

Special S.N.A.P. Section

On the Road to Berea: A Response to Richard C. Chewning's "Biblical Orthodoxy Requires The S.N. A. P. Of Scripture"

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*"...His divine power has granted to us everything
pertaining to life and godliness..."*

II Peter 1:3, NASB

Dick Chewning has written an engaging and necessary "call to arms" for the evangelical community in general and the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) in particular. The Word of God is coming under attack as those within the church grapple with how the Bible speaks and informs contemporary humanity about how to have life and how to live as we approach the new millennium. How can a book written 2000 years ago possibly inform me about the complex choices I must make today? Surely such an ancient tome cannot provide principles and all the guidance necessary for work and life at a Christian college? How can the Bible be relevant for the students we are sending into

the marketplace in our post-modern culture? Yet the Bible states, "...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (II Peter 1:3, NASB). Christ prays in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (NASB). The Word of God is an indispensable link in God's revealing "true knowledge" of Himself through which we gain "everything pertaining to life and godliness." The Bible is a necessary, sufficient, authoritative, and clear revelation of God to humanity.

Non-business oriented scholars and theologians approach the sufficiency of

Scripture issue from a more general perspective than those of us interested in biblical integration in business. They analyze “spiritual matters” without exploring the technical detail of how one may glorify God in the marketplace. We in the CBFA desire to help each student “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all

...the Word of God speaks in a way that is applicable across all times and cultures.

respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10, NASB). However, our perspective must by necessity focus on matters not generally thought of as “spiritual.” We must deal with and help our students deal with business theory and practice. Our capitalistic culture of the late twentieth century was not anticipated by the biblical authors. Some opportunities and problems dealt with on a daily basis in the twentieth century are not addressed explicitly in the Bible. Yet, the Word of God speaks in a way that is applicable across all times and cultures. Members of the CBFA (particularly those employed at Christian colleges) are called to use our unique combination of

gifts to help our students understand and apply biblical principles in a contemporary setting. We must stand on the firm foundation of God’s Word to accomplish this goal. What is the meaning of the sufficiency of Scripture? If one is to claim the Bible is sufficient, what does the claim entail? It is necessary

to understand what *sola Scriptura* does and does not assert. The Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* has to do with the sufficiency of Scripture as our supreme authority in all spiritual matters. *Sola Scriptura* simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.

It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture. The most ardent defender of sola Scriptura will concede, for example, that Scripture has little or nothing to say about DNA structures, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science. This or that “scientific truth” for example, may or may not be

actually true, whether or not it can be supported by Scripture—but Scripture is a “more sure Word,” standing above all other truth in its authority and certainty. It is “more sure,” according to the apostle Peter, than the data we gather firsthand through our own senses (II Peter 1:19). Therefore, Scripture is the highest and supreme authority on any matter to which it speaks.

But there are many important questions on which Scripture is silent. Sola Scriptura makes no claim to the contrary. Nor does sola Scriptura claim that everything Jesus or the apostles ever taught is preserved in Scripture. It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture.

Given that “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness,” and that most certainly the phrase includes our lives in the marketplace; how is Scripture sufficient to inform our particular disciplines, from economics to management to information systems to accounting? What is the relationship between technical business theory and knowledge and the “more sure Word”? (John MF. MacArthur, Jr., “The

Sufficiency of the Written Word,” <http://www.bridge.net/~mikebrem/sufficn.html>)

It will be beneficial to think of a series of three concentric circles (Figure 1) illustrating how the Bible speaks to contemporary business theory and practice. The center circle is representative of spiritual matters—things for which the Bible speaks directly and explicitly, such as salvation. The second of the circles illustrates matters not explicitly dealt with in the Scriptures, but where presuppositions generated by one’s worldview influence the very nature of the discipline. Biblical principles directly color how the discipline is constructed because the discipline deals directly with people and their relationship to one another. The social sciences would be included in this area.

The third of the circles represents matters not dealt with explicitly in the Scriptures where those with different worldviews may hold exactly the same theory and behave essentially the same. Disciplines included in the third sphere would be the hard or physical sciences. If one is designing a bridge, a Christian bridge should look and function much like a bridge designed and constructed by a non-believer.

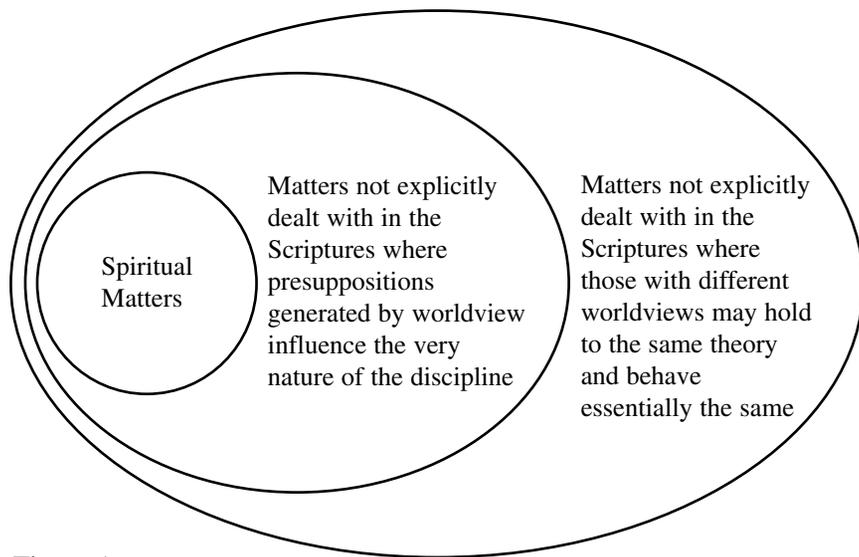


Figure 1

Business disciplines fall somewhere between the second and third circles. For example, some elements of finance are technical by nature and would properly be located in the third sphere. Other parts of the discipline are more closely related to how people deal with one another and hence are to be included in the second region. Business theory and practice include both technical information and techniques for which any person technically proficient should be able to excel, regardless of one's religious background. However, in certain aspects of the application of

technically rigorous material, the Bible has a very perceivable impact on how one performs. Ethical questions must be addressed. In many business situations the presuppositional foundation of the person dealing with the ethical question is of utmost importance. The Scripture has much to say in the majority of business situations. The Bible will not address the application and development of a marketing decision as directly as it will a more directly spiritual matter—such as the deity of Christ—but nevertheless, the ethical and moral foundation upon which the marketing decision ultimately

rests will be formed by one's knowledge of the Word of God and basic beliefs about the world and how God works or does not work in the world. The Scripture is sufficient to form the foundation upon which all our business decisions will ultimately rest. The Bible is indispensable in the application of business theory and practice.

However, differences exist in how sincere, well-meaning Christians interpret the all-sufficient Scripture. Where differences that do not affect fundamental doctrine exist, tolerance of others viewpoints is appropriate. Contemporary Christians have different interpretive schemes through which they view Scripture. Many in the evangelical church are dispensational, while others are covenantal. Given the unique role of the CBFA, there must be room for *some* tolerance of other's viewpoints. This does not mean that tolerance should extend to *any* statement or action that might be made by members of the CBFA (or the church in general). Fundamental doctrinal purity cannot be compromised. However, as attempts at integration are made, grace must be extended to those who may in a given instance interpret a

particular passage differently (from my standpoint incorrectly) than I do. Tolerance cannot be extended to those who would place the necessary, sufficient, authoritative, clear Word of God below its rightful place.

As an example of the type of tolerance that would be appropriate, consider Dr. Chewning's use of cloning as an illustration of the sufficiency of Scripture in all moral matters. The passage he uses from Isaiah (Isaiah 44:3) to show "that His covenant of grace is with us and *with our children*," clearly speaks to Israel uniquely. I believe a correct interpretation of this passage shows nothing about my relationship to my children today and hence nothing about cloning. The New Testament passage quoted (Acts 2:39) is from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, a definitive transitional period. My interpretation of this passage does not carry the same implications as Dr. Chewning's. We disagree on how to interpret these passages and consequently on how the revelation in these verses affects the question of cloning. However, this is not a major doctrinal issue, and I can be tolerant of Dr. Chewning's interpretation.

While some tolerance evidencing both Christian

maturity and discernment is both necessary and admirable, the foundational position of the Word of God must not be lost. We must work closely together to find the correct interpretation of the Word of God, answering one another's questions and dealing with differences in interpretation of specific passages in Christian love. This may be particularly difficult when working with material for which the Bible makes no explicit reference. In matters not foundational to biblically orthodox Christianity, we may need to disagree with one another while maintaining working relationships, all the while striving to move more closely to a perfect understanding and application of God's Word. The Scriptures are necessary, sufficient, authoritative, and clear. The church must not lose its mooring to God's Word. To allow the Word of God to fall from its rightful place is to slide down the path away from the mission of the CBFA and eventually to drift from God. We must be like the Bereans, "...examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11, NASB), studying and interpreting our disciplines in the light of biblical truth. The battle cry has been sounded. Let those in the CBFA rise to the forefront in the

fight. Let us "...put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11, NASB), and cry out with David:

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. 13 Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:7-14, NASB).

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