

THE FOUNDING OF THE *JBIB*: AN INTERVIEW WITH SHIRLEY CHEWNING

Interviewed by Yvonne S. Smith

As the wife of Dr. Richard C. Chewning, Shirley Chewning had a unique view of the early years of the JBIB. She was Dick Chewning's sounding board, she typed many of his manuscripts, and she attended many CBFA conferences with him. We asked her to discuss the founding of the JBIB from her perspective.

Q: What was the situation for Biblical integration in business scholarship in the 1980's and early 1990's?

SC: You have to understand what was happening in the academic community at the time, and particularly in Christian colleges. There was a growing movement towards scholarship in accrediting bodies, and an increasing number of Christian colleges and universities desired their faculty to have a publication record for promotion and tenure. So faculty at Christian colleges and universities wanted to publish, but there were almost no journals open to a Christian perspective. Certainly no academic journals were willing to publish Biblical integration articles.

Q: Where did Dr. Chewning fit into this?

SC: When Dick was teaching at University of Richmond, he began to ask God to help him apply Scripture in economics and finance. Eventually¹ this study led to the book *Business Ethics in a Changing Culture*. Joel Belz² shared ideas with Dick while serving together on several Boards, and asked him to write a "Christian in the Marketplace" series for the *Presbyterian Journal*.³ It was writing this series that deepened Dick's thinking about the practical aspects of Biblical integration in business.

In 1985, Dick was invited to occupy the "Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business" at Baylor University, with the

directive to encourage others to apply Biblical propositions in the world of business and economics. One of the things he did was institute twice yearly "Christian Executive Lecture Series" where executives of the stature of C. William Pollard of ServiceMaster spoke. He also organized Scholars' Colloquiums, where outstanding scholars were asked to write position papers articulating different Biblical viewpoints, with the intent of gaining clarification regarding foundational issues. Sharon Johnson participated in these colloquiums, along with others. The colloquiums were published as the four-volume "*Christians in the Marketplace*" series. These, and other books such as *Business through the Eyes of Faith*, helped legitimize business as being an area that was important for Biblical integration. In addition, Dick made semester long visits to different universities; these visits became instrumental in helping Christian faculty develop their integration writing skills.⁴

Q: Who proposed the idea of a journal to the CBFA board?

SC: The CBFA was the only association that focused on Biblical propositions and also on the business academic literature, so in the late 1980's Dick deliberately chose to become deeply involved with the CBFA. The idea of a journal had been discussed for some time, but I think it was Dick who formally proposed to the Board that CBFA develop a refereed

journal where Christian faculty could submit integration articles which could be reviewed, revised and published.

The board was enthusiastic. There was a need for an outlet for Christian business scholars to publish articles that focused on faith and Biblical issues.⁵ Dick, and the board also, saw a need for a vehicle to help business faculty learn to write for publication from a Christian perspective – to write correctly Biblically and also explore and utilize the academic literature correctly. Sharon Johnson put together a proposal and in the fall of 1994 the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* was approved, with Sharon Johnson as its editor.

Q: Was Dr. Chewning happy with the direction of the *JBIB*?

SC: Yes he was, and he was delighted when Sharon Johnson accepted the call to be editor. He thought that Sharon had excellent integration scholarship and editorship skills. Sharon developed the proposal that became the template for the journal. Dick really appreciated the tone Sharon took, and Sharon’s ability to develop young scholars was outstanding. This was exactly the result that Dick and the CBFA board hoped the journal would have.

Q: Many of the articles that Dick wrote for the *JBIB* became dialogues where other scholars critiqued his ideas. Was that a problem?

SC: Dick was fine with academic give and take. He felt it was fair for others to have their opinion, and he appreciated seeing other people grapple with the issues he was

grappling with. He thought that discussion, as long as it was civil, was healthy for the journal and the association.

Q: Thank you very much for your time and willingness to give us your perspective on the founding of the *JBIB*.

ENDNOTES

¹ Dr. Chewning studied the Bible in these subjects for 14 years. Then he was recruited to develop an ethics class and developed this book as a supplemental text. For his personal story of those years, see Chewning (2010).

² Joel Belz is founder of *World* magazine. He edited the *Presbyterian Journal* for some years.

³ The series ran from 1982-1987.

⁴ For a view of Dr. Chewning as a mentor of faculty, please see Mays and Mason, 2010.

⁵ In his Testimony, Dr. Chewning says “...In early 1986, I had an article rejected by a premier ethics journal because a reviewer discerned that the underlying presuppositions were “religious. He wrote, ‘I will never accept a manuscript that is rooted in religion.’ The words Judaic/Christian were the only overt reference in the article to anything religious” (Chewning, 2010:77). Many other Biblical integration scholars can report similar experiences.

REFERENCES

- Chewning, Richard C. 2010. Richard C. Chewning: A Testimony. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, Vol. 12: 74-77.
- Mays, K. W. and Mason, S.D. 2010. Richard C. Chewning: Model and Mentor of Business and Faith Integration. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, Vol. 12: 64-71.