

Dialogue IV

A Response to Richard Chewning's "A Dozen Styles of Integration"

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This is a refreshingly useful and important article that brings the classroom professor into a new level of awareness. It is useful because one is struck with the impression that you either are *not* providing much of a Christian worldview in class or you now know better just what it is you *are* providing. Either way, you are going to come away from Chewning's article more aware of your teaching approach. You may notice that you are a "Discipline-Specific Cherry-Picker" like I discovered about myself, or you might find that you integrate Christian principles into your classroom work with students. The article is important because it underscores the importance of Scripture as the foundation of Christian worldview integration. In my view, one cannot have a Christian worldview in the class without reference to specific, relevant verses. Finally, we see Chewning's proper respect for the role of the Holy Spirit as

moderator between Scripture and instructor, as it should be. The many teaching style examples, incidently, reminded me of the allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The bulk of the article is focused on the premise that one should be aware of the many ways in which Christian worldviews can be incorporated into one's teaching but that there is no single best way of doing this. Presumably, the more ways, the better. Of course, this is consistent with God's oftentimes counterintuitive nature. God has many ways of getting things done—some of them not always pleasant. But, we must appeal to wisdom when we consider that there is no single best teaching style. Christ seemed to have various teaching styles—question and answer, metaphor, simile, allegory, and analogy, to name a few, but I suspect He preferred the lecture style.

One could misinterpret the author's intention to mean that relativism is acceptable in the classroom. According to the notion that there is no single best style (which, by the way, is at the heart of relativistic, secular leadership theory today), virtually *any* teaching style would be acceptable if the instructor believes in his or her heart that there is "cooperation" with the Holy Spirit as the author purports. Of course, this is not what Chewning had in mind. The stylistic gate is not wide open, just more open than many suppose. Indeed, there is the foundation of absolute truth (Scripture) which does place stylistic limits. Any teaching style that does not meet the criterion of biblical truth should not be considered, but that still leaves a lot of room for the creative, flexible teaching that Chewning proposes, and rightfully so.

We should teach creatively, but competently, to reach the student's heart. It must be noticed in this, however, that we are also interested in the mind. It is the mind that must be changed before reaching the heart. The mind decides to let the heart be changed. Christian Overman, author of *Assumptions that Affect Our Lives*, would say that the

professor's job is to change the student's mind from that of a Greek to that of a Hebrew. The mind, after all, is the battleground for the "presuppositions" Chewning discusses. Overman might say we should seek to change the assumptions upon which students base their decisions. Remember, a decision is the most important act any of us will ever make. A changed mind, i.e., one that accepts Hebraic (biblical) assumptions, opens the way for the heart to change. A greater variety of teaching styles can then be a potent influence with which to better reach the heart via the mind. The greater the variety of teaching styles available in the teaching repertoire, the greater the likelihood that the word will ultimately penetrate and find its mark in the human heart. We must not forget that we are soldiers in spiritual warfare, and the aptly placed Word is more powerful than Satan's weapons of which willful ignorance is but one.

I especially like the notion set forth in the article that there should be a balance between each Christian instructor and the Holy Spirit. This idea of balance reminds me of Alexander Hill's

important book *Just Business*, which puts forth the thesis that mature Christianity is a balance of love, justice, and holiness (or metaphorically, a three-legged stool). The stool cannot stand upright as it was intended unless all three legs are of equal length. So, too, it is true that there must be a balance of love, justice, and holiness in business as well as in the classroom. Too much love, for example, leads to permissiveness, as Hill points out. There is little doubt about the author's admonition that virtually every professor could and should spend more time studying and praying over the Holy Scriptures. If we would spend more time studying and praying over the Word, as he suggests, our teaching styles would blossom in exciting, unexpected ways. We must surrender 100 percent, not just 75 percent or 50 percent.

Implied in the article is the thesis that to change one's heart, and therefore worldview, one must first change paradigms. Notice that a paradigm is a mental and perceptual construct, and so it is at that level that we must deal. Chewning defines paradigm as "a model through which we can screen our thinking process ..." and then gives several examples of Christian paradigms.

The so-called paradigm exemplars he cites could be better described as "heuristics" because cognitive science has studied these kinds of mental devices explicitly. A paradigm does serve as a cognitive filter, but there is more to it than that. Heuristics are cognitive devices that function as rules-of-thumb for making decisions that manage uncertainty. Recall that one's initial decision to place one's faith in Christ precedes one's act of following. The steps are from mind to heart to behavior, each of which is changed. The decision to follow Christ has certainly managed a lot of uncertainty for me, to say the least. My own paradigm changed rather drastically many years ago, but I later learned various Christian-based heuristics that helped me become more obedient.

Certainly there is much to be said for decision-making in this context, but my understanding of a paradigm is that it is a worldview or frame of mind. A paradigm does filter perception, as Chewning points out, but, to be more specific, a worldview is a particular frame of mind that contains heuristics, and heuristics are not evenly distributed among students or faculty. Some have

more heuristics than others. The paradigm serves as the cognitive filter, as Chewning points out, but the heuristic is the tool that nails down the new paradigm in one's mind. Obviously, this understanding is an aid to the facilitation of witnessing and teaching as well as simple obedience. Elaborating Chewning's framework, therefore, we could say that cherry-picking is a teaching frame of mind that is implemented with various heuristics. One such heuristic might be, for example, "look for opportunities to insert Scripture," as his apt example illustrates. We would keep rehearsing this covertly to ourselves before and during class. This device would improve the cherry-picking style that would then connect the worldview with the device that implements it and reinforces it in long-term memory. The net result would be better teaching.

As said earlier, this article makes us more aware of our particular teaching style or styles. Some may have many styles, and we have to assume that would be beneficial. Further thinking, and perhaps empirical research, might focus on elaborating the variety of styles as Chewning suggests. I suggest, for example, that

someone identify and elaborate upon a family of specific business teaching styles. This could be intimidating to the teachers being observed as subjects, but one could identify many styles and find out which ones are most effective as measured by criteria such as grades, subsequent career success, various indices of Christian maturity, and the like. The inherent danger of this (as is true for all applications of empiricism, in my opinion) is the temptation to overlook the most important work that is the focus of Chewning's "A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration"—that is, for all of us to better know and apply the mind of Christ through the work of His indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God which *is* the truth. This is certainly a work that no science can justify, because we are justified by faith alone (Romans 3:28), and it is by faith that we shall live (II Cor. 5:7).

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