RICHARD C. CHEWNING:
MODEL AND MENTOR OF BUSINESS
AND FAITH INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

The influence of Dr. Richard C. Chewning upon faith integration within the business academy is incomparable. He has not only modeled a sustaining commitment to faith integration in his own scholarly work in applied business ethics, but also has established a legacy for future generations through publication and personal mentorship. This paper presents some Biblical examples of establishing a legacy in the faith and highlights the important career of this senior statesman of Christian scholarship who embodies them.

INTRODUCTION

Those who do not love God do not associate going into business with fulfilling God’s will for them. Christians, on the other hand, have an opportunity to see God’s good intentions for them in a business career. Business is, after all, an institutionalization of God’s intention for us to work and to serve each other (Chewning, Eby, & Roels, 1990, p. 7).

In Homer’s classic work The Odyssey, Mentor is the trusty friend of Odysseus who is responsible for overseeing the king’s household and the education of his son Telemachus, while Odysseus journeys from home. It is likely, therefore, that Homer’s ancient poem is first to thank for our modern term mentor as a word that means something like “wise-counselor” or “tutor.” If one is in to etymology then it may be interesting to know, too, that via ancient Greek, the Latin root “men-” means “to think.”

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then having a mentor is bound to be much more helpful for our definitions than verbal derivatives—especially when the mentor is a tall, towering figure with a radio voice emanating both authority and love. The life and work of Dr. Richard C. Chewning speaks loudly to the mentor concept in general, and to the theme of this conference, specifically. The mentoring-influence of Richard Chewning upon faith integration within the business academy is incomparable. He has not only modeled a sustaining commitment to faith integration in his own scholarly work in applied
business ethics but has also established a legacy for future generations through publication and personal mentorship. And true to the original Latin, Richard Chewning exhibits the ability to influence Christian thinking. The following paper highlights the important career of this senior statesman of Christian scholarship as both model and mentor.

Yet, it would only be “Chewningesque” to begin with some Bible. Those acquainted with him know that his commitment to the integration of faith and business is founded on Scripture as the starting point. Chewning demonstrates that in true integration the line separating business and theology is a false one. In fact, he says, “I would like every business student to be a Biblical scholar—that’s what I would like.”

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF FAITH MENTORSHIP

Eyes for Integration

Chewning’s ability to make the profound seem simple, whether in handling Scripture or its comprehensive employment, could be described by his protégés as nothing less than giving sight to the integratively blind. One could draw a few analogies from the drama of Luke 24 and the play on seeing that exists in the narrative. A Greek form of the words eyes, recognize, or see occurs thirteen times in the chapter.

On the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Jesus encountered two downcast and unnamed disciples unaware of the miraculous turn of events since their leader’s death. In fact, in their despair they do not even see (recognize) (v.16) Jesus in their midst as they describe the fallen prophet of Israel who was mighty before God. As their story goes, the women at the tomb had seen a vision from angels (v.23), but at the tomb, Him, Jesus, they did not see (v.24).

In Emmaus Jesus dines with the men. At the breaking of bread, v. 31 reports, “And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and [then] He vanished from their sight.” At this point these disciples are not only sure of what they had hoped for but also certain of what they, all of a sudden, do not see. Jesus flees the scene with the exciting mystery that would make even Spiderman envious.

With equal urgency, the men return to Jerusalem to testify to the eleven that they have seen Jesus. To dispel any outstanding doubt that He indeed is back in the flesh as foreordained by God in His Word, Jesus exclaims,

*These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,* (v.44)

Jesus has not only mentioned three times that all Scripture is about Him (vv.27, 32, and 45) but spells it out in terms Jewish believers can relate—He appeals to Tanak. That is, all three sections of the Hebrew Bible witness to Jesus—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, the largest of which is the Book of Psalms. If they had filtered the recent events through Scripture, they would have understood them properly and recognized Jesus.

While much could be said about the ending of Luke as briefly surveyed, there are a few points of comparison worth highlighting that resonate with the legacy of Richard Chewning. The Lukan narrative challenges Jesus’ disciples to make sense of life in light of Jesus—the transition is from reading Braile to viewing Jesus in high definition, and it is a function of spiritual maturity. One can see life clearly, and recognize Jesus’ pervasive
centrality, only when Scripture brokers it. Moreover, all of Scripture serves this purpose, not just the red letters of our Bible. When Scripture serves as the arbiter between life and understanding, the blinders to Jesus’ omnipresence in our midst—from boardroom, to classroom, to lab, to prayer closet—become strikingly self-evident. In this vein, Richard Chewning’s life and scholarship requires one to view all things through the lens of Scripture as it speaks to God’s kingdom in Christ.

In addition, like Jesus’ commission at the end of Luke, Chewning requires us to serve as witnesses of these things to the world. Chewning’s model of integration demonstrates that this holds true for every realm of academics, which certainly includes applied business ethics.

LEGACY THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

Viewing life and work so Christocentrically and surrendering all things to the light of Scripture is not only the essence of Biblical integration that Chewning models through his scholarship, but personally helping others see it that way is primary to his legacy. Richard Chewning exemplifies the truth that lasting change of thinking, and thus living, is best perpetuated through a close relationship.

Old Testament Examples

That God designed the Christian faith to be transmitted through modeling and mentorship is clearly evidenced throughout the Biblical story. Often in the Old Testament this lesson is learned through failure as the sins of the fathers are visited upon the third and fourth generation (Exod 34:7) starting with the Primeval History (e.g. Gen 9:25), exemplified in the kingship of Israel and Judah (e.g. 1 Kings 15:3), and extending into the post-exilic prophets when the priests and leaders not only fail to heed God’s instruction, but also cause others to stumble, too (e.g. Malachi 2:7-10). But multi-generational sin can be thwarted by fulfilling the commendation of Deuteronomy 6, for instance, whereby God’s word is kept close at heart and passed down the line through life teaching. Leaving a faith legacy is clearly not just for biological descendants but spiritual ones, as well (e.g., Isaiah 56). Abraham was to be the father of a multitude of nations, not just his biological seed (Genesis 17:5). Moreover, sometimes the faith skipped generations altogether as illustrated in the life of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron who displayed utmost righteousness and was duly rewarded (cf. Numbers 25:11-13; Psalm 106:30-31).

Passing the torch of faith is of immense importance, and often the livelihood of God’s kingdom is at stake. The transitions from Moses to Joshua and Elijah to Elisha, respectively, are two classic Old Testament examples. In fact, their stories demonstrate significant parallels as God shifted leadership from one to another. In Deuteronomy 31 Joshua is formally identified as Moses’ successor and is assured that God will provide in every way as he had for Moses and the nation entrusted to his care. When Moses dies the Israelites can be confident that Joshua will mediate the same power of God that his mentor displayed since he too was “filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him,” (34:9). The Book of Joshua proves this to be true, and says as much (cf. 3:7; 4:14), as Joshua’s ability to part the flooding Jordan River, reminiscent of Moses, eliminates any doubt.

The same authentication of leadership validates Elisha’s ministry in the wake of Elijah’s ascendancy in a blaze of glory. Similar to Moses (and more specifically Joshua), Elijah is able to part the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:8) in the presence of fifty other prophets. This is important as the same company witnesses Elisha perform the parallel miracle by himself walking through the Jordan on dry ground (v.14). This certainly validates his succession of Elijah as the prophets subsequently exclaim, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha,” (v.15). The power of God abiding with Moses and then Joshua still abides with Elijah, and then Elisha, centuries later. The paradigm created may invoke a reading of Paul’s own comments in Ephesians 4:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)
Leaving a legacy may involve a number of generations and individuals, but it is the unifying spirit of God transmitted through close and personal mentorship that sustains the faith.

**New Testament Examples**

The New Testament continues the pattern of legacy through relationship that was so selectively illustrated above. While Jesus had many followers, and even eleven disciples who stayed the course, even He understood the benefit of intimate personal interaction in mentoring. Even amidst the crowds it is well known that Jesus had special interaction with what is often called His inner circle — Peter, James and John (cf. Gal 2:9) — probably demonstrating, at least, that investing deeply in just a few yields great return for a legacy. There are three classic occasions in the Gospels that show Jesus taking special interest in these three men: the healing of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:22-43/Luke 8:41-56), the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13/Mark 9:1-13/Luke 9:28-36), and the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42).

In light of our discussion above, the Transfiguration story is worth highlighting specifically. Mark tells us that Jesus leads Peter, James and John up to a mountain after six days. Such a passing comment would seem incidental, but the last time Scripture recalls ascending a mountain after six days it was Moses on Sinai receiving the law with his apprentice, Joshua at his side (Exod 24:12-18). Here, it is the trio accompanying Jesus, not to receive the Law, but to get a glimpse of the kingdom in a different form. Jesus himself is transformed before them into garments of glorious white with two Old Testament icons at his side, Moses and Elijah. The terrifying becomes sublime as God speaks through the shrouded figures, “This is my beloved son, listen to him,” (Mark 9:7).

A story that seems so enigmatic is clarified beautifully by Mark from the very beginning. To introduce the mountaintop experience Jesus says, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power,” (Mark 9:1). You see, this great story is fundamentally no different than those we’ve surveyed so far. Jesus, the ultimate Mentor, gave His close mentees a view of His kingdom and an authentication of His ministry. Jesus maintains a succession of spiritual leaders that include the biggest of hitters – Moses and Elijah – except that He is not under their tutelage and authority, but they are under His. Peter, James, and John, like Joshua and Elisha, can continue the legacy. Moreover, at the Transfiguration, like Luke 24, the figuratively blind are given sight. They see Jesus for who He is, God’s son. And they see the kingdom for what it is—a place where Jesus’ glory reigns in all its fullness. The power to part Old Testament waters becomes that which can rend burning hearts and temple veils, calm storms and walk on those waters. The kingdom of God is inaugurated because Elijah has indeed come in the form of John the Baptist (Malachi 4:5; Mark 9:13; cf. Matthew 17:13), and it is Jesus’ disciples, specifically His closest friends, who are called to sustain His ministry and replicate His powerful work (cf. Matt 17:16) and do even greater things in His absence (John 14:12).

**PAUL’S CHARGE**

While much more could be said regarding the paradigm of leaving a legacy established in Scripture, it is the words of Paul to Timothy that summarize the emphases of these Biblical examples. At the end of Paul’s life he exhorts his spiritual son by the following words in 2 Tim 3:14-15

> ...continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul understands that his own legacy, and that of Timothy’s own mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim 1:5), which was of a faith passed on, as Moses to Joshua, through the laying on of hands (v.6), is a gift of the Spirit that needs fanning. Richard Chewning has laid his hands upon the lives of many in this way. Richard Chewning fulfills a Biblical pattern of spiritual greats
he was preparing for an academic career in the discipline of economics, he did not see himself as a writer. In fact, he says he “fled writing” by accepting a university post which focused more on teaching than publishing. Yet, during those years he steadily sought God through intense reading and study of His Word. More precisely, his search was to know God and apply Scripture in economics and other areas of life. This fascination with applying Scripture coincided with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) mandate for universities to include ethics in the business school curriculum. Finding himself at that place at that time, he made the move, academically, from economics and finance to applied ethics. With very firm encouragement from the founder of World magazine, Chewning agreed to write one piece, just one piece, on Christians in the marketplace. The overwhelming response to that one article made Chewning realize that this work of connecting Scripture, business, and economics was of God. Chewning reflects on 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 where Paul says, “If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel…” Chewning realized that though he was not required to preach, he was compelled to write, even though, “I did not like to write.”

In the early 1980’s, Chewning was discovered by Baylor University where he began to teach. To take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5) became one of his favorite Bible verses and his great desire in life. After much consideration, Chewning made the critical decision to write specifically for the Christian audience. God enabled him to write, and Chewning continued to seek God. While he worked out his writing, he also worked out a mentoring process for a generation of Christian academics and businesspeople.

LEGACY AS A MODEL FOR FAITH-INTEGRATION

Based on the interviewee responses in this project and the writers of this article, it is clear that Chewning has had a direct impact on people’s lives. Because of who he is, what he believes and what he has done, people have learned to see
faith-integration more clearly. He has invested in people. He has made impressions on people. All who know Chewning agree that he is devoted to the primacy of Scripture. His focus is, “How can the Bible inform my thinking? What does Scripture say?” Interviewees describe Chewning as one who has modeled an intelligent use of Scripture, sensitive and thoughtful with room for wrestling and prayer. One interviewee states, “Chewning has been a model of consistency, with his professional life and his personal life mirroring one another.” Chewning has demonstrated a scholarship permeated with Godliness. He is a role model for being scholarly in one’s discipline while deeply integrating it with the spiritual. Several participants say that he has demonstrated the idea of loving God with your mind and striving for excellence in thinking and understanding. One interviewee describes Chewning’s example as “a long obedience in the same direction,” borrowing from Eugene Peterson’s book with that title (Peterson, 2000). Indeed, Chewning’s persistence in God’s Word and business studies is a disciplined example for us all.

Chewning has demonstrated the obvious, but often overlooked, fact that integration requires strength in at least two subject areas. By necessity, Christian academics must spend hours in God’s Word as well as in their discipline. Chewning has provided a prime example of this process. One interviewee states, “Chewning is maybe the first person in my life who was really a student of the Word as well as a student of his discipline. It is a marriage he takes very seriously.” And he has shown others that the marriage is to be nurtured, carefully and intentionally. By continually reinforcing the Bible as an anchor, we can weave business and the Bible together, effectively. This reinforcement serves the movement well, way into the future.

LEGACY IN ORGANIZATIONS AND SCHOLARLY WORK

The legacy of Chewning is evident in tangible ways. Perhaps the most concrete evidence of his legacy is his published writing. Over the years, approximately ninety-five of Chewning’s articles and reviews have appeared in publications, such as, World, Presbyterian Journal, Business Horizons, and Journal of Biblical Integration in Business. He has authored and/or collaborated on seven books (an eighth is in progress), including Business Through the Eyes of Faith and the Word in Life Study Bible. Along with published writing, Chewning has lectured, designed workshops, and delivered presentations on the subject of faith integration in the constant hope that Christian academics would take their call to Scripture as seriously as their call to their discipline.

Chewning’s legacy can be seen in his involvement in two particular organizations, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) and in the publication, The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business (JBIB). The CCCU is an international association of intentionally Christian colleges and universities. Its stated mission is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to Biblical truth (http://cccu.org/). Early efforts by the CCCU in the faith-integration arena consisted of faculty development seminars and resulted in the remarkable book series, Through the Eyes of Faith. Key individuals in several disciplines, including business, biology, history, literature, psychology, and sociology, were invited to write a book describing more clearly how to integrate faith with one’s discipline. An impressive task force and advisory board were utilized in the making of the series. Richard Chewning, along with authors Shirley Roels and John Eby, quickly emerged as a key resource and was very instrumental in the development of Business Through the Eyes of Faith. Published in 1990, this book has been read by numerous Christian business faculty in the CCCU and beyond. Even today, though somewhat dated, it offers wise words for the business faculty member who is seeking to integrate his or her Christian faith and business discipline in a serious way. Through the work of the CCCU and influence of this book, Chewning has mentored thousands of Christian academicians and has helped them see integration.

The CBFA, which grew out of the CCCU, was formed in 1980 by Christian business faculty
interested in pursuing a more thorough faith integration in business studies. The mission of the CBFA is to assist and encourage Christian business faculty in the study, integration, teaching, and application of Biblical truths in service to the academy, students, and the business community. It seeks to be recognized for its commitment to Christ as the focus of all its activities, for its leadership in faith-business integration, as the leading voice in faith-business integration scholarship thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Faculty and business practitioners are encouraged to share their perspectives on how to best equip college students to live out their Christian faith in the workplace. From the beginning, Chewning played an instrumental, advisory role in the establishment of JBIB. He has contributed numerous articles and has been a consistent wise voice regarding serious faith-integration. Through his articles, Chewning has

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(http://cbfa.org/), and as a community of support for Christians teaching business. Chewning is seen as a founding member and key shaper of the CBFA. As one interviewee puts it, he gave it life. By the mid-1990’s, the faith-integration movement in business had taken off. Chewning’s enormous impact can be seen throughout the CBFA and beyond as his influence extends to professors, on administrators, in classrooms, on curriculum, on students, on programs, business people, and employers. Through CBFA activity, Chewning has helped men and women see faith-integration which has, in turn, allowed thousands of others to see integration.

Another important vehicle of Chewning’s legacy is the CBFA-related journal, The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business (JBIB). The JBIB serves as a refereed forum for discussing faith-learning-life links in business (http://cbfa.org/). It is committed to the proposition that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be offered both a theoretical base for faith integration and practical ways of doing it. For example, in one of his early JBIB articles, Chewning presents three principles on which to base one’s faith integration effort. First, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Second, always interpret Scripture in light of Scripture. And third, be subject to one another. He summarized his article in this way,

In closing, I would like to emphasize that successful coalescence of Biblical truths and business principles will not occur without a lot of time being spent in the Bible. The Word must be prayed over. It must be studied. It must be reflected upon in the presence of our academic interests. The finished product-business interests and practices impregnated with Biblical truth-must be tested and refined in the crucible of the prayer closet, collegiality, and the marketplace (Chewning, 1995-96, p.8).

Much of what Chewning has modeled is
seems baffled as to how to respond. Indeed, he says he never really considered it in those terms. When he began, he had no particular “vision” for integrating Scriptural faith and learning. He was simply seeking God in a serious way and focused his attention on his teaching and students. He is certain that the thousands of hours he has spent in the Bible have affected his teaching and writing. After some thought, he suggests that if he were to name it, his legacy would be “to encourage people in the Word of God.”

CONClUsION

Undoubtedly, Chewning would be uncomfortable with some of the ways interviewees described him, “a monument of a man…a giant in the field…a hero to me…a tower of a man.” However, he would be pleased to hear confirmation that “he has been faithful to God’s call on his life.” Chewning has expressed plainly and clearly that he was seeking to know God and live life as closely to God as possible. One interviewee states that Chewning is, “a man willing to make himself available to God, not because of his strengths but in spite of his weaknesses. As a result, God has used him to inspire a generation of Christian teacher-scholars to take their calling to the Christian academy seriously and to share their ideas on the integration of faith and business within the academy and beyond. For that we are all indebted.”

LEGACY IMPACT AND RESPONSIBILITY

So, how are we to measure Chewning’s impact on faith integration, especially in business studies? Comments from interviewees include, “the understanding of faith integration continues to increase.” “It spreads and there is really no way to measure the spread.” “There is significant impact which continues. Like a ripple in a large pond, within the academy and beyond.” Through the CCCU seminars and book series, we see his fingerprint on several campuses. His fingerprint is on almost everything that happens in the CBFA, and well, his “fingerprints are all over the place.” Because of his mentorship through CBFA and on college campuses, others have realized that they have a responsibility to mentor the next generation. He has left a trail of thought and ideas for the current and future generations to grapple with as they seek God’s wisdom in faith integration. For much of his career Chewning has focused on professors and professor development, which affects teaching, which affects students in the classroom, who then affect the business world. “We can’t really measure the impact, but can catch a glimpse of it.”

When asked about his own legacy, Chewning captured in this short reference. Stay deep in Scripture, test ideas, and look for the places of intersection and agreement. The effective integration of faith and business occurs here. Chewning’s writings have stirred up dialogue, debate and discussion on the “what” and “how” of faith integration. For example, he offers a method of identifying and examining commonly held presuppositions in business and testing them for alignment with Scripture (Chewning, 1997). The dialogue continues and expands— in CBFA meetings, among colleagues, in colleges and universities across the country, and in university classrooms around the world. As one interviewee states, “the ‘good health’ of CBFA and JBIB are directly linked to Chewning.” Today, we see Chewning’s ongoing influence on a generation of Christian teacher-scholars through these two mechanisms for integration, CBFA and JBIB. Chewning sees it and wants to help others see it.

ENDNOTES

1Special thanks to Dr. Chewning for a personal interview (June 22, 2009) with the authors of this article.

2See ΩΥΓΟΔΛΜΩ (ophthalmos) in vv.16, 31; ΕΨΦΓΗΠ (epiginosko) in vv.16, 31; ΓΗΠΙΣΚ (ginowsko) in vv.16, 31; ΟΥΨΩΡ (opao) in vv.23, 24, 34, 39[2x]; ΟΞΨΡΕΨ (theoreo) in vv.37, 39.

3This and all other English translations in this essay are taken from the New American Standard Bible © The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

4Our call no matter the venue is to proclaim and embody the message of Christ by the power of the Spirit (v.49; cf. Acts 1:8). Jesus’ call to be His witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the
earth (Acts 1:8), which outlines Acts, reveals that “no-man’s land” does not exist for sharing such an integrative worldview.

5 When one considers the influential mentoring relationships in church history such as that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his student Eberhard Bethge, or Teresa of Avila and her Castilian cohorts, and even Saint Augustine and his own mother (cf. 2 Tim 1:5), the lasting results directly correspond to the depth of personal interaction.


7 Special thanks to the following list of interviewees who so willingly agreed to participate in this project via personal interview (May-July, 2009): Sharon Johnson, Bill Pollard, John Bernbaum, Karen Longman, Ken Armstrong, Bob Roller, Yvonne Smith, Shirley Roels, Steven Bovee, Lisa Surdyk, and Joe Walenciak.

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