

The use of Scripture in the integration of faith in business

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Abstract

This paper builds on Richard Chewning's exposition of various styles of Biblical integration by providing an introductory illustration of my own style which might be characterized as a combination of applying "Principles" and "Cherry-picking" of relevant Biblical texts. While our perspectival efforts must always begin with the Bible – "cherry-picking" where possible--broad biblical principles are helpful when the Bible provides no direct answer to our concerns. Principles can also help to ensure consistency and continuity in our reasoning, can function as useful shorthand in the discussion and help us to avoid selective use of scripture. They must, however, be used together with, not instead of, Scripture. In particular, the paper deals with the application of the Ten Commandments, the derivation and application of the concepts of the Cultural Mandate/Stewardship, Sin, Neighbour Love, Justice, Counting the Cost and Personal Responsibility.

The Ten Commandments which summarize God's law-- the constitution of the Kingdom of God--must also function as our guide when we deal with ethical and perspectival issues in business. The paper provides a number of implications of this, e.g. the first commandment implies that we should reject profit maximization as the sole objective of business; the ninth commandment requires that integrity and honesty are fundamental in business –not only in marketing but also in other areas such as accounting.

The cultural mandate and the stewardship principle also have implications for the objective of the business, the environment, the choices of products and services and effective/efficient management.

Recognition of our sinful nature means that Christians in business will, for example, accept the importance of accountability and controls and will evaluate the incentives in control systems to reduce the tendency for short-term and unethical actions.

The principle of neighbour love implies that our business activity must be beneficial to our neighbours -- service to customers, suppliers, etc., will affect our employee relations and is likely to have implications for how we compete in the market place.

Since our God is a God of justice, the principle of justice must also be reflected in our business activities. Since the Bible uses justice primarily in the sense of "righteousness", Christian justice means, particularly, to obey all God's commandments, to live upright. In that sense, justice again confirms the importance of honesty, integrity etc; it, certainly, requires that we produce goods and services for morally right purposes. Justice further requires us to treat everyone with fairness and equity with obvious implications for employee relations. Since the Bible frequently stresses the need to do justice to the weak, the marginalized, Christians in business should have particular concern for the lowest paid, less skilled employees. A Christian view of distributive justice does not support an egalitarian approach but implies a contribution approach ameliorated by a focus on need.

"Counting the cost" (a subset of stewardship) supports good business management and planning. Personal responsibility has implications for employee relations as well as business ethics..

In sum, the paper summarizes some of the biblical foundation for a number of these general biblical principles/concepts and illustrates how they have important implications for our business activities

¹ Paper to be presented to Christian Business Faculty Association, to be held Oct. 17-20,2002, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa. Idaho

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Research and Publications- Initially, my research efforts focussed on the area of Accounting--particularly Accounting for Inflation. Since coming to Redeemer, my prime concern has been to discover the implications of God's Word for the study and application of Business and Economics. That is, I have sought to integrate my Christian faith with my teaching and publication. This search has culminated in the recent publication of the book, Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God