SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

There is one thing more powerful than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.

~ Victor Hugo ~

Introduction

The processes of globalization have resulted in both positive and negative outcomes for human beings and for the environment. Social entrepreneurship, as a constructive outcome of globalization, has its own particular niche within the global market economy.

Social entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that has been steadily gaining ground in the past two decades; particularly in European countries. It is a dimension of entrepreneurial activity aimed at generating social value and creating sustainable change rather than focusing on producing monetary profit as its primary goal. Although it has many commonalities with traditional entrepreneurial endeavours, social enterprise offers an alternative agenda that is closely bound to social and cultural contexts. As globalization has increased in speed and scope over the past twenty years, so too has the work of the social entrepreneur.

Social entrepreneurship, at its heart, is highly compatible with the values, beliefs, and goals of the Christian Church in its mission to achieve social, economic, and environmental justice. It has tremendous potential to be an inspiring exemplar of what it means to live out the Gospels.

What is Entrepreneurship?

The term entrepreneur has its origins in 17th century French. Translated, its initial meaning was one who takes on a project. Over time, the word entrepreneur has developed a connotation most frequently associated with business and management practices. Interestingly enough, some of the major contributors to the development of our current understanding of entrepreneurship are the same as those credited with the advance of Sociology as a social science: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel (Ruef & Lounsbury, 2007).
Certainly entrepreneurship became a hallmark characteristic of the North American and Western European economies throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. But what is its significance in the 21st century? The research literature is an informative source in defining the concept of entrepreneurship in our present day environment.

*Entrepreneurs are individuals who recognize opportunities where others see chaos, or confusion. They are aggressive catalysts for change within the marketplace…The passion and drive of entrepreneurs move the world of business forward. They challenge the unknown and continuously create the future…*

*Entrepreneurship is more than the mere creation of business…The characteristics of seeking opportunities, taking risks beyond security, and having the tenacity to push an idea through to reality combine into a special perspective that permeates entrepreneurs…*

*Entrepreneurship is the symbol of business tenacity and achievement. Entrepreneurs were the pioneers of today’s business success. Their sense of opportunity, their drive to innovate, and their capacity for accomplishment have become the standard by which free enterprise are now measured (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 1998, p.5-6).*

*An entrepreneur is someone who recognizes an opportunity to start a business that other people may not have noticed – and jumps on it…An entrepreneur recognizes opportunities where others see only problems (Mariotti, 2007, p.4-15).*

*Entrepreneurship, as a field of business, seeks to understand how opportunities to create something new (e.g., new products or services, new markets, new production processes or raw materials, new ways of organizing existing technologies) arise and are discovered or created by specific persons, who then use various means to exploit or develop them, thus producing a wide range of effects (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p.217).*

*A skillful entrepreneur can shape and create an opportunity where others see little or nothing – or see it too early or too late (Timmons & Spinelli, 2008, preface).*

*…entrepreneurship, as an activity carried out by specific persons, involves…identifying an opportunity – one that is potentially valuable in the sense that it can be exploited in practical business terms (i.e., one that can potentially yield sustainable profits) – and identifying the activities involved in actually exploiting or developing this opportunity…the process does not end with the launching of a new venture; it also involves being able to run a new business successfully after it has come into existence (Baron, Shane, & Reuber, 2008, p.4-5).*
The common currents that connect these definitions include the ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities, taking risks, innovation, the importance of timing, and the creation of value. All of these concepts are significant to the entrepreneur.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that entrepreneurship is an innately human activity, designed by humans for human purposes. Following this line of thought, Kao (1991) and Pinkett (2007) provide insight into entrepreneurial qualities as human characteristics.

First, entrepreneurship and creativity are seen as intimately related, timeless human qualities. Creativity implies generating new ideas and approaches. Entrepreneurial behavior involves the ability to identify opportunities based on these new ideas and approaches, and to turn them into something tangible...

Second, the would-be entrepreneur needs facility in an array of human and organizational skills: self-understanding; interpersonal understanding; leadership; conflict resolution; stress management; tolerance for ambiguity; team and project management; creating appropriate rewards and incentives; and organization design (Kao, 1991, p.3).

In the 21st century, entrepreneurship isn’t just a goal or a mission, it’s an empowering mindset. People often think of entrepreneurship as simply owning a business, but really the art of being entrepreneurial is about adopting a mindset and belief system that there’s always a way to use creativity, passion, and inspired vision to create value in the world – or to take something that already exists and make it better...Beyond possessing seemingly boundless passion, entrepreneurs have the following characteristics:

- **Creativity** – possessing an inventive or clever approach to situations.
- **Resourcefulness** – subscribing to the notion that he or she can turn nothing into something.
- **Courage** – taking calculated risks while maintaining a trailblazer’s mentality and the belief that he or she can achieve anything.
- **Vision** – seeing and seeking opportunity where others don’t.
- **Perseverance** – maintaining a healthy acceptance of failure as a way to learn and strengthen oneself (Pinkett, 2007, p.xiii).

Finally, understanding the dynamic, human nature of entrepreneurship better positions one to appreciate social entrepreneurship.

**Appreciating Social Entrepreneurship in the Context of a Globalized Landscape**
Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events and with the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

~ Robert F. Kennedy ~

Social entrepreneurship has proven to be a highly positive outcome of globalization. As noted in the introductory section of this chapter, social enterprise is a dimension of entrepreneurial activity focused on generating social value and sustainable social change. Monetary profit is considered to be of secondary importance and viewed more as a tool for creating additional social value and change rather than being an end unto itself.

William (Bill) Drayton of the Ashoka foundation is credited with having coined the phrase social entrepreneurship in the early 1980s. He views the primary objective of social entrepreneurship as systemic change.

The job of the social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is not working and to solve the problem by changing the system, spreading solutions, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps. Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or to teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry. Identifying and solving large-scale social problems requires social entrepreneurs because only entrepreneurs have the committed vision and inexhaustible determination to persist until they have transformed an entire system (2002, p. 123).

In a later work, Drayton furthers this description with a list of defining attributes of the social entrepreneur.

What qualities define an effective social entrepreneur? First, the person must be creative in both goal setting and problem solving. Second – and this is the toughest screen – is entrepreneurial quality. This is not leadership, or the ability to administer, or the ability to get things done. The driving force here is the fact that such a person is emotionally, deeply committed to making change throughout the whole of society. Once one understands that this commitment itself is the driving force, then everything else follows. The final quality essential to success as a social entrepreneur is ethical fiber. People will not make significant changes in their lives if they do not trust the person asking them to do so (2005, p.3).

J. Gregory Dees echoes Drayton’s perspective, citing five critical attributes of social entrepreneurship: a mission to create and sustain social value and the relentless pursuit of new opportunities to serve that mission, as change agents in the social sector, a commitment to a
process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, the readiness to act boldly without being limited by resources currently at hand, and heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created (1998, p.4). In bringing additional clarity to this definition, Dees wrote in 2003:

Far too many people still think of social entrepreneurship in terms of nonprofits generating earned income. This is a dangerously narrow view. It shifts attention away from the ultimate goal of any self-respecting social entrepreneur, namely social impact, and focuses it on one particular method of generating resources. Earned income is only a means to a social end, and it is not always the best means (p.1).

Simms and Robinson (2009, p.9 in *International Perspectives on Social Entrepreneurship* as edited by Mair, Robinson, and Hockets) contend that the social entrepreneur identity is composed both of the activist and the entrepreneur identities which can effectively function in both the for-profit and nonprofit organizational structures. This theme of dual identity is also echoed in an earlier work of Robinson et al.

The concept of social entrepreneurship is, in practice, recognized as encompassing a wide range of activities: enterprising individuals devoted to making a difference; social purposes business ventures dedicated to adding for-profit motivations to the nonprofit sector; new types of philanthropists supporting venture capital-like ‘investment’ portfolios; and nonprofit organizations that are reinventing themselves by drawing on lessons learned from the business world (2006, p.1).

Paul Light (2008) notes that socially entrepreneurial activity operates in degrees rather than as an “either/or” construct. The following table illustrates Light’s point.

Table 1: A Continuum of Socially Entrepreneurial Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highly socially entrepreneur</strong></td>
<td>The organization shows clear and consistent evidence (80-100 percent of its energy) that it seeks to create social change through innovative and pattern breaking methods and ideas. Nearly all of the organization is focused on addressing significant social problems through its programs, processes, or applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderately socially entrepreneurial</strong></td>
<td>The organization shows moderate evidence (20-80 percent of its energy) of an effort to pursue pattern breaking change. These moderately entrepreneurial organizations tend to have a single</td>
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department or section of the organization that is pursuing pattern-breaking change, while the rest of the organization focuses on service-delivery or other standard organizational activities.

| Not-too socially entrepreneurial | The organization shows the least evidence (less than 20 percent of its energy) of an effort to create social change. While the organization does provide needed services to society, it is more focused on effective service delivery than on developing innovative programs. |


According to Light, the separations between high, moderate, and lower levels of social enterprise are determined by the amount of time and energy that a given individual or organization dedicates to innovative efforts geared towards solving intractable or challenging social problems.

The common themes that appear to be emerging from these descriptions of social entrepreneurship include a focus on solving significant and complex social problems, the creation of social value, sustainable and systemic change, the ability to be a visionary, creativity and innovativeness, deep commitment, and an ethical approach that fosters credibility. But this still does not seem to sufficiently capture social entrepreneurship at the conceptual level. To this end, the work of Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie (2003) is extremely helpful.

In summarizing the research literature, Sullivan Mort et al draw on more than twenty definitions of social entrepreneurship. They concluded that, as a theoretical construct moving towards operationalization, it was much more complex and dynamic than the research literature to that point had described it. They define social entrepreneurship as:

...a multidimensional construct involving the expression of entrepreneurially virtuous behavior to achieve the social mission, a coherent unity of purpose and action in the face of moral complexity, the ability to recognize social value-creating opportunities and key decision-making characteristics of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking (p.76).

In a more detailed explanation of entrepreneurially virtuous behavior, the authors note the following:

*Social enterprises have a spiritual or virtue dimension very often missing from or only latent in commercial enterprises. Social entrepreneurs’ attitudes and behaviors must involve a virtue dimension. It is this virtue dimension of vision of moral purpose that will aid in operationalizing the social mission, and differentiates the social entrepreneur from*
the commercial entrepreneur...Virtues are positive, morally good values such as love, integrity, honesty and empathy, which must be acted upon to become genuine virtues (p.83).

Translated into graphic form, the conceptualization that Sullivan Mort et al put forth combines four facets social entrepreneurship (entrepreneurially virtuous, social opportunity recognition, risk tolerance/proactiveness/innovation, and judgment capacity), situating entrepreneurially virtuous in interplay with the other three areas.

**Figure 1: A Conceptualization of Social Entrepreneurship Based on the Work of Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie (2002)**

![Diagram of social entrepreneurship conceptualization]


Going one step further in separating social entrepreneurship from a more traditional understanding of business entrepreneurship, we can draw on the work of Shaw and Carter (2007) as they offer the following comparison.

- *Business entrepreneurship focuses on profits, while social entrepreneurship draws upon and builds community support.*
- *Business entrepreneurship engages market forces, while social entrepreneurship draws upon and builds community support.*
- Business entrepreneurship involves financial risk, while social entrepreneurship depends on organizational and personal credibility.
- Business entrepreneurship produces individual financial gain, while social entrepreneurship generates collective public good.
- Business and social entrepreneurship both involve creativity, but business entrepreneurship uses creativity to enter new markets, while social entrepreneurship uses creativity to solve intractable problems.

Synthesizing this perspective with the previously noted definitions, we can see the areas of distinction and commonality between a traditional approach to entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

**Table 2: Comparing Traditional Entrepreneurship & Social Entrepreneurship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Areas of Commonality Between Traditional Entrepreneurship &amp; Social Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Social Entrepreneurship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on creation of value, traditionally in terms of monetary profit</td>
<td>Ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities; being a visionary</td>
<td>Focus on creation of social value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves financial risk</td>
<td>Taking risks</td>
<td>Depends on personal credibility through a consistently ethical approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produces individual financial gain</td>
<td>Importance of timing</td>
<td>Generates collective public good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity to enter new markets</td>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>Creativity to solve intractable and complex social problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In summary, social enterprise is a specific form of entrepreneurship that has many similarities to but also some important distinctions from entrepreneurship as it has traditionally been conceived of within a business/management context. There are also themes that potentially run a parallel course between social enterprise and corporate social responsibility (as described in Chapter 4: *Christian Implications of Globalization*). But in the final analysis, it is having the desire to create social value and to bring about sustainable change – pursuits that are at the forefront of the social entrepreneur’s agenda – that help to separate social entrepreneurship from other categories of entrepreneurial activity. Again, we are also drawn to Drayton’s (2005) use of
the term *ethical fiber* and the idea of *entrepreneurially virtuous behavior* (Sullivan Mort et al, 2003). While these are qualities that may be present in corporate social responsibility, they need not be so. However, for the social entrepreneur, they are vital. In summation, social entrepreneurship clearly has its own place on the globalized landscape.

**The Secular Challenge to Social Entrepreneurship**

There are two central challenges that the secular world poses to the social entrepreneur.

1. Traditionally, the demarcating line between the “successful” and “unsuccessful” business person has been monetary. That is, “winners” have been perceived as those that make a great deal of money, while “losers” do not. For the social entrepreneur, producing sustainable social change, creating social value, and resolving intractable social problems combine to generate the primary motivation for his or her work. Dollars and cents profit is secondary, and the social entrepreneur views profit as a means to expand the social agenda rather than as an end in itself.

2. Tangential to the focus on monetary profit is the centrality of self interest in the secular business world. Charitable activity that concentrates on others – as a standard of Christian faith – is not viewed as being of significance in a traditional business model. Rather, such action is frequently portrayed as antithetical to “good” business sense. In his text, *Think Like a Champion*, Donald Trump states the following:

   *Business is about making money. It’s about the bottom line. The sooner you realize that, the sooner you’ll get a grasp of what business is. I’m very often surprised by people who think business is something else. They come in with lofty ideas and philanthropic purposes that have absolutely no place in a business meeting* (2009, p.127).

In another, separate publication from Trump University (*Trump University Entrepreneurship 101: How to Turn Your Idea Into a Money Machine*), we read,

*Entrepreneurs go through the world seeking opportunities to commercialize. They innovate to bring value to the customer and to all stakeholders. The greater and more unique the value, the greater are their profits* (Gordon, 2007, p.13).

Chapters entitled *Plan for War With Your Competitors* and *Design Your Money Machine* follow, reinforcing a focus on self interest that is symbolized by monetary profit as the principal driving force.
In yet another Trump University text (Donald Trump editor), we encounter more of the same. The title of the first chapter, *Think Rich: How to Unleash Your “Inner Trump”* encapsulates the essence of the remainder of the book.

*Rich people think differently than poor people...I’m talking about earning money joyfully. Wouldn’t that be wonderful, living a life that joyfully creates wealth?...*

*By my definition, anyone who isn’t earning a million dollars a year joyfully is a pauper. If hearing that makes you uneasy, or even angry, I’m glad. That reaction may push you to change your beliefs and actions so you finally can stop struggling with money. I can almost hear you saying, “That’s easy for you to say, as you drive around in your Rolls Royce and fly in a private jet. You don’t know what it’s like to be kicked out of your apartment for not being able to pay your rent (pp.12-13).”*

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**Although personal potential is an enticing reason to become an entrepreneur, the real payoff is financial in these four ways:**

1. The income stream from the profitable sales of your products and services.
2. The harvest of your business, either by taking your business public, selling it to a motivated acquirer, or continuing to reap the rewards of growth.
3. Tax deductions for legitimate expenditures in pursuit of business activities.

These quotations effectively disregard the value of the paradigm that underpins social enterprise and clearly reflect an orientation towards self interest.

The above two arguments, as grounded in a traditional secular business perspective, provide us with a rationale for potential opposition to socially entrepreneurial activity. But is such a rationale really legitimate?

The Said Business School of Oxford University is undeniably one of the premiere business schools on the planet, and graduating from one of its degree programs is designed to be a sign of great success in itself; particularly in the secular world. Paradoxically, this business school is also home to the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship. It was with immense curiosity and great humility that I visited with Ms. Hana Graham, a staff member of the Skoll Centre, at the Said Business School in October of 2009. Over coffee, Ms. Graham graciously described the founding of the Skoll Centre and its relationship to the Said Business School.

*The Centre has been in existence for six years and it came about through Jeff Skoll’s interest in social entrepreneurship. Jeff Skoll is the founder of EBay. He sold EBay a few years ago and used the money to fund the Skoll Foundation. He was here in the Said Business School six or seven years ago for “Silicon Valley Comes to Oxford”, which is a*
conference that the Business School holds each year. Jeff met up with Stephan Chambers who is now the Chair of the Skoll Centre. They got talking about social entrepreneurship and there wasn’t, at that point, a research centre for social entrepreneurship in Oxford. The Business School got the ball rolling from there, and resulted in the development of the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship. The initial grant was for five years. That came to an end last December and we are in the course of negotiating a three year re-grant, and that is going well. So we are positive that the Skoll Centre will continue into the future with the continued support of the Skoll Foundation. The Skoll Foundation, as the Centre’s founding organization, remains as our sponsor and our closest partner, and together we still produce the Skoll World Forum; the world’s biggest conference on social entrepreneurship. It takes place here in the Said Business School each year.

In terms of the relationship between the Centre and the Business School, that’s how the Centre came into being. The Centre’s relationship with the Business School is important. I think it’s important to note that there are several research centres in the Said Business School; we’re not the only one. Each of the research centres contributes to create a very diverse program with depth in the Business School because the people who are the forefront of the research on these different topics are also then teaching the courses that are offered in the Business School. For example, Alex (Nicholls) is our researcher on social entrepreneurship but also teaches students. That relationship works very well.

The Skoll Centre is very much part of the Business School and we are formally part of Oxford University; we’re not a separate entity in any sense. We contribute to the activities of the Business School in three main ways. Firstly, our lecturer in social entrepreneurship and the director of the Skoll Centre, Pamela Hartigan, both teach in the MBA program. There are three electives in social entrepreneurship offered in the program. There are obviously core modules that all MBA students must take and then there are elective modules. The elective modules in social entrepreneurship include An Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship, Social Finance – which is the only social finance module offered in any MBA program in the world – and we also offer Social Enterprise Design which is very practical; how-to set up your own social enterprise. All of the courses are very well attended and the numbers have been growing each year.

In addition to teaching in the MBA program and providing research regarding social entrepreneurship, we also have a strong co-curriculum offering. This has been growing under the leadership of Pamela Hartigan, the new director of the Skoll Centre. She came with a strong mandate to really develop the offerings that we have for students. This is what I lead on. For the first time, we will have a student conference as a counterpart to the Skoll World Forum and that will take place this year. We are very excited about that. We do have some world leaders in social entrepreneurship coming and it is open to students from around the world.

We, at the Skoll Centre, also value intrapreneurs; people who go into existing commercial firms and help them to become more socially entrepreneurial. We also value managers within social enterprise. We value those who are consultants to the sector. Everybody has something different to offer. So the idea of the conference is to start talking about these different kinds of careers and how to access them. What can be gained, what are the different issues, what are the global contributions that social entrepreneurship has to make? There is also practical advice for those who are the social entrepreneurs, who do want to go out and set up their own businesses.
We also have funding capital for a social innovation competition. We offer 10,000 British pounds as a prize for the winner. Students will submit their ideas before the competition and the finalists will be selected in November. Then they will get incubation support between November and May when the final will actually take place. So it is a two stage conference, with the attendees coming back together in May to see the final, network with each other, and hopefully cement these peer connections.

We want to cement peer connections between students as they go out into the world. What we hear from students is that starting out as a social entrepreneur - or even going to work for an established social enterprise – it’s still a new sector, and a very diverse sector. Knowing other people, having networks and being able to call on somebody else for support is very important, particularly for Oxford students. The majority of our business students are going into finance, and will be working in the city (London). Social entrepreneurship is still something a bit different, and so they often don’t have their friends from university to call on for support. So they need this extended network. That is what we are hoping, in part, to create; to bring together like-minded people and enable them to cement their network for beyond university.

And so, the Skoll Centre’s co-curricular offering for students is emerging. The conference is our biggest project. We are also going to be sponsoring a speaker’s series. When a social entrepreneur comes to London, our director is able to bring them down here to address the students and these entrepreneurs share what they do and how they do it. For the very first year, we are also going to have a social entrepreneur in residence in the Business School. That is very exciting, and it will be paid for by the Skoll Centre.

Again, with regard to the relationship between The Said Business School and the Skoll Centre, the Business School has a whole range of sector consultants who advise students on careers in finance, real estate, and so forth. And there is one consultant for entrepreneurship. This is another example of how the Business School and the Skoll Centre work together. The relationship is growing and, each year, something is added to that relationship. The social entrepreneurship strand is a very big part of the Business School’s image, and has become part of its branding. There is a genuine support for the Centre’s activities.

The third strand of the relationship between the Skoll Centre and the Said Business School – the first being researching and teaching, the second being co-curricular activity – the third strand is making the Business School a home for social entrepreneurs, and this comes into effect most powerfully during Skoll World Forum. Once a year, the world’s most prominent and successful social entrepreneurs come to the Business School for that forum and it is an exciting event. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Al Gore, Ben Kingsley, and Robert Redford are examples of past attendees.

The Centre is really embedded in the Business School. The research we do filters into the Business School’s offering. For the MBA induction this year, an entire day was given over to social innovation. It was called “Conversations in Social Innovation” and 200 students from the MBA, MSc, and MFE (Masters in Finance and Economics) programs chose to come together to have conversations about social innovation with the researchers in the Business School, social entrepreneurs, and alumni. More students who have a special interest in social entrepreneurship are being attracted to the Business School, and year on year that interest is growing. We have seen those numbers increasing in our three elective courses.
The reputation of the Said Business School is worldwide. Being admitted is not an easy feat. We have some of the best students in the world choosing to come here – really, the “best of the best” - and then from among those students, we have those choosing the social entrepreneurship strand. That is an important sign to the rest of the world that social entrepreneurship is coming into its own. At the very beginning of their induction, Stephan Chambers – Chair of the Skoll Centre and Director of the Said Business School’s MBA program – asks the MBA students, “How many of you know what social entrepreneurship is?” About 80% of them put up their hands (Ms. Hana Graham, Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Said Business School, Oxford, UK, October 15, 2009).

Clearly, this relationship between the Said Business School and the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship has been a decidedly successful one in that it is mutually reinforcing, allowing for the promotion of highly effective and ethical business practices alongside cutting edge social innovation. It is an exceptionally impressive illustration of the power of collaboration at a high level. The very scale of the efforts that both partners make towards this joint venture signifies the importance of social entrepreneurship as a viable career path for a serious business person or manager.

Ms. Graham also shared stories of students’ successes as they established their own social enterprises. One such example was the work of Dhruv Lakra, an alumnus who has successfully founded Mirakle Couriers. This particularly courier service operates in Mumbai, employing only deaf adults. The social goal of the company is to economically mainstream low-income deaf adults through a corporate courier service. India is home to the world’s largest deaf population, and this is significant statistic, as Lakra was seeking to overcome engrained social prejudices against persons with disabilities in Indian society. The company’s website, Mirakle Couriers: Delivering Possibilities, provides a brief overview of its corporate agenda.

*We provide efficient courier delivery service at competitive costs within Mumbai. Our methodical courier operations and professionally groomed courier boys ensure on-time pick up and delivery of your mail to the right address. Our business model is based on creating a service driven profitable enterprise that uses the services of deaf. To this end, we marry professional excellence with social cause.*

*We are not a charity but a social business, where the social element is embedded in the commercial operations (www.miraklecouriers.com as accessed on November 29, 2009).*

Although the couriers are all young men with hearing impairments, several deaf young women also work in the office to sort and direct the mail. Since its inception in November of 2008, Mirakle Couriers has steadily grown, cultivating an established list of clientele.
The Sacred Response: A Theological Reflection on Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs might just prove to be the missing missionaries that we need for a fair and just society.

~ Dr. R.K. Pachauri, Skoll World Forum 2009 address ~

Through the use of parable, the Gospel of Luke (6:46-49) puts into perspective the significance of laying a solid, enduring foundation for our lives.

"Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house (The Bible, New Standard Revised Version, 1996)".

Likewise, the Christian business person or manager is called to choose wisely the philosophical foundation which will underpin his or her professional practice. Elements of that foundation will need to include an understanding of “success” and “charity” and how those are to be interpreted in relation to business.

There has long existed a tension between how the secular world defines “success” and how the sacred world characterizes it. Typically, the secular focus is on the monetary and on the power and the material trappings that serve to provide tangible evidence of that money. The Biblical orientation is much more towards the successful development of human Christian character that is reflective of the Gospel message; it is much more towards the building up the body of Christ, the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

In a parallel kind of tension, we see a distinction between how the secular world defines “charity” and how it is characterized in Scripture. Perhaps the most striking distinction between the two is that the sacred perspective connects “charity” and “faith”, in that charity is seen as a standard of faith. In essence, charity is inextricably bound to faith within the Biblical context. The passage from Acts 9: 36-42 serves to illustrate this point.
Now in Jop'pa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lyd'da was near Jop'pa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, “Please come to us without delay.” So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up.” Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and the widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Jop'pa, and many believed in the Lord (The Bible, New Standard Revised Version, 1996).

It is interesting to note that Dhruv Lakra specifically notes on his Mirakle Couriers website that his company is not a charity; meaning that he is not simply seeking donations of money for low income persons with disabilities. Rather, he is emphasizing that Mirakle Couriers is a full fledged, competitive business that seeks to pay its employees a fair wage for a fair day’s work. And so, while his website description separates his company from the secular connotation of “charity”, it paradoxically illustrates the sacred understanding of “being charitable”; that is, demonstrating through action a sincere interest in the welfare of others. “Being charitable” in this context also implies using one’s resources or gifts to assist others to develop their own gifts so that they, in turn, may contribute to the welfare of others. St. Paul delineates the significance of this concept in his letter to the Corinthians.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, through many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and were all made to drink of one Spirit...

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way (The Bible, 1 Corinthians 12: 4-13, 27-31, New Standard Revised Version, 1996).
Thus, “being charitable” is a cyclical kind of activity, with each person utilizing his or her gifts to ultimately build up the body of Christ. As such, “being charitable” is a very comprehensive verb that is intended to echo or reverberate forward in time and space through continued action. “Charity”, as a secular noun, is not nearly so nuanced. This distinction is precisely what makes the work of the social entrepreneur potentially so compelling for the Christian Church.

In 1853, Frederick Denison Maurice, a British theologian and writer, penned *Theological Essays*. Classically trained at both Cambridge and Oxford, Maurice had already established a reputation for being passionately concerned about social and educational problems when *Theological Essays* was published. A priest and a professor, he was firmly committed to the concept that cooperation should prevail over competition, and worked alongside James Ludlow and Charles Kingsley to establish The Christian Social Movement to protest against what he referred to as *the current economic gospel of laissez faire* or the prevailing business interests (1853, p.8). He perceived that the business interests of the time (as represented by the Industrial Revolution) held the expectation that *universal selfishness* could accomplish *the work of universal love* (p.8). Maurice rightfully eschewed this notion and set about to illustrate its preposterousness.

In the first chapter of *The Theological Essays*, Maurice explores the concept of charity. Interestingly enough, he begins with a quotation from St. Paul: *Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing* (1 Corinthians, 13:2). Consistent with his era, Maurice draws from the King James version of the Bible. Subsequent versions, of course, have substituted the word “Charity” with “love” throughout the entirety of the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Contemporary congregations would recognize it as one of the most oft read pieces of Scripture at weddings. But it is significant to our understanding of “charity” and “being charitable” from a Christian perspective because it again emphasizes a focus that is outward looking and compassionate as opposed to one of self interest and personal gain.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 until his death in 1944, authored the text *Christianity and Social Order* in 1941 while still Archbishop of York. His central concern was one of respect for all humanity, or what he referred to as the *person-in-community*. This tenet extended to the concept of respect for human dignity, but also drew attention to the issue of self centredness as expressed in self interest as a flaw of human character.
The fundamental facts about man are two: he is made ‘in the image of God’; and this image is, so to speak, stamped upon an animal nature. Between these two there is a constant tension resulting in perpetual tragedy.

The dignity of man is that he is the child of God, capable of communion with God, the object of the Love of God – such love as is displayed on the Cross – and destined for eternal fellowship with God. His true value is not what he is worth in himself or to his earthly state, but what he is worth to God; and that worth is bestowed on Him by the utterly gratuitous Love of God.

All his live should be conducted and ordered with this dignity in view. The State must not treat him as having value only so far as he serves its ends...the State exists for its citizens, not the citizens for the State. But neither must a man treat himself, or conduct his life, as if he were himself the centre of his own value; he is not his own end; his value is his worth to God and to his end is ‘to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever (p.61).’

The arguments of both Frederick Denison Maurice and William Temple represent past theological perspectives regarding business practices and the centrality of self interest. However, we are challenged by the questions: What has changed in business and management practices over the past 150 years in relation to our understanding of “success” and “charity”? What is the imperative for the Christian Church to promote change in this century?

**Conclusion: Suggestions for Planning an MBA Degree Program with a Concentration in Theological Studies**

Social entrepreneurship is a progressive and affirmative approach to business and management that pursues sustainable social change as its primary incentive. It has tremendous potential to merge Christian values and beliefs with effective business and management practices in order to promote the collective good and the building up of the body of Christ.

**References**


