

## Dialogue III

### Reply to Seibert's "Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business"

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This article warns the newly-minted Christian graduate that there are sheep and then there are wolves (Matt. 10:16). The trick is to remain a sheep and live to tell about it. I have wondered for a long time just how one can manage the tension between sheep and wolves in order to stay alive, balancing obedience to God's will with worldly demands. After reading Seibert's insightful and instructive article, I can see that it may not always be possible, but more so than I had previously thought. Yet I am still not convinced of one assumption Seibert puts forth—that "most Christian business graduates are seriously committed to living their faith in all areas of their life ...". I accept this as our ultimate objective. The appeal to Daniel in this article has more clearly shown me something. Christians can creatively manage those worldly demands and still remain faithful. I am encouraged.

Seibert provides a useful message for faculty as we send the sheep out to meet the wolves. The sheep must know there are wolves out there, and they must also be realistically prepared. Humanistic culture in business desires to shape us into its own image, as Seibert aptly points out, and this poses ethical questions of individuality and human dignity. The question is: How does the Christian balance these two obligations of allegiance to the company as well as to God? For example, Janis and Mann (1977)<sup>1</sup> have shown in their classic studies that group pressure can be a bad influence under certain conditions. This is true—organizational socialization can become imbalanced to the point of coercion. Of course, human individuality and dignity are more important than a firm's socialization program, whether it is implicit or explicit. Jesus certainly socialized His original

disciples, but He did it in a balanced fashion which honored individuality and dignity. He also maintained this ethical stance under immense pressure from His opponents.

But socialization could also be viewed from the perspective of contingency theory. Contingency theory could say that socialization serves to either “tighten” or “loosen-up” employees. This describes an effective socialization strategy. For example, when the external environment is quickly changing, *less* formal socialization is appropriate, not more. Individual degrees of freedom are at a premium when the environment is uncertain. Socialization should not always be construed to mean more is better. Sometimes less is better. It should be thought of as dynamic. The organization may need added degrees of freedom to stimulate the individual thinking characteristic of innovation. In contrast, as the external environment becomes stable, *more* socialization is appropriate, restricting individual degrees of freedom. Greater uniformity promotes organizational efficiency. Although Seibert rightly warns us that too much worldly socialization is a threat to a right relationship with God,

socialization in itself is necessary to varying degrees.

As I read the article I began to leap beyond it to the mechanisms of socialization. How does socialization get accomplished? Daniel and his three friends were resourceful when challenged to eat certain food, as Seibert implies. They made a verbal contract with the king, which ultimately showed they were capable of resisting and managing social pressure. Their verbal contract was enacted by speech. As Seibert might agree, their efforts balanced the pressure of organizational socialization against that of their individuality and dignity. For Daniel and friends, speech was therefore used to balance socialization pressures, thus honoring their human dignity. Speech got things done for them. Why not think of language as the primary socializing mechanism in all organizations? It is written, spoken, and demonstrated behaviorally. New hires become socialized through the speech of others as well as through observation of body language. This seems so obvious that it is usually overlooked, but it is central to all socialization.

Anthropologists have long maintained that culture is encapsulated in language; understand the implicit use of language, and you understand the culture. Human speech is rarely literal. Reading between the lines is not just nice. It is *always* necessary. Through language, socialization creates and reinforces organizational culture. Therefore, language can be studied and used as a socialization tool. Jargon is the language of professional socialization. Christian-based socialization comes from the language of the special text we call the Bible. Jargon use is common, but why not use biblical language, too? Why can't we be socializing agents on Christ's behalf?

The usual socializing agents in business organizations—one's supervisor, manager, or other colleagues, for example—should be aware of how their speech implements socialization in new hires as well as reinforces role expectations in existing employees. Socializing agents should be aware of linguistic tools such as metaphor, metonymy, simile, and hyperbole, to mention a few. These figures of speech, if used carefully by the skilled professional, can convey

role expectations most effectively. If it were not so, Jesus would not have made such heavy use of these kinds of tools. For example, we see Him use metaphorical expression when He said, “You are the salt of the Earth” (Matt. 5:13) and “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Of course, nobody is literally salt and light. He used hyperbole when he announced, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (Matt. 5:30). He did not mean to literally have one's hand amputated. He also frequently used the parable and simile. For example, we find parable and simile in the stories about the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31), hidden treasure (Matt. 13:44), and yeast (Matt. 13: 33). These tools are effective, at least in part, because they facilitate the development of vivid mental images, making it easier for new recruits to understand and remember. All this underscores the point that in order to socialize new employees, we can follow the model of Jesus by intelligently using language in creative and potent ways to communicate role expectations most clearly. Seibert's read on “how” organizations socialize appeals to a series of dichotomies which,

while useful, seems static. I believe socialization processes are much more dynamic.

There are also ways to verify the efficacy of language as a socializing tool.<sup>2</sup> An empirical study might be to look at secular vs. Christian socialization methods, comparing these methods with organizational outcomes such as present and subsequent job performance, retention, and turnover. To accomplish this end, for example, one might examine the use of Christian linguistic tools in one group vs. humanistic linguistic tools in another group of socializing employees. For example, the supervisor at a working lunch could invoke the Christian metaphor of the vine (John 15:1-8). The text of the Bible is rich with such language. The humanist supervisor, in contrast, might invoke jargon such as a network. At the end of a pre-specified socialization period, perhaps one year, we might expect higher turnover among the employees socialized through the use of humanistic linguistic tools and lower turnover among those socialized in Christian linguistic tools. One danger in this method is that these structures could become meaningless if used habitually. We must not overlook

the important role of the dynamic, indwelling Holy Spirit. This danger would have to be balanced with the potential benefits.

The implications for teaching are at least two. One, we can use the method of “unpacking” metaphors to teach students to better solve problems. This means we peel away one by one the assumptions upon which various propositions are based in order to get to the core meaning of a problem. We might spend time in class teaching students to analyze all the various dimensions and implications of the vine metaphor as an organizational structure, for example. I use this metaphor in my international business course. Two, by teaching and thereby sensitizing students to the utility of linguistic tools such as the metaphor, they will be better able to understand the meaning of others’ use of language in the workplace. This would help students to socialize other students and eventually other employees and colleagues further down the career road. The importance of subtlety, for example, increases as one scales the career ladder. Better interpretive abilities will help students to more clearly *see* the “ropes” others may be subtly pointing out to them.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>I.L. Janis, & L. Mann, *Decision making: A philosophical analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment*. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>See M.K. Moch & W.C. Fields, Developing a content analysis for interpreting language use in organizations. In Bacharach and Mitchell’s *Research in the Sociology of Organizations (Vol. 4)*, (New York, NY: JAI Press, 1985).



## Dialogue IV

### A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration: Assimilating the Mind of Christ

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*Chewning states that biblical integration requires the Holy Spirit, but can be fleshed out in a number of different ways. He offers 12 possible biblical integration methods.*

Those of us who are seeking God's guidance and assistance in assimilating His "world/lifeview" in order to embody it in our academics should engage this undertaking with the following four thoughts in mind: a) There can be no genuine integration without the help of the Holy Spirit; b) The *mind of Christ* is sufficiently bestowed upon all Christians for their salvation, but much more than the bare minimum of Christ's mind is available to those whom *He calls* to be teachers; c) Integration requires cooperation between the Christian and the Holy Spirit; and finally, d) There are a *variety* of styles, methods, processes, or ways by which integration may come to pass—it is this last truth that stimulated the writing of this

treatise. We will examine these propositions in the order in which they are listed.

#### **Proposition A** **Integration requires the help of the Holy Spirit.**

Jesus made several statements to His disciples on the night before He was crucified that capture the essence of the proposition—biblical integration requires the help of the Holy Spirit.

*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ... But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. ...*<sup>1</sup>

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. ... Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.*<sup>2</sup>

*If you abide in Me, and [1] My words abide in you, [2] ask whatever you wish, and [3] it shall be done for you.*<sup>3</sup>

The three scriptural samples quoted above are just that—samples. Scripture is resplendent with the following message: a) It is God who sends the Holy Spirit to help us; b) It is the Holy Spirit who guides us "into all the truth;" c) Apart from the Spirit of Christ we "can do nothing"—this statement is to be taken both literally and figuratively; d) When we abide in Christ, He sees to it

that His "words abide" in us; and e) When His words abide in us, and we ask anything that is in keeping with His will, He will do for us what we ask.<sup>4</sup>

#### **An Appropriate Response**

Given the fact that Christian teachers cannot do anything to advance the kingdom of God in their teaching environment apart from the abiding presence, guidance, and help of the Holy Spirit, it behooves us to *repeatedly* seek the face of Christ in prayer. And in our prayers we need to beseech Him to help us to assimilate *His mind* so thoroughly that our teaching endeavors will more frequently reflect His understanding and wisdom—His "world/lifeview."

#### **Proposition B** **The mind of Christ is available to those whom He calls into teaching.**

The statement was made earlier that all Christians are given a sufficient amount of Christ's mind to be "qualified" by God for salvation. This is really

<sup>1</sup>John 16:7, 13. (All Scripture is quoted from the NASB.)

<sup>2</sup>John 15:1-2, 4-5 (verse divisions and emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup>John 15:7 (Emphasis added) To "ask," in this context, is to seek the will of Christ as found in the Scripture.

<sup>4</sup>I John 5:14-15: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." Also see Romans 8:26-27 and reread John 15:7, quoted previously.

self-evident. What is not always so self-evident, however, is the fact that those whom *Christ calls* to teach for Him have *at their disposal*—if they will but ask—a much larger portion of Christ’s mind, sufficient (not exhaustive) for the calling.

Two truths will be set forth to reinforce this asserted proposition. First, the Apostle Paul stated that in his task of fully preaching the Word of God it was important for him to point out that God had at that point in time chosen to reveal “the mystery which had been hidden from the past ages and generations.” And what was the mystery that “has now been manifested to His saints?” The newly revealed mystery was “Christ in you.”<sup>5</sup> Yes, Christ is *in* all of His people.<sup>6</sup> And when Christ is in us, we are *in* Christ—see this footnote for a brief explanation of the importance of the doctrine “we are in Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The second truth has already been stated but will now be elaborated on. It is that those in whom Christ dwells, and who in turn are *in Christ*, have *at their*

*disposal* all of *Christ’s mind* that is *appropriate* (from God’s perspective) for them to first assimilate and then integrate into their academic endeavors. We will examine this actuality in the light of I Corinthians 2:10-16.

*For to us God revealed [His wisdom] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are [must be] spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things,*

*yet he himself is appraised by no man. For “Who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

Paul’s assertion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is that those who have received the Holy Spirit “have the mind of Christ.” This truth is central to the proposition that the mind of Christ is *available* to those whom Christ calls into teaching.

The “mind of Christ” is first and foremost to be understood as having been revealed and made available to us through the Scripture. God has promised to write His Word on our hearts.<sup>8</sup> God’s Word, as a creedal statement says, is the only infallible guide and rule for life and all of its practices. It is the benchmark or touchstone against which all of our thoughts, intentions, motives, and actions must be measured, tested, and examined. As the Word of God is written in our hearts, we have that portion of the mind of Christ. The more of His Word we assimilate and learn to integrate with our academic disciplines, the more we can teach the truth to

which He has promised to guide us. And this results in our applying “His mind” in our calling to Christian higher education.<sup>9</sup> When the “mind of Christ” shapes our teaching/research, the results are truly “higher education.”

### ***An Appropriate Response***

The only way this author knows to be blessed with an ever-increasing portion of Christ’s mind is to first spend considerable time in prayer asking Christ to implant His Word in our hearts in the belief that God *desires to give us the mind of Christ* in ever-increasing portions. We need to practice the *faith* Christ has given us. To illustrate: “I believe that God desires to give me more of the mind of Christ. I will therefore go and ask Him to help me secure more of the mind of Christ, in the *belief* that He will honor my request because it is His will that His children have the mind of Christ. Furthermore, I believe this to be especially true for those of us who are called to serve in Christian higher education.” This would be putting our faith into practice in

<sup>5</sup>Colossians 1:25-27.

<sup>6</sup>Romans 8:9-11; I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; II Corinthians 6:16.

<sup>7</sup>To be “in Christ” is to derive the benefits of being His brother or sister. It represents the truth that we may commune with our Savior—talk to and hear from Christ—at any time. Read Ephesians 1:3-13 and you will discover that the idea of our being in Christ appears ten times. Also see Romans 8:1; Philipians 1:1; John 14:11, 20.

<sup>8</sup>Jeremiah 31:33; Psalm 40:8; 119:11; etc.

<sup>9</sup>John 16:13.

the practical circumstances of life.

**Proposition C**  
**Integration requires cooperation between the Christian and the Holy Spirit.**

There are two imbalances that hinder the growth of Christians in their desire to become more Christlike. First is the mistaken belief that by simply becoming a Christian the Lord somehow mysteriously treats us like a hose and simply pours Himself out to others through us. Or a corollary view sometimes expressed is that He “inoculates” us with a special spiritual blessing that somehow mysteriously recreates a full-blown, mature, vibrant Christian out of us. Both of these are often accompanied by a false humility that declares, “Oh, I am nothing. I did nothing. God did it all.” This is a false annihilation of the personality of the one created in the image of God—created for good works.<sup>10</sup>

The second imbalance is observed in those people who pray little and act as if everything depends upon their superhuman effort. They renounce verbally

that they are “living by works” rather than “living by faith,” but their behavior denies their profession. Even good Christians occasionally “get off the track” and discover they have fallen into this fearful plight. It is generally discovered when burnout seems to be just around the corner—they are depending on their own strength and wisdom and have temporarily left God out of the mix.

Living by faith means, in this context, that we faithfully acknowledge our *absolute* dependence upon God, who both guides us and strengthens us for His work. And then we are to rise from our prayers and go forth and work as hard as we can, believing He is both present and enabling us to work for His good pleasure.<sup>11</sup> Only the Spirit of God can help us maintain the balance between the two heretical extremes described above.

**An Appropriate Response**

It has been this author’s experience that the following are essential components of what the *Christian needs to contribute* to the “cooperation equation”<sup>12</sup> if we

are to assimilate God’s Word and successfully integrate His “world/lifeview” into our teaching: a) We need to be spending *much time*<sup>13</sup> in the Word; b) The more time we spend in prayer seeking Christ’s help, the more likely we are to be blessed; c) The more time we spend in meditating on what we have *studied* in God’s Word, the more likely it will be that we will retain His thoughts and discover applications for it; and finally, (d) The more time we put into *practicing* what we have gleaned from God’s Word—discussing “integration” with our colleagues, applying the integration skills we do have in our classroom presentations, and writing—the more Christ blesses us with a small but ever-growing portion of His mind.

**Proposition D**  
**There are *varieties* of styles by which integration may take place.**

***There is no “particular way” or one way to achieve integration.***

Those who serve in Christian colleges and universities and want to grow in their ability to integrate the “mind of Christ” with their academic pursuits often do not know how or where to begin.<sup>14</sup> They feel inadequate. They may *presume* that “the way” to do integration is the same way

a particular person they have observed does it.

*There is no “particular way” or one way to achieve integration.* There are multiple ways to integrate the “mind of Christ” into our disciplines, and it is the aim of this section of the treatise to enumerate (define) some of those ways and illustrate the defined style.

***Style 1: Presuppositional Assimilation/Integration Defined:***

Some people live all of their lives without being aware of the truth that all of their thoughts and subsequent behavior rest on top

<sup>10</sup>Ephesians 2:10; I Timothy 5:10; 6:18; II Timothy 3:17; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; James 2:14-26; I Peter 2:12; etc.

<sup>11</sup>Philippians 2:13.

<sup>12</sup>Cooperation Equation: God’s work + human response = “to God be the glory” progress and victory.

<sup>13</sup>I have told the faculty at the five schools where I have served as a visiting professor (while involved in encouraging them to seek and practice the “assimilation/integration” of God’s Word into their academic work) that if I could somehow guarantee they would each spend 10,000 hours in God’s Word, I would immediately pack my bags and go home.

<sup>14</sup>**Proposition D** is offered with the *assumption* that the elements described and discussed in **Proposition C** are taken seriously and are being pursued.

of unarticulated “prolegomena”—unspoken beliefs, assumptions, or presuppositions that *proceed, lie behind, or undergird* their communications and actions. Our presuppositions are the buried, invisible foundational beliefs on which our entire world/lifeview rests. They serve as invisible tracks that *determine* the direction of our thinking. Every thought and action has a “trusted belief” right under it, supporting it. If the “trusted belief” (presupposition) is warped and twisted, it produces a deviant thought and behavior pattern (deviant from the “mind of Christ”). On the other hand, God-fashioned presuppositions nurture a Christ-centered life that “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”<sup>15</sup>

Presuppositions are normally formed and set in place in childhood. They become more difficult to change as a person grows older because they are the stabilizing pillars of a person’s psychological security, and the older the person becomes, the more they have attached to each particular presupposition. That is

why when people seem stubborn and unyielding in their opinion on some matter, it is often because their reasoning rests on top of what is for them an important presupposition. Giving up any significant presupposition requires a lot of re-sorting of a number of other appended ideas. This is extremely hard work and next to impossible if the person’s identity is tied to the threatened presupposition. Without the hope of receiving an enormous amount of outside help when threatened with the prospect of undergoing a presuppositional shift, a person will do almost anything to avoid the sensed threat to their psychological well-being. And the older the person is, the truer this seems to be.

God, however, is in the business of changing humanly generated and erroneously fabricated beliefs/presuppositions. God is in the business of changing *hearts*<sup>16</sup>—the repository of all our presuppositions. This life-changing work is the awesome responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Only He has the capability of taking a heart that is

“dead to God” and making it “alive to God.” This is the work of regeneration. It is the rebirth. It is the making of a “new man” in Christ. Only God is capable of replacing a deformed set of presuppositions with a new and reformed set of presuppositions that conform to the “mind of Christ.”

God’s plan to “rework” a *heart* is a plan known only to Him. But God begins His work within the human psyche at the particular place within that psyche that He deems to be the best place to begin His work. Furthermore, God may begin the renovation process on as many fronts as He judges appropriate. He may begin by bringing about changes in the new Christian’s knowledge and understanding—their *intellect*. Or He may start by renovating a particular heart’s desire—their *affections*. Or He may begin with their “pig-headed” will—their *volition*. Or He may begin working in two or three of these arenas simultaneously.

*Example:*

Cornelius Zinger was 24 years old when Christ convicted him of his deep depravity and rebellious nature, causing him to desperately want Christ as his

Lord and Savior. As a child, Cornelius had been exposed to a mixture of pantheism and a form of New Age mysticism. But in college he rejected these earlier notions of God and haphazardly settled into an “agnostic, but who cares” frame of mind. If God existed at all, Cornelius had so reconstructed Him into his own image that God in no way resembled the self-revealing God of the Bible. And on those few occasions when Cornelius was exposed to someone’s thinking as it regarded the Trinity, he had always found himself thinking that such an idea was absolutely irrational, and he therefore disregarded such thoughts and formulations as if they were utter nonsense. After all, who could rationally believe that “three could be one” and that the same “one could be three.” How ridiculous!

Shortly after his conversion, Cornelius was having a serious spiritual conversation with his best friend whom God had used to bring him to a saving faith in Christ. Cornelius’ friend suddenly became aware that Cornelius held some really unbiblical ideas about God’s nature and character. Recognizing both Cornelius’ hunger to learn and grow and his intellectual capacity to absorb

<sup>15</sup>Hebrews 12:11.

<sup>16</sup>The *heart* is the seat or center of the human *intellect, affections (desires, identity needs), and volition*. The development of the point being made would require too much space to warrant its enlargement at this juncture. Let it be sufficient to say that the comprehension of the biblical view of the heart is at the core of our having a right understanding of human nature and thus human behavior.

some fairly weighty teaching, his friend gave him Stephen Charnock's two-volume work *The Existence and Attributes of God*. Cornelius devoured all 1,130 pages of it in a month and was absolutely thrilled by its substantive content.

But Cornelius was also deeply humbled by what he had read about the characteristics of God that Charnock tied so closely

***... examinations of particular biblical subjects provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to expand the mind ...***

to Scripture. He quickly became aware that he had harbored numerous false *beliefs* about God's very nature—His attributes and character. Cornelius did not know when or exactly what new understandings of God propelled him to the realization that his own underlying *beliefs* and *assumptions* did indeed shape his every thought and subsequent actions. But this realization did dawn upon him, and thereafter he found himself constantly searching for his own underlying beliefs—*presuppositions*—and those of other people with whom he talked. He even heard himself ask some of his friends on more

than one occasion what they were presupposing when they made specific assertions.

This pattern of searching for the presuppositions undergirding his thoughts and the thoughts of other people and the practice of carefully testing these presuppositions against the *presuppositions established in Scripture* continued throughout Cornelius' life. He carried the

habit through his graduate studies and into his teaching career. He eventually went to work at The Mind of Christ College, where the habit benefited

everyone as he labored to carry out the mission of the school.

***Style 2: Doctrinal Assimilation/Integration***  
*Defined:*

Biblical *doctrines* are simply biblical subjects or topics that are either discussed or merely mentioned in many different places in the Bible. Their importance to God became evident to the church fathers centuries ago as the Holy Spirit led them to identify and clarify the importance of these truths to the *gospel*. Today, however, there are many Christian fellowships that do not stress doctrinal

teaching for whatever reason. When this occurs, doctrines like “the doctrine of the Holy Trinity,” “the doctrine of God's eternal decrees,” “the doctrine of providence,” “the doctrine of justification,” “the doctrine of sanctification,” and many, many other doctrines just disappear from those churches that overlook teaching of this type.

However, when biblical doctrines are included as an important aspect of the teaching ministry of a particular church, those in-depth examinations of particular biblical subjects provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to expand the mind of a person seeking to assimilate and integrate God's Word into their “world/lifeview.”

*Example:*

Jane Pilgrim was teaching at The Word of God College in the sociology department and attending a local church where the pastor was including in his teaching a diet of clearly defined biblical doctrines. One winter when the doctrine was focused on the Trinity, Jane became fascinated with this deep truth regarding God. She asked the pastor if he might recommend any outside reading sources that would help her dig even deeper

into this profound truth about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Three who are One, the One who is Three. The pastor gave her a copy of *The Trinity*, by Edward Henry Bickersteth, to study.

Well, Jane Pilgrim had no idea she was in for the “unfolding of God's true nature” that occurred when she studied the Word of God that was laid out before her in such an organized way in *The Trinity*. It soon became clear to her that within the Trinity there was absolute equality between the individual members of the Godhead—every attribute ascribed to one member of the Trinity was indeed ascribed to every member of the Trinity. But just as true was the fact that there was a diversity of roles that was associated with the individual members of the Trinity—only one member of the Godhead became incarnate, only one member of the Godhead is sent to dwell in the hearts of God's children, etc.

Before Jane had finished her study, she had identified five areas of importance that she could integrate into her work in sociology. They had just sort of “jumped out” at her while she was studying the Trinity. She identified them as:

## The Trinity's Contribution to Sociology

- 1) Equality/Role Diversity
- 2) Authority/Submission
- 3) Individuals/Members of a Community
- 4) Rights/Responsibilities
- 5) Freedom/Self-control

Jane recognized the fact that the Trinity has modeled and revealed, in the Scripture, five of the toughest areas for fallen humans to get a handle on and discuss. She had previously found it very hard to provide good illustrations of the wholesome balance she believed God desired on these topics, but now she knew that God Himself could be used as the perfect model. She was ecstatic!

### *Style 3: Principles Assimilated/Integrated* Defined:

“Biblical principles” are very similar to the “biblical doctrines” that were just described in *Style 2*. But there is one very important difference. Many books are written on biblical *doctrines* because this is the territory of the professional theologians who have done their work well in describing the process and significant ingredients associated with the *gospel*—the good news of the

kingdom of God and salvation in Christ. The theologians, however, in their almost exclusive focus on the “spiritual matters” of the *gospel* (salvation, regeneration, justification, grace, faith, sanctification, etc.) have largely spent their time on the salvation in Christ aspects of the gospel. In doing this they have, to a large degree, neglected the kingdom of God aspects of the gospel where Christ would also rule in the lives of His people in every dimension of their lives. Christ is Lord of all of life—life in the public square, life in the marketplace, life in the home, life in our educational institutions, etc. And the Bible has a lot to say about every dimension of life, not just our salvation and the doctrines that focus on this one extremely important reality. The biblical *principles* apply to the other *important* dimensions.

Biblical *principles* are ferreted out and discovered with the Holy Spirit's involvement in our persistent searching. A *principle*, for the purpose of this treatise, is defined as finding the same applicable truth expressed in Scripture *three or more times*. The “three times” has been chosen as a means of avoiding

the possible hermeneutic<sup>17</sup> difficulties that can be associated with finding a “point” only one time. It is a method that could be called “cross-referencing” the Scripture. It is the method of finding a particular statement in Scripture and then asking if the Bible says the same thing again in other places. Then to answer the question, a search is made of Scripture to determine if the same idea is contained elsewhere. If the answer is “yes” at least two more times (giving three references in total), then a *principle* has been identified.

### *Example:*

Jim Trumpet was an assistant professor at Praise the Lord University. He was facing a review by the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences to see if he should be recommended for a “three-year rolling contract.” (He was first employed four years ago and had been on one-year contracts since being hired.) The major requirement he faced to receive the lengthier contract was the need to present a 25-page paper demonstrating his skills of biblical integration in the field of history. He had received his Ph.D. from a well-recognized secular

university, but his experience there certainly did not prepare him for the integration task that his university desired. He had worked hard at *trying* to integrate Scripture in his classes, but he really felt “lost.” And he had received no help from the school in learning how he might proceed. He was discouraged.

Jim had been earnestly seeking the Lord's face about his upcoming review. It was just seven months off. He asked the Lord to open up his understanding. Even in asking this, he had no idea how the Lord might go about answering his request, but he did believe He would answer. At the same time this was going on, Jim was attending a home Bible study on Friday evenings with nine friends from his church. They rotated the teaching assignment among the participants. They were studying the book of James, and when Jim's turn came to teach, he was to prepare and present James 2:1-13. As he was preparing, he did not know why but verses 1 and 9 became very significant in his mind. The whole text seemed to Jim to be dealing with the issue of “showing partiality,” which, according to James, was a

<sup>17</sup>Hermeneutics is the study of the methodology employed in the interpretation of the Bible.

grievous sin. Jim had never particularly thought of that before, and he wondered if the Bible had anything else to say on the subject. He noted the tiny editorial letters inserted in the text of the two verses (1 and 9) that made reference to other texts, and he began to follow the trail of cross-references. In ten minutes he located nine other biblical references<sup>18</sup> to the sin of “showing partiality.”

Jim was profoundly impacted by both the importance of this particular sin which he was unaware of previously and the connection he was able to make between this new enlightenment and his work in history. It became clear to him that “showing partiality” had played a key role in the decisions and subsequent actions of so many kings. It was several years later before he began calling such clusters of texts “biblical *principles*,” but this new-found method of searching the Scripture got Jim rolling, and he eventually had lots of biblical material to work into his review paper.

This little stumbled-upon discovery actually provided Jim with a new method of Bible study. His very approach to

studying the Bible changed. He cross-referenced avidly. Over time this technique provided Jim with many, many biblical *principles* with which to work. The cross-referencing seemed to “load up” the evidence on an issue, and this in turn made the issue being studied more important in his mind, which led him to ponder it more fully.

In reflecting back on this experience, Jim often remembered His earliest prayers for help. It seemed that he had received his answer before he even realized it. But now he thanks the Lord over and over again for His merciful guidance and gracious acts of providence.

#### ***Style 4: Personality Traits Assimilated/Integrated***

*Defined:*

Christ is the archetype for all humanity. This being so, whenever a person wishes to evaluate the *personality traits* (character and conduct) of another human being, they need to make the evaluation in the *light* of Christ’s revealed *personality traits* (character and conduct). Christ is the standard, benchmark, or prototype against which all

true human evaluations of this type should be made.

Theologians and other students of the Bible often refer to specific persons in the Bible as Christ-types—people who manifested a particular characteristic(s) in their thoughts, intentions, motives, or actions that manifests the same perfection later revealed in the person and life of Jesus Christ.

For example, Abraham was a Christ-type; his believing in God was exemplar.

Moses was a Christ-type; he interceded before God for God’s people. Samuel was a Christ-type; he was a high priest offering sacrifices to God. David was a Christ-type; he was a conquering king before God. Most, if not all, of the “positive people” recorded in Scripture are preserved for our edification precisely because they were Christ-types. Helpful Bible teaching often incorporates this element in it as a way of holding God’s Anointed One before us as the perfect model and mentor.

*Example:*

Mary Goodheart taught English literature at His Majesty’s College. She had been there for

28 years and was a designated master teacher. She was given this recognition because of her incredible biblical integration skills. She in fact had several *styles* of integration, but the one her students loved the most was her ability to compare the fictional *personalities* that appeared in literature to Christ. Shakespeare’s writings, for

***Christ is the archetype for all humanity.***

example, provided Mary with a fertile number of characters from which to draw

her illustrations. And those personalities appeared in every form from “debauchery to godliness.”

Mary was a real disciple of Christ. She not only studied to *know about Him*, but she spent much time in communion with Him that led others to conclude she also *truly knew Him*. She loved Christ, and the more she got to know Him, the more she delighted in including Him in her analysis of the people she encountered in her work in literature. Christ was indeed her Standard.

The students frequently commented that when they left Ms. Goodheart’s class, they believed they had experienced

<sup>18</sup>The other references were Acts 10:34; Deuteronomy 1:17; 10:17; II Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; and I Peter 1:17.

more of Christ in her lectures than they generally did when they attended chapel. Her skills were profound. She would contrast the manifested “fallen nature” aspects of the people being portrayed in the literature with the perfected *personality traits* of Christ. And she also had the corollary skill of being able to point out the Christ-honoring *personality traits* in others. She was a genius and a gem.

***Style 5: Wisdom Literature Assimilation/Integration Defined:***

Three books of the Bible are frequently referred to as the Wisdom Literature. They are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These three books in particular never abstractly separate Divine wisdom from its practical implications for human conduct, and they are probably the easiest from which to glean God’s gems and apply them to life, for the jewels seem to lie right on the surface. It is indeed the very intention of the three books to impart practical instructions and to provide directions for the reader. The wisdom they speak of can be, in many ways, likened to common sense. It does not require a great deal of special discernment or intellectual power

to understand what they are calling for you to contemplate or do. The communication is plain and simple. The content of the three books is without question the easiest biblical material to assimilate and integrate. In many cases an unregenerate person could make application of the revealed wisdom as readily as a Christian.

Job addresses the universal and multitudinous questions that arise in the presence of evil and suffering in a world created by a loving God. Ecclesiastes casts life’s experiences into a pessimistic frame of reference, wrapped up in the expression “vanity of vanities.” It concludes that all is vanity when God is left out of the picture, and everything makes perfect sense when God is at the center of one’s world/lifeview. Proverbs, on the other hand, is optimistic in its outlook when one is prudent and wise and follows God’s instructions. It is, for the most part, full of pithy statements regarding what is *right* and what is *prudent*.

***Example:***

Philip Voyager was a part-time evening instructor in an undergraduate business degree program at Lord’s College.

He was 57 years old and held an MBA degree from an Ivy League school. He was a successful executive in the human resources department of a national retailing organization. When he was hired by the school, it was made clear to him that the college administrators both desired and expected him to relate his Christian convictions to his teaching endeavors. This really excited him, because he had developed a habit over the 35 years he had been in the business world of reading the entire book of Proverbs every month. After all, there were just 31 chapters in the book, and that meant he only had to read about one chapter a day. And besides, he loved the practical instructions it contained regarding what behavior is *right and wrong* and what is *prudent*.

Philip’s mind was virtually saturated with the wisdom sayings found in Proverbs. Wisdom directs us in godly paths (4:11); the wise heart receives the commands of God (10:8); wisdom dwells with prudence (8:12); the wise and prudent

person develops discernment (14:8); and the beginning of all this wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (9:10). He knew these truths, and many more, by heart. To these profound, foundational truths he added the prudent, common sense directions that are more practical than spiritual in character. (Philip did not doubt for a moment, however, that there was a close tie between the “practical” and the “spiritual” aspects of God’s ordained reality.) Philip had identified dozens and dozens of specific verses that had very prudent advice for those who worked in business,<sup>19</sup> and he routinely integrated them into his classroom presentations.

***Style 6: Allegories Assimilated/Integrated Defined:***

**Caution, we are entering a Warning Zone!** Scripture does contain some allegories<sup>20</sup> and other writings that lead Christians to ask, “Am I to take this particular biblical passage literally or figuratively?” For example, when Christ was

<sup>19</sup>A sample of Philip’s favorites: Proverbs 10:2, 4, 5, 9, 15, 22; 11:1, 3, 4, 15, 16, 18, 25, 26, 28; 12:9-11, 27; 13:4, 7, 8, 11, 18, 22-24; 14:2, 4, 20, 23, 31, 35; 15:16, 27; 16:2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 16, 18, 26, 32; 17:3, 13, 18, 20, 23; 18:2, 5, 9, 11, 15, 17; 19:1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 15-17, 20, 21, 23, 24; 20:4, 5, 10, 11, 13-18, 22-24; 21:2, 6, 15-17, 21, 23, 25; 22:1-4, 7, 10, 17, 26-29; 23:4, 5, 10, 17, 23; 24:1, 3, 4, 10, 16, 30-34; 25:26, 28; 26:14, 20, 27; 27:1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23-27; 28:4-8, 11, 16, 19-22; 29:2-4, 18, 23, 24, 27; 30:5-9, 24-28, 31:10-31.

<sup>20</sup>Examples of allegories in Scripture—Psalm 80:8-19; Galatians 4:23-26; etc.

answering His disciples' question about who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven, He set a child before them and said,

*Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell.*<sup>21</sup>

Such passages are rich with applicable meaning, but they also offer many opportunities to wander into fallacious interpretations and create applications that are simply wrong.

There was a time in the early church when an allegorical system of biblical interpretation became popular, and much of the Bible was screened through this type of filter. An example of a person who practiced this was the Greek writer, teacher, and church father Origen (182?-254? A.D.). He postulated that there were *three levels* of truth in the Scripture:

- 1) the fleshly/literal level;
- 2) the moral content and meaning level;
- and 3) the pneumatic level—truth about the hierarchy and nature of non-human

spiritual beings that included God. He was the head of the School of Alexandria during its prime. The school emphasized the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. A number of the Reformers—Luther and Calvin, for example—strongly opposed the allegorical method because it was too *subjective* and *uncontrollable*. But aspects of the method linger to this day and are sometimes displayed by those persons who love to integrate biblical parables, allegories, and

metaphors into their academic teaching.<sup>22</sup>

*Example:*

Nancy Purity was a member of the education department at The Saints Below College. Her favorite course was one that focused on teaching pedagogy. She loved to have her students wrestle with the problems associated with the gleanings of truth from metaphors, allegories, and parables. She believed good teachers in the elementary and secondary schools, where most of her students would be placed, should expose their students to the rich deposits of truth that were contained in some of the West's finest literature that was recorded in story form. *Aesop's Fables*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the Bible were her favorite sources for practice materials. She would make assignments and have the students give oral reports to the class on their interpretation of specific allegories or parables and explain how they would guide their future students into

discovering (discerning) the legitimate message of the story. This got at the very difficult question: Can *discernment* be taught, and if so, how?

Her most recent assignment called for the students to interpret Christ's parable found in Luke 16:1-13 that concerns itself with an "unrighteous steward."

*There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward." And the steward said to himself, "What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes." And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first,*

<sup>22</sup>This author "cut his integration teeth" on the parabolic/allegorical work of a few men who were writing in the late 1950s. It was, however, my *rejection* of their "literal" interpretations of many of Christ's parables (which I knew were missing the truth) that motivated me to seek the Lord's help in finding a better way to integrate His truths into my thinking and work. I knew His Word had much to say to business, economics, and public policy, and I was *convicted* that it was my God-ordained assignment to learn how to assimilate and integrate His Word. The parables and allegories are a part of God's Word, however, and are therefore to be rightly interpreted and applied to life. We need to be extremely careful with the *allegorical method*, for its path meanders toward a slippery slope.

<sup>21</sup>This passage of Scripture is set up by verses 1-6 that precede Matthew 18:7-9.

“How much do you owe my master?” And he said, “A hundred measures of oil.” And he said to him, “Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.” Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?” And he said, “A hundred measures of wheat.” He said to him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.” **And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and**

*despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* (emphasis added)

The results were mixed, to say the least. A few of the students thought God was commending the shrewd behavior. Others mistakenly expressed views that the people who were already in heaven were making judgments about who would be subsequently accepted into heaven. The students concluded that those in heaven would make their judgment based upon the peoples’ use of their wealth while on earth. Other students refuted those two ideas but had little to offer in their place.

The majority of the students, however, had ferreted out most of the salient points Nancy had hoped they would discover. Some of the more pertinent points were a) The master who praised the unrighteous steward was *not* representing God, for He would not commend such conduct; b) Worldly people do tend to be *shrewder* in their earthly dealings with other people than do God’s children, who do not think of shrewdness as a virtue; c) There is an admonition in the parable, though, for the children of God to use their mammon (wealth, riches) in a way that is pleasing to

God; d) There will be an explanation made to God one day, by His children, of just how they used the wealth He entrusted to them; and e) It is clear that no one can serve both riches and God simultaneously.

Nancy was thrilled that so many of her students had done so well on the assignment.

### ***Style 7: The “History Books” Assimilated/Integrated Defined:***

There are different kinds of literature in the Bible. There is the Wisdom Literature that we spoke of in *Style 5* and the songs and prayers of the Psalms. There are the apocalyptic writings—futuristic writings that reveal mysteries yet to unfold. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation are generally regarded as examples of this type of literature. There are the books of the Law, the four gospels, and the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John. Then there are the books referred to as the major and minor prophets—designations related to their length, not the significance of their content. In addition to all of these, there are the history books—I and II Samuel,

I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Acts are examples.

The important issue to be raised here, in the context of our discourse about the assimilation and integration of God’s Word into our academic endeavors, is *when do we take a revealed historic activity, event, or occurrence and treat it as if it is normative?* For example, faith healings, miracles, speaking in tongues, “all things were common property to them,” and other nonrecurring or lacking a basis in *principle*<sup>23</sup> incidents are all a part of the biblical record. There is no reason to doubt their occurrence. But are any of these circumstances to be considered standard occurrences that will repeat themselves on an expected or routine basis? There is no agreement within the broader Christian community on the answer to this question.

### ***Example:***

James Truemind was an associate professor of political science at The Servants of Christ University. His doctoral dissertation allowed him to become immersed in the theories

<sup>23</sup>“Biblical principles” were defined in *Style 3* as “finding the same applicable truth expressed in Scripture three or more times.”

and arguments that permeate the political and economic positions associated with egalitarianism, libertarianism, free markets, regulated markets, democratic/representative forms of government, and socialism. He had carried his particular focused interest right on into the classroom when he began teaching. He remained as wrapped up and committed to this work, and its focus, as he had been 20 years ago when he began. If anything, he believed it was even more important today than in the past for the students to understand the issues that separated the various political/economic views. In his judgment, the struggle in our culture between these ideologies was growing stronger and almost vicious at times.

James' biblical world/lifeview was a major stimulus behind his interest in this political/economic struggle in the public square. He certainly *did not* believe that

the Bible was a political science book or an economics textbook. He did, however, believe that the Bible laid out a number of clear principles that undergirded God's interest in human choice, creativity, stewardship, freedom, equity (*not* equality), and other aspects of the human enterprise to provide godly guidance to those who cared to search it out.

With this in mind, he gave an assignment to his junior class to "discuss the application of Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37 to the contemporary public debates regarding poverty and the homeless." [See footnote 24 for the full Acts text.]

It was early in the semester. The class began its discussion with the usual pretty superficial and emotional rhetoric that characterizes such discussions early in a semester before the students are familiar with the professor's expectations.

The early discussion revealed

that it did not matter if a student was egalitarian or libertarian in his or her focus. The perspectives expressed by almost all of them were rather shallow. James knew that at their age they could not be expected to be real biblical scholars. In fact, he was not really disappointed in them at all.

He really expected it.

He took it as an opportunity to lead them into a deeper understanding of the significance of God's

"whole message" or "whole purpose"<sup>25</sup>—*what God has to say throughout Scripture about a particular subject and the additional factors that bear on the issue.*

James accomplished this by asking the students questions that brought direction to their thinking, and then he shepherded them carefully to biblical passages that opened up a whole new vista of understanding for them. In fact, a number of the students began to demonstrate their latent ability to use associative thinking skills as they related the diverse passages of Scripture to the issue at hand. This really excited James, because from his perspective this skill would serve them well in

many areas of life in the future. At times the class would have appeared to an uninformed outsider to be more akin to a Bible class than a political science class, but effective integration required this use of time. The students were soon

***The students were soon ... in thoughtful dialogue that was constantly being examined under the lens of Scripture.***

engaging one another in thoughtful dialogue that was constantly being examined under the lens of Scripture.

It was not long before the students recognized the relationship between the guided discussion and the original question. They were soon considering God's perspective and desires regarding human choice, creativity, stewardship, freedom, equity, the rights of the poor and needy, greed, the Spirit's gift of liberality, and several other biblical considerations that related to the Acts assignment. All of this took two weeks, and then James sent them back to redo the original assignment. The end results were dramatically

<sup>24</sup>Acts 2:44-45: "And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need." Acts 4:32-37: "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

<sup>25</sup>Acts 5:20; 20:27.

different. The students had genuinely matured, and much had been accomplished educationally.

**Style 8: “Selected Lenses” Assimilated/Integrated Defined:**

**Caution, we are entering a second Warning Zone!** No exceptions exist to the following truth: Everyone who takes up the Scripture to read it does so with a “mental lens” through which God’s Word will be filtered and its message subsequently interpreted. The significance of this reality is *extremely* important to comprehend. We lose our humility and ability to truly understand another person’s world/lifeview when we fail to realize that we are not God and do not have His perfect perspective. Yet on the other hand we are, without a doubt, responsible and ultimately accountable for making the right interpretation of God’s Word. But the Word of God itself tells us that some people *distort* the Word so harmfully that they ultimately bring about “their own destruction.”<sup>26</sup> Those of us who have accepted God’s call to be

teachers and who handle His Word in conjunction with our basic academic disciplines should be particularly careful. The apostle James even warns us, “Let not many of you become teachers [of God’s Word] ... knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.”<sup>27</sup> The issue before us is extremely important, and now is the time to recall the truths set forth in the opening proposition—

**Proposition A: Integration requires the help of the Holy Spirit.** Apart from the work of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, we can do nothing to “adjust our spiritual lenses” so we can interpret and integrate properly.

The heart of the issue is this. Each one of us comes to the Scripture with a “mental lens.” That is true. But the important question is, is the Holy Spirit *reforming* our interpretive lenses, or are we *deforming* the truth of God’s Word by *distorting* it?

Those of us who spent years being an “indentured servant” while gaining our terminal degrees went through a brainwashing experience that made every effort to implant a discipline lens into our

world/lifeview. The training in our disciplines did nothing to help us learn how to seek God’s corrective help so we might learn how to integrate His truth into our worldview. In fact, it built barriers that were constructed to challenge anything that contested the veracity of the discipline’s official doctrines. But *many* of the *presuppositions* that guided our academic disciplines are manifestations of a world/lifeview that is antithetical to the “mind of Christ.” (Many seminarians did not experience what was just described!)

The greater tragedy, however, is the fact that this same lens problem is found in the church, where one might hope to receive help in having his or her spiritual lenses adjusted, unless, of course, the person is simply attending to “have their ears tickled.”<sup>28</sup> If one is still unclear as to the issue being pointed to, just ask yourself, is the church unified on the subject of a) capital punishment? b) the role of women in the church? c) election/predestination? d) the use of “contemporary music” in the worship service? and e) a host of

other important and not-so-important issues? Conclusion: *Everyone needs the continual reforming work of the Holy Spirit in his or her heart so that his or her spiritual lens may, by God’s grace, become more and more conformed to the “mind of Christ.”*

**Example:**

Betty Unity, a professor of Christian education with a focus on children’s education, was a member of the Bible department at His University. She was blessed with the gift of love for children and the gift of singleness. She was 47 years old, and for 27 of those years she had given her whole life to Christ without reserving any corner of it for herself. She believed with all of her heart that marriage and family life were God’s “norm” and communicated this to her students when one might venture to ask her why she had never married (she was a beautiful person both inside and outside). She would also carefully point out that some people, such as she, had been given the “gift of singleness”<sup>29</sup> and were really

<sup>26</sup>II Peter 3:16.

<sup>27</sup>James 3:1.

<sup>28</sup>II Timothy 4:3.

<sup>29</sup>Matthew 19:10-12. Betty did not believe that Christ’s reference here to “men” was in any way undermined or unfairly adjusted by believing that some women also “made themselves eunuchs [figuratively] for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Psalm 113:9 was also an important verse to Betty.

content to serve Christ without the outside demands that so appropriately accompanied marriage.

One of the topics that regularly came up in her classes was the issue of child discipline. Some states had laws regulating the discipline of children, subjecting parents to the threat that their children could be removed from their home and placed in a

state-approved home or facility if they failed to adhere to the state standards. There were stories galore about Christian families being harassed and upset in some parts of the country as a consequence of violating their state's position regarding corporal punishment—spanking was forbidden, for example.

There were, of course, those students who had been raised in a home where corporal punishment was a normal part of their rearing. They were almost universally eager to defend the practice and were quick to point out one of its positive benefits—the early opportunity for a child to recognize that negative consequences are to be associated

with ungodly conduct. On the other hand, there were those students who had never had a hand placed on them as a means of discipline, as far as they could remember. These students overwhelmingly disapproved of corporal punishment. They argued that there were alternative ways of getting a child's attention and

***... the moral questions ...  
raised in the public arena  
need to be wrestled with  
under the lens of Scripture.***

that the alternatives should be positive reinforcements for good behavior, not negative consequences associated with unacceptable behavior.

Betty had learned that the students' personal experiences tended to determine what side of an issue they would land on. But what really disturbed her was the realization that the individual's personal experiences tended to either determine how the student would amass and arrange the available biblical evidence, or worse yet, allow the student to view the experiences as more authoritative than the Word of God. Rational discussions rarely altered the lenses the students wore.

Betty had always ended up at the end of an issue with a heavy heart. The students who held the

very position she held on an issue generally clung to their position on *the same grounds* as the students who took the opposing position—because of their personal experience. Why did the classroom discussions and homework not change their hearts? The answer God gave was both heartwarming and challenging. Betty came to realize that there would be no material changes in the lives of her 18- to 22-year-old students apart from the *reforming work of the Holy Spirit*. This truth drove her to her knees in intercessory prayer. Her classes, thereafter, had been much better. God blessed her by letting her see that more and more of her students were getting in touch with the realization that their world/lifeview lenses needed to be adjusted by the Holy Spirit. In fact, a number of them shared with her that they were seeking the Lord's face concerning their need.

***Style 9: "Answered Questions"  
Assimilated/Integrated  
Defined:***

One of the incredible realities about the Scripture is that while it was written and the canon closed hundreds of years ago, it possesses to this day all of the *principles* necessary to address

the most complicated, modern ethical issues. Cloning, genetic engineering, embryo development in dishes, mechanical maintenance of life, and many other modern day miracle discoveries and inventions have pushed a number of ethical *questions* into the public's consciousness. This has taken place at a time of genuine ethical confusion. It would be hard to find a worse time in the past 1,200 years for so many significant moral issues to descend upon our community. Theologians, philosophers, ethicists, and those who are responsible for the establishment of some form of legal direction are living in the midst of great moral confusion. The biblically-based Judeo/Christian world/lifeview no longer dominates the public discussion of ethics. Today the humanistic perspectives guide the thinking of most of those who are in positions of power.

Nevertheless, the Christian community has a responsibility to train its young people to think biblically. This means that the moral *questions* being raised in the public arena need to be wrestled with under the lens of Scripture. The moral issues that flow out of cloning, "external to

the womb” embryo development, genetic engineering, and other technically-oriented problems cry out for those *who teach the sciences in our Christian colleges and universities to step forward and lead the Christian community through the labyrinth of ethical confusion.* The *technical details* that are so often at the heart of these issues *must* become an integral part of the moral dialogue. It is not enough to just say “this is right” or “that is wrong.”

*Example:*

John Preacher, the chairman of the biology department at Disciples College, had been at the college for 17 years. He had just come under the Spirit’s conviction that he really needed the “mind of Christ” in a fresh and new way. This occurred when he returned from his discipline’s annual conference, where he had been overwhelmed by the number of “breakout sessions” that had been specifically focused on emerging ethical issues in the field of biology. And on five other occasions he had listened to the same issues arise “out of nowhere” during general sessions. It wasn’t that he was unaware that the issues existed before he went to the meeting,

nor was it true that he did not have an opinion on them—he did. The conviction came from the fact that he had never really studiously examined *any* of the issues through the lens of Scripture. He suspected that if he did, he would discover *principles* that were both directly related to and parallel to the ethical issues. He was now embarrassed by his prior failure and lack of resolve to seek the “mind of Christ” to learn what Christ thought about the issues. The question before John now was, how should he strategically approach these ethical issues and bring them to the lens of Scripture?

John made a decision at this point that might have appeared to be rather unorthodox to many of his colleagues if they had known he was wrestling with his failure to seek the mind of Christ on such issues. He decided to tell his philosophy of science seminar students of the conviction he was under and engage them in the biblical search. There were 14 science majors in the seminar. John believed his “self-exposure” would become an encouragement to them and that the exercise itself would prove to be a tremendous growing experience for them all.

The students were ecstatic when the professor informed them of the project assignment that would fill their time for the next three weeks. John told them everything that had led him to make a mid-term adjustment in the semester plans. The students thought it was neat that a professor had the courage to expose a particular kind of hole in his own development, but they instinctively knew they would be the real beneficiaries by being included in his semi-public effort to fill the hole. (Indeed they were mightily blessed. The exercise proved to be the greatest academically-related spiritual experience of their four years at college.)

John began by allowing the students to choose the ethical issue they would work on. The class chose the issue of genetic engineering. Then he asked them to identify the deepest presuppositional question they could think of and thought ought to be answered first. The class had learned previously that the question you pursued concerning any issue predetermined both the direction of the inquiry and the fruitfulness of its results. They wrestled with this for an

entire class period and finally settled on two questions. First, “Does applied genetic engineering arrogantly challenge the sovereignty of God?” and second, “*If* applied genetic engineering has an appropriate role to play in medical science, how will society prevent it from being used in ungodly and diabolical ways that could eventually alter the very genetic structure of God’s image bearers?”

Before the first question was resolved, the students raised biblical points like, “Behold, they are one people ... and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them,”<sup>30</sup> that seem to lend weight to the view that human accomplishments are to be unfettered before God. But the counterpoint was made that God had planned many good things that were to be accomplished through what humans generally consider to be “negative realities.” For example, a student quoted, “And the Lord said to him [Moses], ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’”<sup>31</sup> The point was, should we humans interfere with God’s sovereign work? Another student

<sup>30</sup>Genesis 11:6.

<sup>31</sup>Exodus 4:11 (clarification added).

reinforced this question by referring to the passage, “And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”<sup>32</sup> This all led to a two-day discussion on what is to be drawn from the belief that God is absolutely sovereign over everything, while simultaneously providing His image bearers the freedom to freely exercise their will in keeping with their “true nature.” Two weeks were devoted to this first question before the class arrived at a conclusion that was satisfactory, but only to the majority.

The second question was no easier to resolve than the first one. The issues of human choice and freedom, the fall, sin, God’s act of redemption, the rebellion of the unregenerate, and more all surfaced. The problem was that they all surfaced without any *controlling principle* coming to the fore that would provide them with an answer that would work

in the minds of those in the world who rejected Christ as their Lord.

John Preacher, however, was able to clarify in his own mind the biblical picture he would use to guide his thinking and teaching in the future about the ethical issues that surround the subject of genetic engineering. He realized it was not his place to insist on the rightness of his position, but it was his responsibility to bear witness to his beliefs and to be able to defend them in a winsome way.

**Style 10: “Cherry-Picking” Assimilation/Integration**  
*Defined:*

“Cherry-picking” the Scripture is probably the most frequently used method of making application of God’s Word to life’s situations. Most Christians who are regularly reading and retaining the Scripture, either consciously or unconsciously, employ it on numerous occasions as the Scripture spontaneously comes to mind. Sadly, a good many Christians are unaware of the fact that if such an occurrence is a recurring experience in their lives, it is probably the outcome of the work of the Holy Spirit

who is dwelling in them.<sup>33</sup> (To know this would greatly encourage them in their walk of faith.) The *application* of the gift of “cherry-picking” is useful in carrying out one of God’s “missions” for His children, that of being “salt and light” in the world.<sup>34</sup>

Just what is “cherry-picking?” *It is the ability to associate specific verses of Scripture with specific occurrences or happenings in the world and relate this association to others.*

*Example:*

Rachel Helpful, an associate professor of physical education, was the women’s basketball coach and softball coach at The Redeemer’s College. She loved the Lord with all that she knew to give Him, and she loved the girls she coached and taught. She held a women’s Bible study in her home once a week and about 35 girls attended regularly. (She held it on Tuesday evenings when her husband was at a club meeting.) Her three

children were grown and out of the house, so Rachel had lots of time to devote to her girls. She ate lunch in the college dining room with the students five days a week and drove her teams to their games in a 17-passenger school van.

Rachel had a habit of sprinkling Scripture into her conversations in a way that

**“Cherry-picking” ... is useful ... in being “salt and light” in the world.**

caught her girls’ attention but was not in a contrived or forced manner that could

have brought about a negative reaction. It was not an every-time thing, but it occurred frequently enough so that the girls noticed it and sometimes wondered how she did it. And she did not repeat the same passages of Scripture over and over again when a previous stimulus reappeared. It was almost as if she thought, “I said it once; that is enough.”

An example of Rachel’s salt and light occurred one morning when the girls were all in the college van being transported to a softball game. A pickup truck passed them and then stayed about 50 feet or so ahead of them

<sup>32</sup>John 9:1-3.

<sup>33</sup>John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, *He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*” (emphasis added).

<sup>34</sup>Matthew 5:13-16.

for several minutes. Stuck on the rear window of the pickup was the saying “*No Fear.*” Rachel said to Mary, who was sitting next to her in the front seat (all of the girls were paying attention), “Have you ever seen anything so *godless* in all of your life?” Mary responded, “What are you referring to?” Rachel said, “That sign on the back window of the pickup truck.” Betty called from the rear of the van and asked Mary to tell her what the sign said. She could not read it from where she was sitting. Mary sang out, “It says, ‘*No Fear.*’” “Oh,” Betty replied. Rachel asked the girls what they thought of the sign. One girl said she had seen the statement on numerous occasions. Another said she had never stopped to think anything about it. A third said she thought it was kind of macho. Then Rachel said softly, “I think it is blasphemous. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,<sup>35</sup> and anyone who is unaware of that is in for a troubled life and a torturous eternal life.” The episode was over as fast as it had begun, but all of the girls reflected on their coach’s observation and mulled it

over for some time. Every one of the girls knew their coach had spoken the truth, as only she seemed to know how. In the next month, they saw two more identical signs on vehicles while on trips, but Rachel never commented on them. The girls did, however.

Another time on a return trip home, one of the girls asked the others if they had noticed the student trainer who worked for the opposing team. They all admitted they had more than noticed. Wow, he was something to look at. The girls began to speculate about him. They wondered out loud about what he would be like. A number of pretty silly comments were being passed around when Rachel wondered out loud, “Do you reckon he would know how to live with you in an understanding way?”<sup>36</sup> There was no reply for a moment, and then one of the girls asked, “Why would that be important?” For the next two hours Rachel had a God-given opportunity to talk openly, biblically, and profitably about what a girl should look for in a man she might consider marrying.

The girls *never* forgot that conversation. It went deep into their hearts and remained there.

What has just been shared was the *pattern* of Rachel’s life with her girls. She seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of “cherries” to give away to those that lived and worked and played around her.

### ***Style 11: Paradigms Assimilated/Integrated***

*Defined:*

**Author’s Caution, we are entering the third Warning Zone!** Paradigms are archetype examples of “good models.” The type of paradigm being thought of here is one that serves as a *model through which we can screen our thinking process* as we seek to relate a worldly encounter with the Scripture. The positive aspect of having such a screening model is that it provides the user with a consistent tool which he or she can repeatedly use and return to. The user thereby gains the opportunity to develop and reinforce a tried and true pattern to guide his or her thinking.

The negative aspects accompanying such a paradigm, however, are the cause for raising the warning flag once again. First of all, a paradigm that is used repeatedly as a means by

which we enter the Scripture *may* eventually become as important, or even more important, to the user as the Scripture itself, to the point where one comes to rely on the paradigm as much as the Scripture. In the second place, the paradigm may not fit all situations or circumstances. This *can* lead the user to presume that what they are encountering is not important because it does not seem to fit the idea of an “all-purpose” paradigm. Thirdly, the paradigm itself *may* eventually cause its user to see the Scripture through the lens of the paradigm rather than the paradigm through the lens of Scripture. And finally, any paradigm *can* be turned into a “works righteousness” model and come between its user and the maturing work of the Holy Spirit. Any of these four things *can* happen; therefore, anyone who uses a paradigm model for assimilation and integration needs to be on the lookout to protect himself or herself from any of these potential pitfalls.

Several of the more popular Christian paradigms are: 1) What would Christ do in a case like this? 2) The Golden Rule is *the* action rule—just as you want people to treat you,

<sup>35</sup>Proverbs 9:10.

<sup>36</sup>1 Peter 3:7.

treat them in the same way<sup>37</sup>—nothing else is necessary; or 3) *Love* is the only thing Christ requires.

Books, in one form or another, have been written about each of these paradigms. There are Christians who successfully use these types of paradigms. Some people even reveal that they have a guiding verse of Scripture that directs their thinking and actions every day of their life. Others view what has just been described as being too restricted for them. They cannot conceive of themselves as being able to navigate life from such a limited vantage point. The Lord, however, leads His people just as He chooses.<sup>38</sup>

*Example:*

Paul Purelove was a professor of marketing at King of Kings College. He had been there for 12 years. Paul had discovered, while in his Ph.D. program, that the field of marketing was his calling. Many of its complex facets interested him, but none more so than the myriad of ethical pitfalls that lay in the way of anyone who devoted his or her life to the

endeavors associated with marketing. The area of sales in particular offered numerous opportunities for personal temptations to surface—*immediate* personal advantages to be gained from white lies, exaggerations, deceit, and twisted motives.

***... they would succeed if they allowed Christ to rule in their hearts ...***

At the same time, however, Paul saw the wonderful opportunity for young Christians to be salt and light in the workplace. He knew they would succeed if they allowed Christ to rule in their hearts and help them crucify the constant lure to use the *self-serving, short-run* sales tactics that were so pervasive in the field. He knew that to truly serve the customer, one should never lie, never exaggerate, never deceive, and always think about what would be in the best interest of the customer. The integrity that flows from such conduct would build a foundation so strong that *in the long run* his students would be extremely successful in the

field—assuming they had the other tools necessary to be successful.

Paul did not ground his beliefs in a philosophy that honesty paid the best dividend and therefore was best. He simply understood that the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in the marketplace rested on God's natural law that He had created and made operative in the world. Such good conduct was *moral*, it was *prudent*, and it was *successful*. God had made it to operate that way.

Given the fact that there were an infinite number of specific situations one might find oneself in while selling a product or service, Paul had years ago settled on the biblical paradigm of the Golden Rule as the perfect guide for Christians in the field of sales. His students would ask hard questions like, "Dr. Purelove, what should a salesman do when he is selling the 'latest model' and knows for a fact that his company is coming out with a vastly improved new model in four months?"

Paul would first reply, "Well, Bill, what do you think is the right thing to say and do?" If doubt and confusion surfaced in the ensuing discussion, Paul would typically try another

question. "Do you think the customer needs the *newer model*? Will the current model meet your customer's needs? Or do you think answering this question before you get all tied in knots over the potential ethical conflict might help guide you to a good decision?" (We will now suppose that the student responds that the customer would very much benefit from having the newer product.) Paul might then ask, "Bill, if you were in the same position as your customer, what would you want a salesman to do?"

Paul employed this Golden Rule tactic with his students until they knew what his answer would be before they even bothered to ask him an ethical question. Some students believed the Golden Rule principle Paul employed was too simplistic, but Paul believed they were still too immature in Christ to be willing to pay the personal price of sticking to it. Other students recognized the "price to be paid" and rethought their desire to go into sales. Paul thought that this reexamination was healthy. And still other students believed Paul's use of the Golden Rule was legitimate, but they did not believe they would have the strength and commitment to use

<sup>37</sup>Luke 6:31.

<sup>38</sup>Romans 14:1-4.

it. The price of following it was awfully high. Paul prayed for them all.

### ***Style 12: Discipline-Specific Assimilation/Integration***

#### ***Defined:***

Discipline-specific assimilation and integration is where this author began his personal journey in the integration endeavor in 1963. I was deeply convicted by the Holy Spirit that I was not associating/integrating God's Word, which I was much into, with my teaching. I responded as a loved, but broken child, but I had no idea what was involved in such an undertaking. I was theologically isolated at the time and had no clue if anyone else was doing what I was suddenly *compelled* to do—this being compelled is to be understood literally. I have not rested from making every effort to place God's Word at the heart of my teaching and writing from that time onward. It has been and is my passion!

How did I start? I pled with Christ in prayer. I begged Him to help me. And then a light came on in my mind. It was His Word that He wanted to use as “yeast” in my work, so I suddenly realized I must start with the

Scripture. Then I specifically asked Him to show me, as I read His Word, what parts of it applied directly to business and economics. I began my search. Verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter, and book by book I studied the Bible with but one question in my mind, “Does this particular part of His Word apply to my work?” Hundreds and hundreds of verses began to come out of the pages demanding to be seen as truly relevant to the study of business and economics. I put the letter “E” in the margin of my Bible beside every verse that seemed to apply to either business or economics. Soon my Bible seemed full of the letter “E.”

Anyone in any academic discipline can ask God to help them and read the Bible with an open heart in search of the answer to the question, “Lord, does this portion of Your Scripture have anything to say to my work in \_\_\_\_\_?” (Fill in the blank: English, sociology, history, education, political science, psychology, biology, physics, engineering, accounting, marketing, human resources, information systems, management, art, music, philosophy, finance, etc.)

#### ***Example:***

Robert Fullfaith was the chairman of the department of education at Resurrection University. He and two other members from the department went together to a workshop on biblical integration at Joy College in the neighboring state and had just returned home. All three of them were relatively new hires and had come to Resurrection University out of the secular university system. The other four members of the department were old hands at the school. Robert's understanding of the school's history led him to believe that Christian education, as it had been historically practiced at RU, had primarily consisted of having prayer before and at the close of classes.

The new president, however, who had come aboard at the same time these three new members had come, soon let the entire faculty know that he believed Christian education was more than simply having prayer before and after classes. He talked of biblical integration and clearly wanted the faculty to seriously consider undertaking it. Robert and his department colleagues had never heard of it, seen it, or knew what was involved in its practice. When the integration

conference at Joy College was announced, Robert applied for trip money for himself and the other two newer colleagues who also expressed an interest in the conference. The request was granted and they attended.

Three styles of integration were discussed at the conference, but the one that gripped Robert (and, interestingly enough, his two colleagues) was the one described as a “discipline-specific” approach, in which you ask God to help you discern from His Word what applies to your particular discipline. There were some “breakout” practice sessions at the conference, and they each separately took small sections of Scripture to read and see if they could spot any content that applied to Christian education. They were all amazed and became very excited by what they experienced and discovered. God's Word came alive for them in a new way.

On the drive back home they began to talk about their experience at the conference. From there they moved to a discussion about the core courses in the education curriculum at RU. They agreed that the core was secular, with a few Christian labels plastered on the exterior to make it sound like it was

Christian. They wondered aloud why they and the other department members couldn't reverse that reality and develop a core that was truly Christian and then plaster the secular demands to the exterior. They had a great time discussing this idea. By the time they arrived home they had decided to see if they could bring the rest of the department along and get them enthused about "discipline-specific" biblical integration.

After several departmental meetings, the whole team was on board and enthusiastic about getting underway. To do this, they each agreed to take a major book of the Bible and to study it verse by verse following a season of prayer in which they would ask Christ to reveal to them specific verses in His Word that applied to their discipline. Each member was to catalogue the verses they believed applied and report back in four weeks at the next departmental meeting. The time seemed to fly by, and they each reported their findings. They were all astounded at how much they had discovered and learned. After three such cycles of studying, reporting, and brainstorming, they began the development of an entirely new concept for their core curriculum.

It would be truly permeated with God's wisdom. The department, the curriculum, and the graduates would never be the same again. They had discovered, by God's grace, what true Christian education was intended to be.

### **Conclusion**

Assimilating the "mind of Christ" and integrating His world/lifeview into our academic disciplines requires the help of the Holy Spirit, cooperation between the individual Christian and the Holy Spirit, and the application of some form of method, process, or style of integration to accomplish the desired end.

The 12 styles reviewed in this treatise for accomplishing the task of integration are simply examples. They are provided in the hope that they will stimulate the thinking of the readers and perhaps lead to their further reflections and eventual effort to expand their repertoire of styles. Many of you have undoubtedly already discovered that you are even now using multiple styles. And I am sure that a number of you are capable of adding to the list of styles. If you are, I would encourage you to do just that, because those of us who have given our lives to Christ, in

response to His call for us to enter Christian higher education, can use all of the help that is available.

The three most important things to remember, however, from the author's perspective are: 1) There can be no growth in our ability to integrate without the active help of the *Holy Spirit*; 2) Our lifeline to the Holy Spirit is our *faith* in Christ and our *belief* that He desires to give us more of His mind to enable us to carry out His purposes; and 3) We are called upon to help maintain this lifeline to our Redeemer through *prayer*. Without the help of the *Holy Spirit*, the exercise of the *faith* Christ has given us, and *prayer*, there can be no true assimilation/integration of Christ's mind. And without His mind, we have little of value to give.

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## Dialogue IV

### A Response to Richard Chewning's "A Dozen Styles of Integration"

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This is a refreshingly useful and important article that brings the classroom professor into a new level of awareness. It is useful because one is struck with the impression that you either are *not* providing much of a Christian worldview in class or you now know better just what it is you *are* providing. Either way, you are going to come away from Chewning's article more aware of your teaching approach. You may notice that you are a "Discipline-Specific Cherry-Picker" like I discovered about myself, or you might find that you integrate Christian principles into your classroom work with students. The article is important because it underscores the importance of Scripture as the foundation of Christian worldview integration. In my view, one cannot have a Christian worldview in the class without reference to specific, relevant verses. Finally, we see Chewning's proper respect for the role of the Holy Spirit as

moderator between Scripture and instructor, as it should be. The many teaching style examples, incidently, reminded me of the allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The bulk of the article is focused on the premise that one should be aware of the many ways in which Christian worldviews can be incorporated into one's teaching but that there is no single best way of doing this. Presumably, the more ways, the better. Of course, this is consistent with God's oftentimes counterintuitive nature. God has many ways of getting things done—some of them not always pleasant. But, we must appeal to wisdom when we consider that there is no single best teaching style. Christ seemed to have various teaching styles—question and answer, metaphor, simile, allegory, and analogy, to name a few, but I suspect He preferred the lecture style.

One could misinterpret the author's intention to mean that relativism is acceptable in the classroom. According to the notion that there is no single best style (which, by the way, is at the heart of relativistic, secular leadership theory today), virtually *any* teaching style would be acceptable if the instructor believes in his or her heart that there is "cooperation" with the Holy Spirit as the author purports. Of course, this is not what Chewning had in mind. The stylistic gate is not wide open, just more open than many suppose. Indeed, there is the foundation of absolute truth (Scripture) which does place stylistic limits. Any teaching style that does not meet the criterion of biblical truth should not be considered, but that still leaves a lot of room for the creative, flexible teaching that Chewning proposes, and rightfully so.

We should teach creatively, but competently, to reach the student's heart. It must be noticed in this, however, that we are also interested in the mind. It is the mind that must be changed before reaching the heart. The mind decides to let the heart be changed. Christian Overman, author of *Assumptions that Affect Our Lives*, would say that the

professor's job is to change the student's mind from that of a Greek to that of a Hebrew. The mind, after all, is the battleground for the "presuppositions" Chewning discusses. Overman might say we should seek to change the assumptions upon which students base their decisions. Remember, a decision is the most important act any of us will ever make. A changed mind, i.e., one that accepts Hebraic (biblical) assumptions, opens the way for the heart to change. A greater variety of teaching styles can then be a potent influence with which to better reach the heart via the mind. The greater the variety of teaching styles available in the teaching repertoire, the greater the likelihood that the word will ultimately penetrate and find its mark in the human heart. We must not forget that we are soldiers in spiritual warfare, and the aptly placed Word is more powerful than Satan's weapons of which willful ignorance is but one.

I especially like the notion set forth in the article that there should be a balance between each Christian instructor and the Holy Spirit. This idea of balance reminds me of Alexander Hill's

important book *Just Business*, which puts forth the thesis that mature Christianity is a balance of love, justice, and holiness (or metaphorically, a three-legged stool). The stool cannot stand upright as it was intended unless all three legs are of equal length. So, too, it is true that there must be a balance of love, justice, and holiness in business as well as in the classroom. Too much love, for example, leads to permissiveness, as Hill points out. There is little doubt about the author's admonition that virtually every professor could and should spend more time studying and praying over the Holy Scriptures. If we would spend more time studying and praying over the Word, as he suggests, our teaching styles would blossom in exciting, unexpected ways. We must surrender 100 percent, not just 75 percent or 50 percent.

Implied in the article is the thesis that to change one's heart, and therefore worldview, one must first change paradigms. Notice that a paradigm is a mental and perceptual construct, and so it is at that level that we must deal. Chewning defines paradigm as "a model through which we can screen our thinking process ..." and then gives several examples of Christian paradigms.

The so-called paradigm exemplars he cites could be better described as "heuristics" because cognitive science has studied these kinds of mental devices explicitly. A paradigm does serve as a cognitive filter, but there is more to it than that. Heuristics are cognitive devices that function as rules-of-thumb for making decisions that manage uncertainty. Recall that one's initial decision to place one's faith in Christ precedes one's act of following. The steps are from mind to heart to behavior, each of which is changed. The decision to follow Christ has certainly managed a lot of uncertainty for me, to say the least. My own paradigm changed rather drastically many years ago, but I later learned various Christian-based heuristics that helped me become more obedient.

Certainly there is much to be said for decision-making in this context, but my understanding of a paradigm is that it is a worldview or frame of mind. A paradigm does filter perception, as Chewning points out, but, to be more specific, a worldview is a particular frame of mind that contains heuristics, and heuristics are not evenly distributed among students or faculty. Some have

more heuristics than others. The paradigm serves as the cognitive filter, as Chewning points out, but the heuristic is the tool that nails down the new paradigm in one's mind. Obviously, this understanding is an aid to the facilitation of witnessing and teaching as well as simple obedience. Elaborating Chewning's framework, therefore, we could say that cherry-picking is a teaching frame of mind that is implemented with various heuristics. One such heuristic might be, for example, "look for opportunities to insert Scripture," as his apt example illustrates. We would keep rehearsing this covertly to ourselves before and during class. This device would improve the cherry-picking style that would then connect the worldview with the device that implements it and reinforces it in long-term memory. The net result would be better teaching.

As said earlier, this article makes us more aware of our particular teaching style or styles. Some may have many styles, and we have to assume that would be beneficial. Further thinking, and perhaps empirical research, might focus on elaborating the variety of styles as Chewning suggests. I suggest, for example, that

someone identify and elaborate upon a family of specific business teaching styles. This could be intimidating to the teachers being observed as subjects, but one could identify many styles and find out which ones are most effective as measured by criteria such as grades, subsequent career success, various indices of Christian maturity, and the like. The inherent danger of this (as is true for all applications of empiricism, in my opinion) is the temptation to overlook the most important work that is the focus of Chewning's "A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration"—that is, for all of us to better know and apply the mind of Christ through the work of His indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God which *is* the truth. This is certainly a work that no science can justify, because we are justified by faith alone (Romans 3:28), and it is by faith that we shall live (II Cor. 5:7).

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## Case Study

### *Left Behind: The Case Study*

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*Cafferky offers a closer look at the marketing management process for “Left Behind: The Movie.” He also analyzes the movie producer’s faith-life integration ideas and the results of the marketing plans.*

#### Abstract

The product in this case study is the film *Left Behind: The Movie*—a screenplay about the end-time rapture. It was produced by Cloud Ten Pictures in partnership with Namesake Entertainment. The events that form the basis of this case occurred between 1996 and March 2001.<sup>1</sup> This case study places the teaching-learning experience in the context of the marketing management process for a consumer entertainment product. The emphasis is on distribution management and promotion. This case study is comprised of three sections:

1. Background information leading up to the point of strategic decision-making by Cloud Ten Pictures;

2. Analysis of the case, including a discussion of the strategic decisions that Cloud Ten

Pictures made and implications of this case for faith-life integration;

3. Results for Cloud Ten Pictures in their marketing of *Left Behind: The Movie*.

At a more fundamental level, this case touches on the tension the Christian feels at the points where the sacred and secular connect. It is about living in this world while being a citizen of the next world and communicating the gospel in terms that contemporary culture can understand while confronting the culture of “this age.” At a still deeper level, this case ultimately is about how we gain access to God, who is both transcendent and immanent, a God who is eager to use the frailties of human relationships to transmit that which is enduring.

#### I. Background Information

Peter LaLonde hung up the telephone after a long

conversation with a movie marketing consultant. LaLonde had a few minutes to spare before the appointed time for the final marketing strategy session that was to take place down the hall. The executive of Cloud Ten Pictures sat at his desk thinking about the events of the past three years. When Peter LaLonde and his brother Paul LaLonde, producers for Trinity Broadcasting Network’s syndicated Canadian television program *This Week in Bible Prophecy*, walked out of their television studio for the last time, they were not turning their backs on Christian media. The two brothers, co-authors of several books on the popular “dispensational premillennial” or rapture view of the second coming of Christ, had a new, larger vision they wanted to fulfill—launch the first-ever Christian film studio.

Like the prophet of ancient times, the company that the LaLonde brothers created took on the role of telling an apocalyptic story designed to bring people to a decision about their future with God.<sup>1</sup> At the press conference, Peter LaLonde explained, “Movies are the story-telling medium of our generation. They are the vehicles through

which culture and values are passed on. For too long, we in the Christian community have pointed out the shortcomings of Hollywood without offering real, viable alternatives. With Cloud Ten Pictures we want to change that.”<sup>2</sup> LaLonde believes that while the Hollywood film studios can produce great special effects and explosions, a Christian film studio is uniquely positioned to capture eternal truth in a way that the secular studios cannot.<sup>3</sup>

Their first project in the new company was a direct-to-video full-length film titled *Apocalypse* that became a best-seller among Christian videos, selling more than 300,000 copies. After the LaLondes cut their video marketing teeth on a \$1 million budget for *Apocalypse* in 1997, they produced in 1998 a second video for \$5 million (*Revelation*) and then a third video, (*Tribulation*) costing \$9 million.<sup>4</sup> Combined, all three videos sold more than a million units.<sup>5</sup> For LaLonde, it was the success of the *Tribulation* project that “started the revival in Christian filmmaking.”<sup>6</sup>

When LaLonde saw the success of *The Omega Code* at the box office in 1999, he knew he had a chance at rivaling *The Omega Code*’s success. An end-

of-the-world thriller starring Casper Van Dien and Michael York, *The Omega Code* was produced by Gener8Xion Entertainment and financed and promoted by Trinity Broadcasting Network. The film was named the No. 1 limited release that year by *Daily Variety*, based on box office sales, and it was among the top ten box office draws the week it opened on just 304 screens.<sup>7</sup> Its opening weekend, *The Omega Code* grossed \$2.4 million dollars. By the time the film had been pulled off the screens, it had grossed more than \$11.5 million.<sup>8</sup>

If Cloud Ten Pictures had any hope of producing a product that could rival the success of *The Omega Code*, LaLonde knew he had a steep marketing road to climb. He knew that distribution would be one of his most challenging obstacles to success.

### **The Film Marketing Industry**

In North America, a handful of giant film distribution houses rule the movie marketing world. They have so many movies

flowing through their well-greased marketing channel that it is difficult for newcomers to break in. Those who break in do so by unconventional means.

Theatrical screening of movies is a \$7 billion dollar business annually, not to mention the massive video rental segment, video sales, and pay-per-view television. Every year in North America, thousands of new films are produced. Even with more than 33,000 theater screens on the continent, there are not enough places for all these new films to be shown.<sup>9</sup> The reason: most films do not attract the size of audience that will bring in box office revenues needed for theater owners to survive.

### **Consumer Movie-Going Behavior**

At LaLonde's request, Cloud Ten's market research team gathered information from *Screen Digest* magazine to present at the marketing strategy session.<sup>10</sup> The charts they put together for the strategic planning session lay on his desk (see Charts 1-5).

Chart 1

Cinema Admissions in the U.S. & Canada (in Millions)			
	1995	1996	1997
Canada	87.45	90.12	98.14
U.S.	1,262.60	1,338.60	1,387.70

Chart 2

Avg. Cinema-Going Per Capita in the U.S. (visits/yr.)					
	1960	1980	1990	1995	1997
U.S.	7.5	4.7	4.2	4.7	5.16

Chart 3

Cinema Screens in Canada and the U.S.						
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1996	1997
Canada	1,278	1,156	1,037	1,713	2,034	2,164
U.S.	16,354	14,000	17,590	23,689	29,731	31,640

Chart 4

Percent of Total Film Expenditures on Feature Films (1996) in the U.S.				
	Theatrical	Video Rentals	Video Sales	Pay TV
	23.9%	32.4%	19.7%	21.9%

Chart 5

Spending on the Movies in the U.S. (in Millions) 1988 - 1996					
	1988	1990	1994	1995	1996
Theatrical	4,458	5,022	5,396	5,494	5,944
Video Rentals	6,061	7,551	8,564	8,160	8,078
Video Sales	1,469	2,346	3,683	4,384	5,436
Pay TV	4,215	4,842	4,586	5,157	5,448

In addition, the research team gathered box office data from the preceding years. They were looking for the weekends during the year that traditionally had low attendance. They took the box office revenues from the top 15 films each weekend and then ranked the weekends with the

lowest box office revenues at the top. Chart 6 (next page) shows the ranking of each of the 15 lowest box office weekends compared with the average (index) for all the weekends of the year across several years. Conducting this analysis, they found that the 37th weekend of

the year is when theater seats are most likely empty.<sup>11</sup> They had to consider other factors, too, such as their own production capabilities, what films had already been scheduled for release by the Hollywood film studios, and the month of the year that video sales present the most attractive opportunity. The team did a similar analysis (see Chart 7) by month of year comparing the gross box office revenues over a period of several years.<sup>12</sup>

LaLonde's marketing team already had some experience in

video marketing, giving them an understanding of the ways of the marketplace. This they factored into their approach to theatrical film marketing. Marketing a consumer entertainment product like a book or movie is a never-ending problem that requires attention to the quality of the product, strong methods to create access for consumers, and wise use of limited promotion funds to generate early, vigorous word-of-mouth.

Consumer interests rapidly shift from what was new last

week to what is new this week. To be successful in this type of fast-paced market, the marketing managers of entertainment products need to move faster than the public. Months and weeks before the release date of a new entertainment product, the marketing management team is already beginning to work on their next project.

It is one thing to market a video product to a well-defined niche in the market where you know how to find the consumers and know a lot about their interests. It is quite another thing to attempt to mass market a theatrical film product.<sup>13</sup> Predicting consumer response to a theatrical screening of a film is like the roll of the dice. Film marketing is a risky proposition, and there are many more losers than winners at the box office.

Another important element that Cloud Ten marketing leaders picked up is the fact that consumer interest in film varies by gender, age, and occasion. They noticed that there are distinctive patterns of movie attendance depending on the genre. Moviegoers who enjoy romantic comedies on a "date movie" are essentially different from the moviegoers who enjoy action thrillers. These consumer

differences needed to be factored into the marketing plan. The only problem was that there is little data to rely on when determining the consumer behaviors associated with attendance at religious apocalyptic thriller movies. To understand who might be interested in this type of movie, Cloud Ten had to depend upon its knowledge of the direct-to-video experiences.

Whether a moviegoer is interested in drama, comedy, romance, thriller, or a documentary, regardless of whether or not his or her tastes change, one thing seems unchangeable: the moviegoer goes to the movie to be entertained with a good story. Moviegoers don't go to hear a sermon in order to consider the meaning of life.

### *Core Consumers*

Peter LaLonde saw the natural match between the customers of the *Left Behind* books with the potential customers of the movie. It seemed a no-brainer to select the readers and supporters of the books as the primary audience<sup>14</sup> who would support the film version of the story.<sup>15</sup> Victor Vanden Oever, president of Providence Entertainment, estimated the size of the relatively untapped evangelical Christian market at

Chart 6

### **15 Lowest Attendance Weekends in the Year:**

Weekend	Index
37	0.63
44	0.63
18	0.66
43	0.69
38	0.70
17	0.72
49	0.74
19	0.75
39	0.75
16	0.79
20	0.79
50	0.79
51	0.81
4	0.83
5	0.83

Chart 7

Index	Month
1.43	July
1.20	June
1.11	November
1.08	August
1.04	December
1.03	January
0.99	May
0.96	February
0.86	March
0.81	April
0.79	October
0.71	September

more than 70 million people.<sup>16</sup> The power that can come from focusing on a niche like this is in the fact that Christians are relatively easy to find and are highly organized into small cohesive units across North America.

Focusing on such a niche market for a mass-marketed product required “out of the box” thinking on the part of the Cloud Ten marketing team.<sup>17</sup> As LaLonde thought more about this in preparation for the final strategy session, this project began to take on more of a public evangelism theme. Perhaps this feeling he had about the market niche was key to finding the right marketing strategy. The more he considered this, the more he thought, “When you have a great product, let your core audience know about it. They are your best evangelists.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Marketing Independent Films**

As in the book publishing industry, every new film presents a one-of-a-kind marketing task. Each film is different from the ones preceding it. Every story has a different core idea that becomes the foundation for the entire film and thereby the marketing message required to achieve success. For the independent,

sans the distribution channel relationships of the major studios, this means a gravitational pull toward guerilla marketing tactics—spending dollars on publicity and promotions rather than advertising.<sup>19</sup> Independent film studios have microscopic advertising budgets.

Traditionally, independent films have opened on a lesser number of screens, choosing a regional roll-out rather than a national campaign. Many of the theaters that are affiliated with chains will not take independent films since these normally generate lower attendance and lower box office revenues. This is changing to some degree as the number of cinemas grows, creating an over-capacity and empty theaters. Some regional outlets of the big chains are experimenting with independent films, showing them on one or two of their screens, in effect creating an independent theater within a multiplex.

Facing these obstacles, independent films often distribute to the so-called “art house” theaters that specialize in independent films. Selecting the right theaters is crucial since the early experience of moviegoers fuels the word-of-mouth promotion of the film in

succeeding weeks. Add to this the fact that even art house theater owners must make hard decisions on which films to keep loaded on their projectors. Some independent films must share a screen with another film, thus reducing the level of access to consumers. The amount of time/space available to show trailers is limited, often leaving little or no room for the trailer of an independent film. And, when another blockbuster comes along or is already proven to draw an audience, it is the independent film that is most at risk of being pulled off or kept off the screen. Boil it all down and you find that word-of-mouth becomes the independent film producer’s closest marketing friend.<sup>20</sup> When word-of-mouth works, the film “gets its legs.”

### **Christian Film**

What Gener8Xion Entertainment and Trinity Broadcast Network accomplished with *The Omega Code* they did with the help of Providence Entertainment—a film distribution company committed to helping Christian films gain a foothold in the market. The success of *The Omega Code* needs to be placed in the proper context. In the last 60 years of

filmmaking, only a very few Christian films have generated this type of enthusiasm. Most Christian films show in church basements, youth centers, and Christian school gymnasiums, not in the downtown cinema. Christian film producers, as a rule, lack the budgets needed to pull off Hollywood-quality productions. They don’t have the distribution channel connections needed for wide distribution.

Without distribution channels well-greased, it is almost impossible for Christian independent film producers to compete with the Hollywood film giants. And even so, very few of the films with religious themes (such as *The Ten Commandments*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Chariots of Fire*, *The Cross and the Switchblade*) ever made it to box office success. But those that made it did so because the so-called secular audiences thought they were good movies. Though these films were not produced for the Christian market, Christians quickly adopted some of them as their own.<sup>21</sup> Those they did not adopt they criticized for being unfaithful to the biblical record. In any case, these religious theme films were made to entertain, not to spread an overt Christian message. Roger Ebert, film critic

for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, is quoted by the Associated Press as saying, “Hollywood in general will produce anything that makes money.” But he added, “Overtly religious pictures are not generally moneymakers.”<sup>22</sup>

With the plethora of secular films coming out every year coupled with the real financial risks associated with distributing a Christian film that carries a “message” rather than emphasizing top-quality and state-of-the-art entertainment, the major distribution houses couldn’t be bothered to partner with an upstart studio like Cloud Ten. Because the costs for printing and distributing theatrical releases are so high and independent film studios typically are left out of the distribution channels controlled by the Hollywood studios, Christian film producers tend to focus on made-for-television movies and direct-to-video productions. Trinity Broadcasting Network, The Inspirational Network, and World Wide Pictures (Billy Graham) are three examples of Christian film producers who specialize in television movies.<sup>23</sup>

As the end of the millennium approached, LaLonde noticed the increased interest in Bible prophecy and Jerusalem-watching

among both Christian and secular audiences. The end of the world is a theme that has been picked up by the secular movie producers, too (*End of Days* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger; *The Book of Life*). In addition to the end-time theme, secular movie houses are also catering to the increased interest in spirituality by weaving spiritual themes into such films as *Dogma*, *The Matrix*, and even *American Beauty*.<sup>24</sup> His own interest in end-time events provided him with a ready-made avenue to pursue. Even though some in Christian theological circles criticized the rapture view of the second coming as being “bad theology,” LaLonde and other rapture enthusiasts dismissed the objections, choosing rather to focus on the good these films do in making the Bible accessible to the secular-minded movie audience.<sup>25</sup>

Gener8Xion Entertainment (the producers of *The Omega Code*) and Providence Entertainment (the distributor) proved that a focused marketing effort on this important niche market could deliver an audience for theatrical showings even if the quality of the movie suffered compared with that of other movies.<sup>26</sup> If LaLonde could raise the quality of the film up a notch

or two and deliver the audience, he would be even more successful. To achieve this he would need a strong product—a quality story that had strong potential for the screen.

### ***The Product and Brand Awareness***

The *Left Behind* book series was launched in 1995.<sup>27</sup> In 1996, when book sales topped 100,000, Namesake Entertainment saw potential and purchased the movie rights. Whatever gamble Joe Goodman, president of Namesake, might have felt in the deal quickly dissipated as *Left Behind* books rocketed to the top of the charts in the *New York Times* and *USA Today* and on the Web sites of Amazon and Barnes & Noble.<sup>28</sup> The book was developing brand equity that could be shared with other media.

An important element in the product is its title. Titling a movie to ride on the coattails of the book’s success seemed like a prudent action to take, and LaLonde determined that the movie title would be *Left Behind: The Movie*.

Another important element for the product and its position is the genre it fits within—it’s better

if a film has a clear genre connection. This prevents consumer confusion. LaLonde determined that a movie version of the book’s story would result in a suspense/thriller type movie. In an interview with Robin Parrish, he identified the movie as “a supernatural thriller.”<sup>29</sup>

To some extent, brand equity is developed by the collection of actors and director of films. But in this case, with a low budget, the Cloud Ten team was forced to rely on the book’s brand

***“Overtly religious pictures are not generally moneymakers.”***

equity rather than any equity that the

actors, producers, and director brought to the project.

### ***Competition***

From one point of view, one can argue that Cloud Ten Pictures, an independent religious film company, competes only with other independent religious film producers. Cloud Ten competes with Everland, Big Idea, Spring House, and Crossway in the Christian video market. In the Christian film market, Cloud Ten also competes with Signal Hill Pictures, Truth Soul Armor, and Gener8Xion Entertainment. In addition, the

studios such as World Wide Pictures (mentioned previously) that produce made for television movies all are Cloud Ten's competitors. They, too, will welcome the opportunity to enter the theatrical market.

But when LaLonde raised the battle flag claiming that his theatrical film project would be No. 1 at the box office on its debut weekend, he entered an entirely different arena. Not only

was he in competition with other established independent film studios that have experience in the theatrical market, but he was like David going out to slay Goliath. This imagery was not lost to LaLonde's assistants, and the thought of this made them tremble.

To see just how big this Goliath was, LaLonde asked his market research gurus to analyze the distribution strength of the

Hollywood companies. What they found took their breath away. The chart (see Chart 8) of the market shares of Hollywood's largest film distributors lay with the other information on LaLonde's desk.<sup>30</sup> In the larger picture, not only was Cloud Ten Pictures about to launch a competitive strike into the territory of these film giants, it was entering the competitive arena of all consumer entertainment options. In addition to going to movies, consumers have the option of staying at home and watching television, bowling, playing racquetball, working on hobbies, reading a good book, and hundreds of other activities.

#### *Distinctive Competency*

Before starting Cloud Ten, the LaLonde brothers hosted a weekly television show that dealt solely with the topic of the rapture. In addition, they published several books on the topic. Clearly Cloud Ten Pictures' distinctive competency lay in the area of direct-to-consumer marketing of apocalyptic-genre religious videos. The marketing team cut its teeth on learning how to attract evangelical Christian consumers who share a fascination with end-time events and the rapture in particular.

Most of their marketing channel contacts are in the video-marketing world.

#### *Marketing Goals*

Early in the project, LaLonde found it impossible to stifle his enthusiasm for the *Left Behind: The Movie* project. He never wavered from his goal of producing the first Christian film to debut as No. 1 at the box office in America. He also made it clear that he was not talking about being No. 1 for independent films, but rather No. 1 overall in the market.<sup>31</sup> LaLonde told his brother, "If we can prove that audience exists and we can unite the Christian community behind this film, we can achieve our goal, which is No. 1 at the box office. That's a huge goal. Cloud Ten is too small to do it, but the Christian community is plenty big enough to do it."<sup>32</sup>

Only with a national rollout of the film would they have any hope of achieving the primary goal. At various times through the campaign the number of theaters might change,<sup>33</sup> but initially the stated goal was as high as 4,000 screens—another audacious goal that few Hollywood films had achieved.<sup>34</sup> Seemingly unaffected by the brashness of his goal, LaLonde stated that he wanted

Chart 8

1999		
Studio	Gross: (in Millions)	Market Share:
Buena Vista	\$1,231.90	16.79%
Warner Brothers	\$1,030.80	14.05%
Universal Pictures	\$985.70	13.43%
Paramount Pictures	\$836.30	11.40%
20th Century Fox	\$783.10	10.67%
Sony Pictures Entertainment	\$624.80	8.52%
DreamWorks SKG	\$330.30	4.50%
New Line Cinema	\$304.40	4.15%
MGM/UA	\$303.40	4.13%
Miramax Films	\$289.80	3.95%
Artisan Entertainment	\$193.60	2.64%
Lions Gate	\$61.50	0.84%
Dimension Films	\$50.80	0.69%
Fox Searchlight	\$40.20	0.55%
IMAX	\$37.30	0.51%
Sony Pict. Classics	\$33.10	0.45%
October Films	\$32.40	0.44%
Others: \$168.4 Million = 2.29% Mkt. Share		
Gross for 1999: \$7.34 Billion		

*Left Behind: The Movie* to “open on more screens than any movie ever has.”<sup>35</sup>

With the vision of the film’s theatrical release across the country firmly set before them, they became confident that they could generate at a minimum \$30 million dollars in box office gross revenue.<sup>36</sup>

Not wanting to leave behind their contacts in the Christian video marketing channels, LaLonde and his team also set a goal of placing 350,000 units of the video through CBA retail stores as well as another 2.5 million units through large secular discount retailers. Since DVD format had firmly taken hold in the market, they planned to place almost half a million units on DVD. The suggested retail price for videos and for DVDs would be the same (\$29.95).

Along with this they dreamed of producing the video *The Making of Left Behind* to sell through CBA retail outlets and use as an incentive premium to sell more videos. Their goal was to sell at least 15,000 units of this “making of” video at a suggested retail price of \$9.95.

In addition to its tangible business goals, Cloud Ten hoped that with a successful theatrical

release, the small religious theme studios finally would be taken seriously as having quality products to offer in competition to the major studios. They wanted to move the screening of religious films out of church auditoriums and youth centers and into the local cinema, and in the process contribute something to the spread of the gospel. Success at the box office would mean millions from opportunities that were bound to come their way in the form of bigger projects, more capital, better scripts, bigger name actors and directors, and a real shot at getting to the big show on a consistent basis.

### ***Breakthrough Strategy Decisions***

LaLonde picked up the papers on his desk. He went over the marketing strategy issues in his mind as he walked from his office down the hall toward the conference room where his marketing team awaited him. Today they would make strategic decisions that would drive the entire project toward success.

They needed to choose a debut weekend when most of the theater seats are typically empty and competition from the Hollywood studios was at a minimum. He glanced at the list of potential blockbuster films the

major studios had already scheduled for release in 1999 and 2000.

Cloud Ten also needed the help of a distribution company. Namesake Entertainment had discussions with several Hollywood distributors. They had little interest.<sup>37</sup> Cloud Ten was on the verge of signing a distribution agreement with Impact Entertainment to help them through the distribution mine field. Going with Impact Entertainment required new, creative approaches to solving the distribution problem, and LaLonde wanted to make sure his marketing team was together in their strategy before signing the agreement.

LaLonde remembered what Joe Goodman, president of Namesake Entertainment, had told *Christianity Today*: “When you have a project that has good word-of-mouth, the way to go is to start small so that snowflake turns into a huge snowball crashing down the mountain. And that’s what we’re going to do.”<sup>38</sup> Today they needed to decide how they were going to accomplish this.

What LaLonde struggled with in his heart was the dilemma of deciding whether to emphasize the entertainment value of the

story or the gospel content of the story. On one hand, if he emphasized the entertainment value of the film too strongly, he risked offending his core audience—evangelical Christians. On the other hand, if he made the focus of his creative energy the overt gospel content, he would almost certainly offend the secular audience. Whatever internal struggle LaLonde might have felt on this issue, knowing his core audience he came down on the side of doing the best he could on entertaining them—without the traditional Hollywood gratuitous sex and violence—while making the message clear, central, and as non-offensive as possible. He remembered his own words to *Christianity Today*: “It [the film] can’t be a thinly disguised sermon. It has to be a story about real people. Much prejudice against Christian productions within Hollywood was not because of content. We didn’t do things at the level of excellence.”<sup>39</sup> Cloud Ten’s hope was that they would be able to tell a good story and thereby attract a great number of core consumers while achieving a “cross over” to other audiences.

Closely related to this dilemma were questions surrounding what scriptwriters,

actors, director, special effects team, and other resources to use on a small budget. And, once LaLonde assembled a good team, what would he do to keep all his commitments and keep the project moving swiftly and within budget once production began?

Where to produce the film was another question LaLonde had to answer. If he went to Hollywood to gain better access to film industry support services, it would eat up his meager budget.

Also, the closer he got to Hollywood, the less control he

would have over maintaining the central position of the message of the film. Making the film in Canada aided him in taking advantage of tax and currency exchange benefits while maintaining control over the project.

LaLonde knew that one of his biggest obstacles would be the limited budget he had to work with. Even so, with the healthy profits generated from the sale of the Christian videos, LaLonde put together a budget that would make this project become the most expensive evangelistic

movie in history.<sup>40</sup> The point about the \$17.4 million budget should not be lost, and though budget was a concern, in the larger scheme of Christian film marketing it need not be a worry. He hoped he could reassure his team about this in their meeting.

LaLonde knew the marketing strategy they developed needed to emphasize their core competency if they were to have the success of their dreams. He decided that they should focus a lot of their

distribution resources on bringing the video version of the film to the tried and true Christian Booksellers

Association retailers. But with the huge success of the book series, he wanted a wider retail distribution than that offered by the CBA, and he was considering offering the video to large discount retailers, too. But, if the huge secular discount retailers priced the video too far below the CBA retailers, the CBA retailers would become offended. This risk could affect not only CBA support of the current project but also their support for future projects.

Another question related to the distribution of the video was

one of timing of the film's theatrical release compared with the release of the video. All successful Hollywood films have a set release pattern—theatrical version first; a few months later, video rentals; a few months later when other courses have been exhausted, video sales;<sup>41</sup> still later, pay-per-view television; much later, broadcast television. Clearly, box office success drives the success in the other arenas. LaLonde was well aware of this, but he couldn't stop thinking about the success he had in the past in marketing direct-to-video products. He wondered whether this was still possible if he came out with a theatrical version of the film. He considered coming out with the video version at the same time as the theatrical version. Another possibility was coming out with the video version first. For other reasons, the timing of the video release can be crucial. Year-end holiday shopping accounts for a major proportion of retail sales. To cash-in on this buying wave requires careful timing regarding the year-end sales season. The risk of releasing the video too soon was rooted in the belief that direct-to-video release would likely cannibalize box office sales and stifle word-of-mouth with too

much product familiarity before the release.

Cloud Ten certainly had ties to the video marketing world, but unlike the producers of *The Omega Code*, Cloud Ten lacked close ties to the Christian media outlet. Trinity Broadcasting Network assisted in the promotion for *Omega Code* through its hundreds of local affiliates nationwide.<sup>42</sup> LaLonde mulled this over in his mind. He knew something would have to be done to change that.

As he took his place at the head of the conference table, LaLonde's mind summarized the two fundamental problems that his team faced: distribution and promotion. For promotion he knew he would have to rely on time-tested tactics that generate word-of-mouth. But, in LaLonde's mind this key to promotion also was becoming the key to solving the distribution problem. And it was this unique synthesis that he hoped he could verbalize to his team. If he could leverage his contacts in the video marketing world and at the same time mobilize the core audience of evangelical Christians to promote the film, he could generate a grass roots effort that would influence theater owners to screen his film. With this thought

***... he could generate a grass roots effort that would influence theater owners to screen his film.***

in mind, he called the meeting to order.

## II. Analysis of the Case

Cloud Ten's breakthrough strategy was to use the company's marketing strength with videos to build word-of-mouth for a theatrical release of the film. In other words, they decided to release the video first and the theatrical screening second in a carefully timed sequence. Producing a direct-to-consumer video first and then trying for a theatrical release of the same film second is not unheard of in the entertainment industry. It happens about as often as the winter Olympics and only then by companies who lack a firm foothold in the market. Major film distribution houses don't use ancillary products such as direct-to-consumer videos to build theater attendance. The reason: videos, if released first, likely will cannibalize box office sales. Cloud Ten Pictures decided to defy this law of entertainment. In the process it reversed or (for their purposes) retired the industry-standard ratio of box office receipts to video sales receipts as a tool to track success.

Their puzzling marketing strategy raises a few questions.

Why would a consumer pay \$8 to see the film in theaters on February 2, 2001 when they had already paid \$24.95 at Walgreens or Barnes & Noble to see it in the privacy of their own home the previous November?

The authors of the *New York Times* best-selling apocalyptic thriller book series *Left Behind* might ask these questions as would the film's director and actors. This is what movie marketing mavens would ask, but not the marketing team at Cloud Ten Pictures, who released the video version of the film October 31, 2000 in anticipation of the theatrical release three months later on Groundhog Day, February 2, 2001.

Few models for this type of marketing exist, but Roger Corman, the king of low-budget, B-movies, used it once on a limited scale with his movie *Carnosaur*. Two months before the release of *Jurassic Park*, Corman came out with *Carnosaur*, exploiting public fascination with mad DNA scientists who create dinosaurs that run amuck. It made some money in a few theaters but never became a blockbuster.<sup>43</sup> Even so, he sold truckloads of videos. Now Cloud Ten Pictures appeared to be using a similar strategy, but

their dreams were more grandiose. They wanted to become No. 1 at the box office.

Peter LaLonde commented on the strategy:

*When we release this on video in October, the only people who are going to buy it are people who are born-again Christians and people who are fans of the book series. What we want them to do is see the film, see the quality of the film, get excited about the film, and then join with us in our major outreach objective, which is to win the box office when we open in February.<sup>44</sup>*

*We want a Gideon's Army here. And we need to literally have that one percent of the population go crazy with this, if you will, and say, "This is our opportunity to have one of the greatest outreaches in history," and to also send the most powerful message that has ever been sent to Hollywood with the size and scope of audience that comes to see this kind of film. If we're successful in that, we can literally start a bit of a revolution, not just for this film but for all other Christian films and filmmakers, everyone who's vying now to bring these movies into the mainstream. If we build upon*

*what "Omega Code" did, it's going to resonate throughout the Hollywood world. So, we need to get that one percent totally on fire when they see the quality of this film.<sup>45</sup>*

*We need a grassroots movement in every city in America to work this thing—as in word-of-mouth, people talking about it. We can make a great movie, but what we need are people on the ground to support that movie. So we're going into each city and [telling] a church in that city [that] for the same price it would cost them to bring in an evangelist, they can help us sponsor the release of this movie in that city.<sup>46</sup>*

### **The Marketing Goals Revisited**

With the *Left Behind* video on the market, Toronto-based Cloud Ten Pictures prayed that audiences would flood into thousands of theaters on Groundhog Day to see the film, helping the company return its \$17.4 million investment. And with this success LaLonde hoped to achieve what no other religious film had achieved—becoming No. 1 at the box office in its opening.

Though some films are distributed to 2,000 theaters before the close of the film,

few films open in that many cinemas on the debut weekend. To do so requires an expensive national advertising campaign and a big print budget (for thousands of copies of the film to be available at the same time), something that Cloud Ten couldn't likely do. Only a handful of religious theme films (like *The Ten Commandments*) have become miracle money machines for Hollywood distributors.

The February release date selected by Cloud Ten was in a month that ranked 8th in movie attendance, and the weekend, February 2, ranked 15th from the bottom in attendance over the last ten years. Over the past ten years very few movies (*Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Star Wars—Special Edition*, *Scream 3*) that were destined for success made it into the top ten winter season rankings (mid-November to March) with a late January or early February debut. And these were movies distributed by the major houses such as Fox, Buena Vista, and Miramax—distributors that had other products in the pipeline to offer the theaters. Most winning movies in the winter season open around Thanksgiving or Christmas and continue running for 30 or more weeks with the potential of easily smothering

smaller films that get in their way.

February 2, 2001 was just a few weeks before the official start of the spring film season. Never mind that potential blockbusters such as *Red Planet* (Warner Bros.), *Men of Honor* (Fox), *Vertical Limit* (Sony), *Cast Away* (Fox), *What Women Want* (Paramount), *13 Days* (New Line), and *The 6th Day* (Sony) were released on massive waves of advertising and promotion at the start of the 2000-2001 winter film season. LaLonde must have been banking on these films petering out by the time the February doldrums rolled around.

Also, LaLonde was acting on the belief that once the winter season was well under way none of the big five distributors would release a new film until the start of the spring season. If LaLonde could avoid one of the big studios blasting him out of the box office in early February, releasing *Left Behind* at this time of year might prove to be an astute decision. Never mind that most moviegoers had spent their winter season movie allowances in theaters over the Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and Martin Luther King Jr. holidays and were in the traditional February sales slump. LaLonde and his team were

depending on an army of enthusiastic Christians to bring their movie-going friends and neighbors back to the theater on a cold day in February to see something more than their shadows. Other than the sale of videos, that's about all Cloud Ten could hope for. If word-of-mouth took off from there, they would have the box office hit they desired.

Melissa Richter, publicity manager, explained why the first weekend in February was chosen. "It is just after Christmas. Cloud Ten needed lead time to complete the editing and then launch the video. February is typically a time when there is no major competition from the big houses."<sup>47</sup>

#### *A Plan from Cloud Nine*

November was a perfect time to supply the Christian holiday gift market. If the video came out after Christmas, the opportunity would be missed for 2000. By the time Christmas 2001 rolled around, it would be likely that other products would take the spotlight. With the film version released in February, video sales were likely to remain brisk through the spring.

Overcoming the distribution problem for the theatrical release was more significant. To a small distribution house like Cloud Ten, getting in the door at local theaters is like climbing Mount Everest—you need to go there with someone who has been there before. Cloud Ten wouldn't

***LaLonde and his team were depending on an army of enthusiastic Christians ...***

be going there with one of the big film distributors like Sony

or Buena Vista. To solve the access problem, LaLonde's team partnered with Impact Entertainment to mount a direct sales effort recruiting local churches and other organizations to put up \$3,000 apiece to sponsor the screening of the film at local cinemas. Impact Entertainment had a list of about 900 pre-selected theaters across the country that they targeted. When the sponsoring organization sent its money to Impact Entertainment, Impact made the arrangements with the local theater. In addition, Impact sent a media kit that included posters, fliers, press releases, and radio and television spots to the sponsoring organization. Local sponsors had the option to spend additional money to make their

own media buys in their local market.

Essentially a risk-sharing arrangement with the theater owners as a guarantee in case the film flopped, this program became a unique form of corporate sponsorship of films—a tactic well-known in the film world. In this case the corporate entity is a collection of independent religious groups rather than multibillion dollar businesses that have millions to throw at projects like this. Films such as *Hoop Dreams* (sponsorship from Nike) and the James Bond thriller *Goldeneye* (sponsorship from the BMW Z3) successfully wooed corporations to share in the advertising costs and build audience attendance. LaLonde used local churches and Christian bookstores to get him in the door at local cinemas and to spread the cost of distribution while letting them become the primary means for advertising. Informal reviews by video watchers took the place of formal reviews by critics.

If in each sponsored theater over the life of the film 1,200 people attended under matinee prices, the theater would generate \$6,000 in gross revenue. Add a modest per person sponsor donation to the \$5 matinee price

that each coupon-bearing Christian pays at the box office, and you get a ticket price about the same as what the believer would have paid to see the movie without all the hoopla. LaLonde positioned it as being about the cost of sponsoring a traveling evangelist.

If a large enough audience attended, the sponsoring church would get its money back, making the whole idea a potential win for both the local theater owner as well as the church. Pastors and church administrators would win, since it is unlikely that the \$3,000 would be returned to the individual donors. The successful program, in effect, became a fund-raising event for the church. Church members won by getting to go to a movie with their pastor's blessing. Cloud Ten Pictures also won by collecting a percentage of the box office gross and establishing a relationship with a few thousand film exhibitors. Christian bookstore owners who put up the \$3,000 had the potential of getting loads of free advertising for risking the money.

Every local sponsor received discount coupons to use in generating audience support. Instead of paying \$7 or \$8 for the viewing coupon, holders paid matinee prices. Individuals who

purchased the videos received two coupons to give to others. Organized much like a massive evangelistic campaign with many locations focusing their prayer power, financial power, and word-of-mouth influence on the same date, this effort pooled the fervor of Christians trying to accomplish more than just sell a movie experience. Giving away free tickets is a common marketing tactic used to build attendance and word-of-mouth.

#### ***Getting Your Pie from the Sky***

The film's title attempts to exploit the *Left Behind* book series brand equity built by retired evangelist Tim LaHaye and his collaborator, Jerry B. Jenkins. Added to this was an increased interest in doomsday, Jerusalem-watching, and new millennium themes among evangelical consumers. After all, Jerusalem is a hotly-contested sacred ground and the new millennium was just beginning at the end of 2000. And, to reach Christians who share a keen interest in these things, LaLonde had the support of several high visibility television ministries and national Christian organizations.

The film's actors added some weight to Cloud Ten's marketing efforts. While not the most

expensive actors, the image package that the likes of Kirk Cameron (*Growing Pains*), Chelsea Noble (*Growing Pains*, *Full House*, *Days of Our Lives*), and Clarence Gilyard (*Walker—Texas Ranger*, *Die Hard*) and others brought to *Left Behind* would help. Going on the talk show circuit to talk about *Left Behind* would help even more. The value that actors and directors bring to the marketing table is the ability to raise awareness among the primary target audience.

By beginning his marketing efforts for *Left Behind* with the release of the video, LaLonde turned to the familiar, to what had brought him success thus far—Christian video distribution. Through his experience in this market, he developed a choir of contacts in the religious video world that he turned to for support of *Left Behind: The Movie*. Though his contacts were a different set than the names and addresses the major film distributors had, they still were an absolute must for distribution success. If this project succeeded with even 1,000 theaters screening the film, the contact list would change overnight. And with this new contact list, Cloud Ten Pictures

would have a foothold in the big market. If LaLonde could follow *Left Behind* with a winner, local cinema owners might have reason to screen his future products whether or not local congregations sponsored the film.

Another strength that LaLonde's marketing team used was a focused effort on a single market

niche, developing relationships with leaders in the evangelical Christian churches. Evangelical opinion leaders are easy to find. The evangelical Christian market is highly organized into recognizable local entities. Clearly this local niche element is key to success. Direct sales efforts and promotional programs targeted to these organizations will drum up financial support to sponsor a film at local cinemas. Once believers belly up to the bank and collectively donate the sponsorship amount, they do not want to see their gospel investment go to waste. The donation sets up an immediate urgency to bring out the audience.

The sheer size of the evangelical Christian demographic group was in Cloud

Ten's favor. It had been a long time since Christians had had a film they could go to at the theater without feeling guilty that they were supporting an industry that exploits evil for entertainment. More than this, the evangelical's belief that promoting a film like

***The evangelical Christian market is highly organized into recognizable local entities.***

*Left Behind* is a contribution to spreading the gospel would be the fire behind

congregations talking it up among themselves. The film probably would generate attendance by people sympathetic to rapture-believing evangelists.

***Of Mountains to Climb***

Cloud Ten had a good chance to succeed. Even so, it had a few mountains to fly over en route to the big box office hit.

*Left Behind: The Movie* could use a few rave reviews in the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Washington Post*, and in every major city they hoped to conquer. It is all but impossible to get reviews published in newspapers read by the general public if the film is not yet released, and there is even less of a chance if the video is released first. Reviews published in obscure religious

publications will drive some Christians to acquire a video or see a film, but *Left Behind: The Movie* would need more than the reviews by the actors, directors, and a few evangelical leaders if Cloud Ten expected to pique the interest of a wider market. The movie was reviewed online by *Christian Spotlight on Entertainment*, *Preview Family Movie*, and *TV Review*.

Bringing out the video before the film meant that *Left Behind* had no opportunity for the traditional sneak preview at theaters. Indeed, the video became a surrogate for this oft-used marketing tactic designed to build word-of-mouth.

Videos were designed to produce free screenings (in the homes of believers or in churches) that produced word-of-mouth. The risk was that the video would create too much audience experience ahead of the theater release, decreasing the want-to-see level of desire before February 2, 2001. Videos may sell like hot cakes, but would people go to the theaters to see the big screen rendition?

*Left Behind* needed a dynamic trailer, the preview of film attractions coming in the next season, that local theater owners could use to entice the

audience to come back again. The only question was whether or not local theaters would use a *Left Behind* trailer between November 2000 and February 2001. Films are getting longer, leaving less time between showings to show trailers. The trailer is an important element of promotion that is under the complete control of theater owners. If they believed that *Left Behind* would have a run of more than just one or two weekends, theater owners may have wanted to use trailers during December and January. If, however, they were interested in partnering with a local congregation merely to reduce the risks of trying an independent religious film, but they didn't believe *Left Behind* actually would go anywhere, using the trailer for *Left Behind* would not help them much. Nor would screening a *Left Behind* trailer help theater owners promote a Sony or Buena Vista potential blockbuster that might be scheduled for the spring season. The Sony and Buena Vista trailers would be the odds-on favorites to show in December and January.

Another hurdle would be the presentation of the story line in the movie. The *Left Behind* books were proven best-sellers.

This doesn't automatically translate into a great film. The quality of the acting, the plot, special effects, and overall presentation of the script were vital if the film expected to get its word-of-mouth legs to success. The risk was that in trying to mimic the big studios and compete with monster budget films by creating a mainstream X-files type drama about the end of time, the movie would come off as a low-budget "me-too" production.

Cloud Ten's lack of experience in distributing film to theaters might have been its single biggest obstacle. In movie marketing success, the key is distribution, distribution, distribution. Cloud Ten was not using the major distribution houses to launch the film in theaters. Instead, the marketing team put a new twist on the idea of using videos and a novel form of "corporate sponsorship" (organized along the lines of an evangelistic campaign) to place the film in theaters. Did the cinemas selected have an opportunity to view the film before signing an agreement?

*Left Behind: The Movie*, like any one of the many new films that are produced each year, faced competition for screen time and

trailer space. With scores of new films coming out every week on the average, there are just not enough screens to show them all and not enough time to show all the trailers available to promote these new films. Add this fact to the awareness that only ten to 15 percent of all films make it to the box office big-time, and you have a recipe for selectivity by the local theater owner. Independent films often have to share a screen with another film, reducing its availability to the public. Large multiplex super cinema chains screen mainly films distributed from the proven winners. In addition, the big distributors have the clout of ten to 15 more films in the pipeline and can demand the showing of their less successful films as well as the blockbusters. The end result: independent films easily get edited off the marquee. It's a cruel market, with theater owners pulling the low money earners off their projectors in favor of new, more hopeful titles.

Limited screen time available corresponds with the restricted number of column inches available for critics to show their thumbs the week before February 2, 2001. Even if *Left Behind* obtained reviews in

publications fit for the general public, would the reviews get enough space to have any effect on attendance in February? With a decentralized distribution strategy involving local churches, it was questionable to what extent the film would get local reviews in time to crossover to the so-called secular audience.

The question also remained whether *Left Behind* would generate enough buzz among the general public to launch past the initial momentum given it by local believers. Pleasing the conservative and sometimes critical evangelicals who want the gospel appeal to be central and overt in ministry was another mountain to get around. The other side of this risky coin was the task of convincing the unchurched moviegoers that the film was not just another religious propaganda piece. Put another way from the point of view of evangelists, Cloud Ten's task was to entertain both Christians and non-Christians, especially those who might be skeptical of and offended by attempts at proselytizing. From Cloud Ten's point of view, all they really needed to see was a few million believers attending the show during February and March.

### ***Faith-Life Integration Issues***

Regardless of our vocation, Christians are by definition the "salt of the earth," the "light of the world," a bright city on a hill that "cannot be hidden."<sup>48</sup> That is to say, because we are Christians, we can do no other than be lights. Whether we know it or not, our witness cannot be hidden. It is a reality that is as certain as the Lord who is the greater Light of the world.

Paul restates this same truth in the indicative: "you shine as lights in the world."<sup>49</sup> God does not want the salt to lose its savor.<sup>50</sup> This applies as much to a film producer as it does to the minister of the gospel, and in this regard there is really no difference between the two professions. Workers in both professions are challenged to "do all to the glory of God"<sup>51</sup> and in whatever they do "do it with all your might."<sup>52</sup> Whatever our task, we are admonished to "work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men."<sup>53</sup> The challenge that anyone faces, whether a minister of the gospel, auto mechanic, or filmmaker, is the challenge to be salt without losing savor.

Some Christians speak in terms of living in this present world (the secular) while being a citizen of the heavenly world

(the sacred); we are merely sojourners here but we belong elsewhere. The Bible clearly teaches that at the same time Christians are called out of the world they are called into the world.<sup>54</sup> We are called to be in the world in such a way that others with whom we communicate are influenced for the cause of the gospel. Yet while we are in this world, hoping for the world to come, we stand along with those to whom we minister under the unifying reality of God. Some wish to artificially separate the elements of our life into sacred and secular, but as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, there are not two realities (sacred and secular), but one—one reality under God.<sup>55</sup> Ray Anderson concurs: “Religion tends to reinforce its authenticity and power through the boundaries which are drawn between the sacred and the profane, while faith lives only before God in a world with no boundaries.”<sup>56</sup> If Bonhoeffer and Anderson are correct, this means that the sacred gospel must be allowed, in an ironic way, to become Spirit-blessed secular without watering down its message. That is, it must be placed fully and completely right in the middle of the secular context in which our lives are

lived. Only in this way can it truly have power to transform lives. Unlike people in many other professions, a Christian filmmaker such as LaLonde has an unusual opportunity to be at the same moment both squarely in the middle of contemporary culture and under the sacred rule of our Lord, using an art form that speaks to both believers and nonbelievers.

It is in this unified reality, this integrated whole of life, that we influence others for good. This is the context in which the leaders of a company attempt to serve God. And, in a way not completely unlike that of the apocalyptic prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, and John, Cloud Ten Pictures portrays to contemporary world culture its interpretation of eternal truth. For modern day prophets to be heard, they must have credibility; they must speak in a way that is intelligible to contemporary culture. Thus, in a unique way, Cloud Ten Pictures and all other Christian film studios stand at the crossroad between sacred and secular in a highly visible and sometimes controversial way.

At a much deeper level, this case reflects how Christians live with the problem of how to gain access to God, who is at the same

time transcendent and near. Ironically, just as Cloud Ten Pictures struggled in developing a distribution strategy that created access to consumers, so in its larger role under God it has made an heroic effort to create access to God and its interpretation of truth through film. Just as God directed Moses to erect the ancient tabernacle close to Israel’s camp, a

***... Christian filmmakers have a unique opportunity to erect a spectacle that will draw their audiences to the Divine.***

spectacle of Divine worship, so Christian filmmakers have a unique opportunity to erect a spectacle that will draw their audiences to the Divine.

Scripture describes God’s transcendence in many places. “You are from below; I am from above.”<sup>57</sup> “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’”<sup>58</sup> “How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!”<sup>59</sup> Because of His transcendence, human beings have a problem of access. One might even say that access is at the core of a problem that needs to be solved if we are to

glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Without a connecting link, God is unapproachable. Jesus, through His person and work, is that connecting link. Only through His righteousness can we gain access to God’s throne, and because of this righteousness our

access is described as bold.<sup>60</sup> “In the beginning was the Word, and

the Word was with God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”<sup>61</sup> In addition to the access created by Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is designated as the One to guide us into truth.<sup>62</sup> The Spirit helps us in our weakness, speaking on our behalf when we cannot put words to the deepest cries of our soul.<sup>63</sup> In addition to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as the primary connecting links, believers everywhere are God’s “ambassadors,” a “nation of priests.”<sup>64</sup> This is none other than a form of decentralized distribution. For many unbelievers, it is their contact with a believer in the context of their work or as a result of their work that opens access to God.

It is in this way that filmmakers can play a unique, dramatic role by captivating the imagination, thrilling the senses. Is it possible that through the medium of film God's immanence is portrayed in a way unlike any other?

One viewing of the film may move people to think about their place in the final judgment, but exactly what would people be talking about when they left the theaters on Groundhog Day? Would the evangelicals be talking about anything other than the contribution the film might be making to the spread of the gospel? Would there be two or three sound bites to drop in conversations? Would there be one or two poignant moments in the film that would linger in the imagination, captivating conversations the next morning while people shoveled February snow with the neighbors? Would the skeptic who attended out of personal goodwill with an evangelical friend or neighbor have anything to say when he drove home? Personal reflection on one's position in the Kingdom of God is often a private matter. Cloud Ten's strategy was bound to have some success in getting an audience out once. Whether or not a buzz would take hold was quite another matter. Depending

on who you talked with, the answers to these questions was mixed.

### ***Additional Faith-Life Integration Issues***

At a time in history when the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee was grilling Hollywood executives regarding marketing films to children, *Left Behind: The Movie* had its own marketing challenges as it tried to break in where film giants thundered around it. People question the ethics of Hollywood in its marketing approaches with R-rated films, but Cloud Ten was not immune from ethical issues. The issue of exploiting the mission of well-meaning believers to promote a product offered by a for-profit organization has its ethical side. Certainly the cynical skeptics in the *Left Behind* audience would complain about this if they knew all the financial arrangements. Certainly they would feel cheated by an entertainment experience that did not measure up to a blockbuster's standards.

LaLonde stated that "the big studios can do the effects, they can do the explosions, they can do all the marketing and the publicity. But to capture eternal truth on film, I think that's

something we can do as a Christian film studio that they cannot do."<sup>65</sup> I wonder whether this was just another example of Christian arrogance seeping through. I find it difficult to accept that LaLonde really believed his own words. Hollywood film studios can make any film they want to espouse any ideology desired portrayed by any screen story they see fit. And, they can do it in a style that is unmatched by any other source. Hollywood has not wanted to produce a film that captures the evangelical Christian views on "eternal truth" in ways that evangelical Christians find acceptable. If capturing eternal truth is the most important criteria for success in a project like this, why did LaLonde spend so much energy defending his desire to upgrade the quality of the production on a par with what Hollywood can produce? Why would so much energy be placed on the top goal of being No. 1 at the box office? LaLonde was very clear on this point: his first priority was to attempt to make a good movie, and the second priority was to achieve box office breakthrough success into the arena where Hollywood studios usually roam at will.<sup>66</sup> Lesser priorities must have

included the interest in portraying a Christian message in a non-offensive manner.

Consider LaLonde's perspective on the interface between Christianity and culture. He said, "Here's the thing. We in the Christian community have pointed out the errors of Hollywood for how many years? We're not offering any viable alternatives. It's really time, if we're going to battle for our culture, to get out there on the front lines and do it. We're not quite at studio level yet, but boy, we're coming like a freight train."<sup>67</sup> And again, "If we are going to compete with the most powerful institution in our world today, then we have to compete with the best of the best to be the best among them."<sup>68</sup> LaLonde's apparent desire as voiced here was that Christian film studios should completely immerse themselves in the world of film in order to first gain credibility and thereby be heard. It is only by coming close to the culture and then excelling in terms credible to the audience that we are able to gain a listening ear. Many conservative Christian theology pundits will disagree with LaLonde on this point out of fear of defiling the purity of the eternal truth. It seems to me that

though Cloud Ten's attempt was less than perfect, their work was an Incarnation-like ministry.

### III. Results

When reviewing the results of the marketing efforts for *Left Behind*, it is important to consider the context in which the movie entered the market. On its debut weekend, the movie competed for attention with several films that had opened in the previous few weeks, including: *The Wedding Planner*, *Save the Last Dance*, *Cast Away*, *Traffic*, *Sugar & Spice*, *Crouching Tiger—Hidden Dragon*, *Snatch*, *Finding Forrester*, and *What Women Want*. Among these, *Cast Away*, *The Wedding Planner*, and *Crouching Tiger—Hidden Dragon* had received major attention and advertising budgets.

In addition to these films that were already on the market February 2, *Left Behind* joined with other new films that received attention, including *Valentine*, *Head Over Heels*, *Amy*, *Fever*, *In the Mood For Love*, *The Invisible Circus*, *Nico & Dani*, and *The Million Dollar Hotel*. The last six of these films

were limited releases while *Valentine* and *Head Over Heels* were national releases just like *Left Behind*.

#### **Theater Sponsorships**

Between October 31, 2000 and March 4, 2001, the author monitored the Impact Entertainment Web site that listed the sponsored theaters by city and state. This information he analyzed on a spreadsheet. Also, the author monitored the weekly reported box office revenue figures as published on the *Yahoo! Movies* Web site between January 26, 2001 and March 4, 2001. These figures are probably not complete since some theaters do not report gross sales.

Even so, since all movies playing during this competitive time period were

considered in the review, any underreporting for *Left Behind* would probably be matched at least to some degree by underreporting for other movies.

By the time October 31, 2000 rolled around, Impact Entertainment had published their vision of sponsoring almost 900 screens across the U.S. and

Canada—short of the 2,500 theaters goal that LaLonde pronounced when the film was under production. By November 6, 54 percent of the targeted theaters had received sponsors.

By late January 2001, 874 sponsorships had been arranged. In spite of this, Impact Entertainment ended up showing the film on just 670 screens opening weekend. Christians in approximately 200 cities were disappointed when some sponsored theaters had “holdover films” that they selected in place of *Left Behind*. After calculating the expected revenue from the holdover film and comparing it with the expected revenue from *Left Behind*, these theaters opted for a holdover product that was still producing a positive revenue stream.<sup>69</sup>

#### **Geographical Distribution of Sponsorships**

Twenty-two states represent 80 percent of the vision for sponsored theaters, with Texas, California, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Georgia comprising the top ten. LaLonde talked about his desire to screen the film in every major U.S. city, but the Impact Entertainment list

of target cities suggests a different approach was taken, i.e., showing the film in cities where the film was welcomed by a local congregation eager to promote the rapture story or in independent theaters not under the influence of the large film distributors.

Twenty-nine percent of the total sponsored theaters signed up during the last month. These late arrivals came from among the strongest states.

Impact Entertainment exceeded its vision significantly in the following states: Florida, Ohio, New York, Virginia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Kentucky, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Washington.

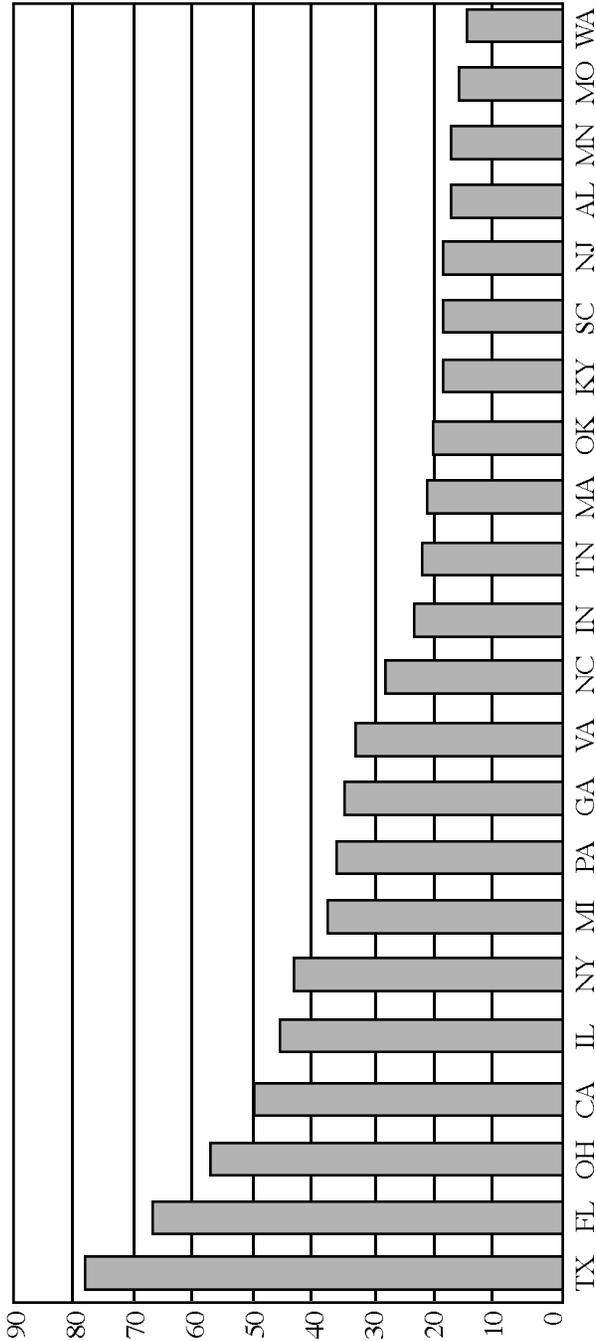
Eighty percent of the sponsored theaters on opening weekend were located in 22 states. Chart 9 (next page) depicts the top sponsored states. Fifty percent of the sponsored theaters are located in the top nine states. Every state in the U.S. had at least one screen sponsored by the time the debut weekend came. More than 750 cities were reached, with one tenth of these having multiple screens sponsored.

#### **Reviews**

Cloud Ten received generally positive reviews from supportive

**Top States Representing 80% of the Total Theater Sponsorships as of Feb. 2, 2001**

Data from Impact Entertainment Web Site, Feb. 2, 2001



believers. Positive opinion leader support came from many Christian celebrities, including Billy Graham, Jack Van Impe Ministries, Focus on the Family, and Promise Keepers.

Reviews among the secular critics were mixed but tended to give the film low ratings for its entertainment value. For example, the *New York Times* and *TV Guide* were less than flattering as were reviewers at the Associated Press, Mr. Showbiz, and film.com. Melissa Richter explained in an interview with the author that Cloud Ten Pictures did not attempt to obtain reviews from the major film critics “because they wouldn’t understand the biblical premise.”<sup>70</sup> I doubt that these film critics will agree with her assertion. Some might even be offended, since it places them in a less-than-credible position of not being able to understand a film’s premise. *Left Behind* is not the only film that has been produced the last few years dealing with an end-of-the-world premise. The critics didn’t miss the premise of the other films. Sidestepping the critics just because they might not understand the premise suggests that Cloud Ten expected a less-than-favorable response from critics. If Cloud Ten wanted to be

No. 1 at the box office, did they really think they could get there without the support of the major film critics?

**Publicity**

The publicity department successfully placed actor Kirk Cameron on several talk shows in the weeks preceding the debut of the theatrical screening. He appeared on *Pure Oxygen*, *Rosie O’Donnell*, *Celebrity Spotlight*, *Fox News*, and several local morning shows, including *Good Morning Texas*. He appeared on local CBS, ABC, and NBC affiliates, *Good Day Atlanta*, *CNN Showbiz*, *Moneyline*, and was featured on *CNN News*.<sup>71</sup>

**The Box Office**

The week following its debut, Cloud Ten Pictures’ publicity department moved quickly to interpret the results. In their news release of February 8, they stated that the release of *Left Behind* “proved to be a ‘minor miracle,’ ranking as the number one independent release for the weekend according to AC Nielson’s EDI.”<sup>72</sup> They were quick to point out that the selected weekend proved to be more competitive than expected: “With a solid box office, up 42 percent over the

same week last year, other top grossing, held-over releases such as *What Women Want* and *Snatch* left limited screen availability.<sup>73</sup>

In the debut weekend of February 2-4, 2001, *Left Behind* ranked 17th. It ranked third among its debut cohort group that entered the market at the same time. By March 2, 2001, the box office receipts for *Left Behind* had topped \$4 million. Based on the results through the month of February, Cloud Ten Pictures expected to generate a cumulative

total of about \$5 million in box office receipts.<sup>74</sup>

During the succeeding weeks after its debut, *Left Behind* slipped from 17th to 22nd, 37th, 44th, and climbed back up to 38th the weekend of March 2-4. Such a drop in ranking is expected for all but the few blockbuster films. Even so, Chart 10 depicts the change in revenue between the debut week and the second weekend. *Left Behind* had the steepest drop in revenue, indicating that public interest in the movie declined faster for it

than for other films that debuted at or near the same time.

It is difficult to explain the fact that *The Omega Code* grossed around \$12 million but opened in less than half the theaters that *Left Behind* opened in. Was it the media support afforded it by the Trinity Broadcasting Network?

### Video Sales

*Left Behind* was the number one video release in America in its week of release in October. As of February 2, 2001, Cloud Ten had placed about 100,000 copies of *The Making of Left Behind*. This far outpaced the original goal of 15,000 copies.

The first wave of videos and DVDs sold between November 2000 and February 2001 resulted in the sale of 1,500,000 units, about what had been expected. Immediately after the debut weekend, Cloud Ten had orders for an additional 1,500,000 units. In its press release to the secular market, Cloud Ten proudly announced on February 8, 2001: “Launched on video October 31st, *Left Behind* catapulted to No. 1 overall as reported by *The Hollywood Reporter*, beating out heavyweights *Toy Story 2* and *The Green Mile*. Sales tipped over 2.5 million units at a suggested

retail price of \$29.95 and continue to rise. In January it was awarded *Best Selling Title of the Year from an Independent Studio* and *Sell-through Title of the Year by an Independent Studio* at the VSDA Home Entertainment Awards in Las Vegas.<sup>76</sup> Cloud Ten’s core competency shows its true colors in these results. Video sales of *Left Behind* will easily be ten times more than the sales of any of their earlier videos. While Cloud Ten attributes the box office success to a “minor miracle,” one wonders whether the strong emphasis on the video sales prior to the theatrical release did, in fact, cannibalize ticket sales.

### Strained Relationships

Dealing in the Hollywood arena sometimes comes with a different kind of price. The success of video sales in the secular market sparked channel conflict between the CBA retailers and Cloud Ten Pictures. Disgruntled retailers watched the results of price-conscious WalMart customers purchasing the video for \$17.88 when they were trying to sell it for full retail value. Some retailers claimed that some discount retailers were selling the video retail for less than the

Chart 10<sup>75</sup>

Box Office Revenues			
Film	Opening Week Rev.	Second Week Rev.	% Change in Rev.
<b>Debut Week of Jan. 26</b>			
<i>The Wedding Planner</i>	13,510,293	10,605,542	-21.5%
<i>Sugar &amp; Spice</i>	5,891,176	3,621,274	-38.5%
<i>Faithless</i>	29,462	27,425	-6.9%
<i>The Legend of Rita</i>	9,318	9,174	-1.5%
<b>Debut Weekend of Feb. 2-4</b>			
<i>Valentine</i>	10,024,648	3,826,454	-61.8%
<i>Head Over Heels</i>	4,804,595	2,611,120	-45.7%
<b><i>Left Behind: The Movie</i></b>	<b>2,158,780</b>	<b>717,509</b>	<b>-66.8%</b>
<i>In the Mood for Love</i>	113,280	103,722	-8.4%
<b>Debut Weekend of Feb. 9-11</b>			
<i>Hannibal</i>	58,003,121	33,501,505	-42.2%
<i>Saving Silverman</i>	7,411,852	4,812,228	-35.1%

independent Christian booksellers could buy it wholesale. Citing a letter that LaLonde published in the December 2000 issue of *CBA Marketplace*, one retailer stated that LaLonde's response to CBA retailers' outcries was "too little, too late."<sup>77</sup> The Cloud Ten press release told how LaLonde would deal with this: "Even with this success, we also faced the challenges that come with it. We made a promise to Christian retailers that as soon as we got past the theatrical release we would begin to work with them to find ways to keep them competitive with the discount retailers."<sup>78</sup>

Relationships have been strained between Cloud Ten Pictures, Namesake Entertainment, and the authors of the book series. The authors filed suit, claiming that Cloud Ten Pictures did not fulfill its promises regarding the theatrical release date and the size of the production budget.<sup>79</sup>

Although Cloud Ten Pictures did not achieve every specific goal it set for *Left Behind: The Movie*, their project is being hailed as a success by many inside and outside their industry.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup>For improved readability of Part I of the case study, certain details and events not relevant to the case have been altered or supplied when not known. Some attributions of thoughts, words, and actions have been made to individuals in this case. While the details relevant to the case are believed to be factual, some of these other details, events, and attributions have not been confirmed as accurate.

<sup>1</sup>The prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, and John the Revelator are examples of ancient prophets that used apocalyptic stories to challenge their own generation.

<sup>2</sup>Cloud Ten Pictures, Company profile on [www.cloudtenpictures.com](http://www.cloudtenpictures.com), March 4, 2001.

<sup>3</sup>Randall Murphree, Film producers engaging culture for Christ, *American Family Association Journal*, October 2000.

<sup>4</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>5</sup>Randall Murphree, Article on *Left Behind* published on [www.freerepublic.com](http://www.freerepublic.com), June 26, 2000.

<sup>6</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment: Part II, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>Danny M. Boyd, Associated Press article on *Left Behind*, January 31, 2001.

<sup>8</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment: Part II, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>9</sup>John Durie, Annika Pham, and Neil Watson, *Marketing and selling your film around the world*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>Charts 1 through 5 from John Durie, Annika Pham, and Neil Watson, *Marketing and selling your film around the world*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup>Cumulative gross of top 15 films by weekend, [www.boxofficeguru.com](http://www.boxofficeguru.com), November 2000; analyzed by the author.

<sup>12</sup>Average gross of top 15 films 1990-2000, [www.boxofficeguru.com](http://www.boxofficeguru.com), November 2000; analyzed by the author.

<sup>13</sup>Tiiu Lukk, *Movie marketing: Opening the picture and giving it legs*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup>Margaret Feinberg, *Left Behind* goes Hollywood, *Ministries Today*, September/October 2000.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Marmon, Cloud Ten Pictures marketing plan for *Left Behind*, [cloudtenpictures.com](http://cloudtenpictures.com), February 2001.

<sup>16</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment: Part II, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Gillian Flynn, Deliverance, *Entertainment Weekly*, September 22, 2000.

<sup>19</sup>Tiiu Lukk, *Movie marketing: Opening the picture and giving it legs*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* See also John Durie, Annika Pham, and Neil Watson, *Marketing and selling your film around the world*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 2000).

<sup>21</sup>Danny M. Boyd, Associated Press article on *Left Behind*, January 31, 2001.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment: Part II, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>24</sup>George M. Thomas, More movies take a look at spirituality, *Akron Beacon Journal*, Akron, Ohio, January 19, 2001.

<sup>25</sup>Peter T. Chattaway, Christian filmmakers jump on end-times bandwagon, *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1999.

<sup>26</sup>Jeff Jensen and Gillian Flynn, Christian entertainment: Part II, *Entertainment Weekly*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>27</sup>Berta Delgado, What's ahead for *Left Behind*? *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 2000.

<sup>28</sup>Peter T. Chattaway, Christian filmmakers jump on end-times bandwagon, *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1999.

<sup>29</sup>Robin Parrish, Interview with Peter LaLonde, published on the e-zine [www.Christianmusic.about.com](http://www.Christianmusic.about.com), October 5, 2000.

<sup>30</sup>Peter Miller, Movie box office reports—movie studio market share for 1999, [www.movieboxoffice.about.com](http://www.movieboxoffice.about.com), March 8, 2001.

<sup>31</sup>Peter Marmon, Cloud Ten Pictures marketing plan for *Left Behind*, [www.cloudtenpictures.com](http://www.cloudtenpictures.com), February 2001.

<sup>32</sup>Berta Delgado, What's ahead for *Left Behind*? *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 2000.

<sup>33</sup>After the initial statements, LaLonde resized his goal. However, Cloud Ten Sales Manager Byron Jones asserted that they might even distribute to 6,000 screens (see the article *Left Behind* by Randall Murphree, published on the e-zine [www.freerepublic.com](http://www.freerepublic.com), June 26, 2000).

As late as October 28, 2000, LaLonde told the *Dallas Morning News* that his goal was to open on 2,500 screens, while at the same time Impact Entertainment was stating that the "vision" was to open in about 900 screens nationwide. See also Berta Delgado's article, "What's ahead for *Left Behind*?" *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 2000.

<sup>34</sup>Josh Chetwynd and Andy Seller, Conan could roll with rock, *USA Today*, May 12, 2000.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Peter Marmon, Cloud Ten Pictures marketing plan for *Left Behind*, [www.cloudtenpictures.com](http://www.cloudtenpictures.com), February 2001.

<sup>37</sup>Michael Smith, *Left Behind* law suit in the e-zine [news.crosswalk.com](http://news.crosswalk.com), February 2001.

<sup>38</sup>Peter T. Chattaway, Christian filmmakers jump on end-times bandwagon, *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1999.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Gillian Flynn, Deliverance, *Entertainment Weekly*, September 22, 2000.

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>46</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>47</sup>Melissa Richter, Cloud Ten Pictures, Telephone interview with the author, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 2, 2001.  
<sup>48</sup>Matthew 5:13, 14.  
<sup>49</sup>Philippians 2:15.  
<sup>50</sup>Matthew 5:13.  
<sup>51</sup>I Corinthians 10:31.  
<sup>52</sup>Ecclesiastes 9:10.  
<sup>53</sup>Colossians 3:23.  
<sup>54</sup>See John 17:15: "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one." John 17:18: "... so I have also sent them into the world." Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world ..." Titus 2:12: "... live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ...".  
<sup>55</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995).  
<sup>56</sup>Ray Anderson, *Historical transcendence and the reality of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975).  
<sup>57</sup>John 8:23.  
<sup>58</sup>Psalms 91:1, 2.  
<sup>59</sup>Romans 11:33.  
<sup>60</sup>Hebrews 4:14-16.  
<sup>61</sup>John 1:1, 14; see also Philippians 2:1-11.  
<sup>62</sup>John 16:13.  
<sup>63</sup>Romans 8:26, 27.  
<sup>64</sup>II Corinthians 5:20; see also I Peter 2:9.  
<sup>65</sup>Randall Murphree, Film producers engaging culture for Christ, *American Family Association Journal*, October 2000.  
<sup>66</sup>Robin Parrish, Interview with Peter LaLonde, published on the e-zine www.Christianmusic.about.com, October 5, 2000.  
<sup>67</sup>Berta Delgado, What's ahead for *Left Behind?* *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 2000.  
<sup>68</sup>Margaret Feinberg, *Left Behind* goes Hollywood, *Ministries Today*, September/October 2000.  
<sup>69</sup>Melissa Richter, Cloud Ten Pictures, Telephone interview with the author, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 2, 2001.  
<sup>70</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>71</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>72</sup>Melissa Richter, Cloud Ten Pictures, *Left Behind* gets down to the business of winning souls, Press release for Christian market, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, February 8, 2001.  
<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Peter Marmon, Cloud Ten Pictures, Telephone interview with the author, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 2, 2001.  
<sup>75</sup>Data for Chart 10 taken from *Yahoo! Movies* Web site for the time period indicated in the chart. Data analyzed by the author.  
<sup>76</sup>Melissa Richter, Cloud Ten Pictures, *Left Behind* gets down to the business of winning souls, Press release for secular market, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, February 8, 2001.  
<sup>77</sup>Bob Painter, Letter to the editor in "Open Forum" section of "CBA Voice of the Industry" on the online version of *CBA Marketplace*, March 2001.  
<sup>78</sup>Melissa Richter, Cloud Ten Pictures, *Left Behind* gets down to the business of winning souls, Press release for secular market, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, February 8, 2001.  
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## Best Practices

### A Forum for Discussing Creative Ways to Achieve Biblical Integration Into Business Classes and Programs

*This section of the JBIB is dedicated to discussions of "best practices" used by individuals and institutions committed to biblical integration in business. The articles are descriptive in nature and focus on efforts ranging from one-on-one counseling to program-wide efforts to connect business students with biblical truth related to their personal and professional lives. This issue contains the following reports:*

- From Brad Stamm, Cornerstone University:  
 "Economic Applications to the Bible" or  
 "Dad, My Bible has some Economics in It"
- From William Fowler and John D. Neill, Abilene Christian University:  
 "The 'Senior Blessing' at Abilene Christian University's  
 College of Business Administration"
- From Eric Elder, Northwestern College:  
 "Integrating Economics and Christianity."

## Best Practices

### Economic Applications to the Bible or “Dad, My Bible has some Economics in It”

Brad Stamm  
Cornerstone University

I recall one summer day when my daughter Sara and I were on the back porch of the house I was renting at Nyack College outside of New York City. The house resembled a small chalet and had a beautiful view overlooking the Hudson River. I was reading *Essays on Economics and Economists* by R.H. Coase (1994) and she was reading *My First Bible*. She looked at me and said, “Dad, what are you reading?” I said, “I’m reading economics. What are you reading, Sara?” She replied, “I’m reading the Bible, Dad, and it has some economics in it.”

This has become my view regarding the integration of economics with the Scriptures in the college classroom—look for ways to apply economics to the Scriptures in order to better understand both the passage and the economic principle involved, but don’t try to make an economic interpretation of the

Bible. Too many Christian economists and business professors make this mistake, and I believe it is a mistake because the primary intention of Scripture is to reveal Christ and His plan of redemption for us and not to convey economic principles. Once we see the Bible as an economic blueprint for living, we start down a path of economic legalism along with its judgmental attitude.

I now will give you a few of the many examples that I use in my classroom (primarily in the principles courses). These examples have proven to be very popular with students, not because they are perfect, but because they promote the exchange of ideas both spiritual and academic.

#### Life’s Most Important Lesson

Perhaps the most important application of economics to the Scriptures is the idea of “opportunity cost.” Opportunity

cost is the cost of the sacrificed alternative. That is, what have I sacrificed in order to gain something else? I like to think of it as “opportunity lost.” This economic principle can be applied to Matthew 16:26 where it states, “What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

In the above situation, what has the individual gained? He has gained the world that includes all the pleasures therein. But what has he lost? He has lost his soul—the only part of him that is eternal—and exchanged it for that which is temporal. Therefore the wise person will determine the opportunity cost in advance and ask himself the question, “What am I giving up in order to gain this temporal pleasure or pursuit?” If we can see past the short run and recognize the eternal benefits that we are giving up, we never will accept the trade-off.

#### The Price of Bean Soup

There is a much-used concept in microeconomics called “elasticity of demand.” It states that given a percentage change in price, there is an associated percentage change in the quantity

demand of that particular good or service. Let’s say the price of a good goes up ten percent and the demand for that good goes down 20 percent. This case would be regarded as “elastic.” That is, the demand for that good is very sensitive to a change in price. If you were the seller of that good you might think twice before raising your price, because total revenues would decline. On the other hand, you might raise the price of a good by ten percent and the demand for that good might only go down by five percent. This would be described in economic terms as “price inelastic” and reflects an insensitivity to changes in the price of a good or service. The more insensitive to price changes we are, the more inelastic the demand for that commodity.

Now think about this story from Genesis 25:29-34.

*Once, when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” ... Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?” But Jacob*

said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

Esau was very insensitive to the price of soup. We might say in economic terms that he exhibited very inelastic demand. Soup on the open market in a typical situation might have only cost him \$0.25, however, given the circumstance, he was willing and able to offer a much higher price. And as a result, he paid his inheritance for a short-term need.

Do we get into situations where we act irrationally such as Esau? Do we enjoy short-term pleasure, simultaneously giving up long-term gain? What are the consequences of trading our blessings, both current and future, to fill our stomachs, minds, etc. because we need it now? If someone craves drugs, money, sex, power, etc., will they be insensitive to the price and possibly pay anything for them, such as a prison sentence, loss of family, loss of friends, ruined career, etc.? Does our shortsighted decision-making sometimes end up having long-run repercussions?

### **Jesus the Monopolist?**

Monopolists generally have the characteristics of being single sellers of commodities with no close substitutes for their products or services. The monopolist's firm therefore represents the entire industry and can charge a higher price at a reduced output, thus eliminating some consumer surplus.

Is Jesus a monopolist? Let's look at the scriptural evidence.

In John 14:6 we see that Jesus is the only provider: "Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In Acts 4:12 it is apparent that there is no substitute for this good: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Thus, Jesus is the industry. Unlike the auto industry, where GM, Ford, Honda, Toyota, Daimler-Chrysler, etc. are all competing for consumers' preferences, there are no other firms supplying the good (although there are numerous false advertisers).

Even though Christ is the sole provider of salvation and therefore has a monopoly on it, He offers it at no cost. He could

set a monopoly price (thus gouging the needy, of which we all are), but instead He provides free access by faith for all, to a good that He has complete control over. This is quite unlike the monopolists of this world who get what they can (until social responsibility is forced upon them) from a dependent population.

### **The Medium of Exchange**

Money has four basic functions: it is a store of value, a standard by which we can compare various goods, a method of deferring payment, and a medium exchange.

In the past people bartered for goods. They traded their cows for chickens for pots and pans for cheese for grain for tools and so on. This was quite inefficient, because it was hard to determine an exchange rate (is my cow really worth 100 chickens?), the goods may not be available when I want to trade, I may not really want the goods that are available, I may need to transact with more than one person to get the item that I want, and some tradeable items can't be stored (I can't keep a pig indefinitely).

It is much easier and more efficient for the market mechanism to use a particular

currency to place value on a good or service and then trade the common currency. There are still problems with using currency (especially if it is not accepted universally for international payments), but the benefits outweigh the costs.

What is the form of currency that can purchase our salvation? Is it the currency of good works or the currency of charitable giving or the currency that a religious group might sell me?

The only currency that can secure our salvation is the blood of Jesus. And isn't it a medium of exchange? In exchange for the blood of Jesus we receive the gift of God which is eternal life. Acts 20:28 states, "Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood." Hebrews 9:22 declares, "... and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Mark 8:37 adds, "... Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The blood of Christ is the only form of payment accepted in heaven—not even American Express will do.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I attempted to give some concrete examples of how the Scripture might be used to convey basic economic

principles. By doing so, I hope to help students develop a better understanding of both the Scriptures and economic principles. These examples are neither perfect nor exhaustive. They also do not reflect everyone's theological perspective. At a Christian college, I do think it is appropriate and helpful to make economic applications to the Bible which, I believe, will promote both learning and retention.

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**Best Practices**

**The “Senior Blessing” at  
Abilene Christian University’s  
College of Business Administration**

William Fowler and John D. Neill  
Abilene Christian University

**Introduction**

The mission of Abilene Christian University (ACU) is to “educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.” The university community takes this mission seriously as do we in the College of Business Administration (COBA). Not unlike most Christian business schools, we try to implement our mission by integrating faith and learning in various ways throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum. For example, we attempt to teach the various business disciplines from a Christian worldview, and many professors begin each class session by asking for the Lord’s blessing on the class. In addition, the university has a daily chapel service that is mandatory for undergraduate students. Once a month, we have a specialized COBA chapel that is organized by students in the College of Business. Both COBA faculty and

students have served as speakers during the last year. In addition to these fairly typical attempts at biblical integration, we will describe in detail in this paper one unique co-curricular activity that serves as a capstone of our attempts to integrate faith and learning. This activity is called the “Senior Blessing.”<sup>1</sup>

The Senior Blessing is an annual event in the ACU College of Business that started in 1994. It is an all-day activity that typically occurs on a Tuesday or Wednesday during the month of April. All the seniors in the College of Business are invited to attend this special event. All COBA classes are cancelled on the Senior Blessing day, and the entire COBA faculty and all the seniors who are able to attend carpool to a retreat site approximately 45 minutes from the campus. In the following paragraphs, we will describe the three primary objectives (the

ABCs) of the day. The ABCs are admonition, blessing, and celebration, respectively. Our discussion will begin with the celebration aspect of the event. The paper then concludes with a description of various administrative issues relating to the planning of this special day, a discussion of outcomes assessment, and some summary comments.

### **Celebration and Coronation**

We in the College of Business view this day as a day of celebration and coronation. We want to celebrate our students' upcoming graduation and their entrance into the marketplace. We also want to celebrate and strengthen the relationships that have been formed over the past four years. We feel it is important to get away from the campus atmosphere of classrooms, labs, and libraries for this day of celebration. This is a day filled with opportunities for our students to fellowship with the faculty and other students.

The first activities of the day celebrate our relationships with each other. To begin the day, students and faculty share a meal together and enjoy a time of casual conversation.

After breakfast, the program moves outside for some mixer-type activities and/or team-building exercises. This is a time in which students enjoy being with their friends and the faculty. It is also a time for the students to relish the possibilities for faculty members to embarrass themselves.

Another opportunity for fellowship during the day is a period of free time after lunch. During this time, it is common to see professors and students throwing footballs or Frisbees or to see students and teachers exploring the beauty of God's creation at the riverside retreat area. In addition to recreation activities, we typically break into small discussion groups twice during the day. One group session is set aside to reflect on the day's speakers and activities. The other discussion session is used for an open question and answer period. During this period, students are welcome to ask faculty members and speakers questions on any subject. There is often discussion in these groups of what it means to enter the world of business as a Christian, how to balance work and family time, and how to be an effective witness for Christ. These sessions are a celebration of the mutual trust and respect

shared by students and faculty. Still another key activity of celebration on this day is a time of collective devotion and worship in which students and faculty participate in singing, praying, and reading Scripture.

In summary, a critical aspect of the Senior Blessing is the celebration of the relationships that have been formed over the past four years. This time of celebration is beneficial to both students and faculty in that we are able to see each other in a different light on this special day as we celebrate our common bond of faith.

### **Admonition**

The Senior Blessing is also a day of admonition. This is a day where the graduating seniors are reminded that being a committed Christian and a successful businessperson are not mutually exclusive goals. The students are admonished to put their focus on Jesus Christ and not on worldly fame, power, or wealth. As stated previously, this day is intended to serve as a capstone for all of our efforts to integrate faith and learning in the curriculum and co-curriculum. Therefore, our students should have heard such admonitions frequently during their time in the College of

Business. However, we feel that a strong encouragement to take to heart eternal matters is periodically needed by all Christians and is especially relevant for a student making his or her initial entrance into the marketplace.

In addition to admonitions from the faculty, it is our custom to bring in one or two guest speakers each year. The typical guest speaker is a successful businessperson who has also successfully balanced faith, family, and career. Such speakers are qualified to speak to graduating seniors about setting priorities and being a positive influence in the workplace.

In the invitation that we send out to each senior student, we describe the role of the guest speakers as follows: "We continue to attract highly successful business leaders to share with you their heart for God, proven methods of meeting the demands of business, the foundations of high-quality family life, and strategies to deal with ethical and moral issues that challenge each of us."

Previous guest speakers have included senior corporate officers, business owners, husband and wife teams, and sometimes even an entire family. The speakers respond favorably

to the students' eager desire to learn. The speakers are very open in sharing their struggles as well as their successes in faith and in business. Their stories tell of the tension of trying to be in control of your life and business while being submissive to God's leading. The guest speakers provide models of discipline and integrity as they talk about hard work and how to manage life's demands. Their messages are extremely realistic in that they often speak about business failures and their personal shortcomings.

Our speakers are essential to the success of our day of blessing. They bring credibility and encouragement with their experiences. The encouragement portion of the day is vital in that we want our graduating students to fulfill God's purpose in their lives. Again, quoting from the invitation to the seniors, "Our mission and your preparation have been built upon the firm belief that God, in His infinite wisdom, has crafted a plan for you. His plan for you, as a business professional, is to bring Him glory and honor in all that you do." In summary, the admonition is for the graduating seniors to remember that eternal issues are of much greater

importance than career and/or financial success. We stress this point because we firmly embrace the following words of Jesus: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

### **The Blessing**

As the name indicates, a major component of the Senior Blessing day is when we as a faculty send the graduating students off with our blessing. The blessings we deliver to the graduating seniors are patterned after various blessings delivered in the Old Testament. For example, in Genesis 49, Jacob (Israel) pronounced a blessing on his 12 sons. In Deuteronomy 33, Moses pronounced a blessing on the Israelites before his death. To give a New Testament example (Luke 24:50-51), Jesus blessed his disciples before his ascension into heaven. It is our goal to pronounce blessings of this type on our students as they leave us and embark on their careers.

In their book *The Blessing*, authors Gary Smalley and John Trent identify five common elements of blessings found in the Scriptures. These elements are:

1. Meaningful Touch
2. A Spoken Message
3. Attaching "High Value" to the One Being Blessed
4. Picturing a Special Future for the One Being Blessed
5. An Active Commitment to Fulfill the Blessing.

Our goal, of course, is to incorporate these elements of blessing into our students' experiences throughout their time in the College of Business. In the following paragraphs, we describe how we attempt to reinforce each of these five elements during the Senior Blessing.

### **Meaningful Touch**

Meaningful touch is a sign of the close relationships we try to build with our students. It is difficult to estimate the significance of appropriate physical touch that communicates acceptance and encouragement. On this day, meaningful touch may occur when we link arms during a team-building exercise. A simple slap on the back after a long touchdown pass is another example of meaningful touch. It is also present in welcoming handshakes and farewell hugs. Meaningful touch is felt while hands are clasped together during

the devotional prayer and is specifically called for when we encircle the students while a spoken blessing is given to them.

### **A Spoken Message**

The spoken blessing is the final highlight of the day. A different faculty member delivers the blessing each year, and the tenor of the blessing varies with the individual

## ***The blessings we deliver ... are patterned after various blessings delivered in the Old Testament.***

delivering it. In order to illustrate such variations, we next provide a verbatim transcript of the blessings delivered in 1998 by Accounting Professor Bill Fowler and in 1999 by Marketing Professor Ed Timmerman.

**Senior Blessing**  
**April 14, 1998**  
**By Bill Fowler**

Father, our prayer and our blessing this day is simple:

Help us to be more like Jesus every day.

Teach us to see people through the eyes of the Spirit and not the eyes of the flesh.

Let us carry about daily in our life the death of Jesus so that we will not be so selfish.

Give us circumstances, Father, which build our trust in You and not our understanding in ourselves.

Focus us, Father, not on the external things of this world, not on the things we want to do, not on the circumstances we want to change, but focus us on *Your power and Your Spirit* that is at work within us to change us from the inside.

Help us, Lord! We acknowledge so much conflict in our values ...

We are eager for gain and for victory. Teach us about losing our life.

We want to be in control all of the time. Teach us the peace of surrender.

We measure ourselves so much by getting. Teach us the completeness of giving.

We constantly look for happiness. Show us the wholeness that comes from mourning and sorrow.

We work hard to be strong and self-reliant. Remind us of Your sovereignty and of Your abiding care for us through circumstances which bring about brokenness and emptiness.

God, we always want an answer. Teach us humility and patience in those times when we don't even know the questions to ask.

God, we are intent on understanding. We *so* dislike uncertainty. Teach us to trust completely in You.

Lord, we become exasperated, stressed, and depressed because our lives are focused on the present, on the immediate. Teach us and encourage us through the hope of eternal life.

God, we have so many works we want to do. Remind us that we are Your work, created in Christ Jesus for Your purposes.

Lord, we want very much to love and be loved. The world would have us believe that it is just fun and sweet, that it is easy and without commitment. God, You are Love. You are Truth. We ask that you teach us the value *and the cost* of godly love. We ask this knowing that You will bring into our lives people who are difficult to love and situations which we may not like or cannot change. We know that You will guide us and be patient with us as we learn that godly love comes not because someone is lovable, but because we allow ourselves to be changed into your image.

Father, our whole prayer, our request for blessing is that we would be consumed by Your love and Your power and Your spirit at work within us. Fill us completely, wholly, purely, to overflowing with Your presence. We ask, God, as the God of Eternity, as the God of peace, that You will sanctify us through and through. We ask knowing that You are the One who calls us, knowing that You are faithful, and You will do it.

**The Blessing**  
**April 13, 1999**  
**By Ed Timmerman**

*[We want to lay our hands upon you ... as we extend our blessing to you ... and since we cannot do this with every person here ... we ask that you join hands and allow the blessing that we offer to flow within you as a conduit to each other.]*

The faculty, administration, and staff of the College of Business Administration at Abilene Christian University ... offer you our blessing.

You were ... made in the image of God ...  
you are born to a purpose by His divine will ...  
you have been intentionally educated to become a blessing to others ...  
you are our message written not on tablets, but on the heart ...  
you are God's ambassador to a defective world ...  
you have an eternal destiny to fulfill ...  
you have an eternal home to inherit.

We are so very proud of you ... for your abilities and skills ... but most of all for your hearts for service. You have made a good name for yourselves as you've served this community in your time here.

We are glad that we could participate for this short time in your lives ... that you tolerated the assignments, the deadlines, the pushing, the discipline ... realizing that it was only out of concern for you that we tried to extract your best effort. We are honored to have a group of your quality and demeanor and dedication to leave here and represent us.

We can already tell that you are destined for great things. Not all of you will occupy powerful positions or acquire great wealth or

be highly influential ... but all of you *will* do great things. You will do the greatest things of all if you remain true to God's truth ... if you deal honestly and talk truthfully ... always be truthful. You will do the greatest things of all if you keep faith with your mate ... if you attend to the spiritual needs of your children ... if you nurture your friendships ... if you become caring leaders and faithful followers in your church.

You are a blessing to us and you are worthy of our blessing.

Professor Fowler's blessing is an appeal to God to "help us to be more like Jesus every day," and a plea for God to "fill us completely, wholly, purely, to overflowing with Your presence." By contrast, Professor Timmerman's blessing is directed at the graduating seniors rather than to God. Much of his message parallels the admonitions discussed previously. Specifically, his message to the students is that "you will do the greatest things of all if you remain true to God's truth."

***Attaching "High Value" to the One Being Blessed***

We strive to incorporate this blessing element in all of our contacts with our students. However, on this day in particular, we want our students to feel honored and valued.

The significant amount of time spent in planning this day of blessing, the time commitment from our speakers, and even the cancelling of a day's classes all contribute to communicating to our students the value that we place on them. In addition, faculty often express that the opportunity to know and influence students is their primary purpose in teaching at ACU. Such statements also serve to affirm the high value we give to our students.

***Picturing a Special Future for the One Being Blessed***

The future is very much on the minds of students at the Blessing. It is one of the primary reasons that we wait until late spring for the Blessing. Most of our senior students will graduate within a month of the Senior

Blessing, and their minds are often occupied with the realities of starting a new job or with anxieties about finding a job. Some are busy planning weddings and still others are anxious about finding a future spouse. Most of the students are anticipating moving to new cities, and they are beginning to realize that this unique time of college friendships is drawing to a close. A major concern for many of these graduating seniors is the realization that their competencies and their faith will soon be tested in new ways. The Senior Blessing is designed specifically to give students confidence that they do indeed have a special future.

### ***An Active Commitment to Fulfill the Blessing***

Students should leave the activities of this day knowing that there are various sources of commitment to fulfill the Blessing. Throughout the day, faculty members have given reassurances of student readiness and have reiterated their willingness to help students after graduation. In addition, the guest speakers have either individually expressed their desire to mentor students or have served as excellent examples of Christians in the marketplace. Above all, we

want our students to acknowledge and be comforted by God's commitment to them to fulfill the blessing. We rejoice with them as we consider God's word to Jeremiah: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart'" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Seeking God's blessing is a natural outcome of a Christian's trust in God. In his book *The Prayer of Jabez*, Bruce Wilkinson extols the faith of Jabez, who prayed to God, "Oh, that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory!" (I Chronicles 4:10). Wilkinson explains, "When we ask for God's blessing, we're not asking for more of what we could get for ourselves. We're crying out for the wonderful, unlimited goodness that only God has the power to know about or give to us." We want our students to recognize God's commitment to bless them and for them to live with the conviction expressed by the writer in Proverbs who exclaims, "The blessing of the Lord makes

rich, and he adds no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).

### **Administrative Issues**

The Senior Blessing requires considerable effort on the part of many people. For example, the speakers make a large commitment of their time to prepare their comments, and they commit their own financial resources to come to this event. Additionally, the retreat center must be reserved and the day coordinated with the speakers' availability. The agenda must also be planned, and program participants must be selected. Menus for meals must be chosen, and snacks for break times must be purchased as well. Still other administrative tasks include the mailing of invitations and brochures to the seniors and the mailing of letters to their parents announcing the event and requesting prayers. Indications of student attendance must also be collected before the event so that discussion groups can be arranged in advance. In addition, the Senior Blessing must be publicized beyond the mailing of invitations and brochures. We have discovered means of effective additional publicity are the posting of notices about the event throughout the COBA

building and the making of classroom announcements. A final administrative task involves the planning of the time of devotion and the discussion sessions. In summary, in order for the Senior Blessing to be a success, there are many activities to plan and there is much to pray about.

### **Outcomes Assessment**

How do we determine if the Blessing is meeting its objectives? Measuring outcomes in an endeavor like this is difficult since the desired outcomes are future-oriented and are so personal in nature. Since the Blessing is a voluntary event, we can use attendance to at least suggest student acceptance of and support for the event. We have averaged about 100 students for the Blessings, which represents about 50 percent of our seniors. We would like for this percentage to be higher, but several factors impede its growth. Many students work and cannot take an entire day off for the Blessing. The distance of the retreat site from the campus discourages partial day attendance. Still other students use the day to complete class projects and assignments, and some others struggle with the early 7:30 a.m. departure time.

Student feedback from prior Blessings has been positive. We collect evaluation forms and student comments each year. The students' comments typically express appreciation for the speakers, for the time shared with faculty out of the classroom, and for the opportunity to have a day set aside to celebrate their time in the College of Business. For example, one student commented after the Blessing in April 2000, "The Senior Blessing is the perfect experience to mark the end of your ACU career. In my four years in COBA, the faculty and staff have not only been my teachers, but also my mentors and my friends. It is hard to believe that you can learn so much about yourself in one day." We hope to identify more specific and measurable outcomes in the future as we improve our alumni surveys and other assessment tools. In the meantime, we are content to plant the seeds and wait for God to give the increase.

### Conclusions

The Senior Blessing in the College of Business Administration at Abilene Christian University is intended to serve as the capstone of our efforts to integrate faith and learning. In a recent issue of the

ACU COBA alumni magazine *Business Interface*, COBA Dean Rick Lytle stated, "The Senior Blessing is where we take our seniors out one last time and say, 'If you missed this the four years you were here, your faith in God is the most important variable of your life.'" We as a faculty obviously hope our students have not missed this vital point in their four years with us, and we are continually striving to integrate faith and learning more and more throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum. However, even if a student has observed this message being lived out in the lives and teachings of the faculty, we feel that the taking of this special day at the conclusion of the students' undergraduate education underscores the eternal significance of our call to "educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world."

#### William Fowler

Chairman, Department of  
Accounting and Finance

#### John D. Neill

Associate Professor,  
Department of Accounting  
and Finance  
Abilene Christian University  
Abilene, TX 79699

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Another description of the Senior Blessing may be found in Timmerman, Winegeart, and Lytle (1999).

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## Best Practices

### Integrating Economics and Christianity

Eric Elder  
Northwestern College

I feel fortunate to teach at a college where we are required to integrate Christianity and our fields. A major portion of our evaluations includes how well we undertake this integration. For a person who did not come through a Christian college and who is an adult convert, this integration has been a pleasant challenge. I am looking forward to reading what has worked for others facing the same challenge.

Using the written work of others has worked well for me. In the principles of economics class, I use *The Clashing Works of Economics and Faith* by James Halteman. I use this as a supplemental text and work through it as the first thing we do in class. I test the students on the material covered and at the end of the semester ask them to write a short paper on various issues raised while discussing the topics in the book.

Using the Halteman book has several advantages. The text introduces important economic

ideas such as choice, scarcity, and alternative methods of allocating resources. It has a good section on biblical thinking about economics and worldviews from different historical periods. The economic assumptions of Hebrew society are presented and offer a stark contrast to our consumerist society. The assumptions are so different that students need help to see how we might incorporate some of those assumptions in our society. It also explains the setting in which capitalism works, explaining the concepts of limited government, individual freedom, and what holds a capitalistic society together. However, the major advantage of the book is that it presents a way to look at economics from a Christian perspective.

The book is written from a Mennonite background and challenges students to consider how their consumption patterns are, or should be, kingdom choices. At the end of the

semester, this is the concept that students indicate has challenged them the most. Most students say that they had never considered that purchasing patterns were something that should be different for Christians.

The text does have topics that need supplementing. For instance, there is a good section covering the relationship of unfair economic systems with street crime, but nothing is mentioned about white-collar crime. The text does not examine utility theory or other foundational assumptions of economics. It does present the concept of social welfare functions which leads into a presentation of a Christian social welfare function. However, I have found that the critique of utility theory and a presentation of social welfare functions are best done at the intermediate level. While the author presents four different worldviews at the beginning of the text, my students would be helped by a systematic presentation of what he thinks a Christian worldview should be. These criticisms are rather minor when compared to the increased student involvement that the book brings to the discussion of economics and Christianity.

Besides presenting factual information, the book is a

springboard for class discussion. I try to use the book at the beginning of the semester and use small groups to encourage class involvement with the ideas presented. Students seem to be more willing to discuss topics presented in this text than the ones covered in more mainstream economics texts. By starting with this book, the students get into the habit of participating in class discussion that sometimes carries over into discussions later in the semester.

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## Book Reviews

### ***How to Beat Burnout***

Frank Minirth, Don Hawkins,  
Paul Meier, & Richard  
Flournoy. (1986).  
Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Why should a book on burnout be reviewed in a business journal? Because businesspeople face burnout just like anyone else. Last semester, a colleague of mine assigned this book to an undergraduate POM class. "POM teaches students to create effective and efficient systems," he argued. "We also need to teach them to be healthy and effective people in the workplace. They need to understand the causes and cures for burnout in order to keep their personal systems working well." The result? The students loved the book and found dozens of applications both to POM principles and to their personal lives.

*How to Beat Burnout* is a short (151 pages) paperback written by psychologists associated with the Minirth Clinic in Richardson, Texas. The book is written in a popular, easily understandable style but has a great deal of sound clinical

application in its few pages. It starts with a basic definition of burnout and examines some of the major causes: unfulfilled expectations, bitterness, and workaholism. It then shows how to reverse the burnout process and start an upward spiral towards health.

The book is obviously written by and for Christians. The biblical assumptions of the authors are overt and appropriate. For example, in the chapter on burning out for God, they examine the issues of obsessive control, the need to let other Christians bear one's burdens, and the need for appropriate perspective. In the chapter on bitterness, they discuss pre-conditions of bitterness such as murmuring, misplaced strife, conditional love, and an unforgiving spirit. However, the authors also stress how God's forgiveness, spiritual balance, and wise perspectives can lead to a healthy and appropriate level of work. They show that throughout Scripture, God provides rest, strength, and hope to His people, elements that are lost when a person experiences burnout.

However, the authors do not leave the reader with a series of vague platitudes. Each chapter is filled with practical suggestions as to how to apply sound psychological and biblical principles to an individual's life. Even more valuable, the authors use illustrations of how both clients and biblical characters used these suggestions to overcome their individual burnout. The book is a practical and well-written example of integration—one that is valuable for both professors and students to read and apply.

*Yvonne Smith*

### ***Plowing the Sea: Nurturing the Hidden Sources of Growth in the Developing World***

Michael Fairbanks & Stace  
Lindsay. (1997).  
Boston, MA: Harvard Business  
School Press.

One of the more difficult questions facing a thinking Christian is that of world poverty. In a significant part of the globe, people who are our brothers and sisters in Christ or just fellow human beings face hunger, hardship, oppressive governments, poor health, ignorance, and the inability to

raise their children as they would wish. This sears the soul of a thinking Christian.

As business professors, we are equipped with the means of creating wealth or of teaching others to do so. However, the complexities of world poverty are immense, starting with flawed social systems, corrupt governments, and lack of resources by the population. Can anything change that?

A few months ago, I ran across an enthusiastic review of the book *Plowing the Sea: Nurturing the Hidden Sources of Growth in the Developing World*. Rather cynically, I decided to read it. However, what I read enthused me, too.

First of all, the authors do not speak from an ivory tower. They have been both grass roots development workers and government and business consultants in the developing world. South America is the focus of their expertise and provides most of the examples in the book, however, most though not all of the principles they discuss can be utilized in other parts of the globe.

The authors use *Porter's Diamond of Competitive Advantage* (1990) to frame the discussion. They start with what

they call “Seven Deadly Patterns” of non-competitive thinking and behavior that they say are inherent in many developing nations—overreliance on basic factors of production, poor understanding of sophisticated customers, defensiveness, paternalism, and so forth. In each case, they offer specifics and examples of how to change these patterns and replace them with relationships that will gain and sustain wealth.

But the authors go much deeper than a “how-to” book for acquiring and maintaining national wealth. Possibly their most valuable contribution is a section on understanding the root causes of the patterns they outline. The reader gains a realistic sense of the issues involved in world poverty and some of the solutions that have been and are being tried. Both perspective and practicality are conveyed.

This book has valuable content and the advantage of being very readable. I recommend it, whole or in sections, as supplemental reading in a strategic or economic class or any class in which world poverty is addressed. It will provide encouragement and a place to start for the pessimist

and a reality check for the idealist.

*Yvonne Smith*



## Guidelines for Manuscripts for the

### *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*

Sharon G. Johnson, Editor  
Cedarville University

#### **Purpose**

The **JBIB** is devoted to providing a broad, peer-reviewed forum for sharing perspectives about biblical integration in the business disciplines. Articles are invited focusing on any matter ranging from research to teaching, from practical applications to philosophical models. Each issue of the **JBIB** reflects the character of the available manuscripts. My aim as editor, and the aim shared by the 40+ member board of review, is to support efforts at publication. Rather than taking some sort of perverse pride in how many manuscripts we can reject, we take great joy in working with manuscripts in order to get them published. This almost always requires manuscripts to be significantly revised.

We see ourselves as in a partnership with authors, not in a competition. The process of writing and revising is part of the great enterprise of sharing ideas with peers and is, I believe, an essential expression of the

need to not only transmit the knowledge of others, but to develop and test new ideas of our own creation. Our teaching is enhanced to the degree that we are both effective carriers and inventive creators of ideas.

#### **Manuscript Guidelines**

**JBIB** articles must focus on the integration of biblical perspectives and passages within the disciplines of business and economics. Thus, biblical citations and discussion must have a prominent part of each article. The editorial process includes a close look at biblical passages being used with proper regard for exegetical and hermeneutic principles.

**JBIB** articles are expected to be grounded in some “stream” of existing literature. While we do encourage creative exploration and the development of innovative insights, the editor and reviewers also want the articles to reflect some awareness of the ideas of other writers, philosophers, etc. Thus, a

reasonable amount of footnoting and a significant bibliography are important. The board of review appraises both the adequacy of the “review of literature” and the appropriateness of the biblical integration.

**JBIB** articles are written for a rather broad business audience. The primary target of the journal is professors teaching business at Christian and secular colleges and universities. Increasingly, however, the **JBIB** is being read by those outside the college arena. Therefore, the editor and reviewers seek to maintain a writing style that is accessible to a wide variety of teachers and practitioners. This would mean that technical terms should be explained (rather than assumed to be known) and that specific business-oriented examples are essential. Put another way, we wish to avoid “jargon” and “academic-speak” and thus focus on communicating clearly and concretely across the various boundaries of our business disciplines.

### **Non-Manuscript Guidelines**

In addition to articles, the **JBIB** also encourages submission of cases and reviews of books, videos, computer programs,

Internet sites, and other media that would be of interest to classroom teachers. Also, the **JBIB** encourages “responses” to articles published in the journal. Such responses may be in the form of extended letters, critiques, or even rejoinders to material presented in past issues of the journal.

### **Questions the Board of Review Asks About Each Manuscript**

1. Would the topic of the manuscript be of interest to our CBFA readership (and those with whom they might share the material)? Is the topic too narrow and technical or too broad and generic? Will the topic be helpful and stimulating to many of our members?
2. Is the manuscript readable or accessible? That is, could people generally in the CBFA membership readily understand the points being discussed? Would understanding the integration message of the manuscript be diminished by the approach/language of the manuscript?
3. Is there a strong integration dimension to the manuscript? Are biblical passages, precepts, and principles intimately woven into the flow and fabric of the manuscript?

4. Does the manuscript handle its biblical passages, precepts, and principles correctly? This does not refer to taking a particular theological stand but does mean that passages are used in context, and precepts and principles are clearly and reasonably articulated.

5. Are there ways in which the manuscript could be strengthened by the addition of some material or by the deletion of some material? For example, does the manuscript need more elaboration in its introduction or greater clarification in its conclusion or sharper development of the in-between material?

### **Review Process**

1. Manuscripts are reviewed by the editor to determine whether the material is appropriate for inclusion in the **JBIB** and whether the material is of sufficient written quality to forward to the review board. The editor, at this point, may request a rewriting of the manuscript.

2. Manuscripts accepted through this “fit and readability” screen by the editor are submitted to members of the review board in a “blind review” process: that is, the author’s/authors’ name(s) is(are) deleted before sending out

the material. The memorandum accompanying the manuscript under review usually includes some initial comments on the manuscript by the editor.

3. After receiving at least three reviews from individual review board members (this may take 30-45 days depending on the schedules of review board members), the editor determines areas of review board praise and concern. Based on the editor’s analysis, four decisions are possible:

- a decision to publish without revisions
- a decision to publish with some revisions
- a decision to withhold a publishing decision until there is a significant rewrite and the review board re-reviews
- a decision to not accept the manuscript for publication.

Almost all manuscripts have to be rewritten to some degree. This is not an indication that manuscripts are weak. Rather, it is an indication of the intention of the editor and the review board to make each issue of the **JBIB** carry the strongest possible message of the quality of applied scholarship. Rewriting strengthens good writing.

Revised manuscripts must be accompanied by a letter from the author(s) detailing the specific changes made to the particular concerns and suggestions expressed by the reviewers. The revised manuscript will be reviewed by the editor and then sent to the original reviewers with the author's letter and a copy of the original manuscript. In some cases, revised manuscripts may also be sent out to new reviewers.

4. A decision to publish (with or without minor revisions) will be acknowledged by the editor in a letter. At that time the author(s) will be asked to submit both a paper and a disk copy of the final manuscript in Microsoft Word format.

5. Manuscripts accepted for publication will be sent out to the entire review board. Reviewers will be invited to submit "rejoinders" to be published along with the article. The rejoinders may challenge and/or extend the paper. The rejoinders create a sense of dialogue that has been considered a valuable feature of the **JBIB**.

#### **Communicating with the Editor**

If you have any questions at all about the **JBIB**, I invite you to contact me.

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## ***Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*** **Cumulative Index** **1995-2000**

*(Note: all institutional references relate to the year the article was printed. Some authors have subsequently changed their institutional affiliation.)*

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Sharon G. Johnson  
Cedarville College

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*Biblical Managers and the Functions of Management: Do Today's Management Principles Apply?*

Amy Creighton, C. Steven Arendall, and Bevalee B. Pray  
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Lisa Surdyk  
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Edward J. Trunfio  
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Robert Brooks  
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*Deming's Philosophy of Transformation: A Christian Criticism*

Thomas M. Smith and Todd P. Steen  
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Niles C. Logue  
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*Three Basics for Leadership Development in  
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Sharon G. Johnson  
Cedarville College  
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*A Response to Vander Veen*

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*The State and the Redistribution of Income*

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*A Response to Smith and Steen*

(see *Deming's Philosophy of Transformation: A Christian Criticism*,  
Thomas M. Smith and Todd P. Steen, Hope College, 1996 **JBIB**)

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Robert S. Huie  
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Harwood Hoover Jr.  
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Sharon G. Johnson  
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Richard C. Chewning  
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*Where There is No Strategic Plan, the People Fail?*

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Sharon G. Johnson  
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Galen Smith and Bert G. Wheeler  
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Sharon G. Johnson  
Cedarville College

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When Hope and Fear Collide*

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Membership is open to college and university faculty members  
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1. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God and through His atonement is the mediator between God and man.
2. That the Word of God expressed in the Bible is inspired by God and is authoritative in the development of Christian faith and practice.
3. That the Christian faith has significant implications for the structure and practice of business.
4. That developing Christian education for business practice should be undertaken as a cooperative venture of this organization.

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