

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Perspectives on the CBFA's Past, Present and Future

By Richard C. Chewning

The past recipients of the “Richard C. Chewning Award” have been asked to reflect on the “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and issues” related to the published *mission* and historic achievements of the CBFA. And what is our mission: “To assist Christian business faculty in the study, teaching, and application of biblical truths to the disciplines associated with various business curricula.”

I have an abiding passion for this mission. To describe my passion, and at the same time comply with the assignment given me, I will use the pedagogy of a personal testimony that begins in 1964. This was sixteen years before the first gathering of Christian business faculty and representatives from the American Studies Program and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities that resulted in the creation of the CBFA.

The Holy Spirit awakened me to the fact one morning in 1964, during my devotional time, that I was not relating God’s biblical truths to the courses I was then teaching in business and economics. I was applying Christ’s teachings to the affairs of my family, the Church, and my personal life but not to my academic vocation. I immediately began to pray and search for published examples of such integration to help me in how I might bring God’s Word to bear on my academic courses. I discovered the “parabolic / allegorical” work of a few men who were applying biblical parables to business practices but quickly rejected their particular works for they were overlooking the deeper spiritual principles embodied in the parables,¹ and were, in my opinion, misapplying the parabolic story containing God’s “truth.” Finding no other help I undertook a personal in-depth study of the Scripture, hungering for Christ to show me the application of His Word to my work. I continued this searching for years while bathing the efforts in much prayer.

I put the letter “E” in the margins of my Bibles next to the passages that had application to the many business related subjects that comprise the disciplines of business and economics for many years. I soon realized that the Scripture was full of related verses that in turn represented repeated *biblical principles*. To best of my knowledge I “coined” the notion that when the Scripture repeated the same specific truth three or more times, that particular truth could then be called a “biblical principle.” I did this to distinguish it from the historic concept of “biblical doctrines” – a repeated truth that became associated with specific dogma within the teachings associated with particular aspects of the broader subject of *salvation* – the *doctrines* of regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, grace, the fall, adoption, repentance, etc. Over the years I filled eight Bibles with the letter “E” (I believe that is the correct number) and came to realize that God had given His people thousands of helpful guides, and multitudinous principles.

In 1979 the “American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business” began to mandate the teaching of “business ethics” in the schools they accredited. It was at this time that the faculty at the University of Richmond asked me if I would leave the field of

¹ There is a brief discussion of the “parabolic / allegorical” approach to integration in my article, “A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration: Assimilating the Mind of Christ,” in the section titled, “Style 6: Allegories Assimilated / Integrated,” in the Fall 2001, **Journal of Biblical Integration in Business**, pages 129-131.

finance and take on the work of teaching business ethics. I was thrilled to have the opportunity. It was at this time that I stopped hiding behind my dyslexia and began writing.

Baylor University invited me to come there in 1985 to assume the “Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business.” At this time I was still struggling with the question of whether Christ wanted me to devote my efforts in addressing the secular business community with “disguised biblical truths” – truth whose biblical source is not publicly acknowledged – or to expend my life in relating God’s Word and its application to my “brothers” and “sisters” in the academic / business community. The issue was settled for me in early 1986 when a reviewer for the **Journal of Business Ethics** rejected an article I had submitted with the statement that the piece was clearly undergirded with Christian presuppositions and that he would never allow such an article to be published in the journal as long as he served on the review board. The only overt Christian reference in the article was a phrase that contained the words, “Judaic / Christian.”

Immediately following this 1986 journal rejection I wrote a letter to Dean Richard C. Scott of the Baylor School of Business asking him if he would allow me to devote the remainder of my years in the Chavanne Chair to serving and working for and with the faculty of the CBFA in an effort to foster the association and integration of Scripture with the disciplines of business, economics and public policy. He gave me permission to do this. Thus began my secrete commitment to,² and “love affair” with, the CBFA and its **mission:**

- 1) **“To assist Christian business faculty...**
- 2) **in the study, teaching, and application of biblical truths...**
- 3) **to the disciplines associated with various business curricula.”**

The first component of our mission is the call to *think of others first*. This is certainly a sound, biblically commended, place to start (Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10; and Ephesians 5:21 – I do believe we have a *biblical principle* here we are following). We have chosen, as Christ’s followers, to affiliate ourselves with each other in an effort to help, assist, encourage, and serve one another as we strive to fulfill the aspirations embodied in the remaining segments of our mission. This is indeed a high calling.

My “old nature” hinders me more than anything else in my ability to meet this high calling. My *self-centeredness* is the “drag” on my life. I am more likely to be concerned with “how I will come across” and “whether you will be impressed with my outpourings” than I am to ask, “will what I do and say prove to be helpful to my brothers and sisters at the CBFA meeting?” When Steve Simpson asked what “...weaknesses,.. threats and issues...” face the CBFA, I would have to respond, “Steve, it is my (our ?) ‘old nature’ that so easily draws me (us ?) away from Christ and His will that can pervert the CBFA’s future.

The “high calling” of this first component of our mission statement is, however, also our “strength ...[and] opportunity.” It is our opportunity to humble ourselves before Christ and acknowledge our absolute dependency upon Him, for in truth we must *abide* in Christ for *we can do nothing right or good apart from Him* (John 15:4-5). Abiding in Christ carries with it the understanding that we are to live with Him on a continuing, daily basis and not be content with just an occasional visit. We need Christ’s ongoing

² For fourteen years no one other than Dean Scott knew of my commitment to the membership of the CBFA.

help if we are to fulfill and accomplish the wonderful mission we have agreed to and adopted in the CBFA.

The second segment of the mission statement – “**assist...in the study, teaching, and application of biblical truths...**” – is the part of the mission statement for which I personally have an abiding and deep passion.³ This has been Christ’s call on my life for the past forty years. I long with all my heart to see this kind of important work continue and *to grow in the recognition of its importance* within the Christian business community – academic and marketplace. I can do nothing to give this burden for “integration” to anyone else other than to pray that Christ will continue to raise up those who long for it.

I believe with all my heart that God’s Word speaks to every area of life and that He will show us the application of His Word to our business specialties if we will but *prayerfully and earnestly study the Scripture* with an expectation that God will enlighten us regarding its application to our work. To do this requires a sustained commitment, and it is very hard work. The possession of such a commitment and drive are, I believe, God’s gift to give. Every professor is not given such a gift, but I do thank God that *there are those in our midst who do exhibit this passion for genuine integration*. It is now incumbent upon me (us) to encourage them to persevere in God’s calling. In doing so they will be an encouragement, help, and blessing to the rest of us in the years to come.

The “...weaknesses,...threats, and issues...” we face as individual members of the CBFA regarding this second segment of our mission statement is once again our “flesh” – spell “flesh” backwards, and drop the letter “h,” and you are left with “self:” the biblical definition of “flesh.” Our “old nature” problem is again before us. In order to “discern and integrate” God’s Word with our academic subjects we must first know God’s Word. And learning and digesting the Scripture to do this kind of work demands *many hours* of prayerful study. That is just plain hard work. And worse still, that is hard work after we have experienced “near burn out” in getting our PhD’s. We are tired and find it easier to rest for a while and rely on what we have already stored in our thinking under the pressure placed on us by those who demanded so much of us when we sat under their tutelage in our graduate programs. God applies no such pressure. Those who do this kind of “ground breaking” work are “primary discerners / appliers” of God’s Word.

The self-discipline that is required to be either a primary discerner / applier of God’s Word to an academic discipline, or to study, learn from, and emulate the primary discerner / applier workers in this endeavor is simply time consuming, hard work. And hard work is just that, hard work. The other demands that are placed upon us by our institutions are so great that it seems unreasonable for others to expect us to find the time necessary to accomplish the “association / integration” work our institutional mission statements imply is going on, or that is set before us by the CBFA mission statement.

All things are possible with God, however. And I rejoice to observe the number of our members who are fruitfully engaged in both “primary,” and “study / learner / emulator” forms of biblical integration. It is my prayer that Christ will bless the CBFA with generations of such integration models / mentors who “...**assist Christian business fac-**

³The third and final segment of the mission statement establishes the context within which the first two parts are to be accomplished. I do not intend to address the third component for its reason for being included is self-evident.

ulty in the study, teaching, and application of biblical truths to the disciplines associated with various business curricula.”

Dick Chewning

The Future Challenges of the CBFA
Dr. Sharon Johnson

ABSTRACT

Dr. Johnson focuses on the following tensions facing the CBFA as it moves deeper into the third Millennium:

- (1) **Maintaining unity while celebrating diversity.** Part of the “genius” of the CBFA is a commitment to a “federation” of teachers and institutions who share a common commitment to biblical integration but bring to that integration different perspectives reflective of their own faith positions and journeys. In the future the CBFA will be challenged to continue to find a common affirmation of values substantive enough to provide a meaningful identity for the organization, even as the organization grows and embraces an ever wider diversity of faculty.
- (2) **Maintaining community while celebrating growth.** The CBFA began in the early 1980’s as a small community of faculty from a smaller number of institutions. It acted largely as an informal network of like-minded teachers at Christian colleges and universities. From that beginning the CBFA has grown into an international organization with national conference presentations, a peer-reviewed journal and membership now numbering close to 400 faculty from US and international colleges and universities (and a variety of other Christian agencies). All the resource advantages of growth carry with them the relational disadvantages of size. In the future the CBFA will be challenged to continue to broaden its outreach while seeking meaningful ways to deepen the connection of its members one to another.
- (3) **Maintaining high touch while celebrating high tech.** At one time all contact between CBFA members was face-to-face, phone and “snail-mail.” The organization’s size was such that at some of the early national meetings it would not have been uncommon for attendees to know almost everyone there personally. With the creation of e-mail and Internet contact points the CBFA has become much more high-tech. Electronically-distributed newsletters, and JBIB copies available via PDF download have made communication easier and faster – but, perhaps, much less intimate. In the future the CBFA will be challenged to continue to advance its ability to utilize the best in information technology while seeking ways to maintain some sense of personal intimacy among its members.

(4) **Maintaining intellectual growth while celebrating spiritual development.** The CBFA has sought to nurture two intersecting streams of influence: seeking to encourage CBFA members to dig deeply into the research of their teaching disciplines while also emphasizing the need for its members to foster deep spiritual development personally and among their students. These two streams are not necessarily of the same water – as Christians we may well find our theological presuppositions and positions challenged by the currents of trends in our disciplines. In the future the CBFA will be challenged to continue to encourage its members to cultivate their lives as both scholars and Christians.