



CHURCH LEADERSHIP, THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

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- Ronald G. Steadman*

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C O P Y R I G H T

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FROM THE EDITOR

Jim Helfers, Ph.D.

This inaugural Open Issue of the *Canyon Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* stands in a unique position: its name and issue title suggest diversity: diversity of disciplinary approach, and even a wide diversity of topic. That diversity is certainly evident in the publication's initial offerings—a sociological study of student attitudes in a course on Christian worldview, two essays from a business perspective: one on Christian organizations as learning organizations, and one on the concept of servant leadership, a leadership framework compatible with Christian perspectives, but not necessarily completely synonymous with them. Finally, the issue contains a study of the name of God from a theological perspective.

How, though, can the publication achieve unity within this diversity? One way attempted by this first issue (and hopefully, subsequent issues) will be to solicit compositions that relate issues in specific disciplines to Christianity (CFP, 2012). This idea of relating or integrating the explorations of different academic disciplines with Christian perspectives has a significant history in Christian higher education, reaching back into the 1950s (Holmes 1987, 105). Certainly the idea that religious vocation and the pursuit of academic knowledge intertwine is implicit in the very development of the university in the West from the scriptoria and libraries of medieval monasteries.

It might be well, however, to consider some of the issues involved in the idea and the execution of this project of integration: it is no secret that in some Christian subcultures a tension is perceived between the methods and knowledge developed by academic disciplines and the Christian faith. Further, many subcultures of Christendom are actively suspicious of developments in various academic disciplines, developments which they feel undermine important and central tenets of the Christian faith as they understand it.

In his attempt to provide a framework in which to discuss issues surrounding the integration of faith and discipline, William Hasker provides this brief definition of integration: “a scholarly project whose goal is to ascertain and to develop integral relationships which exist between the Christian faith and human knowledge, particularly as expressed in the various academic disciplines” (Hasker, 1992). He points out the limitations of this definition by distinguishing the cognitive content of faith from the important volitional and emotional aspects, and by asserting the principle that connections between concepts related to faith and seminal concepts of academic disciplines are already present, but must be explained or developed. Borrowing terms from David L. Wolfe and Ronald R. Nelson, Hasker identifies three general strategies for disciplinary integration: the compatibilist, the transformationalist and the reconstructionist (Hasker 1992).

Each strategy approaches the subject matter and methodology of particular disciplines differently. For the compatibilist, the subject matter and methodologies of faith and the discipline in which one finds oneself are largely consistent and coherent with each other. The compatibilist scholar's concern is to explain and clarify the potential unities that he or she sees between faith and the subject matter and methodology of the discipline. The task of the transformationalist scholar is more complicated; though such a scholar might see validity and significance in the content and methods of his or her discipline, there remain significant areas of tension between strongly felt religious understandings of the scholar and the understandings and methods of the discipline. The scholar's task in that case is to transform the discipline with divergent and innovative insights compatible with faith-based understandings. Finally, the reconstructionist strategy is far more radical: the scholar sees the practices and methodologies of a discipline as so antithetical to faith that he or she is compelled to remake the discipline, building on faith-based presuppositions (Hasker, 1992).

FROM THE EDITOR (CONT'D)

Jim Helfers, Ph.D.

The reader might note that the above strategies, spoken of as distinctively Christian in Hasker's essay, could serve as models of faith and discipline integration for other faith traditions.

In this issue, one could see Timothy Larkin's essay on Christian worldview as essentially compatibilist in approach, as he uses the methodologies of the social sciences (survey research and field notes) to advance a pedagogical thesis: that in order to thrive in a course of Christian worldview clarification, students must possess a sense that truth is, or at least could be, universal and objective. Gary Piercy straddles the line between compatibilist and transformationalist as he reports an empirical study of Christian denominations as learning organizations. In general, he accepts the utility and relevance of the designation "learning organization," and studies denominational characteristics that either qualify or disqualify them from this classification. However, he does deal with a pertinent question: are the qualities of "learning organizations" characteristics which are either desirable or necessary for organizations such as Christian denominations?

Scott Douglas, in his essay on servant leadership and church leadership development, asks some interesting transformative questions as he, first, queries the Christian roots of the servant leadership model (though he does accept the model's strong applicability to Christian organizations) and second, as he applies the model to the specific generational divides in the current vocational pool of Christian ministry leaders. Finally, Ronald Stedman's essay on the scriptural name of God stands in a unique position: it would seem to be a tautology that theology and faith cohere. For what is theology other than thinking about and systemizing the intellectual content of faith? Yet the general history of theology over the last century and a half (if not over 500 years) is one of intense controversy and mutual accusation of heterodoxy. So, Stedman's essay takes a conservative theological approach to elucidating the significance of the name of God in both the Hebraic and Greek traditions that underlie current Christian understandings. This is a largely compatibilist approach that has significant dissenters in the tradition of theological inquiry.

The reader may think of this initial Open issue, then, as the opening of an issue, the issue of integrating the Christian faith and academic disciplines on an intellectual level. In no way can the intellectual level alone exhaust the integration that should occur in a Christian college or university setting: such integration should include experiential, emotional, and even imaginative and mystical dimensions that are beyond the scope of this publication. But this publication is a step.

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The Discrete Category of Truth

Timothy M. Larkin, Ph.D.

Upon teaching worldview classes at a traditional Christian university, the researcher realized that students engaged the topic from a particular paradigm. The course brings to the surface students' beliefs and perspectives on reality and life. Through qualitative methods, survey research, and research literature, the paper demonstrates students' propensity to conflate truth and reality concepts and avoidance of an objective truth construct. This paper presents the journey of the worldview classroom's students and instructor with these issues and suggests the introduction of a "discrete category of truth." The "discrete category of truth" provides students with a definitional framework they can agree or disagree with, while calling them to argue their point from a discrete category perspective. Just as other fields of study have established a pedagogical framework, this study suggests that the "discrete category of truth" is an important part of the worldview course's pedagogical framework.

Worldview thought within courses is an important part of Christian university curricula. Two perspectives come together in the worldview classroom—that of the university's curriculum and the students' orientation to the subject matter. This paper asserts that the concept of the "discrete category" of truth is an essential bridge for students' understanding and analysis of truth, which is important within and supportive of worldview curriculum. In the past, as experienced by this researcher, capstone courses and senior seminars were to be the carriers of worldview perspectives and analysis (Syllabus for SOC. 487–Wheaton College, 1974). Today there are examples of the worldview course as a stand-alone subject of study and as part of the general education requirement (Syllabus for CWV 101–Grand Canyon University, 2011). The 2011 CCCU *Report on Spiritual Formation* states that one of the main approaches for spiritual formation by the member universities within this evangelical higher education organization is worldview courses (Corts, 2011). The report indicates that member uni-

versities have instituted "a freshman class intended to influence the students' worldview, described as an 'intro to Christian liberal arts and worldview' class or as being 'informed by tradition, scripture, mind/body/soul, small group interaction, and other key issues,'" i.e., a class designed to intentionally educate students about worldview and faith perspectives (Corts, 2011, p.11). Dr. David Stockwell (personal communication, July 23, 2012), Director of the Chicago Semester—a practicum and urban studies program developed by the Consortium of Christian Universities—states that "part of our evaluative process is the extent that we press for and support worldview development . . . we need to put the real world back into the worldview discussions, and at the same time we need a worldview that is Christian and biblical but somehow relates to the diversity of students that we get at Chicago Semester."

As previously mentioned, the worldview classroom engages the students' orientation to the topic and the university's curriculum. The intersection of these perspectives causes students to contemplate

important life questions: What can I believe? Does it matter? What can I really know? How should I now live? What is the purpose of life? The perspectives of the student and the university work together to educate the student about the worldview framework and to encourage the pursuit of a truthful worldview through analysis.

This study will share the journey of teaching worldview concepts to undergraduates at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona, and provide some conclusions as to the students' perspectives and the pedagogical framework in teaching the course. The research involves the undergraduate students' conceptualization of truth. Specifically, how do students conceptualize the core worldview concept "truth"? This project also focuses on clarifying the following questions regarding worldview coursework: What is an effective starting point for the study of a worldview? Does the students' preliminary knowledge base best serve their inquiry? The research data will include qualitative data (narrative of the worldview classroom) and quantitative data (survey of seventy undergraduates' perspectives concerning truth). In summary, the research question is: What suppositions about truth are accepted by undergraduates? A secondary question: Is there a conceptual tool for the worldview classroom that will aid the student and curriculum in worldview studies?

This project's research engaged students from a traditional Christian university, Grand Canyon University, which requires all students to complete a specific course labeled Christian Worldview. The university has a diverse student body from different faith traditions and does not require students to sign a doctrinal or religious values statement to attend the university. The course defines the concept of worldview and its components, distinguishes major worldviews (naturalism, atheistic existentialism, secular humanism, eastern pantheism, western pantheism, theism, and Christian theism), and provides comparative analysis of Christian worldview with other worldviews (Syllabus-GCU, 2011). One of the research methods used for this essay was a convenience survey of seventy undergraduates, with the majority being freshman and sophomores, enrolled in one of three social science courses and one worldview course. The same approximate number of surveys was taken from each course for a total of seventy-three surveys. The worldview course

students were surveyed prior to receiving course instruction on truth content. Students self-selected to participate and no identifying information was gathered with the survey. Data was also collected through the ethnographic tools of class notes, classroom logs, student essays, and reflection on the experience of teaching thirty worldview courses, including courses with the topic of worldview analysis. The following text will discuss the students' journey within the worldview course, examine the undergraduate conceptualization of truth, and give suggestions for worldview course structure.

THE WORLDVIEW DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK

Even though the definition of the term "worldview" is contested, there are a number of elements agreed upon by differing definitions of worldview. A worldview is a human engagement with life and becomes a paradigm, a network of ideas, or a grid through which to view life. Thus, a worldview is made up of ideas, cultural understandings, beliefs, and the intersection of knowledge and experience. It is manifested by living life and involves one's perceptions of reality and truth. Cosgrove (2006) defines a worldview as "a set of assumptions or beliefs about reality that affect how we think and how we live. The important ideas and beliefs that people hold invariably move their thoughts and behaviors" (p. 19). Colson and Pearcey (1999) define a worldview as "the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the 'big picture' that directs our daily decisions and actions" (p. 14). Sire (1997) indicates that a person's worldview is a "conceptual universe, evolving from a network of principles that answer the fundamental questions of life" (p. 23). He also concludes that worldviews are "universes fashioned by words and concepts that work together to provide a more or less coherent frame of reference for all thoughts and actions" (p. 16).

As courses commence with a definitional framework for the topic of worldview, each student begins to self-examine by contemplating his or her beliefs about life and its purpose and meaning, the nature of truth, and diverse worldviews and truth statements. As the student enters the worldview classroom a journey begins for him or her and the instructor and through the curriculum they begin to engage these concepts. The curriculum is established to give a breadth of knowledge and classical tools for analysis to the student.

One of the key concepts for both parties is that of truth.

TRUTH IN WORLDVIEW STUDIES

The study of truth is usually confined to philosophy courses or to scientific analyses of knowledge. However, this concept is central in the worldview classroom, where truth is not only defined but analyzed for its quality within a worldview. As we begin this study it is important to remember that the students approach this concept, in many cases, from different assumptions than outlined in the curriculum. Students come to class with preconceived definitions of reality and shaped ideas of “realness” from culture, family, secondary education, and media (Smith, 2011). In this postmodern age truth is proposed as that which matches up to socially constructed or personal realities and thus is relative. In historical philosophical understandings, truth is made up of propositions that match reality, or, truth is objective reality. The historical philosophical truth paradigm is part of the curriculum of the worldview course within the university of this research study (Cosgrove, 2006) (Sire, 1997).

The following is a sample of how truth is defined within the body of worldview literature. Truth is a point of knowing reality and the framework of one's worldview, “the ‘big picture’ that directs our daily decisions and actions” (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p.14). Nash (1999) states that truth is a property that is embedded within the propositions that correspond to “the way things are” (p. 228). Mohler (2005) contends that an individual's daily life engages a concept of truth; “They [the public] still have confidence in the existence of absolute truth and objective reality, and their lives would be unworkable—practically impossible without it” (p. 72). Thus, truth and one's worldview interact at a foundational level to establish one's reality. Truth then informs the content areas of one's worldview and consequently one's engagement with life (Appendix A, Worldview Content Areas). In the classroom two important orientations about the concept of truth surface: relativism/postmodern theory of truth and correspondence/objective theory of truth. There is a third important orientation of truth, called the coherence theory of truth. Thiselton (1978) states that in coherence theory, “a statement is described as true or false in accordance with the extent to which it coheres, or fails to cohere, with a system of other

statements” (p. 896). The benefit of this theory is to introduce another framework of analysis. This theory has been found useful for the student as another truth orientation and framework of analysis after the other theories (relativism/postmodern and correspondence/objective) and the “discrete category” of truth have been established in the course.

Relativism for many students is their default position and may not even be recognized as such. Relativism is the “view that beliefs and principles, particularly evaluative ones, have no universal or timeless validity but are valid only for the age in which, or the social group or individual person by which, they are held” (Bullock & Stallybrass, 1977). There is much thought about relativism as a postmodern construct, although this concept has been in debate since Plato challenged the relativism of the Sophists (Nash, 1999). Relativism in its present form is situated in postmodern thought and is part of our culture through our social institutions, such as the media. Within media, truth expressions come through a story or narrative. Relativism grounds every truth as coming from the contextual or situational perspective of the person, which can be expressed as their story. A result of this idea is expressed in students allowing everyone to have their own truth—truth is not absolute. For the student, this truth is experiential; thus, socially constructed and personally situated. Relativism is also viewed as a dualistic construction. A relativistic dualism (value and knowledge) places truth in the value category and knowledge in a perception category; thus, truth is shaped by interaction. The categorical divide in relativism's epistemology concerning truth claims is a values category (encompassing socially constructed meanings) and a fact/knowledge category involving publically verifiable truth claims (Pearcey, 2004). Dawkins (1986), an atheistic public intellectual, states that this dualism allows for a complete “intellectual fulfillment” of a worldview that accounts for man's ideas and endeavors without an outside truth (p. 6).

Since relativism tends to be a default position for students, other truth positions become either incoherent or unacceptable to the student. The result is that other truth positions become unapproachable and are not to be entertained. Specifically, this includes the correspondence/objective theory of truth. The correspondence perspective of truth presents the idea that truth is established

“by proposition (belief, thought, statement, representation) corresponding to reality; truth obtains when reality is the way proposition represents it to be” (Moreland & Craig, 2003, p. 130). This theory stresses the importance of a “truth bearer” standing in relation to a “truth maker,” providing a tool of analysis to determine the veracity of a truth claim. “Thus, a proper analysis of truth involves analyzing the truth-bearer, the correspondence relation, and the truth-maker” (Moreland & Craig, 2003, p. 135). So the true propositions (truth bearers) are propositions which correspond to the true state of affairs (truth makers) in reality.

The objective truth perspective asserts that truth does not change from person to person or from group to group. This objective truth is also referred to as absolute truth (Moreland & Craig, 2003). Moreland and Craig (2003) continue their explication of truth by saying, “On this view, people discover truth, they do not create it, and a claim is made true or false in some way or another by reality itself, totally independent of whether the claim is accepted by anyone” (p. 132). A key concept then is the independent and objective nature of truth. Pearcey (2004) points to a dualism established by objective truth: a claim is true or it is not. Thus, the objective truth dualistic categories are truth or nontruth.

In the study of truth and relativism, each side creates arguments. Markowitz (2005), in her work on feminist thought, promotes relativism and social construction as the answer to understanding the power differentials in the social world. In fact, her position states that worldviews with objective truth create power differentials and thus subjugation. This answer is a socially situated understanding of reality that gives voice and credence to all. As previously mentioned, Dawkins embraces a relativism that can live without objective truth. In fact, he suggests that relativism gives an account of the questions that challenge relativism. The resulting conclusion is that objective truth does not see what “is” and promotes arrogance.

Mohler (2005) argues that relativism is an unsustainable position because correspondence theory is “inherent to every important truth claim. Once again, we could not operate in everyday life without a basic dependence upon a correspondence theory of truth” (p. 72). Yandell (1997) speaks of the “intellectual suicide” within relativism: an “example of self-destruction is the claim—*All language is meta-*

phorical; as a non- metaphorical use of language, it is itself the very sort of thing it says there cannot be. Such claims, and views to which they are essential, commit intellectual suicide; there is no chance that they constitute knowledge . . . we may legitimately add to our simple truths. No view that commits intellectual suicide can be known to be true” (p. 17). Smith (2011) in *Lost in Translation* points out that relativism is an encompassing framework that analyzes the concepts of truth, reality, and rationality. However, his analysis forces this conclusion because the framework is relative. For him, the philosophical concepts or worldview questions are always understood “relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, culture” (p. 15). This process of relativism privileges whatever is the chosen framework, resulting in claims beyond the framework not being universal. Bernstein concludes that relativism does not allow for a rational argument or an ability to “evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms” (p. 8). Veith (1994) points out that to disbelieve in truth is self-contradictory, “The belief means to think that something is true; to say, ‘It’s true that nothing is true’ is intrinsically meaningless nonsense. The very statement—‘there is no absolute truth’—is an absolute truth” (p.16). Thus, relativism becomes problematic for critical thinking and the pursuit of knowledge.

Pearcey (2004) indicates that our culture is pushing relativistic dualism with an upper story of values and ideas and a lower story of accounted facts or knowledge and argues against this dualism being correct by pointing out that:

As a result, the upper story was now completely cut off from any connection to the realm of history, science, and reason. What is lost is a claim being made true or false by reality itself, totally independent of the claim being accepted or rejected by individuals. After all, if evolutionary forces produced the human mind, then things like religion and morality are no longer transcendent truths. They are merely ideas that appear in the human mind when it has evolved to a certain level of complexity—products of human subjectivity. We create our own morality and meaning through our choices. (p. 106)

In order to provide a meaningful framework for critical thinking and normative discussion, then, these arguments must inform the worldview classroom. The challenge is to present a paradigm that allows for both constructs (truth being conceptualized either as a human construction or as a form of reality beyond human construction) to be engaged in and thought of with clarity in order for analysis to proceed. The desired conclusion for the students is the veracity of the truth claim. All worldview courses directly, or through assumed ideas, engage the concepts of truth and relativism.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH

In a worldview studies class a certain student understanding of the shape of truth often emerges. Even in classes with a mixture of self-proclaimed religious and nonreligious students, the group reaches a point at which there is a general acceptance of the diversity of worldviews commonly assumed by individuals of varying sociocultural backgrounds. This acceptance is rooted in the notion that all worldviews must have merit (be working for someone), otherwise they would not exist. As the students scrutinize naturalism, deism, eastern and western pantheism, and particularly Christian theism, deeper issues of truth arise.

The exposure to the diverse set of worldviews “out there” causes the student to agree with some and not with others. Thus a conflict arises within students that some worldviews are not as true as others. This, however, is not consistent with the students’ orientation to accept all worldviews as “true” for someone. For each class the truth question will appear at different times throughout the course. It often arises from employing the philosophic “tools of analysis” (evidence, existential repugnance, or logical consistency), when the students realize that they are concluding that a certain worldview may be “wrong.”

Hence, an almost visceral reaction occurs as the students ask themselves: How can this be if all worldviews have value and are right unto themselves? The students are exposed in the curriculum to the book and video by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (2000). The intellectual crisis can become more profound after viewing Strobel’s video (LaMirada Films, 2008), in which J.P. Moreland states: “all religions can be wrong,

but they all cannot be right.” The students’ outlook is confronted with the logical reality that something (religion) or someone can be considered wrong because the worldview in question does not meet the standard of truth. As previously mentioned, the course employs Cosgrove’s (2006) test for truth: evidence, logical consistency, existential repugnance, and human nature (p. 64). Students use these tests in analysis and comparative analysis of worldview perspectives. These tests link to the classical analysis of truth and the tools for critical thinking. In short, the matter of worldview studies now moves beyond a “just playing nice” academic exercise in theory to one of profound thought. Many, without realizing it, must make decisions concerning the concept of truth, which subsequently causes the students’ strong ideas about truth to surface.

RESEARCH: UNDERGRADUATE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TRUTH

University of Chicago philosopher Allan Bloom (1989) stated “there is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: Almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative” (p. 25). However, Christian Smith’s (2011) work on emerging adulthood and this study gathered data that suggest that undergraduate views of truth are not expressed as a coherent, codified, or unified system of thought or belief. Emerging adulthood is a life cycle designation for individuals in the 18 to 29 age category. Arnett (2004) established this categorization of an early stage of adulthood. Emergent adults experience:

an intense identity exploration; instability; a focus on self; feelings of being in limbo; in transition, in between; and a sense of possibilities, opportunities, and unparalleled hope. These experiences are also accompanied by a sense of transience, confusion, anxiety, self-obsession, melodrama, conflict, disappointment, and sometimes emotional devastation. (Smith, 2011, p. 15)

Smith (2011) states in his study of emergent adult morality (specific focus on 18 to 24 year olds) that emerging adult thinking is:

not particularly consistent, coherent, or articulate. It is not only that not many emerging adults are moral philosophers in the making: everyone knows

that. In addition, not many of them have previously given much or any thought to many of the kinds of questions about morality that we asked. Thus, much of what they have to say about morality is peppered with uncertain phrases, such as ‘I don’t know,’ ‘like,’ and ‘I guess’ (p. 20).

This study’s survey research revealed that 52% of the informants stated that truth is something the person discovers (a correspondence theory perspective), 37% stated that truth can be found in an objective state (sacred scriptures), and 100% of those surveyed agreed with an objective view of truth being unchanging. However, 66% of the same respondents indicated that truth is relative or defined by culture, and 78% expressed truth as individualistic/relativistic by asserting “we all have our own truth.” The results of the survey questions regarding the qualities of truth further indicate an undifferentiated position with the dual belief in relativism and objective truth. In addition, these beliefs can be held at the same time without a sense of internal contradiction. Two thirds of the informants stated that a mixture of concrete qualities and relativistic qualities exist in the definitional framework of truth. This is exemplified by a student who wrote that “truth is defined by an individual through experiences that has taught them what their reality is” (Informant #6, Survey participant, 2012). The student also indicated that truth is concrete, never changing, and is discovered. A survey informant states, “truth is knowing that something is real, that there is a universal belief in it” and indicated that truth is concrete and relative. In providing a list of something that was true 30 years ago and will still be true 30 years from now the informant states “passion for something is the stem of everything” (Informant #66, Survey participant, 2012). Another student states, “truth is something that can be proven through science,” and that truth “never changes, can never be known, and comes from God” (Informant #19, Survey participant, 2012). The data reveal and confirm the students’ mixed conceptualization of relativistic and objective truth. Students are coming to the classroom with an undifferentiated view of absolute truth and relativism.

A relativistic sense of truth, through social construction and personally situated truth, has a strong presence in the classroom. Students are hesitant to confront each other and state that the other is wrong. A relativist perspective does not allow for a

false claim. When surveyed participants were presented with the situation in which “another person’s truth is different than yours,” only 14% of students would “say they are wrong.” However, one of the consequences of having an objective view of truth is that something can be right or wrong. Ultimately, the research indicates that the present conceptualization of truth for many students eliminates opportunities for healthy and mutually respectful disagreement and debate, and the rebuttal of a false claim for truth.

Another important component of truth for students involves what validates a claim as true. This especially comes to the forefront concerning ethics and what is morally right or wrong. Smith’s (2011) data indicates that for the majority of emerging adults “if people believe something to be right, then for them it is right, simply by virtue of their belief. Absent any morally objective standard of moral evaluation anything could be morally right, then, as long as someone believes it” (p. 29). In our postmodern era a personal truth is absolute. During this paper’s study, informants were asked, “what do you do when another person’s truth is different than yours?” (Appendix B, Research Survey). Eighty-eight percent of students concluded that “they have their truth and I have mine,” 7.5 % selected “we are really saying the same thing,” 14.5% stated “say that they are wrong.” This data coincides with Smith’s findings that two-thirds of participants were not firm realists or moral absolutists, and one-third of participants were strong moral relativists. Smith (2011) concludes that undergraduates’ responses are often individualistic and situational, with firm “moral commitments jumbled together in confusing statements” (p.31). This has been expressed in the worldview class when students condition their responses by stating that everyone is different and it depends on the situation.

STUDENT’S RESOLVING OF DISSONANCE

Upon presenting the class with the notion that truth is absolute, a very interesting phenomenon and interaction commonly occurs. In the classroom students struggle to resolve the dissonance by defining truth to match their presuppositions: (a) acceptance is love, (b) humility and justice call for every worldview to be regarded as truthful, and most assuredly (c) every person’s truth is of ultimate value. Now, if one attempts to point out the relative nature

of the students' definition of truth, the assertion is either disregarded or students will restate their belief and redefine truth as what is real to the person or culture.

A number of nonhostile classroom discussions often follow that focus on taking truth out of the relative context of personal expression and moving toward categorizing truth as either ultimate/absolute or relative, but these interactions usually prove fruitless. For some students the eyes glaze over, followed by a polite but internal shutdown. Even among those students who declare a Christian theistic worldview and who perceive themselves as proclaiming the reality of God, the view persists that ethics are culture-bound, as opposed to originating from God's unchanging character. The personal shaping of truth is foundational even for these students. Thus, truth as a standard, a measure of ultimate reality, and something that starts outside of the student's subjective perceptions, is absent. The personal shaping of truth becomes confusing for the students as they attempt to give credence to conflicting ideas and try to allow and hold competing ideas. Adler (1981) states that the confusion is:

between truth and falsity that inheres in a proposition or truth statement and the judgment that a person makes with regard to the truth or falsity of the statement in question. We may differ in our judgment about what is true, but that does not affect the truth of the matter itself. (p. 41)

Adler provides the example of a disagreement and confusion regarding the number of peaks over 14,000 feet in height. One individual sets the number of peaks at 50 while the other disagrees. Adler (1981) points out that there is a definite number of peaks:

and so the statement that sets it at 50 is either true or false, regardless of what the persons who dispute this matter of fact may think about it ... we do not make statements true or false by affirming or denying them. They have truth or falsity regardless of what we think, what opinions we hold, what judgments we make (p. 41).

An aid to the student in resolving this confusion will be for the classroom to: (a) identify the confusion and its origin, (b) provide a framework that creates definition and discrete categories for truth, and (c) for the instructor to model and engage the class in the use of the objective definition and discrete categories. Students are now forced to resolve a concept of truth which is something other than simply perception or experience.

Nonetheless, even when students accept the notion of ultimate truth or absolute truth, their understanding is that it is ultimate and absolute only to them or someone else. It is not truth for everyone everywhere. This view is consistently evident in the many reflections and personal statements in student worldview papers. The initial dissonance is resolved by redefinition and using the postmodern construct of logical opposites being able to coexist. Credibility for the student's position is a self-proclaimed individualist position and not driven by classical logical constructs or paradigms.

OBJECTIVE TRUTH AS PERSONAL

To address this phenomenon, I engage the class in the next steps of examining the nature of truth. Is it subjective or objective? Is it relative or absolute? Some students will quickly turn objective truth into a personal tool, one that resides within the person, with absolute truth reaching the levels of being absolute for a single person or even a culture but not in the universal sense. When the question arises of truth needing to be true everywhere and for everyone—i.e., universal—there is knowing agreement, but only in the sense that culture is everywhere and that everyone wants and experiences truth. So the student's conclusion is that the "everywhere and everyone" truth is objective and absolute within cultural and personal boundaries rather than in a universal sense. The class then comes full circle in taking and agreeing with a definitional framework and making it theirs. And they have done so, without perceiving the larger problem of their truth construct framework being relative and locked within personal and cultural boundaries. In effect, they have cut and pasted new definitions of truth into a relativistic framework which they brought to the discussion.

After talking with a number of worldview instructors, I realized my experience was not an isolated phenomenon. There seems to be a particular

set of presuppositions with which students initially engage worldview studies. Wikipedia's take on truth (2011), one which many students use as an academic framework, is that truth is theoretically driven, having a "variety of meanings," as well as "being in accord with the body of real things" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth>). Without delving any deeper, students quickly gain a sense of truth as being relegated to "realness" with truth being what is "real" to the student; the idea of the individual not being the arbiter of what is real and therefore true, is foreign to them.

One could spend inordinate time putting forward theories as to why this inability to comprehend the absolute nature of truth exists in undergraduate academia. Many reasons have been posited, from the postmodern mind to the secularization of the church. Smith (2011) concludes that the education system has not provided the tools for these discussions, while Pearcey (2004) points to modern society relegating truth to a value, while Claerbaut (2004) points to the cultural relativism promoted through social institutions. The relativistic underpinnings and logically inconsistent thought process of students is not what is most troubling. What is troubling is the absence of perceiving truth as a discrete category. Because of the undifferentiated view of relativism and absolute truth, the substantive nature of truth and its definitional framework is literally inconceivable to students. Categories are not firm, and in the classroom there is a limit to dialogue and critical thinking because discrete categories are not understood or employed by the students.

THE DISCRETE CATEGORY OF TRUTH

What is needed? To establish the discrete category of truth. The challenge in the worldview class, then, is to assist the students in examining the nature of truth. A suggested practical beginning of the course includes introducing students to the practice of engaging truth as a discrete category, one that is not malleable or continuous, rather than beginning the course by sifting through worldviews and subsequently making one's way toward a definition of truth. Not unlike the periodic table of elements or the rules of mathematics, truth then becomes similar to an empirical, objective framework. It is separate, distinct, and independent in form and concept from anything else, including nontruth. The nature of truth, thus defined, can neither be added to nor

subtracted from. What is true will be true today, yesterday and tomorrow, and is true wherever one goes—India, Egypt, Poland, Japan, Australia, the United States, or Brazil. With truth residing outside the individual generating it, that truth becomes an orientation point. One then can strive to acquire truth, realize truth, understand truth, and most productively argue the truthful merits of a worldview. This is at the core of critical thinking. Paul (1992) states that within critical thinking the application of standards and logic are implemented with the desire of determining truth (1992).

The dialogue that can come from a substantive, discrete categorical view of truth allows the participants to have a level of integrity beyond the self by embracing a position and proclaiming the strength of it. Gone is the amiable interaction aimed at protecting feelings in what has become a conflict-averse academic culture. If a student believes or holds to a closed system of truth (nontranscendent, all derived through social construction, godless) and another advocates an open system (transcendent, a deity intervening in time and space) both believe in truth as a discrete category. Hence, the ensuing debate is on the merits of each student's claim as to what is universally true. The closed-system student may call for evidence from the individual with the open system by asking for the evidence as to the existence of God. That student can also indicate the evidence of the closed worldview system through the reality of the power of causation and the "survival of the fittest" in the natural world. This allows the discussion to move beyond the personal and subjective and frees the students to disagree with one another, which is one of the strongest reasons to use the discrete category of truth in an educational setting. Moreover, elevating this construct of truth allows for a definitional framework as a common "point of orientation." Analytical thinking can then proceed from a common starting point with the aim of gaining clear understanding and knowledge within the worldview framework.

In an atmosphere in which everything is relative and personal—and for many students that means everything—a great service for worldview students is early on to establish the dialogue within the context of the discrete categories and the discrete nature of truth. Amid the present thinking, one in which the individual can establish anything to mean anything providing it is "real" to the person, the teaching of

worldviews needs a way to capture the meaning of absolute/universal truth. Establishing the existence of the discrete nature of truth may be one such way.

SUMMATION FOR THE CLASSROOM

The following is a brief summation of instituting the discrete category of truth within the worldview classroom.

Entering the Classroom

The research demonstrates that the instructor can presume that students come to class with a mixture of undifferentiated relativistic and objective views of truth, a high value of nonconfrontation, and a personal filter of assumptions and life experience that are the foundation of their truth construct.

Course Structure and Goal

The course's structure should provide subject content through a definitional framework, a body of literature, an analytical framework, and classroom dialogue and discussion. A goal of the course is to aid in the students' discovery of their worldview. Another goal of the class is to engage current social trends through the students' defined worldview and the use of comparative analysis with other worldviews.

Issue of Dissonance

The students will feel unsettled by the challenging material of the course. This experience is expressed many times as confusion. The following three steps guide the student beyond confusion: (a) identify the confusion ("is this true or not," or "is this real") and its origin, (b) provide a framework that creates definition and discrete categories and the discrete category of truth, and (c) allow the instructor to model and engage the class in the use of the definition and discrete categories.

Implementing the "Discrete Category of Truth"

The discrete category of truth can be introduced very early during the content stage of the course and can be presented right after the definition of "worldview." The purpose of explicating the concept of truth before defining major worldviews such as naturalism or eastern pantheism is to aid the student in seeing the difference in categorizing a worldview and accepting its truth claims. The concept of a discrete category will call for an analysis that is bounded by definition and agreed or rejected

as to its claims. Thus, the course work can engage the student in class to understand this bounded category and substantive quality of truth. The tools of analysis can be introduced to lead the class through arguments. An example would be the evidence that supports or negates the reality of life after death. This topic can then be engaged by the other tools of analysis and students can write a short paper on their conclusion and reasoning. Then, the instructor can again teach about the discrete category of truth. From what we have learned about the pre-suppositions of the students, a number of exercises such as these are needed to engage our students' nondiscrete categories and introduce discrete categorization. Exercises that engage truth as personal and situational, such as a debate over female circumcision within African tribes and whether this is right or wrong, are useful. At this point, introducing ideas of ethics allows one to begin to state the components of a worldview and move toward the expression of these components in the major worldviews. All along, the tools of analysis need to be brought to the surface and the discrete category of truth affirmed.

Conclusion

The undergraduate student engages the worldview course with a mixed bag of ideas. This is not a belittling statement or the beginning of a "blame game" by instructors. In fact, the refreshing honesty of students' thoughts has been expressed to me by many professors. The important journey for us is to state what "is" in the classroom and provide steps for constructive engagement. Just as Markowitz (2005) has spelled out a pedagogy for feminist studies, the worldview class needs to do the same. Markowitz, from a postmodern perspective, encourages courses to follow a teaching and curriculum path that includes participatory learning, social construction of knowledge, and the legitimation of personal experience. This paper proposes that an important pedagogy for worldview studies includes defining a discrete category of truth. Truth coming from a bounded and coherent category allows for critical thinking and avoids the trap of elevating the personal.

A suggestion for the structuring of a worldview course is to present the discrete category of truth early in the coursework, which may fit well during the course's defining of the concept of worldview.

Upon establishing this concept, along with definitional frameworks and analytical frameworks, a natural goal of engaging truth follows. With the discrete category of truth providing a path, a point of orientation is established. This point of orientation for student perspectives, arguments, and curriculum makes specific the reality of truth running through critical thinking and worldview studies.

Author Biography

Timothy M. Larkin, currently an Associate Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences at Grand Canyon University, received his Ph.D. in Sociology and his Masters of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Illinois, Chicago. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Wheaton College (IL), as well as an M.Div. from Golden Gate Theological Seminary.

Besides his current professorship, Dr. Larkin has served as Assistant Professor of Sociology at Biola University (CA), as an instructor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (IL), and Wheaton College. He has held both supervisory and field positions in social work at various social service agencies in Illinois and California, and has also ministered as chaplain and Community Ministry Associate Pastor in Chicago.

Dr. Larkin has presented widely on topics relating to both sociology and ministry at numerous conferences, and is the author of electronic forum contributions, one article, and one section of a sociology text: (2011) Establishing truth in the worldview classroom, *Faith and Learning Forum: An International Forum on Faith and Learning Issues*, www.faithandlearningforum.com; (1983) The church as the workplace for social work, *Social Work and Christianity*: 10 (1), Spring; and (1985) Low income neighborhoods, in *Single Adults Resources and Recipients for Revival*.

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Appendix A

WORLDVIEW CONTENT AREAS

Reality (Ontology or Metaphysics)

Knowledge (Epistemology)

Human Nature (Anthropology)

Human Problems

Solutions to Human Problems

Human Value

Human Purpose

Ethics

Suffering

Meaning of Life

Human Desire

(Presented in: Cosgrove, M. P. (2006), *Foundations of Christian thought: Faith, learning, and the Christian worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel - Academic and Professional.)

Appendix B

RESEARCH SURVEY

Truth Survey – Thank you for considering the filling out of the following survey. This survey is part of a larger project that seeks to understand how individuals in college view the concept of truth. You are under no obligation to take this survey. You may stop taking the survey at any time and leave the room. This is an anonymous survey and by filling it out you agree to take the survey. Your college course grades will not be affected by your choice to participate or not in this survey. Thank you for your consideration.

Truth Survey

The best way that I know truth is through –

- Looking within me
- Can't be found
- Discovering it
- Through sacred scripture – Bible, Koran, etc.

Is there a truth that never changes and has been true yesterday — also today — and tomorrow?

- Yes
- No

Circle all that apply as a quality of truth –

- It is relative – (depends on the situation)
- It is concrete – (real and unchanging, substantive)
- Starts within the person
- Is defined by culture
- It can never be known

Where does truth come from?

- From culture
- From God
- From within the person
- Other _____

List or leave blank three things that are true today and were true 30 years ago and will be true 30 years from now.

-
-
-

What do you do when another person's truth is different than yours? – Circle all that apply..

- “Say that they have their truth and I have mine.”
- “Say that they are wrong.”
- “We really are saying the same thing.”

What is truth?

The Proficiency of Christian Denominations as Learning Organizations

Gary W. Piercy, Ph.D.

Although recent studies confirmed that concepts related to learning organizations could achieve positive outcomes such as financial performance, innovation, and adaptation to change, there is no research addressing whether religious organizations can benefit from these concepts. A primary purpose of this study was to investigate the status of Christian denominations as learning organizations. Completed surveys of a random selection of senior pastors from 34 denominations provided the data for multiple regression analysis. Key research questions addressed the possible relationship between learning components and performance outcomes and between individual, team and organization-level learning and performance outcomes. Results demonstrated Christian denominations lacked proficiency in team-level learning, inquiry and dialogue, collaboration, and other learning components. The recommendation is that denominations explore the benefits of team-level initiatives, which could lead to improved organizational performance and allow the organizations to adapt more effectively to changing social conditions.

Globalization requires organizations to adapt to changing environments and to generate new learning to remain viable. One organizational model that arose as a result was the concept of the learning organization, which refers to the ability of organizations to solve operational challenges by acquiring new knowledge or improving skills as well as resolving deeper organizational issues related to values, beliefs, and assumptions within the organization (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Theorists such as Argyris and Schon (1978) pioneered the concept of the learning organization, while, Senge (1990) created a broad appeal for learning organization ideology. Interest in the learning organization continues to foster literature suggesting that optimal organizational performance requires that organizations develop the capability to learn (Marquardt, 2002).

According to Senge (1990), the inability to incorporate these learning skills is a primary reason organizations fail. More explicitly, Marquardt (2002) stated that organizations that fail to adapt quickly to the changing environment “will die” (p. 1). Thus, for organizational viability, it seems essential that organizations engage in learning activities to ensure success.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Building a thriving community requires optimal organizational performance to serve the community effectively. Churches represent nearly one fourth of all nonprofit organizations in the United States supporting important community roles such as food and clothing banks and emergency shelters (Saxon-Harrold, Wiener, McCormack, & Weber,

2000). Additionally, churches provide communities with a reservoir of social capital by encouraging volunteerism in social and civic service (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Wuthnow, 2004). Further, churches give people a sense of belonging (Krause & Wulff, 2005) that seems to result in healthier living (Robinson & Nussbaum, 2004) and longer lives (Koenig et al., 1999).

Yet, like many organizations, churches encounter organizational problems that relate to their ability to perform proficiently. For example, the median age of ministers in the United States is rising while the number of younger ministers is declining, leaving a shortage of pastors for the future (Lewis Center Report, 2006). In addition, denominations lose ministers every month through resignation, retirement, dismissal, transferring to other denominations, and death. Without pastors to lead local congregations, many churches may close. Furthermore, pastors often have a sense of isolation and lack of support from their denomination and other pastors, which Hoge and Wenger (2003) identified as a primary reason pastors leave their churches. Additionally, Wuthnow (2004) noted that many churches are too small to affect society, which could forecast their demise. Church attendance is currently declining, resulting in fewer people engaging in church activities, thus reducing the social capital churches offer communities (ANES, 2010; Hadaway & Marler, 2005). Like all organizations, churches must remain connected with their ever-changing communities to remain relevant and must continually evaluate performance outcomes to remain viable organizations. However, churches collect performance data less frequently than other organizations because it is difficult to collect, manage, and measure intangibles such as spiritual growth and program accomplishments (Saxon-Harold et al., 2000).

Nevertheless, evaluating performance gives organizations, including Christian denominations, the opportunity to scrutinize performance outcomes. As cited above, researchers have identified significant relationships between learning organization characteristics and performance outcomes. Yet, to this researcher's knowledge, social science literature focusing on Christian denominations as learning organizations is absent from the knowledge base. Incorporating learning organization characteristics within denominations could result in positive performance outcomes such as those identified

in other types of organizations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research conducted with for-profit organizations demonstrating characteristics consistent with those found in learning organizations revealed significant relationships between those learning characteristics and financial performance (Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, & Howton, 2003), innovation and adaptation to change (Kontoghiorghes, Awbrey, & Feurig, 2005), and business performance (López, Peón, & Ordas, 2005). Additionally, research conducted with large nonprofit organizations (NPO) revealed significant relationships between those learning characteristics and performance outcomes (McHargue, 2003). The problem addressed in this study concerned the absence of literature within the social sciences that focused on Christian denominations as learning organizations. This is problematic as churches operate in the same changing world as other organizations and failure to adapt to change and develop innovative, relevant ministry strategies and programs could result in diminishing performance outcomes.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the performance of Christian denominations in the United States as learning organizations and to provide church leaders a learning organization model that may help create better performance outcomes. Moreover, the results of this study offer leaders a conceptual model clarifying the status of participating denominations as learning organizations by identifying learning components currently present or absent within those denominations. This knowledge provides leaders with the action imperatives to equip denominations to become more explicitly, and therefore more proficiently, learning organizations as defined in the literature. Further, the purpose of this study is to add to the knowledge base of the learning organization literature by offering empirical research identifying the status of Christian denominations as learning organizations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) learning organization theory serves as the framework for this study. Watkins and Marsick recognized that learning takes place within an organization on sev-

eral levels, including the individual level, the team level, the organization level, and the global level. Additionally, Watkins and Marsick identified seven dimensions of learning commonly found in learning organizations. The first dimension is creating continuous learning opportunities, which serves as the foundation for organizational learning because an organization learns as individuals within the organization learn (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). The second dimension is promoting inquiry and dialogue, which is a cornerstone of organizational learning as inquiry and dialogue serve as the link between individual learning and team learning. The third dimension involves encouraging collaboration and team learning, which serves as a critical link between individual learning and organizational learning as teams, groups, and networks become the human means through which an organization distributes information and learning. The fourth dimension is establishing systems to capture and share learning, which is the means by which organizations embed new learning into the organizational memory. The fifth dimension involves empowering toward collective vision, which necessitates the abandonment of hierarchical, authoritarian organizational structures in favor of a flatter design that encourages everyone in the organization to assume responsibility for success. The sixth dimension, connecting the organization to its environment, involves systems thinking and requires understanding how the organization connects to its internal and external environment to remain relevant. Finally, the seventh dimension is providing strategic leadership to support learning, which represents one of the most important learning organization dimensions, as research indicated that leadership is the “single most important factor in determining fluctuations of quality between different episodes of learning” (Naot, Lipshitz, & Popper, 2004, p. 470).

These seven learning dimensions represent characteristics of learning organizations and serve as action imperatives, offering leaders a plan of action to begin developing a learning organization. Further, these learning dimensions address the organizational learning components, both the cognitive components (continuous learning opportunities, inquiry and dialogue, collaboration and team learning, empowerment toward collective vision) and the structural components (systems to capture

and share learning, connecting the organization to its environment, strategic leadership for learning) (Yang, Watkins, & Marsick, 2004). Finally, these seven learning dimensions serve as the independent variables related to this study.

Researchers employing Marsick and Watkins' (2003) learning organization theory and corresponding Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) focused on international and national organizations, small family businesses, financial firms, high-tech firms, and nonprofit organizations. These studies indicated a significant relationship between the seven dimensions of the learning organization and three performance outcomes including knowledge performance, financial performance, and the additional mission performance for nonprofit organizations (Ellinger et al., 2003; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; McHargue, 2003). The first performance outcome, knowledge performance, often refers to organizational value above its book value (Brown, Jr., Osborn, Chan, & Jagannathan, 2005). Tangible values might include patents, trademarks, copyrights, investment in technology, and organizational growth rates (Brown, Jr. et al., 2005; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Intangible values include knowledge and intellectual capital that develop within an organization over time (Brown, Jr. et al., 2005). Such intangibles are often problematic for measuring knowledge capital, as there is little agreement as to the appropriate metrics (Abeysekera, 2006; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Nevertheless, measuring knowledge performance is necessary to determine an organization's status as a learning organization. The second performance outcome is financial performance. Studies contain evidence of positive relationships between concepts identified with learning organizations and the financial performance of organizations (Dimoviski & Skerlavaj, 2005; Ellinger et al., 2003). The third performance outcome, following McHargue's (2003) research in the nonprofit sector, involves mission performance, as success for NPOs depends upon the ability of an organization to accomplish its mission (perhaps including changing lives), “which often eludes tangible measurement” (p. 198). Further, Saxon-Harrold et al. (2000) noted that measuring intangibles, such as spiritual growth, is one reason performance outcome measures are problematic for churches.

The application of this theory in this study could prove significant for church leaders, since

Saxon-Harrold et al. (2000) identified several problems related to churches that could relate to Watkins and Marsick's (2003) and McHargue's (2003) performance outcomes. For example, the ability to identify ways to address the shortage of younger ministers and the ability to share knowledge and learning throughout the organization through investments in technology relates to knowledge performance. Additionally, the lack of funds to build facilities, engage in new missions endeavors, address social needs, and engage in local and foreign missions projects relates to financial performance. Finally, mission performance relates to the ability to develop new programs that address social needs both locally and globally. Applying Watkins and Marsick's theory and a revised version of the DLOQ to the present study determined the status of participating Christian denominations as learning organizations and thus offers church leaders action imperatives with which to address these and other issues.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This was a quantitative study involving the administration of an emailed link to a web based survey followed by an analysis of the data using a correlational research design. Correlational design is useful for determining how one part of a system relates to other parts of a system. This design offered a means to observe the relationships between the seven dimensions of the learning organization and three levels of learning within organizations, and the financial, knowledge, and mission performances of denominations (McHargue, 2003; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996). Specifically, the employment of multiple regression analysis provided a tool for analyzing data collected from the respondents.

Research questions

The design of this study offered the means to answer the following research questions:

R1. What relationship, if any, exists between the seven dimensions of the learning organization and the knowledge, financial, and mission performances of denominations?

R2. What relationship, if any, exists between the three levels of learning within an organization (individual, team, and organizational) and the knowledge, financial, and mission performances of denominations?

The seven dimensions of the learning organization served as the nonmanipulated independent variables for the first research question and three learning levels served as the nonmanipulated independent variables for the second research question. Performance outcomes employed as the dependent variables for this study included knowledge performance, financial performance, and mission performance.

Target population and sample

The target population for this study included ordained senior pastors and priests within Christian denominations in the United States. Determining the number of churches in the United States was problematic because the United States government maintains no centralized list of churches (Hadaway & Marler, 2005). Therefore, it became necessary to define membership in the population from which to draw the sample.

The Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA) maintains a list of denominations in the United States, yet does not maintain church mail or email addresses. A database of emails purchased in 2006 from Williams Direct became a cross reference of denominations with church mail and email addresses grouped by denomination. Comparing and cross-referencing the ARDA list with the Williams Direct list provided a list of 34 denominations with over 1,000 churches common to both lists. Using two unaffiliated lists of denominations to create one list established a control for bias as the two unrelated lists together established the criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the population. A further attempt to reduce bias necessitated eliminating the Assemblies of God, as the researcher is an ordained minister in that denomination. Thus, the total population consisted of 34 denominations common to both sources yielding 30,717 email addresses. Based on a total sample frame of 30,717, a sample size of 2,312 provided a 95% confidence level and a 1.96 confidence interval. After delivering 2,312 email invitations, there were 243 respondents representing 10.5%, which compared with previous clergy research with a 10% response rate (R. Sellers, personal communication, October 19, 2006). However, not every survey was complete, resulting in 159 usable surveys.

Instrumentation

The instrument employed for this study was the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), an established survey that Watkins and Marsick (1997) developed and that many researchers employed to examine the relationships between learning organizations and performance outcomes within organizations (Ellinger et al., 2003; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; McHargue, 2003; Selden, 1998). This study built upon those studies, and included McHargue's study, which sought to determine how large nonprofit organizations (NPO) functioned as learning organizations. However, whereas Marsick and Watkins' original survey only measured knowledge performance and financial performance, McHargue (2003) added mission performance as an outcome indicator because NPOs must demonstrate credibility through "positive outcomes from their services and programs" (p. 199).

Following McHargue's (2003) research, slight language modifications became necessary to adjust the survey to church culture while maintaining the original integrity of the questions. Examples of modification included replacing the word *organization* with the word *denomination*, replacing the word *employee* with the word *pastor*, and replacing the word *client* with *church members*. The original DLOQ focused on for-profit organizations; therefore, the instrument avoids issues or concerns regarding theology or ecclesiology. Additionally, McHargue's revised DLOQ did not address performance concerns unique among churches, including a shortage of younger clergy (knowledge performance), lack of funds for facilities and new missions endeavors, engaging in local and foreign missions projects (financial performance), and developing programs to address social needs (mission performance) (Saxon-Harrold et al., 2000). Therefore, addressing these performance concerns required adding six additional performance outcome questions to Part 2 of the survey. As a result, the DLOQ Church version (DLOQ-C) contained 67 six-point Likert-type scale questions ranging from *Almost Never* (value 1) to *Almost Always* (value 6) in Part 1 and *Not at all* (value 1) to *To a great extent* (value 6) in Part 2. Cronbach's alpha provided the means to determine instrument reliability. Cronbach's alpha for Part I and Part II of the survey was .975 and .953 respectively revealing a high level of reliability.

RESULTS

Research question 1

What relationship, if any, exists between the seven dimensions of the learning organization and the knowledge, financial, and mission performances of denominations?

Knowledge performance.

SPSS identified four learning dimensions that best relate to knowledge performance, including creating systems to capture and share learning, empowering toward collective vision, strategic leadership to support learning, and continuous learning opportunities, that account for 56% of the variance in knowledge performance questions.

Mission performance.

SPSS identified three variables as significant predictors of mission performance, including creating systems to capture and share learning, empowering toward collective vision, and providing strategic leadership to support learning, that account for 57.9% of the variance in mission performance questions.

Financial performance.

SPSS identified two variables as significant predictors of financial performance, including empowering toward collective vision and providing strategic leadership to support learning, that account for 44.3% of the variance derived in financial performance questions.

Figure 1 is an illustration of the status of the participating denominations as a learning organization identifying each of the learning dimensions and its relationship to the three performance outcomes. Three learning behaviors had significant relationships with the three performance variables. In each of the three regression models, strategic leadership was the strongest predictor in the equation. Continuous learning opportunities was not significant by itself; however, when removed from the knowledge performance equation it caused a significant decrease in variance and therefore remained within the model. Although these four components were present within the data analysis, three of the seven independent variables were notably missing from any of the regression equations including inquiry and dialogue, collaboration and team learning, and connecting the organization to its environment.

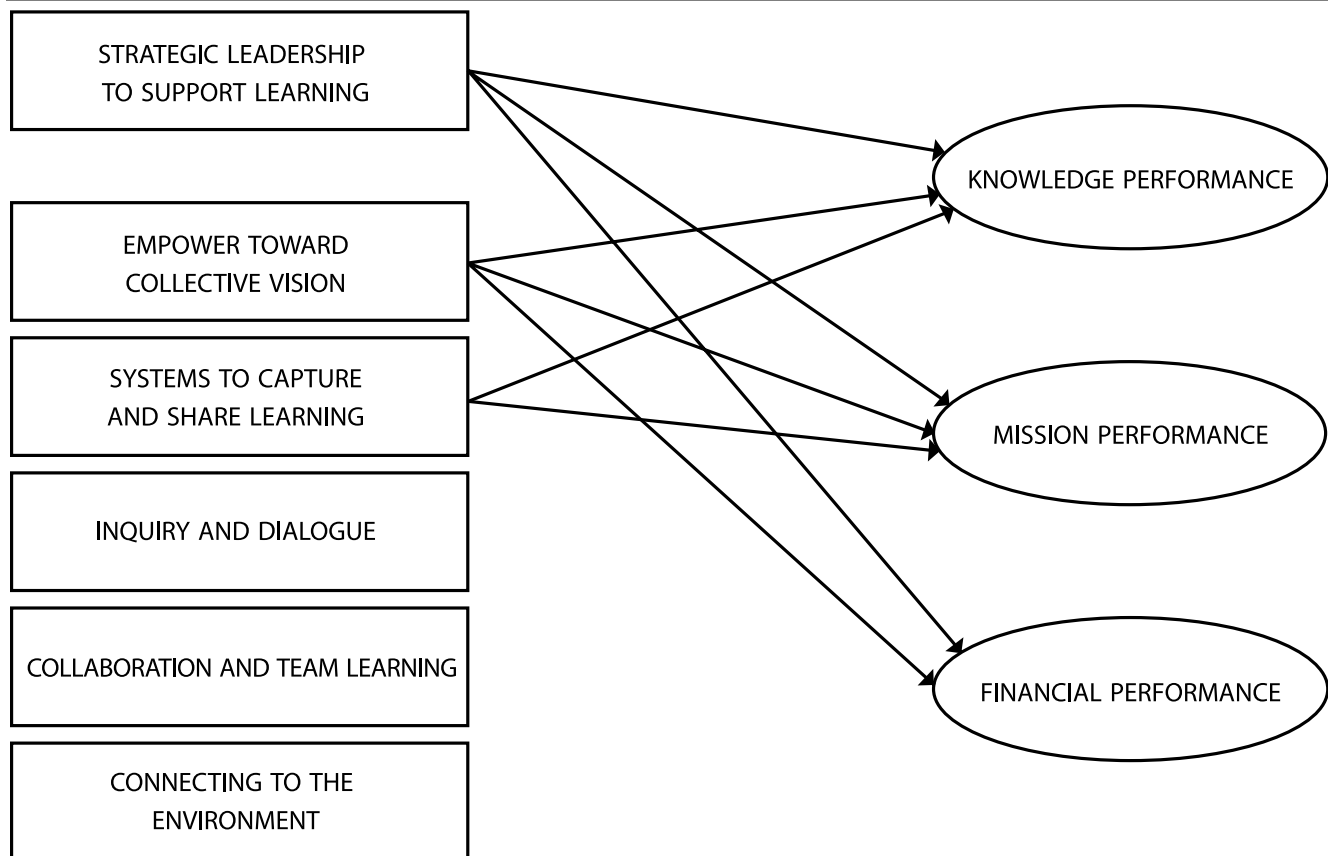


Figure 1. Conceptual Model 1: Denominations as learning organizations.

Research question 2

What relationship, if any, exists between the three levels of learning within an organization (individual, team, and organizational) and the knowledge, financial, and mission performances of denominations?

The factor analysis with regard to the relationship between three learning levels (individual, team, and organization) and performance outcomes was problematic. The factor analysis failed to identify team-level learning as a component resulting in the employment of only individual-level learning and organization-level in the regression equations.

Knowledge performance.

SPSS identified both individual-level learning and organization-level learning as significant, accounting for 54.6% of the variance derived from the knowledge performance questions.

Mission performance.

SPSS identified only the organization-level learning as the individual-level learning dropped out of the equation. Organization-level learning is the significant predictor variable and alone ac-

counts for 56.2% of the variance derived from the mission performance questions.

Financial performance.

SPSS identified only organization-level learning as the significant predictor, accounting for 40.4% of the variance derived from the financial performance questions.

The data analysis pertaining to the second research question identified a significant relationship between organization-level learning and each of the three performance outcomes. Individual-level learning found a significant relationship with only the knowledge performance variable. Finally, team-level learning was not a factor in any equation since this level of learning failed identification in the factor analysis that preceded the regression analysis. Figure 2 is a conceptual model relating the three learning levels to the three performance outcomes.

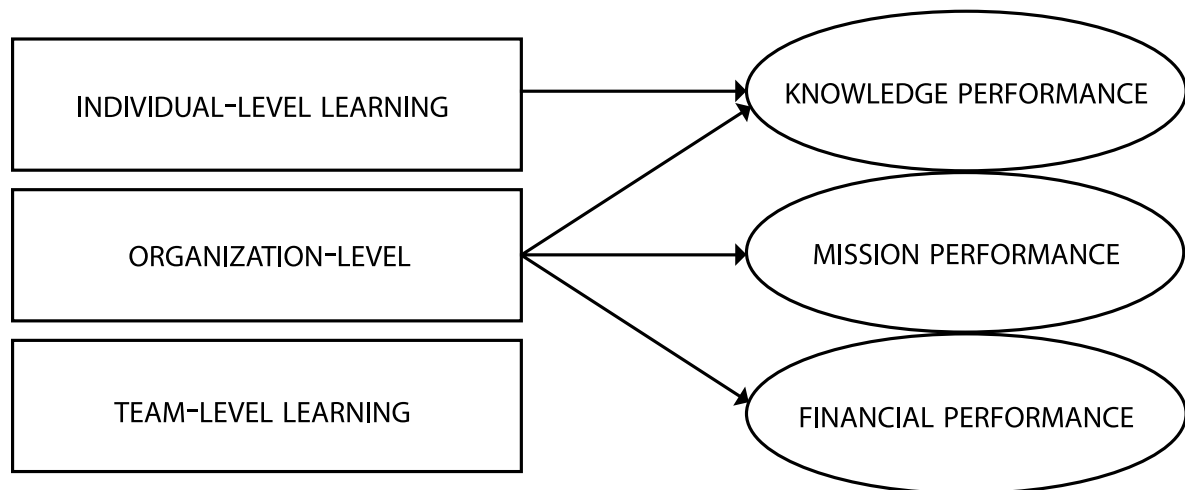


Figure 2. Conceptual Model 2: Learning levels within denominations

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the findings revealed that within the participating denominations, inquiry and dialogue, collaboration and team learning, and team-level learning were not significant in relation to the performance variables. The absence of these learning components exposed a gap in the ability of these denominations to function proficiently as learning organizations. This learning gap exists at the heart of Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) learning organization theory. Previous research identified significant relationships between individual-level learning and team-level learning and between team-level learning and organization-level learning (Chan, 2003). However, the same research was un-

ing organizations. Additionally, the link between individual-level learning and team-level learning is inquiry and dialogue and the link between team-level learning and organization-level learning is collaboration and team learning (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Therefore, the significance of these findings revealed that pastors are not connecting with their organizations, which supports Hoge and Wenger's (2003) research regarding isolation from the organization as a primary reason pastors leave churches.

Further, although regression models identified continuous learning opportunities and individual-level learning, neither of these components was as significant as other learning components. This further supports the concept that an organizational

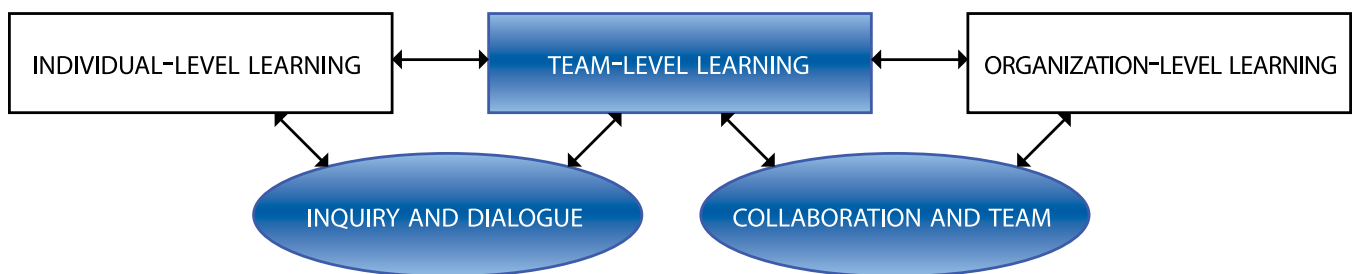


Figure 3. The shaded areas represent the three missing learning components

able to identify a significant relationship between individual-level learning and organization-level learning. Thus, team-level learning is the centerpiece that connects individual learning to organizational learning and without team-level learning, organizations fail to function proficiently as learn-

ing organizations. Figure 3 contains an illustration of the absence of inquiry and dialogue, collaboration and team learning, and team-level learning, the absence of which creates a

learning gap within the denominations.

The data revealed that currently a disconnection exists between individual-level learning and organization-level learning within the sample population. This is problematic as, according to Senge (1990) and Watkins and Marsick (1993), individual learning is foundational for learning organizations, since organizations learn as individuals within the organization learn. However, team-level learning serves as the link between individual-level learning and organization-level learning. Thus, the absence of team-level learning may explain why individual-level learning was significant with only one performance variable and explain the near insignificance of continuous learning opportunities, because this learning gap may inhibit individual-level learning from gravitating toward organization-level learning and may inhibit organization-level learning from gravitating toward individual-level learning.

Additionally, the absence of team-level learning, with the corresponding learning dimensions of inquiry and dialogue and collaboration and team learning, deprives denominations of innovation and creativity, because this learning component and its dimensions enable members to learn from others to address problems facing denominations. Employing team-level learning that includes inquiry and dialogue and collaboration and team learning could assist denominations in addressing issues related to financial performance helping denominations secure funds to build facilities, engage in new missions endeavors, address social needs, and engage in local and foreign missions projects (Saxon-Harold et al., 2000). In addition, team-level learning offers greater opportunity to engage in learning that enables adapting to change and generating new learning, which is a primary function necessary for organizations to connect to their environments. However, connecting the organization to its environment is another learning component absent from the optimal performance models. The failure of denominations to connect to their environment could prove devastating to the long-term ability of denominations to fulfill their purpose, since connecting the organization to its ever-changing environment is necessary to remain relevant. For churches, this may indicate an inability to relate to those outside of the church. Jarvis (2004) wrote, “it might not be that this is a non-religious world, but that the churches are out of touch with the religious questions of today” (p.

145). This finding may provide insight into a possible reason many churches experience a decline in attendance (ANES, 2010; Hadaway & Marler, 2005). Thus, through team-level learning, teams of pastors and church members could collaborate to create ways to adapt to the changing environment both inside and outside the church and generate new learning in order to remain relevant in the environment to address the concerns of those within their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for action.

Analysis of the data identified leadership as a significant factor in denominational performance as learning organizations, which according to Naot et al. (2004) is the most important component of the learning organization. Furthermore, analysis of the data identified empowering toward collective vision as a present learning component within denominations. Thus, denominational leaders should employ these strengths to implement Watkins and Marsick’s (1993, 1996) learning organization action imperatives.

First, denominational leaders could establish a strategic plan that includes creating a learning management department to spearhead organizational learning. Second, leaders should establish systems to create and share learning and best practices within the organization. Leaders could expand knowledge performance by expanding existing denominational web sites to include portals that allow pastors to share learning and best practices. Additionally, church leaders could share knowledge to promote a culture in which young people gravitate toward pastoral ministry as a vocation or offer learning opportunities that promote proven programs to address social concerns. Such centers of expertise might serve as knowledge domains for various topics, including funding raising, discipleship, sermon preparation, theology, and many other areas of interest. Third, leaders could further increase knowledge performance by appointing qualified Learning Managers (LM) to implement the action imperatives of the learning organization and to promote and develop a culture that values learning and sharing learning. Fourth, the LM could design, implement, and oversee strategies to establish team-level learning within the denomina-

tion to bridge the identified learning gap. Often, denominational leaders address many of the organizational challenges that churches encounter from a national or regional perspective. However, creating local teams of pastors and church members could enable inquiry and dialogue to explore various solutions to the problems and challenges facing local churches, while the establishment of regional or national teams could assist in addressing challenges facing denominations and the world. These learning teams are different from existing committees that report to denominational leaders, as leaders should empower these teams with authority to take action to generate learning through inquiry, dialogue, collaboration and team learning to address critical issues related to knowledge, financial, and mission performances. Furthermore, these learning teams should collaborate with other learning teams inside and outside the denominations to broaden the scope of organization-level learning. Finally, the LM should create and maintain a learning environment within which people feel safe and receive support and commitment from the denomination. This type of learning environment is critical for learning teams to thrive. As learning teams of pastors and church members wrestle with challenges, they must operate in a secure learning environment that permits disagreement, varying opinions, new ideas, experimentation, and failure without fear of retribution or dismissal.

Recommendations for further study.

This study has opened the door for further quantitative studies regarding denominations as learning organizations. Whereas this study was a broad look at 34 Christian denominations in the United States, the administration of the DLOQ-C to one denomination could provide empirical evidence to suggest how that denomination functions as a learning organization. Similarly, many denominations have districts or regions that could serve as a sample as well as large departments within denominations, such as the missions department or the education department.

CONCLUSION

To the researcher's knowledge, this was the first quantitative study to focus on denominations as learning organizations. Now, empirical evidence exists regarding the status of denominations

as learning organizations. This evidence may both challenge and invite scholars and practitioners to engage in meaningful dialogue concerning how the implementation of learning organization behaviors might enhance a denomination's ability to fulfill its purpose.

In a rapidly changing world, denominations face many challenges. The failure to address and correct those challenges could negatively affect the future for denominations. Additionally, the inability to connect to the environment raises questions regarding the ability of churches to remain relevant to their environments; this necessitates the need to employ learning teams to work innovatively to remain relevant in a changing world lest they die (Marquardt, 2002). Empirical evidence now exists that exposes a void in the ability of churches to function proficiently as learning organizations.

Bridging this learning gap could result in an increase in attendance and social capital that churches provide, as innovative solutions and programs arise from the denominational learning teams. Additionally, bridging the learning gap may enable pastors to become more adept at connecting with their environments to address the life concerns of those in their communities. Finally, bridging the learning gap may provide pastors the opportunity to capitalize on collective intelligence resulting from team-level learning. This untapped source of learning represents a potential to address challenges facing churches and to create social change as learning-teams collaborate to address contemporary challenges.

What does it matter? Churches occupy an important part of the social fabric of the United States, offering a wellspring of social capital (Wuthnow, 2004) and worldwide influence through foreign mission efforts. Senge (1990) and Marquardt (2002) suggested that organizations failing to learn and adapt to changing environments would fail or die. Denominations that continue on the present courses of declining attendance, an aging clergy base, and a declining reservoir of younger clergy may prove Senge and Marquardt correct in their assessments.

Many denominations seem to depend upon historic influence and traditional methods to engage people in the 21st century. However, a learning society requires churches to attend to today's religious questions rather than rehashing questions from the past (Jarvis, 2004). Unfortunately, accord-

ing to this study, many essential learning components that may enhance denominational ability to learn and turn from their present courses are absent from their organizational structures. Implementing the behaviors of the learning organization explored in this study could mean the difference between the failure or success of many denominations in generating new ideas that change their current state and create their desired future.

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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AS A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM ON A CHURCH PASTORAL STAFF

Scott M. Douglas

A pastoral staff has a variety of ages, and as the Baby Boomer generation retires, thousands of Millennials are waiting in the wings to take the leadership mantle. What are the Boomers doing to develop the Millennials as future leaders? Servant leadership, as first expounded by Robert Greenleaf, provides a foundation and framework for developing Millennials for effective and fruitful ministry leadership. Larry Thomas lays out four principles for doing this: Equip, Enable, Empower, and Encourage. Biblical examples of leadership development include Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Paul and Timothy and Titus, with Jesus as the exemplar of a servant leader. Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges provide a fourfold approach focusing on the heart, the head, the hands of the leader, and the good habits of the servant leader. Larry Spears further develops the notion of a servant leader with ten principles: Listen, Heal, Persuade, Conceptualize, Develop, Dream, Trust & Build, Communicate, Evolve, and Promote. Applying all of this to the ministry, three principles arise for pastors to (a) model servant hood for their staffs, (b) engage younger staff as people, and (c) serve in ways other than work. Younger staff can serve the senior pastor in many ways while being conscious that there is no idle time or useless task when serving their leader.

On a typical pastoral staff a variety of ages can be found. Usually the senior pastor is older than those who serve as associate ministers (youth, children, education), and because of this there is a natural deference to the senior leader. Within this, there is the reality that the senior leader will eventually retire and a younger leader will step into this gap. As the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire, waiting in the wings are thousands of Millennials, who are positioned to take the leadership mantle.

The question is, what are the Boomers doing to develop the Millennials as future leaders? Servant leadership provides a foundation and framework for Boomers to invest in Millennials and develop them for effective and fruitful ministry leadership.

The need is great for this development, if for nothing else, than because of numeric data. Research by the Rainer (2011) group has shown that the Millennial generation is now the largest generation by population (from 1980 to 2000 there were

approximately 77.9 million live births), with the Boomers taking a close second (from 1946 to 1964 there were approximately 75.9 million live births). By comparison, according to their research, the next closest generation in terms of population has been what they term the GI generation (1904–1924) with just under 60 million live births (Rainer & Rainer, 2011). From these figures, the church can be shown to have a leadership gap, with the majority of older leaders being from the Boomer generation and a lag in leadership numbers in the Millennials (who at this point are under 30 years old) (LifeWay Christian Resources, 2012).¹ Despite the generational differences in communication, technology, family expectations, and perception of government, work, and recreation, there is a great need for the Boomers to invest in the Millennials and a great desire from the Millennials to be shepherded, mentored, and disciplined into leadership by the Boomers (LifeWay Christian Resources, 2012, pp. 30-47).

Larry Thomas (2006), in an article for the *Baptist Digest*, the state news journal for the Kansas-Nebraska Baptist Convention, outlines four simple principles and practices for servant leaders to impart on those who follow them: Equip, Enable, Empower, and Encourage. These four principles, along with others from Reggie McNeal and Ken Blanchard, will form the basis for understanding how servant leadership can be used as a means of staff leadership development in the local church.

WHAT IS SERVANT LEADERSHIP?

Servant leadership as a concept originated in the writings of Robert Greenleaf (2002) after he read *Journey to the East* by Hermann Hesse. A central character in the book is Leo, who accompanies the traveling party as their servant, doing menial chores. Only after the disappearance of Leo is it discovered that he is not a servant but in fact the leader of an Order, who carries tremendous influence and authority in that group. The paradox that stood out to Greenleaf was that the best leaders who command the most influence and authority are servants first (p. 21). Greenleaf, who at the time was an executive with AT&T, took the principles of servant leadership with him and revolutionized the workplace, replacing a more autocratic form of leadership with a management culture that sought to serve and bring out the best in employees as opposed to a dictatorial approach that focused on getting the job

done.

Ginny Boyum (2006) posits that servant leadership is based on a leader who is grounded in values and manages by values and vision. The definition of a servant leader is missing from Greenleaf's explicit writings, but from the literature base a working definition of servant leadership can be summarized: "a servant leader is a person who has an innate desire to lead by serving, serves to align with own beliefs, and strives to meet the highest priorities of others" (Boyum, 2006, p. 2). The concept of servant leadership is found not only in the actions of the servant leader but also in the result of the leadership process. Through it there is a raised level of service grounded in the morality and values held by the leader and organization.

Servant leadership, then, can be described as the process by which those in positions of influence and authority seek the betterment of those in the organization through actively serving them and seeking to develop them into servant leaders. This implies that church ministries should continue to develop leaders who first and foremost strive to be shepherds in the church, who serve and sacrifice for the people rather than being autocrats. The image of the shepherd is used for two reasons: it is an image Jesus uses of himself (John 10:11), and also it was a common ancient practice to ascribe shepherd language to leaders. As such, the Bible "promotes robust, comprehensive shepherd leadership, characterized as much by the judicious use of authority as by sympathetic expressions of compassion" (Laniak, 2006, p. 21). Rather than seeking out his own agenda, the shepherd, or servant leader, is primarily driven to care and provide for the flock. The image of the shepherd is often used of God in the Exodus as the nation of Israel is led through the wilderness and constantly provided for by God.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Typically, the Bible's use of leadership development occurs in a personal mentoring process involving a younger protégé and an older mentor who acts as a father in the faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2). This relationship is more informally structured than what can be found in business schools or leadership development programming, but it is still effective. The mentoring role is one that was highly valued in biblical times and still has application today. Mentoring is a relationship that is designed to produce a

mature disciple who can then replicate the process by establishing a cycle of leadership development. Mentoring at its core takes a younger or immature protégé and develops that person into a replicating and mature disciple.

Moses and Joshua

Moses was the God-called leader of the Hebrews who led a nation of slaves out of Egypt and through a forty-year sojourn through the wilderness. He was known as a friend of God (Exod. 33:11) who enjoyed a unique calling and equipping (Exod. 3-4). Moses' leadership was uniquely God-ordained and purposed by God to supersede Moses' own interpersonal abilities. Joshua, on the other hand, rose as a lieutenant to Moses and as one of his most trusted aides. In Numbers 27, Moses prays for his successor to be prepared for the upcoming conquest of Canaan, and ultimately Joshua is chosen (Howell, 2003, p. 40). This is confirmed in Numbers 34 where upon the death of Moses Joshua is endowed with a "spirit of wisdom."

Joshua's preparation as an aide and lieutenant to Moses became useful as he led the military campaign through the Promised Land. More than his ability as a commander, Joshua was called to be a shepherd leader of the nation of Israel. This development came from the leadership and mentoring of Moses, who represented a prophetic shepherd leader of the Hebrews. This preparation came to a head when Joshua had to deal with the judgment of God after Achan's theft of the conquered people's goods (Josh. 7). Just like Moses, Joshua's response was to pray and plead for the nation and seek the mercy of God (Howell, 2003, p. 42). Ultimately, Joshua's humility in following the leadership of Moses and learning from him the difficulties of leading an entire nation would come to fruition as Joshua became a leader in his own right, and through the Spirit's unique gifting of him to be a shepherd warrior. Joshua's leadership came through the example of Moses, who modeled what it meant to be a shepherd leader for the nation of Israel. Moses' dependence on the leadership of God for decisions and wisdom is also reflected in how Joshua led during the conquest of Canaan.

Elijah and Elisha

The description of the relationship between these two is very short, mostly contained in 2 Kings

2, but from that chapter many principles of Elijah's mentoring and development of Elisha are evident. Primarily the link seen is the calling of God on both men's lives to serve as prophets. This cannot be overstated, as God is the one who equips and calls those in Kingdom service. Second, Elisha has the opportunity to travel with Elijah and through this he is able to see Elijah's public and private leadership. Third, a desire from the protégé to be under the teaching of the mentor is accented by Elisha's persistent desire to be in the presence of his mentor in order to learn from him. In order for a protégé to develop as a leader, there must be a conscious and concerted effort from him to develop. It cannot happen unilaterally from the mentor, it must be a two-way approach. Elisha, even though he was a "second-chair" leader, was still an initiator who sought to find a way to serve the one God had placed in authority over him. Elisha, though given great ability and authority, still saw his primary responsibility as serving the senior leader (Patterson, 2011). The work of Elisha offering to serve Elijah eventually led to Elijah seeking to serve his successor in whatever way he needed. Elisha's servanthood also prepared him to succeed Elijah as God's prophet.

Paul and Timothy/Titus

Timothy, a disciple of Paul, is mentioned in Acts 16 as a believer who comes to Paul and becomes a companion for his missionary journey after Paul is sent ahead. Later, by the time Paul writes 2 Corinthians, Timothy is considered a beloved laborer and spiritual child. There is, through the limited number of references to Timothy in the New Testament (26), a progression in Paul's affection for and trust of Timothy as a disciple to the point that Paul views Timothy as an equal in the pastoral epistles that bear Timothy's name. Over the course of their time together, Paul commends Timothy to other churches as an authority, names him as a coauthor, and implores him to carry on the task of planting and leading churches to Christ (Williams, 2005, p. 186).

Titus is first mentioned canonically in 2 Corinthians, where he is introduced as a traveling companion of Paul and a co-laborer in the work of the Gospel. It is unclear where he was from, though in Galatians 2:3 Titus is shown to be a Greek by birth, as he is uncircumcised. Outside of the canonical letter under his name, Titus is only mentioned by

name 11 times in the New Testament, with many of those found in 2 Corinthians. He is a trusted companion of Paul, and when he is listed in 2 Timothy 4, he has left Paul, though the circumstances are different from those under which Demas left. The limited evidence from the New Testament shows Titus to have accompanied Paul and been part of his ministry team. At some point he leaves to lead on his own after receiving instruction from Paul in the book of Titus. Even though Paul had released him to serve, there still is an element of Paul being a faithful teacher and friend to guide Titus through difficulties within the church (Williams, 2005, p 186).

In Titus 2:7-8, it seems that Paul is giving specific instructions to Titus as his disciple, with specific directions for him on how to model himself as an example in his teaching and conduct. These instructions are general enough that they have application for all young men as well. In Titus' case, the mentor in his life is Paul, who set himself out as an example to follow in 1 Corinthians 11:1, where he instructs the church to "imitate me as I imitate Christ." The implication here is that Titus' life and teaching should be reflected in men he mentors, just as Paul mentored him and gave him an example to follow. His teaching should be sound, in accord with the apostolic tradition given him by Paul (Knight, 1999, p. 312).

JESUS AS EXEMPLAR OF SERVANT MENTOR TO DISCIPLES

Servant leadership as a Christian model became popular because of the self-denial and sacrificial service Jesus modeled to the disciples. Greenleaf's connection of the Leo character from the Hesse book and Jesus may draw criticism because of the foundational differences between the two (Leo has influence, but Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God, Leo is fictional, Hesse and Greenleaf are coming from an Eastern pantheistic worldview rather than a Judeo-Christian theistic approach), but ultimately there are principles between the two that are noteworthy. It is difficult to assume that, since Jesus served the Disciples and Leo served his traveling party, Jesus must be a servant leader (in the Greenleaf mold). Jesus does stand as an example of humility, servanthood, and a leader through influence rather than position or mass following.

Despite the non-Christian origins of the concept of servant leadership from Greenleaf, there is still much that can be drawn from the example

of Leo and how it relates to Christian practice. Jesus stands apart from Leo as an example of servant leadership, but the fact that there is a link in how Jesus and Leo led cannot be ignored. The aim for the Christian and for church leaders should be to read Greenleaf's servant leadership model through the lens of a biblical worldview rather than reading the biblical portrait through the lens of Greenleaf's model. Jesus' leadership through serving and humility demonstrate a shift away from the Roman and Jewish religious authorities in Jesus' time. In light of the example of Christ, pastors should seek leadership based on their humility and servanthood, and through that seek to build the leadership capacities of their staff members through modeling, as Jesus did.

In Philippians 2, Paul records what many believe to be an early Christian hymn recounting the cycle of humiliation and exaltation of Jesus. At the core of the Incarnation hymn is the phrase "taking the form of a servant" in verse 7. This servant image is contrasted with the divine regality that Jesus is shown to have before the Incarnation and that He enjoys following the Ascension. This ethic of "humility before honor, service before status, suffering before glory, a cross before a crown is given special prominence in the new covenant community where the coming King is first a suffering Servant" (Howell, 2003, p. 195). For Jesus and those who would follow Him, leadership and influence would not come through the pursuit of ambition or self-driven interests, but would instead come through the intentional and sacrificial service of others, just as Jesus models in His own life (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).

Mark 10:45 (and its parallel passage in Matt. 20:28) records that Jesus came not to be served but to serve. In light of Philippians 2 this takes on an even more radical nature. Not only is the teacher serving the students, but the teacher is also the one by whom the entire universe came into existence (Col. 1). This verse in the context of the narrative falls after James and John have requested prominent places of authority in the Kingdom. The statement by Jesus of seeking to be the servant (or slave [*doulos*] is perhaps more accurate) is counter to the self-seeking and self-exalting that the disciples are pursuing. For Jesus, leadership and influence in the Kingdom come only after the humble service of oneself for others. The imagery of a cup and baptism are used as word pictures for the life and work

of Jesus, in particular the suffering Jesus would endure in the passion narratives. This is the contrast to the Gentiles, who rule and lord over those under them and exercise authority (Mark 10:42). Jesus is not abdicating leadership, influence, or authority, but instead is redirecting the aim and origin of that from position and entitlement to sacrifice and service.

In John 13, Jesus shows what servant leadership truly looks like as he washes the feet of the disciples. This job was normally reserved for the lowest class of slaves in the culture, and was considered by many to be the most humiliating act of service. The fact that this is the act of service Jesus seeks out and does only serves to accent the shift of the leadership paradigm from the pursuit of position to one of humility. In the book *Humilitas*, John Dickson (2011) lays out the historic understanding of humility in Jesus' time, and points out that it was not considered a virtue; instead it was seen as the lowest form of shame (the primary cultural axis in the Greek world being honor-shame). Dickson (2011) also demonstrates that the idea of humility as a virtue, especially for leadership, only comes as a result of Jesus and the early Christians' influence in the Roman world (the cross and its inherent shame in the Roman culture became the centerpiece of Christianity). Because of this radical shift, servant leadership becomes the prescription for Christian leaders to practice in light of the witness of Christ, who changed global perspectives on leadership, authority, and power.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Servant leadership as a paradigm offers much for the development of young leaders by their older predecessors. By cultivating within the ministry staff an attitude and culture of servanthood, the senior leader is able to develop a relationship with junior staffers that enables influence (which can have lasting impact in the junior leader's life) to occur. Building in a culture of service also brings down the formality and rigidity between leader and follower in an organization, just as Leo did in the *Journey to the East* (which started Greenleaf on the servant leadership path).

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges (2005) provide an approach to understanding servant leadership through four foci. The first and most important is the heart. The authors use EGO as the motif for the heart, with the servant leader Exalting God

Only and the self-driven leader Edging God Out (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005, p. 64). This is the motivation and intent of the leadership paradigm, and is a key in development of leadership. The goal of the senior leader is to instill in the junior leader a desire to glorify God and depend fully on Him in leadership. The second focus is the head, which is defined as the leader's belief system and perspective on the role of the leader (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005, p. 83). In this, the pyramid of leadership and following must be turned upside down in order to lead fully like Jesus. It also means having a vision that is the direction of the organization. The third focus is the hands of the leader, or the behaviors that go with leadership. The center of this is to be a coach, and the authors present four distinct stages of learning a new task or skill (Novice, Apprentice, Journeyman, Master) that require different coaching techniques. For the servant leader this requires a focused attention on the follower and where they are in the development process (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005, p. 126). The end goal of the process is to delegate (but not abdicate) leadership responsibility, which is an act of humility and service in itself for the senior leader. Lastly, Blanchard and Hodges (2005) propose habits for the servant leader, which are solitude, prayer, study/application of Scripture, accepting/responding to God's unconditional love, and involvement in supportive relationships (p. 154). Leadership always leaves a legacy, and for Blanchard and Hodges the servant model of leadership leaves not only a healthier but a better legacy for future leaders to replicate. Their desire is to see senior leaders investing in junior leaders and instilling in them a deep desire to love God through serving others and leading those under them to do the same.

Larry Spears, who serves as CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, offers ten helpful principles for trainers to use in their professions. These are Listen, Heal, Persuade, Conceptualize, Develop, Dream, Trust and Build, Communicate, Evolve, and Promote (Bennett, 2001, p. 44). This shows that simply doing menial tasks does not qualify as servant leadership; instead, servant leadership is an intentional process that sees the development of the whole person as the goal of the process (Page & Wong, 2002, p. 5). Servant leadership in this regard is akin to situational leadership, which also centers on development as a key element. In

situational leadership, as in servant leadership, the goal is maturity in the follower or junior leader. In servant leadership, there is an intentional modeling and purposeful movement towards developing the junior leader.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY

For the younger leader who is likely a Millennial finding him- or herself in a “second chair” position of leadership, it can be difficult to maintain focus and not fall into despair in an organization that may not be going the direction the leader wants it to. At that point it is helpful to remember that the second-chair leader’s primary responsibility is to serve and enhance the leadership of the first chair. Subordination is both a humbling activity and a way of cultivating a leadership ethos of influence rather than power (Bonem & Patterson, 2005). This is not inherently a bad thing, as many second-chair leaders eventually desire to be a first-chair leader and the Bible speaks of the pursuit of this as a noble thing (1 Tim. 3:1). However, this desire for greater position and influence should not be used as an excuse not to pursue influence and service in the here and now. First-chair leaders do have a responsibility to equip and serve the second-chair leaders, but the second-chair leaders have an obligation to be servants and consider the task they are called to at the time to be worthy of their attention and effort. Learning to be an effective second-chair leader through serving others and humbly submitting to the first-chair leader will come back as useful when they become first chairs, to develop a culture of service and humility in the church. This is crucial because the second chair’s ambition and personal development cannot come at the cost of the organization or the first chair’s leadership capacity (Bonem & Patterson, 2005).

Reggie McNeal (2006) brings up some helpful points about leadership development and how it relates to the work of the ministry. For Jesus, and for ministry leaders, greatness revolves around humility and service. True servant leadership is a requirement for effective leadership in the Kingdom. This ethic of self-denial and others-focus is contrary to the world’s perspective on leadership and ambition. The very definition of greatness changes in light of the life and passion of Jesus.

For McNeal (2000), another key element to leadership development is a focus on the heart. Too

many leadership concepts focus on methodology, or the perception that “by changing _____, things will get better.” Instead, leadership development and conformity to the image of Christ is primarily tied to the need for a heart change. Servant leadership development is more than a method or coaching behavior, it is the shaping of the heart, mind, and will of the leader to a more full and complete obedience to God. The servant leader is interested in being a developer of people, recognizing the junior leader as more than a project or an item on the daily agenda (McNeal, 2000).

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

When it comes to the generational differences between Boomers and Millennials, there can often be a conflict in how each generation sees the other and what leadership development looks like. Millennials desire a mentor and are very relationally-driven (Rainer, 2011). For them, meeting one-on-one at a coffee shop for an hour is an incredibly profitable use of time. However, Millennials also tend to desire the structure that comes from an organized work environment, so Boomers, seeking to cultivate servant leaders in the Millennials working for them, should recognize that Millennials crave the relationship with an older mentor, providing an excellent opportunity for the Boomer to serve the Millennial (Rainer, 2011).

The key to developing servant leaders is to recognize that it is as much an internal change as it is an external behavior or habit. The development of servant leaders also hinges on the initiative of the first-chair leader to model a servant’s heart and lifestyle before his followers. Generational differences are also a reality, but these can be overcome through transparency, openness, listening, and pursuit of mutually advantageous goals.

Millennials have a deep desire to make a lasting and significant impact outside their culture and see this as a foundational task of the church. Their frustration with organizational churches that focus more internally may cause the Millennial to look disgruntled or impatient, but the reason is because they have a deep desire to serve others and are looking for opportunities to do so. Cultivating servant leadership in the future may not necessarily happen within the context of the church community but instead in a very different context that has the

local church as the conduit. This should be seen by Boomers as a potential for lasting legacy rather than the pipe dreams of overly excited young leaders (Rainer, 2011).

CONCLUSION:

PRINCIPLES FOR PASTORS AND YOUNGER STAFF

The following is a list, though not exhaustive, of principles derived from the literature and from practical experience that pastors and younger staff can use in order to be more effective as leadership developers for their staff.

Pastors: Model Servanthood to Your Staff

Millennials desire authenticity, and are able to tell when they are being told one thing and seeing another. A pastor cannot expect those under him to do unless he is willing to set the pace and show the way for the rest of the church and especially his own staff.

Pastors: Engage Younger Staff as People

The task-focus of most Boomers can often lead to a perception that Millennials may not be focused on the job or may be lazy or unmotivated. For Millennials, there is more to life than work, and engaging them holistically (family, dreams, ambitions, what motivates them) can lead to developing a rapport and increased influence for the Boomer in the Millennial's life. The Boomer pastor, as well, should engage the Millennial as a person and share more of him- or herself than the work relationship.

Pastors: Serve in Ways Other than Work

The work relationship is important to Millennials, but for them life is more than their job. The effective serving pastor can seek out other ways to serve the staff. Sharing life can be effective in building the connection at work by something as simple as a household project or errand being run for the junior leader.

Younger Staff: Serve the Senior Pastor

In order to cultivate a culture and attitude of service, a junior leader needs to be serving. It provides a humility and perspective to serve the senior pastor faithfully by assisting and doing what is possible in order to magnify the pastor's influence and leadership. The younger staff member should seek out ways to lessen the pastor's load and free him or her

up to cast vision, invest in people, and focus on the big picture of leading the organization. This can be as simple as making copies or as complex as offering to preach a series to allow the pastor additional time during the weeks to focus on other issues.

Younger Staff: Do Not Waste Time

The second-chair leader may not feel very effective or able to do much in terms of leading change and influencing others. John Piper (2003), in his book *Don't Waste Your Life*, focuses on the imperative to not allow a single day to go to waste in serving God (Chap. 1).² Similarly, this principle says that there is no such thing as an idle time or a useless task as a second-chair leader. Instead, every opportunity to serve, regardless of the setting or who is being served, should be seen as a divine appointment and an opportunity to be more conformed to the image of Christ, even if it is as simple as setting up chairs or working in the nursery.

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²The entire first chapter is a discussion of the imperative to live life with purpose and not waste a single day. Piper contrasts this with the existentialism of both history and popular culture in the 1960s as he grew up. He also brings to bear the influence of both Francis Schaeffer and C.S. Lewis in his formation. Much of this brought him back to a sign in his parent's kitchen that said *Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.*

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GOD-THE 'I AM'

A LOOK AT THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME OF GOD

Ronald G. Steadman

This paper explores the name, recorded in Scripture, by which God identified himself. First, an investigation of the history of identification by name, the need for identification by name, and the implications associated with the knowing of a name are presented. This is followed by a consideration of God's initial presentation of his name and a selected review of passages. This review will show that God's involvement with mankind reveals that he is one without equal; therefore, his name cannot be qualified by adjuncts – he is the One who cannot be restricted by further definition. It will also show that when Jesus of Nazareth walked upon this earth in the form of a man, he declared himself as God among men when he identified himself as I AM.

INTRODUCTION

Charles H. Spurgeon said, “the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the doings, . . . of the great God which he calls his Father” (as quoted in Zacharias, 2012, p. 265). Children have a natural affinity to know their fathers – a desire to model what they observe. Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery, and this can be observed in the simple way a young child imitates every move of his or her father. The child mimics the movements, the words, and even the attitudes of this one whose name is Daddy, desiring to inculcate the attributes he or she observes into their being. In the same way, the child of God desires to know his or her God intimately. An understanding of the name of God will help usher the believer into this deeper relationship; for the name of God reveals his nature, his person, and his attributes.

Identifying places, things, and persons by a name or title is nothing new; it has been part of culture since the creation. In Genesis, the first place in which man resided had a name, “Eden.” Eden

was further identified as the source of four named rivers – the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates (Gen. 2:10-14). The first duty performed by man was to name the living creatures:

The LORD God (YHWH Elohim) had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them before the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” (Gen. 2:19, ESV)

How Adam determined the name he bestowed upon each living creature is not revealed, but one can postulate that he took care in dispensing the names – giving each creature a name that established its distinctiveness. That is exactly what he did in naming the helpmate (Eve) whom God provided: “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man” (Gen. 2:23b, ESV). Adam gave Eve a name that established both her distinctiveness and their relationship – a name illustrating

their interdependence. Thus, through designation by name, identity, distinctiveness, and relationship are established. No name is more important than the name of God.

DOES GOD NEED A NAME?

As the only essential element in all creation, God is known by a series of names that reveal aspects of his nature, his purposes, his power, and his abiding relationship with mankind. Often, the name of God compounds “*‘el* [with] a descriptive adjunct . . . [such as] *‘el roi* (God who sees; Gen. 16:13) and *‘el olam* (God eternal; Gen. 21:33)” (Elwell, 2001, p. 505). As is evident, the combining of *‘el* with a descriptor reveals how God has interacted with his creation. El, however, is not a unique name for the God of creation. As Nelson’s notes “El. By itself it refers to a god in the most general sense. . . In the Bible the word is often defined properly by a qualifier like “Jehovah”: ‘I, the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim), am a jealous God (El)’ (Deut 5:9)” (Lockyear, 1986). Elohim is the plural form of El, “commonly understood as a plural of majesty. . . In the [Old Testament] the word is always constructed in the singular when it denotes the true God” (Elwell, 2001, p. 506). Therefore, names such as El Shaddai (God Almighty), found in Exodus 6:3 (Lockyear, 1986), are not personal names of God but names indicative of his power and majesty. Often these are names bestowed upon God by human beings in an effort to better explain his activities – names given by humans in an attempt to better comprehend God’s unfathomable person.

In the Hebrew culture “names were not mere labels . . . A name was chosen very carefully, and with attention to its significance . . . Hebrews considered the name an embodiment of the person bearing it” (Erickson, 1998, p. 296). “Giving a name to anyone or anything was tantamount to owning or controlling it (Gen. 1:5, 8, 10; 2:19-20; 2 Sam. 12:28)” (Elwell, 2001, p. 812). A name in the Hebrew understanding implied identity, character, relationship, and power.

Elwell (2001) also points out that “the very fact that the word *name* occurs more than a thousand times in the Bible attests to its theological significance” (p. 812). Genesis 4:25 begins a transition in the historical record, moving from a recounting of the line of Cain to recording the lineage of Seth, through whom would come the Messiah. After the

birth of Enos (Seth’s son), “people began to call upon the name of the LORD (*YHWH*)” (Gen. 4:26, ESV) – an indication that seeking a relationship with God, not evident with the line of Cain, is now the focus of the biblical record, and that the relationship will be established through the “name of the LORD (*YHWH*)” (Gen. 4:26, ESV).

The New Testament attests to the significance associated with a name in John 14:13-14: “Whatever you ask in my name, this is what I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (ESV). “Praying in Jesus’ name, therefore, is not mystical reliance on a traditional formula but is praying in accord with Jesus’ character, his mind, his purpose” (Elwell, 2001, p. 812). Praying in Jesus’ name is indicative of an established relationship with God the Father through God the Son – a relationship that includes intimacy and power.

As is evident, a relationship with God is established through the intimacy of his name. When Moses was sent to lead the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, he asked God for his name. Moses needed to know, and convey to God’s chosen people, the identity of the One under whose authority he was operating. God granted Moses’ request and gave Moses his name – a name that demonstrated his unique relationship to all things. He added no descriptive adjuncts or qualifiers to denote his existence, his purpose, or his position – he identified himself simply as the “I AM” (Exod. 3:14, ESV).¹ This identification demonstrated that, instead of God being qualified or defined in some manner, all things are defined by and dependent upon him.

MOSES’ ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

This encounter between God and Moses occurred when the time had come for the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt (Gen. 15:13, 14). God appeared to Moses in the wilderness from an unconsumed burning bush (Exod. 3:2); informing Moses that he was to be the instrument through whom God would bring the promised deliverance of his chosen people (Gen. 15:13, 14). Moses, being reluctant to accept the task, and knowing that the Israelites would be skeptical, asked God for the name of the one for whom he was to act as representative before the people. God replied to Moses saying, “I AM WHO I AM. Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent

me to you” (Gen. 3:14, NKJV). On the surface, this seems a strange reply. In ordinary conversation a reply of “I am” would be followed by a statement to further clarify what is meant, such as, “I am a father,” or “I am a mother,” or “I am a citizen of the United States,” or some other adjectival qualifier. God did indeed add a qualifier to “I AM,” but not one that might be expected; God reiterated “I AM.” Thus, God identified himself as the One of existence and presence without qualification. He is the one essential presence in all of creation. God is the “only noncontingent reality” (Erickson, 1998, p. 624). The Israelites would come to know that the “I AM” was their God.

This recognition of “I AM” with the divine is also evident in the life of Jesus. John 8 records an elongated debate between Jesus and the Jews. The interchange is brought to a close when Jesus states, “before Abraham was, I AM” (Greek ἐγώ εἰμι) (John 8:58, NKJV). John 8:59 (NKJV) records the reaction of the Jews to Jesus’ statement, “Then, they took up stones to throw at Him.” The Jews reacted in this manner because they understood Jesus was identifying himself with the divine – he was identifying himself as God among men.

Therefore, it is evident that “I AM” was the name of God, and when Jesus referred to Himself as “I AM” he was proclaiming Himself to be God. Jesus changed water into wine (John 2:1-10), he healed some of perceived incurable afflictions (John 9:1-7), he cast the unclean spirits out of those who were demon possessed (Luke 4:33-36) – he even raised the dead (Matt. 11:4-6; John 11:14-44). Were not his deeds enough to declare his divinity (Luke 4:16-21; 7:22-23)? Why was it necessary for him to identify himself as God by name? Why does God even need a name? Isn’t the fact that he acted as God sufficient to differentiate him from all others?

WHAT’S IN A NAME

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun “name” as:

the particular combination of sounds employed as the individual designation of a single person, animal, place, or thing; . . . I. 2. The particular word or words used to denote any object of thought . . . II 4. The name of a person (or thing) with implications of the individual denoted by it . . . 7. repute, reputation, fame” (Oxford English Dictionary: Vol. VII, 1933, pp. 14-15)

The Oxford dictionary defines a name, then, not only as something by which a person is known, but also as expressing qualities or characteristics descriptive of that person. This coincides with the Biblical principle of naming as “rooted in the ancient world’s understanding that a name expressed essence” (Butler, 1991, p. 1007). Thus, to know the name of God was not only to know how to refer to him, it also gave a glimpse of something essential about his character.

There is a further aspect of a name that needs to be recognized. Not only does a name distinctively identify someone and reveal something about his or her character, it also establishes a relationship between the one named and the one knowing the name. The biblical perspective can be stated as “the knowing of a name implied a relationship between parties in which power to do harm or good was in force” (Butler, 1991, p. 1007). Therefore, in knowing the name of God there was an implied relationship. When God told Moses his name, he implied there was a relationship between himself and Moses that Moses was to convey to the Israelites (Exod. 3:14-22). This relationship was established, in part, by God revealing his name to Moses, imparting to Moses a glimpse into something essential about his character, and endowing Moses with the authority to act in his behalf.

THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

A look at the extended periscope of which Exodus 3:14 is a part is needed to get a more comprehensive idea of the relationship between God and Moses and the importance of Moses knowing the name of God in that relationship. In looking at these additional verses, it will become evident that the relationship was not only between God and Moses but extended to a relationship between God and all Israel.

God chose to reveal his name (which included identification of his character, power, and majesty) to Moses while Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert around Mt. Sinai (Ex.3:1).² The stage was set when Moses observed a burning, yet unconsumed, bush. As Moses approached the bush, God informed him that the ground on which he was standing was holy ground. Next, the voice from the bush told Moses “I am the God (*Elohim*) of your father – the God (*Elohim*) of Abraham, the God (*Elohim*) of Isaac, and the God (*Elohim*) of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6, NKJV). This phrase

²The New King James Version identifies the area as Horeb, which MacArthur (1997) points out is another name for Mt. Sinai. (p. 96).

appears twice more in the third chapter of Exodus (3:15, 16). In essence, God told Moses that he had an established relationship with the Israelites – he is the God of their forefathers, the God who called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:28), the God who promised Abraham innumerable descendants (Gen. 13:16), the God who promised a land for the Israelites to possess (Gen. 13:14, 15), the God who promised a seed through whom all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). This repeated (reiterated three times) statement (listing of the patriarchs) reinforced an established, continuing, covenantal relationship between Moses and God.

Another pertinent aspect of the established relationship evidenced in this chapter is God's knowledge of the plight of the people in Egypt. First, God told Moses "behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them" (Exod. 3:9, NKJV). Later in the chapter, God told Moses to tell the elders of Israel "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt;" (Exod. 3:16, NKJV). God's relationship with the Israelites was so intimate that he had been keeping a watchful eye upon their condition, visiting them, ever listening to their pleas.

There is a bedrock principle pointed out in this chapter that further illustrates the solidified relationship between God and Moses – God promised Moses his presence. Before informing Moses of his name, God said to Moses "I will surely be with you," (Exod. 3:12, NKJV). Little can solidify a relationship more than continued presence – "God says 'I will be with you.' That should galvanize any man against any foes and any fears. It was Moses' armor, inside and out" (Paschall, Hobbs, 1972, p. 55).

The reaction of Moses to the presence of God needs to be noted. When Moses first saw the burning, yet unconsumed bush, he said to himself, "I will turn aside to see this great sight" (Exod. 3:3, ESV). Upon hearing God's voice, and being told, "Do not come near, take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground . . . Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Exod. 3:5-6, ESV). Moses' attitude changed from curiosity to reverence; from confidence to an understanding of his inadequacy in the presence of the incomparable God. At first Moses thought himself investigating a natural anomaly; in an instant, he was told he was standing on holy ground and re-

alized his unworthiness to gaze upon the God of his ancestry. R. C. Sproul (2012) points out it was not the location nor the geological composition which made this ground special – that set it apart from the other ground in Moses' view; it was the presence of God that transformed the ground from profane to holy (April 20, 2102).

God already had an established relationship with Moses and Israel, even though they may not have been cognizant of that relationship. Further, God protected Moses from harm when he entered His presence. God established the relationship, maintained the relationship, watched over the relationship, and promised His presence to enhance and continue the relationship. By giving Moses His name, "I AM," God was revealing something more of His character and deepening the existing relationship.

THE SANCTITY OF THE NAME

Dictionaries have given insight into the revealing nature of a name and the implied relationship in the knowledge of and use of a name. The initial significance for this writing is to understand what the name of God ("I AM") meant to the Jews. Then, application will be made for the Christian.

Most study Bibles contain explanatory notes on various verses of the Scripture to help the layman better understand the import of the passages. John MacArthur's notes on Exodus 3:14 are extremely helpful as he points out both the characteristics the "I AM" name conveyed and the attitude of the Jews regarding that name. First, MacArthur (1997) says, "This name for God points to His self-existence and eternity; it denotes 'I am the One who is/will be'" (p. 97). Through the name "I AM," God is revealing his unique quality; he is one of eternal self-existence – existing not only in the present, but also in eternity past and future. He alone can claim this characteristic.

MacArthur (1997) further points out the attitude of the Jews by saying, "since the name *Yahweh* was considered so sacred that it should not be pronounced, the Massoretes inserted the vowels from *Adonai* to remind themselves to pronounce it when reading instead of saying *Yahweh*" (p. 97). The Jews stood in awe of the name of God, awe that produced deep respect coupled with the fear of offending the One to whom the name referred.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TRANSLATION

Conservative scholars are in general agreement

regarding the overall interpretation of Exodus 3:14-15, but the exact literal rendering of this passage is difficult. Elwell (2001) notes there is a “parallel structure” in the passage, “which supports the association of the name Yahweh with the concept of being or existence” (p. 507). He adds that “the name ‘I AM’ is based on the clause ‘I AM WHO I AM’ found in 3:14, which, on the basis of the etymology implied here, suggests that Yahweh is the 3. p. form of the verb ‘*ehyeh* [אֶהְיֶה] (Green, 1986, p. 49) (I am)” (Elwell, 2001, p. 507). Others explain the association as “before the name [of God] is revealed an explanation of it is given. I AM WHO I AM – three words in the original – reveals and withholds at the same time” (Howley, Bruce, Ellison, 1979, p. 179). The difficulty of the literal rendering of this phrase “‘*ehyeh aser ‘ehyeh*” [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה] (Green, 1986, p. 49), can be seen in the ways it is translated in the various texts, “‘I am that I am’ (KJV), ‘I am who I am’ (RSV, NIV), and ‘I will be what I will be’ (RSV margin)” (Elwell, 2001, p. 507). The Septuagint rendering of this section is “*λεγων ἐγὼ εἰμὶ*” which one translator has rendered “I am THE BE-ING” (Exod. 3:14, Septuagint, 1972). The renderings are similar, with each offering a slightly different nuance to the translation; however, each points to the idea of an unchanging God who reveals himself to men as a God who is both active and eternal.

Yahweh is the tetragrammaton of the consonants Y – H – W – H, appearing in Exodus 3:15 as “LORD,” its usual rendering in the Scripture. Because of the parallel structure of the passage, there is a link between “I AM WHO I AM” of verse 14 and “LORD” of verse 15 (Howley, et al, p. 179). One explanation of this link is that it “establishes the connection between the divine name Jehovah/Yahweh and the Hebrew verb ‘to be’ (*hayah/hawah*)” (Howley, et al., p. 179).

J. Vernon McGee (1981) sees an even stronger link when he states, “the name ‘I AM’ is a tetragram, or a word of four letters. We translate it JEHOVAH. It has also been translated as YAHWEH” (p. 211). Though most scholars see at least a link between the names “YAHWEH” and “I AM,” both McGee and MacArthur view them as virtually synonymous. To this understanding Merrill (2009) adds, “Yahweh is the personal name of God whereby he reveals himself to man; it is the covenant name of him who is immanent and who deigns to have close relations with man” (p. 50).

GOD IN THE MIDST OF MEN

The greatest act of deliverance in the history of mankind is the deliverance that Jesus Christ provided for the sinner by sacrificing his life to atone for sin and usher believers into a right relationship with the Father. This atoning work was performed by the pre-existent One – the One the apostle John identified as “the Word” (λόγος) who was “with God” in the beginning and who “was God” (John 1:1, ESV). The construction of this sentence in the Greek “*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.*” (John 1:1, Green, 1986 Interlinear New Testament); demonstrates that Jesus (“the Word”) was not only present with God in the beginning, Jesus (“the Word”) was God. John continues by asserting, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3, NKJV). Henry Morris (2011) points out that “the emphasis in John’s opening statement about ‘the Word’ is that He was God from eternity past, equal in every respect as the Son of God within the Trinity, yet He ‘was made flesh’ and entered the world that He had created in order to redeem those whom He had created” (p. 35). John’s prologue uses λόγος (the Word) as a personal identification, or name, that establishes Jesus as God. Vines (1981) points out that John 1:1-2 establishes “(1) His distinct and superfinite Personality, (2) His relation in the Godhead . . . (3) His creative power” (p. 230). John emphatically testifies that Jesus is the uncaused One who is the cause of all creation; he is the essential One whose life defines all existence.

Perhaps one of the more sobering verses in Scripture appears at the end of John’s introductory statements in his gospel. Referring to Jesus as the “life . . . [and] light of men” (John 1:4, NKJV), John says “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:5, NKJV). Ample evidence was available, both from the Hebrew Scriptures and from the life of Jesus, to validate that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Luke 7:22); yet, the religious leadership of His day refused to comprehend His self-revelation (John 11:49-54).

The gospel writers record numerous instances in which Jesus used “*ἐγὼ εἰμὶ*” (I am) to identify a certain characteristic or quality of His divine nature, such as “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48, NKJV), “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5, NKJV), “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, NKJV), and “I am the resurrection and the life”

(John 11:25, NKJV), to name a few. I am, ἐγώ εἰμί, is a simple yet profound statement. Both words are first person singular; ἐγώ, a personal pronoun (Peschbacher, 2008, p.115), is joined with εἰμί, a present indicative verb (p.119). Mounce (2003) points out “the indicative mood describes a fact or asks a question” (p.151). In the context in which these statements by our Lord are made, Jesus is stating unequivocally that He personally is the active force that is involved in the action described. On at least two occasions, the assertions made by Jesus were so evidently linked to the “I AM” name of God that they caused the religious leaders to take action in an attempt to silence Him.

One occasion is recorded in the eighth chapter of the gospel of John. Jesus began His interchange with the Pharisees by proclaiming, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12, NKJV). One commentator links the setting for this comment with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles by saying, “Jesus again uses one of the ceremonies of the feast to explain his own mission. At dusk they lit four great golden candelabra to symbolize the pillar of fire by which God guided his people through the desert by night” (Alexander & Alexander, 1973, p. 541). With this backdrop, it would have been hard for the religious leaders to miss the assertion Jesus made with His comment in verse 58. Between verses 12 and 58, Jesus engaged in a discussion with the Jews regarding their refusal to recognize and acknowledge Him as the promised Messiah. After proclaiming, “Abraham rejoiced to see My day,” (John 8:56, NKJV) Jesus asserted “before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58, NKJV). Irwin (1928) explains, “The peculiar phrase, ‘I am’, evidently refers to the name Jahveh or Jehovah . . . expressing His eternal self-existence; and it was fully understood to do so, as the people immediately prepared to treat Jesus as a blasphemer” (p. 426).

The other occasion of importance for this writing, found in the gospel of Mark, occurs after Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32, 46). He had been brought before the Sanhedrin for trial where false witnesses had testified against Him (Mark 14:56). The high priest questioned Jesus repeatedly, with no response from our Lord. The high priest then asked Jesus directly, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61, NKJV). Jesus broke His silence and answered, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of

the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62, NKJV). This reply by Jesus caused the chief priest to tear his robe and declare Jesus a blasphemer (Mark 14:64). The word used by the high priest in his accusation against Jesus, βλασφημιας, is also translated “evil speaking, railing” (Strong, 1890, p. 926) and “is practically confined to speech defamatory of the Divine Majesty” (Vines, 1981, p. 131). Jesus’ reply to the high priest identified Jesus himself with the eternal, self-existent God—the “I AM” of Exodus 3:14. The high priest understood Jesus’ claim but failed to acknowledge the validity of it. Instead of hiding his face in reverence and awe, as Moses had done, the high priest accused Jesus of “railing” against God – the very thing of which the high priest himself was guilty.

John 11:45-53 records the plot hatched by the high priest and the Pharisees because, after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, “Many of the Jews . . . believed in him” (John 14:45, ESV). At a meeting of the council, Caiaphas (the high priest) stated “it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not the whole nation should perish” (John 11:50). Caiaphas was concerned about his position of power and the continuance of the nation of Israel under the banner of Rome (he had no idea of the spiritual reality of which he prophesied). After the trial by the Sanhedrin and the acquiescence of Pilate to the demands to crucify Jesus, Caiaphas probably felt he had succeeded; however, one last time before his death upon the cross, the covenant name of God would be linked to Jesus in an unmistakable way. John 19:19 records that Pilate placed an inscription on the cross, “written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin” (John 19:20, NKJV) that read “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (John 19:19). This caused the chief priest to go to Pilate and ask that the inscription be change to “He said, I am the king of the Jews” (John 19:21), but Pilate refused. Missler (2004) points out this final association between the covenant name of God and the inscription Pilate placed on the cross:

This may have more significance than is apparent in our English translations.

The Hebrew [read right to left is]:

HaYehudim v'Melech HaNazarei Yeshua

Jesus of Nazarei and King of the Jews.

What we [do not] notice in the English translation is the potential acrostic made up of the first letter of each word which would spell out the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, Yahweh יהוה" (p.87).

As Jesus hung upon the cross, taking upon himself the sin of mankind, the placard placed on the cross by the Roman authorities identified Jesus as the God of creation; the God whom appeared to Moses in the wilderness, the God who was once again revealing himself to mankind, the God who gave himself to establish a relationship with men.

CONCLUSION

Moses asked God for his name so that he could tell the elders of Israel the identity of the One who had sent him with the message of deliverance from captivity. "Moses felt he must have a fuller disclosure of the character of the God who was calling him. In asking for His name, he was also asking to be told more about His nature" (Alleman and Flack, 1948, p. 213). God replied, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14, NKJV), showing that there was no way to qualify, quantify, or describe God apart from Himself. There is nothing in nature or the experience of humanity that is adequate in describing God or His characteristics. He is the essential being of creation.

Jesus identified himself as this same incomparable, indescribable God. Even though he used numerous characteristics, (the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and many more) to help people understand more about his nature, these are only aspects of who he is. If all of these sayings were accumulated, they would still be incomplete in giving a full description of God. That is why he claimed the name "I AM," the essential, eternal essence that cannot be limited by qualifiers.

The authority of the "I AM" is to what people

will respond, one way or the other. The apostle Paul stated it this way: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11, NKJV).

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OVERVIEW

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1. To encourage exchange of empirical and theoretical research among faculty and students at GCU, especially graduate students.

2. To provide graduate students professional experience in the dissemination and publication of their work.

3. To increase awareness of the range and diversity of research being conducted by faculty and students at GCU.

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- State explicitly the hypotheses under investigation or the target of the theoretical review.
- Keep the conclusions within the boundaries of the findings and/or scope of the theory.
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- References - Carefully select references to ensure that citations are current and relevant; prioritize credible, published sources that have proven pertinent and valuable to the relevant investigations. Include the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), when available, for all references. (See <http://www.doi.org>)

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To facilitate the masked (also known as “blind”) review process, the author's name and other identifying information should only appear on the title page; the remainder of the manuscript should be written in a more generalized fashion that does not directly divulge authorship.

Manuscript (including citations and references) must strictly follow APA style as dictated by the 6th Edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (<http://www.apastyle.org/>).

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- Foster dialogue concerning innovative teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- Promote a scholarly approach to the practice and profession of teaching

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