

## SPIRITUALITY

### God and Business

Bringing spirituality into the workplace violates the old idea that faith and fortune don't mix. But a groundswell of believers is breaching the last taboo in corporate America.

## FORTUNE

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By Marc Gunther

Three dozen middle-aged rebels in business suits are gathered for lunch in a conference room on the top floor of the LaSalle Bank building in Chicago. They have come for sandwiches, and for spiritual sustenance, and before long they are floating radical ideas: Work less. Slow down. Stop multitasking. Listen to your heart.

The burly, long-haired man stirring up this talk is a 59-year-old scholar, theologian, and health-care consultant named Jack Shea. As the business people recount the pressures they face, Shea recalls a Latin phrase from parochial school: *Age quod agis*. Do what you do, it means, and do it with all of yourself. "We've all had the experience of having much too much to do, getting frustrated, and finally saying, 'Oh, the hell with it,' and giving up," Shea says. "Doing less means you can work from the center of yourself. It means you can work from your soul."

Work from your soul. That, too, sounds subversive. Yet that goal is what animates these executives, most of them Catholic, who belong to a Chicago-area group called Business Leaders for Excellence, Ethics, and Justice. For more than a decade they have wrestled with big questions: How can business promote family life? What is a just wage? When are layoffs justified? They have held dialogues with bishops, published papers, and guided one another through crises. They say the struggle to integrate faith with work is never-ending. Lately they find their numbers have grown a lot.

"Why would we want to look for God in our work?" asks BEEJ co-founder Gregory F.A. Pierce, a publishing executive and the author of a new book called *Spirituality@Work*. "The simple answer is most of us spend so much time working, it would be a shame if we couldn't find God there. A more complex answer is that there is a creative energy in work that is somehow tied to God's creative energy. If we can understand that connection, perhaps we can use it to transform the workplace into something remarkable."

These executives are in the vanguard of a diverse, mostly unorganized mass of believers—a counterculture bubbling up all over corporate America—who want to bridge the traditional divide between spirituality and work. Historically, such folk operated below the radar, on their own or in small workplace groups where they prayed or studied the Bible. But now they are getting organized and going public to agitate for change.

A conference at the business school of Santa Clara University, a Jesuit institution in Silicon Valley, begins with the chime of a Tibetan bowl, a reading from the Sufi mystic Rumi, and a few moments of silent meditation. Executives, academics, and theologians then discuss such topics as how to find one's true calling. "There were two things I thought I'd never see in my life," says Andre DelBecq, a management professor and organizer of the event, "the fall of the Russian empire and God being spoken about at a business school."

At a lecture series called Faith@Work organized by the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, the senior pastor, the Reverend Dr. Thomas K. Tewell, urges business people to become "points of distribution" for God's love in the marketplace. "Are you willing to be a channel in the divine economy?" he asks.

At a church retreat near San Antonio, parishioners listen to the message of "everyday Christianity" delivered by David Miller, a former IBM executive and investment banker who now leads a faith-in-the-workplace group called the Avodah Institute. Miller, 44, left business to study at Princeton Theological Seminary, not to flee corporate America but to help knit closer ties between business and religion. "People often talk about the sacred-secular divide," he says, "but my faith tells me that God is found in earth and rocks and buildings and institutions, and, yes, in the business world." Avodah, a Hebrew word, means both "work" and "worship."

The spiritual revival in the workplace reflects, in part, a broader religious reawakening in America, which remains one of the world's most observant nations. (Depending on how the question is asked, as many as 95% of Americans say they believe in God; in much of Western Europe, the figure is closer to 50%.) The Princeton Religious Research Index, which has tracked the strength of organized religion in America since World War II, reports a sharp increase in religious beliefs and practices since the mid-1990s. When the Gallup Poll asked Americans in 1999 if they felt a need to experience spiritual growth, 78% said yes, up from 20% in 1994; nearly half said they'd had occasion to talk about their faith in the workplace in the past 24 hours. Sales of Bibles and prayer books, inspirational volumes, and books about philosophy and Eastern religions are growing faster than any other category, with the market expanding from \$1.69 billion to about \$2.24 billion in the past five years, according to the Book Industry Study Group. Literally hundreds of those titles address spirituality at work, from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and nondenominational perspectives.

"Spirituality in the workplace is exploding," declares Laura Nash, a senior research fellow at Harvard Business School who has followed the topic for a decade. But while the movement to bring spirituality to work has spawned countless books and conferences—including a major gathering to be held next April in New York, at which the Dalai Lama will speak to global business leaders—no author, guru, clergyman, or celebrity CEO has emerged as its leader. It's very much a grassroots affair.

People who want to mix God and business are rebels on several fronts. They reject the centuries-old American conviction that spirituality is a private matter. They challenge religious thinkers who disdain business as an inherently impure pursuit. (The great Harvard theologian Paul Tillich once wrote, "Any serious Christian must be a socialist.") They disagree with business people who say that religion is unavoidably divisive. Most of all, they refuse to bow to the all too common notion that much of the work done in corporate America must be routine, dull, and meaningless; they want and expect more. Says author Greg Pierce: "I like to think of us as the anti-Dilberts." In other words, the goal here isn't to rally the troops behind yet another office blood drive; it's to make the workplace a more ethical and humane arena, one where believers and nonbelievers alike can find fulfillment.

None of that is entirely new, of course. In fact, FORTUNE in 1953 published an article titled "Businessmen on Their Knees"—yes, those were the days when women and non-Christians weren't welcome in the executive suite—which reported that "American businessmen are taking more notice of God." The story noted that prayer groups were forming and that religious books were climbing up the bestseller lists, and asked, "Is it a superficial, merely utilitarian movement, or is it a genuinely spiritual awakening?"

Then, as now, the topic caused some people's hackles to rise. As much as Americans say they believe in God, most also believe in religious freedom, and hence in the separation of church and boardroom. And considering all the crimes committed in the name of one god or another, it's only natural to imagine zealous executives doing more harm than good. So while the business world has found ways to talk about race, gender equity, sexuality, disability, and even mental illness, religion has remained the last taboo.

Now more and more people are willing to talk about bringing faith to work, as the stories that follow attest. They are choosing their words carefully. To avoid tripping over dogma, they speak of "spirituality" and "meaning," not of religion and God. And with reason: One survey of executives found that more than 60% had positive feelings about spirituality and a negative view of religion. "We can't and shouldn't and don't want to drive people to a particular religious belief," says Bill Pollard, chairman of ServiceMaster, a FORTUNE 500 company committed explicitly to serving God. "But we do want people to ask the fundamental questions. What's driving them? What is this life all about?"

ServiceMaster has been talking openly about God and business ever since the Depression, when its founder, having survived a flash fire, dedicated his business to serving the Lord. Outside its headquarters in Downers Grove, Ill., stands a statue of Christ washing the feet of his disciples. The company generates nearly \$6 billion a year in revenues from such brands as Terminix, TruGreen, ChemLawn, and Merry Maids, but it's best known for a spiritual culture that has won praise from the likes of management guru Peter Drucker. All employees get stock, promotional

opportunities, and the chance to be heard, and no one earns more than 12 times the salary paid the lowest-level worker.

The thing is, ServiceMaster exemplifies how hard it is to live up to saintly standards. Profits are down at ServiceMaster, and its Terminix pest-control unit has run afoul of regulators in several states; it admitted ripping off customers in Kentucky and polluting a stream in Pennsylvania. Pollard regrets the lapses but argues that they are inevitable in a company with 75,000 employees and another 175,000 “associates” who are supervised by ServiceMaster. “There is no management-control system that can manage those people to always do the right thing,” he says.

As ServiceMaster’s woes make clear, spirituality in no way guarantees material success. It may not even correlate with worldly riches. “I’ve seen a lot of not-very-good human beings succeed in business,” observes investor Warren Buffett. “I wish it were otherwise.”

What, then, is driving the resurgence of interest in spirituality and work? It’s not the business cycle. Groups like Legatus, an organization of about 1,300 Catholic CEOs, have been growing steadily for more than a decade, since long before the market ballooned and then popped. Most likely, what’s happening now is generational.

Yes, the baby-boomers are at it again—the same cohort, if not the same people, who brought us the 1960s youth culture and the greedy 1980s now want their work to deliver more than a paycheck. As they turn 50, they’re anxious to know what really matters. As Greg Pierce says, “We’ve always been a very introspective group—which is the polite way of putting it. Actually we think the world revolves around us. We’re reaching the top of our careers, we’re kind of where we’re going to be, and now we’re saying, What’s it all about, Alfie?” Or as one executive put it at a conference on spirituality at work, “You get to the top of the ladder and find that maybe it’s leaning against the wrong building.”

In a book called *The Fourth Great Awakening & the Future of Egalitarianism*, Robert William Fogel, a Nobel Prize-winning economist at the University of Chicago, argues that post-World War II prosperity has created enough wealth that many Americans’ primary desires are not for material goods but for spiritual and intellectual assets. “In a world in which all but a small percentage are lacking in adequate nutrition and other necessities, self-realization may indeed seem like a mere ornament,” he writes, “but not in a country where even the poor are rich by past or Third World standards. That is the case in America today.”

Before proceeding further, let’s briefly stipulate what this story is not about. It’s not about deploying spirituality in your company to boost productivity or soothe workers’ psyches. Nor is this story about business ethics. Behaving ethically is a necessary but not sufficient component of integrating faith and work, says David Miller of the Avodah Institute. “This is about who you are, your being, your character within the organization,” Miller says. “It’s going beyond minimum obligation to

being motivated by love of neighbor. Let's say you're in banking. What are you proactively doing to get involved in inner-city lending? How do we treat the migrant worker, the single mom, the illegal alien? These are the modern-day equivalents of the biblical poor." Of course, none of this is intended to suggest that only spiritual people can lead exemplary lives.

No, the stories that follow are about people who struggle to resolve the tensions between business and God. Marketplace pressures frequently bump up against spiritual values, as business people tackle questions that reverberate beyond the bottom line: How to handle layoffs. How much to pay people. How to reach out to others in a loving way. How to react to unethical conduct. How to make money—of course—and make meaning too.

Never on Sunday

Selling dishwashers and dinette sets has always come easily to Bill Child. Selling his chain of furniture stores to Warren Buffett was easy too—the best business decision he's ever made, he says. But selling the Omaha billionaire on a risky plan for expanding the business—well, that proved tougher, especially when Child's religious practices collided head-on with Buffett's business sense.

Child, 69, is the soft-spoken chairman of R.C. Willey Home Furnishings, a Utah-based retailer that he built up and sold to Berkshire Hathaway, Buffett's holding company, for an estimated \$150 million in 1995. Several years later Child had his heart set on opening a new store in Las Vegas, so he took Buffett for a ride—literally. Touring Vegas and its suburbs by helicopter, the two men marveled at the new subdivisions that sprawled in all directions. Child had his eye on a location in upscale Clark County, where an estimated 8,000 newcomers arrive every month—nearly all needing furniture.

There was just one problem. R.C. Willey stores have always closed on Sundays because Child, a devout Mormon, observes the Sabbath. So do many of his managers who are also members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. That was no handicap as long as Child stayed close to his roots in Salt Lake City: With nine stores, all in Utah, where most people are Mormon, R.C. Willey had become the biggest furniture retailer west of the Mississippi. Sales last year topped \$400 million.

But Las Vegas? Without Sunday hours? Buffett wouldn't go for it. "Sunday is an enormously popular day for a great many people to shop for a lot of things, and certainly for furniture and appliances," says Buffett, whose Berkshire Hathaway owns three other furniture companies, all of which are open on Sundays. Industry experts estimate that 20% to 30% of all furniture sales are transacted on Sundays. Buffett worried that customers who drove to the store to shop on Sundays would be frustrated and never come back.

To resolve the dispute, the two plain-spoken Westerners struck an unorthodox compromise: They would hold off on Vegas and instead test R.C. Willey's approach

outside Utah by building a store in Boise—not Sin City but not a Mormon stronghold either. Buffett still had doubts, so to allay them, Child insisted on paying for the new store himself. He put up \$9 million, with the proviso that if the Boise store took hold, he would sell it back to Berkshire Hathaway at cost; if it failed, he'd eat the losses. Of course, the store would be closed on Sundays.

For Child, Sundays have been set aside for church, family, and rest as long as he can remember. As a young man he intended to become a schoolteacher; he got into retailing almost by accident when, after college, he was handed the keys to a 600-square-foot R.C. Willey store by his ailing father-in-law, Rufus Willey.

Child didn't know much about business, but he knew the store was in trouble. "If I'd had a business education, I probably would have closed it," he says. The one thing R.C. Willey had going for it was its reputation. Rufus knew his customers personally, having met them when he worked for the electric company, climbing utility poles and bringing electricity to rural farmers; evenings and weekends he sold them appliances on credit from his red pickup truck. He'd ask farm families to try a refrigerator or electric range for a week. Says Child: "I don't think he ever had to take one back."

Nearly 50 years later Child has built the business into a powerhouse retailer by combing the world for unusual products and offering a vast array of electronics and appliances as well as furniture. But he says the company's reputation remains its most prized asset. He tells his 2,000 employees to be scrupulously honest, even when they could shade the truth about, say, when an out-of-stock item will become available. His customer service people take returns with no questions asked. "If we foul up, in any way, we go to all ends to satisfy people," Child says. A while ago R.C. Willey decided to stand behind thousands of product warranties it had sold to an insurance company that went bankrupt. "It cost us more than \$1.5 million over the next five years," Child says, "but we just felt it was the morally right thing to do." Other stores told customers they could no longer honor the warranties.

Child believes that Sunday closings have actually contributed to R.C. Willey's success. In a tight labor market, he says, he can attract workers who want to spend the day with family. And everyone at R.C. Willey—even the workaholic who might be tempted to check on sales figures or stop by an outlet—gets a true day of rest on Sunday because the entire business is shut down.

Whatever the reason, R.C. Willey proved to be a hit in Boise. Several months after the store opened in 1999, Berkshire Hathaway bought the property from Child—who refused to take any interest on the capital he had tied up. In Berkshire's annual report, Buffett wrote, "If a manager has behaved similarly at some other public corporation, I haven't heard about it."

This September, R.C. Willey will open its 11th store, in Henderson, Nev., just outside Las Vegas. It will be open until very late at night, but it will be closed on Sundays.

Buffett, a self-professed agnostic who plans to be there for the opening, recently told Child, "You impressed me in Boise. Now, if you can do it in Vegas, you'll make a real convert out of me."

### God Is Her CEO

Can a management consultant whose expertise is mergers and acquisitions, with their attendant downsizing and sometimes nasty culture clashes, do God's work? And on Wall Street, no less?

Absolutely, although it's not always easy, says Jose Zeilstra. Zeilstra spent eight years as a globe-trotting consultant at Price Waterhouse, which became PricewaterhouseCoopers after she joined, before she was recruited last spring by J.P. Morgan, which was then acquired by Chase Manhattan. (You can see how she's become a merger expert.) Zeilstra loves her job; she's a vice president, part of an in-house consulting unit that deals with strategy, leadership, and productivity issues. And, yes, she says, she feels she has been able to live her faith at both Pricewaterhouse and J.P. Morgan Chase—by encouraging executives to look up from their spreadsheets to focus on people and values, by arguing for what's right, and by trying to act with compassion. She's guided as much by the Bible as by any corporate dictate or business school text.

"Ultimately I'm working for God," Zeilstra says matter-of-factly. "There is no higher calling than to serve God, and that does not mean only within the church. Ultimately, your life, whether it's work, family, or friends, is part of a larger plan."

Born in the Netherlands, the 34-year-old Zeilstra moved as a child to Calgary, where her father ran a real estate business. The churches she attended delivered the message that the best way to be a Christian was to work as a minister or missionary. "You almost felt that going into business was anti-Christian because it was only about money and power and materialism," she says. Even so, intrigued by business, she earned an MBA and went to work at Price Waterhouse. She worked on a merger of cement companies in Indonesia, spent a year in China consulting for the central bank, assisted with a failed telecom merger, and helped a major airline outsource its catering and cleaning operations.

Her Christian principles were tested in big ways and small. Working overseas, she had to contend with cultures in which bribes and kickbacks were the norm. On one occasion she argued against giving what she calls "very expensive gifts" and saw a deal fall through. Another time she worked for an executive who berated subordinates, bad-mouthed the locals, and had an office affair. She urged him to change, after first praying for guidance. "When you feel God is with you, you get a little bit bolder," Zeilstra says. "But you have to do it diplomatically. What's the phrase? You love the sinner and you hate the sin." But why step in at all? "It was my role to help him see how he was impacting other people."

More typically she tries to lead by example. She seeks, for instance, to avoid office gossip or backbiting. God tells us, she says, “to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show humility to all.” Her goal is to treat everyone, whatever their rank, with dignity and respect.

That is the nub of both Zeilstra’s faith and her consulting practice: Leaders who are guided by spiritual principles should thrive in the new economy. Speaking at a conference on faith and work at New York City’s Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, where she worships, Zeilstra argued that business leaders no longer needed to “flex muscles, drive loyalty, and institutionalize hierarchy.” Instead, they must be “attuned to people and ideas” and able to articulate a vision and imbue others with purpose. She argued that Jesus Christ was history’s greatest leader: In less than 40 years on earth He began a global organization that today has more than a billion followers.

Now Zeilstra is in the thick of yet another merger—the J.P. Morgan-Chase integration, which top executives have said will eliminate thousands of jobs. While she is not in a position to make policy (or speak for the firm), she tells those in charge of layoffs, “Err a little bit on the generous side. You always want to do what you can to reduce the pain and be thought of as a fair and caring employer.” That may seem obvious, but as the recent waves of dot-com layoffs showed, some employers can be shockingly casual about the way they throw people out of work.

On the job, Zeilstra uses secular language and avoids the “G” word. Aside from that, she feels few conflicts between her faith and her work. The biggest challenge, sometimes, is keeping her own perspective in a workplace in which twentysomethings can take home million-dollar pay packages. Zeilstra herself enjoys heli-skiing, horseback riding, and scuba diving, and she’s learning to fly a plane. Wealth, she confesses, can be seductive: “When you ask how you bring God into your work, it’s by not getting caught up in making money or achieving power so that they become your gods.”

#### The Sounds of Silence

Not many courtroom lawyers can shut their mouths for an hour, let alone a day or a week. But Thomas Crisman, a patent attorney and litigator with Jenkins & Gilchrist, a big corporate-law firm in Dallas, leaves his business behind every winter to spend a month in silence at a meditation retreat in rural India. He does so to deepen his practice of an increasingly popular form of Buddhist meditation known as Vipassana.

Ordinarily a voluble man, the 59-year-old Crisman actually looks forward to his month of silence. “The transition can be difficult,” he says. “You’re coming out of a high-speed, high-energy, hard-driving world, and you’re moving to a much quieter, more peaceful place.” But the payoff is worth it, so much so that Crisman has taken a month-long retreat in India every year since 1980, when he met S.N. Goenka, a onetime Myanmar industrialist who is now among the world’s leading meditation teachers. Back home, Crisman and his wife, Tina, operate a Vipassana Website (

www.dhamma.org) and oversee a meditation center in Kaufman, Texas, that puts between 500 and 1,000 people a year through a ten-day introductory silent Vipassana course.

Vipassana meditation has been described as a journey of discovery, taken with the eyes closed. As Crisman explains it, practitioners observe their breathing, thought patterns, and physical sensations during meditation and train themselves not to react negatively to life's inevitable stresses. Instead, they strive to respond "in a balanced way, without allowing events to whipsaw you." Buddhists believe that practicing meditation helps restore people to a natural state, filled with love and compassion. "I don't know anybody who has been through the full ten days who doesn't come out the other side of it, really, a different person," Crisman says. "It's like scrubbing the paint off the outside of the light bulb and letting the light shine through."

Raised as a Baptist in West Texas, Crisman discovered meditation after experiencing a mix of career success and personal discontent. When a fellow patent lawyer named Jack Holder invited him to a retreat, Crisman figured he had nothing to lose. Holder, who recalls that Crisman cried for 45 minutes when the retreat ended, says, "I knew then that something had happened." Crisman was so taken with Vipassana that he arranged to spend several months in India and considered quitting the law.

"Fighting people all the time—that didn't seem like a very good way to make a living," Crisman says. Goenka talked him out of it, saying that the law can be a tool to help people and that professionals like Crisman can spread the word about Vipassana among their peers.

As a partner at a big firm, Crisman now compresses his workload into about ten months a year. "I'll work 12-hour days, some seven-day weeks, pretty much from mid-January until December, and I'll end up billing more hours than almost anybody else" he says. "Then I go off to India, and my partners go off skiing." Colleagues manage his cases when he's gone.

He has made other adjustments too. He turned down legal work from a client who operated a Texas slaughterhouse. (Buddhism asks that its followers do no harm to "sentient beings," although Crisman himself eats meat.) Another client asked him to apply for patents for machine-gun technology. "The guy's a good client, and pays well, and he's a friend too," Crisman says. "But I just couldn't bring myself to do it."

But Crisman's no less forceful an advocate; to the contrary, he argues that bringing calmness and perspective to a bitter court battle gives him an edge over an emotional adversary. "You can't lie down and roll over when these jerks come along. You've got to push back," says Crisman. "But to do it without the agitation, without the suffering, with a balanced mind—that was probably the No. 1 thing that I saw happen to me in my law practice." Stan Moore, a law partner and friend, says, "Most

attorneys look forward to the cocktail hour to go out and drown their stresses. Tom goes to meditate.”

“Sinful Desserts, Sainly Causes”

When Julius Walls Jr. gave up his dream of becoming a Catholic priest at age 19 because he wanted a family, he felt certain he was leaving the ministry behind forever. Now he’s not so sure.

As chief executive of Greyston Bakery, a maker of gourmet brownies, cakes, and tarts in Yonkers, N.Y., Walls runs a business that is explicitly guided by spiritual principles. He hires people off the street, first come, first served, because he thinks everyone deserves a shot at a job. The company helps its workers with problems whether or not they’re job related. Meetings begin with a moment of silence. And all the bakery’s profits, roughly \$200,000 last year, go to the Greyston Foundation, which helps the needy. Says Walls: “I think of a lot of what I do here at Greyston as my ministry.”

Greyston serves the poor by feeding the rich. Much of its \$4 million in annual sales are generated by selling bits of brownies to Ben & Jerry’s for its chocolate fudge brownie ice cream and frozen yogurt. Greyston also bakes cakes and tarts for Manhattan restaurants and cafes, creates elaborate cakes to order, and sells desserts like Triple Chocolate Mousse Cake and Lemon Tart over the Internet ([www.greystonbakery.com](http://www.greystonbakery.com)). In a Zagat survey of 160 New York City area bakeries, Greyston ranks just behind top-rated Payard, a French patisserie on the Upper East Side. Greyston, says Zagat’s, offers “sinful desserts that support saintly causes.”

Walls, now 39, happened upon Greyston almost by accident, although he sees divine forces at work. (“I was supposed to be here, honestly,” he says.) The son of a prison guard, he grew up in a Brooklyn housing project and attended a Catholic high school and seminary on scholarship. Later he studied business at Baruch College, where he was elected student body president. An outgoing man of strong opinions, Walls rose through the ranks of a New York chocolate manufacturer, where he made good money but chafed at the way that traditional companies treated people. “It was a matter of us vs. them,” he said. “You paid the least amount possible to your employees and suppliers, and you charged the most you could to your customers.” He wondered whether he’d ever be able to marry his faith with his business skills.

In 1993 he made a sales call at Greyston. There, Walls, who is African American, was impressed that the bakery was staffed by poor blacks and Hispanics from Yonkers, a blighted city just north of the Bronx. Walls wangled a job as a marketing consultant and was named CEO in 1997—by which time he’d come to appreciate the venture’s spiritual underpinnings.

Founded in 1982, Greyston was the brainchild of a Zen Buddhist and entrepreneur known as Roshi Bernard Glassman. Born a Jew in Brooklyn, Glassman had worked as an aeronautical engineer for McDonnell Douglas before turning to Zen. He created

the bakery to support a Zen group called the Peacemaker Community—and to bridge the worlds of the spirit, the street, and the startup.

What Walls brought to Greyston was business savvy, Christian faith, and a strong ethic of personal responsibility. Greyston remains “spiritual,” he says, but its aim isn’t to produce Buddhists or Christians; rather it’s to support people as they pursue their own path. The company maintains a three-person department, overseen by a social worker, to help employees with problems ranging from landlord-tenant disputes to marital discord. Workers also get lots of on-the-job training, grants for education, and even help writing a resume if they decide to seek a job elsewhere.

Of the 55 Greyston employees, many are working for the first time or are former substance abusers or convicted criminals. Walls explains his “open hiring” policy by saying, “Everyone deserves an opportunity for a job. Period.” Workers then must prove themselves during a 12- to 16-week tryout.

That reflects a bedrock principle at Greyston: People are responsible for their actions. That may seem self-evident, but Walls says the welfare system has created a class of people who have been taught to depend on others. Still, he preaches self-sufficiency in the context of a caring workplace where people are willing to listen to one another and lend a helping hand. That, he argues, is enlightened capitalism. “As we’ve taken care of our employees,” he says, “our employees have taken care of this business.”

#### Praying for Answers

For 25 years after starting Catalytica in his basement in New Providence, N.J., Ricardo Levy proudly watched it grow from a tiny consulting firm into a pharmaceuticals and energy company with headquarters in Silicon Valley, a factory in Greenville, N.C., 1,800 employees, and a market capitalization of \$750 million. Then Levy faced one of the most difficult decisions of his business career—whether to sell the company’s biggest, most successful division.

“I had never considered selling,” says Levy, a reflective 56-year-old chemical engineer. “An entrepreneur wants to keep the baby and take it all the way.” To complicate matters, Levy took a strong dislike to the point man for the potential buyer, a Dutch pharmaceuticals giant called DSM.

That Levy ultimately chose to sell most of Catalytica is, by itself, unremarkable. But the way he made the decision—by turning to an ancient Christian tradition known as discernment, in which one quiets the mind and surrenders to the unknown, attempting to discover the will of God—well, let’s just say that’s not a management tool taught in many business schools these days.

As it happens, though, that’s just where Levy discovered discernment. In 1998 he took a pilot course in Spirituality for Business Leaders at the University of Santa Clara’s business school, taught by Andre DelBecq, a management professor and

devout Catholic. Levy, who is Jewish, had long been interested in philosophy and religion, particularly the Eastern traditions; he has, for example, practiced tai chi, a physical discipline rooted in Taoism. Like many baby-boomers, Levy has fashioned his own brand of spirituality, which draws from a number of religious traditions.

“For me, spirituality is a very individual issue,” he says. “Although I consider myself fully Jewish, I’m not a member of a synagogue. Those of us who are less affiliated have to uncover our own path, and that’s hard. Especially when, at the same time, we are CEOs of fast-growing companies.”

Certainly business is in Levy’s blood, as is a family history shaped by religion. The son of a Jewish entrepreneur who fled Nazi Germany to Ecuador, Levy spoke German at home and Spanish at school; he learned English well enough to earn advanced degrees from Princeton and Stanford. After a stint at Exxon, he joined with two colleagues to form Catalytica. In time they developed two promising technologies—a combustion system that reduces pollution from fossil fuels and an efficient way to manufacture complex pharmaceuticals. They raised venture capital, took their company public, and grew by acquisition, becoming one of the drug industry’s biggest contract manufacturers; their products included AZT, the anti-AIDS drug, and Sudafed.

Levy’s world had become terribly hectic and complex by the time he took DelBecq’s course. He read spiritual books, began meditating every morning, and took a “field trip” to a homeless shelter. He practiced humility, making a deliberate effort to become a better listener and stay in touch with his people as the business grew. “That means recognizing that the fact that you have made a million dollars means squat,” he says. From his meditation practice, Levy says he learned how to “quiet the innumerable noises that an executive hears.” It’s this quieting of the mind that is at the heart of discernment.

When the offer came to buy Catalytica’s pharmaceuticals business, Levy had to contemplate a lot of questions. Getting a fair price for investors was essential, but not sufficient. How would selling affect his employees? What about his customers? Could Catalytica’s combustion division, which DSM didn’t want, survive on its own? And what would he do with the rest of his life?

Levy attacked all the questions logically, and then went deeper. “Those are subtle issues that don’t fit into an Excel spreadsheet. It’s not writing a list on the left and a list on the right,” he says. “It’s really more than anything a matter of feeling. The question is, feeling what? Really it’s your compass. How your total psyche, how your intellectual and spiritual being interfaces with the issue.” This may simply be a more disciplined way of getting to what other executives call a gut decision.

As he made up his mind to sell, Levy also used meditation to overcome the hostility he’d felt toward his DSM adversary. He tried to reach out “in a loving way” and found that his own kinder demeanor helped move the talks along. Catalytica sold its

drug business to DSM last year; its combustion division is now a stand-alone public company, with Levy as chairman.

Sure, the process sounds a little mushy—Levy knows that—but remember that this is a scientist, an engineer, and a CEO talking. To skeptics, he says that being spiritually grounded is a way of staying close to the people who are key to any company's success. "People are the most intangible, the most complex element of any business equation," he says. "The only way to reach people is to start by reaching into yourself—by understanding yourself."

### Beyond the Bottom Line

Dick Green is a modest Midwesterner, a traditional Catholic, and the president of an old-economy manufacturer called Blistex, which makes lip-care products. After more than a decade of trying to integrate his faith and work, he has reached a conclusion that may surprise dewy-eyed theorists who see only harmony between God and business: Sometimes the two collide, head-on.

When they do, Green can allow his conscience to shape his business decisions because Blistex is a privately held, family-owned firm, and a profitable one. (He won't disclose revenues or profits, although he says that a published estimate that Blistex brought in \$59 million in sales last year was too low.) Neither Green nor David Arch, Blistex's chairman, feels pressure to squeeze out more cash, because they are part of the family that owns the 54-year-old firm. "We're a very conservative company," Green says. "We just want to keep doing what we're doing."

Green, 62, joined Blistex in 1971, after marrying Patricia Arch, the daughter of Blistex's co-founder, Charles Arch. A chemical engineering graduate of Notre Dame, he rotated through various departments before becoming president in 1990. By then he'd helped start the Chicago-based group now known as Business Leaders for Excellence, Ethics, and Justice, which was formed after Catholic bishops issued an encyclical that was sharply critical of capitalism. "The implication was that profit was a four-letter word," Green says.

While BEEJ was formed to defend business, its leaders soon shifted their focus inward. Drawing upon Catholic theology, they wrote position papers on issues like layoffs, firings, and wage scales. Green's thinking changed, sometimes in unexpected ways; he had, for example, previously found it very hard to fire even underachieving employees, but he came around to the belief that "it's immoral not to fire" those who can't do the job.

But Green also came to see himself as working for his employees rather than the other way around. If, instead, he was hell-bent on maximizing profits, he probably would have long ago moved the factory from suburban Oak Brook, Ill., to a low-wage locale. "We could make our product cheaper somewhere else," he says. Or Blistex could have outsourced manufacturing altogether.

Green has also opted not to lay off workers during seasonal or economic slowdowns. "We've had people painting machines, we've had people painting the walls, we've had them doing everything to keep them busy," he says. All workers get a profit-sharing benefit, usually pegged at 15% of their annual salary. It's paid into their retirement accounts because the company owners figure that most people will be better off saving the money. "Are we too paternalistic?" Green says. "I sometimes wonder."

Fortunately for Green and the other owners, Blistex is thriving. It has increased its earnings for nine of the past ten years through smart marketing, brand extensions, acquisitions, and global expansion. Blistex could have done even better financially, but that's not really an option for Green. "I don't think I can make a business decision and ignore who I am," he says.

So what are we to make of this efflorescence of spirituality in the business world? Is this a superficial, merely utilitarian movement, or is it a genuinely spiritual awakening?

This was the question FORTUNE asked in 1953 about the revival of faith among businessmen. Thirteen years later traditional religion had fallen so far out of favor that Time ran a famous cover asking is god dead? We simply can't know whether today's ad hoc efforts to integrate faith and work will coalesce into something bigger and more powerful, with long-lasting effects, or whether they will fizzle. Certainly it's no surprise that as baby-boomers peer around the corner at mortality, they're asking big questions. A cynic would say they'll soon be into something else—golf, maybe.

Still, change happens. This generation has seen it. Did "Women's Lib" remake the workplace? We'd say yes. Will my-way-or-the-highway leadership rise anew? Probably not.

Some believers argue that spirituality will eventually be welcomed into the business world for pragmatic reasons. Faith works, they say. They claim that the core principles of spirituality—the belief that all individuals have dignity, that we are all interconnected, and that a transcendent being or force defines purpose in human affairs—dovetail with contemporary management thinking about what drives great companies. These companies employ the whole person; they don't buy a worker's labor for eight hours a day. They deploy teams of people who respect one another and promote learning and listening up and down the ranks. They have a mission that transcends the bottom line.

"Spirituality is in convergence with all the cutting-edge thinking in management and organizational behavior," says Hamilton Beazley, a former oil-company executive who now teaches at George Washington University. "It creates a higher-performing organization."

In the end, though, it isn't likely that the faith-in-the-workplace movement will be driven by such a practical calculus. Nor will it be guided by consultants and churches. Rather, it will be powered, as it has been so far, by business people who yearn to find meaning in what they do. Whether there are enough of them, with sufficient will, to make a lasting difference remains to be seen, but they have begun talking, and that's a start.

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