to the church. This deceit and lack of integrity caused them to receive judgment from God. Having integrity, and being trustworthy, go closely together in business dealings.

DEPENDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Being dependable is also linked with trustworthiness. Both managers and workers need to be able to depend, or count on, each other. An unreliable member of staff can spoil teamwork, and affect the whole business. Arriving at work on time, being there for the full time expected, carrying out a job to the end, keeping your word, and fulfilling your commitments, are habits other workers respect, and that employers really appreciate. No one needs special qualifications to show these characteristics. Accountability adds to dependability the extra quality of taking responsibility for the quality of our work, and reporting it properly. Blaming others for things we have done poorly spoils relationships among staff. Keeping records of the operation of the part of the business, for which we are responsible, and reporting regularly to those above us in the business structure, are ways we demonstrate our accountability. It is very difficult to evaluate where a business can be improved if responsible people at each level do not accept these accountability duties. Record keeping and reports provide the data we need to plan well for growth, and to correct problem areas in any business. Dependability and accountability are both habits we need to cultivate as young people, and steadily improve throughout our business life. They are the marks of character, which employers look for when considering promotions.

UPRIGHT JUSTICE AND IMPARTIAL FAIRNESS

Treating employees fairly, and being consistent, by treating all staff with the same levels of respect and personal or emotional support, should set Christian businesses apart as good places of employment. This means, of course, fair pay, no inappropriate pressure on staff to do overtime. To be just and fair, managers, will need to know their staff personally, so as to help them in their times of family or personal needs. Favouring one person, or group of persons, over others, and changing the way company policy is applied to different groups, soon undermines morale and confidence in the staff team. But, open fairness without favouritism creates loyalty, and a willingness to “go the extra mile”, when necessary for the business. Good businesses have clear pathways for staff to express a concern, or make a complaint about the way the business is running, and wise managers attend promptly to any such concerns.

COMPASSION AND KINDNESS

Justice and fairness are not enough on their own, as sometimes they can be administered coldly, and without much feeling for the people involved. So, Christian businesses seek also to blend compassion, empathy, and kindness into their operations. Words of appreciation and encouragement, both when things are done well, and when the task is hard and demanding, and thoughtfulness in the way new requests or changes are introduced to the workers, are simple ways to show compassion among the workers. Most workers like to see the senior managers walking around among them, and talking personally with them. Our Lord Jesus Himself is our model in these aspects of interpersonal relationships with staff and customers in a business.

There are no magical secrets, which can automatically guarantee success in any business. But, where a united team of management and workers aim for these qualities of personal character, attitudes, and habits, they foster a good working environment – a strong “business house”.

A SUMMARY – IN WORLDVIEW TERMS

In summary, we can say these teachings seek to introduce a number of fundamentally new attitudes, at the worldview level. We can bring them

together, using ideas developed by the late Harold W. Turner, whose studies on primal societies are still of vital significance. He suggested, in an article presented to a South American seminar on religion and global poverty in 1985, that there are five basic movements needed in a primal society's worldview if it is going to participate successfully in the global economies of today.⁷ Each of His five points deals with one of the major areas of human understanding, which a worldview seeks to explain.

Cosmology – Understanding the Nature of our Universe

Traditional thinking believes in the cosmos, or whole universe, as a closed, fixed, and unchangeable system, which is too sacred to work on, or develop. That view needs to change towards seeing the cosmos as open, full of potential for development, and natural, not sacred. Thus, we can study, explore, and creatively improve the material world and its parts. The world is not “necessary”, or fixed and unchangeable, but “contingent”, or able to be changed by the free decisions of humans making choices about how to work with the resources and materials in the physical world. We can use human powers for the ongoing good of the planet, or we can exploit and spoil our environment.

Epistemology – How We Can Know What is Real

We also need to change the way we think humans gain access to proper understanding and power to make changes and improvements in our world. This does not come through magical beliefs and religious rituals, nor through using special words in magical ways, and repeating fixed practices, to influence the spirit powers.⁸ Rather, the way to proper understanding of the physical world is by using the lessons of science and technology; and to

⁷ Harold W. Turner, “The Relationship between Development and New Religious Movements in the Primal Societies of the Third World”, in Frederick Ferre, and Rita Mataragnon, eds, *God and Global Justice: Religion and Poverty in an Unequal World*, New York NY: Paragon House New Era Books, 1985, pp. 84-110.

⁸ Don McGregor explained and illustrated that this was the way Papua New Guineans traditionally thought, in his important paper, “New Guinea Basic Assumptions”, the revised form of a Paper he prepared for the 1966 Christian Missions in Many Lands Annual Brethren Missionary Conference at Anguganak, PNG, August 1966: see Assumption Three, pp. 4-11.

understand and relate to the spiritual world, we follow faith and obedience to God's revelation in the scriptures.

Eschatology – Understanding Time and its Meaning

To understand time, we need to add to the traditions and myths, which have come from the ancestors, a clear grasp of the progress of history, and a sense of meaning and movement towards a final goal, as an essential context for our human story.

Sociology – Understanding How People Relate to Each Other

The primal worldview needs to move from the old way of understanding society as made up of a single, closed, and sacred set of relationships in extended families, clans, and tribes, with fixed cultures, with each tribe sure they were inherently better than others.⁹ We need to move to understand society as open to change, with many different patterns of belief and relationships, and as secular, not too special or sacred to change. So, new social relationships with people from other clans, tribes, religions, and cultures are both possible and to be accepted.

Ethics and Morality – Understanding the Reasons for Right and Wrong

Our understanding must no longer think that evil is just something outside us, coming from spirit beings, or from the environment.¹⁰ Rather, we should understand evil is also present in us internally as human beings. Our own choices and desires are often the source of evil, selfishness, greed, and deceit. Moreover, we do not become evil, or unclean, or polluted, because we did not observe some laws and rituals in the right way. No, evil is a moral reality, which comes from our wrong choices and actions as responsible humans.

Changes in these five kinds of thinking take time. But they are important if we want to grasp how business works in the global world of today. The

⁹ Don McGregor explains this point as the first "Assumption" in his paper referred to in the previous footnote, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ Again, this belief is illustrated in Don McGregor's explanation of Assumption Three, pp 5-9.

biblical teachings, we have set out above, form the basis for changes at this worldview level of understanding.

CONCLUSION

These are some of the basic biblical foundations, and new patterns of understanding, we need to share in a previously-primal society like Papua New Guinea. This is the way to lay the worldview-level foundations for Christian involvement in business, commerce, and industry. These Christian values and assumptions have deeply and richly informed and shaped Western culture, and the whole global economic scene over the past 400 years. But attempts in our world today to retain the fruit of the Christian gospel, without any commitment to their roots in that gospel, is one of the biggest concerns in the Western world today. We need to keep both the roots and the fruit alive, in fostering new business ventures in PNG.

Let me conclude with a personal story. In 1978, a Christian businessman friend of ours, Heaton Drake, from Nelson, New Zealand, was at the Christian Leaders' Training College in PNG. He was auditing the College books before the Annual College meetings. As we talked, he surprised me by saying, "John, I love making money". When he saw the shock on my face, showing I wondered what he meant, he smiled and went on, "I love making money, so that I can give it away, and help others in God's service". Then, we went on to talk about the need for money to help God's work in PNG. Later that same visit, Heaton offered fees and fares for me to go to the other side of the world, to Aberdeen University in Scotland, to study the history of Christian mission in the Pacific, and to complete PhD study. Our family's whole service for Christ from that time was changed and enriched through Heaton's generosity. Even when Heaton was tragically killed in a work accident two years later, he had made arrangements so that the fees and fares my family and I needed to complete the PhD were still available. We owe a huge debt of thanks to this man who "loved making money", for the right reasons. He was also behind the *Bia Mogo Bulene* business venture at Koroba.

Our prayer is that many Papua New Guinea Christians will rise up to become Christian business people, who manage their businesses well, so

that, like Heaton Drake, they, too, can serve God faithfully through making money, and using it well for God’s glory.

APPENDIX: TWO CONTRASTING PATTERNS OF BUSINESS

To show the contrasts, we set out our description of the features of each as a diagram:¹¹

A socially-embedded, gift- and relationship-based <i>wantok</i> economy/business	The key feature of the business being compared	A geographically-extending, commodity- and capital-based, market economy/business
Strong roots in a particular social group of <i>wantoks</i> – “embedded” in their culture and customs	Its location and who works for it	Based in a particular place, but employees may be from many backgrounds, and it can reach from local to regional, to national and, perhaps, international markets.
What it “buys and sells”, or exchanges, are thought of as gifts. They carry relational meanings, the sellers always feel they still own part of what was sold.	Nature of what is traded	What it “buys and sells” are thought of as commodities: once traded, they no longer belong to the seller, but become the property of the buyer alone.

¹¹ Some of the ideas in the chart were suggested by the content and diagrams in the article by George N. Curry and Gina Koczberski, “Relational Economics, Social Embeddedness, and Valuing Labour in Agrarian Change: An Example from the Developing World”, *Geographical Research* 50-4 (November 2012), pp. 377-392. They investigated Oil Palm farming on New Britain, PNG.

<p>Selling, or giving and receiving, the gift builds a ongoing, reciprocal relationship between the seller/giver and buyer/receiver. These social implications are an important part of the purpose of the business.</p>	<p>Expectations created by the sale</p>	<p>The buyer and seller have no further necessary relationship, once the sale is complete. Any social implications of the business are regarded as secondary, not part of the sale.</p>
<p>The seller/giver can expect some future return from selling the gift. The receiver/buyer has a responsibility to (later) make a return to the giver/seller of similar value</p>	<p>Expectations: for seller . . . for receiver</p>	<p>When an agreed price is paid that is the end of the transaction, with no further expectations or obligations between the seller/giver and buyer /receiver.</p>
<p><i>Wantoks</i> contribute time, labour, skills/knowledge, or loan goods, or money for the business. The business makes some immediate payment for those services, based on generosity of the boss, and status or needs of the contributor, not on the amount or value of the work done. Also, the business or boss has a continuing obligation to “pay-back” equivalent goods to the contributors later.</p>	<p>How workers are paid</p>	<p>Employees contract to contribute time, labour, skills/knowledge, experience, or to invest goods or money into the business for an agreed period of time. The contract sets an agreed, fair price to be paid in wages and allowances (or salaries). Once the contract ends, there is no further obligation on the employer or the employee.</p>
<p>Everything the employers and the contributors do together is thought of as part of the <i>wantok</i> relationship, so everything the <i>wantoks</i> do is related, to some extent, to the business.</p>	<p>How the sale relates to the rest of life</p>	<p>The buyer and seller may also become friends, and do other things together, away from the business, but these are not thought of as part of the business agreement.</p>

<p>Whatever the contributor gives to the business is valued on the basis of how it builds up the social relationships of the <i>wantok</i> group rather than what it cost the contributor to give it.</p>	<p>How work and skills are valued</p>	<p>Time, skills, experience, education, knowledge, tools, materials, and everything a person uses in the business has a monetary value, which is added in when working out each employee's pay, or allowances, or salary, for their contribution to the business.</p>
<p>Income from the business goes into the common pool of resources of the <i>wantok</i> group, and can be used for whatever is the pressing need of the moment within the <i>wantok</i> network.</p> <p>Those who benefit from such distributions have an obligation to make further contributions to the business at some later time, when the business needs come to the top of the <i>wantok</i> priority list.</p>	<p>How income is handled</p>	<p>Income is marked to pay for particular costs of business operation, and goes into designated accounts, to be used only for that purpose. Funds needed to run the business (operational income and expenditure), and to develop the business (capital income and expenditure), have to be met before any income is regarded as profit. All the costs for running and developing the business are included in the "budget". Only payments agreed to in the budget can be paid quickly. Funds cannot be taken from one designated account to cover needs in another account, unless a way of repaying the "loan" has been agreed.</p>

<p>Different traditional “accounting” systems may be used. The tribal leaders, or headmen, of the <i>wantok</i> group often carry the “memory” of who owes what to whom. Other <i>wantok</i> leaders can argue or contest the decisions of the headmen. <i>Wantok</i> leaders can put heavy pressures on the business managers to distribute income to meet their priorities. Money for long-term budget needs, and capital to develop the business, are sometimes spent to meet the immediate demands, causing difficulties for the business. Community memory fill the role, which detailed budgets, and financial accounts and reports, fill in other systems. Traditionally, these were not written down. A person’s status in the <i>wantok</i> network gives authority to make demands on the business income, whether or not they contribute equitably to its operation.</p>	<p>Kinds of “accounting” followed</p>	<p>Only the people with authority in the business can approve payments, or disbursing of income. They have to keep the finances within the agreed budget, and give a full account of all income and expenditure. These financial reports are checked regularly by the manager(s), the Board, and an outside auditor, to make sure nothing is being used wrongly. Setting aside income for investment in professional development of staff, for maintenance and improvement of equipment and tools, and for capital development and expansion need careful control, planning, and reporting.</p>
<p><i>Wantok</i> businesses work best in the kinds of setting where most adult members of the community have the required skills and experience for doing the business well. Where most adults in the <i>wantok</i> group can contribute similarly to a</p>	<p>Where each kind of business works best</p>	<p>Complex businesses, needing a range of specialised expertise, diverse tools, knowledge, equipment, and materials need these specialised financial accounting systems to keep track of operational expenditure, operational</p>

<p>project, and where there is widely-shared knowledge of what the business requires, the system works well. Traditional subsistence farming in rural communities, and cash cropping, or agricultural ventures, with local distribution of goods and services, can work well under this system.</p>		<p>performance, and forward planning.</p> <p>When the business is supplying goods for international markets, then international accounting standards must be met.</p>
<p><i>Wantok</i> businesses usually show good care and respect for their workers or contributors, as they value their contribution to the <i>wantok</i> network. Usually, members of the <i>wantok</i> group are given preference in job opportunities, or promotions. Loyalty to the business is expected, and assistance with other non-work-related needs is often given for those in the <i>wantok</i> network. They seldom provide secure work positions for non-members of the <i>wantok</i> group.</p>	<p>How staff are looked after</p>	<p>Wise market businesses regard their employees as their most valuable asset, and provide good human relations care and support for them while in the workplace. Employees cannot always expect support or assistance for needs outside the workplace, such as family, or general health needs. But practices vary, and Christian businesses may include health insurance, or other assistance, in their employment contracts. These businesses expect loyalty from employees, as long as they are employed, but they are free to change loyalties when a contract ends.</p>

<p>The goals of the business, and the use of profits are normally all focussed on building up the social relationships within the <i>wantok</i> network. This kind of business finds it hard to contribute to wider community, regional, or more general needs of other particular groups in the community, unless there is strong leadership from headmen. Since <i>wantok</i> membership is restricted, those outside the <i>wantok</i> network are not likely to benefit from the business.</p>	<p>Goals of the business and the use of profit</p>	<p>The goals of this kind of business are normally primarily financial – to improve the financial wealth of the shareholders of the company. The company charter can include a requirement to meet specified social or community obligations by designating a proportion of the final profit for this purpose. Or, the shareholders themselves may be expected to personally meet those societal needs, through their own giving from their income from the company. Such companies can be accused of just building up the personal wealth of the shareholders, or they can become known for encouraging Christian business people to give generously to meet the social and spiritual needs of their societies.</p>
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Question: Another, third, business model is a cooperative, which combines aspects of both these models. Would a cooperative work if its members are not already sharing in other *wantok* relationships?

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