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Foreword: Biblical Integration at Cedarville University

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The key aspect for distinguishing Christian scholarship from any other types of scholarship is the essential element of biblical integration. Biblical integration introduces a new set of questions into the field of study enhancing the contribution to general knowledge. For any field or discipline, one’s view of biblical integration affects the tools of study deemed appropriate, the scope of study, and the ultimate goal of the study or activity in the field.

Christian scholars in various academic fields often struggle to articulate how biblical integration affects their research or teaching because of a perceived lack of overlap between the Bible and the content of their field. Greater clarity on what biblical integration is can help distinguish its value and will increase intentionality in biblical integration regardless of the academic discipline. The relationship of knowledge drawn from the Bible and that discovered in other sources is a key question for biblical integration.

Cedarville University takes this question very seriously and expects all of its faculty in all of the disciplines to be able to provide a reasoned answer. All faculty write a biblical integration paper which explores the nexus of Scripture, a theology derived from scriptural authority, and his or her discipline as part of the tenure and promotion process.

**Knowledge and Truth**

The Apostle Paul exhorts, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to
obey Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV). Such biblical texts have implications for understanding the possible tension in how biblical knowledge interacts with some aspects of general (“secular”) knowledge or religious knowledge drawn from other sources.

Biblical knowledge and general knowledge often do find complementarity. But some aspects of “knowledge” or enquiry are not compatible with biblical revelation. Paul puts this incompatibility in terms of a spiritual conflict. Theories or research in the “hard sciences” that adopt as a starting point non-theistic ideas will inevitably conflict with biblical teaching. In the social (“soft”) sciences, certain understandings about human nature cannot coincide with the biblical description of humans. In the areas of the humanities and theological disciplines, drawing authoritatively on non-biblical sources has led many throughout history to adopt views that are heterodox by the church’s standards and/or do not provide proper deference to the biblical canon.

The warfare analogy depicted by Paul, however, does not mean that all things found in the sphere of secular (general) knowledge conflict with biblical revelation. Christian academics strive to discern what aspects of their chosen field need to be rejected, what aspects can be revised, and which ones can be affirmed. As far as different fields of knowledge discover true things, the affinity with Scripture can be straightforward. Arthur Holmes describes this phenomenon: “The Christian regards the biblical revelation as the final rule of faith and conduct, but he does not think of it as an exhaustive source of all truth… and in the final analysis there will be no conflict between the truth taught in Scripture and truth available from other sources.”

Worldview and Integration

A worldview that amplifies the place of the biblical text as revelation in worldview construction prompts biblical integration into all fields of

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1 Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 18. Holmes’ view is extended (and probably improved) in the following quotation from George Guthrie who seems recognize some distinction in the concepts of “revelation” which would prioritize Scripture’s description of God’s character and purpose and “truth” which would include revealed truths but not be limited to this form of truth.
knowledge. Along these lines, George Guthrie contends, “God’s revelation is preserved through his inspiration of the Scripture. Thus, every area of human life and inquiry has at its foundation the reality reflected by God’s revelation in Scripture. Therefore, Scripture forms the appropriate beginning point for shaping a worldview.” A “biblical” worldview begins with an understanding of God and how humans can know him. The one, true God has revealed Himself definitively in the biblical texts.

The Bible not only reveals God’s true nature, but also depicts His activity as consistent with His being. So, to study the biblical text’s depiction and explanation of God’s work, is to have access to God, His truth, and His purposes. The Bible begins with God as the creator of all things. The biblical account of creation is then foundational for every understanding of reality from a biblical worldview. The Scriptures assert that a failure to recognize God as creator, will skew every accomplishment of human knowledge and will darken every motive of human ingenuity.

A central element to a biblical worldview is to see life and reality through the biblical wisdom gleaned from God’s character and purposes as revealed in the Bible, an expressly theological task. A theological vision for integration that prioritizes the place of the biblical texts as revelation should ultimately result in an engagement with all disciplines and fields for the sake of the glory of God.

**Biblical Integration as Central to Christian Higher Education**

The scholar (or student) with this biblical-theological mindset can pursue and communicate wisdom in predominately “secular” academic fields. This pursuit and communication require penetrating the citadel of contemporary “knowledge” and brings every thought captive in service to others and for the sake of God’s glory (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The mind that has been “renewed” or trained by biblical theology drawn from the biblical texts “sees” and “hears” things differently.

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Theology meshes well with other areas of a liberal arts curriculum in a Christian university. Christian higher education should be marked with distinctive characteristics including a central role for biblical revelation and situating an academic’s own discipline with a theological framework. Brad Green writes on a commitment to biblical revelation, “At the heart of Christian higher education is the affirmation that God has spoken. The God of Scripture is a God who has revealed himself. This is a crucial affirmation, not a peripheral one, and a biblical doctrine of revelation has profound implications for a Christian understanding of education.”

Furthermore, a theological framework must be constructed by drawing on a historical confessional tradition (e.g., Augsburg, Westminster, etc.) or an original document (e.g., Cedarville University’s Doctrinal Statement). The academic’s specific discipline is then engaged within those doctrinal commitments with the goal of a distinctly Christian body of knowledge. David Wells speaks of this intersection of theology and academic discipline as “coherence,” he contends for:

a different kind of faculty... who, regardless of their discipline, are able to think theologically and to think of their own discipline within a larger theological frame. What is needed are not more specialists to break down further the coherence of what is learned, but for those who can once again build up this coherence within their own detailed knowledge of their specific field. The only way this coherence will be found again is if it is built upon biblical and theological foundations.

In 1950, S. T. Ludwig made an impassioned plea for the role of the “church college” in a prospering society. He critiqued the “gaudy” initiatives that many churches and Christians attempt to influence society. Instead, he argued that “it is incumbent upon the church college to help establish a Christian pattern for the future that will raise the level of life and make our

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society more nearly Christian.” As Ludwig contended, if higher education is not driven by Christian principles and infused with Christian ideas, then people can “can lose their sense of ‘belongingness’ and become isolated units with no chart to guide.” Christian education sets a different course and in so doing forwards the most holistic thinking of the current day and has an opportunity to chart a new vision of the future (both personal and corporate). Ludwig continued, “It is the function of the church college in our disintegrating society to so present Christ and teach principles of His culture in every phase of the curriculum, until the incoming power of His spirit can change lives and make them a part of God’s great program.”

What Ludwig later asserted as a need is a collection of faculty who have a “high sense of life purpose” to this calling of changing lives and thought patterns.

Cedarville University gathers a faculty who allow the purposes of God to prompt and sustain their labors. The impact of this Christian approach to education is immediate on students, has a long-term effect on society, and will bear fruit in eternity. Careful Bible reading and the synthesis of biblical texts into a theological view of reality prompts the task of biblical integration in literature and laboratories for God’s glory.

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6 Ibid.