Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization

ISSN: 2153-9480. Volume 9, Number 1. December - 2016

Religion and the professional ethos: The YMCA, Dale Carnegie, and the "Business Man"

Lance Cummings
University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA

Introduction

Despite predictions of religion's demise in the first decade of this century (Krattenmaker 2010; Meacham 2009), religion and spirituality have come front and center in many public arenas like pop culture, health and well-being, and politics. Whether it be the power of the religious right and left in politics, anxiety over Islamic terrorism, or simply the use of meditation within large corporations, religious issues play an important role in how we view and participate in secular society. This is no less true in the world of business and professional communication. Considering the role religion has played in rhetorical thought and our understanding of writing as a technology, this should be no surprise to scholars of rhetoric. For example, Eric Havelock (1963) and Walter Ong (1982) have both pointed out the constitutive relationship between cognition and writing, as well as how these have influenced the development of religion and culture. By creating a division between the knower and the known, writing allows "introspectivity" to open up the mind to reflection on both the "objective" world and the "interior self" (Ong, p. 114). For Ong, this kind of reflection gave birth to religious traditions, like Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which are characteristically introspective, often focused on sacred texts. This division also makes moral character a subject of reflection, as religion grapples with the relationship between constructing a communicator's ethos and actual moral being. Because Protestantism has developed its own special relationship with writing, growing as it did out of the invention of the printing press and the public sphere (Eisenstein 1979), developing moral character is thoroughly intertwined with the production of both business and communication.

Understanding our idea of the "business man" necessarily entails understanding the powerful religious influences from our personal and disciplinary histories. Using the early instruction in business and professional communication of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), I argue that business and religion still exist within this constitutive relationship, particularly as it subtly informs the professional ethos and our ideas of the "business man." In particular, Dale Carnegie, one of the most famous self-help gurus of the twentieth century, successfully deployed moral aspects of Protestantism through a professional ethos that focuses on self-discipline and

empathy for others. Understanding these religious ties will help us better identify the cultural influences on how we teach and deploy the professional ethos, particularly in comparison to other ways these relationships may be configured across cultures.

To see these relationships, we must see religion as more than just a matter of belief or a set of propositions. As Judith Butler (2011) has pointed out, understanding religion as a set of propositions misses how it "functions as a matrix of subject formation, an embedded framework for valuations, and a mode of belonging and embodied social practice" (para. 4). If we understand religion as a persistent matrix of symbols, discourses, and actions that shape communication theory and practice, then religion becomes significant "available means" for the communication that drives professional discourse and business exchange. In other words, religion creates a deeply embedded, but "totalizing" system that determines how we relate and understand the world (Kunin, 2003, p. 221). For Clifford Geertz (1975), this "inherited" system of conceptions is essential to understanding culture, or how we "communicate, perpetuate, and develop … knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (p. 641). In other words, business professionals have inherited a "system of conceptions" that powerfully influence how we construct a professional ethos, often perpetuating unexamined attitudes about moral character and professional practice, "clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (p. 643).

These religious influences are often hidden in the histories of professional communication, as we pick through historical data with a disciplinary lens that assumes a sharp distinction between science, business, and religion. Rhetoricians, like Thomas Lessl (1993), Kenneth Burke (1970), and Walter Ong (1982), have observed a much more fluid relationship between communication and religion, particularly when we consider the power of religious discourse to represent "a specialized kind of symbolic transformation that may occur in any sector of the public marketplace" (Lessl, 1993, p. 127). This relationship is just as true in business and professional communication as in science. In fact, seeing religion and business as constitutive of each other is necessary for understanding the nuances of the professional ethos often deployed in United States business settings.

To understand the relationship between moral character and professional ethos, one must also understand the close historical ties between business and Protestantism in European and American contexts. Max Weber (2002) was one of the first modern thinkers to point out a strong link between business and religion in his well-known book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (first published in 1930). In particular, Protestantism has found various ways of maximizing religion, commerce, and liberty by interweaving them together culturally (p. 7). Weber connects the religious atmosphere of nations or ethnicities to what he calls "conduct of life" (*lebensführung*)—or particular mental and social habits that define economic activity, movement of wealth, and class organization (pp. 3, 5). In other words, nation, ethnicity, or even economics alone cannot explain the different approaches to work and money that Weber observes across various locales. Religion is a necessary component for understanding the attitudes essential to capitalist ways of organizing society, economy, and professional life — or "the spirit of capitalism" (p. 9). Though religions can influence this behavior in various ways,

Weber is primarily referring to the idea that working and increasing wealth is an end itself, not simply a means to live happily.

Weber uses Benjamin Franklin's essay on managing money as case and point, even though overt religious discourse is mostly absent (p. 11). From Weber's point of view, Franklin constructs a morality with a "utilitarian slant" that sees ethics as useful because they increase productivity and ultimately profit (for profit's sake):

> According to Franklin, these virtues, like all others are only virtues at all to the extent that they are 'useful' to the individual in concrete situations; the mere appearance of virtue is an adequate substitute wherever it serves the same purpose. (p. 11).

In fact, Franklin sees money (or business) as a gift from God to "direct him toward virtue by this means" (p. 12). In other words, professionalism in business is not merely a means to fulfill material needs, but becomes an end to itself, because participating in a professional "calling" (or *beruf*) produces character (p. 12). This idea of a professional calling arose in Protestantism as a way to produce moral character by means other than "monastic asceticism," looking beyond simply "living a life pleasing to God," but fulfilling the "innerworldly duties which arise from the individual's station in life" (p. 29). Doing business is the way to fill one's spiritual potential in the world, and professional ethos is a product of the character development that happens through these public activities.

From this perspective, religion and business are mutually constitutive, at least as they have been deployed in the United States and other Protestant milieus. People work, not because they have to, but because they have been called to. We find "salvation" or wholeness in doing our job. Religious discourse, then, inevitably shapes how we see business and professional ethics and vice versa. This explains, to some degree, the idea that each person must seek out and find the profession that is best tailored to one's personality and mission—the "perfect job," so to speak. One can also understand a bit better the idea of "doing what you love." If you find your passion, then work isn't really work.

All these ideas are common *topoi* in the professional world and have their beginning in religious discourse of the nineteenth century—discourse that was later developed by Dale Carnegie and other self-help gurus of the twentieth century. Even as overt religious discourse disappears, and disciplines and institutions orient themselves towards a more secular frame of reference, many of these systems can still maintain influence through powerful sedimentations that lie just below the discursive terrain. In a recent issue of *Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*, I made the case for understanding how grounds of thinking or "evidences," (like nationalism, for example) can layer themselves into our ways of thinking, often disappearing from direct view (2014, p. 128). These *sedimentations* powerfully impact not only how we make cultural comparisons, but also how we construct the act of comparison itself. Religion can also play an important role in these sedimented discourses.

For the purposes of this article, I propose that many Christian ways of thinking, mostly Protestant, are heavily sedimented into discourse in and around professional communication, even when religion as an overt set of symbols and discourses cannot be seen. To do this, I examine the close ties between Christianity and the pre-disciplinary formations of professional communication in the Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA) teaching of technical and business writing. Secondly, I show how the YMCA's construction of character and business ethos is rearticulated by one of the most influential figures in business culture, Dale Carnegie. In his popular book first published in 1936, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1981), Carnegie used the "psychological man" to revise the religious, masculine ethos of the nineteenth century for the business world, while retaining ethical checks derived from religious discourses on cultivation, discipline, and self-control. Though many professional communication classrooms and textbooks still retain many of these relational principles and the masculine persona they entail, this professional ethos is rarely balanced by the deeper ethical implications of Carnegie's holistic. Re-incorporating this more holistic vision, while also reflecting on many of the masculine and individualist leanings, can help us understand how the professional ethos is influenced by other religious and ethical visions, perhaps deepening how we deploy the professional ethos in the United States and abroad.

This exploration into the histories of professional communication will show how the study of religion is not tangential to the study of professional communication. On the contrary, religion was necessary for the development of professional communication, particularly as a way of moralizing the business and technical persona. Excavating these sedimentations is crucial to understanding professional communication in a diverse global society, where religion continues to play an important role in determining both communication practice and theory.

YMCA and professional education

From its very beginning, writing, business, and the professional ethos were all important elements of the YMCA mission to minister to the physical, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of young men, driven by a religious mission shaped by what Weber calls the "Protestant ethic" (p. 8). The YMCA emerged as an offshoot of the nineteenth-century university, first in England in 1844, and more enthusiastically in the United States in 1851. By 1854, there were over 50 YMCA centers open across the country (Young Men's Christian Association, *YMCA in America 1851-2001*, p. 1). As described in most Association constitutions, the YMCA worked to promote "Evangelical Religion, the cultivation of Christian sympathy, and the improvement of the mental and spiritual condition of young men," particularly university men and young workers (as cited in Hopkins, 1951, p. 25). The YMCA's work began with a core of activities meant to "sanctify leisure time with uplifting work," for example "devotional meetings, classes for Biblical Instruction, Mission Sunday Schools, Lectures, a Library and Reading Room, or any other agencies in accordance with the Scriptures" (as cited in Hopkins, p. 25). Instead of visiting saloons or "places of ill repute," men could congregate at YMCAs to build their character through Christian influences

The educational work the YMCA performed at the workplace and in night schools became a highly organized and central part of the organization's mission to administer to a man's whole

person, by seeing that "all under its influence are getting intellectual piety," in addition to "piety of the will" and "piety of the heart" (Harris, 1891, p. 205). This tripartite mission is the origin of YMCA's famous triangle, which represents these three aspects of well-being (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. YMCA triangle. Used with permission from the Kautz Family YMCA Archive.

Not only was this a way of completing the university's intellectual education, but this work was seen as a way to extend this training to men outside of the university to produce better "American citizens" in all walks of life. Walter C. Douglas (1892), General Secretary of the Philadelphia YMCA in 1892, describes this mission succinctly when arguing for more cooperation between the YMCA and the University Extension movement, which provided educational opportunities for the public:

> The object of the Young Men's Christian Association is defined to be the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual improvement of young men. In other words, its high ideal is the development of the entire man. To develop the young men intellectually, it uses libraries, reading-rooms, literary societies, lectures, and evening classes. (p. 1)

Though the YMCA considered many different elements to citizenship, work ethic was crucial to their holistic view of masculinity. In these religious contexts, writing and communication became more than just a skill to get things done, but a discipline that helped cultivate a Christian moral identity. This conception of the masculine self would eventually meld into the professionalization of the business self, influenced by what would become known as "muscular Christianity" in the nineteenth century—a movement that sought to "recover" masculinity from the feminizing forces of intellectualism and industrial civilization. For the YMCA, and many

others in the nineteenth century, writing (like business) was a spiritual discipline that trained and strengthened the mind and body, while developing a more ethical vision of the world through sympathy and practice.

Though much of the nineteenth century writing instruction occurred in land grant institutions and normal schools, religious institutions like the YMCA played an important role in making education available to a wider circle of people. Business, professional, and labor contexts served as important spaces for the development of professional communication, and the YMCA was one of the primary drivers of this kind of on-site education. Having literate employees with at least some composition training was increasingly important as the business world became more bureaucratic. If one's job was the source of fulfillment, it only made sense that education in the workplace be implemented to develop one's mind and moral character, along with other more physical or menial tasks.

In his early lecture at a London YMCA, Thomas Binney (1854) praised composition as an "instrument of mental culture" that lent "strength, nimbleness, [and] dexterity" to mental faculties, making "the discipline of authorship something analogous to the discipline of virtue" (p. 18). Speaking primarily to professionals, or "men engaged in trade and manufacturers," learning to write was not just a matter of communication, but a matter of ethics and self-control (p. 12). If a man can control language, then he can control himself:

> He who will put himself under these masters, and do justice to their lessons and their example, may acquire power over his own tongue, ability to embody and adorn his thoughts, to an extent far superior to what they will possess who have enjoyed the advantages of a learned education, if they have not gone and done likewise. (p. 14)

Writing was not something only for the educated. In fact, writers like Binney consistently questioned whether universities and colleges provided these practical skills, signifying an early divide between academia and the workplace. These theories on writing dominated thought in the nineteenth century, and this disciplining of the mind was meant to replace leisure time with productivity and character growth—ideas that would fold themselves into the instruction of business and professional communication.

The YMCA was clearly at the vanguard of innovation in professional and business communication when looking closely at archival evidence, like handbooks, courses of study, examinations, and textbooks. Early on, professional writing was a key characteristic of YMCA leaders, who were required to be literate and persuasive "business men." For example, their handbook for "corresponding secretaries" (or communications officers) suggests that these leaders have a strong education, alongside the "desire, will, and industry" that will continue to develop knowledge and character (Ninde, Bowne, & Uhl,1892, pp. 125-126). Such officers were encouraged to "cultivate the art of correspondence," acquire "a fair business hand" and "correct style" that would enable graceful and tactful communications (p. 145). As the YMCA's educational system continued to develop, these approaches to communication were further

articulated in textbooks and courses of study. YMCA's first course of study in business English on record was in 1903; however, business writing was visibly incorporated into English studies as early1899. Students were taught grammar, vocabulary, letter writing, and literature (Young Men's Christian Association, *International Examinations, 1899*). By 1903, these subjects became more distinct with classes in Business English, Composition, and Literature (Young Men's Christian Association, *International Examinations, 1903*). This work all happened before George Burton Hotchkiss authored the first textbook primarily focused on business writing in 1916 — a textbook used in YMCA classes, consequently (Weeks, 1985). Hotchkiss and Edward Jones Kilduff also co-authored a textbook on *Advanced Business Correspondence* through the YMCA in 1921.

Before professional communication was a topic in academic circles, the YMCA was developing systems of instruction geared for young men and professionals, serving very real needs for literacy in the workplace. These educational systems cannot be separated from the YMCA's mission to mold the "whole man," —body, mind, and soul—into an ethical and sympathetic citizen worker. The YMCA's focus on the "whole man" and the recovery of "Christian masculinity" influenced how Christianity was deployed in worldly contexts throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including many professional and business contexts.

Professional ethos and character development

The YMCA's instruction demonstrates a shift in how ethos was articulated in both writing and the business world as a whole. In his brief study of business communication in the fifteenth century, Malcolm Richardson (1985) points out an important difference between early and modern business writing — a lack of distinction between "business" and "private" correspondence. Richardson attributes this lack of distinction to a twentieth century tendency to see an "opposition between [the] inner, or 'real,' selves and [the] outer, 'public,' or 'professional' selves" (p. 25). George Douglas (1985) makes a similar claim when he examines early nineteenth century business writing: "Men of affairs wrote as gentlemen, and they did not gravitate, as the contemporary businessman so often does, toward an impersonal style in which things just happen in some kind of institutionalized vacuum" (p. 126). As a result, it is not uncommon to see references to a more personal and active life in this early writing. Business became a public sphere where true character and discipline were tested and molded. Business, like composition, was not just a way to make a living or to move on in the world; practicing business was a way to discipline the self, develop emotional intelligence, and, ultimately, become a better and more whole person.

A common theme throughout early business books found in YMCA libraries shows an attempt to reconcile the deepening divide between public and private self—a problem often cast in religious terms. For example, in *Religious and Business: Practical Suggestions to Men of Affairs*, Henry A. Stimson (1894) points out that the distinction between the sacred and secular is an "impossible" one, both private and public morality must be one, because God cannot be separated from the business world:

> In other words, the prevalent distinction between the secular and the religious has utterly broken down. A man who has one code of morals for his home and church, and another for his business, has in fact no morals. A man whose public character is reputable, and his private character vicious, is without character. A man, even, who would do business for himself, who is indifferent to welfare of his neighbor, who holds might to be right, who is cruel in competition, who cares not for the city in which he dwells except in those things which his interests are concerned, and who would leave God and the ministers to look after the world at large, because these are things secular, and those things religious, has not standing ground whatever. He is not simply unmoral; he is immoral. (p. 17-18)

Because business identities had become unanchored from social roles, the need to develop a professional ethos that was holistic and integrated into the good of society became a primary directive for organizations like the YMCA. Just as the body must be exercised and developed through activity, so also does moral character.

Integrating ethos with physical, mental, and emotional well-being was, in part, a way to deploy conceptions of the "business man" across class lines. In his book, *Making Men, Making Class,* Thomas Winter (2002) explains how the YMCA created this masculine ethos as a way of uniting men across class differences (p. 7). Similar to Richardson and Douglas, Winter identifies a significant shift in the meaning of "character" from some "distinctive mark impressed [or] engraved" to "the sum of moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed," eventually becoming a "malleable quality" by the nineteenth century (pp. 10-11). Personality and ethos take on embodied meanings that can be shaped through training, education, and institutional environments. In the context of "muscular Christianity," religious work meant far more than evangelism, but the development of activities and environments that would create productive, healthy, and moral young men. This professional ethos, combined as it was with the masculine body, certainly reified gender roles that limited access of women and other minorities, but also embedded religious principles with the attitudes and behaviors that make up the dominate professional ethos in the United States.

As the YMCA developed its systematic approach to ministry, religious discourses focused on the re-appropriation of the masculine body and self, responding to forms of Christianity that were seen as "overly tolerant of physical weakness and effeminacy" in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Putney, 2001, p.1). Civilization was having a feminizing force on men, and churches subsisted in a state of "women peril"— too many women and not enough men (p. 3). Victorian models of "manliness" did not "enable native-born, middle-class white men to maintain their authority in an era when immigrant politicians, articulate suffragists, and powerful monopolists were on the ascendant" (p. 5). In fact, in the 1890s, the word "manly" was replaced by "masculinity" as a way of reclaiming "primitive" elements that had been "civilized out" of nineteenth century men (Bederman, 1995, p. 5). The YMCA's invention of team sports like basketball was a way to develop the physical aspects of masculinity that civilization had stripped out of men's identities. This focus on muscular Christianity also sedimented masculine definitions of the "business man" into popular conceptions of the professional ethos, while, at the

same time, mending the schisms between mind, body, and spirit that threatened the ethical vision of industrial society and developing corporate networks.

In what might be called an early textbook on business education by Edwin Freedly (1853), *A Practical Treatise on Business,* these intersections between the Christian religion and business are made abundantly clear from the beginning. This text appears in YMCA library catalogues throughout the nineteenth century and may be one of the first attempts to "see what landmarks had been set up, and to know how much could be learned respecting a matter so important as business," and how these principles could be imparted to the inexperienced business person (p. 1). Early on in the text, the author demonstrates the importance of both "body and mind." Business ultimately serves our bodily needs and desires, while science and literature serves our "intellectual growth" (p. 22). Though questioning an overvaluing of the intellect, the author describes how the two must be cultivated together:

> He that strives for the master must join a well-disciplined body to a well-regulated mind; for with mind and body, as with man and wife, it often happens that the stronger vessel is ruled by the weaker, although, in moral as in domestic economy, matters are best conducted where neither party is unreasonable, and where *both* are agreed. (p. 22)

Participating in business, then, is not just a way to make money or be successful, but becomes a way to build a moral character, defined primarily from a masculine point of view. From this perspective, "Business is, in truth, a test of virtue, a fire furnace to principle," where one's moral character is tested and molded into a professional ethos that is balanced, in control, and all-encompassing (p. 27). Like composition, business "conquers idleness" — the "foe to virtue" (p. 29). Business becomes a way to balance the feminizing intellectual, "who passes days in studious ease, holding converse with the spirits of the great dead, or meditating on abstract truths, and sees life only through the windows of his study, knows nothing of trial, or danger, or temptation" (p. 27). Even so, underneath these masculine notions lay the assumption that business must necessarily participate in the production of a professional ethos that is, at once, holistic, moral, and empathetic. The power of this professional ethos would shape our ideas of "business men" for generations.

Dale Carnegie and the new professional ethos

Dale Carnegie, perhaps the most well-known business personality in twentieth-century United States, emerged during a time when the Christian business ethos necessarily had to change. Based on a YMCA course he developed in 1912, Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has sold over 15 million copies, heavily influencing how we conceive the role and persona of a business person. One biographer, Steven Watts (2013), attributes Carnegie's success to a particularly timely moment, growing up as he did during a transition from "market exchange" and "economic calculus of scarcity" to a new consumer economy driven by industrialization and immigration ("Introduction," para. 7). The period between 1880-1920 was crucial to the development of Carnegie's ideals, even though his work did not rocket him to success until the 1930s. For Watts, Carnegie represents the replacement of Victorian morality,

driven by character and self-control, to a modern morality based on personality and self-fulfillment.

Now that modern society allowed for more leisure time and more ways of occupying oneself, personal fulfillment began to fill this void. According to Watts, “muscular Christianity” gave way to the "psychological man," preoccupied by self-awareness, personal growth, self-esteem, and an “unceasing quest for a state of emotional well-being" (“Introduction,” para. 8). Though, to some degree, this is true, it is important not to ignore the moral vision that Carnegie integrates into his new “psychological man,” influenced by his work with the YMCA. Many of the religious principles that formulated the early professional ethos were sedimented into this new persona, even as people like Carnegie began to separate themselves from traditional, Protestant Christianity. Carnegie continued many of the masculine definitions formulated by this professional ethos, while also incorporating a moral vision that kept these characteristics in check.

Carnegie's philosophy had clear religious roots, beginning with his childhood in rural America, where he encountered "religious revivals, temperance crusades, and political Populism" (“Introduction,” para. 15). In fact, his first speech as a young man was entitled, “The Saloon, the Offspring of Hell.” The Protestant focus on sin, or spiritual failings, translated into Carnegie’s focus on "social faux pas," going so far as maintaining a file called "Damned Fool Things I Have Done" (“Introduction,” para. 16). The idea of sin, or “missing the mark,” was rearticulated as relational blunders and failure in business. Though Carnegie was not interested in a religious career, he continued this “didactic impulse” by making “the cultivation of human relations and the achievement of success” a kind of salvation (Ch.1, “Poverty and Piety,” para. 27). Carnegie’s lessons growing up can be described in this way: hard work and religiosity was not how one becomes successful in America. He had to come up with a more effective way to be successful, fulfilling his need for prosperity while maintaining an acceptable morality.

After some mixed results selling correspondence courses and meat products, Carnegie eventually tried his hand teaching public speaking at the smallest YMCA in New York City (Ch. 5, “Teaching and Writing,” para. 6). Due to innovative teaching techniques that asked students to enthusiastically speak about topics of their own interest, these courses became wildly popular. Though Carnegie would not publish his pivotal book until 1936, he did compose an early version as a textbook called *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* in 1926. This textbook clearly shows the transition Carnegie was making between public speaking and what we now call professional communication. Though still containing speech exercises, diction tips, and vocabulary lessons, the heart of this book reformed the professional ethos in a way that could be used in everyday communication practices — not just in front of groups or large crowds.

Ultimately, Carnegie saw a correlation between passion and personal success; enthusiasm and desire were the drivers of modern business. Though in some ways counter to Victorian visions of morality, this enthusiastic personality carried with it “muscular” notions of the professional ethos: “If your desire is pale and flabby, your achievements will also take on that hue and consistency. But if you go after this subject with persistence, and with the energy of a bulldog

after a cat, nothing underneath the Milky Way will defeat you" (*Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business*, p. 15). Enthusiasm like character must be developed and molded through practice and concentration. For example, Carnegie does recommend using prompts during speeches, but "the first times only," because "a baby does not cling to chairs after it once learns to walk" (p. 17). Carnegies notion of ethos is intertwined with strength, vitality, and physical ability. A "business man" is both a passionate and able-bodied speaker that can "stand on his own."

Even so, Carnegie's professional ethos is not without self-control and discipline. Throughout Carnegie's text, he relies on male role models to illustrate concretely the principles he sees as important — Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt being the most prominent. Each of these, especially Roosevelt, carry with them notions of muscular Christianity. For example, he quotes Roosevelt on the value of practice:

> [Self-Mastery] he can get only by actual practice. He must, by custom and repeated exercise of self-mastery, get his nerves thoroughly under control. This is largely a matter of habit; in the sense of repeated effort and repeated exercise of will power. If the man has the right stuff in him, he will grow stronger and stronger with each exercise of it. (pp. 19-20)

But this notion of self-mastery was not simply a way to avoid intemperance, but a way to mine one's own resources. For Carnegie, preparation means "assembling of *your* thoughts, *your* ideas, *your* convictions, *your* urges" [Emphasis in original] (p. 33). Because such feeling and experiences lie within the subconscious, preparing means "thinking, brooding, recalling, selecting the ones that appeal to you most, polishing them, working them into a patter, a mosaic of your own" (p. 33).

This kind of passion often trumped education. For example, Sherman Rogers, an uneducated lumberjack, is an example of how a speech can represent " a huge, raw piece of palpitating experience" that goes beyond eloquence: "It didn't smack of books. It was a live thing. It fairly crouched and stared at you. Everything that he said leaped flaming hot from his heart. The effect on the audience was electrical" (p. 101). This "electrical" masculine ethos was far more effective than educated eloquence. In fact, Carnegie uses the etymology of *enthusiasm* to associate this quality with deification: "The enthusiastic man is one who speaks as if he were possessed by God. This quality is the most effective, the most important factor in advertising and selling goods and getting things done" (p. 101). This move from eloquence to conversational approaches can be found throughout the early twentieth century, but for Carnegie, being conversational is more than just being clear or relatable — being conversational is a way to bring the whole person, body and soul, into a speech.

How to Win Friends and Influence People (1981) represents a shift from instruction on public speaking to interpersonal skills or professional communication. These approaches developed over years of classroom observations, as Carnegie notices that his students needed "still more training in the fine art of getting along with people in everyday business and social contacts"

(p.18). Carnegie repeatedly calls these rules "magic," even describing "conversion" stories of his students:

> One man was so stirred by a talk on these principles that he sat far into the night discussing them with other members of the class. At three o'clock in the morning, the others went home. But he was *so shaken by the realization of his own mistakes, so inspired by the vista of a new and richer world opening before him*, that he was unable to sleep. [Emphasis added] (p. 22)

What Carnegie describes here is an epiphany, or a kind of repentance, leading to new birth. This epiphany centers around a self-reflective and reciprocal approach to dealing with people, likely informed by what is most often referred to in Western society as "the Golden rule": treat others as you would treat yourself. This principle appears in several major religions, but most notably in the New Testament (see Matthew 7:12), at least for Carnegie and his peers. For example, if you don't like being criticized, then why would your employer, co-worker, or boss? If you like feeling appreciated, why wouldn't everyone else? Ultimately, Carnegie's students realized that persuasion works best when focused on the audience in sincere ways that account for all facets of the human being.

But instead of giving birth to a new moral identity that relies entirely on religious principles, Carnegie's "new man" relies on business principles to bring out the individual, unique characteristics that lie dormant within each person:

> But personality is a vague and elusive thing, defying analysis like the perfume of the violet. It is the whole combination of the man, the physical, the spiritual, the mental; his traits, his predilections, his tendencies, his temperament, his cast of mind, his vigor, his experience, his training, his life. It is as complex as Einstein's theory of relativity, almost as little understood. (*Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business,* p.163)

Character is no longer a way of categorizing different people, but a rhetorical means for persuading yourself and others to make specific, embodied changes through habit, thought, and action. Character development becomes the fulfillment of your own individual self in relation to others — a way of influencing the people around you. This is why making people feel important is a key to handling them: "If you tell me how you get your feeling of importance, I'll tell you what you are. That determines your character. That is the most significant thing about you" (*How to Win Friends and Influence People,* p. 50). Carnegie has converted the YMCA's holistic vision of masculinity into a professional ethos with only a distant connection to the religious ideals from which it emerged.

Even though Carnegie identifies "deep, driving desire" as the key to "all human relations," discipline is the harness that makes this enthusiasm work. Though Carnegie never explicitly cites the Bible, how he deploys this moral principle clearly has some connections to this text. For example, when formulating his first principle, not to criticize, condemn, or complain,

Carnegie asserts that it requires "character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving" (p. 42). Additionally, when expounding his principle that asks readers to sincerely compliment the people in their lives, he is quick to make a distinction between appreciation and flattery, which is like "counterfeit money, it will eventually get you into trouble if you pass it to someone else" (p. 57). The difference between appreciation and flattery is that sincere compliments arise from the entire being, not just an empty persona:

> The difference between appreciation and flattery? That is simple. One is sincere and the other insincere. One comes from the heart out; the other from the teeth out. One is unselfish; the other selfish. One is universally admired; the other universally condemned. (p. 58)

Advice against the use of flattery appears throughout the bible as well (for example, see Proverbs 29:5).

In his third principle, "arouse in the other person an eager want," we see Carnegie adeptly applying his professional ethos to business writing situations, where he describes what many textbooks today call "you-oriented" language. Using the metaphor "fishing for men," a famous term referring to Jesus' calling of the twelve disciplines (see Matthew 4:19), Carnegie asserts that one must bait the hook "to suit the fish" (p. 61). He demonstrates this principle primarily through letters. For example, he begins with a letter sent to managers of a local radio station that focuses entirely on the company's problems, inserting in brackets how he thinks his audience will respond — mostly critically and defensively. He then contrasts this with a letter written by a freight superintendent and student of his course using second person and first person plural. Though Carnegie gives very little commentary, the shift is plain to see. Carnegie is not interested in spreading any kind of specific religion, focused as he is on personal success. He does not want religious converts; he wants successful "business men." Even so, religious discourse adheres to his own advice and serves as heuristic for each of these moral situations.

It is this you-centered orientation that structures Carnegie's entire book and how he trains his students to be authentically concerned with the other. As seen earlier, religion plays a key role in how Carnegie understands this professional ethos, though he neither proselytizes nor makes propositional statements about religious belief. In fact, he only mentions Jesus once in this book when discussing the Golden Rule, placing him in fairly equal standing with other religious leaders and philosophers:

> Philosophers have been speculating on the rules of human relationships for thousands of years, and out of all that speculation, there has evolved only one important precept. It is not new. It is as old as history. Zoroaster taught it to his followers in Persia twenty-five hundred years ago. Confucius preached it in China twenty-four centuries ago. Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, taught it to his disciples in the Valley of the Han. Buddha preached it on the bank of the Holy Ganges five hundred years before Christ. The sacred books of Hinduism taught it a thousand years before that. Jesus taught it among the stony hills of Judea

> nineteen centuries ago. Jesus summed it up in one thought—probably the most important rule in the world: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." (p. 131)

Carnegie defines religion, then, not as a system of beliefs or propositions, but as "rules of human relationship" that bring success and well-being. Treating people as yourself, the Golden Rule, was the measure of human relationship, for example when describing his first principle that asks readers not to criticize others, he uses a quote from Confucius:

> Do you know someone you would like to change and regulate and improve? Good! That is fine. I am all in favor of it. But why not begin on yourself? From a purely selfish standpoint, that is a lot more profitable than trying to improve others—yes, and a lot less dangerous. "Don't complain about the snow on the neighbor's roof," said Confucius, "when your own doorstep is unclean." (p. 41)

And again, Carnegie cites Buddha when describing his first principle for influencing people — avoid arguments whenever possible:

> Buddha said: "Hatred is never ended by hatred but by love," and a misunderstanding is never ended by an argument, but by tact, diplomacy, conciliation and a sympathetic desire to see the other person's viewpoint. (p. 148)

Ultimately, in an era when ethics and business were often at odds, Carnegie uses religion as a heuristic that enables him to rearticulate the professional ethos.

It is important to note, though, that Carnegie's vision is considerably limited by a cultural lens. His principles work, and are easily applied, in the masculine, individualistic environment predominant in the United States at the time, because this was the professional self that men during this time were likely to see when observing their audience. As noted by thinkers like Edward T. Hall (1959) and Geert Hofstede (2010), applying such principles across cultures is far more difficult. Even so, there is a value in understanding the ways religion can implicitly inform how the professional ethos is deployed as a heuristic for thinking through human relationships.

Today's professional ethos

These religious influences on the idea of a "business man" are not confined to history, but continue to influence how we construct the professional ethos through sedimentations left by the power of textbooks and popular books like Carnegie's. Business writing instruction is certainly one of the primary locations where these patterns can be observed. For example, in an early brochure advertising YMCA classes on writing business letters and reports, a business persona is best demonstrated in writing:

> The effective letter writer is able to produce good letters for his house, and to convince his employer of the rightness of his theories. He can also sell himself, and apply his skill in his own behalf. He is able to cause men to act as he wishes them to act by means of letters rightly written. He can capitalize on the ability which should yield him large and constant returns. (Young Men's Christian Association, *Better Business Letters*, 1916).

Dale Carnegie effectively inverts this focus, while using many of the same principles, incorporating a holistic vision of the professional ethos that includes the entire being, anchored by discipline and self-control — a vision that hearkens back to Quintilian's "good man speaking." Participating in business is not just about displaying a particular kind of persona; rather, the practice of business itself is an ethical activity that allows for the development of character. Writing is certainly key to dealing with people, but Carnegie realized that such ideas must be applied more holistically to broader communicative contexts to be a successful professional: "But the person who has the technical knowledge *plus* the ability to express ideas, to assume leadership, and to arouse enthusiasm among people—that person is headed for higher earning power" (*How to Win Friends and Influence People,* "How This Book Was Written—and Why," para. 7).

Even so, early instruction in professional communication was heavily influenced by the letter, often leading to a separation between the business world and one's personal life. Writing makes it easy to create an ethos that does not match one's true behavior, divorcing the professional ethos from personal interaction. A writer can project any number of "characters" in their letter writing, but perform quite differently in one's personal life. As a result, professional ethos was most often conceived as an impression rather than a practice or way of life. For example, in the early textbook written by Hotchkiss and Kilduff (1921), ethical character is something constructed through language in the format and design of a page and the correctness of style (pp. 29-30). Incorrect or unclear language is "distracting and irritating" to the reader (p. 31). Many of the principles found in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* can be found in this early Business English textbook, but Carnegie used these principles to go beyond simply displaying a particular kind of epistolary persona. For example, in *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* writing good letters meant seeing the world from your audience's point of view (p. 38). These principles for letter writing served as heuristics to form a holistic professional ethos that could both attract successful business and maintain an ethical and moral vision of the self and its relationship to society.

The YMCA continued business writing classes well into the twentieth century, though religious discourses slowly dissipated from the instruction as the YMCA became a more secular institution after WWII. According to brochures and courses of study, many of these classes either used or were influenced by these early textbooks, introducing the class first with the principle of "adaptation to the reader" and then the five C's (correct, clear, concise, cohesive, complete) (Young Men's Christian Association, *Well-Handled*, 1916). Much of the course was also influenced by principles in composition like punctuation, understanding parts of speech, sentence unity and clearness, etc. This curriculum was organized around genres and a set of

problems that asked students to write for a specific set of scenarios, clearly precursors to many of today's business writing textbooks. Much of the standard exams focused on mechanics, rather than ethos, assuming that correct writing would produce the correct ethos.

For Carnegie, portraying a correct persona through style was not enough. Up until the nineteenth century, one's social role usually determined what kind of ethos you projected during persuasive moments. Business people in the nineteenth century, and Dale Carnegie in the twentieth century, had to continually rethink what it means to "habitually" act as a "business man" among "business men," particularly as business practices seemed to be detaching themselves from Christian moralities. For Carnegie, living in a time when social roles were unclear and in flux, style was not enough and traditional religious principles no longer served as a clear frame for business men who had to work with differing religious perspectives and principles. Influenced by the YMCA's focus on the "whole man," Carnegie created an embodied business ethos that was defined by how a person relates to those around them. Unquestionably, this ethos was primarily masculine, Caucasian, and heteronormative—categories that can still be found sedimented in today's textbooks. For example, Mary Ellen Guffey and Dana Loewy's (2016) textbook, *Essentials for Business Communication*, still uses the phrase "flabby expressions" when discussing methods of writing clear and concise sentences: "Trim sentences, like trim bodies, usually require far more effort than flabby ones" (as cited in p. 91). Composition, like physical exercise, is a way of disciplining the mind, as well as your business ethos.

Developing a professional ethos is certainly central to most professional communication textbooks and classes today. Though a quick examination of today's textbooks does show a continued focus on style, most have moved on to consider other elements of the business ethos. Pieces of Carnegie's professional ethos can still be found throughout. For example, also in *Essentials of Business Communication*, many of Carnegie's characteristics are key to "gaining an etiquette edge" in the business world:

> Etiquette, civility, and goodwill efforts may seem out of place in today's fast-paced, hyper-connected offices. However, when two candidates have equal qualifications, the one who appears to be more polished and professional is more likely to be hired and promoted. Moreover, most hiring managers are looking for new-hires who *show enthusiasm, are eager to learn, volunteer to tackle even difficult tasks, and exhibit a positive attitude*. You will not be hired to warm a seat. [Emphasis added] (p. 355).

According to this textbook such skills are not innate, but can be learned (p. 352). Several of Carnegie's principles appear throughout this chapter on teamwork and professionalism, for example avoiding negative remarks (or criticism), using correct names and titles, or giving sincere praise (*Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business,* p. 358). For Carnegie, criticism makes no "lasting changes and [will] often insure resentment" (p. 5). But he doesn't stop there: "Instead of condemning people, let's try to understand them. Let's try to figure out why they do what they do" (p. 17). Carnegie reframes this principle positively, requiring not just a change of impression, but a change of attitude towards a more empathetic point of view.

In Barbara Shwom and Lisa Gueldenzoph Snyder's (2016) *Business Communication: Polishing your Professional Presence*, the key to developing a professional presence while on a job search is to develop confidence:

> The first step in ensuring a professional presence is to develop confidence in your career goals and your suitability for the career you are planning. Confidence helps you target the right jobs and compose a brand message, social media content, and effective job search materials to market yourself for the job. (p. 452)

This confidence is achieved through self-reflection or, in Carnegie's words, understanding one's desires. The clearer one is about one's career goals, strengths, and weaknesses, the more coherent professional ethos, or brand, one can project to the world. Even so, projecting a professional ethos is mostly utilitarian, not necessarily an element of character development. For Carnegie and the YMCA, such desire needs to be balanced by a genuine interest in other people: "The world is full of people who are grabbing and self-seeking. So the rare individual who unselfishly tries to serve others has an enormous advantage" (*How to Win Friends and Influence People,* p. 46). Our goals and desires have to be understood in a broader social context that involves the perspectives, goals, and desires of other people. Success is rarely attained alone by our own efforts.

Noting how this professional ethos is sedimented in today's discourses is crucial, since they hold a clear bias towards masculinity, heteronormativity, and able-bodies. This professional ethos also carries with it many other cultural biases, like individualism. One can find elements of this ethos out of control, for example in Wall Street, often demonstrated by characters in pop culture like Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street* and Bobby Axelrod in *Billions*. These characters are paragons of masculinity driven by desire, yet masterful at controlling the people around them. After our last election and the success of Donald Trump, one might even argue Trump's attraction to voters lies not in a political persona, but in a business persona based on desire and displaying a "winning" personality—all elements of the masculine persona developed by Carnegie and others. But it is critical to note the religious and moral backbone to Carnegie's professional ethos. Each of his principles are balanced by self-reflection, discipline, and authentic care for others.

Though there are aspects of Carnegie's ethos that can and should be changed and adapted to today's contexts, perhaps it is this self-reflective element that can be brought back into the professional communication classroom and business world. One interesting possibility can be seen in Peter Cardon's (2016) textbook, *Business Communication: Developing Leaders for a Networked World*, which defines character as "a reputation for staying true to commitments made to stakeholders and adhering to high moral and ethical values" (p. 8). Though Cardon defines ethics rather vaguely, or as "rules of conduct to moral principles that guide individual or group behavior," his deployment of this concept focuses on transparency, or "sharing all relevant information with stakeholders" (p. 9). In his chapter on interpersonal communication, Cardon describes both self-awareness and self-management as key skills for relating to people: "People high in self-awareness understand their emotions well, what satisfies them, and what irritates them." Self-management "involves the discipline to hold off on current urges to meet long-term

intentions" (p. 32). Understanding one's self goes beyond simply writing a "you-centered" letter, but must be integrated into how the professional relates to the people around them in everyday situations.

What does this mean for studying the relationship between world religions and professional communication? Even though religion is rarely considered when researching or theorizing professional writing, understanding professional writing from a religious point of view can serve as a heuristic for understanding the ethics of the professional ethos, even though religious discourse may not play a prominent role in everyday business practices. More analysis of other religious traditions can also deepen comparative work in intercultural communication by looking at how religious discourses shape other kinds of professional ethoi. For example, character, virtue, and ethics are embedded in Confucian ways of thinking. According to a recent translation of Confucius by Robert Enos, the term *wen* most often refers to the opposite of rudeness and requires people to cultivate "patterns" that can be applied to specific situations (pp. 120-121). Confucius states many times that the way to handle people is "to cultivate patterns and virtues to attract them" (p. 90).

What if we reimagined the professional ethos, not as something to be displayed, but patterns of behavior to be cultivated and adapted to different situations? How might this change the way we teach and deploy the professional ethos? Such questions are beyond the scope of this article, but closely examining the religious roots of our own conceptions of the professional ethos provides us with new opportunities to reflect and rearticulate how we construct and deploy the ethical characteristics that emerge in today's business world and professional communication classroom.

References

Bederman, A. O. (1995). *Manliness and civilization: A cultural history of gender and race in the united states, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Binney, T. (1854, January 24). *Authorship: A lecture. Delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association, in Exeter Hall*. London: James Nisbet and Company.

Burke, K. (1970). *The rhetoric of religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Butler J. (2011) Is Judaism Zionism? In J. Butler, E. Mendieta, & J. Van Antwerpen (Eds.), *The power of religion in the public sphere* [Kindle version]. New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from www.amazon.com

Cardon, P. W. (2016). *Business communication: Developing leaders for a networked world.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Carnegie, D. (1937). *Public speaking and influencing men in business.* New York: American Book-Stratford Press, Inc. Retrieved from www.archive.org (Original work published 1926)

Carnegie, D. (1981). *How to win friends and influence people*. [Kindle version] New York: Simon and Schuster. Retrieved from www.amazon.com (Original work published 1936)

Cummings, L. (2014). Comparison as a mode of inquiry: Rearticulating the contexts of intercultural communication." *Journal of rhetoric, professional communication, and globalization*, 4(2),126-146.

Confucius. (2015). *The analects of Confucius*. Robert Enos (Trans.). Retrieved from http://www.indiana.edu/%7Ep374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf

Douglas, G. H. (1985). Business writing in America in the nineteenth century. In G.H. Douglas & H.W. Hildebrandt (Eds.), S*tudies in the history of business writing* (pp. 125-133). Urbana, IL: Association for Business Communication.

Douglas, W. C. (1892). *University extension and the Young Men's Christian Association*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Eisenstein, E. L. (1979). *The printing press as an agent of change* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.

Freedley, E. T. (1853). *A practical treatise on business, or how to get, save, spend, give, lend, and bequeath money* [Google Book version]. Lippincott. Retrieved from www.books.google.com

Geertz, C. (1975). Religion as a cultural system. In *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 639-655). London: Hutchinson.

Guffey, M. E., & Loewy, D. (2016). *Essentials of business communication.* Boston: Cengage Learning.

Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent language*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Harris, W. T. (1891). The proper place of the Y.M.C.A in the educational field. *Education*, 11(5), 205-272.

Havelock, E. A. (1963) *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University.

Hofstede, G. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hopkins, C. H. (1951). *History of the YMCA in North America.* New York: Association Press.

Hotchkiss, G. B., & Kilduff, E. J. (1921). *Advanced business correspondence* [Google Book version]. New York: Association Press. Retrieved from www.books.google.com.

Kunin, S. D. (2003). *Religion: The modern theories*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

Krattenmaker, T. (2010, May 10). Q gathering 2010: Heralding the arrival of a post-Christian America. *Newsweek.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-krattenmaker/q-conference-2010-heraldi_b_571089.html

Lessl, T. M. (1993). Toward a definition of religious communication: scientific and religious uses of evolution. *Journal of communication and religion*, 16, 127-138.

Ninde, H. S., Bowne, J. T., & Uhl, E. (Eds.). (1892). *A hand-book of the history, organization, and methods of work of the Young Men's Christian Associations* [Google Book version]. New York: International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations. Retrieved from www.books.google.com

Meacham, J. (2009, April 3). The end of Christian America. *Newsweek.* Retrieved from http://www.newsweek.com/meacham-end-christian-america-77125

Ong, W. J. (1982). *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. London: Routledge.

Putney, C. (2001). *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and sports in protestant America, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Richardson, M. (1985). The first century of English business writing, 1417-1525. In G.H. Douglas & H.W. Hildebrandt (Eds.), S*tudies in the history of business writing* (pp. 23-44). Urbana, IL: Association for Business Communication.

Shwom, B., & Gueldenzoph Snyder, L. (2016). *Business communication: Polishing your professional presence.* New York: Pearson.

Stimson, H. A. (1894). *Religion and business: Practical suggestions to men of affairs* [Google Book version]. Anson D.F. Randolph. Retrieved from www.books.google.com

Watts, S. (2013). *Self-help messiah: Dale Carnegie and success in modern America*. [Google Book version] New York: Other Press, LLC. Retrieved from www.books.google.com

Weber, M. (2002). *The Protestant ethic and the "spirit" of capitalism and other writings* [Kindle version]. New York: Penguin Classics. Retrieved from www.amazon.com (Original work published in 1930)

Weeks, F. W. (1985). The teaching of business writing at the collegiate level, 1900-1920. In *Studies in the history of business writing* (pp. 201-215). Urbana, IL: Association for Business Communication.

Winter, T. (2002). *Making men, making class: The YMCA and workingmen, 1877-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

YMCA Logo. Logo/Trademark. Vertical File. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Young Men's Christian Association. (1916). *Better business letters*. Pamphlets and leaflets, 1895-1928. Educational work records. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries.

Young Men's Christian Association. (1899). *International examinations, 1899*. New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Association. Annual Reports, 1894-1911. Educational work records. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries.

Young Men's Christian Association. (1903). *International examinations, 1903*. New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Association. Annual Reports, 1894-1911. Educational work records. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries.

Young Men's Christian Association. (1916). *Well-handled.* Pamphlets and leaflets, 1895-1928. Educational work records. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries.

Young Men's Christian Association. (2000). *YMCA in America 1851-2001: A history of accomplishment over 150 years*. Chicago: National Council of the Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States.

A special thanks goes to Ryan Bean and the Kautz Family YMCA Archvies for supporting this project with both expertise and access to archival material.

Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization
December 2016, Volume 9, Number 1, 6-27.