

Editor's Perspective

The Many Dimensions and Dynamics of Christian Higher Education

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A friend shared a small, but significant, book with me authored by Richard T. Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2001). I found the book challenging and enriching, and reflecting upon it has given rise to this particular editor's article for the 11th annual issue of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*.

The book is too rich to summarize easily, but at its core is a set of assertions about the energizing impact the Christian faith can have on scholarly engagement:

First, the life of the mind commits us to a rigorous and disciplined search for the truth ... Second, in the context of the search for truth, the life of the mind entails genuine conversation with a diversity of perspectives and worldviews that are different from our own ... Third, the life of

the mind involves critical thinking as we seek to analyze and assess worldviews and perspectives we have studied ... And fourth, the life of the mind involves intellectual creativity (pp. 2-4).

Richard Hughes goes on to discuss the attitudes that a rich life of the mind requires, including curiosity, humility, living with paradox and ambiguity, and an appreciation for the ways that various Christian traditions can bring considerable liveliness to the way we frame and understand issues.

I was challenged to think about what we might have learned about Christian higher education through the community of Christian scholars in the Christian Business Faculty Association in general and the 10-year history of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* in particular.

C-ing through Christian Higher Education

We have learned that Christian higher education is a *calling*. We serve not merely because it is a job. While each of us might express it differently, we all share the belief that God has directed us into the work we do. We act out of wonder and responsibility, delighted to sense both God's encouragement and empowerment for the privilege of scholarship, teaching, and service. *The JBIB* in its first 10 years has offered a variety of articles that speak to issues of the nature and nurturing of the professorate as a calling.

We have learned that Christian higher education is also a *career*. We all work in very real institutions that carry their own community and administrative rights, responsibilities, rewards, and rituals. Some (though not all) of us have served in more than one such institution and have been part of a career path (often called tenure) with attendant levels and titles. Most of us have an active interest in the progress of our career in the institutions where we work and in the issue of pay and promotion that go along with such matters. *The JBIB* has less often addressed such issues, but the new CBFA-sponsored publication — the *Christian Business*

Academy Review under Dr. Kent Saunders' able editorship — will be launched in the spring of 2006 in part to offer a forum for career-oriented concerns.

Christian higher education is also importantly about *community*. In both on-campus and off-campus associations (such as the CBFA), we have learned to thrive in fellowship with each other. This fellowship is one that rejoices in the unity of our shared commitment to Christ and to Scripture, while also celebrating the diversity that our personal, institutional, and denominational differences bring. *The JBIB* has been called a “town hall meeting” where the interplay of ideas (especially featured in the article-rejoinder structure adopted early in *The JBIB*'s history) is encouraged.

Christian higher education is also a matter of *conflict*. By this, I do not mean the kind of destructive conflict that leads to academic (or religious) warfare. Rather, I refer to the kind of conflict that comes when differing perspectives meet and invite discussion, disagreement, and debate. Such debate has occurred often in the pages of *The JBIB*, encouraging open discussion of differences in a climate of humility and grace.

Christian higher education is a matter of *confrontation*. *The JBIB* has as a central background tenet that business decisions are not merely economic or political or psychological. We confront the secularization of business discussions and decisions. We challenge ourselves and others to allow the Bible to speak to matters of business and economics. In that dialogue we often find that faith-based perspectives challenge conventional, secular “wisdom.”

Christian higher education is *confessional*. By this I mean that our various faith traditions properly and profoundly affect the way we understand and seek to resolve various business issues. In his book referred to earlier, Richard Hughes discusses how the fundamental presuppositions of Roman Catholic, Reformed, Anabaptist, and Lutheran faith traditions help inform and enrich discussion about various issues. *The JBIB* has always invited authors to make clear the denominational distinctives that shape their views on business and economic issues. At the same time, *The JBIB* has always sought to reflect in its variety of articles the broad array of denominational backgrounds of its CBFA members.

The Fall 2005 Issue of *The JBIB*

This 11th issue offers a variety of exciting conversations — some reflective, some very current, and others that point us toward the future.

Stacey Brook’s (the University of Sioux Falls) article “A New Testament Perspective on Wage Determination Using the Principle of Spiritual Rewards” advocates opening a discussion concerning the way companies pay wages. That discussion is joined by David L. Skinner (Mount Vernon Nazarene University), W. Calvin Fields (Wingate University), and Brian E. Porter (Hope College).

Jon R. Austin (Cedarville University) and Colin Smith (Baptist Bible College), in “Toward A Biblical Market Orientation: Initiating a Scriptural Analysis of A Business Philosophy,” offer a thorough review of the “market orientation” perspective so dominant in the marketing literature. They then examine the role of Scripture in clarifying and challenging the concept.

Brett R. Wilkinson (Baylor University), in “A Framework for a Christian Perspective on Accounting Research,” offers a challenging perspective on the connection between scholarly accounting research and possible

connections to a Christian faith perspective.

Richard C. Chewning (John Brown University), in “God Is Good: Why We Desire, Love, and Serve Him,” offers another installment in his continuing series on the nature of God and the implications of His nature on the understanding and application of Scripture to business and economics issues.

This issue of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* presents a special “10-Year Reflections” section anchored by Bruno Dyck and Frederick A. Starke’s (University of Manitoba) review of the first 10 annual issues of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*. Their paper is titled “Looking Back and Looking Ahead: A Review of the Most Frequently Cited Biblical Texts in the First Decade of *The JBIB*.”

Yvonne S. Smith (University of La Verne) offers a commentary titled “*The JBIB* and the State of Faith/Business Integration: Accomplishments and Gaps” as she reflects on the journal’s 10 years of publication.

This is followed by two reprinted articles which offer in-depth reviews of both the state of distinctly Christian scholarship (“The Marketplace Movement:

Book Titles as a Window” by Pete Hammond, vice president with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) and the evolving character of Christian higher education (“A Higher Education” by Michael S. Hamilton of Seattle Pacific University).

This special section is completed by another special article from Richard C. Chewning — “*Gnosis to Epignosis: God’s Transforming Work*.” The article significantly challenges all of us to reconsider what we mean by “biblical integration.”

The issue ends with insightful book reviews, including one of Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Scott Burn’s *The Coming Generational Storm: What You Need to Know about America’s Economic Future*, from Stephen S. Van der Ploeg (Northwest Nazarene University). Michael E. Cafferkey (Southern Adventist University) reviews *Evangelical Christian Executives: A New Model for Business Corporations* (by Lewis D. Solomon).

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