

Introduction to the Special Section: “He Who Is and Who Was and Who Is To Come”

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“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” Psalm 127:1

This special section is the very first joint venture between the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business (JBIB)* and the *Christian Business Academy Review (CBAR)*. It came about because the editors of the CBFA journals were curious. In 1999, at the turn of the millennium, before the *CBAR* even existed, the *JBIB* published a group of articles discussing the opportunities and challenges of Christian business education in the coming millennium (*JBIB*, 1999). We, the CBFA journal editors, wanted to know what had happened in the decade plus since those papers were written. Therefore, we invited some authors to update their papers, and we added some new thinking to the mix.

Litfin (2004) in *Conceiving the Christian College* describes the tale of a king who wished to build a cathedral and had to replace his foreman. When questioning each worker as to what their job was, he came upon a stonecutter who described his job as “building the grandest cathedral in the land” (p. 74).

Christian scholars are like the stonecutter who understood his calling. He was not merely an individual artisan going about his craft; his craftsmanship was the servant of something larger and far grander. In the same way, Christian scholars view their work as larger than themselves, larger than itself. (Litfin, 2004, p. 75)

It is our hope that this section will give an update on the current state of construction of Christian business education and will inspire scholars to keep Christ at the center of our work.

THE WAY WE WERE — THE WAY WE ARE

The Articles

The original articles (*JBIB*, 1999) can best be summed up by the title of Sharon Johnson’s (1999) article “Christian Business Education in the Third Millennium: When hope and fear collide.” The authors of the 1999 articles were optimistic about the future, but they were not blind to the challenges faced by Christian universities in the 21st century. More than ten years later, the articles we received about “what happened” are, interestingly, more operational than theoretical. They contain the kinds of ideas deans can suggest to the faculty and faculty can walk into the classroom and use. Authors, as well as editors, seemed to want to know what happened.

David Befus skillfully updates Ron Web’s (1999) article on microenterprise, against the background of the 21st century growth in hybridization (Edgell, 2012), including the Tentmaker and BAM movements (Rundle, 2012). Befus summarizes the maturing microenterprise literature, including what he has observed, to discuss both the hopes and the failed hopes of that movement. Interestingly, Rundle (2012) has suggested that the microenterprise

movement is a few years ahead of the BAM movement, but closely parallel to it. Professors who teach in these areas should take note of Befus' important paper.

Sharon Johnson balances his decade old "hope and fear" (1999) paper with an article about Christian schools flourishing in the middle. His 2013 paper reflects his almost 40 years of experience as a professor and administrator in Christian higher education, including the reading he does as director in institutional research at two different Christian universities. He is not optimistic. His reservations are not about the future of universities but about the slippage away from the transformation that Christ can effect in the lives of students. Since CBFA is ultimately about the transformational Christ, this article bears reading from all of us.

On the other side of the coin, Steve Bovee and Marcia O'Brian, writing for the 2007 *CBAR*, presented the experimental Integrated Model for Student Transformation that the Roberts Wesleyan faculty had been working on since 2000 (Bovee & O'Brian, 2007). Bovee and O'Brian, with Ervin Starr, updated their article with "Lessons Learned." Every dean and every faculty member interested in student transformation should read this article.

THE WAY THE WORLD IS

The experience of reading these papers in a world that is both so different and so similar to 1999 was surreal. The mercy of God is apparent in the past 10-plus years and so are the drastic changes in society. Someone has said that the more things change the more they stay the same; many of the trends that were nascent in 1999 have reached flowering — and some of them smell. Consider some of the trends as they affect Christian business schools:

Sociocultural

The faculty, staff, and students in our universities, including those who claim to be Christians, have high self-esteem and are very willing to brag about their accomplishments, particularly those involving money. They are sexually active and casual about it. Many tend to be quick to slander — even brutalize — others, and generally lack self-control (Snow & Twenge, 2006). Many students appear to love pleasure more than they love God — and if Facebook is a reflection of their thinking, they think saying so is funny.¹

Technological

The internet has collapsed the old channels in the newspaper business and education seems to be the next industry to be radically revised. Internet classes are, of

course, old news, and free internet classes are a reality (e.g. <http://online.stanford.edu/>). Educational flipping, where students learn content outside of class and do most of the application of content inside class (Fink, 2003) is a growing trend. Biola University is putting some of its resources on line for free (Newell, 2012).

Economic

In our economy, consumers are self-interested and greedy. In God's economy, believers share their possessions (Acts 4:32). Our economy is based on working: working lunches, working overtime, and working holidays. God's economy is based on working balanced with resting and rejuvenation: Sabbath days, Sabbath years, and Jubilees (Exodus 20:9-10, Leviticus 25). Our economy is based on scarcity. God's economy is based on abundance (Mark 6:35-44). Our economy is based on self-service. God's economy is based on service (Matthew 25). In our economy our occupations are based on how much we can make. In God's economy our occupations are based on calling (Romans 12:1-8). Our economy is about taking. God's economy is about giving (Acts 20:35).

HE WHO IS AND WHO WAS AND WHO IS TO COME

However, whatever the whirlwind of the environment, Christian universities center around the One "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:8). Litfin (2004) points out, a Christian education is based around Christ, the second member of the Trinity, the Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8). Christ is "the divine Logos, the central principle...of the universe, the 'Word who became flesh'" (Litfin, 2004).

The Christian university might be resource-limited. We, the people who operationalize the university, might be imperfect and stumbling. We are still directed to change from glory into glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). Our business schools should display Christ. The sufficiency is not of us, it is of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:5). Christ is the vine, our business schools are only the branches. Unless we abide in Christ, they will not bear fruit (John 15).

One of the primary questions raised in the 1999 issue and that continues to this day is whether Christian business education will fall into the societal pressure of accommodation or rise to its calling to be transformational. We still believe that the future can be a time "when hope and faith combine" (Johnson, 1999, p. 155). Christian business education has the potential to make this world more like

God’s world. Christian business education is an investment that will bear fruit in God’s economy. What would our world look like if we focused on what we have rather than what we lack? What would our world look like if we woke up every day and asked ourselves: How will I share my gifts of time, talent, and treasure?

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” (Revelation 22:12)

Webb, R. (1999). Business Education and Microenterprise: A millennial marriage, *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 187-203.

ENDNOTE

¹ This section is taken directly from II Timothy 3:1-5.

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