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CBFA'22

CUPBEARERS TO KINGS:  
EMPOWERING STUDENTS  
TO BE FUTURE SHAPERS

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**Online Sports Gambling and College Students: A Christian Response to a Growing Industry**

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### **Abstract**

Online sports gambling (OSG) is growing rapidly in the U.S., and it is increasingly targeting 18-28-year-old males, many of whom are attending colleges or universities. OSG is increasingly seen as an extension of video gambling and has been normalized by society. States are rapidly implementing OSG to generate much-needed revenue. However, OSG, like all gambling, can cause significant harm, and the concept itself does not align with biblical values. This paper presents an overview of the state of OSG and presents ways that Christian faculty can productively discuss OSG with students as we empower them to be future shapers.

*Keywords:* sports betting, online gambling, gambling, ethics

## **Online Sports Gambling and College Students: A Christian Response to a Growing Industry**

In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) unconstitutional, ending federal bans on sports gambling. Since then, sports gambling has become legalized in one form or another in 30 states. Online sports gambling is taxed at both the federal and state levels, making it a lucrative form of revenue for most government entities. As online sports gambling continues to grow, there is a need to consider the ethical implications, especially for the 18-28-year-old demographic that is most likely to join an online sports gambling platform (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). While gambling has historically been viewed as being a sin or a morally gray activity, extensive promotion of online sports gambling and gambling company sponsorships and partnerships with sports teams has normalized online gambling (O'Brien & He, 2021). Due to the rapid legalization and growth of online sports gambling and its impact on 18-28-year-olds, the demographic that is attending colleges and universities, now is the ideal time to address the gap in extant literature about the pros and cons of online gambling to develop a Christian perspective toward discussing online sports gambling with students and broader audiences, including policy makers and government officials. This paper will provide an overview of the current state of online sports gambling, outline the “benefit” of gambling from a revenue perspective and then highlight the motivations of online sports gamblers and the marketing strategies of online gambling platforms. The paper will end with recommendations for how to address online sports gambling with students and other entities and will suggest that although largely normalized, online sports gambling has significant harms and does not align with biblical values.

### **Literature Review and Discussion**

Gambling, in various forms, has existed almost as long as humanity (Schwartz, 2007). The Bible includes a narrative of soldiers casting lots – gambling – for Jesus’ garments as he dies on a cross, which is the root of the word “lottery” (Matheson, 2021). At its core, “gambling is the

determination of the ownership of property by appeal to chance” (Hobson, 1905, p. 10). Today, we may think of gambling as being centered in Las Vegas, but excavations of tombs in ancient Egypt show evidence of dice and other gambling paraphernalia (Schwartz, 2007). Online sports gambling (OSG), developed in the 1990s, includes sports betting, poker, casino games, and other games of chance, such as bingo and the lottery (KPMG International, 2010). Sports gambling is simply defined as any instance of “making bets on sporting events” (Labrie & Shaffer, 2011) and includes pay-to-win games related to sports (Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk, 2021). Hobson (1905) differentiates between “professional” gamblers, such as stockbrokers, who have superior knowledge vs. the non-professional or ordinary gambler. The focus of this paper will be on the “ordinary gambler.” Like gambling, organized sports also have a long history, dating to before the first recorded Olympic Games of 776 BC (Matheson, 2021). It should therefore not be surprising that sports and sports gambling have also existed for centuries.

In the U.S., gambling was a common activity in the colonial era, with lotteries being used to fund the Jamestown settlement as well as the operations of Harvard and Princeton (Matheson, 2021). Beginning in the late 1800s, the social and political attitudes toward gambling in the U.S. alternated between curiosity and interest in gambling and concern over its moral acceptance. As a result, the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the U.S. brought a series of restrictions that severely reduced legal gambling (Munting, 1996). However, while legal gambling decreased, illegal gambling thrived, as evidenced by corruption and scandals in virtually every professional sports league (Matheson, 2021). During prohibition, gambling was largely taken over by gangs, who saw an opportunity to control all the “sin” industries (Sklar, 2021). From a societal viewpoint, since the Great Depression, gambling has come to be more accepted (McDowell, 2020), and it is now fully normalized, particularly among young men (McGee, 2020).

## Current State of OSG

Until the development of online gambling, the gambling market had been relatively stable for decades since there was a finite pool of gambling activities in specific locations, such as lotteries and casinos (Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk, 2021). Prior to 2018, the only state that allowed OSG was Nevada (McDowell, 2020).<sup>1</sup> This led to a black market, whereby people who were not residents of Nevada could place a bet through a “bookie,” or place a wager through an intermediary website based in the Caribbean (Sklar, 2021). Sports wagering outside of Nevada became permissible after the Supreme Court ruled the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection act unconstitutional in the 2018 ruling *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*. As of January 2022, online gambling was legal in 30 states. New York just legalized OSG in January 2022, and Maryland, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin, are in the process of starting their OSG programs (Yakowicz, 2022). As a result, online gambling is now the fastest-growing form of gambling (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021).

However, not all states that have legalized sports wagering have implemented the legislation. For example, Ohio legalized sports wagering in December 2021 but will not implement the law until January 2023 and Florida legalized sports wagering in May 2021, only to have the law challenged in court, thereby delaying implementation of legal sports wagering. Furthermore, not all the jurisdictions that have legalized sports wagering allow wagering online. For example, Mississippi does not have any legal online sports wagering. All sports wagering in South Dakota must take place in person, and the only legal mobile sports wagering in Montana occurs through Montana Sports Bet, the sole state-licensed operator (US Sports Betting and Handle, 2022). So, while the Supreme Court ruling has allowed legal sports wagering in all U.S. states and Washington, D.C., those jurisdictions have taken different approaches in implementation. As a result, more money is now bet

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<sup>1</sup> PASPA exempted the sports lotteries of Delaware, Montana, and Oregon, though these were relatively small in scale compared to the legal sports wagering in Nevada.

in New Jersey than in Las Vegas (O'Brien & He, 2021). According to O'Brien & He (2021), in June 2018, sports gamblers placed wagers of \$310 million for the month. By October 2021, this amount increased to \$7 billion. There are currently four major companies that dominate the OSG market: BetMGM, Caesars Entertainment, DraftKings, and FanDuel (O'Brien & He, 2021).

### **OSG Federal and State Overview**

Today, gambling is embraced by states looking to generate additional revenue. The amount of money legally wagered since June 2018 is staggering. Between June 2018 and April 2022, bettors wagered \$133.99 billion (see Appendix A), with sportsbooks taking \$9.4 billion in gross gaming revenue (GGR) (see Appendix B).<sup>2</sup> Three states account for close to fifty percent of all wagers: New Jersey (20.42%), Nevada (18.17%), and Pennsylvania (10.8%). While Nevada's performance is explained by its extensive history of legal sports wagering, New Jersey and Pennsylvania benefited enormously from New York's slow adoption of online sports wagering. Even though New York has allowed legal sports wagering since July 2019, this wagering was contained to casinos located in upstate New York, and the state did not allow online sports wagering until January 2022. In comparison, New Jersey has allowed online sports wagering since August 2018, and Pennsylvania has allowed online sports wagering since May 2019. Therefore, New York bettors who lived near New Jersey or Pennsylvania, which includes the populous New York City, could easily cross state lines and place online bets instead of travelling to upstate New York to make wagers in person. Since New York legalized online sports wagering in January 2022, the state is by far the largest receiver of sports wagers, with bettors placing \$534.4 million in wagers from January 2022 to April 2022. This is a full \$308 million dollars more than the next closest state of Illinois, who only ended

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<sup>2</sup> GGR is the amount of revenue a sports wagering company keeps after it accepts wagers and pays winners. For example, suppose a sportsbook accepts \$10 million in wagers (in sports betting vernacular, the amount wagered is the handle) on one National Football League game. After the game, suppose the sportsbook pays \$8 million to the winning bettors. The remaining \$2 million is the GGR.

required in-person registration requirements to place mobile sports wagers in March of 2022 (US Sports Betting Revenue and Handle, 2022). While still the third and fourth largest sports wagering states, New Jersey and Pennsylvania have seen their shares of sports wagering decline relative to New York. In 2022, New Jersey and Pennsylvania received a fraction of New York's sports wagering revenue (38.9% and 32.4%, respectively). Appendix C shows total wagers for each state delineated down by year.

Federal tax policy towards sports wagering takes two forms, an excise tax on wagers and a head tax. Beginning in 1951, the federal government has administered a 10% excise tax on sports wagering. The current federal excise tax rate on legal sports wagering is 0.25% of the amount wagered, plus an annual \$50 head tax for every employee engaged in the collection of wagers for or on behalf of any legal sportsbook. The federal government also applies an excise tax on illegal sports betting at a rate of 2% of the amount wagered and an annual occupation tax of \$500 for each person who accepts illegal wagers. The federal government does not separately report the total tax revenue it receives from the excise tax on sports wagering. Therefore, a conservative estimate of federal tax revenue from sports wagering since June 2018, legal and illegal, excluding the annual \$50 employee head tax, is \$33.25 billion.

States also tax gambling, though sports wagering tax policy varies considerably by state. Most states use an *ad valorem* tax on gross gaming revenue (GGR). The tax rate varies from 6.75% on the low end (Iowa and Nevada) to 51% on the high end (New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island). Some states tax mobile wagers and in-person wagers at different rates. For example, the state of New Jersey taxes any gambling entity, including OSGs at a rate of 8.5%, as well as an additional 13% tax on any online gambling, resulting in over \$36 million in revenue from June 2018-September 2019 (Sklar, 2021). States also differ on whether they allow deductions from GGR before the state taxes. Instead of using an *ad valorem* tax, a minority of states take management fees from GGR

(Montana and Oregon). Appendix D shows the sports wagering tax revenue by state since June 2018, excluding New Mexico and providing estimates for Montana, Oregon, and Washington D.C. New Mexico allows sports wagering at tribal casinos, but that data is not publicly available.

Montana and Oregon operate their sports wagering business through their respective lotteries. Therefore, revenue earned from wagering is pooled with other gaming revenue (e.g., lottery) and then transferred to the states' general funds, making it difficult to ascertain how much the state earns directly from sports wagering. However, the authors used totals provided by state officials through public records requests. Washington, D.C. divides their wagers between GambetDC, the sportsbook app operated by the DC lottery, and commercial operators. The district does not report tax revenue from GambetDC, but approximately 50% of total gaming revenue is profit for the lottery. Therefore, the authors calculated tax revenue based on that approximation. Given these data limitations, states and the District of Columbia have received \$1.43 billion in tax revenue and transfers since 2018. In the first four months of 2022, states received \$475.6 million, or slightly over 33% of all state tax revenue and transfers from sports wagering since the Supreme Court ruled the PASPA unconstitutional in 2018.

Since a primary reason states gave to legalize sports gambling was bringing betting that was already occurring illegally into legal markets so that it could be taxed and regulated, it is fair to ask how large the illegal sports wagering market is. Unfortunately, the amount of money wagered on sports illegally is difficult to ascertain, and the parties making the estimates have different incentives to overestimate, thus the amount of illegal sports wagering is debatable. For example, casinos and gaming associations have an incentive to overestimate the size of the illegal market in hopes of government regulation that would eliminate or severely hamper competition from illegal gambling sources. Governments have an incentive to overestimate the size of illegal sports wagering because it bolsters the argument that legalizing sports wagering as taxable income is a way to increase to

increase government revenue for new spending or to decrease budget pressures. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission estimated that Americans illegally wagered \$80 to \$380 billion on sports in 1999 (National Gambling Commission, 1990). The American Gaming Association, the national trade group for U.S casinos, estimated that illegal wagering on sport amounts to \$150 billion annually (97% of Expected \$10 Billion, 2018). A 2021 report from the United Nations estimates that between \$340 billion and \$1.7 trillion was wagered on illegal sports wagering globally in 2020. The same report from the United Nations (2021) estimates that 5.75% of the global legal sports wagering was in North America. Assuming this same ratio and applying it to the illegal sports betting market, the size of illegal sports wagering in North America in 2020 was somewhere between \$19.55 billion and \$97.75 billion. Given that legal sports wagering in the United States in 2021 was approximately \$58 billion (or 60% of the high-end estimate of the illegal sports wagering market in North America), it is fair to assume that states have successfully captured a large percentage of illegal sports wagering and that this will continue to be the case as more states implement legal sports wagering.

From a revenue generation perspective, states should not rely on increasing tax revenue growth over the long run from sports wagering for two reasons. First, some states benefited from having no, or little competition from neighboring states. As discussed earlier, New Jersey and Pennsylvania benefited both from New York not legalizing online sports wagering until the beginning of January 2022 and from New York City being close to Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Once New York legalized online sports wagering, at least some of the wagering that was occurring in New Jersey and Pennsylvania migrated to New York. As states with large population centers legalize sports wagering, bordering states will see some relative decline in the amount wagers and tax revenue, particularly if the large population center borders other states. Illinois and Indiana will provide another test case of this hypothesis since Chicago is the country's third largest city and it is relatively close to the border of Indiana. Second, tax competition between states will eventually

occur, especially when states see sports wagering decline or stagnate. As noted by Jacobs, Lighthart, and Vrijburg (2010), states act strategically when setting tax rates. Will Rhode Island and New Hampshire continue its high tax policy now that New York has legalized online sports wagering, or will it lower its tax rates to tempt sportsbooks to move there? Both problems are acute for Nevada. Nevada has a very low tax rate on sports wagering but has seen its share of the sport wagering market fall, even before California has implemented its own legal sports wagering. If states increase spending one-for-one with the current increases in tax revenue from sports wagering, or increase spending based on unrealistic assumptions of how sports wagering will increase, these states may find themselves in fiscal trouble if competition arises.

### **Gambler Motivation**

While gambling and OSG might benefit states from a revenue perspective, a troubling aspect is that online gambling is growing the most quickly among 18-28-year-olds than any other demographic (McGee, 2020). There are four primary motivations for this group. First, this age group contains many students who are studying at a college or a university, and some of these students believe that OSG can provide an easy form of revenue (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). Second, the experience and excitement of OSG – even among those who bet relatively small amounts of money - can be even more important than the amount of money that an individual user might win (Fortunato, 2020). Third, OSG is a natural extension of video games, which are something that this demographic has grown up experiencing. In fact, video games are also increasingly offering in-game rewards, such as additional points or special avatar, and these activities make the transition to OSG for money more seamless (Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk, 2021). Relatedly, eSports fans, another trend popular with Gen Z and Millennials, are more likely than others to gamble (Grove, 2016). Fourth, people open an online gambling account to obtain promotions and bonuses that are advertised by OSG sites (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). They are

also more likely to open an OSG account if they receive a recommendation to do from a friend (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). Free bets or loyalty awards – marketing and promotion – are the one thing that most influences younger gamblers to keep placing bets (McGee, 2020). While Gen Z may be the most prolific joiners of OSG, Millennials are more likely than others to hold more than five online gambling accounts (Financial Times, 2018).

The harms of online sports gambling may seem obvious. Potential loss of revenue that leads to financial distress can be exacerbated by the fact that since OSG involves both gambling and gaming, it can trigger even more addictive behaviors than traditional gambling or gaming that does not involve gaming (Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk, 2021). OSG can also lead to a difficulties in navigating interpersonal relationships as well as a decline in overall mental and physical health (Paterson, Whitty & Boyer, 2021). While there is still limited research on the effects of online sports gambling, recent research on a group of online sports gamblers in Spain demonstrated that online gamblers are much more likely to develop gambling-related disorders than those who gamble offline (Díaz & Pérez, 2021). McGee's (2020) research of young male gamblers in the U.K. also demonstrated that the risks of financial loss, mental health struggles, and addiction are exacerbated in vulnerable populations, including people who gamble as an alternate means to pursue wealth.

### **OSG Marketing**

Urban dwellers in cities that recently legalized OSG may have seen a remarkable increase in advertisements promoting online platforms. Newark Penn Station had floor-to-ceiling ads in several hallways promoting Caesars as well as DraftKings, and subway stations in NYC hosted similar ads. Borna and Lowry (1997) noted that traditional gambling preys on the poor, and the same may be true with OSG. Sports deregulation directly correlates with increased advertisements from OSGs. In the U.K., the deregulation of sports gambling in 2007 resulted in a 600% increase in gambling advertisements (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). While marketing is not inherently bad, gambling can

be a public health issue, and encouraging gambling can lead to social harm. Since OSG has been legal in the U.K. and Australia longer than in the U.S., more research has been completed on the impact of gambling in these regions. As an example, research by McGee (2020) demonstrates that in the U.K., men are six times more likely to participate in online gambling than women. This is likely because OSG firms position their product as being an activity that is engaged in “by tech-savvy young men living a glamorous high-stakes lifestyle, with the bettor’s power, [and] success . . .” (Hing et al., 2017, p. 1052). While gambling inherently has risks, OSG has been normalized in the marketing world, thereby minimizing the risk in the mind of the gambler (McGee, 2020). During sports broadcasts, OSG is promoted, and professional teams and leagues have direct partnerships with OSGs, as do other media and entertainment companies, including Walt Disney Company (O’Brien & He, 2021). This “embedding” of advertising can include logos on players’ uniforms, stadium signage, celebrity endorsements, and even segments that are sponsored by gambling companies (Hing et al., 2017). As a result of these increased partnerships and marketing, the four major OSG companies, BetMGM, Caesars Entertainment, DraftKings, and FanDuel, to be on pace to make approximately \$4 billion in 2022 (O’Brien & He, 2021).

### **OSG Target Market**

Online sports gambling (OSG) advertising is targeted at males, ages 18-28, who account for the largest increase in online gaming (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). As noted earlier, this includes college students, who are a “high-risk, high-priority group,” because students are inherently associated with risky behavior, such as drinking, taking drugs, and sexual behavior (Moodie, 2008, p. 31). A study of 455 Australian Internet sports bettors indicated that young, male OSGs are especially vulnerable to gambling issues, particularly if they hold the gambling sponsors and promoters in high esteem (Hing, Russell, Lamont, & Vitartas, 2017). Njoku, Chukwuma, and Obiorah (2021) argue that many youth in Africa have turned to sports gambling because the marketing messages promise

an expeditious exit from chronic poverty found on the continent. Problem gambling is more common with gamblers who use Internet-based games, and young adult males are especially at-risk for developing online gambling problems, particularly around OSG (Hing et al., 2017).

The anonymity of online gambling is another reason why online gambling has grown so much (Dunlop & Ballantyne, 2021). This type of gambling can be performed in total privacy, which mitigates any negative social connotations (Ganzálvez-Valles, Barquero-Cabrero, Caldevilla-Domínguez, & Barrientos-Báez, 2021). Additionally, younger populations (especially 18-28-year-old males) have a high level of technical proficiency, and online gambling is, essentially, another type of online game that can be played on their phones or other smart device (James et al., 2017; Ganzálvez-Valles et al., 2021).

### **Ethics of OSG**

The Bible does not directly address gambling (let alone sports gambling), outside of the practice of casting lots (Brug 1974). Luebchow (1985) argues that the Bible neither directly condemns nor condones the activity, labeling gambling as an “indifferent matter” (p. 4) like alcohol consumption, and Hallo (1983) notes that the practice of gambling is not listed in the Pentateuch along with practice the Israelites should avoid. Because the Bible does not offer direct guidance on the topic of gambling, Christian denominations take differing positions. For example, Methodists have traditionally opposed gambling (Lampard, 2004) as has the Southern Baptist Convention (1997). The Catholic Church view games of chance and wagering as “not in themselves contrary to justice” that only “become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 2413). Quakers have historically moved between calls of abolition and moderation regarding gambling (Chambers, 2009). The common thread between these traditions is that there is a point where gambling becomes morally impermissible.

However, it would be folly to conclude that because the Bible does not list gambling as a sin that biblical principles are unhelpful regarding the ethics of gambling. Following the discussions of Brug (1974) and Luebchow (1985), consider the following questions regarding biblical principles and gambling. First, what is the motivation for participating in gambling, entertainment, or greed? If gambling moves from a form of entertainment to one of greed, the act is clearly sinful, just as any greedy action is. Second, since gambling is a zero-sum game, with the winner benefitting at the expense of another, how does gambling advance the command of Jesus in Matthew 22:39 of loving your neighbor as yourself? Some may object to this point with sports wagering since legal sports wagering is through a sportsbook rather than directly with another person, meaning that a winning bettor is not taking from a losing bettor but is rather taking from the sportsbook. However, this distinction is really a semantic argument about levels of separation because the sportsbook is a middleman, paying winners from the wagers of the losers. Is gambling helping or hurting a weaker believer in the faith? Third, does the practice of gambling help or hurt one's Christian witness to an unbelieving world? If gambling hurts one's witness or hurts a weaker believer, Christians should abstain from the practice, even if it is within Christian liberty. Lastly, is gambling a good example of proper stewardship? Whether one holds that gambling is sinful on these grounds (as the Southern Baptists do), or whether one sees these questions as providing guardrails to prevent one from moving beyond permissible gambling to sinful gambling, the questions provide a biblical framework to ascertain the wisdom of gambling. Key to the discussion of if gambling is good stewardship is the concept of whether gambling is a long-term investment or a short-term risky venture. As outlined by Saunders (2016), responsible stewardship as it pertains to investing, "involves screening, shareholder advocacy and community development investing" (p. 62). Moreover, instead of being a long-term investment, most gambling, including OSG, is a short-term bet which increases risk and results in a zero-sum game (Saunders, 2016). This concept is reflected in Proverbs 13:11, "Wealth obtained

from nothing dwindles, but one who gathers by labor increases it” (New American Standard Bible, 2020). Proverbs 28:20 also seems to support the concept that short-term risk is folly, “A faithful person will abound with blessings, but one who hurries to get rich will not go unpunished” (New American Standard Bible, 2020).

While the above discussion is useful for gambling in general, as faculty at a Christian college, the emphasis on OSG and increase in the student demographic becoming online gamblers leads us to consider the ethics of OSG. Gambling has been seen as detrimental to human behavior for centuries. Horace in 23 B.C. suggested that the skills of young Roman were less focused on riding and hunting and more focused on games of chance, which were illegal (Matheson, 2021). Juvenal, writing in Satire I in 101 AD, stated, “Never has the torrent of vice been too irresistible or the depths of avarice more absorbing, or the passion for gambling more intense. None approach nowadays the gambling table with the purse; they must carry their strongbox. What can we think of these profligates more ready to lose 100,000 than to give a tunic to a slave dying with cold” (as quoted in Matheson, 2019). The Puritans believed that gambling was sinful and banned it (Skeel, 2009), and until the mid-1900s, a sense of cultural disdain surrounded the gambling industry (O’Brien & He, 2021). Hobson (1905) initiated ethical arguments surrounding gambling by suggesting that the acquisition of property by means other than some amount of hard work disrupts the norm of production and consumption. Moreover, Hobson (1905) notes that, “the essence of gambling consists in an abandonment of reason, an inhibition of the factors of human control” (p. 138).

However, as state lotteries, casinos, and even Las Vegas continued to develop, gambling became more socially acceptable (O’Brien & He, 2021). Despite the increase in gambling, and especially online gambling, modern academic theologians have been reticent to study sports (Watson, 2018). While research has not focused specifically on the ethics of OSG, research has

demonstrated a clear link between online gambling and problem gambling, with estimates that approximately one third to two-thirds of online gamblers admit to being addicted to gambling (Matthews et al., 2009). Moreover, there is a direct correlation between young male sports betters and increased risk when those betters are exposed to televised advertisements that promote OSG opportunities. (Hing et al., 2017)

From an OSG industry perspective, some suggest that legalizing sports gambling brings transparency to the industry. In fact, some leagues pay “integrity fees” which are payments by gambling organizations paid to sports leagues to prevent match fixing (Depken & Gander, 2021). However, while OSG providers promote their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the reality is that these activities, such as supporting gambling addiction hotlines and interventions, do not match the amount of addiction and other harm that is caused by people engaging with the OSG platforms (Yani-de-Soriano, Javed & Yousafzai, 2012).

### **Recommendations**

OSG has been normalized, even though research indicates that the generation being most targeted (18-28-year-olds) are the most likely to become addicted. As a result, we stand with Hobson, who called gambling, “A practice so corrupting to the intelligence not only of the *habitué* but even of the casual spectator stands condemned as a formidable enemy of education and of intellectual order” (Hobson, 1905, p. 140). While written in 1905 about traditional gambling, the words of Hobson hold true to OSG, which may be even more pernicious in that it has been normalized among younger generations, “The passion of gambling, once settled in a man, seems to take physical root in him and to be almost as difficult to expel as drink, opium, or any other acquired physical vice” (Hobson, 1905, p. 144).

Since faculty in Christian higher education seek to empower students to be future shapers, we can form mentor-mentee relationships with our students and can be crucial allies helping young

men and women avoid the pernicious danger of OSG. To this end, we propose three avenues of involvement for faculty in Christian higher education. First, as faculty, we can discuss OSG in our classes, especially those that address ethics, and can point out the harms of any type of gambling, including OSG. Business classes commonly work through case studies to explore ethical issues. Economics classes could highlight the dangerous of government relying on a narrow tax base. Philosophy and religion classes could work through the questions found above in the Ethics of OSG section. Classes in the performing arts could showcase performances that highlight the dangers of addiction (and the joy of redemption!). The opportunities throughout a well-ordered curriculum are myriad.

Second, faculty can encourage greater participation in the local church. Hoffman (2000) shows that attending church more frequently decreases the frequency of gambling and lessens the likelihood of problem gambling, because church attendance provides social networks that discourage it. Similarly, Eitle (2011) shows strong religious adherence and environments reduces the likelihood of gambling dependency, specifically in young adults. In both cases, active involvement in the church body is crucial to healthy behavior towards gambling. Participation in college Christian clubs and ministries could also provide an appropriate nurturing environment. However, local church bodies typically provide greater diversity regarding age, ethnicity, marital status, and spiritual maturity. Faculty members can model their own church life as an example, including their own challenges.

Lastly, and in some ways more controversially, we can work against the pervasive presence of sports betting advertisements in modern media by promoting effective social media marketing campaigns that show the negative results or harm of OSG, specifically to young adults. (Hing et al., 2017). In fact, public health policy can be used to provide counter-messaging to the OSG promotions (Hing et al., 2017). Babor et al. (2017) finds that adolescents are susceptible to alcohol

advertising and Weitzman and Lee (2020) find a causal relationship between alcohol advertising and use of alcohol. Given that OSG shares the same dangers of addictiveness as alcohol and tobacco use, the literature on alcohol and tobacco regulation is relevant. We can also encourage more stringent regulations on OSG advertising in general, whether through social pressure for companies to adopt voluntary codes or through additional legislation. This approach has already happened with alcohol and tobacco. One example is the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which gives the Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate the marketing of tobacco products. Another example is the voluntary advertising and market codes of the Beer Institute, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, and the Wine Institute, which are the three major alcohol supplier trade associations. These voluntary codes “contain provisions relating to the content and placement of alcohol marketing efforts, including guidelines designed to reduce the likelihood that alcohol will, by its content or placement, target consumers below the legal drinking age” (FTC, 2014, p. 12). Voluntary advertising codes could also allow the gambling companies to exercise civic virtue and responsibility on their own, which forced regulation might complicate.

### **Conclusions and Future Research**

Online sports gambling is still relatively new in the U.S. Research conducted in the U.K. and Australia on their (slightly) older industry should be replicated in the U.S. to determine if the context provides similar results. Second, while there is a significant body of research that focuses on gambling in general, more research is required to effectively define the relationship between traditional gambling and e-sports gambling. Research by Lelonek-Kuleta et al. (2021) indicates that an increase in gaming competitions also increases the risk of participants being affected negatively by gambling issues, such as addiction. This research also demonstrates that individuals who participate in OSG **and** traditional gambling may have even more addiction issues (McGee, 2020). From a revenue generation perspective for the federal and state governments, more research is needed to

determine the extent to which OSG brings in new players and new money to the gambling industry or whether it cannibalizes existing gambling opportunities, such as casino gaming or state lotteries (Matheson, 2021).

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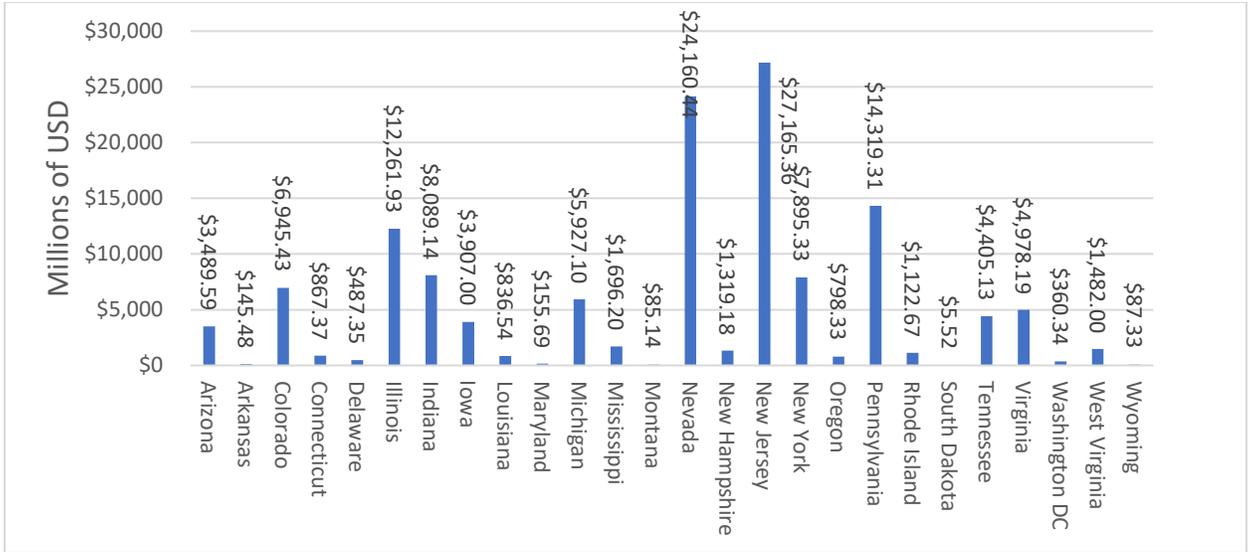
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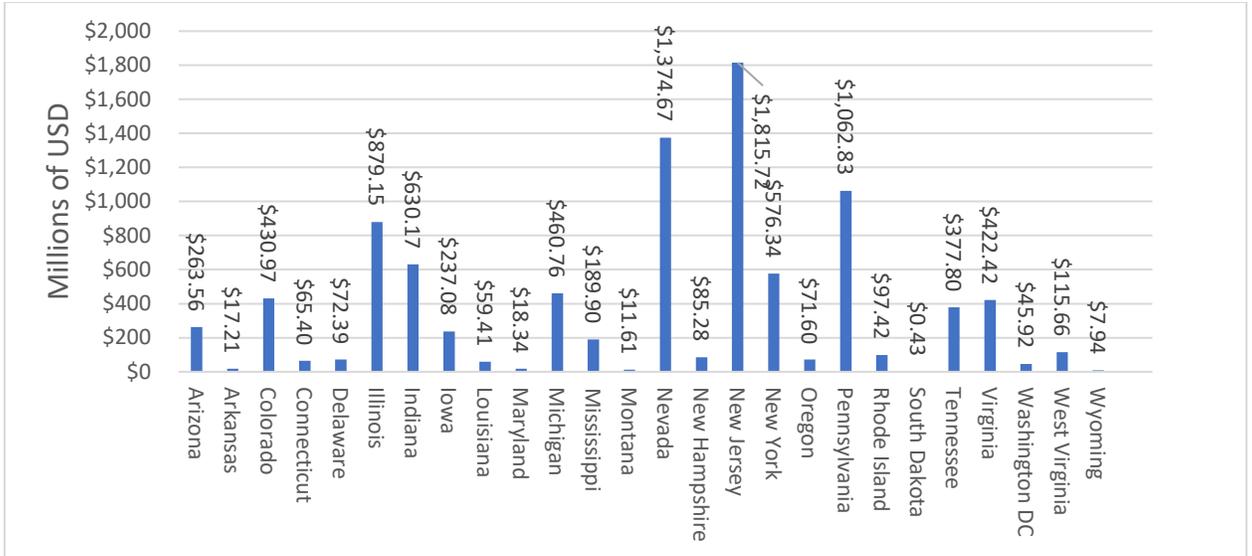
Appendix A

Total Money Wagered on Sports (2018-2022)



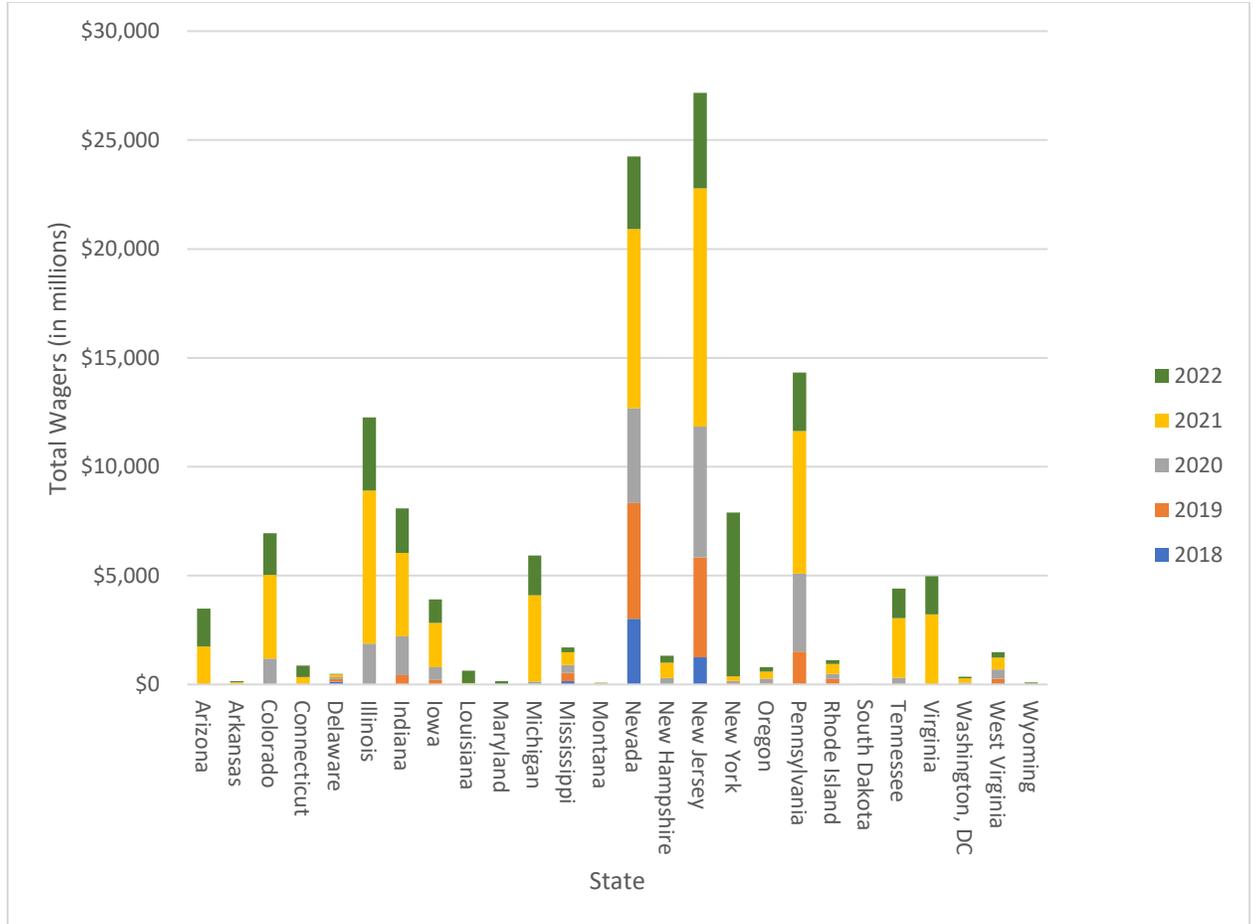
**Appendix B**

*Total Sportsbook Revenue from Sports Wagering (2018-2022)*



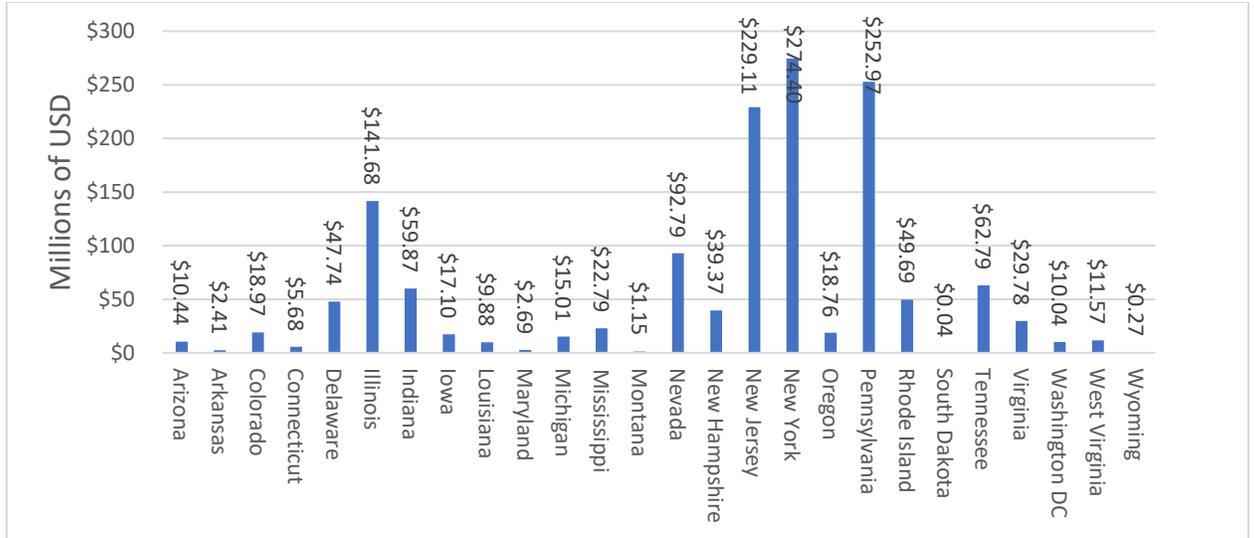
Appendix C

*Sports Wagers by Year (June 2018-April 2022)*



**Appendix D**

*Local and State Tax Revenue from Sports Wagering (2018-2022)*



**Inter-Faith Application of Virtue Ethics in Business:  
How Can Christians and Muslims Shape Common Ground for Common Good?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper surveys Christian and Muslim teachings on business ethics and discusses convergence and divergence of virtue ethics perspectives from the respective religious traditions. The study, funded by a CCCU grant, is grounded in a virtue ethics framework and incorporates the stakeholder theory of corporation. It discusses ways to draw from faith traditions in exploring and encouraging inter-faith approaches in dealing with business ethics issues in workplaces with diverse religious communities. The purpose of the study was to assess the experiences of business owners/operators, employees, and students enrolled in virtue ethics training workshops in Bulgaria. Participants with different religious and ethnic backgrounds reflected on the effectiveness of the workshop to successfully, cooperatively, and meaningfully apply the presented virtue ethics framework in order to discuss common approaches to developing ethical behaviours in the workplace.

*Keywords:* multi-religious groups, ethics training, stakeholder relations, qualitative research methods

## **Inter-Faith Application of Virtue Ethics in Business:**

### **How Can Christians and Muslims Shape Common Ground for Common Good?**

Three philosophical traditions in ethics (deontology, teleology, and virtue theory) have historically provided the foundation for development of ethical decision making in business. However, this narrow approach to business ethics as an applied philosophy has drawn criticism (De George, 1987). Furthermore, in recent years numerous calls have been made to broaden the scope of business ethics to incorporate spiritual, religious aspects. Calkins (2000) rightfully observes that “business ethicists are inclined to neglect their religious traditions and to focus narrowly on purely philosophical and social scientific approaches to ethical dilemmas” (p. 347). The evidence of the effects of religious motivation on ethical decision-making (Clark & Dawson, 1996; Hunt & Vitell, 1986) and the aforementioned criticism have promoted the discussion of a conceptual framework that incorporates religious beliefs that we present in this paper. The proposed framework appears useful in inter-religious business ethics training.

This essay will first explore the virtue ethics teachings from Christian and Muslim perspectives. Then it will analyze various themes emerging from the analysis of the religious beliefs of the two Abrahamic religions. Finally, it will discuss the importance and applicability of religious virtue ethics for development of ethics training programs in religiously diverse workplaces and communities. The authors present the design, facilitation, and preliminary results of a virtue-ethics based ethics training workshop conducted with a group of multi-ethnic and multi-religious participants in Bulgaria – a country with a significant minority Muslim population and a history of inter-religious tension and mistrust in the marketplace relations.

### **Virtue Ethics: Convergence and Divergence**

Both Plato and Aristotle argue that people want to be happy, and many, if not most, practitioners of the Abrahamic religions would tentatively agree. Jews have their Deuterocanonical

theology, where God blesses the faithful (e.g., Job), and both Christians and Muslims acknowledge that God blesses those who are righteous . . . if not in this life, certainly in the next life. Many practitioners of the Abrahamic religions can agree with Plato and Aristotle, then, that happiness can be achieved by acting according to one's proper or - in more religious speech - "God-designed" nature. The claim is that God wants us to be happy, but we can only achieve the highest form of happiness - that is we can only taste the most potent happiness - if we act in keeping with God's design, for we were made for Him and in His Image.

We should add that God has also made us rational beings and hence our intellectual capabilities suggest to us that we ought to act morally. Here our basic morality might be discoverable in nature (what many Christians call "Natural Law") and/or in sacred texts such as the Torah, Bible or Qur'an. For example, in his extensive discussion of the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments, Cafferky illustrates how adherence to covenantal laws promotes marketplace interactions and contributes to well-being or flourishing (Cafferky, 2014). Either way, certain virtues *in their most basic form*, such as justice, temperance, and humility, seem to be common to all these religions (and others) and as such can give us a good basis for a virtue ethic and ethical training in the workplace (Quddus, Bailey, & White, 2009). Indeed, recent research in positive psychology confirms universality of many of such virtues across cultures and throughout the history. Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman (2005) examined the various Western and Eastern philosophical and religious traditions and found that the virtues of courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence have systematically appeared in the writings from those traditions. Transcendence in their work refers to "strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning; examples include gratitude, hope, and spirituality" (p. 205). Dahlsgaard and colleagues defined humanity as "interpersonal strengths that involve "tending and befriending" others (Taylor et al., 2000); examples include love and kindness" (p. 205). In summary, Wang, Cheney, and Roper (2016) conclude that

“virtue theory provides a useful explanatory framework in making sense of various business ethics issues through placing a focus on the moral character of the individuals and its transformational influences in promoting ethical business conduct” (p. 76). We will further discuss the more traditional virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and others in the following sections.

Naturally, given the diversity between the Abrahamic traditions, particularly between Christianity and Islam, we need to be properly sensitive to the way that we ground our approach to virtue ethics and application of a framework in business. Given the influence of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition on Christian and Islamic ethics, it seems entirely appropriate to work with some insights that this tradition has brought to the table.

Our review of literature on Islamic and Christian virtues suggested the following list of virtues we believed to be most relevant for making ethical decisions and developing positive organizational cultures in multi-faith workplaces: justice, honesty, humility, forgiveness, generosity. We now turn to a comparative analysis and discussion of these virtues, from Christian and Muslims respectively.

Biblical justice refers to the ways relationships are structured so that there are no built-in disadvantages to any individual or group of people. Thus, the first characteristic of justice is its ability to create right relationships. Christian teaching suggests that justice is among the most important virtues exactly because it is others related. Thus, justice is concerned with rights. So, injustice exists when someone is cheated of something to which he is entitled. Islamic scholars, somewhat similarly, emphasize the notion of justice as an equilibrium or balance” it is the fundamental value or principle which governs all social behaviour within the Islamic community and thus forms the basis of all social dealings and legal foundations (Beekun & Badawi, 1995).

We defined justice as “to treat each thing, person or situation correctly or rightly.” To elaborate, we added that justice means treating “a superior as a superior,” “an equal as an equal,” and

“a subordinate as a subordinate.” Few would disagree with this in general, though many might have different ideas about what “correctly” or “rightly” look like in detail. Of course, we cannot fully prescribe the details since different persons and religions input different data into this. For example, while Jews, Christians and Muslims would all agree that God is one’s superior and treating God as more important than oneself is certainly just, they might disagree about the degree to which one’s boss ought to be treated as one’s superior and the degree to which—perhaps after work—one’s boss becomes merely an equal. The emphasis in virtue ethics is not to solve these problems for everyone, but rather to emphasize the need for practical wisdom in working from the common notion of “justice” and applying it to one’s particular situation.

Honesty is another virtue. We defined it as “to say, write or more broadly communicate truth where it is relevant that one so communicates it.” Honest is a species of justice in that it has to do with *properly, rightly or justly* communicating something. Our Abrahamic religions, again, would likely agree with this definition—Exodus 20:16 telling us not to give “false testimony against one’s neighbor,” and Surah 9:119 telling us to “Fear God and be with those who are truthful.” Once again, though, Christians and Muslims might disagree, not with the general definition, but with particular applications. For example, if one were in a situation of some urgency—a situation that challenged one’s ability to communicate truthfully—a Christian might emphasize telling the truth or remaining silent as a way to be virtuous, whereas a virtuous, honest Muslim might—*might*—opt for *taqiyya* or “just deception” (which is often misinterpreted by non-Muslims) since honesty is connected with “just” communication in situations that are “appropriate.” Both the Christian and Muslim would agree that God wants them to tell the truth and so develop honesty, yet they could still disagree about what is “just communication” or what an “appropriate time” is.

The virtue of humility—another virtue connected with justice—comes to be when the weak (a person lacking something) recognizes his or her weakness (lack) especially in the presence of the

strong (or a person who does not have the lack). Micah 6:8 reads, “And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God;” and Surah 7:55 reads, “Call to your sustainer humbly and in the secrecy of your hearts.” As with many of the virtues, humility is related to justice in that it is *proper* or *right* that the weak acknowledge their weakness, and even, in some cases, ask for the help of the strong. This type of acknowledgement is not the same as groveling (a kind of inappropriate begging), but rather a statement of fact, often followed by a statement of need. In the workplace, everyone has some lack and usually these persons need someone to help them with this. Humility, consequently, is vital to this. Humility properly acknowledges one’s own need, but it also has the proper benefit—as becoming justice—to uplift those who have skills that one does not have. Even the bellboy can be then exalted in some situations. Humility is a virtue that does not create a slavish environment (as Aristotle may have thought) but rather an environment much the way the Abrahamic religions claim God made the world: filled with glorious differences, though all under His righteousness.

Forgiveness is a species of virtue derived from sacrificial love, or a love that goes beyond, but never in violation of, justice. As such this virtue is non-obligatory but is very praiseworthy and a person of this virtue would be highly valuable to any company since such would be a great peacemaker. Christians and Muslims, at least, agree with this virtue (Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” and Surah 7:199: “Show forgiveness, enjoin equity, and avoid the ignorant”), though both need to properly understand what one’s obligations are first before this virtue comes to focus. For example, if my colleague defames me—that is, unjustly spreads rumors about me—then I have been wronged, and it is entirely proper for me to seek justice. Here—where I be Jew or Gentile so-to-speak—I should confront my colleague and ask for amends to be made; however, if my colleague refuses—and we saw lots of this with inter-religious tension in the Balkans—then to bear the injustice of my

colleague, to take it upon myself, and release my colleague of his guilt is virtuous as it is an act of forgiveness. What's crucial to this virtue is that justice be acknowledged and dealt with *first*, for only then can true forgiveness (and not some sort of servility or laziness) arise. Also, by dealing with the injustice it helps to clear the air, and better treat the wound in the workplace.

Generosity (praised in both Proverbs 11:25: "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" and Surah 3:92: "By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well") is a virtue connected with both justice and sacrificial love and has two senses. In one sense, generosity is the just act of the strong (in some general sense) benefiting the weak (in some general sense). Here the "strong" could refer to the physically strong, of course (e.g., a fireman), but also the financially strong, the educationally strong, and so on. The strong in this sense is generous insofar as he or she helps the weak. In some ways this sense of generosity is the reverse of humility, which places emphasis on the weak's need for the strong. Here, though, it's important to emphasize that the strong has a general moral obligation—it is *just*—for him or her to help the weak. In a company, the elder employee has the obligation, whether he or she is told so or not, to help the new employee generally speaking. Yet there is also the second sense of generosity, which is when a person—be they strong, equal or weak—doesn't have an obligation to help another, and yet still chooses to do so. Perhaps an older employee has some basic obligation to help orient the new employee, but yet if this older employee were to give more of his or her time in this way, it could, in some situations, be seen as an act of generosity *qua* sacrificial love.

All five of these virtues—and countless others—are vital to human beings as such, and so, *a maiore*, are vital to persons in the workplace. Although we have talked about common definitions of five virtues, we have seen that the application of a given virtue is negotiable since people differ widely in their detailed evidence sets and personalities. There is a need, then, for practical wisdom—

for people to apply, without overly restrictive measures, their own judgments on what is a virtuous act in the workplace. The key, though, is getting one's employees to *think, seek out and practice* virtue at work. This is no easy task, of course, but Plato and Aristotle long ago told us that virtue is not attained without practice. *It is vital, therefore, that employees and employers see the workplace as a place where they can and should practice virtue; that the workplace is, as much as the synagogue, church or mosque, as place of "soul making."*

### **Finding Common Ground**

"An Interfaith Declaration: a Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims and Jews" is a document which was drafted at a meeting held in Amman, Jordan in October, 1993 after years of deliberations by various stakeholders from the respective religions (i.e., theologians, royalty, business leaders, clerics, etc.). The purpose of the Declaration was to provide: 1) a moral basis for international business activity, 2) some principles of ethical practice to help businesspeople, traders and investors identify the role they and their organisations perform in the communities in which they operate, and 3) guidance in resolving genuine dilemmas which arise in the course of day-to-day business (p. 97). The final outcome of this Declaration was definition of four principles or common concepts that occur in all three religions of the People of the Book (i.e., the Torah, the Bible, and the Holy Qur'an): justice (fairness), mutual respect (love and consideration), stewardship (trusteeship), and honesty (truthfulness). Thus, we paid close attention to these virtues in designing our training program. Interestingly, the Declaration provides specific guidelines for business policy development in regard to six groups of stakeholders: employees, providers of finance, customers, suppliers, community (local and national government), and owners (shareholders). We found this distinction very helpful for the purposes of determining the "weak" and the "strong", the nature of the existing relationship between virtue practicing individuals, and

the context in which ethical decisions are made. We now turn to the discussion of the stakeholder theory and its implications for ethics training.

### **Loving and Serving the “Neighbors:” Stakeholder Analysis**

Businesses as well as non-for-profit organizations should encourage identification and application of individual virtues in specific situations and organizational contexts. Virtue ethics is a “full-contact” affair. In fact, since each situation is laden with unique aspects and interactions with other interested parties, a careful examination of such parties is necessary. Such interested parties are often referred to as stakeholders and require careful analysis for the application of the training program. These stakeholders (e.g., customers, partners, suppliers, etc.) represent a multitude of diverse “neighbours” with respective needs and preferences in the context of marketplace interactions.

Freeman (1984), one of the pioneers in the field of stakeholder identification and analysis, defined a stakeholder as an entity that “can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (p. 46). Stakeholder research has expanded this definition since then, adding those who “have a stake in or a claim on the firm” (Evan & Freeman, 1988), p. 75-76), those who have “contracts” (Cornell & Shapiro, 1987, p. 5), and even as vaguely as those who have a “relationship with an organization” (Thompson, Wartick, & Smith, 1991, p. 209). Stakeholders are, thus, the company’s employees, customers, competitors, suppliers, regulatory agencies, and many others. Other researchers, however, focused on the importance of the stakeholders to the very existence of the organization (Bowie, 1988), the role of stakeholders as providers of critical resources necessary for organization’s operations and attainment of goals (Hill & Jones, 1992), and, more specifically, “have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities” (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Furthermore, some authors argued that stakeholders may hold a moral (in addition to a legal) claim on the firm and the organization is responsible for their well-being

(Langtry, 1994) (e.g., employees claim for safe and appropriate work conditions) and even that stakeholders “give meaning and definition” to the organization (Wicks, Gilbert Jr, & Freeman, 1994). Thus, it appears that ethical aspects of relationships between the organization and its stakeholders demand further discussion. This discussion, in turn, requires a further distinction among the various stakeholders.

First, we need to distinguish between internal (e.g., employees) and external (e.g., competitors, customers, etc.) stakeholders. These internal and external stakeholders have a variety of both competing and complimentary stakes or interests in the activities of an organization which need to be clearly distinguished for the purposes of analysis. For example, both employees and customers need the company to behave in an environmentally responsible way. The society also expects to benefit from the activities of the organization, which includes taxes, quality goods and services, sustainable economic growth and development, as well as individual flourishing of the various stakeholders. However, often issues related to wages and compensation take precedent for employees over the interests of suppliers to obtain timely and quality deliveries from the company.

The second, and probably the more important element to consider when mapping stakeholder relationships, is power or influence (i.e., ability to change behaviour of other stakeholders or deliver the desired organizational or personal outcomes). Mitchell et al. (1997) have carefully reviewed the implications of power in inter-stakeholder relationships and concluded that “a party to a relationship has power, to the extent it has or can gain access to coercive, utilitarian, or normative means, to impose its will in the relationship” (p. 865). They add that such power can be attained and lost. Power is seen as a continuum. Furthermore, some stakeholders, by the nature of their sources of power and authority have more or less influence over the organization’s affairs. One may compare here the power of a regulatory agency with that of a customer. In fact, in some countries the nature and the source of influence are even more confusing. For example, an employer

generally is said to have power or influence over hired employees. The employees are contractually obligated to carry out appropriate duties, appear for work during scheduled hours, participate in company sponsored training, etc. The transitory nature of power may complicate managers' task of encouraging a fair and just ethical environment in inter-stakeholder relations.

We considered the discussion of virtue ethics in the context of these dyads: internal vs. external and power-ful vs. power-less stakeholders. How do respective virtue ethics traditions treat these relationships? For example, does a "moral" claim of an internal stakeholder differ from those of an external one? How does a specific virtue (e.g., generosity) guide a decision maker's actions toward the power-ful (i.e., the "strong") compared to those toward a power-less (i.e., the "weak")? Who is the legitimate stakeholder and has a "moral" claim on our actions? Which claims are more urgent for managerial consideration? These questions were usually successfully addressed in a dynamic discussion of who has the power in a particular stakeholder relationship. Hence, the authors chose workshop format to facilitate such a dynamic discussion and application of virtue-ethics frameworks in the context of marketplace stakeholder relationships. We now turn our attention to how we attempted to assist in cultivation of such virtues through the design and facilitation of the workshops.

### **Workshop Design**

Weber (2007) suggests that ethics training programs "tend to rely on sequential, verbal presentations, combined with private reading and writing activities. . . . The loss of opportunities to engage participants from a variety of orientations is an obvious flaw, given the possibility of diverse backgrounds and points of view" (p. 62). The purpose of ethics training programs is to raise awareness of ethical issues, raise important ethical judgment questions, and improve ethical decision making (Johnson & Corser, 1998). The primary goal of our program was to familiarize participants of various faith backgrounds with a virtue ethics framework in order to develop common

approaches to fight corruption and unethical business practices in their organizations and beyond as well as to enhance the atmosphere of trust among businesspeople.

Prior to the workshop the authors conducted extensive research and underwent training in preparing for work in such a culturally and religiously diverse environment. The authors reviewed expansive literature on business ethics from the Christian and Muslim perspectives. We looked for common themes and language to describe relevant perspectives on faith, business and workplace activities, and virtuous behavior. Three student researchers were hired to assist the authors in compiling the relevant literature from all three faith traditions, researching relevant case studies or vignettes, as well as interviewing lay people and clerics to validate a proper understanding of the underlying concepts and practices. We identified a variety of ethics traditions within the two religions and attempted to incorporate them in our program. A comprehensive review of various approaches presented in “Spiritual goods: Faith traditions and the practice of business” (Herman & Gross-Schaefer, 2001) provided an excellent initial guide for our exploration. Green (1997) and many others informed our understanding of the Jewish business ethics, while the works of (Ahsen, 2010; Hourani, 2007; Sadeq & Ahmad, 2001; Upton, 2006) shaped our knowledge of the Islamic ethics and philosophical traditions. The development of the workshop content from the Christian perspective relied heavily on a series of books by Chewning (1989; 1990) as well as Rae and Wong (2009).

The workshop was organized in partnership with the Armenian Apostolic Church in Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> Participants received both phone and personal invitations from the leaders of the respective communities. A flier describing the program was also distributed among the potential participants. Members of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish faiths were invited to attend the event,

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<sup>1</sup> The authors express gratitude to the officials of the Armenian Apostolic church in Bulgaria for their important role in organizing these events.

however the event was open to the public. We had numerous conversations with the local religious leaders, especially in the Christian community to prepare for the challenges of this multi-lingual and multi-religious workshop. (The workshop was presented in English with synchronous interpretation to Bulgarian, while some discussions occurred in Russian and Armenian languages, as one of the authors is fluent in both. The workshop workbooks were also translated into Bulgarian). The workshop took place on a Saturday in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, and lasted approximately 6 hours, with about 25 participants.

We organized our workshop into three sections:

- 1) *God and I*, which was aimed at helping the participants to learn about the most important tenets of the three represented religions. This presentation provided parallel narratives on God's nature as Creator, Sustainer, and Provider of resources and opportunities for all human activities.
- 2) *God of Business*, which focused on scriptural support for entrepreneurial activity and describe the role of the human beings as stewards or vice-regents (depending on the religious tradition and prevailing terminology in theological and other literature). This section also introduced tools for stakeholder analysis (described above), focusing on identification of the relevant stakeholders, identifying the stakes or the needs of a stakeholder group or a particular stakeholder within that group (i.e., a specific supplier from the host of suppliers working with the company), and determining the nature of the relationship in terms of power or influence. Interestingly, we encouraged the participants to classify the stakeholders both in terms of the influence they had on respective stakeholders and in terms of the amount of influence or power some of the stakeholders had on them.

3) *Doing Virtuous Business*. We devoted this section to the description and discussion of the selected five virtues (justice, honesty, forgiveness, generosity, and humility) with references to the respective Holy Scriptures and citations from famous theologians and researchers. We also introduced a working framework which combines elements of the stakeholder analysis with virtue ethics to provide a comprehensive structure for the application and incorporation of virtuous business behaviors in the workplace. Table 1 provides a more detailed description of the sample workshop activities for each of the described sections.

A comprehensive literature review on pedagogical approaches in teaching virtue (Mintz, 1996) helped us identify the following four methods: (1) case studies, (2) group interactions in the classroom, (3) engaging participants in role-playing, and (4) using video presentations. He particularly stresses that “regardless of the technique used to each virtue, business educators should emphasize to students that virtue considerations influence the moral agent's actions and decisions by influencing thought” (p. 834). We chose a combination of the first two methods: case studies and group interactions. The case studies or vignettes were examples of virtuous actions of (management) agents toward a stakeholder in a variety of settings and from different industries. These descriptions were designed to be very brief and intended to stimulate a recall of similar examples of virtuous actions the workshop participants observed previously in the workplace or a description of hypothetical actions toward multiple stakeholders in future stakeholder interactions.

We then facilitated a discussion of such actions with prepared questions and encouraged the participants to share their observations or suggestions with the members of their own group and then with the rest of the participants. For example, after introducing the concept and practice of forgiveness in the workplace, including its importance in the Abrahamic religions, as well as describing examples of forgiveness in a vignette, we posed the following questions to the attendees:

**Table 1***Interreligious Virtue Ethics Training Workshop*

Workshop section and title	Sample discussion questions and examples
Section 1  God and I	Discussion questions  In what ways have you seen qualities of God The Good Creator or signs of Him in your workplace?  What does it mean to be a Christian or a Muslim? Specifically, what kind of role models of strong Christians or Muslims have you seen in your community, family, or at work?
Section 2  God of business	Discussion questions  Who are we as God’s stewards or vice-regents? Can you recall and share two “stewardly” experiences we can all learn from?  Does business success mean proof of God’s blessing? Why?
Section 3  Doing virtuous business	Virtue: generosity  Jack’s Landscaping, a landscape construction company based in Richmond Hill, ON provides employees with proper compensation both in the winter and summer months. It is a rare practice in the industry to compensate employees a set pay even during the winter months with regard to snow removal. Employees are still paid whether it snows or not, which is very uncommon in the industry. Not only compensation, but Jack's Landscaping provides employee BBQ's, outings, and employee support as a way to show generosity.

“How can forgiveness be relevant to business operations? What kind of examples of forgiveness have you observed or practiced at your workplace? What were the positive outcomes of such situations?” We facilitated similar discussions and decision-making exercises for other virtues as well.

### **Methods**

Academic literature provides numerous tools for evaluating ethics training programs (Fraedrich, Cherry, King, & Guo, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 1975; Phillips, 1997). Some of these tools offer a series of ethics scenarios or dilemmas in a form of short vignettes. One of the most commonly used and reported tools is Defining Issues Test (DIT) developed by (Rest, 1986). This pretest-post-test evaluation tool has been used and validated in more than a thousand studies. Respondents use a Likert-type scale to rate twelve issues regarding a few different moral dilemmas and subsequently rank the four most important issues.

Clark’s Questionnaire (1966) (cited in Arlow & Ulrich, 1985) is another popular tool for measuring the impact of ethics training; particularly gauging managers’ commitment to personal business ethics and their desire to accept personal responsibility for the consequences of business decisions. The test consists of eighteen ethical scenarios, with eleven of those attempting to assess the executive’s commitment to honesty and personal integrity. The rest of the cases are designed to measure the respondents’ interest and commitment to social responsibility. Arlow and Ulrich (1985) have successfully used this tool in their longitudinal study of ethical behaviors among business graduates.

Among the many useful tools to measure the impact of ethics training the qualitative methods, however, are rare. This particularly refers to in-depth personal interviews and similar techniques. Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) is one of such techniques developed by Colby and Kohlberg (1987) to “elicit a subject’s own (1) construction of moral reasoning, (2) moral frame of reference or assumptions about right and wrong, and (3) the way these beliefs and assumptions are

used to make and justify moral decisions” (p. 61). A research subject is presented with various descriptions of cases of moral conflicts. The subject responds to a number of open-ended questions designed to evoke normative judgements (i.e., what one *ought* to do) in each of the ethical dilemmas. The purpose of this exercise is to discern the participant’s moral reasoning in solving the moral conflict situation. However, the method suffered from methodological difficulties of coding and interpreting the data. Furthermore, it was designed to elicit moral reasoning upon encountering an ethical dilemma, rather than evaluating the influence of a training program, which dissuaded us from using this tool.

Brand and Slater (2003) provided a comprehensive overview of the literature on this subject. Their findings suggested a limited use of qualitative methods in business ethics research. Their own work with Australian managers in China relied on in-depth interviews of thirty-one respondents revealed a number of business ethics issues the managers face at work. The issues ranged from bribery and facilitation payments to nepotism and employee theft. Brand and Slater (2003) deduced four strategies of coping with challenging ethical situations used by Australian managers: (1) strong commitment to one’s moral standards, (2) desire to learn the motivations of Chinese managers and adjusting accordingly, (3) requests for mentoring from more experienced colleagues, and (4) commitment to abide by the company policies. The authors called for further investigations of ethical motivations and practices using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

This study attempted to expand the current understanding of ethical behaviors and motivations among workshop participants in Bulgaria through a series of semi-structured interviews. We combined interviews, observations, and field notes (Merriam, 1988), when possible, to create as complete of a picture of our participants as possible. The nine interviews occurred in the days after the workshop. The workshop attendees who agreed to participate were invited for an interview in a

casual setting. Interestingly, only Christian participants agreed to take part in these follow-up conversations.

Following (Boyatzis, 1998) qualitative thematic strategy to analyze and interpret the data, we attempted to identify common themes in the stories of the participants. We developed an explicit coding system, established protocols for thematic interpretations, and made effort to remain flexible and show cultural sensitivity during our interviews. Furthermore, we ourselves became a part of the instrument in this qualitative study (Merriam, 1988), and our backgrounds provided as with an advantage for the data analysis. One of the authors was of Armenian origin and tri-lingual: spoke Armenian, English, and Russian (which is still in use among some Bulgarians). The interviews varied in length, with some taking 15-20 minutes, while others lasted up to an hour.

### **Results and Discussion**

We started our interviews with questions to encourage participants to reflect on the current ethical environment in the country. The general assessment was negative. Most of the respondents noted some improvement over the last few years in their dealings with public officials at various levels. However, many complained about bribery and nepotism still prevalent in some governmental structures.

One interviewee, a female tour operator and independent entrepreneur in her 40s, complained that despite the democratization of some policies and processes in government agencies, especially after Bulgaria joined European Union, and continuous reforms, nepotism and favouritism is still commonplace. These phenomena are particularly prominent in her industry, as well as in construction and other service industries which heavily depend on regulation:

I was able to obtain my professional licensing from the respective ministry within a month after the application and submission of all required documents. Obtaining other business licenses was not as easy, though. You know, you had to find special connections to get what

was needed. My brother has a construction company and tried to bid for a government contract to replace windows in state-run kindergartens. He was not successful at securing a contract because (as he learned later) another company, whose leadership was closely associated with the government officials administering the bid, received the contract. This happens quite often, unfortunately.

The respondents also presented a number of cases of unethical behavior they observed in their professional lives. Margo, a female in her 50s, a former entrepreneur of a medium size liquor exporting company, described cases of corruption and unfair competitive pressures that forced her out of business.

“A larger competitor appeared and grew quickly in Bulgaria a number of years ago. I believe the source of their advantage was very questionable. At the time all alcohol exporters were required to purchase excise tax (a special duty) labels from a government agency to attach to the outgoing bottles. The competitor purchased a large quantity of those stamps (about 50,000), apparently for an export transaction. The company later returned the unused portion of those labels and received a credit from the government. However, the competitor had (allegedly) forged and reprinted fake stamps in a neighbouring country and was able to export a significant quantity of goods with fake labels before returning the real ones to the agency. They were obviously able to lower their prices significantly as a result of this operation, while we lost our contracts and had to leave the marketplace.”

Our discussions with the respondents identified other types of ethical issues ranging from inappropriate gift giving and bribery to employee theft, hidden employment, and discrimination in the workplace. These findings are consistent with those reported in Goev and Boshnakov (2008), who identified similar challenges on the road of democratization in governance of Bulgaria.

One of the most frequently cited reasons for the failure of business and public sector ethics in Bulgaria was socialist era legacy. Many of the interviewees reflected on the system that dominated the political and economic life of this Balkan nation in the period following the World War II and until late 1980s when the absolute majority of the population worked at state owned enterprises. They blamed the period for the creation and maintenance of a new unproductive work ethic and organizational culture. One of the participants, we call him Oskar, a male in his 60s, a manager at one of the largest companies in the country, was very blunt in his evaluation of the situation:

People became lazy. The socialist system created a generation of people who would rather look for and rely on government handouts and social assistance than to search business opportunities. Many citizens also relied on petty bribery and ‘grease payments’ and now, that this opportunity is gone, feel helpless and frustrated about improving their quality of living standards.

Another interviewee, Vazgen, a male lawyer in his early 30s, echoed that sentiment during the interview:

You see, even in private enterprises employees are not motivated to achieve their best potential. Many of them are complacent about unethical behaviours of their colleagues. They also think that, like in the ‘old times,’ their own questionable behaviour will not be scrutinized or judged. People did not have to work hard at all to get paid under the communist regime.

This kind of “laziness” or casual attitude toward work that appears to dominate in the countries of our interest has been observed by other researchers. For example, Ryan (2006) speculated that long periods of successive Russian, German, and Austrian domination of Poland contributed to the creation of a culture of “passive resistance” among Polish citizens. They rejected the oppressive regimes by refusing to work with commitment and to contribute to the flourishing of

the oppressor. Our interviewees did hint at a similar phenomenon in Bulgaria, for example. The country experienced isolation from the rest of Europe under the 500-year Ottoman rule, with numerous periods of persecution and generations of mismanagement. One of the interviewees, Sylva, a female retired attorney in her 60s, reflected on this period of her country in the following manner:

The country became stagnant for centuries. The educated and productive class, the nobility, was virtually destroyed and ineffective. The influence of the Bulgarian church was significantly reduced throughout the country. The taxation imposed by the Ottomans discouraged the people from work.

During the communist years the role of the church significantly declined in Bulgaria. Persecutions of the clergy and the faithful worshipers, infiltration of both the church membership and its leadership by sovietising agents among other destructive activities have left a deep spiritual void in the hearts of their citizens.

We then asked the participants to reflect on some of the training elements of the ethics workshop we conducted earlier. Generally, in a survey administered at the completion of the workshop, the respondents provided positive feedback on its quality (3.57 on a 4-point satisfaction scale). However, we were interested in how the presented framework and incorporation of virtue ethics perspective affected their ethical reasoning. “Which elements of the workshop did you value the most?” we asked the participants.

“Frankly, I found the exploration of relations with stakeholders most fascinating and informative. I come in contact with these people all the time in my work as a manager, and yet rarely think of their impact. This section helped me to recognize the diversity of the interested parties and their interests. I will be more cognizant of my behavior with them in the future,” responded Oskar

(quoted earlier) upon prompting. “Being actively aware of their needs and thinking of proper ways to serve them will help me in the future,” he continued.

Margo (quoted earlier) noted the importance of forgiveness in the competitive marketplace: “I never realized that this is what I actually had to do (after the loss of my business to a competitor) to move on. Now that I reflect on it, I feel I forgave them. That’s all that I could probably do, anyway.”

Another respondent, Arsen, a church leader in his 40s, shared his take-aways from the workshop: “The discussion of justice was probably most beneficial for my work. I see what a challenging act it is: to balance the interests of so many stakeholders. I think the challenge is in defining ‘what is *due*’ to a particular stakeholder. . . . At times it is not clear what my obligations are toward my subordinates. Knowing what is proper and what serves justice in a relation to a particular stakeholder is the most challenging issue of application.”

This reflection of the respondent is consistent with Pincoffs’ assertion that a goal of moral development “is the development of the sense of the moral self as the product of continuous cultivation” (1986, p. 30). Development of a moral character is an arduous and time-consuming process. It requires awareness and regular practice as well as an appropriate community for guidance and affirmation of such efforts (Hartman, 2006). Hartman (2006) cites Aristotle and suggests that “virtuous people must trust their intuitions where principles compete or are hard to apply” (p. 77). Arsen, a male participant, who provided little additional information about himself, reflected on the benefits of the training after the workshop:

Actually, learning about Islam and its views on business activities was the most useful and intriguing part of this workshop. There was so little that I knew before. Now I better understand the Muslim perspective, which appears to be quite similar in many respects to our own Christian understanding (although I do see the differences as well). I think it will

help me in dealing with my Muslim colleagues at work. I feel that I used to trust them less because I did not really know much about their faith and customs.

In conclusion, the participants appeared to have gained a new understanding of ethical behaviour and the role their faith plays in guiding their attitudes and actions in their workplaces. Furthermore, many respondents positively evaluated their experiences of interactions (albeit very limited) with the representatives of other religions. Workshop facilitators learned about the peculiarities and complications of conducting multi-ethnic and multi-religious ethics training workshops.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences of business owners/operators, employees, and students enrolled in virtue ethics training workshops in Bulgaria. The emphasis was especially placed on the opportunity of people with different religious and ethnic backgrounds to successfully, cooperatively, and meaningfully apply the presented virtue ethics framework in order to discuss common approaches to developing ethical behaviours in the workplace. Although this study provided some quantitative evidence of meaningful effects on the participants' moral reasoning, the post-workshop interviews indicated positive effects of this training format on awareness of ethical issues, knowledge, and appreciation of ethical schemas of people of other religions, as well as different approaches to developing virtuous ethical behaviours toward stakeholders. Despite the relatively short duration of the workshop and round-table discussions among its participants, the workshop appears to have strengthened the attendees' resolve to engage in more ethical interactions with stakeholders: business partners, suppliers, and customers. Previous studies have shown positive effects of even short-term business ethics training on moral reasoning (Jones, 2009). Whether this training was conducive to delivering long-lasting changes in virtuous behaviours and facilitating more amicable and trustworthy relationships among community members of different religions will

remain to be explored in the future investigations. However, we also believe that educators, particularly in the Christian institutions, may find the proposed workshop framework useful for engaging and shaping students' marketplace interactions in the increasingly global and diverse work environment.

Nevertheless, we believe that a comparative virtue ethics approach presented here may constitute a basis for successful ethics training in multi-religious organizations. These events will likely attempt to firstly, introduce participants to various religious traditions with a focus on convergent themes or teachings regarding the aforementioned universal virtue, and secondly, engage attendees in discussions of ethical issues within the framework of virtue ethics to develop positive workplace ecology.

Furthermore, Mintz's (1996) methods of nurturing ethical decision-making among workplace participants - case studies, group interactions in the classroom, engaging participants in role-playing, and using video presentations – have shown their effective potential in cultivating virtuous business behaviour among the study participants. We believe that the combination of the first two methods applied in this study - case studies and group interactions - has indeed yielded effective learning outcomes and may be successfully applied in future studies. The discussions of case studies or vignettes with examples of virtuous actions of agents toward different stakeholders in a variety of settings and from different industries will likely not only raise participants' awareness toward the presence of different virtues in their daily routine but also encourage open communication and transparent ethical environment.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study needs to be viewed in light of several limitations. First, this study, like many similar qualitative studies, lacks control. We observed a relatively high rate of participant drop-out during the workshop. Participants were not enticed with any monetary or alternative rewards and

were free to leave the training grounds. Unlike many other types of training environments, such as corporate ethics training programs or university or college classes with mandatory enrollment, the attendees of our workshop were free to disengage from the process.

Second, because we had little control over the invitations of the workshop and study participants and had to rely on personal contacts of the religious leaders and local connections, the respondents are not representatives of a random sample. This limits the reliability of the results, however, the depth of the interviewed participants' self-reflection and their desire to share stories of virtuous behaviours in their professional lives hopefully offset some of these limitations. The study, like many similar ethics studies, likely suffers from social desirability bias (i.e., the desire of respondents to embellish on descriptions of socially desirable behaviours or outcomes and their tendency to soften the description of socially undesirable ones). The authors conducted the interviews within hours and days after the workshop. The interviewees who expressed a desire to participate in the follow-up interviews also appeared to be the most interested, attentive, and active participants during the workshops. Their willingness to engage the workshop content and exercises allowed the authors to build positive rapport, which may have biased the post-workshop evaluations of the interviewees.

Third, the lack of trust among the members of the different religious groups was a major impediment to the collaborative dialogue and cooperation in workshop activities. Future events will benefit from preliminary prior consultations and presentations with potential participants to facilitate mutual familiarity and to lower the barriers of communication and misconceptions. Furthermore, a panel discussion with clergy members or faith leaders from the respective religions with reflections on the topics of the presented workshop, particularly those related to application of teachings in business or workplace settings, would provide a fruitful ground for more successful and productive educational experiences in the future.

Finally, the participants were likely to consider the authors and workshop facilitators as cultural and religious “outsiders.” Muslim participants in particular might have felt less comfortable (compared to their Christian counterparts) with the facilitators and academics from a North American university. The workshop was conducted in English and the citations from the Qur’an were presented in the language other than Arabic, which often is contested as unauthentic and “corrupted.” Moreover, it is risky to encourage discussions of religious perspectives on business issues (Fort, 2008). In fact, we encountered a case when a participant decided to leave the workshop because of concern that expressions of his faith “may inadvertently insult other participants.”

Future research needs to focus on studies that combine mixed, quantitative, and qualitative methods. For example, demographic and religious characteristics of the participants could help us understand the effects of these factors on the effectiveness of the ethics development programs. Christian religiosity measures (e.g., Basset, 1981) can supply data for comparisons of groups of individuals with various degrees of faith commitments and religious practice. In addition, similar measures developed for Muslim believers (e.g., Krauss, Hamzah, & Idris, 2007) could enrich our knowledge of the dynamic relationship between the participants’ religiosity and other relevant variables. Ideally, recruitment of a control group to compare the pre- and post-intervention effects of the workshop would enrich similar studies with more rigor and generalizability. Finally, future research needs to focus on the content evaluation of the workshop, such as the depth and breadth of the covered virtues, their immediate relevance to the workplace experiences of the participants, as well as the opportunities to enrich this content with local content (i.e., stories of successful virtuous behaviours in business).

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**Measuring Christian Faith Commitment Among Business Undergraduates:  
The Christian Faith Index**

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### **Abstract**

Assessing faith integration is a key objective for baccalaureate business programs at Christian colleges and universities; however, objective tools currently do not exist for measuring how the personal faith of individual students effects the success of faith integration efforts. Although the social sciences offer a number of scales for measuring religiosity, these tools deliberately ignore the claims of Christianity, which are central to assessing faith integration at Christian schools. In a study of over 700 business undergraduates attending twelve different Christian colleges and universities, the authors have identified the Christian Faith Index (CFI) which appears to offer potential toward addressing this gap. The tool, which attempts to measure an individual's commitment to the Christian faith, appears to offer discriminant capabilities. The authors found that the index varied by area of emphasis within the business major as well as between universities. In addition, study results indicate that faith integration efforts do have a differential impact based on students' CFIs. The effect of CFI was noted on students' understanding of the role of work and business within Christianity, their career aspirations, and their appreciation of the spiritual value of both their major and general education courses. Unfortunately, no differences were noted between different academic years, perhaps indicating that students are not growing in their spiritual maturity throughout their time enrolled in Christian higher education.

*Keywords:* Christian faith index, CFI, faith integration, business undergraduate

## **Measuring Christian Faith Commitment Among Business Undergraduates:**

### **The Christian Faith Index**

Faith integration is essential to the mission of business programs at Christian colleges and universities. As educators, we are not only challenged to equip our students with a Christian worldview, but also a view of business that is distinctly Christian. As an academy, we have written numerous articles on styles of Biblical integration, methods, and tools to achieve integration, and case studies on results of integration (Dupree, 2015). In fact, business is one of the few academic disciplines with a journal exclusively dedicated to faith integration: *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* (Kaak, 2016). Yet despite a wealth of research on faith integration, we lack validated empirical assessment tools (Smith, 2005; Holder, 2006, Kaak, 2016). As part of this, our current means of assessment do not take in to account the spiritual maturity of the individual. Since biblical integration efforts aim toward helping students grow in their faith, should not their individual faith commitments be considered in our assessment?

### **Tool to Measure Spirituality**

While we lack empirical tools to measure faith integration among Christian students, the social sciences are not without tools to measure faith in general. Most of the scales available for measuring “religion,” however, take a pan-theological approach and avoid the claims of any one religious group. Theological neutrality is an objective of such measures. Evidence of this is a study by De Jager Meezenbrock, et. al. (2012) who examine ten spirituality questionnaires in order to identify the most “valid” tool, as defined as the tool with the least reference to any specific religion. Those scales were *Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)*, *Spirituality Assessment Scale*, *Self-Transcendence Scale*, *Spirituality Subscale of the Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Well-Being*, *Spiritual Involvement and Belief Scale-Revised Version*, *Prague Spirituality Questionnaire*, *Spiritual Transcendence Scale*, *Spiritual Well-Being Scale of the Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy*, *Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (SWBS)*, and *WHOQOL*

*Spirituality, Religion, and Personal Beliefs*. They identify the SWBS as the best fit for their research criterion of being non-theological. It was comprised of four five-item scales covering personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental well-being.

One of the first and still commonly used scales is Allport's (1966) measures of external versus internal religious orientation. It measures whether one grows spiritually through internal means, such as prayer, or external means, such as fellowship. This concept has been expanded through the work of Streib (2001) who, building off Fowler's stages of moral development, identifies four different stages of religious development: openness to experience, truth of texts and teaching, fairness, tolerance and rational choice, and inter religious dialog, i.e., xenosophia.

The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) measures both attitudinal and behavioral components of religiosity (Worthington Jr. et al, 2003). The ten item instrument was developed as a more parsimonious way, versus existing measures, to assess how an individual's faith impacts their daily living. The RCI-10, which was tested among adherents of numerous religious worldviews, loads on to two specific factors. The first contains cognitive measures: "My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life," "I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith," "It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection," "Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life," "Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life," and "I often read books and magazines about my faith." The four items in the second factor focus more on behavior measures: "I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization," "I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation," "I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions," and "I make financial contributions to my religious organization."

While the authors of this article found few tools associated with specific belief systems, those that do exist tend to focus on behavioral components associated with worldviews. For

example, Hall, Koenig, and Meador's (2010) Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMDMRD) attempts to determine which behavioral component of the Christian faith could best measure an individual's maturity in the Episcopal tradition. The BMDMRD when combined with qualitative interviews provides insight into three key Christian faith components: prayer, meditation, and study of scripture. Their study revealed that the more an individual practiced these things, the more likely they would be rated "mature" by Episcopal priests. Similarly, the Islamic Faith Scale focused on scripture, meditation, and prayer.

The perspectives of existing scales are what make them inappropriate for measuring faith integration among Christian college students. That is, they lack the theological necessity of Christ. Martin (2007, 2021) demonstrates that different faiths necessarily have different orientations toward both God, Locus of Faith, and the role of religion in believers' lives, Behavioral Prescriptiveness. So, while authors use existing scales to demonstrate the cultural relevance of the measures (cf. Streib et al. 2010; Streib et al. 2020), it is their spiritual relativity that makes them inappropriate for use in face of the absolute claims of Jesus.

### **Faith Integration in Assessment**

Authors maintain that in our efforts to assess faith integration in Christian higher education, we need to address the transformative nature of Christianity. Glanzer and Ream (2005), for example, contend that we need to consider the impact of our curricula on the formation of individual student identity and not just check off whether curricula include doctrinal elements. In an article speaking of faith integration among business students in particular, Wallace (2021) argues that we not only need to include individual identity, but we also need to take a holistic perspective. This includes defining what a student should be like in terms of spiritual "doing", such as personal character traits and commitment to excellence, and "being", such as habits of discipleship and ability to articulate a biblical worldview. Supporting this view is the work of Helms-Stevens et al. (2018)

who found that students participating in a service-learning project as part of an upper-division management course, an act of “doing”, acknowledged a positive impact from the experience but could not validate a claim that participants grew in their faith, i.e., positively impacted their “being.”

Our faith integration efforts in business in particular seem to be hampered by existing misconceptions about business as a discipline and the role of work in believers’ lives. There are widespread beliefs that business is unethical, greed-motivated, and even a villain (Martin & Harrison, 2022). These are coupled with beliefs that work in the marketplace does not have any spiritual value. Often students and others in the Church hold views counter to the Reformational view of work, which purports that work is part of God’s calling for all of our lives and that all legitimate work, including work in business, is equally spiritual in God’s eyes. We are charged as Christian college educators to correct these misinterpretations (Chewning, 2001; Roller, 2013; Dupree, 2015). This leads to the question of whether students’ theology of work differs depending upon their personal spiritual maturity in Christ.

### **Methodology**

To address the question of whether our faith integration efforts have varying impact depending upon students’ personal spiritual maturity, undergraduate business majors at twelve Christian colleges and universities, associated with the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), took a self-administered online survey covering their attitudes about their choice of major and their perception of its congruence with biblical principles on business. A census of business undergraduates from participating universities were sent three emails, one announcement and two reminders. In exchange for their participation in the survey, students were offered the chance to be included in an institution-specific gift-card drawing. In order to enlist schools’ participation, the authors of the study offered the schools summary statistics from the survey for their particular institution for use in their program assessment efforts.

Along with demographic information, the survey consisted of five main sections, 1) personal career aspirations, 2) perceptions of impact of personal faith on career, 3) theology of work in business, 4) campus experiences, and 5) depth of personal faith. The average completion time for the survey was under nine minutes. The overall response rate was 26%, with 705 qualified respondents.

### **Instrumentation and Development of the Christian Faith Index (CFI)**

In an attempt to measure the depth of an individual's faith, a group of items in the survey was included in order to assess respondents' personal level of Christian commitment and understanding. Using the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) (Worthington Jr., et al., 2003) as a foundation, the authors modified some items and added others specific to Christianity in an attempt to develop a tool for use in measuring the attitudes of Christians based on their level of spiritual commitment. Scores on the items were factor analyzed using principal components analysis, varimax rotation. Eleven items, all with factor load of .6 or higher, loaded on to one factor with an Eigenvalue of 6.9 (see Table 1). Three of the items from the RCI-10 remained in the final scale. The measure appears to be robust with a coefficient alpha of .94.

While all analyses were conducted with the original factor scores, to ease interpretation, factor scores were indexed to a 100-point scale for reporting, with 100 representing the mean score for the study ( $sd=20$ ). To help assess the discriminant capabilities of the tool, the mean CFI by school was calculated (see Table 2). Only one institution, A, required a statement of faith to attend. That school's high faith index, 106, and relatively low level of variability, as measured by the standard deviation of 10.1, evidence that students have a high level of faith commitment and share a more similar theology. Conversely at institution L, with a mean CFI of 83 and a standard deviation of 30, students seem not only less likely to have high levels of faith integration, but also have a significantly wider range of attitudes toward Christianity.

**Table 1***Christian Faith Index (CFI) Scale Items*

<b>Christian Faith Index (CFI) Scale Items</b>	<b>Factor</b>		
	<b>Load</b>	<b><i>m</i></b>	<b><i>s.d.</i></b>
Jesus Christ is an important part of my life	.88	4.6	.84
My faith plays a major part in how I live my life	.86	4.4	1.00
I consider myself a follower of Jesus Christ	.86	4.7	.79
I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith	.82	4.3	.97
It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought, reflection or prayer*	.81	4.3	1.03
Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life*	.81	4.1	1.11
Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life*	.78	4.3	1.02
I feel close to God	.78	4.1	1.01
Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven	.77	4.6	.93
I am going to heaven when I die	.70	4.5	.86
Most of my friends are Christians	.61	4.2	1.07
Principal Component Analysis, Varimax Rotation ( $\alpha=.94$ )			
5=Agree			
* Item common to RCI-10			

**Table 2***Christian Faith Index by Participating Institutions*

<b>CFI By Participating Institution</b>		
<b>School</b>	<b>Mean CFI</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
A	106	10.1
B	105	20.0
C	104	17.5
D	101	16.6
E	101	18.3
F	100	16.4
G	100	19.0
H	99	17.2
I	99	22.5
J	97	22.1
K	96	24.2
L	83	30.0
Total	100	20.0

Rather than discuss the absolute ratings of each survey question, which is not within the scope this paper, the appendix shows the effect of CFI on all items in the survey relative to the discussion below. It is encouraging to note that the eta squared, which calculates the effect of CFI on the area measured by the survey question, is above .5 in all cases. This is very strong given an eta squared above .14 indicates a large effect (SPSS Tutorials, 2022).

## Results

Analyses run on the different areas of the study by CFI yielded the following results:

### Faith Commitment by Academic Year

Surprisingly, as seen in Table 3, there were no statistically significant differences between the CFIs of the different academic years. While one would surmise that students' CFI would increase throughout their four years at a Christian institution, this does not appear to be the case. With the exception of "other" students—largely auditors or those taking more than four years to graduate—all academic classifications of students scored around the mean index of 100.

**Table 3**

*Christian Faith Index by Academic Year*

	<b>CFI</b>
First semester Freshman	103
Freshman (not first semester)	98
Sophomore	99
Junior	102
Senior	100
Other	91*

*\* $p < .05$  Bonferroni correction, paired comparisons*

### Faith Commitment by Emphasis

Students' level of faith commitment varied by emphasis within the business major (Table 4). Using the CFI tool, different student subgroupings were evaluated to explore potential differences in

the level of spiritual commitment among students. As can be seen in Table 4, students of different emphases showed differing levels of commitment. The highest level of commitment was among Accounting and Finance majors (CFI 102), while the lowest level of commitment was among Marketing (CFI 95), Entrepreneurship (CFI 94) and Sport Management (CFI 92) majors. It appears that students in the more quantitative fields have a stronger spiritual commitment than those in the more creative fields.

**Table 4**

*Christian Faith Index by Area of Emphasis*

<b>Emphasis</b>	<b>CFI</b>
Accounting	104
Finance	104
Management	102
Business Administration	100
International Business	98
Other*	98
Marketing	95
Entrepreneurship	94
Sport Management	92
*Other includes emphases with fewer than five respondents including areas such as Real Estate, Ministry Management, and Agribusiness.	

**Student Attitudes by CFI**

Three areas of the survey explored students’ attitudes about their major and their understanding of their faith and work. These sections assessed their feelings about their personal career goals, their perceptions of impact of personal faith on career, and their perceptions of the congruence between Christianity and business. ANOVAs run on the questions relative to these generally found that as students’ personal exercise of the Christian faith increased, so did their level of support for the different areas related to faith and work (Tables 5, 6, and 7).

**Table 5**

*ANOVA: Significance of Christian Faith Index versus Career Aspirations*

<b>“I look forward to a career where I will....</b>	
<b>Significant Effect of CFI (<math>p &lt; .05</math>)</b>	<b>No Significant Effect of CFI</b>
Donate a lot of money to good causes	Be respected
Influence people	Be successful
Serve God	Have nice things
Help other people be better off	Have power
Make a difference	Make a lot of money
Make decisions that have a positive impact on people	Help the economy
Serve the poor	

**Table 6***Views of the Impact of Personal Faith on Work, ANOVA Results*

<b>Significant Effect of CFI (<math>p &lt; .05</math>)</b>
I feel my work will be a blessing to others
I think it is important to keep your faith separate from your work (negative relationship)
I think my work will be a part of my ministry
I think my work will please God
I think I will be more joyful at work because of my faith
<b>No Significant Effect of CFI</b>
I feel like my salary will be negatively impacted because of my faith
I feel my advancement at work will be hindered because of my faith
I feel my impact for God could be stronger if I did not have to work for a living
I think I may have to make decisions at work that conflict with my faith

**Table 7***Effect of Business Student Attitudes Toward Faith and Work, CFI ANOVA*

<b>Significant Effect of CFI (<math>p &lt; .05</math>)</b>
Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith
Work allows you to provide for your family
Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job
Work allows you to obey God
The Bible supports the idea of careers in business
Work in business can help improve human flourishing
Ethical business practices generally help people
<b>No Significant Effect of CFI</b>
Work allows you to make money to donate to the church
Businesses can do more to help the poor than aid programs can
Jobs focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do more to serve God than jobs in business
Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are more important to God than other types of jobs
Some jobs are more spiritual than others
Work in business is more selfish than other types of work
Work in business is more unethical than other types of work
It hurts society when businesspeople focus on making a profit

***CFI and Career Aspirations***

Spiritually committed students were more likely to support spiritual reasons for working in business, while equally holding nonspiritual aspirations. To explore the motivations of students at Christian colleges for majoring in business, respondents were asked to rate a number of items in response to the prompt, "I look forward to a career where I will..." using a 5-point Likert scale with 5 representing "agree". As summarized in Table 5, ANOVA results show statistically significant trends that as CFI increased, students were more likely to agree with statements related to serving others and God. However, for most statements that dealt with non-spiritual or non-humanitarian career expectations, no such differences were noted.

***CFI and Spiritual Value of Work in Business***

As students' faith increases, the more likely they are to see the spiritual value of their work in business. In many areas, there is a significant relationship between students' level of spiritual development as measured by CFI and their views about the impact of their faith in the workforce (Table 6). The higher a student's CFI, the more they see the spiritual value in their work as indicated by their support of the following statements: "I feel my work will be a blessing to others", "I think it is important to keep your faith separate from your work (negative correlation)", "I think my work will be a part of my ministry," "I think my work will please God", and "I think I will be more joyful at work because of my faith."

Students do not think their career potential will be hindered because of their faith, inasmuch as there are no significant differences in attitudes between high and low CFI student scores to the following statements: "I feel like my salary will be negatively impacted because of my faith," "I feel my advancement at work will be hindered because of my faith," "I feel my impact for God could be stronger if I did not have to work for a living," and "I think I may have to make decisions at work that conflict with my faith."

***CFI and Reasons to Work***

Students with higher levels of faith commitment are more likely to ascribe to traditional principles of faith and work than their less-spiritual counterparts. Table 7, which focuses on students' understanding of their faith and work, seems to show that while more spiritually committed students do see spiritual value in their work, they are no more likely to appreciate the original Reformation view of faith and work: i.e., that work has value just because God ordained it and work does not need to be justified on other grounds. As students' commitment to their faith increases, the more likely they are to support cultural views of the spiritual value of work. Specifically, students are more likely to endorse the following statements: "Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith", "Work allows you to provide for your family", "Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job." They did demonstrate a strong understanding of the "faith and work perspective" through their endorsement of the following: "The Bible supports the idea of careers in business," "Work in business can help improve human flourishing," and "Ethical business practices generally help people." They did not, however, demonstrate a significantly stronger appreciation of the spiritual value of work in business versus other occupations. This was seen because there was no difference in effect of CFI on students' understanding of the following: "Jobs focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do more to serve God than jobs in business," "Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are more important to God than other types of jobs," "Some jobs are more spiritual than others," "Work in business is more selfish than other types of work," "Work in business is more unethical than other types of work," and "It hurts society when business people focus on making a profit."

***CFI and Attitudes Toward Courses***

More spiritually mature students are more likely to appreciate the spiritual value of classes at their Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) schools: both general education and in

business. A fourth area of the survey explored students' attitudes toward different aspects of campus life at their CCCU school. There were no significant interactions worth reporting here with one exception. The more spiritually committed a student, the more they expressed appreciation of the Christian value of their courses. While there were only three items in the survey to explore this, there was a positive effect of CFI on students' attitudes to the following: "My general education courses help me appreciate how Christianity relates to life" ( $p < .05$ ), "The professors in my general education courses are supportive of business as a major" ( $p < .10$ ), and "The professors in my major help me understand how Christianity relates to my field of study" ( $p < .05$ ) (Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Business Student Attitudes Toward Classes, CFI ANOVA*

<b>Significant Effect of CFI</b>
My general education courses help me appreciate how Christianity relates to life ( $p < .05$ )
The professors in my general education courses are supportive of business as a major ( $p < .10$ )
The professors in my major help me understand how Christianity relates to my field of study ( $p < .05$ )

### **Discussion**

In his early work calling Christian educators to seriously assess faith-learning integration, Hasker (1992) stated "what is lacking...is a systematic mapping...of general ways in which worldview issues connect with particular concerns of various disciplines" (p. 234). Since then, members of the Christian academy have conducted numerous studies and written multiple articles on faith integration, yet in many ways we still lack a systematic way to assess whether our efforts to connect matters of the Christian faith our disciplines are effective. Particularly relating to business,

Smith (2005) notes that after 25 years, the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) has done significant work applying biblical principles to topics in business but lacks ways to test faith-integration applications. This challenge is not unique to business as an academic discipline. Kaak (2016), writing in *Christian Higher Education*, called for more work to be done across the academy to identify ways to assess whether faith integration efforts are working. This paper introduces the concept of the Christian Faith Index (CFI) as a potential move toward this goal.

We know individual students in our classrooms express different levels of commitment to faith in Christ. It would seem that students' levels of Christian maturity would be a factor to consider in assessing the impact of faith-integration efforts. Would we not expect faith-integration efforts to have a stronger impact on more spiritually mature students? As students' commitment to Christianity increases, should not their understanding of the links between our disciplines in business and Christianity also increase?

We argue that most of the existing tools for measuring faith and spirituality, as outlined in the introduction section of this paper, are inadequate for use in measuring our faith integration efforts. Since they intentionally take ecumenical approaches and try to measure religiosity or spirituality, they ignore the claims that make Christianity unique. Those are the claims that we are specifically trying to address in our faith integration curricula.

### **The Christian Faith Index**

This paper presents the Christian Faith Index, CFI, as a way to assess students' Christian maturity in Christ, and therefore, may be used as a potential tool to help educators at Christian colleges and universities assess their faith integration efforts. As with all initial research efforts, the CFI tool needs to be refined, but one possible way to use such a tool would be to benchmark students' spiritual growth. This may be done versus other schools, as illustrated in Table 1, or other majors, as illustrated in Table 2, or over time, as illustrated in Table 3.

Early tests of the among undergraduate business majors seems to show the CFI has face validity. The researchers found that as students' scores increase, they are more likely to embrace career goals surrounding their faith, such as donating to good causes, serving God, and serving the poor (Table 5). CFI seems to indicate that faith is not a factor in students' desire for traditional career goals such as to be respected, be successful, and help the economy. However, as respondents' CFI increased, they are more likely to see spiritual impact in their work itself (Table 6). The fact that there are no significant correlations between CFI and traditional measures of marketplace mobility such as career advancement and salary, seems to indicate that more spiritually mature students did not view their faith as having a negative impact on their career future.

The Christian Faith Index also seems to show face validity in that as the measure increases, students are more likely to endorse spiritualized reasons for working such as being able to share and demonstrate their faith. Unfortunately, it also appears that we as business educators need to do more to teach the Reformational view that all legitimate work has value in the eyes of God. This is because more mature students are equally as likely as less spiritually mature students to see some types of work as more spiritual than working in business.

An additional area of concern revealed by the study is that students do not seem to be maturing in their faith commitment during their time at a Christian college or university (Table 3). This seems indicated by the essentially equal CFI measures for freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Of note, however, is that this lack of significance may represent an aberration due to COVID-19. Specifically, the study was fielded on the tails of the COVID epidemic. During COVID many schools suspended or altered on-campus spiritual development activities such as chapel, small group meetings, or personal discipleship. It may be possible, therefore, that the lack of spiritual growth noted between academic years may represent the fact that sophomores, juniors and seniors are missing one or two years of on-campus spiritual support. Had the schools' spiritual

formation curricula been in effect, one would have hoped to see students' CFI scores increase throughout their four years on campus. Additional research into this topic is warranted.

While the Christian Faith Index shows promise as a tool to be used as Christian educators assess their faith integration efforts, more work is needed to develop the tool. The study was primarily administered among students at schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), in which all universities adhere to a specific doctrinal statement. The tenants of this statement are probably reflected in the students' CFI scores. In addition, given the respondents in this study self-selected to attend a Christian university, their personal levels of spiritual maturity are already likely higher than that of students attending non-Christian schools. Future work on the index is needed to determine if a wider range of spiritual attitudes and behaviors need to be addressed by the instrument.

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## Appendix

*Survey Questions and CFI ANOVA: Measures of Association*

			CFI Effect Size	
<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>		<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
		<b><i>Career Aspirations:</i></b> <b><i>I look forward to a career where I will.....</i></b>		
4.6	0.64	Be respected * CFI Factor Score	0.83	0.61
4.7	0.54	Be successful * CFI Factor Score	0.90	0.60
4.3	0.80	<b>Donate a lot of money to good causes * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.72</b>
4.1	0.91	Have nice things * CFI Factor Score	0.78	0.61
3.4	1.10	Have power * CFI Factor Score	0.95	0.59
3.7	1.08	Impress people * CFI Factor Score	0.91	0.60
4.5	0.75	<b>Influence people * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.69</b>
4.1	0.90	Make a lot of money * CFI Factor Score	0.88	0.60
4.6	0.81	<b>Serve God * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.91</b>
4.6	0.67	<b>Help other people be better off * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.77</b>
4.4	0.81	Help the economy * CFI Factor Score	0.46	0.64
4.6	0.65	<b>Make a difference * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.77</b>
4.7	0.56	<b>Make decisions that have a positive impact on people * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.77</b>
4.2	0.94	<b>Serve the poor * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.72</b>

4.5	0.82	<b>Make decisions that have a positive impact for God * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.88</b>
4.7	0.61	<b>Reach my personal goals * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.74</b>
4.3	0.90	<b>Reach my spiritual goals * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.80</b>
		<i>Faith and Work Prospects</i>		
1.9	1.11	I feel like my salary will be negatively impacted because of my faith * CFI Factor Score	0.99	0.57
1.8	1.09	I feel my advancement at work will be hindered because of my faith * CFI Factor Score	0.59	0.63
2.2	1.31	I feel my impact for God could be stronger if I did not have to work for a living * CFI Factor Score	0.64	0.63
4.3	0.84	<b>I feel my work will be a blessing to others * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.77</b>
1.9	1.16	<b>I think it is important to keep your faith separate from your work * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.75</b>
3.7	1.27	<b>I think my work will be a part of my ministry * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.80</b>
4.4	0.82	<b>I think my work will please God * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.90</b>
2.8	1.35	I think I may have to make decisions at work that conflict with my faith * CFI Factor Score	0.90	0.60
4.3	0.95	<b>I think I will be more joyful at work because of my faith * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.87</b>
		<i>Theology of Work</i>		

4.1	1.10	<b>Work allows you to make money to donate to the church *</b> <b>CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.86</b>
4.0	1.16	<b>Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith</b> <b>* CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.88</b>
4.8	0.50	<b>Work allows you to provide for your family * CFI Factor</b> <b>Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.71</b>
4.3	1.00	<b>Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing</b> <b>well on the job * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.89</b>
4.3	1.09	<b>Work allows you to obey God * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.87</b>
3.5	1.13	Businesses can do more to help the poor than aid programs can <i>* CFI Factor Score</i>	0.98	0.58
2.2	1.27	Jobs focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do more to serve God than jobs in business <i>* CFI Factor Score</i>	0.28	0.65
2.0	1.20	Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are more important to God than other types of jobs <i>* CFI Factor Score</i>	0.27	0.65
3.7	1.33	Some jobs are more spiritual than others <i>* CFI Factor Score</i>	0.97	0.58
4.3	1.01	<b>The Bible does not support the idea of careers in business *</b> <b>CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.70</b>
4.4	0.76	<b>Work in business can help improve human flourishing *</b> <b>CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.72</b>
2.1	1.25	<i>Work in business is more selfish than other types of work * CFI Factor</i> <i>Score</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.68</i>

2.1	1.20	Work in business is more unethical than other types of work * CFI Factor Score	0.56	0.63
4.4	0.80	<b>Ethical business practices generally help people * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.72</b>
2.8	1.33	It hurts society when business people focus on making a profit * CFI Factor Score	0.66	0.62
		<i><b>Campus Experience</b></i>		
2.3	1.22	Chapel or other spiritual experiences on campus are not supportive of jobs in business * CFI Factor Score	0.61	0.63
2.7	1.33	I feel others on campus believe business people are greedy and/or unethical * CFI Factor Score	0.75	0.62
3.0	1.32	I feel people on this campus put more value in careers in vocational ministry than in business * CFI Factor Score	0.96	0.59
3.0	1.42	<i>Most of my friends on campus are business majors * CFI Factor Score</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.68</i>
3.8	1.17	<b>My general education courses help me appreciate how Christianity relates to life * CFI Factor Score</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.71</b>
2.3	1.32	I feel students from other majors on campus think I am not as spiritual because of my major * CFI Factor Score	0.95	0.59
4.3	1.02	The courses in my major do not support ideas that are consistent with Christianity * CFI Factor Score (reverse coded)	0.65	0.62
4.3	0.92	<i>The professors in my general education courses are supportive of business as a major * CFI Factor Score</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.68</i>

4.5	0.84	<p><b>The professors in my major help me understand how Christianity relates to my field of study * CFI Factor Score</b></p>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.79</b>
		<p><b>Bold <math>p &lt; .05</math>, <i>Italics <math>p &lt; .10</math></i></b></p>		

**Faith Integration Among Business Undergraduates at Christian Colleges and  
Universities: An Empirical Study**

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### **Abstract**

How do Christian future business professionals envision their careers in business and the integration of their faith in the process? This article reports the results of a survey of undergraduate business majors at twelve Christian colleges and universities. Results show that students believe a career in business can support both personal and faith goals. Students show the most support for spiritual goals with less focus on pursuing more materialist goals. Overall respondents do not see a conflict between their future work in business and their faith. Instead, they largely recognize the spiritual value of all work as being from God. While students feel supported by their faculty, both inside and outside business schools, seniors, particularly, feel less institutional support for studying business. Insights gained from this research reveal that Christian colleges and universities are doing a good job introducing and/or confirming the belief that all work is good and that work in business can bring glory to God and flourishing to their communities. Results also shed light on the fact that more needs to be done across campuses to affirm students' choice of majors and career choices, particularly in the field of business.

*Keywords:* faith integration, business, undergraduates, Christian, faith and work

## **Faith Integration Among Business Undergraduates at Christian Colleges and Universities: An Empirical Study**

In 1996, when discussing the amount of time television programming showed businesspeople and practices in negative situations, Novak called big business “television’s favorite villain” (p. 7). Based on feedback heard on some Christian college campuses, one wonders whether the same could be said of business major, that they are “Christian higher education’s favorite villain?” Faculty at some institutions report facing negative attitudes stating that business as a major feeds student greed and has little Kingdom value. The arguments they hear purport that business as a discipline offers no value, and that any spiritual worth from business as a career is either classified as providing a venue for evangelism or as a means to generate income in order to support the ministry of the church. Critics contend that rather than encourage Christian virtues, business encourage vices such as materialism and greed; ultimately resulting in the “marketization or commoditization of life itself” (Carrette & King, 2007).

In light of such criticisms, business faculty at Christian institutions lament whether business undergraduates hear of and understand the Kingdom-value of marketplace vocations. Furthermore, they express concern that the messages students receive elsewhere on the campuses of Christian colleges and universities are often antithetical to the view of marketplace as ministry. While a key component of the Reformation was that all legitimate occupations have equal value in God’s eyes, are Christian business students hearing this message? As faculty face the challenge of assessing faith integration among business students in Christian higher education institutions, what messages are the students actually integrating?

The perception that business majors tend to be non-altruistic in their motives is not unique to Christian academia. In his literature review, Fatoki (2015) summarizes that “many people view business students to be mostly ‘me-oriented’ and less ‘other oriented’ especially when compared to

students pursuing non-business degrees (p. 6634). He indicates that business majors scored higher on the love of money index, as developed by Tang and Chiu (2003) than did students from other majors. Using the same scale, Tang (2016) reports that even lectures on ethics did not decrease economics majors' love of money. Another study, which touches on concepts of Christian ethics, shows that the love of money decreases when respondents demonstrate altruistic helping behaviors, but increases when subjects were rated high on social exchange theory, i.e., "I'll help you if you help me" (Tang, et al., 2008).

For Christian educators, one would hope to find a moderating effect of a student's faith on the love of money. This is demonstrated somewhat in a comparison of students from Jesuit and State universities (Burns & Gupta, 2014). However, while students from the Jesuit universities did score lower on their love of money, they also showed higher materialistic envy.

Studies have found that business majors may be more self-focused than students from other majors. In a comparison of social science, business, and technology majors at three different institutions, Myyry (2008) notes that while all majors had equal regard for concepts related to social justice, business majors had higher respect toward goals related to individualistic values. They were less likely to resonate with values associated with spiritualism and universalism; and negatively viewed self-enhancement goals such as pursuing maturity, self-esteem, and integrity.

### **Why Undergraduates Study Business**

Researchers have identified that undergraduates tend to choose their major in business for a number of reasons. In one of the earliest published studies of why students choose to major in business, Hafer and Schank (1982) identifies the top three reasons students gave for studying business were personal interest in the topic of business, job security provided by business, and financial rewards. The reasons were moderated by two factors, 1) school related factor such as instructors and core courses and 2) reference groups including parents, siblings, and peers.

Later studies show the choice to major in business is impacted by personal characteristics. Malgwi, et al. (2005) note a gender difference with women being more motivated by interest in the topic whereas men are motivated more by compensation, job opportunities and career advancement. Similarly, while Leppel et al. (2001) note that students' desire for financial success increase the chance that they choose business as a major, they also note a significant impact from parents' occupation. If only one parent is employed in business, students are more likely to choose business as a major, with female students being particularly prone to the business major if their father is in business. Interestingly, if both parents are employed in business, students are more likely to major in an area of technology.

Researchers also report that different student characteristics impact their choice of emphases within business. Those with strong quantitative skills tend toward Accounting and Finance, while others are more likely to choose emphases in Management, Marketing, and Management Information Systems (Pritchard, Potter, & Saccucci, 2004). Accounting majors are further motivated by perceptions of self-efficacy and self-interests, whereas others are more motivated by extrinsic career prospects (Owusu, Bekoe, Okyere, & Welbeck, 2019). Entrepreneurship majors, alternatively, while also having strong perceptions of self-efficacy, are more likely to be outgoing, be action oriented, and creative improvisors (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006).

Interestingly, little research has been conducted on students' perceived outcomes from their majors, i.e., what are their career and life expectations after graduating with a chosen major? Likewise, the authors to this study were unable to locate any empirical studies among Christian university students as to how they perceive their faith impacting their career choice. Since faith integration is an important objective of any major at a Christian academic institution, this is disappointing.

### **Faith Integration in the Business Major**

Different authors have struggled with the definition of what faith integration means with the context of the business majors (Dupree, 2015). Smith (2005) proposes that generally it is:

The scholarly pursuit to interrelate chosen elements in the business literature/world to Truth given to us by God, primarily in the Bible, but also in the life and in church practice and history. (p. 155)

In the Christian academic press in Business, numerous articles have been written on personal case studies and biblical models for integration. In a review of twenty years of articles on faith integration in the *Journal for Biblical Integration in Business (JBIB)*, Dupree notes that integration efforts tended to focus on either the conceptual, that being a theological/hermeneutic orientation, or the functional, that being focused on practical application in either the marketplace or the major.

### **Christianity and Business**

While there is a functioning definition of faith integration and hundreds of articles devoted to supporting faculty in the process of faith integration, the question remains whether or not students understand and internalize our messages. One of the challenges professors of business at Christian higher educational institutions face when measuring faith integration is clarifying the role of business within Christianity (Martin, 2021). Many individuals hold to the pre-Reformation view of work proposed by Aquinas that work exists to provide for one's family and to support the church. In this view, careers in business are of lesser spiritual value than careers in ministry, such as pastor or missionary. While one of the key components of the Reformation was the recognition that all legitimate work was equally spiritual and honors God, post-Reformational thinking has drifted from this perspective. Instead, we tend to "spiritualize" work by slotting it to one of the following categories starting with the letter "E": 1) Ethics, which focuses on the ethical impact Christians can have on an organization, 2) Evangelism, where adherents work in secular jobs in

order to evangelize co-workers, 3) Experience, in which the challenging experiences in the workforce are seen as means to help believers grow in their faith, and 4) Enrichment, wherein individuals view work as a venue to focus on personal transformation and spiritual growth through the exercise of disciplines such as prayer and meditation on the job (Miller, 2007).

The Faith and Work movement challenges this thinking and states that legitimate work in business, like all legitimate work, is honoring to God and has spiritual value in and of itself. This perspective, which Miller estimates began about 1985, holds that work is a place where we integrate all aspects of God's calling in our lives. Further, it recognizes the value of work in business in particular. This perspective outlines the positive role businesspeople have had in the Bible and continues to expand on the positive role business has today, such as creating jobs and causing economic growth to support human flourishing (Martin, 2021). Underlying this is the argument that the problems with business are like the problems with all of society, sin. It is the attitude of the people in business that create the situations critics oppose. The problem is not business itself.

### **Methodology**

In order to understand what motivates Christian undergraduates to study business as a major and assess their understanding of the role of business in Christianity, undergraduate business majors at twelve Christian colleges and universities took a self-administered online survey. The survey covered students' attitudes about their choice of major and their perception of its congruence with biblical principles on business. In exchange for their participation in the survey, students were offered the chance to be included in an institution-specific gift-card drawing. To enlist schools' participation, the authors of the study provided to the school summary statistics from the survey for the particular institution for use in its program assessment efforts. Participating universities sent three emails, one announcement and two reminders, to a census of their business undergraduates.

In addition to demographic information, the survey consisted of four main sections, 1) personal career goals, 2) perceptions of impact of personal faith on career, 3) perceptions of congruence between Christianity and business and 4) depth of personal faith. The average completion time for the survey was under nine minutes.

The overall response rate was 26%, with 705 qualified respondents. Of these, 91% indicated they were traditional undergraduates, not online or blended delivery students. By academic years 19% were freshmen, 16% sophomores, 24% juniors, 27% seniors, and the balance either classified themselves as “other” or did not report. In addition, 7% of respondents indicated they were international students, 14% indicated they were transfer students, and 45% indicated female.

Of the emphases indicated, most students were from the traditional business majors of marketing, accounting, finance, and management (Table 1). Twenty percent indicated they were emphasizing in marketing or related disciplines such as public relations, fourteen percent each in accounting and finance, and eight percent in management and related emphases. Students who classified their major as “other” were from a variety of specialized emphases such as ministry management, real estate, and computer information systems.

Two thirds of respondents indicated their career goals included going into business, with 53% indicating they wanted to own their own business and 18% indicating they intended to start their own enterprise (Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Distribution by Business Emphasis*

	<b>% by Emphasis</b>
Business Administration	26%
Marketing	20%
Accounting	14%
Finance	14%
Management	8%
Entrepreneurship	4%
Sport Management	2%
International Business	2%
Other	6%
Missing	4%

**Table 2**

*Respondent Occupational Goals*

<b>Occupational Goal*</b>	
Work for a business	66%
Own one's own business	53%
Work for a non-faith nonprofit	18%
Start a new enterprise	18%
Work for church or ministry	13%
Other (ex. Law enforcement)	4%
*multiple responses possible	

## Results

### Faith and Personal Goals

Overall, students see careers in business as supporting their faith and personal goals. As seen in Table 3, subjects seem to view careers in business as a venue to pursue their personal goals, both interpersonal and spiritual. With the exception of the overarching goal to “be successful,” students showed strongest agreement to goals that would have a positive, spiritual impact. These included making decisions that have a positive impact on people, serving God, making a difference, helping other people be better off, and making decisions that will have a positive impact for God. Students were less likely to embrace more materialistic goals such as make a lot of money, have nice things, impress people, and have power.

Additionally, respondents largely agreed with the statements relative to the spiritual value of their work (Table 4). Students supported the idea that their business career will please God, be a blessing to others, and that they would personally be more joyful because of their faith. Students’ disagreement with the statements that it is important to keep faith separate from your work and that neither their salary nor advancement would be hindered because of their faith, indicate they believe their faith will not adversely impact their careers. Attitudes were mixed on whether students saw their work as ministry and on whether they would need to make decisions at work that would conflict with their faith.

In order to assess whether attitudes changed throughout their Christian college experience, the authors compared the scores of seniors to freshmen on all these factors and found not statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the two groups.

**Table 3***Personal Career Goals*

<b>Agreement with “I believe my major will allow me to have a career where I can...”</b>		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Be successful	4.7	0.5
Make decisions that have a positive impact on people	4.7	0.6
Reach my personal goals	4.7	0.6
Be respected	4.6	0.6
Serve God	4.6	0.8
Make a difference	4.6	0.7
Help other people be better off	4.6	0.7
Make decisions that have a positive impact for God	4.5	0.8
Influence people	4.5	0.8
Help the economy	4.4	0.8
Reach my spiritual goals	4.3	0.9
Donate a lot of money to good causes	4.3	0.8
Serve the poor	4.2	0.9
Make a lot of money	4.1	0.9
Have nice things	4.1	0.9
Impress people	3.7	1.1
Have power	3.4	1.1
<i>All responses: <math>p &lt; .05</math></i>		
5=Agree		

**Table 4**

*Student Views of Personal Faith and Future Work*

	Mean	Std. Dev.
I think my work will please God	4.4	0.8
I feel my work will be a blessing to others	4.3	0.8
I think I will be more joyful at work because of my faith	4.3	1.0
I think my work will be a part of my ministry	3.7	1.3
I think I may have to make decisions at work that conflict with my faith	2.8	1.4
I feel my impact for God could be stronger if I did not have to work for a living	2.2	1.3
I think it is important to keep your faith separate from your work	1.9	1.2
I feel like my salary will be negatively impacted because of my faith	1.9	1.1
I feel my advancement at work will be hindered because of my faith	1.8	1.1
All responses $p < .05$		
5=Agree		

**Spiritual Value of Work**

While holding to traditional views of faith and work, students tend to recognize the spiritual value of work in business (Table 5). Student respondents generally agreed with traditional views of faith and work, showing agreement to the following statements: “work allows you to provide for your family,” “work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job,” “work allows you to make money to donate to the church,” and “work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith.” While not rejecting these traditional views, they also agreed with statements consistent with the faith in work movement including: “ethical business practices generally help

**Table 5***Attitudes on Faith and Work*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work allows you to provide for your family	4.8	0.5
Ethical business practices generally help people	4.4	0.8
Work in business can help improve human flourishing	4.4	0.8
The Bible supports the idea of careers in business	4.3	1.0
Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job	4.3	1.0
Work allows you to obey God	4.3	1.1
Work allows you to make money to donate to the church	4.1	1.1
Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith	4.0	1.2
Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are equally important to God as other types of jobs <sup>1</sup>	4.0	1.2
Work in business is no more selfish than other types of work <sup>2</sup>	3.9	1.3
Jobs focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do not do more to serve God than jobs in business <sup>3</sup>	3.8	1.3
Some jobs are more spiritual than others	3.7	1.3
Businesses can do more to help the poor than aid programs can	3.5	1.1
Work in business is no more unethical than other types of work <sup>4</sup>	3.3	1.3
All responses $p < .05$ 5=Agree		

<sup>1</sup> Reverse coded. Original statement was Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are more important to God as other types of jobs.

<sup>2</sup> Reverse coded. Original statement was Work in business is more selfish than other types of work

<sup>3</sup> Reverse coded. Original statement was Job focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do more to serve God than jobs in business.

<sup>4</sup> Reverse coded. Original statement was Work in business is more unethical than other types of work.

people,” “work in business can improve human flourishing,” “the bible supports the idea of careers in business,” “work allows you to obey God,” and “work in business is no more selfish than other types of work.” There was less support for concepts of economic flourishing through the statement “businesses can do more to help the poor than aid programs can.”

Included with their overall support of the biblical foundation of business but to a lesser extent, they supported the ideas counter to the traditional notion that some jobs have more spiritual value than others. Respondents generally agreed with the following: “Religious jobs, such as pastor or missionary, are equally important to God as other types of jobs,” “Jobs focused on helping people, such as nursing or teaching, do not do more to serve God than jobs in business.” Students showed varying perceptions to the concept that some jobs are more spiritual than others.

As with the previous analysis, there were not statistically significant differences between the attitudes of freshmen and seniors in these areas.

### **Cross-Campus Support**

Institutional efforts toward faith integration among business students could be significantly improved. To assess the impact of faith integration over time at an institution, the authors compared scores of freshmen to seniors, removing any respondents who identified as transfer students. Only

three items showed significant differences between the two groups' scores. Freshmen were more likely to believe that work in business is more unethical than other types of work and that it hurts society when businesspeople focus on making a profit, while seniors were more likely to agree to that work in business can help improve human flourishing. For all other items measured, including career expectations and attitudes toward faith and work, there were no other statistically significant differences between the scores of the two groups. This would seem to indicate that students graduate with the same attitudes towards the spiritual value of their careers in business that they come in with.

While their attitudes toward their careers did not vary, seniors were statistically more negative about the Christian university experience as being supportive of their major (Table 6). While seniors were significantly more likely to appreciate the value of their business professors as indicated by their support of the statement "the professors in my major help me understand how Christianity relates to my field of study in," they were more negative about the overall campus experience relative to their careers in business. Seniors were significantly more likely to support the following: "chapel or other spiritual experiences on campus are not supportive of jobs in business," "I feel others on campus believe business people are greedy and/or unethical," "I feel people on this campus put more value in careers in vocational ministry than in business," "most of my friends on campus are business majors," "I feel students from other majors on campus think I am not as spiritual because of my major."

**Table 6***Campus Experience: Freshmen versus Seniors*

<b>Chapel or other spiritual experiences on campus are not supportive of jobs in business</b>	*
<b>I feel others on campus believe business people are greedy and/or unethical</b>	*
<b>I feel people on this campus put more value in careers in vocational ministry than in business</b>	*
<b>Most of my friends on campus are business majors</b>	*
My general education courses help me appreciate how Christianity relates to life	
<b>I feel students from other majors on campus think I am not as spiritual because of my major</b>	*
The courses in my major support ideas that are consistent with Christianity	
The professors in my general education courses are supportive of business as a major	
<b>The professors in my major help me understand how Christianity relates to my field of study</b>	*
<b>*Bold indicates significant difference between groups <math>p &lt; .05</math></b>	

**Parents' Careers**

Business majors with parents in ministry were more likely to see the spiritual value of their career plans. While a relatively small part of the sample, 12%, students who had parents employed in ministry were more likely to see the spiritual value of their career plans in business (Table 7). They were statistically more likely to endorse the following statements: "I look forward to a career where I will donate a lot of money to good causes," "I look forward to a career where I will serve God," "I believe my major will help me have a career where I can make decisions that have a positive impact

for God,” “I feel my work will be a blessing to others,” “I think my work will be part of my ministry,” “Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith,” and “Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job.” Conversely, those without parents in ministry were significantly more likely to support the more secular statements relative to having nice things and keeping one’s faith separate from one’s work.

**Table 7**

*Statements with statistically higher support by parental occupation*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Supported by</b> <b>Students with Parents in Ministry</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Supported by Students</b> <b>without Parents in Ministry</b></p>
<p>I look forward to a career where I will donate a lot of money to good causes</p>	<p>I look forward to a career where I will have nice things</p>
<p>I look forward to a career where I will serve God</p>	<p>I think it is important to keep your faith separate from your work</p>
<p>I believe my major will help me have a career where I can make decisions that have a positive impact for God</p>	
<p>I feel my work will be a blessing to others</p>	
<p>I think my work will be part of my ministry</p>	
<p>Work allows you to meet nonbelievers and share your faith</p>	
<p>Work allows you to demonstrate your faith by performing well on the job</p>	
<p><i>p&gt;.05</i></p>	

Counter to Leppel et al.’s findings (2001), students with parents in business were not more likely to endorse ideas in support of business than were students without parents in business. There were no significantly significant differences between the attitudes of the 58% of respondents who had parents who worked in business and those who did not. Lack of a parent in business, however, may lead to students’ having a more negative view of people in business. Students whose parents do not work in business were statistically more likely to support the two statements that work in business is more unethical than other types of work and work in business is more selfish than other types of work (Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Statements more likely to be agreed to by students whose parents did not work in business*

Work in business is more unethical than other types of work
Work in business is more selfish than other types of work
<i>p &lt; .05</i>

**Discussion**

While past research has shown that undergraduates majoring in business are motivated by extrinsic factors such as potential for success and money, this study seems to indicate that undergraduate business majors at Christian colleges and universities are more motivated by Kingdom values. These students did not seem to see a conflict between their faith and career choice. Instead, many seemed to understand the concept of marketplace ministry.

Regarding their career potential in their chosen major in business, overall, they did not see a conflict between business and Christianity. While students showed support for the ideas that their career would allow them to reach traditional goals, such as to be successful, to be respected, to make a difference, and to reach their personal goals; they also equally supported ideas that their careers

would help them reach spiritual goals, such as to serve God, to make decisions that have a positive impact for God, and to help other people be better off. They did show moderate but mixed support toward the appeal of the trappings of successful careers. Overall attitudes varied more widely on the ideas that their jobs would allow them to make a lot of money, have nice things, impress people, and have power.

Rather than seeing faith as a handicap, respondents largely viewed their faith as having a positive impact on their future careers. They felt that their work would be a blessing and please God, allowing them to be more joyful at work. They disagreed with ideas that their faith would negatively impact their career potential. Respondents indicated that they believed that neither their salary nor advancement potential would be hindered because of their faith. In addition, most indicated that they should bring their faith with them into the workplace, i.e. will not keep their faith separate from their work.

Students largely did not support the more holistic view espoused by the faith and work movement, but instead most students held to the more traditional values of Christians' participation in the marketplace coined by Miller (2007)—ethics, evangelism, experience, and enrichment. There was directional support of the concepts related to work allowing one to provide for one's family and to donate to the church, performing on the job allows one to demonstrate one's faith, and providing a venue to meet nonbelievers in order to share one's faith. Feelings about whether all legitimate work was equally spiritual varied strongly. There was a slight tendency for them to see spiritual jobs and helping professions as providing more Kingdom value than jobs in business.

While they did not see work in business as a calling *per se*, they did support the idea that work in business is good. There was general support that work in business can improve human flourishing, the bible supports the idea of careers in business, and that work allows one to obey God. However, while there was support that ethical business practices help people, there were

widely varying opinions as to whether working in business was less ethical than work in other professions.

While attitudes toward the different issues did not vary based on most demographic groupings tested, the authors found it interesting to note that students who had at least one parent involved in ministry were more likely to support the spiritual value of work than were students who had at least one parent working in business. This would seem counter to the original premise that people in ministry see business negatively and people in business understand the ministry value of work in the field.

The lack of a difference in attitudes between freshmen and seniors about the role of work and the value of careers in business is of concern. It may be that our faith integration efforts are having less impact than hoped. In addition, it was disheartening to note that as students progressed in their college career at a Christian institution, they were more likely to see the institution as less supportive of business as a major. The fact that seniors were more likely to identify their friends as business majors than were freshmen seems to indicate the formation of an “us versus them” attitude about the integration of faith and business. However, it was encouraging to note that this attitude did not carry over into the classroom experience. Students saw their professors in both their general education classes and their major as equally supportive of their major and their faith. The rest of the campus experience, including chapel and general opinions on campus, were seen as increasingly unsupportive of business.

### **Limitations**

As with all survey research, this study shared certain challenges. There was a self-selection bias among the subjects. Because students had already selected business as a major and to study at a Christian college, subjects were already “pro-business” from a Kingdom perspective. The selectivity bias probably led to a more positive view of faith and work.

The sample in this study was not random. While a census of business students was approached within each participating institution, the institutions themselves were selected based on each school's business faculty's willingness to work with the researchers. Most of these faculty are members of the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA), which supports the idea that work in business is valued by God. Because these faculty probably address this view in their faith-integration efforts in the classroom, students may be more aware of the tenants investigated in this study than students studying with professors who are not CBFA members.

Furthermore, institutions participating were members of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), a group of over 185 institutions. All institutional members of the CCCU share a common doctrinal statement. It is probable that students' understanding of their personal faith is impacted by this doctrinal foundation and therefore the attitudes reflected are influenced by this.

As with all survey research, respondents may not have interpreted questions in the same way as the authors intended and reported attitudes may not reflect students' actual feelings. While all efforts were made to protect student confidentiality, students may have biased their answers toward what they felt researchers wanted to hear versus what they really felt. The fact that the invitation to that the survey came from within the students' institutions and not from an outside research firm may have contributed to this perception. It is also because of the fact that the authors did not have access to student emails so they were not able to calculate a non-response bias.

### **Future Research**

Future research is recommended to expand the sample to more institutions. In addition, repeat administrations are recommended in order that institutions can measure their faith integration efforts over time

This study seems to offer promise for Christian business educators as they try to assess faith integration among their students. Unlike previous studies where researchers only looked at students' motivations for choosing to major in business, this study focused on students' career expectations after graduation given their major in business. In addition, whereas previous studies focused on assessing traditional values of working in business, such as money and power, this study focused on students' perceptions of the spiritual value of work. Important to this perspective is their understanding of the biblical narrative about work and the contribution that work in business can make to the Kingdom. This perspective seems particularly important to disseminate to the larger Christian campus community in general so business majors can feel fully supported. In addition, all students, no matter the vocation pursued, should feel appreciated for their contribution to Kingdom calling.

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**Christianity and Corporate Outcomes:  
How is Religiosity Related to the Financial Outcomes of a Corporation?**

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### **Abstract**

Nehemiah was an amazing leader with vision, foresight, and risk-taking strategies who led his people to accomplish the impossible as they sought and followed God's Will. This study investigates how similar traits may be operating today within Christian financial decision-making. Specifically, this study investigates how religiosity relates to corporate outcomes. Albeit a restrictive assessment compared to the dynamic commitment and achievement of Nehemiah and his followers, religiosity offers however a quantifiable measure that can tenably be used to correlate potential impact of Christian populations on corporate outcomes, particularly, the quantitative appraisals of debt financing, credit ratings, and cash holdings. Based on Biblical principles, this study offers valuable insight into the commitment and perseverance, prudent risk-taking and vigilant financial planning of Nehemiah.

*Keywords:* Christianity; religiosity; corporate financing

## **Christianity and Corporate Outcomes:**

### **How is Religiosity Related to the Financial Outcomes of a Corporation?**

Religiosity refers to the degree of commitment in religious beliefs and activities. This study explores the influence of religiosity of the community in which a firm operates. Managers of corporations are making decisions; thus, this construct operationalizes the concept of religion and its influence on financial attitudes and activities of the groups of individuals within companies. Many studies claim that religious affiliation, often used as a proxy for cultural norms, affect not only individual decisions but also corporate decisions (see Baxamusa & Jalal, 2014; Cai & Shi, 2019). Similar to these prior studies, the religiosity of a company is calculated as the percent of population who are religious adherents in the county where the firm's headquarters is located. Next, the degree of religiosity is empirically examined with three corporate outcomes, namely debt financing, credit ratings, and cash holdings.

This study contributes to the growing literature regarding the relationship of religiosity and corporate financial outcomes. The research findings offer suggestions for Christian educators on Biblical principles and passages to incorporate into finance and accounting curricula. Further, this study encourages Christian business leaders to embrace and emulate Nehemiah's foresight, commitment, and risk management to further advance God's kingdom. The rest of this paper proceeds with a literature review, hypothesis development, and methodology review. The paper concludes with analysis and discussion of findings as well as future research suggestions.

### **Literature Review**

Religiosity measurements rely on people self-identifying as members of a religious group (Koenig et al., 2015). Based on the seminal work on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), Ellemers and Haslam (2012) claim that social identity bolsters group behavior. Weaver and Agle (2002) propose that religious doctrines offer role expectations. When internalized, these role expectations

impact that person's decision-making process and represent an individual's religious self-identity (Weaver & Agle). Organizational influences could persuade individuals to modify, but not permanently alter, personal values and decisions.

Linkage between individual decisions and religiosity may be distorted by complex doctrines and varying denominations. Regardless, studies have repeatedly shown a positive correlation between religious followers and risk aversion (see Diaz, 2000; Halek & Eisenhauer, 2001). Osoba (2003) reports risk-averse individuals attend church more often than risk-seeking individuals. Longenecker et al. (2004) find that individuals act in accordance with their religious beliefs in making ethical business decisions.

Extant studies have shown that religiosity influences corporate actions, such as adding corporate social responsibility initiatives (Casselman et al., 2015) and limiting risky investments (Hilary & Hui, 2009). Studies also examine the relationship between religion and financial outcomes. Ma et al. (2020) find that firms located in areas of higher religiosity exhibit more accounting conservatism. Francis et al. (2013) link conservative financial planning to company sustainability. Kuhnen and Niessen (2009) record that areas with higher religiosity have lower executive compensation. Boone et al. (2013) report that firms in areas of higher religiosity practice less tax avoidance.

Much of the literature report a positive association between religiosity and corporate outcomes. However, Baxamusa and Jalal (2014) hypothesize that Protestantism is negatively associated with debt, while Catholicism is positively associated with debt. Abakah and Kedia (2015) observe that states with fewer Catholics have higher credit ratings. McGuire et al. (2012) report that religiosity reduces accruals manipulation but increases real earnings management, while Callen et al. (2011) find no effect of religiosity on earnings management. Intrigued by the multitude of variables

and variations in results, this study follows empirical finance literature by applying the religiosity of the firm's headquarter location to study the impacts of management decisions.

### **Biblical Principles**

Christian managers are called to be faithful stewards of God's provisions. Three Biblical financial principles are discussed: (1) commitment and perseverance, (2) prudent risk-taking in investing, and (3) vigilant financial planning. First, Nehemiah demonstrated commitment and perseverance as he used God's resources wisely, both in rebuilding the wall and in bringing His people back to God. He shared his vision with the others to draw them into achieving the impossible. Nehemiah got the people reading God's Word and praying for wisdom. He was able to make decisions and take action to carry out those decisions. Just as Nehemiah had the foresight and knowledge for what the task would entail, Liang (2011) offers reassurance that "the discerning and obedient Christian is uniquely equipped to prevail over cycles of financial prosperity and adversity" (p.207). Christian managers need to be committed to and persevere toward the goals of their respective organizations.

Secondly, the Bible teaches the principles of calculated risk assessment and prudent risk-taking in investing to reap returns, notably in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Investing is advised: "Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest" (Matthew 25:27, NIV). Those called into finance work are ideal partners to assess if company assets are utilized effectively and financed appropriately. However, the Bible cautions the dangers of indebtedness. Proverbs 22:7 compares debt to captivity, "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender," and bankruptcy is described as wicked in Psalms 37:21: "The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously." Conversely, lending is called a blessing in Deuteronomy 15:6, "For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will

borrow from none...”. This delicate balance of lending and borrowing emphasizes the value of financial planning

The third Biblical principle highlights the value of vigilant financial planning. Luke 14:28 asks “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” Diligence and discipline across financial commitments, risk-taking, and financial planning are important contributions of business professionals that also align with those of Christian stewards. Thus, this study examines religiosity with particular interest in Christianity.

### **Significance**

Pew Research (2022) warns that Christians could fall below 50% of the U.S. population by 2070 if recent trends continue. In 2020, 64% of Americans cited Christian as their religion preference, followed by 30% of ‘None’ and 6% across all other religions (Pew Research). By 2050, only the United States is projected to have a majority Christian population. Other mega economies in 2050 are projected to have other majorities, such as Hindu (India) and Muslim (Indonesia); China and Japan are projected as exceptionally high levels of religious diversity (Pew Research). Aggarwal et al. (2009) warns that cultural distance among countries hinders foreign investment flows. Growth of religious populations can cause redistribution of wealth and sway financial outcomes.

This substantial prediction relies on people self-identifying with a religion preference. Pew Research (2021) collects religious measurements through nationally representative group of roughly 13,500 U.S. adults. Pew asks questions such as “In what religion were you raised?” and “What is your religious preference?” Notably, survey respondents tend to indicate higher levels of religiosity when answering questions from a live interviewer than when filling out a paper or online survey, reflecting that being religious has long been considered a socially desirable attribute in America

(Pew, 2021). Brenner (2011) claims that Americans tend to overreport religiosity. Arguably, church attendance may be more accurate than religious preference since there is a verifiable answer.

The level of religiosity can be assessed by factors of church attendance, belief in God, prayer frequency, and professed importance (Johnstone, 2016). The Association of Religious Data Archive (ARDA) measures ‘adherents’ to represent individuals actively affiliated with a religious body. Church membership may not be consistent across all religions and is reserved for adults in some denominations. Adherents are defined as “all members, including full members, their children and the estimated number of other participants who are not considered members; for example, the ‘baptized, those not confirmed, those not eligible for Communion, those regularly attending services’” (ARDA, 2010). The U.S. Religion Census requests adherent data from all religious bodies identified as having congregations in the United States (Grammich et al., 2012). Consistent with prior studies noted above, this study relies on religious adherents from the ARDA data set.

### **Hypothesis Development**

The research question of this study asks: How is religiosity related to the financial outcomes of a corporation? The null hypothesis states there is no relationship between religiosity and corporate outcomes.

The first alternative hypothesis is that firms headquartered in locations with denser religious populations are predicted to have lower levels of debt financing, higher credit ratings, and higher cash holdings than firms in areas with lower levels of religious populations.

The second alternative hypothesis is that firms headquartered in locations with denser Christian populations are predicted to have lower levels of debt financing, higher credit ratings, and higher cash holdings than firms in areas with lower levels of Christian populations.

## Sample

The firms used in the sampling frame are the Fortune 100 corporations that are headquartered in the United States and have available data between the years from 2011 to 2020. Firms are sorted by the 11 Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) sectors. The Fortune 100 companies do not include any firms in the real estate industry sector. Due to balance sheet uniqueness (for example, loans are assets to banks but assets to all other sectors), the 24 financial services companies are removed from the sample. Further, six private companies are removed from the sample due to lack of available data.

The sample results in 70 corporations each with ten years of data (2011 to 2020), translating to 700 firm-years. In aggregate, the 70 firms collectively generated eight trillion dollars and employed 13.6 million people (Fortune, 2022). Additional company attributes are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**

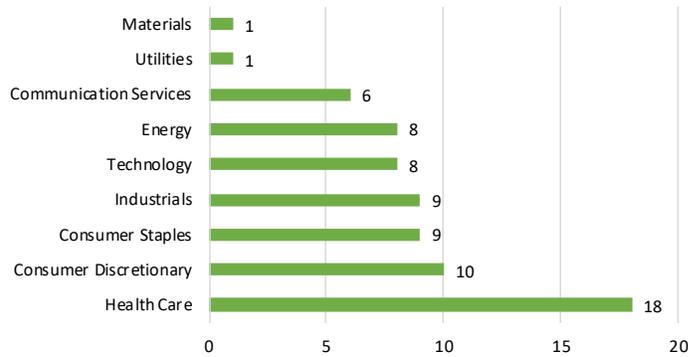
*Summary Statistics of Sample (n=70)*

Attribute	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Revenue	\$118B	\$36B	\$573B
Profit	\$12B	\$-6B	\$95B
Market Capitalization	\$206B	\$15B	\$2.3T
Employees, 2020	194K	7K	2.3M
Ownership by Individuals	8%	0.09%	49%

The sample spans nine industry sectors. Healthcare is the most frequent industry classification (18 companies or 26%). Headquarter locations reside in 23 states with the highest concentration in California (11 companies or 16%). Figures 1 and 2 visually depict the sample.

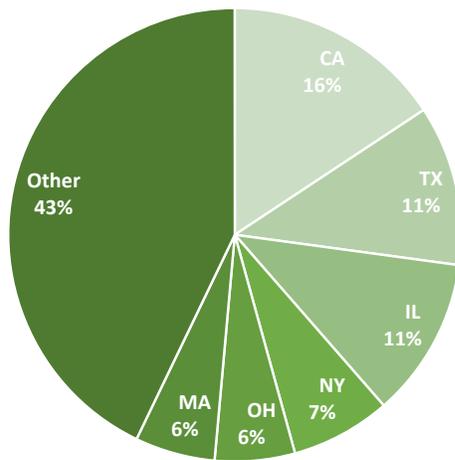
**Figure 1**

*GICS Industry Classification by Company*



**Figure 2**

*Headquarter Location by Company*



**Variables**

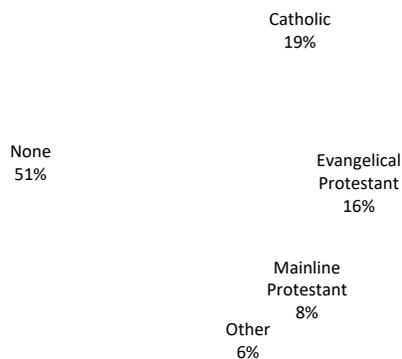
The independent variable for the first hypothesis is religiosity (REL). This variable is defined as total adherents in a county according to surveys administered by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies and reported by the Association of Religious Data Archive (ARDA, 2010) divided by the population in the respective county as reported by the U.S.

Census Bureau. The most recent ARDA data currently available is for the 2010 survey. 2020 data is not available at the time of this study but expected shortly. In the interim, the 2010 adherent rates are assumed comparable and held constant over the ten-year sample timeframe. The sample is located in 41 counties across 23 states.

The ARDA religion classification is based on the RELTRAD schema developed by Steensland et al. (2000). ‘Religious traditions’ can be categorized into five major groups: Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Other and None. The classification of ‘Other’ includes Black Protestant, Orthodox, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religious forms. Figure 3 displays the adherents to religious traditions for the 2010 U.S. population.

### Figure 3

*Adherents by Religious Tradition for 2010 U.S. Population*



A deeper level of ARDA data classification is religion family. Religion family is coded into 20 classifications ranging from Catholicism (code #87) to Restoration Movement (code #115).

Table 2 lists the 20 religion family codes.

**Table 2***ARDA Religious Families*

87) Catholicism
88) Episcopalianism/Anglicanism
89) Eastern Liturgical, Orthodox
90) Lutheran
91) Presbyterian-Reformed
92) Methodist/Pietist
93) Holiness
94) Pentecostal
95) European Free-Church
96) Baptist
97) Independent Fundamentalist
98) Adventist
99) Liberal
100) Latter-day Saints
101) Communal
102) Christian Science
103) Spiritualist
106) Judaism
113) Other (e.g., Islam, Buddhism)
115) Restoration Movement

The independent variable for the second hypothesis is Christian religiosity (C-REL). While REL, includes total religious adherents, C-REL only includes Christian adherents, defined as codes #87 through #99 for purpose of this study.

The dependent variables are corporate outcomes, indicated by debt financing, credit ratings, and cash holdings. Publicly reported financial data from the company 10-K reports filed with the U.S. government were collected for all years from 2011 to 2020. Company headquarter location data is based on the reported city, state, and zip code and cross referenced with the current address on the company's website. Notably, 11% of the sample has announced plans to relocate their HQ

location. Headquarter location was held constant over the sample but further reviewed in the discussion section.

Debt Financing (FIN) is calculated as the ratio of total debt divided by total assets. As a supplemental review, net debt issuance and net equity issuance data are also captured. Net debt issuance is the difference between debt issuance and debt purchase and then divided by total assets. A negative number represents payment of debt, and a positive represents debt issuance. Net equity issuance is the difference between stock issuance and stock repurchase.

Credit ratings (RAT) is based on the S&P long-term domestic default credit rating on a scale from AAA (highest rating) to D (lowest rating). Ratings of BB+ and lower are regarded as having significant speculative characteristics. A Compustat data report is used to obtain credit ratings for the years 2011 to 2017 (WRDS, 2022). Data from 2018 to 2020 are not available in the report. The lowest rating in the sample is B-. To quantify credit ratings for statistical tests, the letter ratings are converted to a 15-point scale as follows: 15 for AAA, 14 for AA+, 13 for AA, 12 for AA-, 11 for A+, 10 for A, 9 for A-, 8 for BBB+, 7 for BBB, 6 for BBB-, 5 for BB+, 4 for BB, 3 for BB-, 2 for B+, 1 for B, and 0 for B-. Figure 4 illustrates the spread across ratings for 2010 data. Since 2010, the credit ratings within the sample have upgraded for 38% of the companies, downgraded for 23% of the companies, and remained flat for 39% of the sample companies.

Cash Holdings (CSH) is calculated as the ratio of cash and cash equivalents divided by operating revenue. Higher cash levels improve liquidity and thus reduce default risk. Cash balances trend higher in the technology industry sector; thus, to normalize the variable, the CSH ratio is divided by operating revenue.

**Figure 4**

*Number of Companies by 2010 Credit Ratings*

Credit Ratings, 2010	
AAA	3
AA+	2
AA	4
AA-	4
A+	11
A	15
A-	7
BBB+	7
BBB	7
BBB-	2
<b>Adequate</b>	
BB+	
<b>Speculative</b>	
BB	1
BB-	4
B+	1
B	
B-	2

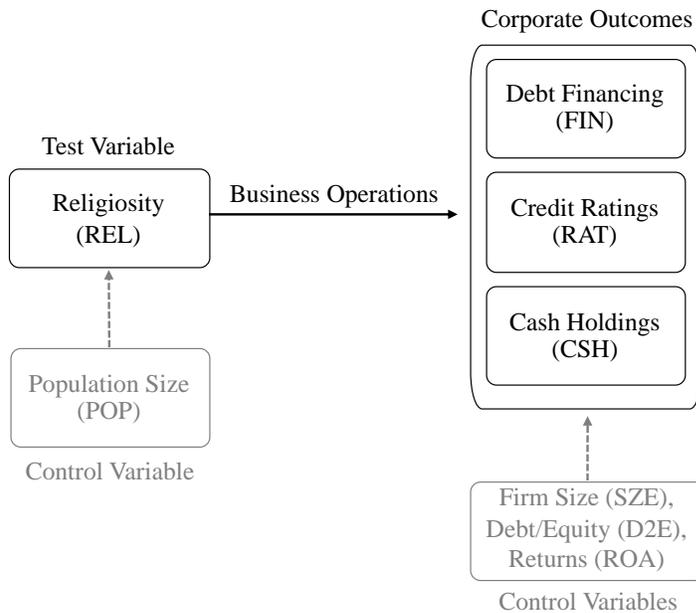
Control variables for demographics include total population size. The ARDA data file includes the population data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Additional controls, such as minority percentage, married household percentage, educational attainment, and per capita income, could be incorporated but have not been employed at this point in the study. Control variables for financial outcomes are firm size, debt-to-equity ratios, and return on assets. The variables align with extant research (see Baxamusa & Jalal, 2014; Ma et al., 2020) to allow comparability of results and provide a context for incremental findings. The variable measurements are defined in Table 3. The graphical model for REL in Figure 5 highlights the associations among REL and the dependent and control variables. A similar model is employed to analyze C-REL.

**Table 3***Description of Variable Measurements*

Variable Type	Variable Name (Code)	Variable Measurement
Test (Independent)	Religiosity (REL)	Degree of religiosity equals total adherents in a county divided by the total population of that county.
	Christian Religiosity (C-REL)	Adherents by county in religious families #87-99 divided by the total population in that county
Outcome (Dependent)	Debt Financing (FIN)	Ratio of total debt divided by total assets.
	Credit rating (RAT)	S&P long-term issuer default rating. Letter ratings are converted into a 15-point scale.
	Cash Holdings (CSH)	Ratio of cash and cash equivalents divided by operating revenue.
Control, Demographic	Population size (POP)	Total population of a county.
Control, Financial	Firm size (SZE)	Natural log of total assets of firm.
	Debt-to-Equity (D2E)	Ratio of total debt divided by equity.
	Return on Assets (ROA)	Ratio of operating income divided by total assets.

**Data Analysis**

Initial evaluation of the data begins with descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The observations for REL had an average of 0.57 (SD = 0.10,  $SE_M = 0.004$ , Min = 0.34, Max = 0.79, Skewness = -0.14, Kurtosis = -0.83). The observations for C-REL had an average of 0.51 (SD = 0.11,  $SE_M = 0.004$ , Min = 0.27, Max = 0.73, Skewness = -0.23, Kurtosis = -0.98). Summary statistics can be found in Table 4.

**Figure 5***Variable Construct Testing REL*

Next, multiple regressions are conducted to evaluate REL with each dependent variable (FIN, RAT, CSH) including a panel of all ten years of data. Currently, the 2010 religiosity value is held constant across 2011 to 2020. When the 2020 religiosity data is available, 2020 religiosity ratios will be entered for 2020 financial data. For the years between surveys, namely 2011 to 2019, the degree of religiosity will be extrapolated from 2010 to 2020.

Probability values, or  $p$ -values, of religiosity and corporate outcomes are measured. A  $p$ -value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant and supports evidence to reject the null hypothesis. R-squared, the coefficient of determination, represents how much variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variable. Robustness checks are conducted to address the possibility of causality, omitted variables, and county-level fixed effects.

**Table 4**

*Summary Statistics (n = 697 with exception of credit rating with n = 404)*

Variable	Mean	Min	Max
Religiosity 2010	0.57	0.34	0.79
Churches	1,275	134	6,619
Christian	0.51	0.27	0.73
Catholic	0.24	0.05	0.48
Lutheran	0.03	0.00	0.25
Baptist	0.06	0.01	0.25
Other Christians	0.17	0.07	0.45
Non-Christian	0.06	0.02	0.12
<i>CORPORATE OUTCOMES</i>			
Debt Financing	0.67	0.09	1.24
Debt Issuance	0.02	-0.19	0.31
Equity Issuance	-0.03	-0.32	0.24
Credit Rating	9.68	0	15
Cash Holdings	0.20	0.0002	1.75

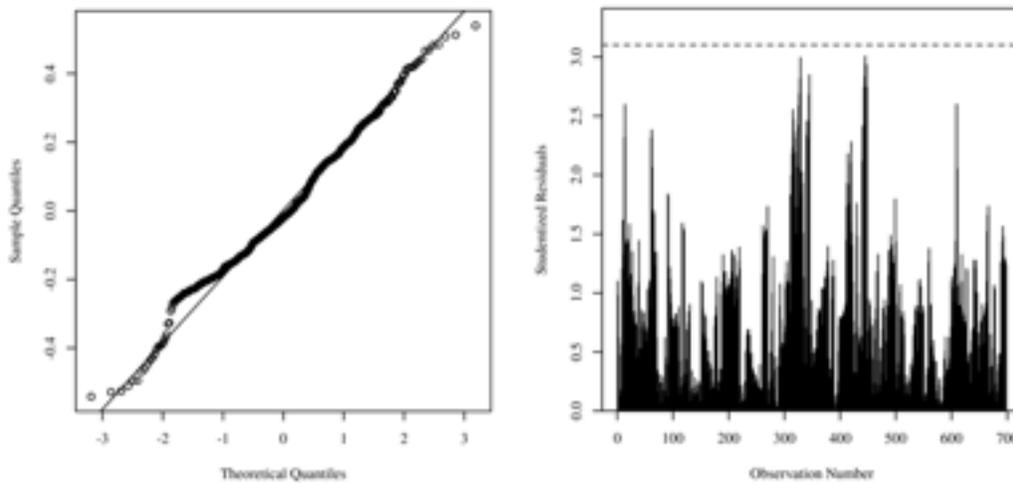
### **Results for REL-FIN**

The first linear regression analysis assessed whether REL significantly predicted FIN. Regression assumptions (normality of residuals, homoscedasticity of residuals, absence of multicollinearity, and lack of outliers) were reviewed. Figure 6 presents a Q-Q scatterplot for

normality of the model residuals and a graph plotting residuals to check for outliers. Three observations were detected as extreme outliers and removed from the sample.

**Figure 6**

*Q-Q Scatterplot for Normality and Residual Plot for Outliers for REL-FIN Regression (n=697)*



The results of the linear regression model were significant,  $F(1,697) = 25.99, p < .001, R^2 = .04$ , indicating that approximately 3.59% of the variance in FIN is explainable by REL. REL significantly predicted FIN,  $B = 0.34, t(697) = 5.10, p < .001$ . This indicates that on average, a one-unit increase of REL will increase the value of FIN by 0.34 units. Table 5 summarizes the results of the regression model.

**Table 5**

*Results for Linear Regression with REL predicting FIN*

Variable	B	SE	95.00% CI	$\beta$	t	p
(Intercept)	0.47	0.04	[0.40, 0.55]	0.00	12.22	< .001
REL	0.34	0.07	[0.21, 0.48]	0.19	5.10	< .001

*Note.* Results:  $F(1,697) = 25.99, p < .001, R^2 = .04$   
 Equation:  $FIN = 0.47 + 0.34*REL$

## Summary Results

Additional regression analyses were conducted for each dependent variable. Regression analyses also assessed whether C-REL significantly predicted FIN, RAT, or CSH. Table 6 summarizes the resulting p-values for each respective regression. Individual tables for every variable are excluded due to redundancy.

**Table 6**

*p-values for REL and C-REL*

Variable	FIN	RAT	CSH
REL	< .001	.031	< .001
C-REL	< .001	.026	.001

Lastly, regression analyses were conducted to assess the impact by unique religious family, namely Catholics (code 87), Lutheran (90), Baptist (96), all other Christians (88-89, 91-95, 97-99), and non-Christians (100-115). Religiosity by family also significantly predicted FIN and RAT. CSH shows significance but has extreme outliers and warrants further study. Figure 7 summarizes the directional results, based on R-squared values, of the regression model when religiosity increases.

## Robustness Checks

Data was also analyzed with only 2010 financial data (one year) with the 2010 religiosity ratios. Separately, the independent variable was amended from the county level (REL and C-REL) to the state level (REL-State and Evangelical Protestants-State). Separate regression analyses were completed by industry to check for industry uniqueness. None of the alternate scenarios changed the overall directional findings.

**Figure 7**

*Directional Results as Religiosity Increases*

	Religiosity by County	Catholic	Lutheran	Baptist	Other Christian	Non-Christian
Debt Financing	↑	↑	↑	n/s	↑	↑
Credit Ratings	↓	n/s	↓	↓	n/s	↑

Note: Arrows represent statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). The direction of the arrow represents the R-squared value. A positive R-squared value is shown as an upward arrow and vice versa. The color of the arrow represents a favorable (green) or unfavorable (red) result from a financial perspective. A gray oval signals no statistical significance.

### Discussion

The results of this study are pending release of 2020 U.S. Religion Census. However, the preliminary study results indicate that as religiosity (REL) increases, FIN increases, RAT decreases, and CSH decreases. Christians (C-REL) yield the same findings. The null hypothesis states there is no relationship between religiosity and corporate outcomes. The study findings report significance and thus reject the null hypothesis.

The first alternative hypothesis is that firms headquartered in locations with denser religious populations are predicted to have lower levels of debt financing, higher credit ratings, and higher cash holdings than firms in areas with lower levels of religious populations. The study findings for REL report statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ) for all three variables; however, find an opposite R-squared value than expected for each. As REL increased, FIN increased, RAT decreased, and CSH decreased. Thus, the study findings are contrary to the first alternative hypothesis.

The second alternative hypothesis is that firms headquartered in locations with denser Christian populations are predicted to have lower levels of debt financing, higher credit ratings, and higher cash holdings than firms in areas with lower levels of Christian populations. Similarly, with

C-REL as the independent variable, the findings report significance but in opposition to the hypothesized results. As C-REL increased, FIN increased, RAT decreased, and CSH decreased. Thus, the study findings are contrary to the second alternative hypothesis.

Decision-making practices at the largest U.S. corporations, the Fortune 100, may differ as these firms have intense investor scrutiny and global engagement in key financial decisions. This may downplay importance on the county-level attributes. This sample also has unique internal firm movements, such as headquarter relocations and C-suite changes. Lastly, most current studies conducted using 2000 data; thus, updating the study with 2020 will deliver new insights.

Limitations of this research include the basis of geography for the religiosity ratio versus other social environmental factors. Another limitation is the inability to generalize across organizations; this convenience sample of large public corporations does not represent smaller companies, private firms, governmental agencies, or non-profit organizations. Limitations also include the variability in the degree to which financial executives are empowered in decision-making as well as impacts of other managerial traits that may affect finance decisions.

### **Future Research**

Three areas of research are proposed for future studies. First and foremost, this study should be updated with the 2020 adherent data when published by ARDA. Expanding the sample with smaller companies outside of the Fortune 500 would refine the analysis. Alternatively, control groups containing a defined subset of known Christian-led organizations would offer comparison points. Another control group may be companies producing goods and services that are considered unaligned with Christian values, such as tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. Another cash ratio could be incorporated. Lastly, alternative measures of religiosity may also be warranted.

Secondly, a supplementary test should be conducted with religiosity of the Chief Financial Officers (CFOs). CFOs are the executives responsible for managing financial risk and

conscientiously stewarding financial assets of their respective firms. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 heightened the accountability of the CFO for a public company. Direct observations of the religious beliefs across all CFOs in the sample are unattainable; thus, the proxy for CFO religiosity can utilize the county where the CFO received his/her undergraduate degree. Shu et al. (2012) assumes this proxy, rationalizing that a student selects a school with values and culture consistent with his/her family and hometown. College athletes with alternative school selection motives and present risk-seeking recreational activities by the CFO may be additional considerations in the variable construct. Future research could catalog Biblical virtues for the CFO to instill in financial management practices. Expanding this area of research could lead to a compilation of distinct CFO characteristics, resulting in a viable Christian CFO profile model.

Thirdly, headquarter relocation is a future research opportunity. Within this study's sample, 11% of companies had announced plans to relocate their headquarters. Also, the ownership structures for these corporations have marginal percentages of individual investors and large percentages of institutional investors and other companies. Thus, examining the stated reason for relocation and the underlying financial transformations would be of interest.

### **Contributions**

This study examines the community religiosity of a firm's headquarters and the association with corporate outcomes. It utilizes a quantitative method with specific measurements from a sample that are easily replicable. Based on empirical tests, this research feasibly offers three main contributions. First, this paper adds to the growing literature regarding the relationship of religiosity and financial outcomes. Secondly, the research findings offer suggestions for Christian educators on Biblical principles and passages to incorporate into finance and accounting curricula for aspiring business professionals. Lastly, this study clarifies the need to establish a more tenable link between religiosity and financial outcomes, seeking a correlation, not between the religiosity of the outside

community, but of the individuals within the firms who are involved in its financial decision-making, and thus the financial outcomes.

Business executives hold prominent, influential roles within corporations. Christian business leaders that hold characteristics, like drive, passion, and commitment like that of Nehemiah, can advance God's kingdom. Nehemiah convinced the king to let him have free rein to rebuild the wall. Likewise, business executives are responsible for securing resources, leading employees, and communicating to stakeholders. Christian educators have the opportunity to mold and shape these future leaders to exude the commitment and perseverance, the prudent risk-taking, and the vigilant financial planning of Nehemiah. Commit, Invest, and Build!

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## **Leadership Essentials in the New Era in Christian Higher Education**

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**Abstract**

We explore leadership in Christian colleges and universities by examining the leadership context and the complex interactions of leadership at different levels. We apply a model of leadership competencies to the challenges facing Christian higher education and examine the leadership implications to help Christian colleges and universities thrive and empower students.

### **Leadership Essentials in the New Era in Christian Higher Education**

These are perilous times for Christian higher education. Many institutions have a weak financial position; for example, only one member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) received an A+ financial rating in *Forbes* 2021 college financial grades (Schiffrin & Tucker, 2021), four received a B+, eleven received a B, and fourteen received a B-. All other CCCU institutions received a C+ grade or lower. This implies that only about 20% of CCCU institutions have a secure financial footprint. Meanwhile, the population of college-age students is declining, and a demographic cliff is on the horizon, beginning in 2025 or 2026 (Boekenstedt, 2022). Our increasingly secular society no longer places a premium on faith-based education. As a result of these and other factors, most Christian colleges and universities lack a clear institutional competitive advantage (Andrews et al., 2017; Wenger, 2015).

Christian colleges and universities exist to transform students and empower them to serve the Church and shape society, but that purpose is increasingly at risk.

We believe that the current environment confronting Christian higher education calls for competitive positioning, change, and innovation that is much more purpose-driven, strategic, customer-centric, proactive, revolutionary, and abrupt than the industry is accustomed to. These realities, in turn, require strong leadership that is appropriate for this new era in Christian higher education.

In this paper, we explore the importance of leadership in Christian colleges and universities by examining the leadership context and the complex interactions of leadership at different levels of an institution. We then apply an accepted model of leadership competencies (Zenger & Folkman, 2017) to the current challenges facing Christian higher education. Finally, we examine the leadership implications for Christian higher education. In doing so, we hope to help Christian colleges and

universities not only navigate these perils, but also emerge as thriving institutions that continue to serve the purpose of transforming and empowering students.

### **The Importance of Leadership**

Strong leadership makes a difference in the performance of any organization and can be measured by specific outcomes. For example, leaders rated in the top 10% by other leaders and followers produced twice the net revenue of those not rated in the top 10% (Zenger & Folkman, 2017). In extraordinary times, such as those currently facing Christian higher education, leadership becomes even more important. Leadership effectiveness, however, depends on the interactions of the leaders, the followers, and the situation (Hughes et al., 2022), each of which will be briefly examined in the following sections.

### **The Situation**

As noted previously, the situation facing many Christian colleges and universities is particularly challenging at this time. In terms of organizational strength and competitive position, most are in a low or medium position, which often implies that a turnaround or harvest strategy is appropriate; this requires different types of leaders than a growth strategy (Roller, 1996).

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, many Christian colleges and universities were on a growth trajectory, often due to successful adult and graduate education initiatives aimed at nontraditional students. Many Christian colleges and universities who relied on a steady income stream from nontraditional education now find that stream slowing to a trickle, or in some cases a net negative. At the same time, the competition for traditional undergraduate students has intensified. Discount rates have increased, thus putting pressure on the net revenue per student (Brock, 2020). Given that few Christian colleges and universities have large endowments or reserves, leaders have little room to maneuver when it comes to employing strategies that would rely on heavy investments drawn from endowment reserves. Their resources for survival, much less for institutional thriving, must be

found in strategic changes that are attuned to current and future market conditions and that engage all their relevant stakeholders in a robust and potentially institution-saving change process.

### **The Followers**

In for-profit organizations, employees are often thought of as the main follower group. For Christian colleges and universities, however, employees—such as faculty and staff—are only one of the follower groups. Other stakeholders of the university, such as students, alumni, trustees, employers of graduates, and the community, are also important followers. Leadership success often depends on these followers. Many of these stakeholders are aware that the university environment has become more challenging (Coley, 2020; Goel et al., 2019), but they vary in their levels of dissatisfaction and sense of urgency in addressing the changed environment. University performance increases when the university is more responsive or proactive toward key stakeholders (Alarcon-del-Amo et al., 2016).

Two of these follower groups—trustees and faculty members—are especially important in that they are also leaders of the university. Trustees usually follow university leadership, but become active leaders especially in times of stress, crisis, or top leadership transition. Faculty members are both followers and leaders, with the concept of faculty governance ensuring that faculty members provide at least some leadership to the university. The fact that trustees and faculty members move between being leaders and followers adds to the complexity of leadership in Christian colleges and universities.

The leadership situation is made more challenging because each of these follower groups has different perspectives, expectations, and needs. Among other things, students want a positive campus experience and to get good jobs after graduation. Employers want employees who will benefit their organizations. Alumni want the reputation of their alma mater to grow. Trustees want smooth sailing for the institution. Communities want universities to contribute to economic

development. Faculty want good pay, benefits, and to be recognized as experts in their fields. These differing perspectives, expectations, and needs add to the complexity of the leadership situation in Christian colleges and universities.

### **The Leaders**

Leadership in Christian colleges and universities includes a wide range of individuals, including the trustees, president, top leadership team, mid-level leadership, and the faculty. With so many levels of leadership, each with different perspectives and expectations, the leadership situation is complex. Each of these leaders is critical to the performance of the institution. Each of these leaders has their own circles of influence, and from a leadership and governance perspective, each has their own lanes. When leaders stay in their lanes, the organization runs more smoothly; when leaders stray from their lanes, the situation often become chaotic. For example, if a faculty member goes directly to a trustee with a concern, the faculty member has strayed from his or her lane, and chaos is likely to result. Or if trustees get involved in the day-to-day operations of the university, they have strayed from their lane, and chaos is likely to result. Or if the president wants to tell a faculty member how to teach a class, he or she has strayed from their lane, and chaos is likely to result.

Trustees play an essential role in university performance, especially in setting direction for the university, choosing its president, and supporting the leadership team in making critical decisions. University boards often behave as if choosing the president is their main job, and otherwise rubberstamp the recommendations of the president and top leadership team. However, when competition becomes more intense, the role of the board becomes more important (Bozec, 2005). In this new era of Christian higher education, boards will need to be more involved in providing strategic direction for the university. This could mean increasing the size of the board of trustees, since research has found that organizational performance increases with larger boards,

especially those with more outside board members (Jackling & Johl, 2009). Adding board members who are also on other boards (multiple directorships) has been shown to positively influence research and development intensity (Bravo & Reguera-Alvarado, 2017), which may imply that universities who wish to become more innovative should consider adding trustees with expertise on other boards. Jaskyte (2015) found that “organizations that experienced continuous innovation had boards that were rich in human capital” and that successful “organizations looked for board members who had the right type of human capital needed for their organization’s continuous success” (p. 1939). Clearly, having the right members on the board of trustees can help the performance of the university.

The president is often considered to be the most important leader in the university, and leadership at the chief executive officer level is essential, especially in challenging times. The president plays a key role in framing strategy and managing expectations. In this new era in Christian higher education, where innovation is critically needed, the predisposition of the president toward innovation influences innovation success (Daellenbach et al., 1999). The university president must attempt to keep university leaders in their own lanes, which can be challenging at all levels, especially regarding trustees and faculty (who, as mentioned earlier, have dual roles as followers and leaders and share governance with the administration). Unfortunately, presidents often are not aware of this need or are unable to accomplish it successfully.

The top leadership team contributes significantly to university success. The top leadership team provides functional diversity, but that does not mean that having excellent functional leaders results in high organizational performance. While a technically competent top management team can boost the organization’s innovative capabilities (Daellenbach et al., 1999), the impact of functional diversity on organizational performance is dependent on the relationships among the president and

the top leadership team (Buyl et al., 2011). For the top leadership team to be effective, it must truly operate as a team.

Mid-level leaders—including deans, department chairs, and directors of functional areas—also play an essential role in university leadership. These leaders usually have the closest relationships with faculty and students, who are the lifeblood of the university. Mid-level leaders can support or sabotage the university’s strategic initiatives and are thus essential to organizational effectiveness.

Faculty play an important role in university leadership. Several components of faculty leadership are codified in the faculty governance documents of the institution, but the reality of faculty governance often falls short of those standards. One of the authors compared his institution’s faculty governance to 2 Timothy 3:5 (New International Version, 2011/1973), “having a form of godliness but denying its power” as “having the appearance of faculty governance but denying its reality.” Much of the time, this is fine; most faculty members want to be left alone to do the things they really care about—teaching and scholarship—and are happy to leave leadership to others. That is, until a crisis or top leadership transition occurs which threatens the university, at which point faculty members want to be involved in leadership decisions.

Faculty members also want to feel like their expertise is valued and their opinions are heard, and if any of the other leaders of the university treats them differently, faculty members can get quite involved in leadership and may stray from their lanes. The other choice—which is worse—is to become unresponsive to leadership. At that point, faculty members are neither good leaders nor good followers, but are resisters, which is usually not beneficial to the institution.

The preceding discussion illustrates the complexity of the leadership challenge in Christian colleges and universities. The situation in which Christian colleges and universities find themselves is challenging and the interrelationships among leader and followers are complex. Given these enormous challenges and complex interactions, high-performing leadership is essential to success.

Next, we will examine the leadership competencies necessary for success in the new era in Christian higher education.

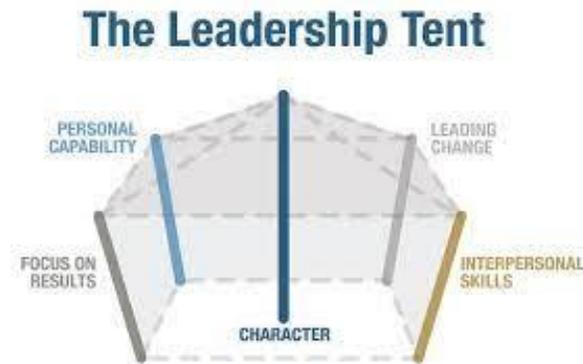
### **Critical Leadership Competencies**

The identification and selection of the appropriate leadership model or framework was critical to illuminating for institutional leaders the implications for successfully navigating the new era in Christian higher education. Two considerations were particularly important in this process. First, the model should utilize a competency-based leadership framework, allowing the researchers to explore the relative importance of specific leadership competencies in responding to the unique challenges and opportunities facing our institutions. Second, it was critical that the selected leadership model be grounded in strong research that has proven its value through leadership development over time.

A number of leadership models were considered, including Kouzes and Posner's *Leadership Challenge* (2017) and associated *Leadership Practices Inventory* (2012); Rath's *Strengths Finder* (2007) model, and Blanchard, Hodges, and Henry's (2016) *Lead Like Jesus* model. However, Zenger and Folkman's (2017) *Extraordinary Leader* model was selected for the purposes of this research because it is grounded in more than 30 years of research and practice, supported with data from more than 1.5 million *Extraordinary Leader 360* Assessment participants. Additionally, this research identifies sixteen specific leadership competencies in six categories (character, personal capability, focus on results, interpersonal skills, and leading change) that separate the top 10 percent of leaders from the rest (p. 4). This model has the additional benefit of emphasizing the importance of character in supporting each of the other competencies (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The Leadership Tent (Zenger and Folkman, 2017)*



Zenger and Folkman's (2017) research indicates that top leaders demonstrate the following competencies (p. 4):

**Character**

1. Displays high integrity and honesty

**Personal Capability**

2. Technical/professional expertise
3. Solves problems and analyzes issues
4. Innovates
5. Practices self-development

**Focus on Results**

6. Drives for results
7. Establishes stretch goals
8. Takes initiative

**Interpersonal Skills**

9. Communicates powerfully and prolifically
10. Inspires and motivates others to high performance

11. Builds relationships
12. Develops others
13. Collaboration and teamwork

### **Leading Change**

14. Develops strategic perspective
15. Champions change
16. Connects the group to the outside world

It is highly unlikely that any leader will demonstrate towering strengths in all of these competency areas. Zenger and Folkman (2017) point out that “there is no one right way to lead” (p. 4). In other words, different competency combinations can lead to success. However, Zenger and Folkman (2017) find that “the more strengths people have, the more likely they are to be perceived as great leaders [and] in general, leaders are most effective when they possess strengths in each of the major clusters of competencies” (p. 7). Even though a single leader may not demonstrate all these competencies, these competencies are all needed for an institution to thrive. Therefore, it is critical to select an institutional leader who demonstrates strong character and (as much as possible) at least one competency in each of the other categories and to surround this leader with other leaders who have complementary competencies. Zenger and Folkman (2017) concur, noting that “for an organization to have exceptional leadership ability, it needs to assemble the right team with ample diversity and talent to maximize the collective influence of the team” and “The more great leaders an organization develops, the more it will become an outstanding organization” (pp. 3-4).

The importance of character (honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, etc.) to effective leadership, particularly during turbulent times, cannot be overstated. As John Maxwell (2002) says: “He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk.” Followers are unlikely to follow a leader who cannot be trusted and is not respected. In fact, Zenger and Folkman (2017) note that a lack of

character can be a fatal flaw for leaders, potentially washing out other significant strengths and a leader's overall effectiveness:

While our focus [is] on developing strengths, there are some circumstances when a focus on weaknesses is warranted. This often happens when the nature of the weakness jeopardizes the center pole of the "leadership tent": character. If a person is not honorable, does not keep promises, does not tell the truth to people, or if this person places personal gain above the needs of the organization, then that flaw will cause the person to be ineffective (p. 7).

Zenger and Folkman (2017) also point out that additional fatal flaws may include "an inability to learn from mistakes... poor interpersonal skills, unwillingness to accept new ideas, lack of accountability, and a lack of initiative" (p. 7)

Zenger and Folkman (2017) identify the ability of a leader to successfully champion change as, perhaps, the truest test of leadership effectiveness – the crucible of leadership:

The highest expression of leadership involves change, and the highest order of change is guiding an organization through a new strategic direction, changing its culture, or changing the fundamental business model. Thus, change is an important and ultimate criterion by which to measure leadership effectiveness (p. 3).

As noted earlier, we believe that the current environment confronting Christian higher education calls for competitive positioning, change, and innovation that is much more purpose-driven, strategic, customer-centric, proactive, revolutionary, and abrupt than the industry is accustomed to. These realities, in turn, require strong leadership that is appropriate for this new era in Christian higher education. As a result, new strategies for identifying critical competencies, selecting leaders and leadership teams who demonstrate these competencies, and finding creative ways to engage the competencies are needed to help our institutions thrive. Next, we will explore strategies for

effectively leveraging leadership competencies to help institutions thrive in the new era of Christian higher education.

### **Effectively Leveraging Leadership Competencies**

To effectively leverage Zenger and Folkman's 16 competencies, the leader needs to align the proper competencies with the unaddressed threats to the institution. Table 1 lists multiple threats to an institution's fiscal or cultural health that are common in today's turbulent higher education market. To illustrate the use of this table, a common strategic problem found in private universities is the lack of a clear institutional competitive advantage. Without this distinctive, the president, board members, and cabinet officers will not understand why prospective students do or do not choose to attend. In turn, resources are not aligned in a strategic way so as to bring about maximum return on investment. Without alignment, stakeholders do not have a clear picture as to what makes the university competitive against the other universities. To address this threat, a leader should be able to identify, harness, and leverage critical institutional strengths/competencies; possess a strategic perspective; and communicate powerfully. If applied properly, the outcome will align and deploy university resources in a cost-effective manner and stakeholders will understand the university's purpose and the basis on which it competes against other universities.

Since no one executive is a master of all 16 competencies, the most obvious implication of this research will be on the university's staffing and professional development procedures. In the same way that today's turbulent environment required changes in student recruitment, marketing, and degree offerings, so too must changes to executive<sup>1</sup> staffing methods parallel changes in the workforce. Often, these methods are highly similar to historical corporate executive recruitment methods whereby candidates were chosen for their technical expertise, administrative skill, or financial acumen. But due to the emergence of new environmental threats, changes in social norms,

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of brevity, the word "executive" in this context may mean Board member, President, Vice President, Dean, or Chair depending on the size of the university and the scope of the executive's influence.

and the resulting change in organizational processes, universities need to recruit executives less on the basis of historical resume entries, and more on the basis of competencies that match current and future challenges. Today, universities need to hire executives with “soft skills” that allow them to motivate a diverse, technologically savvy workforce; who can play the role of campus statesperson, deal effectively with constituents ranging from students, to parents, to the corporations who employ graduates, and to local community members; and who can rapidly and effectively apply their competencies on a new campus, in what may be an unfamiliar strategic landscape, and often with colleagues whom they didn’t know previously (Sadun et al., 2022).

Additionally, changes to campus professional development programs must expand beyond such historical activities such as a faculty member attending a conference or a staff member attending a webinar (which only maintain the status quo) to include the intentional identification and development of an individual’s competencies. This is especially true for those competencies necessary to address the university’s current and future threats.

### **Conclusion**

Our primary contention in this paper is that the current environment confronting Christian higher education calls for competitive positioning, change, and innovation that is much more purpose-driven, strategic, customer-centric, proactive, revolutionary, and abrupt than the industry is accustomed to. These realities, in turn, require strong leadership that is appropriate for this new era in Christian higher education.

In our review of the various theories of leadership and change management, we argue that Zenger and Folkman’s (2017) 16 core leadership competencies serve as a highly useful framework for the development of leaders at multiple levels of executive leadership within Christian higher education. We apply the Zenger and Folkman core leadership competencies model into a simple initial heuristic framework which demonstrates particularly at the executive and board levels the

relevancy, adaptability, and future promise which this model may have in identifying areas where presidents and boards have their own leadership development work which must be undertaken.

The stakes for Christian higher education have never been higher and the challenges have perhaps never been greater. As teachers, scholars, administrators and consultants/practitioners who have labored alongside (and in some cases served with) executive leaders and boards across Christian higher education, we certainly understand that this paper in and of itself provides no easy answers or quick solutions. Indeed, there are no such things available to the faithful leaders of our institutions.

However, we do hope that the initial scope of this paper will provide a new(er) line of inquiry, with new questions and new potential answers to the challenges that we face in these times. If our institutions are to do more than simply survive over the next decade, it will require bolder, more creative, more innovative and more risk-taking than we have seen in our collective experiences.

Those institutions and their leaders who are willing to take on those challenges with both the honesty of knowing where they truly stand in relationship to the marketplace, what their true mission and vision is and must be for a vibrant future, what commitments and risks they must be willing to take to be truly competitive, and what deep changes they are going to need to make in order to get there, are the institutions that we believe will thrive into the future. And we are convinced that there are leaders who will embrace that challenge and step into that future knowing that they are doing so both in faith, hope, and the resolve that comes from knowing this work we are all called to for both today's students and for generations of students to come. Perhaps this paper will be a new resource for those leaders and others who are determined to bring their very best efforts and their very best people and resources to bear upon the work to which they are called.

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**Table 1**

*Threats, Barriers, Competencies, and Thriving*

<p><b>Unaddressed Threats</b></p>	<p><b>Resulting Barriers</b></p>	<p><b>Competency Needed for Change</b></p>	<p><b>Desired end state (Thriving)</b></p>
<p><b>Lack of a clear institutional competitive advantage</b></p>	<p>Lack of competitive clarity to stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying, harnessing, and leveraging critical strengths/competencies</li> <li>- Develops strategic perspective</li> <li>- Communicates powerfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University stakeholders have clarity around the institution’s WHY and WHAT</li> <li>- Identification of a competitive advantage that can be sustained</li> </ul>
<p><b>Affordability</b></p>	<p>Existing structure, processes, and cultural norms (the way we do things)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying and avoiding fatal flaws</li> <li>- Personal capabilities</li> <li>- Focus on results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realigns resources as necessary</li> <li>- Works on a “stop-doing” list to maintain relevance, efficiency</li> <li>- Doesn’t chase “new” for its own sake - looks for strategic</li> </ul>

			<p>opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tells its stories well</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impending decline in the number of college aged students</b></p>	<p>Misalignment of resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying, harnessing, and leveraging critical strengths/competencies</li> <li>- Personal capabilities</li> <li>- Focus on results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realigns resources as necessary</li> <li>- Works on a “stop-doing” list to maintain relevance, efficiency</li> </ul>
<p><b>Short-term, non-degree credentials</b></p>	<p>Differences in stakeholder perspectives and resulting priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develops strategic perspective</li> <li>- Focus on results</li> <li>- Identifying, harnessing, and leveraging critical strengths/competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly engaged stakeholders, starting with the Board of Trustees</li> <li>- Realigns resources as necessary</li> <li>- Works on a “stop-doing” list to maintain relevance, efficiency</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organizational</b></p>	<p>Mistrust among</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong character</li> </ul>	<p>The board and president</p>

<p><b>and cultural balkanization</b></p>	<p>administration, faculty, and staff groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpersonal skills</li> </ul>	<p>set the pace for leadership-clarity, integrity, deep-accountability and trust</p>
<p><b>Lack of clarity in strategic vision, direction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mission drift</li> <li>- Confusion internally and externally about who we are, our “why”</li> <li>- Lack of a compelling case</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong stakeholder engagement process</li> <li>- Engaging external perspective to assist in process</li> <li>- Research to understand how marketplace defines the institution</li> <li>- Commitment to speed, while deepening trust</li> <li>- Develops strategic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Robust strategic plan</li> <li>- SMART goals tied to annual operating budget</li> <li>- Reenergized stakeholders at all levels</li> <li>- University stakeholders have clarity around the institution’s WHY and WHAT</li> </ul>

		perspective	
<p><b>Government policies threatening institution right to hire, religious freedom and mission identity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threatened access to federal financial aid funding</li> <li>- Potential division/tension with sponsoring denomination/ church and other key constituencies (faculty, alumni) depending upon board position on APPROACH and DEPTH of breaking from government funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Robust strategic initiatives to identify alternatives to federal funding</li> <li>- Gaining new commitments from engaged stakeholder regarding their support for the institution</li> <li>- Develops strategic perspective</li> <li>- Connects the group to the outside world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial independence from federal funding</li> <li>- Maintain mission distinctives while also maintain accreditation status</li> <li>- Engaged stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Board division/dysfunction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threats to good governance of the institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intentional board development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A unified board that speaks and acts with one voice</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of potential executive leadership and faculty/staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work including deepening of relationships</li> <li>- Pruning of unhealthy/toxic board members</li> <li>- Displays high integrity and honesty</li> <li>- Builds relationships</li> <li>- Collaboration and teamwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An engaged board that knows its responsibilities and does not micro-manage the executive</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unplanned executive leadership transition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creates uncertainty</li> <li>- Loss of momentum</li> <li>- Potential board division</li> <li>- Potential faculty disruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Conduct succession planning which includes scenario plan for unexpected departure</li> <li>- Develops strategic perspective</li> <li>- Takes initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce succession plan approved by board which includes scenarios for interim appointment</li> </ul>

## **Human Dignity: A First Principle of Leadership**

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### **Abstract**

Human dignity is an important, yet under-explored topic in leadership and management research that holds particular importance for Christians in the field. It reflects the idea that the human person has value as an inherent aspect of our design by God and as a perceived aspect of interpersonal relationships. This paper presents a summary of views of human dignity. It then provides the findings of recent research that suggests a relationship between the inner values of organizational leaders with respect to human dignity and the perception followers have of those leaders' motivations. The paper concludes by suggesting that an advancement to organizational leadership theory and the practice of leadership development may be achieved through explicit incorporation of human dignity concepts.

## **Human Dignity: A First Principle of Leadership**

In Christian biblical tradition, human beings are created in the image of God, often referred to as the *imago dei*. Although all humans fall short of God's design for them, they are made to reflect his good character and to be aligned with his design and desires within the mission of God, the *missio dei*. The historical orthodox Christian tradition holds the view that humans have dignity because they are image-bearers of God (Hoekema, 1986; Kilner, 2015). Dignity, an inherent human trait that reflects God himself, is the basis for mutual human respect, just treatment, and concern for one another. In this paper, we explore the implications of human dignity in the organizational context by presenting the results of a recent qualitative study involving the values and attitudes of organizational leaders regarding human dignity and its role in the leader-follower relationship. We report various views on human dignity, outline the biblical view of dignity, and explore some of the recent research on human dignity in the field of organizational leadership. Based on these foundations, we then discuss the implications of human dignity for leadership theory and practice including connections between altruistic love and respect for human dignity as admirable leadership qualities and briefly report on the related findings of our recent qualitative study. This paper concludes with a discussion of implications of human dignity in leadership theory and leadership development practice, including the proposition that respect for human dignity may form an *ab initio* first principle of leadership.

### **Background on Human Dignity**

#### **Views on Human Dignity**

Views on human dignity are rooted in historical, cultural, philosophical, and theological traditions. Generally, these views fall into four categories (Kyle et al, 2017a; Kyle 2020):

1. Human dignity as a matter of social rank or standing
2. Human dignity as a matter of inherent worth

3. Human dignity as a matter of normative behavior
4. Human dignity as an illegitimate concept

The first of these, human dignity as a matter of social rank, suggests that one's dignity is hierarchical and defined by one's role or standing in society or community. For example, Aristotle believed some humans are born into a life of nobility (i.e., dignity) while others are born into serving classes (Aristotle, 2001a, 2001b). This view of human dignity persisted well into the Enlightenment period (Kyle, 2020). The view that dignity is a matter of inherent worth is primarily rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition. In this view, human dignity is understood to be an inherent trait of the human person and is defined as one's intrinsic value. This view holds that dignity is universal and independent of one's ability to create value in society. Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant contributed to the inherent worth view by proposing a moralistic framework of human dignity based on the rational autonomy of the human being (Kant, 1996a, 1996b). Even though this view of human dignity has its detractors and critics, it is the most widely held view in the social science research community (Kyle, 2020). The third approach to human dignity is that it is measured by one's behavior in social settings. The phrase, "acting in a dignified manner" conveys the essence of this view. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian framework is an example of this approach to dignity. He argues against inherent value of the human being as a moralist fallacy and instead suggests that a person's value is measured by their willingness and ability to abide by the expectations placed upon them by the state (Bentham, 1843). This is not a commonly held view in the research community (Kyle, 2020). Finally, some hold the view that humans do not have inherent dignity and, as a result, are not due any inherent rights, regard, or esteem and that rights are derived solely from social constructions. This view is often rooted in secularist-humanist views of human anthropology and the connection between dignity and assumed rights in specific social issues and questions. Frustrated by pro-life arguments in the realm of bioethics, for example, Macklin (2003) and Pinker (2008) have

argued that human dignity is a bogus concept that should be tossed out of serious academic and legal discussions.

### **Biblical View of Human Dignity**

As noted above, the view that human dignity is an inherent human quality primarily derives from the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition (Riley, 2010). It is rooted in a biblical anthropology and, specifically, the account of the creation of humans by God. According to Genesis 1:26, Adam was created in God's *image* (תְּצַלְמֵנוּ – *tselem* – a carving or statue) and *likeness* (דְּמוּתֵנוּ – *demuth* – to be like). Humans are made as image-bearers of God, the *imago dei*. Under the Cultural Mandate given in Genesis 1:26-29, and passing from one generation to another, the *imago dei* distinguishes humans from the rest of Creation (Hoekema, 1986; Kilner, 2015). The universal, equal, and inherent dignity of all human beings stems from God's dignity rather than from the human physical form which is lowly and made of dust (I Corinthians 15:46-49) or from human moral actions which are subject to fallibility (Numbers 23:19). Human dignity stems from the fact that we are made in the image of God, that is, made to be like him and to reflect his character. We see this principle reflected in the many social commands of Scripture, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment "thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13) and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, Mark 12:31). The social commands of Scripture reflect God's character and good design that humans treat one another with dignity. The New Testament extends and expands our understanding of human dignity and the *imago dei*. The Apostle Paul instructs us to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is the perfect image-bearer, perfectly reflecting God the Father. We are being "conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29). We are called to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1) which, among other things, is a call to live up to the dignity inherent in our image-bearing design. Our treatment of one another matters because it is one of the

ways that we worship God, giving honor to his creative work and character. As will be explored in a forthcoming section, the mandate to respect the dignity of others extends to all areas of life, including the leader-follower relationship in the organizational context.

Through the centuries, Christians have sought to understand and apply the concept of human dignity as presented in Scripture. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1956) applied the *imago dei* concept to form an early humanist view of dignity. He argued that humans stand somewhere between angels and animals in that they uniquely possess the ability to pursue philosophical thought, which he believed to transcend earthly existence (Kirk, 1956). Although rejected by the church leaders of the time, Pico's ideas provided a platform for Erasmus and others to establish a broader framework of humanism (Kirk, 1956). It can be argued that by focusing on the human ability to engage in philosophical (i.e., higher order) thought, Pico set the stage for Immanuel Kant's Enlightenment proposal that humans are distinguished by, and have dignity because of, their rational autonomy (Meilaender, 2009). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Blaise Pascal followed a similar line of thinking. He wrote,

Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him. But, if the universe were to crush him, man would still be more noble than that which killed him, because he knows that he dies and the advantage which the universe has over him; the universe knows nothing of this. All our dignity consists, then, in thought. By it we must elevate ourselves, and not by space and time which we cannot fill. Let us endeavour, then, to think well; this is the principle of morality. (Pascal, 1958, p. 97).

### **Brief Review of Human Dignity in Management and Organizational Leadership Research**

Research on human dignity in the workplace has primarily followed the inherent value concept and, to a large degree, has focused on worker's rights, collective bargaining, and progressive

socio-political ideals (Kyle, 2020). Some have explored ways to resolve the apparent conflict between unskilled labor tasks and the human need for significance. One researcher argues that while employers should not “extol the goodness of scrubbing toilets and laundering linens”, they should acknowledge that the “basic dignity and inherent human worth of the oppressed transcends their labor, which often fails to express or actualize their human potential.” (Veltman, 2016, p. 33). In other words, she argues that while some labor is considered lowly and degrading, the dignity of the laborer is found in their personhood rather than in their work. Castrillón raises questions of a manager’s obligation to promote human dignity in the workplace: “First, how can managers preserve the dignity and value of all the people affected by their actions and decisions? Second: how can managers themselves come to deserve the dignity of the offices they hold?” (Castrillón, 2012, p. 160). He goes on to propose that managers must be trained in the concepts of human dignity and that business schools have a responsibility to teach about human dignity with a “preoccupation with its promotion in others” (Castrillón, 2012, p. 175). Some have suggested that human dignity in the workplace is primarily about the promotion of “dignified work” and the opportunity for workers to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect, demand a living wage and equal opportunity, resist abuse, and take pride in his/her work (Hodson, 2001; Sayer, 2007). Citing numerous accidents and deaths on the job, Barrett and Thomson (2012) connect human dignity with the need for occupational safety. Hamel (2007) claims that human dignity is the basis for a “just” workplace that includes provisions for processes that are physically safe and not harmful to a worker’s moral integrity. In her exploration of severance compensation, Vettori (2012) suggests that human dignity and commercial viability (i.e., profit motivation) are fundamentally opposed to one another. Similarly, Morin (2012, p. 190) poses the question, “Are the concepts of business performance and human dignity compatible?”

Recent research on workplace dignity, specifically the implications of dignity for the leader-follower relationship, has focused on perceptions of dignity as a lived experience. For example, a team at the University of Louisville has conducted qualitative and quantitative research on human dignity perceptions in the workplace (Lucas, 2015, 2017; Thomas and Lucas, 2019). Their findings suggest four aspects of workplace dignity:

1. Acknowledgement that dignity is expressed in relationship, communication, and interaction.
2. Understanding that dignity is experienced by most individuals as both inherent and earned.
3. Understanding that the sense of dignity is very personal, and the individual involved is the final arbiter of their sense of workplace dignity.
4. Understanding that workplace dignity is often experienced more by its absence than its presence.

Kyle has explored human dignity in the leader-follower relationship as an element of workplace well-being (Kyle et al, 2017a, 2017b; Kyle and Wond, 2018; Kyle, 2020). These findings show that leaders and followers perceive inclusive decision-making to be one of the leadership behaviors that contributes most to the sense of human dignity in the workplace. The findings also link dignity-affirming leadership behaviors to the positive psychology concept of mattering.

### **Human Dignity, Altruistic Love, and the Inner Life of the Leader**

#### **Spiritual Leadership and the Inner Life of the Leader**

One's views on human dignity are held in the inner thought life of values and attitudes. The inner life has been an area of interest in the leadership literature. It is closely linked to the concepts of ethics, values, meaning making, and authenticity (Palmer, 1998; Moxley, 2000; Bolman and Deal, 2001; Ciulla, 2004a; Cameron, Mora, et al, 2011; Holden, 2012; Fry, Latham, et al, 2017; Hicks, 2018). Morrison et al (2007) suggests a connection between one's sense of "meaningfulness of work" as an inner mindset and one's level of commitment and engagement in the workplace that

can be influenced by organizational leaders. Organizations that incorporate people-centered values into their culture initiatives are better able to engage the hearts and minds (i.e., inner life) of followers when such initiatives connect meaningfully with their interests, values, and motivations and when those values are promoted and exemplified by senior leaders (O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000; Pfeffer, 2010). Leaders that demonstrate inner values in their outward behavior, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, tend to have more success as leaders (Reave, 2005; Pfeffer, 2010). Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 139) advocate for organizations to recognize that individuals have "an inner life that takes place in the context of community." Holden argues that leaders that fail to try to engage the inner life do so at their own peril. He says the expectations and customs of the professional workplace "train us to keep our inner life to ourselves, but these ragged, emotional, and spiritual issues deepen our leadership and humanity, impacting followers long after our tenure as leaders is over. They yield leaders who speak from a full, authentic self. When these interim dynamics are unexamined or kept silent, people, performance and culture suffer" (Holden, 2012, p. 16). Beehner (2019, p. 62) remarks, "leadership begins internally because it is difficult to lead others unless we first learn to manage ourselves".

Spiritual leadership theory suggests that specific aspects of the inner life of the leader are essential to creating a workplace environment that positively contributes to leader and follower well-being (Fry, 2003; Fry and Slocum, 2008; Fry and Cohen, 2009; Fry, Matherly, and Ouimet, 2010; Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013; Fry, Latham, et al, 2017). In explaining the theory of spiritual leadership, Fry suggests that "leaders must get in touch with their core values and communicate them to followers through vision and personal actions" (Fry, 2003, p. 710). He goes on to explain that those values include, among other things, "the universal spiritual values of humility, charity, and veracity." Using the causal structure of spiritual leadership as a theoretical framework, recent research confirms and adds to our understanding of the importance of the inner life of the leader by connecting inner

values and attitudes with respect for human dignity (Kyle, 2020). Although human dignity is not a core theme of spiritual leadership, the “primacy of people and human well-being” is a key assumption of the theory (Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013, p. 223). Human dignity is an implied, rather than explicit, concept in the theory. At least four implied connections have been identified between human dignity and spiritual leadership: 1) basic assumptions of the validity of human dignity, 2) altruistic love as the basis for mutual well-being, 3) wholeness of the human person, and 4) service to others as an acknowledgement of human dignity (Kyle, 2020). For this paper, we will focus on altruistic love as the basis for mutual well-being.

### **Altruistic Love and Human Dignity as Essential Values of a Leader**

Altruistic love is the desire for the well-being of another person (Wojtyla, 1981).

I Corinthians 13, which provides the bible’s most comprehensive definition of love, makes clear that loving relationships are rooted in a desire for the well-being of the other and are not built on the assumption of *quid pro quo*. In other words, altruistic love is built upon respect and appreciation of the other person (Lindsley, 2008; Mattson and Clark, 2011; Coates, 2013). Maslow (1971) describes this as “unambivalent” love:

The point at which a corner is turned is when love becomes so great and so pure (unambivalent) for the object itself that its good is what we want, not what it can do for us, i.e., when it passes beyond being means and becomes an end. (Maslow, 1971, p. 136).

Referencing Kant’s Categorical Imperative (Kant, 1996a) and adding the Greek concept of *agape* (i.e., unconditional love for humanity), Wojtyla (1981) suggests that desire for the well-being of another person is the definition of altruistic love, and that love is the only reasonable posture of one human toward another. Together, these ideas suggest that altruistic love is rooted in the recognition of the inherent value (i.e., dignity) of the other person. Fry picks up this theme by suggesting that we love someone by showing “care, concern, and appreciation” for them (Fry, 2003, p. 712). In the

organizational context, altruistic love, the desire for a colleague to flourish, and expenditure of personal effort toward their well-being rests on the assumption that humans have value (i.e., dignity). As leaders and followers work together, altruistic love forms a bond of mutual value and respect (Coates, 2013).

Baumann (2007) suggests that the human need for respect from others is an essential element of human dignity. Mattson and Clark also suggest a link between human dignity and respectful behaviors that benefit others more than the self. They note, “granting dignity to others can be accompanied [by] a willingness to sacrifice oneself in the service of others” (Mattson and Clark, 2011, p. 308). Preliminary field work suggests that mutual respect is a key aspect of the ways that leaders and followers experience human dignity in the workplace (Lucas, 2015; Kyle and Wond, 2018; Kyle, 2020). Positive psychology offers another nuance to our understanding of altruistic, dignity-honoring behaviors. Rather than seeing altruism in fundamentally egoistic terms (e.g., “I love because it makes me feel good” or “I love because I sense that I was loved first”), positive altruism accepts a balance of benefits for both the altruistic actor and the recipient (Irani, 2018). In this approach, the egoistic benefits of altruistic behavior are seen as incidental, unintended side-effects of otherwise unselfish behavior rooted in genuine empathy for the other (Batson et al, 2011; Irani, 2018). Empathy, in this approach is defined as an “other-focused emotional response that is congruent with and provoked by the perceived welfare of the other person” (Irani, 2018. p. 20).

### **Research Findings: Human Dignity and Perceptions of the Inner Life of the Leader**

To explore perceptions of human dignity in the leader-follower relationship, we conducted a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with nineteen executives, managers, and individual contributors. This research is phenomenological in that it sought to explore the lived experience of human dignity in the leader-follower relationship. All but one participant lived and worked in the United States at the time of the study. Roughly 25% were immigrants. All the participants worked in

white collar environments and reflect a range of demographic traits. Roughly one-third identify as Christian. Interestingly, and worthy of further investigation beyond the scope of this paper, the responses of Christians were largely indistinguishable from participants that did not identify as such. The study was designed to explore perceptions of human dignity held by leaders and followers. One aspect of the exploration involved the perception of leader values and attitudes about the role of human dignity in the leader-follower relationship. The interviews and subsequent transcript analysis revealed three ideas held by nearly all the participants:

1. *The perception that one's inner life values and attitudes about human dignity guide one's outward behavior.*

This is not a surprising result, but the specific perceptions about human dignity are instructive and help establish a foundation for the other findings. The research revealed that participants universally associated dignity-respecting behaviors with values and attitudes in the inner life of the leader. This reflects the idea that, when evaluating a leader, employees “look not only at what is done, but also at the motivations and beliefs that underlie management approaches” (Pfeffer, 2010, p. 29). Spiritual leadership theory suggests that the inner life of the leader explains and accounts for the motivation to create an others-oriented, inclusive, service-minded organizational culture (Fry, 2003; Fry and Slocum, 2008; Fry and Cohen, 2009; Fry, Matherly, and Ouimet, 2010; Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013; Fry, Latham, et al, 2017). These values are part of the inner life of the leader in what Fry refers to as the “spiritual realm of purpose and meaning, values and beliefs, emotional and moral development, and self-understanding” (Fry, 2009, p. 79) and that “speaks to the feeling individuals have about the fundamental meaning of who they are, what they are doing, and the contributions they are making” (Fry, Latham, et al, 2017, p. 24).

2. *The perception that inner values that respect human dignity are most often formed in early life but can also be formed and reformed in adult life.* Most participants, whether in leadership or individual

contributor roles, expressed that their views on human dignity were mostly formed in early life and education. For example, most cited learning values from parents, teachers, club leaders, and athletic coaches. Early life was not the only source of dignity formation, however. Several participants expressed learning important lessons about human dignity and human value in the workplace, often under the guidance of mentors or by observing respected role models. Again, this is a straightforward observation, but is instructive in context. It suggests that values and attitudes about human dignity can be formed and reformed well beyond early life and even in the context of work itself, giving hope to the potential for human dignity-based advances in leadership development programs.

3. *The perception that dignity-related values are formative to a leader's philosophy about the value and balance of instrumental and human outcomes in an organization.* Specifically, leaders perceived to have a high regard for human dignity in the workplace were also perceived to maintain good balance between instrumental outcomes (e.g., profit and productivity) and human outcomes (e.g., individual sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging), and were less likely to pursue exclusively selfish outcomes at the expense of their followers. For the participants of this study, there was a perception that leaders honor the dignity of followers by not only emphasizing instrumental outcomes in their leadership pursuits, but also by emphasizing human outcomes.

For the participants in this study, some leaders are clearly motivated by the well-being of their followers in addition to the instrumental outcomes of the organization. The participants perceived that this motivation stems from the leader's inner sense of the inherent value of their followers. Given the strong link between the concepts of human dignity and human value, one could argue that when leaders recognize the transcendent value of their followers they are, in fact, recognizing and respecting the dignity of those followers. That is, those leaders are aware of a

balance between the value of instrumental outcomes and the value of human well-being outcomes for employees. It is also worth noting that the participants in the study perceive the inner life, especially one's respect for human dignity, to influence outward behavior in a direct and even causal manner. The assumption is that inner values are intrinsic to the thoughts and decision patterns of leaders and not something that must be weighed consciously in the moment of every action. This concept was expressed, in one form or another, by every participant of this study. It is noteworthy that the responses of executive participants were very similar to the responses of mid-managers and individual contributors. This consistency across roles suggests a potential common ground for organization-wide discussions about human dignity in the leader-follower relationship. For example, all the executive participants felt that human dignity is an inherent human trait. In addition, all the executive participants cited family upbringing and education as the main sources of their views on human dignity. All of them expressed, in one form or another, that one's thoughts and ideas (i.e., inner life) about human dignity impact one's outward actions as a leader. All the executives also noted that respect for human dignity is an aspect of the leader-follower relationship that involves the leader acknowledging the worth and value of individuals beyond their contributions toward instrumental outcomes.

### **Implications for Leadership Development**

For Christians well-versed in I Corinthians 13 and other "love passages" of Scripture, it may seem self-evident that love of others and respect for their inherent worth would contribute positively to well-being in the workplace. Even so, as researchers and educators of leadership and management, it is fruitful to challenge ourselves to move beyond the apparent by exploring the intricacies of these concepts and the perceptions people have of them. In this exploration, we might find that we are able to advance the state of leadership theory and practice by proposing an *ab initio*

first principle of leadership by incorporating respect for human dignity as an explicit element of our work.

That some leaders exhibit dignity-respecting behaviors stemming from their values and attitudes suggests that leader development could benefit from robust formation in the knowledge and implications of human dignity as an element of altruistic love. To consider the implications for leadership development, we must consider the state of inner life awareness among leaders and emerging leaders. As noted previously, inward and outward alignment in a leader is important since followers look not only at leader behaviors but also leader intention and motivation when evaluating leader success (Pfeffer, 2010). This offers a potential explanation for the suggestion that leaders that lack awareness of their inner life are less likely to experience success as a leader (Palmer, 1998; Moxely, 2000; Fry, 2003; Sweeney and Fry, 2012). Alignment of the inner life and outward behavior also has implications in the domain of leadership ethics. In suggesting that ethics is the heart of leadership, Ciulla (2004a) proposes that the inner life of values guides decisions and actions and is how leaders and followers distinguish between right and wrong in actions, intentions, and character. Connecting our research with the inner life concepts mentioned here suggests that there may be significant value in emphasizing human dignity and inherent human value as an element of leadership development programs.

Castrillón (2012) proposes that these ideas do not come naturally, that managers must be trained in the concepts of human dignity, and that business schools have a responsibility to teach about human dignity and its organizational implications. Hicks has suggested that all leaders, and we would include here all students of leadership, must wake up to their inner values and attitudes about the dignity and worth of the human person, something she calls “dignity consciousness” (Hicks, 2018). She argues that dignity consciousness involves “understanding the complex, often conflicted state of our inner worlds and the emotional challenges we face daily.” (Hicks, 2018, p. 7). As we

consider the need to incorporate human dignity more explicitly in leadership development programs, we also need to consider how we might go about doing that. As a starting place, Irving and Strauss have proposed a framework for emphasizing the value of followers in the organizational context based on observations of Barnabas in the book of Acts. They do not refer directly to human dignity as a leader motivation, but their approach to leadership is rooted in the appreciation of the value of others that is closely linked to the dignity concepts discussed here. Their framework includes six elements that could be readily incorporated into a leadership development program (Irving and Strauss, 2019, pp. 79-84):

1. Valuing by seeing the needs of others (Acts 4:36-37)
2. Valuing by seeking reconciliation (Acts 9:26-27)
3. Valuing by crossing cultural boundaries (Acts 11:19-24)
4. Valuing by seeing and encouraging the strengths of others (Acts 11:25-26)
5. Valuing by empowering others above personal prestige and or position (Acts 13-14)
6. Valuing by seeking the best in others (Acts 15:39; II Timothy 4:11)

Given the biblical foundations of human dignity and the *imago dei*, this challenge is particularly pertinent for Christian researchers and educators in the field. Human dignity is an inherent, God-ordained aspect of human design that has significant implications for the leader-follower relationship. The research presented here indicates that followers are keenly aware of those implications, albeit not from a Christian viewpoint, as they observe leaders and seek to follow them. Understood from a biblical perspective, human dignity is an inherent and fundamental aspect of the human person. And yet, it is not the prominent topic in leadership research and praxis that it might be.

Given its importance and perceptual impact, respect for human dignity is arguably a first principle of leadership with significant implications for theory construction and validation. How

might we approach the integration and synthesis of human dignity into the current milieu of leadership research and praxis? We might start by evaluating the prominent organizational leadership theories in the context of human dignity. As mentioned above, work has been done to explore the human dignity connections in one organizational leadership theory, spiritual leadership (Kyle and Wond, 2018; Kyle, 2020). As future work, these connections could be explored in virtually all organizational leadership theories, such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1998), ethical leadership (Brown et al, 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006), and authentic leadership (Avolio et al, 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Ethical leadership, for example, is also closely related to inner life values and therefore a good candidate for the next theory to be studied in this lens (Burns, 1978; Bass and Avolio, 1993; Ciulla, 2004a; 2004b; Brown et al, 2005). Another avenue for further research is to explore the role of human dignity in leadership development programs. For example, there is opportunity to encourage emerging leaders to explore human dignity as part of their inner value system and to gain dignity-specific reflections from employees and colleagues through 360 feedback programs. Christian leaders have the unique opportunity to consider their own leadership role and responsibilities in light of human dignity and the *imago dei*, as revealed in Scripture.

### **Conclusion**

We have presented some of the results of a research study involving the inner life of values and attitudes of organizational leaders. This inner life is not limited to values and attitudes about leadership. It is also where we find ideas and perceptions of human dignity, memories of lived experiences that inform these ideas and perceptions, and emotional awareness of ourselves and others. The inner life is where we hold views on the value of the human being. It is where we wrestle with the questions of inherent vs. earned dignity. It is where our inclinations to respect or deny the dignity of another person are most firmly rooted. We have proposed that advancements can be made to leadership theory and practice, as well as to the discipline of leadership development,

by explicitly incorporating training on human dignity and the *imago dei* from which human dignity is established. This advancement would be based on the ideas that inner values motivate outward behavior, that perceptions of human dignity are often formed in early life but can be reformed in adult life, and that well-formed ideas about human dignity in a leader and resulting behaviors can result in follower perceptions of value-balance between instrumental and human well-being outcomes in an organization.

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## **Christian Perspectives on Social Exchange Theory**

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### **Abstract**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) considers a sequence of reciprocal, social (non-economic) exchanges as central in the process of relationship building. SET has been applied in various ways in the management literature. This paper defines key assumptions and elements of the SET framework and their application in the literature of leadership and organizational behavior. These assumptions are investigated through a variety of Christian perspectives which at times challenge or add nuance to SET theory and its application. Implications for the application of SET are discussed.

### **Christian Perspectives on Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory (SET), which models the building of social relationships by considering two-person relationships as a continuing set of reciprocal social exchanges, has been used to provide explanatory power for models of leadership and organizational behavior. The literature of SET is a wide ranging one reflecting both the wide application of the theory and its conceptual challenges (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This paper will consider the key elements, and especially the core assumptions, of the theory from a variety of Christian perspectives which both support and challenge some of these elements and assumptions. It will then consider how the applications of the theory might be modified to address these perspectives or suggest alternate ways in which leadership or organizational behavior might be grounded in theory and in practice.

### **Origins and Key Aspects of Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory considers social interactions in terms of social (non-economic) exchanges which generate mutual obligations. SET's origins can be traced back at least to the 1920's (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The work of Homans (1961), reflecting a behavioral approach, and Blau (1964), using a more economic lens - both writing in the early 1960s - laid the foundations common to most versions of SET.

Both consider social exchange as "an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons" (Homans (1961) as cited in Blau, 1964). In effect, SET "may be viewed as providing an economic metaphor to social relationships" (Chibucos et al., 2005, p. 137). The definition above suggests some of the key elements of SET:

*1. SET considers social (generally non-monetary) reciprocal exchanges between people - favors, assistance, courtesies, concessions, ideas (Blau, 1964, p. 88).*

The exchanges considered by SET are characterized by **reciprocity** and a certain ambiguity (Blau, 1964, pp. 91–93). SET considers a sequence of exchanges, with each exchange made with the expectation that it will be reciprocated. Of course, this reciprocity is not generally symmetrical - for example, one might reciprocate a courtesy with visible gratitude - but SET considers that some kind of reciprocity is assumed in each action of the sequence. An important distinction between social and strictly economic exchange is that social exchange “entails *unspecified* obligations ... Social exchange ... involves the principle that one person does another a favor, and while there is a general expectation of some future return, its exact nature is definitely *not* stipulated in advance.” (italics in original) (Blau, 1964, p. 93) Thus, this type of exchange differs from a typical economic exchange in which the obligations of both parties in the exchange are clearly defined in advance of the exchange.

It is worth noting that the relationship between explicit exchanges (often referred to as negotiated exchanges) and the unspecified social exchanges described by SET is one that has received significant attention in the literature (Molm et al., 2009). A typical workplace relationship is, in fact, likely to be a blend of negotiated and social exchanges (Cheshire et al., 2010; Molm et al., 2009; Shore et al., 2009).

*2. People participating in these exchanges make some (rational) evaluation of the value exchanged.*

This ambiguity in the exact nature of obligations in a social exchange does not mean that such exchanges are not characterized by a **rational** weighing of exchange value (Chibucos et al., 2005, p. 137). Both Blau and Homans suggest that participants in social exchanges behave on the basis of rational evaluation of the costs and benefits of the exchange. Blau in particular frames this rational evaluation in **consequentialist (or utilitarian)**<sup>1</sup> terms and highlights the role those

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, the kind of consequentialism applied to SET is probably closer to a consequentialist egoism than a utilitarian frame - but SET is often described in the literature as applying a utilitarian lens.

forward-looking expectations (met and unmet) play in the sequence of exchange (Cook & Rice, 2006, p. 54).

Homans takes a more behavioral approach and situates decision-making within a process of **reinforcement**, a more backward-looking - but still rational - approach to evaluating a sequence of exchanges (Cook & Rice, 2006, p. 54). While Homans may not be as explicitly utilitarian in his analysis, he also recognizes a fundamental cost/benefit structure to social exchange (Homans, 1961, pp. 57–64).

While there may be upfront ambiguity about what will be exchanged, SET certainly suggests that a rational evaluation of exchanged value will be made by all participants in a social exchange sequence and if value is not returned, exchanges will likely cease (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

*3. The basic unit of analysis for SET are the exchanges between two people (dyads).*

Reciprocal interdependence, which “emphasizes contingent interpersonal transactions, whereby an action by one party leads to a response by another” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), has been the basic building block for understanding the exchanges described by SET. In effect, **dyads** (two actor exchanges) are the fundamental unit of analysis for SET. This is not to say that SET has ignored the broader cultural, relational and organizational contexts of these dyads, or the possibility of larger group reciprocity. Both the network dynamics of social exchanges (Molm et al., 2009) and collective reciprocity (Cheshire et al., 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2018) have received significant attention. Nevertheless, much of SET - and its application to organizational settings - has focused on the fundamental dyadic unit of exchange.

*4. Implicit in the definition is the idea that social exchanges will usually be seen as part of a continuing sequence of exchanges, and continued exchange occurs if both parties consider the exchanges valuable.*

A key element of dyadic analysis is that the pattern of exchange builds and reinforces **interdependence**. Of course, an exchange relationship requires that parties have something to

exchange. The SET literature recognizes that this may not always seem to be the case since exchanges do occur between those with valuable resources and those without any obvious countervailing (equal value by any measure) resources. This unequal exchange may describe the origin of a power relationship where the exchange is of value for relational power - a different kind of interdependent dyad (Blau, 1964, pp. 28–29). Thus, the process of “of a series of individually performed, sequentially contingent acts, in which obligations are repeatedly created and repaid” (Molm et al., 2009), whether obviously equal in value or not, will tend to create an interdependent relationship over time.

Such interdependent relationships while built and reinforced through a pattern of exchange may lead to positive outcomes beyond valuable exchanges. For example, **trust** (Blau, 1964, p. 94) and **relationship commitment** (Blau, 1964, p. 101) may grow from the positive experience of a pattern of successful social exchanges.<sup>2</sup> This potential relational benefit is often cited when SET is used as a basis for theorizing - for example in leadership theory.

*5. SET is a sub-institutional lens through which to understand social interactions within organizations.*

Because it uses a fundamentally dyadic, micro-level lens, SET can serve to illuminate key aspects of organizational life and behavior that may be rooted in the one-to-one relationships between individuals, among teams and even - when the institution itself is seen as one of the ‘individuals’ in a dyad - between individuals and the organization. Some key applications of this sub-institutional lens will be described below.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that not all relationships need have the characteristic of exchange relationships. For example, Blau suggests that family relationships *might* not be driven primarily by the kind of pattern of social exchange that SET describes. Nevertheless, organizational life has generally been seen to be a fruitful field for SET analysis.

## Summary

Social Exchange Theory describes a process of reciprocal, rational, largely dyadic exchanges of social value that can build interdependent relationships which at their best will be characterized by positive relational outcomes such as commitment and trust.

It is, perhaps, a testament to SET's influence that almost every one of the elements of the SET framework has been challenged and nuanced in significant ways (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This is not to say that the fundamental thrust of SET has been questioned in this literature. Many, though not all, social relations within organizations can be described and analyzed through a SET lens - and, thus, SET has been applied to a variety of organizational questions.

## Applications of Social Exchange Theory

### Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

Perhaps the most prominent application of SET to the literature of management is in its support of leader-member exchange theory (LMX). LMX emerged out of vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory which had developed as “alternative to the average leadership style approach, which operationalized leadership style as the average of subordinate perceptions of leaders' behaviors” (Henderson et al., 2009) In effect, both VDL and LMX note the differentiated relationships which leaders have with their subordinates and seek to explain the dynamics of these differentiated relationships.

LMX describes the leader—subordinate (or member) relationship in terms of a series of dyadic, reciprocal social exchanges which, depending on their acceptance and quality, can lead to either a high quality (in-group) or low-quality (out-group) relationship. That is, LMX considers the differing quality relations between leaders and subordinates as a function of the quality (and presence) of reciprocal social exchanges within the dyad. One benefit of this perspective is that it

adds to leadership theory and practice a dimension of reciprocity and relationship which is missing in many leadership models that focus largely on the leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The basic LMX framework has engendered much detailed discussion about the context, process, and outcomes of LMX relationships. While LMX follows SET in its primary focus on dyadic relationships, there has been considerable elaboration of potential group effects of differentiated relationships (Henderson et al., 2009). Further, the nature of the LMX process from the first (lower quality) stages of leader-subordinate interaction to a high quality LMX relationship has been investigated (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Since LMX relationships typically develop in organizational settings where there are likely to be both negotiated and social exchanges between leaders and subordinates, the exact dynamic between these different exchanges in developing LMX relationships has been considered (Kuvaas et al., 2012; Kuwabara, 2011; Molm, 2010). While LMX has certainly undergone significant refinement over the last few decades, its fundamental roots in SET still largely hold.

### **Organizational Effects: Justice, Support, Loyalty, Trust, and Citizenship Behavior**

While LMX focuses on the question of differentiated, reciprocal exchanges as a basis for a relational understanding of leadership, an organizational literature has developed which applies SET (and LMX) to understanding various aspects of the employment relationship: questions of justice in the workplace, employee's perceptions of organizational support, employee loyalty, commitment, and trust within an organization, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the literature frequently explores the interplay between these various aspects of employee perceptions and behavior. It is reasonable to assume, for example, that workers who feel that they have been treated unfairly will have a lower sense of being supported by their organization - or that organizational citizenship behaviors are more common in employees that trust their organizations (and leaders).

While many of these linkages could be explored without consideration of any underlying social exchange relationships, SET does offer a particular lens which can have explanatory power.

In the sphere of **organizational justice** an SET lens considers the relationship between differentiated social exchange relationships and employee perceptions of justice. Employees who see themselves treated fairly are likely to be more open to social exchanges (Colquitt, 2001; Yagil, 2006). In fact, fairness is seen as an important factor in the promotion of social exchange relationships - and SET may be a key link in explaining the relationship between justice in organizations and positive organizational outcomes. For example, fair treatment of employees may lead to employee commitment to organizations in large part because fairness encourages stronger social exchanges which, in turn, lead to positive employee outcomes such as commitment (Tekleab & Chiaburu, 2011). Conversely, it may also be true that out-group members in an LMX relation may see themselves as treated unfairly - which could lead to negative organizational outcomes (Scandura, 1999).

While LMX focuses on the building of the leader-subordinate relationship, the **perceived organizational support** (POS) literature extends SET to the relation between the organization as a whole and the individual employee. In some ways this requires the anthropomorphization (treating the organization as a human individual) of the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007) or at the least the employee assumption that agents of the organization are speaking and acting unambiguously on behalf of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Under these conditions, SET suggests that POS can be fruitfully understood as a result of a pattern of strong social (and, no doubt, negotiated *and* economic) exchanges between the organization and the individual which lead to a perception of organizational support for the individual and, in turn, a variety of positive individual and organizational outcomes (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018; Lee et al., 2022).

As has been indicated above, an SET lens on organizations suggests that a pattern of fair exchanges (*Organizational Justice*) between employees and their leaders (*LMX*) and the organization as a whole (*POS*) should lead to positive outcomes for employees and the organization such as **trust** (Chan et al., 2008; Cheshire et al., 2010; Molm et al., 2009), **loyalty** (Lee et al., 2022; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and **commitment** (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Finally, SET has been linked (often through Organizational Justice, LMX and POS) to **organizational citizenship behavior** (OCB) - that is, to employee behavior that goes 'above and beyond' either toward the organization or the leader. (Roch et al., 2019; Tekleab & Chiaburu, 2011). Employees that have experienced positive exchanges with their leaders or organizations will be more likely to reciprocate this support with workplace behaviors that go beyond the contractual obligations of the job (Cohen & Blecher, 2022; Manogran et al., 1994).

### Summary

Social Exchange Theory is an explanatory framework which has been applied to several key questions in the literature of leadership and organizations. Its basic thrust is that workplace relationships can be fruitfully understood as a pattern of rational, reciprocal non-economic social exchanges which, in turn can lead to relationships of deeper trust, loyalty and commitment between individuals within the organization and with the organization as a whole. As such, SET would suggest that these exchanges need to be carefully understood and managed to encourage these outcomes. It is not surprising, perhaps, given the reach of SET that the theory has seen considerable debate as to the building blocks of the theory (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018; Cooper-Thomas & Morrison, 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Porter, 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2018). For example, what is the nature of the rationality in a social exchange - is it an essentially utilitarian calculus, or perhaps a behavioral calculation better described by reinforcement theory, or is it something altogether different? What is the exact distinction between an exchange and an

exchange relationship? How can one understand the dynamic between social and economic exchanges - especially in a workplace setting where both are likely in evidence? A Christian lens on SET may add another valuable perspective to a discussion of SET, its use and implications.<sup>3</sup>

### **Christian Perspectives on Social Exchange Theory**

While social exchange theory has been an attractive model for theorizing in the areas of leadership and organizational behavior, its core assumptions and connections described above have not remained unchallenged. A Christian lens on the theory can also offer insights into these assumptions and connections and suggest a more nuanced view of some of these key assumptions. We will consider the following elements of the SET theory in turn:

1. The nature of reciprocity and exchange described by SET. In particular, what might be a Christian reading of the assumption that individuals see social exchanges through a consequentialist lens?
2. Interdependence in SET. Is the dyadic structure of exchanges which lies at the heart of SET a sufficient description of the nature of social exchange?
3. Trust and SET. How might the description of the connections between trust and exchange be understood from a Christian perspective?
4. Justice and SET. Can the depiction of justice in SET be deepened by a consideration of Christian descriptions of justice?

### **Methodology: The application of a Christian lens**

While this paper seeks to apply a Christian lens to social exchange theory, it does not attempt to do so from the perspective of any one particular, systematic and fully developed Christian

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<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that the reach of SET theorizing goes beyond the aspects covered in this paper. For example, SET has been used in the discussion of corporate social responsibility (Farid et al., 2019; Tekleab et al., 2020) and business ethics (Chen & Choi, 2005; Hansen et al., 2013). The basic modeling of human relationships through an exchange lens is clearly an attractive possibility.

description of human beings and their social interactions. It would, of course, be perfectly legitimate to attempt that kind of critique of SET as well - but such a critique would first need to articulate a precise systematic description of such questions as the nature of human beings in this moment of salvation history, the activity of God with human beings, the nature of society and Church etc. In addition, such a systematic critique of SET would need to elucidate how starting with a prescriptive, fully developed theology of the human person would interact with the typically descriptive approach of mainstream SET research.<sup>4</sup>

The method here instead will be to draw from various Christian perspectives to put questions to some of the fundamental assumptions and connections offered by SET. The goal here is not to offer a full-blown Christian alternative to, or version of SET as much as to seek to nuance and suggest extensions or alternatives to SET and its applications.

## **Reciprocity and Exchange**

### ***Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory***

As described above, social exchange theory posits that high-quality social relationships are developed through a sequence of reciprocal exchanges of social “goods”. In order for relationships to flourish certain “rules” of exchange must be adhered to. Participants in social exchanges understand that “humans in social situations choose behaviors that maximize their likelihood of meeting self-interests in those situations” (Chibucos et al., 2005, p. 137). That is, they are aware that their actions, and the actions of others, are likely to have a goal of meeting self-interests, not infrequently through the creation of a social obligation toward another. Furthermore, these obligations are seen as part of a pattern of exchange, and should engender reciprocating actions —

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Wilkinson (2005) describes one possibility for this interaction.

in the absence of reciprocity, further exchanges will ultimately not take place (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

As indicated previously, the most common framing of these exchanges in the literature is a consequentialist one. Even though the obligations generated remain unspecified, the expectation of all participants is that the costs and benefits of the pattern of exchanges meet the self-interests of each of the participants at least in the long run.

### ***Christian Perspectives***

There is rich evidence of exchange in the Bible. Economic exchange for benefit between individuals and in the market receives frequent mention in biblical texts.

Social exchange - as a more subtle, unspecified form of exchange - may be harder to discern explicitly in the biblical text, but can be inferred, especially in the language of social obligation. One can consider, for example various arguments for favor based on past services or acts of loyalty (e.g., Gen. 30:27, Neh. 2:5, Esther). In many cases there is an explicit request (for favor) based on past services rendered. It seems that the initial services were rendered as 'moves' in a social exchange sequence since they were made without an explicit *quid pro quo*. While the explicit asking for a favor in return might come closer to a 'move' in a negotiated exchange, it can be argued that the explicitness of the requests in these instances is a function of the dramatic contexts of the requests, which have necessitated a breaking out of the normal pattern of unspecified exchanges which came before the request.<sup>5</sup>

A more direct example of social exchange is found in 2 Cor 6. After describing the hardships faced by Paul and his co-workers, Paul concludes that "we ... have opened wide our hearts to you" (2 Cor. 6:11b). He then suggests that in spite of the affection that has been shown to the

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<sup>5</sup> The language of favor is more commonly deployed in describing the relationship between God and His people. The structure of this relationship will be discussed in a subsequent section of this paper.

Corinthians, they have not returned this affection. He concludes: “As a fair exchange ...open wide your hearts also” (2 Cor. 6:13) Whatever the broader implication of Paul’s argument, he is explicitly rebuking the Corinthians for not responding to an offer of social exchange.

So, social exchange is not a practice unattested in the Scriptures. Clearly there are instances of patterns of unspecified reciprocal social exchanges which follow the ‘rules’ of such exchange relationships.

What is less evident in the biblical account of exchange is a consequentialist, self-interested conception of these exchanges. The example from 2 Corinthians above is telling in this regard. There is a clear exchange intended here, but it is an exchange of self-giving affection for the other - with no sense that there is some deeper self-interest at play.

In fact, the more common biblical framing of social exchange is that it should be selfless, even sacrificial. Jesus enjoins a wealthy host to invite those who cannot repay his hospitality rather than those who can (Luke 14:12-14). Paul reminds the Ephesians that is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Multiple New Testament epistles warn against ‘selfish ambition’ (2 Cor. 12:20, Gal. 5:20, Phil. 2:3).

More radically still, evil should not be repaid with evil (an example of negative social exchange) but should be repaid with good (Rom. 12:17-21, 1 Pet. 3:9). To the extent that any ‘reward’ is suggested for these acts it is that God will look with favor on those who have acted selflessly (Luke 12:14).<sup>6</sup>

So, while the Scriptures are certainly not lacking examples of social exchanges, they do frame these exchanges as exchanges that should reflect selflessness and even sacrifice rather than self-interest.

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<sup>6</sup> The parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46) suggests that the possibility of divine reward should not be understood as part of a social exchange sequence of humans with God. Neither the sheep nor the goats know that their actions toward others will be understood as actions toward God.

## **Interdependence**

### ***Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory***

A key assumption of social exchange theory is that social exchanges are best understood as dyadic exchanges between individuals (Cook & Rice, 2006, p. 54). Thus, SET offers dyadic exchanges as a microfoundational building block for analyzing organizational phenomena. One key advantage of this approach is that it highlights the interdependencies created and maintained between individuals in a social exchange relationship. SET also adds a useful relational perspective that may not be incorporated in other models of organizational behavior - for example the contribution of LMX to the literature on leadership.

Of course, such exchanges often do take place within organizations and networks. Consequently, SET has been studied in the context of networks (Chan et al., 2008; Molm, 2010) and, in the case of the perceived organizational support literature as an exchange between an individual and the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Nevertheless, these more complex descriptions of social exchange in organizations rest solidly on a dyadic foundation for understanding interdependence.

### ***Christian Perspectives***

The Scriptures chronicle a wide range of dyadic relationships. Some of these, like the complex history of the interactions between Saul and David, are rendered with rich detail. The reality of networks and larger organizations and their connection to one-on-one dyadic exchanges is also rendered in multiple accounts (the books of Esther, Nehemiah, and Daniel, for example all feature these interactions).

But, perhaps the most distinctive set of dyadic exchanges in the Scriptures are of individuals with God. Of course, some of these encounters are described as one-time encounters with God,<sup>7</sup> but a significant number represent an ongoing set of encounters over time: for example, in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and many of the prophets.

A fascinating example of the dyadic and reciprocal nature of these depictions is found in Jeremiah 15. The prophet is not happy and complains that his doing of God's will has made him a curse in his land (Jer. 15:10). He is, in effect, accusing God of poor exchange behavior - Jeremiah has upheld his end of this unspecified exchange, God has not (says Jeremiah). God responds by assuring Jeremiah that He has reciprocated, though in a slightly inscrutable way (Jer. 15:11-14). Jeremiah redoubles his complaint by claiming that he had joyfully accepted God's word and, yet, has been repaid for his faithfulness with unceasing pain (Jer. 15:15-18a). He finishes with the accusation, "you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail" (Jer. 15:18b). God's response begins with a deeply relational, dyadic exchange offer: "If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth." (Jer. 15:19). The prophet's turn will be matched by a gracious turn from God. This offer is followed by a promise that this mutual turning of the prophet and God to each other will fortify the prophet against all the forces that have hurt him.

So, the Bible chronicles dyadic relationships between people and of people with God. But there is a further element to relationships that runs through the biblical narrative. Human relationships, even ones that are dyadic on the surface are consistently seen in the light of the relationship of both parties to God. In effect, there are, in a very real sense, no dyadic human

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<sup>7</sup> Many of the individual encounters of Jesus in John's Gospel, for example, are profound and revelatory but 'one off' encounters.

relationships at all: all dyadic relationships should be properly understood as triadic, with God as the central member of the triad.

This (sometimes invisible) presence of God in triadic relationships is made clear in the close linking of the two great commandments to love God and neighbor (Luke 10:25-28) and, for example in the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46). Love for one's neighbor is intimately connected with love for God.

A further example of the triadic nature of social relationships can be seen in the household codes of the New Testament (Eph. 5:22-6:9, Col. 3:18-4:1). Each of the admonitions to wives, husbands, children, slaves, and masters frames the relational behavior of individuals in these various roles in the light of the individual's relationship to God. The social interaction is interpreted in the light of the triad of the two individuals and God.

Not only should relationships be seen as fundamentally triadic, but the body imagery of the Church suggests that dyads (or triads for that matter) may not be as fundamental a building block for understanding social organisms as SET would suggest. The Church, in particular, is described as a body (Eph. 4:4), composed of individuals to be sure (1 Cor. 12:27) and with diverse contributions (Rom. 12:4), but an organic whole with various parts (1 Cor. 12:12), not a simple network of dyadic pairs (1 Cor. 12:14-26). While the Church may be a unique social institution in many ways, the descriptions of human flourishing within the Church seem to leave little room for a conception that humans are intended to see social interaction primarily through the lens of a dyadic exchange of otherwise unconnected individuals.

## **Trust**

### ***Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory***

Trust has been posited as an important necessity for, and outcome of social exchange relationships. Since the unspecified nature of social exchanges requires an element of risk taking, and

hence trust in the other party of the exchange, trust is a basic necessity of all exchanges (Cheshire et al., 2010). Not surprisingly given the inherent risk of social exchanges, violation of trust at any point in the process can set back or derail entirely the further building of trust through successful exchanges (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996, p. 125).

Of course, the level and nature of the trust required of and developed by a sequence of social exchanges is dependent both on the context for the exchanges and the strength of the exchange relationship. For example, higher risk environments are generally thought to promote greater development of trust since exchange participants will more actively seek trustworthy partners to mitigate exchange risks (Molm et al., 2009). The nature of trust may also evolve over the life of a social exchange relationship. Lewicki and Bunker (1996, pp. 124–125) suggest that trust may evolve from an initial calculus-based trust (based on the possibility of sanctions), through knowledge-based trust (based on understanding of the exchange partner) to an identification-based trust (based on a mutual understanding and appreciation of wants). As successful exchanges occur the level and nature of trust changes and deepens unless such trust is violated in the process.

### ***Christian Perspectives***

Certainly, the idea of *trustworthiness* is an important concept in the biblical account. Leadership is to be chosen in Israel (Ex. 18:21, Neh. 13:13) and in the church (1 Tim. 3:8-10, Titus 1:6-7) on the basis of trustworthiness. Dose (2012) and Fischer and Friedman (2014) consider different aspects of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and draw a link between organizational trust and behaviors enjoined in this literature. While the model developed in these papers does not take an explicit social exchange perspective, it would not be a stretch to suggest that the antecedents of trust - ability, benevolence, and integrity - will likely be evaluated in the context of exchanges within the organization.

However, the use of terminology of trust in the Bible occurs most often in the context of the relationship between God and humankind. Central to the biblical conception of human life is that human beings should place their trust in God (Ps. 37:3, Prov. 3:5, Jer. 17:7, Rom. 15:13) - and that God *can* be trusted utterly and completely (Ps. 52:8, Ps. 125:1, Isa. 26:4, 1 Pet. 2:6). In fact, any attempt to replace trust in God with trust in other things - in wealth (Ps. 23:4, Ps. 49:7, Prov. 11:28, Jer. 49:4), other gods (Ps. 40:4, Isa. 42:17, Jer. 13:25), power (Ps. 20:7, Isa. 31:1), and even in other people (Ps. 118:8, Isa. 2:22, Jer. 17:5), or oneself (Ps. 49:13, Prov. 28:26) and one's actions (Jer. 48:7) - is seen as a central problem for humankind.

Thus, trust in God (or its absence) is a key dimension of the triadic relationships that the Bible describes between two individuals and God. Trusting God - and the security such trust brings - allows individuals to offer trust in circumstances where that trust has not been 'earned' through successful social exchange, and where such an unearned conferring of trust would be seen as highly risky. God's love, which has extended trust to such flawed and untrustworthy individuals as Patriarchs of Genesis, Moses, and the Apostles, opens the possibility of trusting others where trustworthiness has not been established in exchange.

In practice, of course, especially in organizational settings the picture is as complex as the two streams of biblical teaching summarized above attest. A track record of trustworthiness is certainly commended in the evaluation of fitness for leadership and responsibility. Yet, the unearned extension of trust as an invitation into relationship is also a live possibility. Could it be that trust in God's faithfulness in a triadic relationship allows a greater latitude to trust others than what might be possible if one limits the building of trust to the outcome of a pattern of dyadic reciprocal exchanges?

## Justice

### *Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory*

For social exchange theory, the dominant lens for viewing justice has been that of procedural justice - or fairness in the use of process (Colquitt et al., 2013). Fairness in exchange is a necessity for continued exchanges, and employee perceptions of fairness are reinforced by positive experiences with leaders' use of process (Karam et al., 2019). This is not to say that the literature has ignored other types of justice such as interpersonal justice. For example, interpersonal justice which sees fairness in the light of interpersonal treatment, rather than in the use of procedures has also been tied to SET (Roch et al., 2019).

Of course, an organizational context adds complexity to questions of fairness and justice. Distributive justice, for example, addresses the issue of the fair distribution of benefits throughout the organization. SET exchanges can also be seen in this light, since leader-member exchanges can have significant impact on this distribution - and perceptions of fairness (Scandura, 1999). For SET all of these justice effects are, in one way or another, framed in terms of patterns of positive social exchange which require justice to continue, and which reinforce perceptions of fairness when carried out successfully.

### *Christian Perspectives*

The importance of fairness in exchange that social exchange theory highlights is certainly not absent in the biblical text. The repeated admonition for honest scales in proverbs (Prov. 11:1, Prov. 16:11, Prov. 20:23) are not only a call to commercial probity, but part of the broader call for integrity in the wisdom literature. The frequent mentions of the importance of impartiality in judgment by those in power also underscore that fairness in organizational processes, whether in trade, or government (1 Kings 3:28, 1 Kings 10:9, Prov. 29:4, Mic. 3:9), or the legal system (Lev. 19:15, Deut. 16:19-20, 1 Sam. 8:3, Prov. 18:15) is a key concern of the Scriptures.

But beyond this concern for fairness, the Scriptures have an even more prevalent justice concern: the just treatment of the marginalized - the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners (Deut. 27:19, Prov. 29:7, Isa. 1:17, Jer. 5:28). The lifting up of the marginalized requires more than impartial treatment, it requires active engagement with their concerns. This concern for the poor goes even further. Repeatedly (Isa. 1:27, Isa. 16:5, Isa. 51:5, Ezek. 34:16) justice is linked with the salvation of God's people. So, the theme of justice binds together God's concern for the marginalized and oppressed with His promises to bring salvation to His people.

Finally, none of this justice is seen in the context of exchange. Justice will come to the poor, the oppressed and to Israel not because they can offer anything in exchange, but because a gracious God wants them to have it. So, justice is not only the companion of fair exchange, but it also seeks to restore brokenness and to redeem those who have nothing to exchange. And there is no boundary to this vision of justice: it should manifest itself in the market, among the powerful and with all those who hold justice in their hands.

### **Discussion**

Social exchange theory has been used as a key explanatory model especially in the areas of leadership and organizational behavior. A more nuanced reading of social exchange theory (and the logic of social exchange in other theories) from a Christian perspective could add richness to both the teaching and practice of these areas of management.

None of the questions posed by Christian perspectives in the previous section of this paper fully undermine the 'on the ground' reality of social exchange that SET describes. People *do* engage in patterns of reciprocal social exchanges. They *do* often calculate the costs and benefits of these sequences of exchanges. These exchanges *are* frequently visibly dyadic. These exchanges *are* judged through the lens of fairness and *do* require and often engender trust.

But Christian perspectives can nuance and perhaps even suggest alternatives to the particular assumptions and implications of SET.

### **Consequentialism and Exchange in SET**

#### ***Earned and unearned social goods***

SET has generally adopted a consequentialist lens to explain the rationale of social exchanges. As argued above, this perspective on exchange is evidenced in the biblical text, but the text offers other conceptions of this type of relationship as well. While SET sees reciprocal social exchanges as the building block of social goods such as trust and justice, the biblical text more often speaks of trust and justice as graciously given goods, not 'earned' through a pattern of exchanges.

This distinction might matter a great deal. As Ghoshal (2005) argues, management theories that assume a (pessimistic) view of human beings can, though their influence on management practice, bring about precisely the behavior that they have posited. So, for example, agency theory in assuming self-seeking behavior may prescribe incentive policies that in turn reinforce (or even cause) problematic agency behavior.

For SET, the assumption that sequences of reciprocal social exchanges must be the building blocks for relational goods such as trust may, in fact, lead to managerial practices that assume that trust can only be 'earned' through these types of social exchanges. This could create an organizational (and relational) climate that is much more 'show me' - and much less trusting - than it might be without these assumptions.<sup>8</sup>

#### ***Consequential calculations and alternatives***

An intriguing stream in the literature of social exchange explores possible reasons for individual differences in willingness to exchange, and especially to show trust in exchanges

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<sup>8</sup> An interesting discussion in this vein, which includes some discussion of reciprocity can be found in Herrity (2017).

(Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1987; Lee et al., 2022; Roch et al., 2019). One possible explanation is that some individuals have a strong exchange ideology, that is, “that some individuals are likely to endorse the reciprocity norm [in social exchanges] but others are less likely to do so” (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) further describe that social exchange may be more attractive to individuals with ‘folk beliefs’ that ‘everything works out in the end’. Roch et al (2019) build on this by looking specifically at individuals who subscribe to what they term a just world hypothesis (JWH) “the general belief that the world is morally ordered, such that people generally get what they deserve” (Roch et al., 2019).

It could be argued that the grand redemptive narrative of the Bible would incline Christian to hold a belief similar to the JWH. After all, the ultimate end of the world is a restored heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1), where there is both judgment (Rev. 20:11-12) and the end of suffering and pain (Rev. 21:4). This belief in an ultimate reckoning for human behavior will likely not mean the end of all social exchange calculation - as discussed before, trustworthiness proved in action is certainly not absent in the thinking of the biblical text - but Christians should be more open to take the risk of trusting without proof, to giving without a sure expectation of return because they understand that God’s justice will ultimately prevail, even when immediate justice may not be forthcoming.

### ***Exchange in the now and not yet***

The preceding discussion hints at a further issue in considering SET through a Christian lens. It may well be the case that the ‘ideal’ for human relationships is rooted more in selflessness and a commitment to deep justice rather than consequentialist calculation of exchange.

The question is, should one, can one manage from this ideal perspective?<sup>9</sup> After all, the Christian narrative places us in an in-between time - the now and not yet between Christ’s

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<sup>9</sup> The use of the words ‘should’ and ‘can’ here is deliberate. This question obviously echoes the debates about descriptive and prescriptive theorizing - and perhaps Ghoshal’s observations (2005) about the roles of theory and pragmatism in managerial practice.

completed work on the cross and the final consummation of this work (Heb. 2:8-9). In this time, behavior in line with the ideal is certainly possible. Human beings, especially - but not only - those redeemed by God, can and do show selfless care for others and a deep commitment to justice and gracious trust. Nevertheless, they may often be put in social contact with those (both inside the Church and outside) who are more likely to follow a self-interested relational calculus.

How does one best manage in this context? Perhaps an awareness of both possibilities is a reasonable choice. Certainly, some will respond most readily to reciprocal social exchange since it may fit both with their ideology and experience. So social exchange may have its place as a perspective in the managerial toolbox. But the possibility of more - of relationships that do not begin with, or depend on the basis of exchange, but rather on unearned trust, justice and other relational goods freely offered and without expectation of reciprocation - is also a real possibility. And given the possibility discussed above that a pessimistic assumption in a social relationship may well steer the progress of the relationship, perhaps the 'ideal' approach should be the one to be tried first.

### **Triadic Exchanges and the Body**

SET sees dyads as the fundamental unit of analysis for social interaction - a micro-foundational building block for all other social behavior. As we have noted above, the biblical picture of human relationships is probably better described as a triadic one: of two individuals and God in mutual relationship to one another (even if either or both individuals are not aware of God's presence in the triad).

A key aspect of this triadic quality to relationship is that it changes the implicit calculus of the visible dyadic relationship. After all, we have described the third member of the triad (God) as graciously giving, trusting and just. The expectation for the other human members of the triad is that they mirror, as best as humans can, this gracious self-giving behavior of God in their relationships,

by committing to loving God and their neighbor. This is a far cry from the self-interested calculus of the SET prescription.

As discussed above, this ‘ideal’ of triadic selflessness may seem unrealistic, especially if one of the human beings in the relationship understands relationships in terms of self-interested exchange. It will always be a challenge for managers to decide how to navigate between the (expected) ideal and the ‘on the ground’ reality of the attitudes that they encounter.

### **Leadership Questions**

Leader-Member Exchange, the leadership theory most indebted to SET, offer a useful framework for understanding leader-member interactions, adding an important relational lens to a literature that has been dominated at times by theories focused only on the leader. Its focus on differential exchanges, for example, provides helpful insights into leader-member dynamics in a context of limited leader resources.<sup>10</sup> However, LMX’s use of SET’s view of reciprocal social exchange as a basis for the building of trust and other social goods does limit it compared with other approaches to leadership. There are several other relational approaches to leadership which may offer further insights by relaxing some of the assumptions of SET, sometimes in ways more consistent with Christian perspectives described above.

Servant leadership, first introduced in a 1970 essay by Robert Greenleaf suggests a leadership posture of “servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.” (Greenleaf, 1970) Servant leadership seeks to ensure that followers “become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants.” (Greenleaf, 1970) Thus servant leadership steps back from the focus on requiring reciprocity by considering instead the real needs of the other in a social relation. This clearly echoes (though it does not need to be motivated by) the

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<sup>10</sup> See Dose (Dose, 2006) for a rich discussion of this and other aspects of LMX from the perspective of key leader-member case studies in the Bible.

idea of gracious giving that we have discussed above. Of course, the effectiveness (in terms of desired organizational and relational outcomes) of this leadership approach remains an open question. Greenleaf himself introduces this question almost immediately after his definition of the practice noting that “one cannot know for sure” whether these acts of service will lead to the desired outcome - and suggests primarily that the leader will have to use trial and error to refine the practice. It may be that differences in exchange ideology will be one of the considerations moderating the possible effectiveness of servant leadership.

Covenantal leadership offers a somewhat different - and perhaps even more biblically evocative - approach to relational leadership. Covenant rather than exchange is the central frame for understanding leader-member relationships in this type of leadership practice. Certainly, covenant is the dominant language used in the biblical description of the relationship between God and human beings (Block, 2021, p. 1). Biblical covenants are “elected (as opposed to natural) relationships of obligation, typically ratified by an oath, that include blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.” (Crowe, 2021, p. 2) While there is a variety of types of covenant in the Bible, perhaps the central image is of a stronger individual invoking a covenant with a weaker (or subordinate) one (Hahn, 2009, Part I). The covenant is self-binding for the stronger party - and as a result inherently trusting - but with a structure of consequences involved if the covenant is dishonored. This differs from SET’s description of trust gradually built through successful social exchange with no *explicit* structure of commitment. Like servant leadership, covenantal leadership is oriented to promoting the good of the other, but it makes more explicit that there may be reciprocal duties (even if they remain less clearly specified than in contractual settings) in the relationship which both parties need to observe. Of course, the question of whether the invocation of covenant will be honored by both parties - much like the servanthood ‘gamble’ of the servant leader - remains an open question.

While LMX (with its roots in SET) is a framework that adds relational richness to leadership thinking, we have seen alternatives such as servant and covenantal leadership which suggest other ways of managing the leader-member relationship in ways that may more nearly reflect a Christian perspective on social exchange. Nevertheless, these other perspectives are not without their challenges, and it may be that nuanced leadership practice will draw on all of these perspectives, sometimes exchanging, sometimes serving and sometimes binding leaders and followers in covenant.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has looked at Social Exchange Theory and its application in other theories through the lens of a variety of Christian perspectives. None of these lenses suggest that SET should be abandoned. The popularity of SET as an explanatory framework for relational behavior is, at least in part, a reflection of how well it models the observed behavior of people, especially in organizational settings.

Nevertheless, the Christian perspectives suggest that some of the assumptions of SET, for example the strongly consequentialist framing of human relationships, should probably be understood to hold only some of the time and in more limited ways - and that alternative approaches to the building and maintaining of relationships and their desired outcomes such as justice and trust should be part of the managerial toolbox. In fact, it may be that SET and the approaches it offers should take a back seat to such practices as gracious, selfless giving and covenantal trust. How leaders and other participants in organizational life will end up balancing the exchange mindset of SET with its alternatives may be one the more difficult challenges of managing in organizations.

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## **Equipping the Cupbearers: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Supply Chain Career Selection Factors**

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### **Abstract**

As the importance of the global supply chain grows within an organization as an indicator of success, so is the recruitment of supply chain employees. However, there is a shortage of qualified supply chain talent entering the supply chain field, a field that has not traditionally been seen as an act of service to God and man, but where competent leaders of Faith are needed to bear the cup that brings the goods that sustains society ethically and with respect for all people and God-given natural resources, living out the triple bottom line. Career selection factors are a key determinant to recruitment in a field and little previous research has been done on supply chain career selection and in turn recruitment into supply chain educational programs and in turn the career field. This research determined the driving intrinsic and extrinsic factors in supply chain management (SCM) career choice. This study proved beneficial to supply chain educators hoping to recruit students into supply chain and to practicing managers recruiting for supply chain roles. Intrinsic factors, such as living out the triple bottom line as an act of service, can bring personal fulfillment, while extrinsic factors can bring the financial security that one would expect from a career in a business field. If students can envision their future in relation to extrinsic and intrinsic factors this can impact their career selection decision.

### **Equipping the Cupbearers: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Supply Chain Career Selection Factors**

This research sought to answer the question: How does industry attract supply chain management talent in consideration of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction factors in Supply Chain Management (SCM) career choices (selection and satisfaction), shifts (globalization, integration and competition) and expectations (skills, work flexibility)? To answer this question, this research examined the intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction factors of career satisfaction (Goffnett, 2013) with an added factor of work flexibility/telecommuting. If educators are to prepare students to be cupbearers, defined as a person of high position tasked with delivering wine to recipients in the Kingdom, much like supply chain managers are tasked with delivering the goods that keeps society functioning and fulfilled, and where competent, ethical leaders are needed (Definition of CUPBEARER, n.d.). As the supply chain and its practitioners have risen to the top levels of organizational importance, they must first see the importance and significance of the serving in supply chain and both its driving extrinsic and intrinsic benefits enough to choose it as a career path.

#### **Background and Environmental Context**

Research into understanding the career satisfaction factors of supply chain employees is required to tackle today's complex supply chain problems (Sanders & Wagner, 2011; Sanders et al., 2016). To achieve excellence in the marketplace, supply chains must be built upon foundations of excellence in the skills and competencies of the people who manage those supply chains (Mangan & Christopher, 2005). This research answers calls for more research into the "people dimensions" of supply chains (Wieland et al., 2016).

Supply chain management is increasingly complex and the duties and demands of supply chain managers are quickly changing to keep up with rising demand. Globalization and market volatility are requiring managers to have new SCM skills. There is a shortage of talented individuals who have the desired skills (Maloni et al., 2017; Ozment & Keller, 2011; Ruamsook & Craighead,

2014);). The profession of supply chain managers is increasingly cross-functional in that it “breaks down functional silos and connects many different entities across intra- and intercompany boundaries” (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017, p. 35; Lambert & Cooper, 2000). Supply Chain Managers have a unique role in business as a bridging function that interacts with the other critical corporate functions to manage inventory flow globally between a myriad of suppliers, as well as the company and its customers (Cottrill, 2010).

Superior supply chain competency has a positive relation to the financial performance of the firm, so therefore understanding supply chain talent has a direct correlation (Ellinger et al., 2010). “Supply chain management as an employment field continues to grow rapidly as companies see the need for end-to-end value chain integration and its potential to drive down operational costs” (McKevitt et al., 2017, p. 1). This drives the demand for supply chain managers up (McKevitt et al., 2017). Firms are suffering from a continuous shortage of qualified supply chain professionals, just as the need for them is rising, before but especially in light of current events such as the pandemic which has brought this once little researched issue to the forefront of global business and news (Cottrill, 2010; Ellinger & Ellinger, 2014; Hohenstein et al., 2014; Luckstead et al., 2021; Mangan & Christopher, 2005; Nagurney, 2021). In the past ten years since the crisis was unearthed, the shortage of supply chain and logistics professionals continues to significantly worsen (Maloni et al., 2017) and talent shortages and career shifts are evident at most occupational levels in the supply chain (Goffnett et al., 2012). The global supply chain faces a severe shortage of talent at a time when the demands on the profession have never been greater (Cottrill, 2010, Luckstead et al., 2021, Nagurney, 2021).

To combat this, companies must be more proactive in their approach to recruiting the supply chain professionals they need to stay competitive (Cottrill, 2010). To achieve excellence in the marketplace, supply chains must be built upon building excellence in the skills and competencies of

the people who manage those supply chains (Mangan & Christopher, 2005; Tarigan et al., 2021). The issue is that organizations lack an understanding of how to support their recruitment and retention of supply chain talent (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017; John, 2015).

As the field of supply chain matures, multiple scholars are pointing out that human resources also need to understand how to help the supply chain get a competitive advantage (Ellinger et al., 2002; Esper et al., 2010; Maloni et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of HR research about supply chains, as firms are placing priority on operations and customer satisfaction instead of developing their employees (Cao et al., 2015; Ellinger & Ellinger, 2014; Gomez-Cedeno et al., 2015; Maloni et al., 2017).

Business leaders managing the supply chain also need to have a better understanding of this and greater attention should be paid to it (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017; Wieland et al., 2016). Employee and employer will only experience congruence and good job performance if there is a correspondence between the individual's career satisfaction priorities and those provided by the job. Finding congruence is important to human resource departments so they can match people with correct roles in supply chain and to create staffing strategies to accommodate both the supply and the demand of talent (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017; Sonnenfeld, 1989).

Another issue is that SCM is only a fledgling discipline, and confusion as to its definition creates challenges in university education and marketing the supply chain major and profession to Millennials. Flothmann and Hoberg (2017) recognized:

Despite the rapidly growing recognition of SCM that emerges in the 1980s, the debate on how to define it still continues. The lack of a clear definition affects SCM education: Universities have established programs for SCM only recently and the university programs that do exist differ significantly in various ways. While SCM programs are under the

umbrella of the business schools or business administration programs of some universities, they are part of the engineering schools at others. (p. 36)

Students don't understand the scope or scale of the supply chain and what it encompasses, and this lack of understanding has historically made establishing academic programs and recruiting students to the field challenging.

Education is considered the foundation for a person's later career, as it provides the theoretical tools to fulfill the requirements of the job (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017). Finding factors that inspire one to choose a career path provides the inspiration for research on "career patterns for a wide variety of target groups" (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017, p. 37). However, few papers in SCM have addressed this topic and even less have compared satisfaction factors that influenced major choice with those that impact satisfaction several years into one's career (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017).

Although the shortage continues, there are an increasing number of supply chain programs, and students with an understanding of the supply chain career path are entering them eagerly due to the reported high satisfaction of the career, which is often driven by intrinsic factors but not often discussed in supply chain career discussions. More students are "beginning their career in the supply chain, change jobs less frequently and are highly satisfied with opportunities for advancement in the field" (McKevitt et al, 2017, p. 1).

"Recruiting ... promising SCM employees with ambitious career goals is a challenge if companies are not able to tell them what they must do to succeed and become eligible for future leading roles" (Flothmann & Hoberg, 2017, p. 37). This research hopes to assist in closing the gap of understanding what career selection factors matter to students in order to recruit them to supply chain majors and to supply chain careers to help to ease the crisis of supply chain worker shortage.

One bright spot of the pandemic and the shortage of goods being spotlighted in the news, is that the little-known supply chain has now a raised visibility that brings it into the top of conversations in not on businesses and universities, but also households. Incoming students have experienced and now have some idea of the role and importance of supply chain at a time when businesses and universities are realizing the need to invest in strengthening their supply chain and invest further in their talent pool.

Supply chain careers are known to be careers with high satisfaction, the Association for Supply Chain Management reported in 2021 that 88% of supply chain professionals were satisfied or very satisfied with their career and would recommend the career path to others. Those entering the career average a strong starting salary of \$60,000 and quickly advance to a median practitioner salary of \$90,000 (Eshkenazi, 2021). Those that move into managing the supply chain boasted a median salary of \$131,000. At a time where many salaries are stagnant, almost 60% reported an increase in their salaries (Rand, 2021). Now is a prime time to recruit students into supply chain programs and roles. Bringing awareness to these facts and why those working in supply chain chose the field is a great recruitment tool for future supply chain managers.

### **Research Question**

Attracting supply chain management talent is a major concern for industry (Keller & Ozment, 2009). Researchers have been calling for additional research on SCM career choices, shifts, expectations and overall talent retention (Autry & Daugherty, 2003; Cotrill, 2010; Min & Lambert, 2002; Nagurney, 2021; Van Hoek et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2011).

*How does industry attract supply chain management talent in consideration of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction factors in SCM career choices (selection and satisfaction), shifts (globalization, integration and competition) and expectations (skills, work flexibility)?*

### ***Professional Significance of the Study***

This study utilizes needs theory (Herzberg, 1958) and career theory (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) and expands its application to supply chain management.

The theoretical base for this research starts with early career theory that addresses the traditional career path, the natural progression toward career advancement (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) and moves into modern career theory in which careers tend to have both objective (physical) and subjective (psychological) aspects that need consideration to understand career satisfaction and success, such as the boundaryless career path that says a career is not dependent on a single employer and does not confirm to an upward path for career satisfaction (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) states that the presence of adequate hygiene (maintenance) factors, which are extrinsic and come to us externally, in this case from the organization, and reduces levels of dissatisfaction. Examples of extrinsic hygiene factors are: salary, security, policy, relationship with peers and supervisors. Hygiene factors do not influence motivation. Intrinsic factors, which Herzberg's designated "motivators" are what provide motivation and satisfaction and come to us from doing the work. Examples of intrinsic motivation factors are: responsibility, advancement, recognition, challenge and contribution to society that are internal to ones' self. Herzberg's theory has two separate dimensions, internal and external, and different work elements can meet one or both of these needs, which in turn can result in satisfaction with work. When hygiene (extrinsic) factors are present, they result in reduced levels of dissatisfaction with work. When motivators (intrinsic) are present they increase satisfaction with work. Therefore, employers should be seeking to provide both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to employees to retain them. Chen et al. (2011) showed that job satisfaction can improve or decline over time, and this can influence turnover intentions.

Luthans (2002) proposed three dimensions of job satisfaction: job satisfaction is an emotional response to a job situation; job satisfaction is often determined by how outcomes meet or exceed expectations; job satisfaction represents both extrinsic and intrinsic factors.

Understanding the various indicators of job satisfaction in the workplace are important for supply chain educators and leaders. Understanding what traits students value can be useful to recruit them into the supply chain workforce. These can then be applied to staffing concerns regarding the shortage of new entrants and retention in the supply chain career field.

Job-related factors in the organizational context account for most of the variances in job satisfaction (Glisson & Durick, 1988). Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards can entice employees into an organization (Westover et al., 2010).

The rise of globalization and the pandemic furthered the push toward these efforts with telecommuting saving businesses money, increasing productivity and expanding working hours (Wartzman, 2014). Employees who work from home can cut their commute times and have more time to complete their work or more time with their families, thus increasing their overall satisfaction level. Telecommuting increases employee satisfaction and has a profound effect on workplace recruiting (Johnson, 2016).

Historical drivers of the shortage of talent in the supply chain field are low awareness of the supply chain profession, low priority of supply chain in the organization and shortage of supply chain faculty and academic programs (Maloni et al., 2017; Ozment & Keller, 2011; Ruamsook & Craighead, 2014) some of which have been remedied by the supply chain shortages brought on by the pandemic. Undergraduate education is closely tied to both job performance and job satisfaction of graduates (Lertputtarak & Samokhin, 2021; Riley, 1982). It is only in the last few years that undergraduate programs have offered courses in supply chain management and logistics, and new graduates are coming into supply chain directly out of university programs (Mangan & Christopher,

2005). Supply chain management education and teaching is changing to meet the more demanding qualification criteria of supply chain positions (Hohenstein et al., 2014). Supply chain students are more strongly influenced by professors and the reputation of their school than other business majors (Maloni et al., 2017).

Supply chain management offers a high level of career satisfaction with the excellent career advancement opportunities, challenging and fast-paced environment in supply chain (Johnson et al., 1999). Supply chain educators, academic programs and practitioners must seek to better understand these needs to attract more students to the major and in turn the supply chain profession (Maloni et al., 2017). Young professionals in the workforce should be managed carefully as they are the supply chain's most critical resource profession (Maloni et al., 2017).

Goffnett et al.'s (2013) study focused on identifying key extrinsic and intrinsic career selection factors that predict satisfying careers in SCM because satisfaction is essential to SCM success, for both the individual and the organization, as well as recruitment and retention factors of recent SCM graduates working in the field of SCM of a Michigan college. When reviewing literatures from both supply chain and logistics, both extrinsic and intrinsic factors were important to job satisfaction. Aside from Goffnett et al.'s (2013) study, other research is inconclusive as to the specific factors that are most important to supply chain professionals.

This research contributed to career literature by responding to the call for a broader range of career success criteria (Heslin, 2005). Secondly, this study highlights the importance of managing factors that are important in a SCM career at the career choice by examining a model that included several extrinsic and intrinsic career choice factors in relation to SCM career satisfaction with added considerations for work flexibility and pay.

## Methodology

This research investigated the probability of the model shown in Table 1 that shows the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to career satisfaction and then in turn to careers in supply chain.

**Table 1**

*Model of Factors that contribute to Career Satisfaction and Attraction to Supply Chain Careers*



A sample population was taken from undergraduate and graduate alumni of supply chain programs located in the United States currently working in a supply chain field. Participants were asked to rank the importance of items in choosing a supply chain major and in relation to their current satisfaction with a supply chain career.

Five extrinsic factors were used for this study: starting salary, a flexible career path, career location, career security, demand for skills and work flexibility (telecommuting).

Nine intrinsic factors were used for this study: advancement opportunity, leadership opportunity, responsibility, fast paced/exciting work, future earnings potential, and contribution to society, challenging work, respected profession, and prestige. These factors were based on Goffnett et al.'s (2013) study with the addition of telecommuting as a relevant factor important to new generations entering the workplace (Janin, 2022).

Two hypotheses are proposed to support answering the problem statement:

*Hypothesis 1-e:* The top three extrinsic career selection factors are significantly related to career selection.

*Hypothesis 2-i:* The top three intrinsic career selection factors are significantly related to career selection.

The results investigate the probability of the model in Table One and provide data that ties back to the two hypotheses and prove overall that intrinsic and extrinsic factors lead to recruitment in the supply chain career field.

The research was quantitative and independent demographic variables were how respondents were asked to identify themselves: by their institution, undergraduate or graduate, age, gender, years' experience in supply chain and their role. Variables include extrinsic and intrinsic factors, including: starting salary, flexible career path, career location, career security, demand for skills, telecommuting, advancement opportunity, leadership opportunity, responsibility, fast-paced work, future earnings potential, contribution to society, challenging work, respected profession, and prestige of profession.

Respondents were asked to rank the 15 extrinsic and intrinsic factors from 1-15 regarding which factors led them to their supply chain career selection.

## **Research Results**

The researcher reviewed each respondent's school to confirm the school offered a four year and/or master's level degree in a supply chain field. To allow for a maximum number of respondents, schools that had degree programs with a specialization in supply chain were included. The survey required that respondents rank 1-15 the extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction factors combined that lead to their level of satisfaction with their supply chain career. Respondents that ranked their responses chronologically from 1-15 were excluded from the study as a sign of survey fatigue. With an initial pool of over 900 respondents over nine rounds of Qualtrics testing over two months, these screening requirements left 108 self-identified respondent samples that were useable for the study.

SPSS is a widely used program for statistical analysis in social science (Gunarto, 2019).

A Chi-Square test is a statistical hypothesis test that is valid to perform when the test statistic is Chi-Square distributed under the null hypothesis, specifically Pearson's Chi-Square test, which is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the expected frequencies and the observed frequencies in one or more categories (Pearson, 1900). Although the full Chi-Square was not used for these hypotheses, it was helpful in identifying the top ranked factors. Ranked data were chosen over a Likert scale for each factor as previous research with these factors by Goffnett et al. (2013) identified multiple factors that scored the same or similar on a Likert scale. The goal of ranked data was to clearly identify the top factors that contributed to career selection in the supply chain field.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Respondents were asked to rank their top factors, intrinsically and extrinsically that lead to their career choice (see Appendix).

H1-e: The top three extrinsic career selection factors are significantly related to career satisfaction. For the first hypothesis respondents ranked their top three extrinsic factors as being salary, career flexibility and location. This was identified by counting the number of respondents who ranked pay as a top, second or third priority.

Pay: Fifty respondents chose the extrinsic factor pay as the top factor in their career selection, twenty chose it as a second priority, and two chose it as a third priority in their career choice, making 72/108 or 2/3 of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the extrinsic factor of pay. Overwhelmingly, the salary paid to those in the supply chain profession, not only led them to choose the supply chain profession, but was enough to sustain them in the career path.

Flexibility: Fourteen respondents chose the extrinsic factor flexibility as the top factor in their career selection, twenty-six chose it as a second priority, and fourteen chose it as a third priority

in their career choice, making 54/108 or half of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the extrinsic factor of flexibility. Clearly, the flexibility of career choices provided to those in the supply chain profession, not only led them to choose the supply chain profession, but was enough to sustain them in the career path.

Job Location: Eleven respondents chose the extrinsic factor job location as the top factor in their career selection, fourteen chose it as a second priority, and eighteen chose it as a third priority in their career choice, making 43/108 or forty percent of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the extrinsic factor of job location. Indeed, the location of the supply chain career not only led respondents to choose the supply chain profession, but was enough to sustain them in the career path.

H2-i: The top three intrinsic career selection factors are significantly related to career selection. For the second hypothesis respondents ranked their top three intrinsic factors as being leadership opportunity, advancement opportunity and fast-paced work.

Leadership: Two respondents chose the intrinsic factor leadership as the top factor in their career selection, four chose it as a second priority, and seven chose it as a third priority in their career choice, making 13/108 or twelve percent of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the intrinsic factor of leadership opportunity, or conversely 88% did not choose the supply chain career path due to leadership opportunities. Despite the leadership opportunities to those in supply chain careers, and it being the top intrinsic factor chosen, it was not a priority in choosing the supply chain profession.

Advancement: Three respondents chose the intrinsic factor leadership as the top factor in their career selection, two chose it as a second priority, and five chose it as a third priority in their career choice, making 10/108 or nine percent of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the intrinsic factor of advancement opportunity, or conversely 91% did not choose the supply

chain career path due to advancement opportunities. Results strongly show that despite the advancement opportunities to those in supply chain careers, and it being the second intrinsic factor chosen, it was not a priority in choosing the supply chain profession.

Pace of Work: Five respondents chose the intrinsic factor leadership as the top factor in their career selection, one chose it as a second priority, and two chose it as a third priority in their career choice, making 8/108 or seven percent of respondents being motivated to their career choice by the intrinsic factor pace of work, or conversely 93% did not choose the supply chain career path due to pace of work. Overwhelmingly, despite the fast pace of work in supply chain careers, and it being the third factor chosen, it was not a priority in choosing the supply chain profession.

### **Summary of the Results**

Results showed in the first hypothesis that the top three factors for extrinsic supply chain factors were salary, work flexibility and location. The second hypothesis showed that the top three intrinsic supply chain satisfaction factors were leadership, advancement, and pace of work.

This shows that extrinsic factors are what is leading students to choose career choices, with pay a primary driver. Intrinsic factors are a much smaller consideration, and leadership and advancement may indeed also have pay implications, making those that are going into careers are fiscally motivated.

### **Implications for Practice from the Literature**

Industry can work with institutions to promote the top extrinsic and intrinsic job characteristics that are prominent in supply chain roles. Due to the shortage of qualified talent in the field and to attract new entrants, firms should also improve opportunities for promotion, pay and long-term job stability, which research has shown are important to students (Maloni et al., 2017). Managers should develop a formal SCM career path plan with successive promotions providing

broader responsibility and earning potential transparency (Cook & Gibson, 2000; Dischinger et al., 2006; Goffnett et al., 2013).

Educators must focus on attracting students to the field by showing available opportunities in industry, conveying the value of the field to the organization and society, and by providing salary data and earnings potential (Goffnett et al., 2013). Although supply chain recruits may be fiscally motivated educators should also focus on the intrinsic benefit of the role to society and also the opportunity to be internally fulfilled by seeing this as an opportunity to serve God through ethical supply chain management and practices, much like a cupbearer would serving the King and his court.

Supply chain educators, academic programs and practitioners must seek to better understand these needs to attract more students to the major and in turn the supply chain profession (Maloni et al., 2017). If students are to be entrusted with bearing the cup, or the resources of this world to the consumer and honor God with how they operate in their supply chain role, they must be properly educated and prepared for success in these roles that educators and programs have the responsibility to provide.

### ***Research Problem Restated***

As supply chains rise in importance in organizational strategy, filling supply chain roles has become a major concern for industry. With supply chain growth, the talent pool for supply chain has not grown as fast as the career field, leading to a shortage in supply chain talent (Autry & Daugherty, 2003; Cotrill, 2010; Min & Lambert, 2002; Wellborn et al., 2022, Williams et al., 2011).

This research investigated the probability that fifteen intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to career selection and then in turn could be used by employers and institutions of higher education to attract students to the supply chain field at a time when it has never been more essential.

### ***Research Limitations***

Several limitations presented themselves during this study. First, self-identified respondent data purchased through Qualtrics led to a large amount of unusable data. The only validity testing that was possible was by manually checking respondents' selections of schools to see if they indeed offered a four-year undergraduate or graduate level supply chain program. Respondents did not provide identifying personal information that could affirm that enrollment or completion from a program. The second limitation of this dataset was ranking vs use of a likert scale to establish top factors. Previous research by Goffnett et al. (2013) was on a Likert scale and identified multiple factors that were ranked equal or close to it and the goal of ranked data was to eliminate this option. However, the Qualtrics survey did not vary the order in which respondents saw the ranked list, therefore there was a large amount of chronological data entries for ranking. All responses were again hand screened for purely chronological responses and those were eliminated from search results. Between these two issues, over 900 samples in nine rounds over two months was needed to render 108 useable responses to minimize chronological ranking. If this study was repeated the following conditions would help to eliminate these limitations: a larger sample size of at least 300 to allow for clearer results, verification of respondents' supply chain program as well as varying order in which respondents saw the ranked choices or using a Likert-based scaled for the factors. Also, narrowing down the list of factors from 15 to 8 would also be helpful in centralizing responses for themes in the data. Using a different database to identify respondents could also be helpful, such as members of a SCM organization such as APICS ASCM or alumni of a school that offers supply chain programs would offer more suitable pools of qualified candidates as well. All of these areas would help correct the limitations experienced during this study.

### ***Areas of Future Study***

This study serves as a broad base that can launch into multiple areas of future study. First, would be to rerun these data with a new population and a larger sample size as well as randomizing the order that respondents see the ranked data choices to allow more opportunity for significance in responses. Other areas of future study include but are not limited to: expanding this study to other global regions that are essential countries in global supply chains such as China or Germany. Pulling samples from the greater supply chain industry, not just from a self-identifying population and identifying respondents based on their role instead of their institution of higher education could show different results. Future study could also focus more on the selection differential factors between genders, roles and across cultures or how the results of this study have changed telecommuting priorities in light of COVID-19 as work policies around this have changed since this study was given. Also identifying supply chain career selection as a result of the pandemic, where severe supply chain shortages were broadly experienced could also be a worthwhile research angle to further expand upon and update this study.

### **Supply Chain Career Selection Factors**

The ability to determine the relevant factors that lead students to select a supply chain career is valuable to both industry and supply chain programs in a role that is pivotal to not only organizational operations but fulfilling the needs and allowing the function of our society. The pandemic has risen the profile of the career, but labor shortages continue. The supply chain is plagued with ethical dilemmas and as Christians, viewing this field as a service to God and society, where we can care for man by not only carrying resources as a cupbearer, but also care for the earth's resources and the least of these, many of those provide those resources is really the true cup supply chain professional carry. Students should be fiscally concerned in providing for their future but should also be concerned with intrinsic factors that living a life fulfilling the call of service

Christians are called to and Christian faculty should raise awareness of students of this vital need and responsibility of supply chain cupbearers.

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**Appendix**

**H1-e1**

*Pay as a Priority: Summary*

		Pay as a Priority				Total
		Top priority	Second priority	Third priority	Not a priority	
Total	Count	50	20	2	36	108
	Expected Count	50.0	20.0	2.0	36.0	108.0

**H1-e2**

*Flexibility: Summary*

		Flexibility				Total
		Top Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority	not a priority	
Total	Count	14	26	14	54	108
	Expected Count	14.0	26.0	14.0	54.0	108.0

**H1-e3**

*Location: Summary*

		Location				Total
		Top Priority	2nd priority	3rd Priority	Not a priority	
Total	Count	11	14	18	65	108
	Expected Count	11.0	14.0	18.0	65.0	108.0

**H2-i1**

*Leadership: Summary*

		Leadership				Total
		Top Priority	2nd Priority	3rd priority	Not a priority	
Total	Count	2	4	7	95	108
	Expected Count	2.0	4.0	7.0	95.0	108.0

**H2-i2**

*Advancement: Summary*

		Advancement				Total
		Top Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority	Not a priority	
Total	Count	3	2	5	98	108
	Expected Count	3.0	2.0	5.0	98.0	108.0

**H2-i3**

*Pace of Work: Summary*

		Pace				Total
		Top Priority	2nd priority	3rd priority	not a priority	
Total	Count	5	1	2	100	108
	Expected Count	5.0	1.0	2.0	100.0	108.0

## Exploring The Hidden Meaning of Marketing in Creation Account

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### **Abstract**

Lots of individual Christians and Christian firms attempt to live their life and run their business for the glory of God following God's message in 1 Corinthians 10:31. However, it seems that they do not have clear guidelines since they believe there is very limited connection between practicing marketing activities and living for God's glory, mainly driven by the implicit meaning of dualism. In this regard, this paper discusses one main issue: Can they live for the glory of God in this world by practicing marketing activities from the biblical worldview? This effort is possible if there exists any hidden meaning of marketing—in the forms of biblical or creation principles for God's original plan for this earth—in the creation account under the umbrella of new central theme of the Bible, e.g., the kingdom of God. Also, this study discusses whether those biblical principles are closely linked to the conceptual foundation of modern marketing principles and concepts. It is expected that this study empowers students to be future shapers in this world.

*Keywords:* kingdom of God, creation account, glory of God, God's messenger, marketing, Bible-driven marketing, empowering students

### **Exploring The Hidden Meaning of Marketing in Creation Account**

Following the suggestion of Corinthians 10:31, a significant number of Christians are putting their efforts to live for the glory of God in their living areas in this world. To this end, they mainly go to the sacred place the church and show various types of holy behaviors to give the glory to God. For instance, they praise and worship God, participate in Bible study group, have fellowships with other church members, and follow the church's missionary activities to spread the gospel.

Implicitly, they tend to follow the principles of dualism assuming that religious activities are sacred, while worldly events are secular. Their perception is resulted in the unexpected separation of God's Word from our life and deviating religion from science. One typical example is that many Christians who were affected by Matthew 6:24 have lots of skepticism about living for God's glory through business and marketing activities because of secular image in this world. As Grudem (2003) indicates, thus, when there are two paths of either chasing a pastor and/or missionary position or running into the business world, most Christians tend to choose the former one, even though most Christians spend their time on their workplaces.

In this on-going negative situation, what we are interested in is to consider if there is any connection between living the life for the glory of God and practicing marketing activities in our life. Specifically, we are interested in examining whether there is any hidden meaning of marketing in the creation account and if so, review how a list of biblical or creation principles employed in the beginning is closely linked to the foundation of modern marketing principles and theories.

To this end, we begin with one big assumption that God's big picture or original plan toward this earth is implied in the creation, unlike the traditional approach focusing on the birth of the sin in Genesis 3. Thus, this big assumption makes it possible for the Christians to live their life for the glory of God by practicing marketing activities which are rooted on the biblical or creation principles

in the creation account. Additionally, it can be said that executing marketing activities deliver God's blessings to all of us in this world as the essence of God's big plan in the beginning.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it is to reveal various types of biblical or creation principles nested in the creation account using the biblical hermeneutics approach. Then, this study attempts to review how a list of biblical or creation principles becomes the conceptual foundation of modern marketing principles and theories—especially in terms of major conditions for marketing activities to occur—to live a life for the God's glory.

This article is organized as follows. In the next section, we try to establish a biblical foundation for laying out God's big picture or original plan toward this earth. Given that, we attempt to figure out what kinds of biblical or creation principles are nested in the creation account under the umbrella of living for the glory of God from the perspective of God's kingdom. Then, we discuss how various types of biblical or creation principles are connected to the major conditions for marketing activities to occur. Finally, we provide our implications for future research and draw the conclusions of this study.

### **Laying Out Biblical Foundation for God's Big Picture**

It is important to establish a biblical foundation with respect to God's big picture to achieve our goal: identifying God's purpose for creation in Genesis 1-2 and then, figuring out how to live our life to follow God's creation purpose with marketing activities in this world. For this matter, this study considers three issues: 1) considering the hermeneutic implication of the kingdom of God as the central theme of the Bible and 2) reviewing the essence of God's creation purpose as implied in the creation account. Putting both discussions together, this study proposes one conceptual framework which describes how to live for the glory of God in this world.

### **Hermeneutic Meaning of Kingdom of God in the Bible**

Traditionally, there have been several concepts which are regarded as the central theme of the Bible. Those suggested central themes are Jesus Christ, God's salvation, God's covenant, God's temple, and kingdom of God. Among these concepts, this study argues that the kingdom of God is an overarching theme of the Bible after considering two selection criteria. This unifying theme arises out of the Scripture itself and allow other biblical concepts in the Bible to figure out their own places and roles (Roberts 2002).

The gospel of the kingdom of God is the core idea of what Jesus Christ preaches for His three-year earthly ministry (Matthew 4:23, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:43, John 3:3-5). Disciples of Jesus Christ also make the same statement—for instance, Philip and Paul preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12, 28:31, NIV). The fact that the kingdom lies before Jesus Christ in the statement implies that the role of Jesus Christ needs to be considered under the umbrella of the kingdom of God. In addition, pastors and theology professors argue that the kingdom of God is the central theme of the Bible (Ladd, 1959, Goldsworthy, 2008).

When the kingdom of God becomes the central theme of the Bible, it is essential for us to view the Bible and our life from the standpoint of God's ruling over the earth as the essence of biblical worldview. Note that the kingdom of God has the hermeneutic meaning of God's ruling or dominion over the earth in the Bible with respect to its Hebrew and Hellenistic meaning. Following this idea, Goldsworthy (2011) defines the kingdom of God as "God's people in God's place under God's rule" (p. 120). In this regard, it is necessary to read and interpret God's words and consider how we behave in our life from the biblical worldview of how God reigns over this earth for the God's glory.

## Identifying God's Creation Purpose

It is possible to believe that God the Creator finished His creation works with His unique purpose in the beginning. With the verse “Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made” (Isaiah 43:7, NASB), the Bible provides us with the glimpse of what the God's purpose for creation might be. It is implied that the God's creation purpose is to live for the glory of God.

Then, it is essential to consider the way of living our life for God's glory in this world. To this end, we need to consider where God's glory starts and ends in terms of its directional flow. The literal meaning of the root of Hebrew word *kavod* for *glory* in the Bible is “heavy” (Benner 2007). Considering that God's biblical principles are paralleled with God-given natural laws in our living environment on earth, it can be argued that the glory of God, which initiates from the heaven where God's presence exists, comes down into this earth. Refer to what one of the Bible verses says, “Be exalted above the heavens, God, And may Your glory be above all the earth” (Psalms 108:5, NASB).

Interestingly, lots of Christians seem to be confused with the core of living for God's glory by equating “living for the glory of God” with “give the glory to God.” Since the Bible provides two expressions together, but it is possible to see that each verse has distinct implicit connotations (John 11:4, 2 Corinthians 4:5-6, Matthew 9:8, John 9:24, Acts 4:21). Thus, it can be argued that one man is responsible for living the life for God's glory in our life instead of trying to give the glory to God, especially at church (1 Corinthians 10:31).

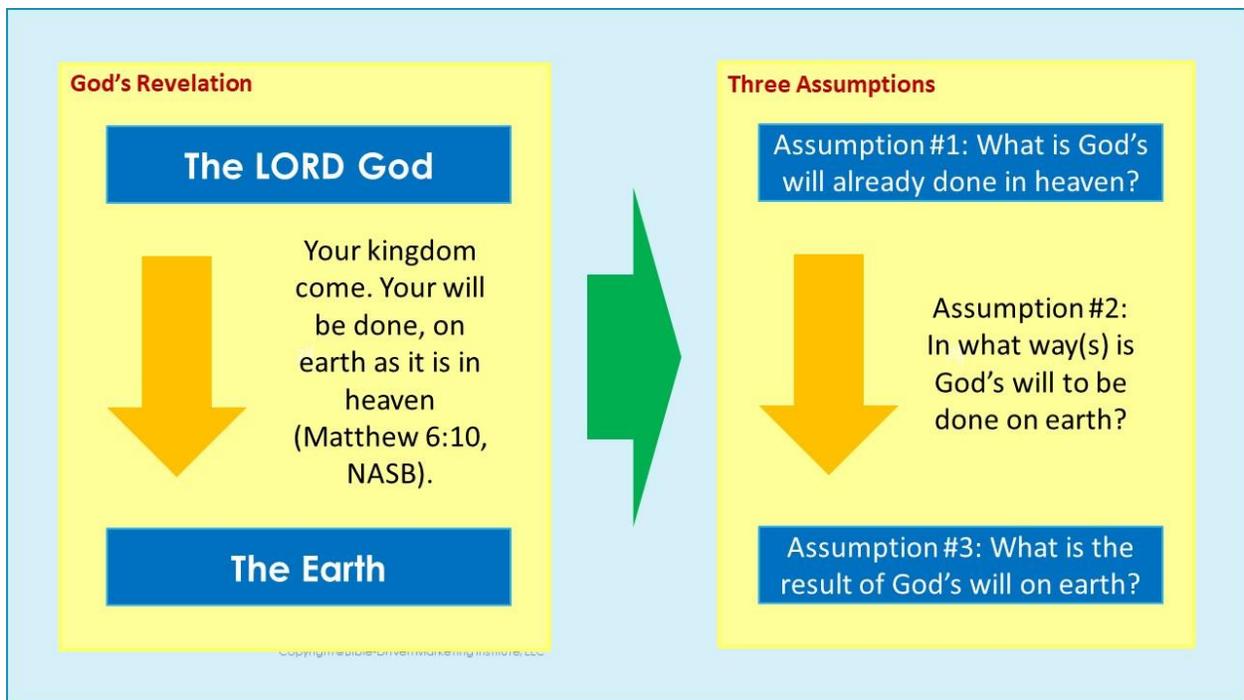
Putting all things together, the way of living for the glory of God's can be defined as enjoying our experience of participating into the one-directional flow from the heaven where God's glory is initiated to the earth where we live. As noted, each person needs to be God's representative

or mediator which connects both the heaven and the earth as the intermediate bridge (1 Timothy 2:5).

Interestingly, this conceptual idea is well reflected into the core of God’s command in Genesis 12:2—to be a God’s blessing—and the core of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:10 and 6:33—the will of God’s kingdom done on earth to be a God’s blessing. Considering the essence of Lord’s Prayer, Figure 1 exhibits three key assumptions in the form of questions to be considered further.

**Figure 1**

*Three Major Assumptions in Lord’s Prayer*



**Major Biblical or Creation Principles in the Creation Account**

Now, we identify a list of biblical or creation principles which might be nested in the creation account. This effort is important since it is assumed the biblical or creation principles in the

beginning become the conceptual foundation of marketing activities to occur in this world. Below is the list of biblical or creation principles this study finds out.

**BP#1: God initiated his ruling over the earth in the beginning.**

When did the kingdom of God begin? Regarding this issue, there are three opinions: 1) when God created everything at the beginning (Genesis 1:1, Goldsworthy, 2011), 2) when God called Abraham to initiate God's redemption history (Genesis 12:1-3), and 3) when Jesus Christ proclaims the gospel (Matthew 4:17, Luke 4:43, Carson, 2012). Considering one editorial aspect of the Bible—having the sandwich structure with three sections of introduction, main body, and conclusion, this paper supports the first opinion. In this regard, it can be argued that God's ruling over the earth initiated at the beginning. This became the foundation of biblical worldview so that we could view the Bible and our life from the standpoint of God's ruling over the earth.

**BP#2: God created everything for His glory in this earth.**

Following the spirit of Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10) and Matthew 6:33, everything was created for God's glory to come down into the earth from the heaven where God's presence exists in the beginning (Isaiah 43:7). Theologically and practically speaking, God has been making it possible for God's glory to come down with the support of several types of mediators such as human beings (Genesis 1:26), their innovations (Acts 4:32), and various entities in natural environment (Psalms 19), along with divine efforts of God in Three (Genesis 1:2). As expected, four types of mediators have been working functionally well. This functional idea is implied in the hermeneutic meaning of "it was good" (Walton 2009, 2015). In this regard, it is important for each of us to participate into the experiencing process of God's glory to come down to this earth from the heaven where it is initiated, as mentioned previously.

**BP#3: God made the man in His image for the ruling mission.**

There was no man to work the ground—as the manifestation of ruling over the earth—in the beginning so that two spiritual and materialistic forms of God’s blessings could not be able to be delivered to the people in this world (Genesis 2:5). Note that another purpose for God’s creation is to do good works (Ephesians 2:10) by delivering physical blessings with needs-satisfying materials—typically foods in Genesis 1:29-30—through via one’s ruling or cultivating behaviors. To cure this issue, the LORD God makes the man in His image and lets him rule over the earth (Genesis 1:26) as well as to work the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15).

The hermeneutic meaning of ‘the man in God’s image’ implies that all the human beings in this earth are created as God’s representative, vice-regent, or priest to live the life for the glory of God (Grudem 2003, Wright 2008, Walton 2009, 2015). The presence of this expression implies that God decided to take the indirect dominion way with the obedience of His representatives when working on the ground with God’s wisdom or knowledge. This is the main reason why the Proverbs is called the Book of Wisdom. Proverbs 1:7 mentions “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” In this regard, it is important for each of us to be one of God’s representatives or mediators and to become a bridge between the heaven and this earth for the realization of God’s big picture in this world.

**BP#4: God put everything in relationship especially with Him.**

For the God’s kingdom and His glory to come down to this world, God put everything in relationship through different types of mediators which are planned to make a bridge between the heaven and the earth. Being in a relationship depends on several conditions: 1) there should be two entities, 2) both are engaged in a dyadic interaction for exchanges, 3) both should be better-off as the outcome of exchanging valuable things. In contrast, the nature of sin in the Bible can be

characterized with 1) two entities being separated or independent, 2) no interaction for exchanges of God's words as the wisdom for cultivation, and 3) resulting into the status of sin and death in a spiritual manner. Thus, when there is no relationship between God and the man in this world, it is not possible for the God's glory in the forms of His blessings to come down to this world for all the living things.

**BP#5: God created everything uniquely and differently.**

In the beginning, God created everything in a unique and different form or status. The expression "according to their kinds" in Genesis 1 is one typical evidence for this matter. We need to recognize what kind of God's mind exists behind this creation process. Two types of perspectives can be considered: 1) the portfolio perspective grounded on the unity biblical principle and 2) the exchange perspective based on the promotion of biblical interactions between two members. The Triune God wants all of us to be the members of God's team or community for the realization of God's purpose for creation, resulting in the concept of the church (1 Corinthians 12:27-28, Matthew 16:18). In addition, God wants each of us to be involved into practicing the greatest commandment in the Law of loving your God and your neighbors (Matthew 19:19, 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34). Note that the practice of loving your God and neighbors is possible when two entities are different and unique. Also, this is one of the key foundations for all kinds of give-and-take marketing exchanges between one provider and another receiver to occur in our world, as mentioned later. Thus, when all the members in a team work together, they will be in satisfaction status at the individual level and the experience of abundance, as a whole, at the team level.

**BP#6: God made unmet needs of the man through the formation of his body.**

In the beginning, God created human beings using the dust from the ground (Genesis 2:7). This creation event implies that God also allowed all the human beings to have various types of their

own unmet needs consequently. Consider why all kinds of industries, businesses, products and services, and brands exist, along with the existence of all nations in this world. It is because meeting unmet needs of all human beings needs to happen via the good works of one man as implied in the God's purpose for creation in the beginning. Thus, it is expected that each of us practices the ways of loving your neighbors to meet their unmet needs by walking with God in one's life.

**BP#7: God asked us to be imitators of God with replicating His work.**

Two biblical phrases grab our attention. Genesis 2:2-3 indicates that God finished His work in the beginning. Also, Ephesians 5:1 indicates that we need to be the imitators of God. Combining the core of both phrases together, it can be summarized that all of us need to be the God's imitators by resembling God's creation works (Grudem 2003). The expression "God's work" has the Hebrew meaning of "the messenger" so that God the Trinity themselves could become their messenger to deliver their blessings to this earth. Remember that we are making something valuable—by resembling God's creation works—at every moment in our daily life. Parents are making foods for their kids at home. The firms are designing and delivering their products and services to their target customers. Likewise, it is essential for us to be ready to create something valuable and to deliver it to this world.

**BP#8: God expected us to be a blessing toward this earth.**

Because of the disobedience of one man, the sin comes into this earth and consequently, the death reigns over this world (Romans 5:17). Also, one man's disobedience was resulted in the fall of God's original ruling plan. God wants to restore His broken plan into the original one. This is the essence of God's redemption or salvation work from the kingdom viewpoint. For this matter, God called one man Abraham and let him be a His blessing toward this earth so that God's glory in the form of God's ruling or dominion can be present at every corner of our world (Genesis 12:1-3). It

implies that Abraham needs to be a God's representative or ambassador by making bridges between the heaven and the earth. He is responsible for delivering God's blessings to all the people in this world. In this regard, it is expected that each of us in this world needs to be ready to be God's blessing.

**BP#9: God commanded the man to finish creation mandate to rule over the earth.**

God commanded the first man to have a dominion over this world through God's creation or cultural mandate (Genesis 2:26-28). Specifically, God asked the man "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" for ruling over the earth. In Genesis 2, later, God asked the same man to cultivate or work the temple-garden of Eden which is regarded as the place of experiencing the presence of God and the source of God's blessing toward this world (Alexander 2008). This idea is parallel with the essence of Greatest Commandment given by Jesus Christ to his disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Then, consider what needs to happen at the front for all nations to complete God's mandate or the Greatest Commandment by Jesus Christ. Definitely, various types of interactions or exchanges will happen between two entities. Thus, it is essential for the Christians to design and implement various types of exchange activities to deliver the gospel and other God's blessings.

**BP#10: God expected us to create heavenly value by working with Him.**

The Bible put lots of emphasis on the idea of walking with God on the way to God's righteousness with the same direction or purpose (Amos 3:3). The reason behind this emphasis is because God is the Creator and knows everything about making a reign over this world. God the Trinity wants to give us his wisdom and knowledge of how to rule. That is why Jesus Christ mentioned "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me" (Matthew 11:28-30). At same time, we need to remember that God expects us to create the heavenly value which will be used for loving

our neighbors, especially through give-and-take exchange with others. Thus, each of us should be ready to rule over the earth in God’s way while walking with Him.

Figure 2 has the summary of all ten biblical or creation principles nested in the creation account.

**Figure 2**

*The List of Ten Biblical or Creation Principles in the Creation Account*

Biblical or Creation Principles	Areas To Be Applied
BP #1. God initiated His ruling over the earth in the beginning.	It is the foundation of biblical worldview toward the Bible and our life.
BP #2. God created everything for His glory in this earth.	
BP #3. God made the man in His image for the ruling mission.	This list is the direction of any individuals and organizations to follow for the glory of God.
BP #4. God put everything in relationship especially with Him.	
BP #5. God created everything uniquely and differently.	
BP #6. God made unmet needs of the man through the formation of his body.	
BP #7. God asked us to be imitators of God with replicating His work.	This list is the conditional foundation for marketing activities to occur between two entities such as the provider and the receiver.
BP #8. God expected us to be a blessing toward this earth.	
BP #9. God commanded the to finish creation mandate to rule over the earth.	
BP #10. God expected us to create heavenly value by walking with Him.	This is the basis of marketing as problem-solving process via the value creation.

**Connecting Biblical or Creation Principles to Marketing Principles**

Due to its secular image, Christians have less considered the necessity of connecting business and marketing to the practice of living for God’s glory in the past (Doran, 1996a, 1996b, Gilley, 2005). Or they have not fully attempted to figure out specific guidelines for doing good business and marketing activities by following God’s Word for the glory of God (Grudem 2003). Refer to the definition of business in the college textbook stating as “any activity that seeks to provide goods and services to others while operating at a profit” (Nickels et al., 2010, p. 4). As expected, doing business

at any workplaces in this world is a different story and has different meaning from the standpoint of biblical worldview.

In this section, thus, this study attempts to investigate the ways to serve God and the neighbors with give-and-take exchanges as the core of marketing in an attempt to achieve God's original plan for God's glory implied in the creation account. In this regard, this article figures out how the biblical guidelines nested in the creation account are interconnected with marketing principles under the umbrella of kingdom of God and God's purpose for creation. We discuss this in three ways.

### **Focusing on the Foundation of Biblical Worldview**

Basically, the Christian organizations including the Christians need to have their right lenses—called the biblical worldview—toward the Bible and the life in this world (Pearcey 2005). A worldview can be defined as our basic belief system which shapes our view toward our world (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2004, Wolters and Goheen, 2005, Middleton, 2014). In this sense, this is one of the important tasks since the biblical worldview guides them into walking with God in His way—especially, chasing God's righteousness and love as mentioned in the Bible.

In the execution of marketing process, the worldview becomes the input of forming our values or value system before exhibiting different types of behaviors. For instance, when consumers receive various types of any incoming stimuli, then tend to use their five senses and form their opinions with their values or value system which depends on the personal worldview in a behavioral chain (Yoon 2019). Keeping its importance in mind, this study recommends that Christian firms and Christians need to remember who God the Sovereignty might be and what He wants from us in this world, depending on the God's Word. This is the heart of BP #1.

### **Need for Higher Purpose of Organizations**

Recently, Quinn and Thakor (2019) found out that the higher purpose links to producing a better performance for the organizations than do any existing goals. This is different from the popular principle of profit maximization in Economics. In this case, chasing God's purpose for creation might be the example of higher purpose for the Christian firms as the biblical direction. The Christian firms can specify the way of managing their organizations and ruling over their business for the glory of God—the manifestation of higher purpose—as the core idea of mission statement. The mission statement tends to indicate what the core idea of their biblical worldview and in which direction the organizations need to go and be managed (Kotler and Keller 2009, Yoon 2020). This is the essence of BP #2.

The Christian firms and individual Christians need to be in any dyadic interactions with other organizations and individuals for their business when attempting to achieve the higher purpose—e.g., God's creation purpose for the glory of God. This is the essence of being in a relationship between two entities. Note that the Bible focuses on one man's harmonious relationship with God. This is the underlying underpinnings of the BP #3.

As discussed previously, it is the God's plan to achieve the higher purpose of glorifying God through one man's ruling or cultivating behaviors in this world. This is what the creation or cultural mandate implies in the creation account (Genesis 1:26-28). By becoming the mediator between the heaven and the earth, the man in God's image makes it possible for the God's glory to come down into this earth in the forms of various types of God's blessings. This is the essence of BP #4.

### **Major Conditions for Marketing to Occur**

Remaining BP #5-#10 are closely related to major conditions for various types of marketing activities to occur between two entities, especially between the provider and the receiver, in this world. For instance, Kerin et al. (2011) identifies four factors to be required: 1) two or more parties with unsatisfied needs, 2) desire and ability to satisfy these needs, 3) a way for the parties to communicate, and 4) something to exchange. Now, consider how both biblical principles found in the creation account and major conditions for marketing to occur are related in this section.

It is well-known that the core of marketing is the exchange (Kotler 1972, Bagozzi 1975, Houston and Gassenheimer, 1987, Anderson et al., 1999). Given that, it is assumed marketing exchanges have the big picture of the problem-solving process via value creation (Yoon, 2021). It is also assumed that the entire marketing process consists of three spaces such as production, exchange, and consumption space occurring between two entities. This is the core of value creation spaces model (Yoon, 2021), which is different from the core of value creation spheres model by Gronroos and Voima (2013) in a sense that the latter focuses on the aspect of co-creating the value.

As the first thing to remember, the Christian firms and individual Christians need to remember that all the human beings are created differently and uniquely. This idea is conceptualized as the term *consumer heterogeneity* in marketing and economics (Desarbo et al., 1997, Yoon, 2021). The presence of consumer heterogeneity is the starting point for taking segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) process and making any give-and-take marketing exchanges between two entities. Because of this presence, one man should be ready to serve others in order to follow God's commandment of loving your neighbors. However, it does not mean that one man needs to serve all the peoples in this world. Instead, they need to define their target market as a part of STP approach among their neighbors to serve. This is the essence of BP #5.

It should be noted that any marketing activities are initiated by research efforts of the firms to identify unmet needs of consumers. As mentioned before, various types of industries, businesses, products and services, and brands cannot be existing in this world without unmet needs of human beings mostly coming out from their body system. Combining with the concept of BP #5, the firms need to define their target market and identify their problems including their unmet needs before being involved into the problem-solving process with them. This is the core implication of BP #6.

Once the firms guess the unmet needs of target market through marketing research efforts, they need to develop valuable market offerings including tangible goods, intangible services, etc. For this matter, Christians need to resemble God's creation works to make any valuable market offerings for our neighbors (Genesis 2:2-3). This is what the implicit meaning of cultivating the ground in the Garden of Eden might be (Genesis 2:15). Preparing valuable offerings implies that depending on the value equation as of the difference or ratio between total benefits and total costs (Woodruff, 1997). Utility or value maximization principle in micro-economics indicates that customers choose the alternative providing the maximum value. The firms need to design offering close to the heavenly value to make their neighbors better-off. This is what the BP #7-#8 are intended to imply.

When the firms prepare any valuable offerings for target market, they need to create any give-and-take marketing exchanges with target customers during the exchange space. Basically, the marketing exchange efforts needs to be based on three types of channels such as communication, distribution, and payment channels. As mentioned before, occurring the marketing exchanges is the final requirement of the creation mandate and the Greatest Commandment to be completed between the providers and the receivers. This is the essence of BP #9.

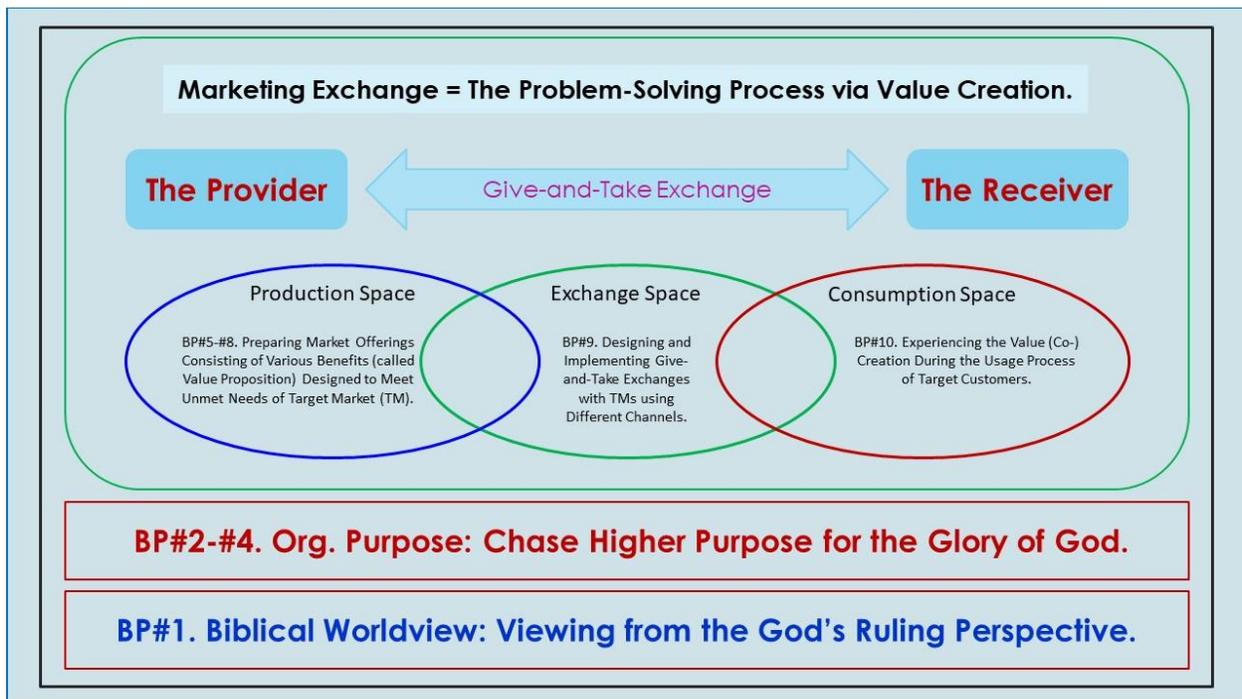
However, it should be remembered that even though the customers, the receiver, acquire any market offerings through distribution channels, the entire story is not done yet because they did

not use the acquired offerings to meet their unmet needs or solve their problems. In other words, target customers need to use the acquired products or services with or without the support of the firms to create the expected value. This is the reason why the entire marketing process includes the consumption space. Thus, the customers need to experience the problem-solving process or need-satisfying effort through the value creation activities by walking with the firms. Finally, this is what the BP #10 is trying to imply.

Putting all the above discussions together, we propose one summary conceptual framework in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Marketing Process as the Problem-Solving Process via Value Creation*



**The Power of Marketing Exchanges**

In this section, finally, it is discussed how living for the glory of God can be realized with the execution of various types of give-and-take marketing exchanges between two entities, the provider

and the receiver, or the giver and the taker (Grant 2014). We consider the power of marketing—in terms of consequences of marketing exchanges—through three ways of living our life in this world: at the individual level, at the organizational level, and at the national level.

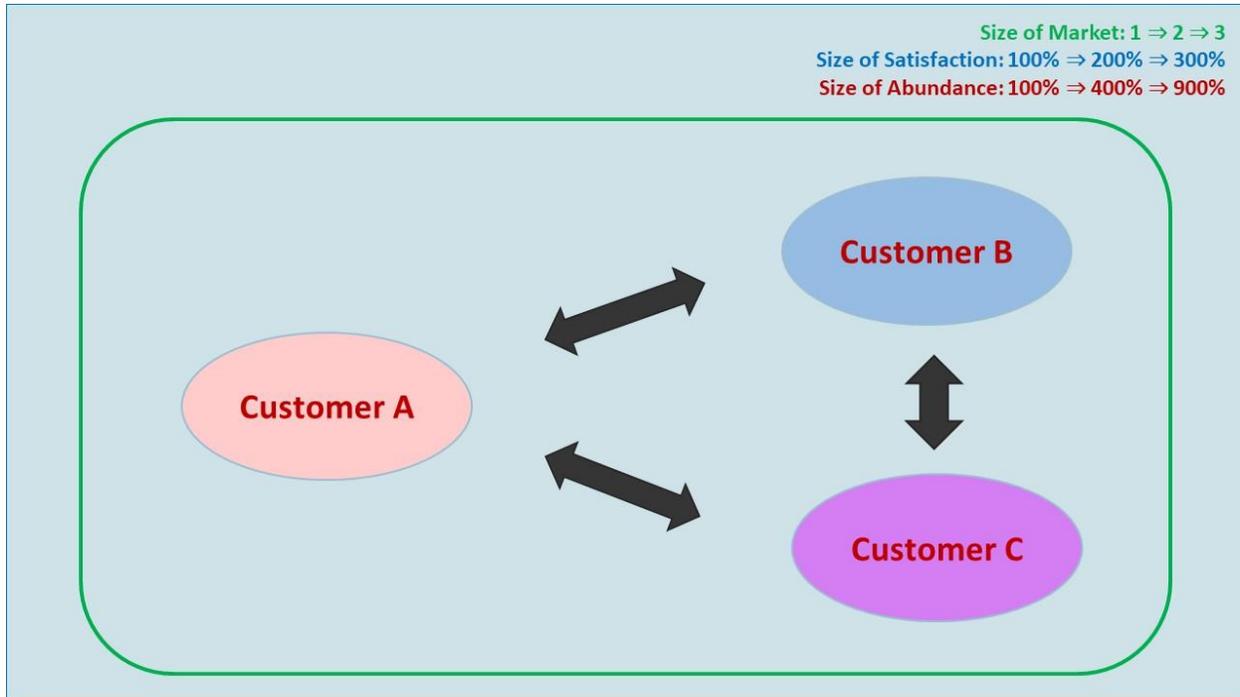
### **Biblical Foundation of Marketing Consequences**

Before going into the discussion of what kinds of consequences various types of marketing exchanges affect at different levels, we explain how they are linked to together. Here is one graphical illustration of how the underlying biblical foundation is linked to the occurrence of marketing consequences when marketing exchanges happen between two entities.

Figure 4 illustrates one biblical foundation of why each individual person should join into any marketing exchanges with others, resulting in the generation of both individual satisfaction and abundance as a whole. As an individual person joins the circle of exchanges with others, each one experiences that the size of market and satisfaction increases in a linear form. In contrast, all the members in a community will experience the increasing size of abundance or well-being together in an exponential way when the concept of abundance is defined as the collective term like a collection of various dishes in a buffet table.

### **Three Types of Consequences as the Power of Marketing**

We illustrate how the power of marketing exchanges occur at three levels such as at the individual, organizational, and national one.

**Figure 4***Graphical Illustration of Marketing Power*

At the individual level, the power of marketing exchanges is linked to the fulfillment of one's unmet needs, resulting in experiencing individual level of satisfaction. Basically, the construct of satisfaction depends on the fulfillment via the supply or provision. Oliver (1997) indicates that the satisfaction is defined as the consumers' fulfillment response. This is the reason why the subject of satisfaction is the most important issue to individuals and the firms (Yoon 2004). In this regard, all the individuals in this world are not able to experience their satisfaction, through the fulfillment of unmet needs, without the supply or provision driven by various types of marketing exchanges.

At the firm level, the business goal of revenue or profit maximization can be met as the consequences of implementing various types of marketing exchanges with target customers. Consider that the profit is defined as the difference between total revenue and total cost. Given the profit equation, the firms need to define key control variables of 4Ps—such as product, pricing,

promotion, and place—and design and execute give-and-take marketing exchanges with their target customers. The management guru Peter Drucker indicates that the valid definition of any business is to create a customer with two basic functions of marketing innovation (Drucker 1954). To create a customer implies that the firms need to create various types of marketing exchanges with a customer to meet one's unmet needs and generate a series of consecutive sales.

At the national level, finally, the creation of various types of marketing exchanges with others is the input to the wealth of one nation (Smith, 1776). Basically, the wealth of one nation can be growing in conjunction with the execution of marketing exchanges (Smith 1776). In order to see if one nation is managing economically and how well it is growing, consider the definition of gross domestic product (GDP) as of the market value of all final goods and services produced within an economy in a given period of time (Mankiw, 2019). Thus, another marketing power is about the increase of one nation's wealth. The index of GDP might be one index to measure the level of abundance in this world from the biblical standpoint.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Finally, this study discusses several issues regarding living for the God's glory with various types of business activities. Then, we draw some conclusions in the end.

### **Future Research**

It is well-known to Christian in science that God gave us two types of books such as the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature (Haarsma & Haarsma, 2011, Psalms 19, Rome 1:20). From the biblical standpoint of revelation, the Book of Scripture is given to reveal things about who God is and what His big picture for this earth might be. Also, the Book of Nature is given to explore various scientific laws surrounding our living environment in this world. Given this understanding, an implicit meaning of the creation mandate is two-folded: 1) this earth or world is

the place for God's ruling and 2) the heart of God's purpose for creation needs to be realized in this world—e.g., God's glory coming down to this earth in the forms of God's blessings. For this matter, there should be the harmony between God's words and our life or broadly speaking, the link between religion and science.

It seems that the Christians tend to have lots of their misunderstanding about the kingdom of God. One of them is that the kingdom of God is purely a future happening after one's death or the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, the Bible indicates "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). It focuses the present nature of the kingdom to be realized in this world, coupled with the essence of Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10, 6:33). From the perspective of God's ruling, this is possible when one is able to rule over the earth or cultivate the ground with God's wisdom via Holy Spirit after accepting Jesus by faith. In this regard, it is essential for the Christians to consider how to live as the kingdom citizen in this world.

As discussed, it seems that the Christians do not distinguish the true meaning of "for the glory of God" from that of "glory to God." Specifically, if they go to the holy place, the church, and exhibit church activities only for worship, bible study, fellowship, and mission, they are doing the same things to give the glory to God, not for the glory of God. It is possible for us to live for the God's glory by designing and practicing various types of marketing exchanges between two entities. According to new viewpoint toward modern marketing, the entire marketing process consists of three spaces such as production, exchange, and consumption one (Yoon 2021). At the production space, the Christians can be God's imitators by resembling God's creation works in the beginning (Genesis 2:2-3, Ephesians 5:1). At the exchange space, they can go and make disciples of all nations by creating give-and-take exchanges with them (Matthew 28:19-20). At the consumption space, then, they can teach the disciples to rule over this earth by walking with God and obeying God's wisdom.

If these three steps are done, the God's glory from the heaven may come down to this earth with lots of God's blessings.

Finally, the Christians need to remember that they are a member of the church which is the body of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). Also, it should be remembered that each member has different talents and gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-12). Given this background, it is helpful to discuss the core of *sphere sovereignty* which is suggested by Abraham Kuyper (2013). He assumes that this world consists of various spheres such as the family, the church, the workplace, the state, and so on. Then, he emphasized that Jesus Christ has all the authority to rule over each sphere in his kingdom even though human authority provides order and governance in each area. Following this concept, the Christians need to be the representative or messenger of God and take the yoke from Jesus Christ to learn and to rule over in God's way. Also, different types of marketing exchanges need to be present at different spheres.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This study attempts to explore any hidden meaning of marketing in the creation account. After figuring out various biblical principles implied in the God's creation process, specifically, this study investigates how the identified biblical principles become the theoretical foundation of marketing principles occurring at diverse living areas.

As its overarching umbrella, this study reviews the true meaning of God's creation purpose—e.g., for the glory of God in Isaiah 43:7—within the context of the kingdom of God as the central theme of the Bible. In this context, consequently, this study discusses how to live for the glory of God with the execution of marketing exchange activities.

This article provides several findings. First, originating from the heaven, God's glory needs to come down into every corner of this world in the forms of God's blessings by following the

essence of creation mandate (Genesis 1:26-28) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Second, it is found that there are 10 biblical principles nested in the creation account and they are the conceptual basis for the practice of various marketing exchanges between two entities.

This study is very important since students can be empowered to live for the glory of God in their living areas by practicing marketing exchanges with others. There are two legitimate reasons why this argument is critical. First, all the peoples are the marketers in this world since they are involved in any kinds of give-and-take exchanges with others. Second, they are responsible for executing various marketing exchanges with the neighbors when it comes to practicing God's commandment of love.

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**Toward Multi-Aspectual, Normative Marketing Theory:  
The Challenges of Definitions and Measurement**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to seek developmental feedback and to invite fellow scholars to develop a research agenda, including collaboration with the aid of a Planning Grant from CCCU. More specifically this paper: (1) briefly discusses the modern definitions of marketing, which generally suggest that marketing is an activity for creating and exchanging value between a provider and a consumer as well as to provide a brief reflection on the discipline from Christian writers; (2) introduces a revised view of the discipline based on the biblical concept of shalom to fill the gaps in the existing Christian scholarship on this subject; (3) presents the notion of normative marketing practice, in order to distinguish among activities that bring glory to God and those that offend His Name; (4) introduces Christian philosophical framework of Modal Aspects proposed by Herman Dooyeweerd and discuss its possible applications for normative marketing theory development as an effective tool to shape students' thinking; (5) proposes potentially suitable research methods to examine those practices with fellow collaborators.

*Keywords:* normative marketing, theory development, Christian philosophy, empirical research models

## **Toward Multi-Aspectual, Normative Marketing Theory:**

### **The Challenges of Definitions and Measurement**

The most recent definition of marketing according to the American Marketing Association conceptualizes the discipline as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”<sup>1</sup> Marketing guru Phillip Kotler (2013, p. 6) broadly defines marketing as “social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others.” These and similar definitions suggest that marketing ultimately involves actions of stakeholders (such as consumers, managers, government agents, among others) that benefit more than one party. Thus, the task of marketing as a *positive* science is to research, explain, predict, and influence behaviour of the exchange counterparts, especially those of consumers, for a *monetary* or otherwise societally beneficial gain. In short, the goal of marketing is to assist creators and consumers of value to find the right product, in the right place, at the right time, and at the right price (also known as the 4 Ps of the marketing mix).

Many Christian writers have often been critical of these views of modern marketing theory and practice. However, some authors have recognized the important role marketing plays in modern society and have attempted to reconcile the practice with business principles found in the Scriptures. Faith-ful marketing thinkers frequently reflect on the Biblical themes of God’s provision (Gen 9:3; Ex 16:1-30; 1 Tim 6:17; Mt 6:30) and God’s sovereignty (Gen 1:1; Deut 5:7) as well as the participatory nature of human beings, created in His image, with gifts of creativity (Gen 1:1), freedom (Gen 2:16; Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 10:23-31; Gal 5:1), stewardship (Gen 1:28; 2:5,15) and personhood (Gen 1:26-27). Karns (2008) suggests that “exchange and marketing are the avenues for

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<sup>1</sup> “Definition of Marketing,” American Marketing Association, accessed July 24, 2015, <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>

participating creatively with God in work that provides for each other's needs, whether recognized as such by those engaged in it or not" (p. 102). The concept of exchange is thoroughly discussed in the context of a reconciliative approach to marketing (Busuttil, 2017). Karns further claims that "the exchange and marketing processes would be at play even if the fall had not occurred" (p. 104) and argues that a Christian worldview envisions "exchange as a means to serve one another and not as a means to exploit," prefers "distributive justice and self-sacrificial love over greed," and promotes "[G]enuine relationships between persons [which] model the relationships between God and persons" (p. 105). Hence, we need to examine these processes and practice, with the purpose of aligning them with God's norms.

### **Toward Normative Marketing**

The secular literature has developed various notions of normative marketing. Generally, normative marketing is a prescriptive practice which is rooted in normative ethics and is anchored in moral philosophy, business ethics research, corporate social responsibility frameworks, public policy thinking, religious values, legal guidelines, and a modicum of utopian idealism (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006). However, much of the discussion has revolved around distinction between normative and descriptive ethics, law and self-interest as guides to good conduct, and various ethical approaches describing the practice (Smith, 2001). Recent developments from Christian writers have helped shed more light on the concept of normative marketing from a Christian perspective (Busuttil, 2017; Engelland, & Engelland, 2016; Hagenbuch, 2008; Karns, 2008), although a comprehensive model is yet to be developed.

First, we need to recognize the roots of normative marketing practice. Normative marketing is a prescriptive practice which is rooted in normative ethics and is "anchored in moral philosophy, business ethics research, corporate social responsibility frameworks, public policy thinking, religious values, legal guidelines, and a modicum of utopian idealism" (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006, p. 157).

From a Christian perspective, the “anchor” of such practice is the redemptive nature of Christ. I agree with Steen and VanderVeen (2003) who cite Spykman (1992) and boldly proclaim that the norm of marketing is found in “the mediating Word of God given with creation ..., reaffirmed in the redeeming work of Christ, and illumined by the witness of Scriptures” (p. 75). Thus, to recognize and apply normative practices we need to first turn to Scripture as the source of wisdom and inspiration. Furthermore, normative marketing practice is discerned with the influence of the Holy Spirit and is aimed at reorientation or reordering of love toward God, the self, others, and creation. Hence, marketing practice and research may be reclaimed to become a home of righteousness.

Beyond Scripture, we learn about God’s norms in marketing practices through intuition, experience or interactions with each other and creation, and the empirical study of various phenomena. We also need to acknowledge the effects of sin as a result of the Fall, which produces tension and acts as a counterweight to our own efforts. Wolters (2005) argues that “[S]in introduces an entirely new dimension to the created order... it establishes an unprecedented axis, as it were, along which it is possible to plot varying degrees of good and evil” (p. 57). This varying nature of good and evil provides a helpful guide for developing a theoretical and practical framework to research the extent to which a practice or a process conforms to God’s ordained norms and how it deviates from them.

God imposes his law over creation, creating and maintaining order through the laws of nature and norms. Spykman (1992) states that “[I]his good order for creation holds for all our life relationships. It defines our manifold callings. . . . This cultural mandate [Genesis 1:26-31] lays its claim on us both as a benediction and a command. . . . It delineates in a typically biblical way the potentials for every human enterprise as well as the limitations on it. . . . Viewed in this light, every calling is a religious calling. . . . Our calling is to bring the order *of* our life in God’s world, whether in the pulpit or in politics, in our halls of learning or in our marketplaces, into conformity with God’s

good order *for* our life in this world” (p. 179, 180). Our role as the culture makers, as marketers and consumers, is to reveal and apply these creational, *structural* norms in carrying out respective duties in our lives, including our economic relations; to discern and to do His will to His glory and human well-being. Thus, one of the first tasks of a faithful marketing practitioner is to recognize, define, and organize those structural norms – the order of creation – in specific contexts of exchanges, as well as to reform or redirect them when they appear to deviate from God’s instituted laws. The performance of these tasks is possible because of humans’ “intuitive attunements to creational normativity” (Wolters, 2005, p. 29) or conscience. For example, because market exchanges need trust and efficiency to perform their basic functions, the cultivation of this kind of confidence and reliance on the other party is necessary for proper functioning of marketing. Karns (2008) labels deviations from such proper functioning as “misalignments.” We now turn to a more expanded discussion of such “misalignments” as well as possible “alignments,” in the context of a Christian philosophical framework.

### **Theoretical Background**

Philosophy helps us to systematically formulate a framework profitable for exploration and development of discipline-specific theories. The philosophical framework presented in this paper, for the purpose of developing a normative theory of marketing, is based on writings and interpretations of twentieth century Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. His Christian philosophical framework assumes that all of the creation and its laws are dependent on God, the Creator, and any exploration of their existence (i.e., meaning, Dooyeweerd, 1984) and interrelationships can only take place in reference to Him. The following discussion only briefly presents Dooyeweerd’s Cosmonomic philosophy insofar as it is useful for the present analysis.

Dooyeweerd's theory of modal aspects attempts to examine the diversity and coherence of creation. He argues that all of created reality does not *have* meaning, but *is* meaning, which points

beyond itself to the Creator. The “structure of individuality” refers to the ways a thing (an entity) is meaningful in the various aspects: it is what enables the entity to be that particular individual despite changes (Dooyeweerd, pp. 76-77). Dooyeweerd devoted some time to explicating the intricate and complex relations between subjects and objects in creation. Subjects are the “active” participants, originators of an action. Objects play (as if) a passive role as recipients of the subject’s actions, all operating under God’s laws within a specific aspect. Thus, under all spheres or aspects there exist both laws and phenomena (i.e., subjects and objects) that operate under these laws. Dooyeweerd (1984) argued that all of nature has been created to be in a coherent relationship with each other. The subject (in the context of this paper) is the individual: consumer, marketer, parent, citizen, worshiper, etc. Man, as image bearer of God, installed on Earth to rule over creation and to make sense of all things (although not fully, but in his limited capacity), acts as the centre of action, “engages with things” Basden (2008, p. 81), and enters relationships.

Dooyeweerd argued that a person is also subject (note a different use of the term) to various laws that define a particular irreducible aspect and that these laws enable her to interact with the environment (e.g., watch and react to an advertisement) or enter into relations (e.g., exhibit brand loyalty). (However, generally speaking, an individual functions in each aspect either as a subject or an object; ‘things’ can be done to us).

An aspect is a mode, a fundamental way of being. According to Dooyeweerd there are fifteen irreducibly distinct aspects (spheres of meaning) of life: quantitative, spatial, kinematic, physical, biotic, sensitive, analytical, formative, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and pistic. Each of these aspects has a distinct set of laws that enable things to exist and interact (see Kalsbeek, 1975 for a more comprehensive review of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy). He proposes that each aspect has a meaning-nucleus, a kernel which can only be grasped intuitively, and which “always indicates a *how*, never a *concrete something*” (Kalsbeek, 1975, p. 100). Table 1 lists all 15 aspects

(also called modalities) with their respective kernels as presented by Kalsbeek, p. 100 (with some expansions).

**Table 1**

*Aspects and Corresponding Kernels*

Aspect	Its Kernel
Numeric	Discrete quantity
Spatial	Continuous extension
Kinematic	Motion
Physical	Energy and matter
Biotic	Life and vitality
Sensitive	Feeling
Analytical	Distinction
Formative	Formative power
Lingual	Symbolic representation
Social	Social intercourse
Economic	Frugality
Aesthetic	Harmony
Juridical	Retribution (what is due)
Ethical	Love in temporal relationships (self-giving)
Pistic	Faith, firm assurance, and vision

Hence, sand, for example, exists by its reference to the physical aspect, a theatre performance by reference to the aesthetic aspect, a business by reference to the economic aspect.

The qualifying aspect of a thing (i.e., the one which characterizes it, as in a plant being characterised by the biotic aspect) determines the unity of that thing.

Dooyeweerd's framework proposes that later aspects depend on earlier ones for their facilitation (the principle of retrocipation) while earlier ones depend on later ones to reveal their full meaning (the principle of anticipation). Most creatures operate *subjectively* (e.g., as initiators of action under God's Law) in multiple aspects; only humans can operate *subjectively* in all of them. Multi-aspectual analysis then answers the question "In what ways does an entity (a concrete element of created reality, i.e., a 'thing') express a particular aspect?" "Progress" is made when human exploration of aspectual order of creation "opens up" each modality.

Despite the framework's comprehensive philosophical view of created reality, only few attempts have been made to apply it for the scientific exploration of current issues in various fields. Basden (2008), for example, has successfully applied this framework in information systems research. This paper will rely on the described framework to examine normative marketing practice, especially as it relates to its application in evaluating business practices.

Dooyeweerd argued that our harmonious functioning in all aspects (particularly as it relates to the normative laws of aspects above the *sensitive* – see *Table 1*) leads to a full, healthy, godly life, whereas violations of such laws result in harmful and unholy living, which is unsustainable. It is worth examining this role for guidance in godly living, particularly as it relates to economic consumption. Furthermore, because Dooyeweerd argues that men can object-function in some aspects (i.e., "I am owned by what is 'mine'"), it is necessary to examine the implications of such functioning (e.g., idolatry) and how to help bring harmony in our consumption behaviour and shalom for the people of God. (Dooyeweerd argued that because all things point to God, we cannot truly understand created reality without reference to Him.) This examination and its results will contribute to our understanding of the modern consumerist culture, in which consumers "identify

themselves by the formula: *I am = what I have and what I consume*” (Fromm, 1976, p. 36, italics original). This notion of modern consumer behaviour may be paraphrased in the context of relationship marketing theory as “I am = what I have or consume and relationships I build.”

According to the Cosmomic philosophy, coherent interwoven-ness of creation is “attuned to man, related to man. The visibility of things, their analyzability, [...], their beauty and ugliness, their capacity to function as a juridical or economic object, - these are all intrinsic aspects of the individuality structure [characteristic lawful order] of things” Kalsbeek (1975, p. 121). Thus, our feelings, our affective and cognitive states are a part of the creation and are meaning, which is attuned to the rest of the creation.

Dooyeweerd argues that the functioning of every event, situation, consumption pattern, etc. may be used to truly reflect God’s character or to turn us away from God. Furthermore, all objects are a gift from God to be held in stewardship for God and to be used to the glory of God. This principle upholds the sovereign lordship of God over all creation and bestows responsibility upon managers and consumers. New approaches to marketing research are needed to identify the normative principles that would guide marketing practices: product design, strategy formulation and execution, promotional tactics, etc. that are designed to facilitate a healthy, harmonized, stewardly, and joyful relations between man and creation.

We continue with a critical reflection on the nature and the direction of the relationships among the participants and objects involved in a marketing activity (e.g., a sale of an item or a television commercial). Imagine a consumer, an item (e.g., a car, toy, vacation package, or college education), a manufacturer or marketer of that item, other stakeholders, as well as the rest of the created order (e.g., environment) and the Creator. The process of developing redemptive or reconciliatory marketing strategies must include a comprehensive analysis of such relationships. My proposition here is consistent with the Model of Reconciliation as Vocation proposed by

Hagenbuch (2008), who argues for reconciliation and support of strong relationships “between oneself and God, oneself and others, others and God, and others and others” (p. 83). Furthermore, redemptive marketing is defined by regenerative practices that participate or contribute to realising of the human heart from its bondage and captivity to sin through the process of reordering and redirecting love, in obedience to God’s law, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, and encourages shalom and the ushering of God’s Kingdom. The proposed framework for such an analysis allows us to shape responses to questions related to marketing activities such as: What characteristics of a car advertisement would constitute a healthy and flourishing relationship between the driver and her car? How would a promotion of a particular household cleaning item enhance God’s shalom in life of a family? What kinds of relationships is a board-game designed to invoke among the participants during and after the game? What vision of the Kingdom is encapsulated in the liturgies (Smith, 2009) of shopping, consuming, and disposing? I believe the Dooyeweerdian framework presented here allows us to answer such questions in a comprehensive way.

Table 2 further explains the differences among the previously described aspects or modalities. The table lists all fifteen aspects and descriptions of how an entity, a print ad from *Federici* gelato marketer included in the table, functions within that modality as presented by Kalsbeek (with some expansions).

**Table 2***Aspects and Their Meanings*

Aspect	Its meaning	Examples <sup>2</sup>
Numeric	Discrete quantity (numerable, calculable)	This 1 page contains about 4 product attributes, and has a certain number of words.
Spatial	Continuous extension or expansion	This ad page is laid out in rectangular areas.
Kinematic	Motion (extensive movement)	The ad invites your gaze to move across it.
Physical	Energy and matter (physico-chemical)	This ad emits light.
Biotic	Life and vitality	Certain areas of your nerve cells are activated by interacting with this ad.
Sensitive	Feeling, sensation	This ad can be seen, and the reader may have an emotional reaction to its content.
Analytical	Distinction, logic, cognition	The reader can distinguish things on this ad and think about them.
Formative	Formative power	The reader can construct an impression of this ad.
Lingual	Symbolic representation	The reader can understand some of what this ad describes.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of aspectual functioning of the text on an advertising page in a magazine (adapted from Andrew Basden, <http://kgsvr.net/dooy/aspects.html>.)

Social	Social intercourse	The reader has a role as reader or “encounter.”  This page is not conventional.
Economic	Frugality	The writer attempts to get all that is needed into this page.
Aesthetic	Harmony, beautiful proportion	Is this ad interesting? Does it 'work' as a whole?
Juridical	Retribution (what is due)	Does this page do justice to the topic, and to you as reader?
Ethical	Love in temporal relationships (self-giving)	Information contained on this page is truthful and the writer is “generous” with the readers
Pistic	Faith, firm assurance, and vision	The writer believes in what he or she is writing on this page, and believes it's important.

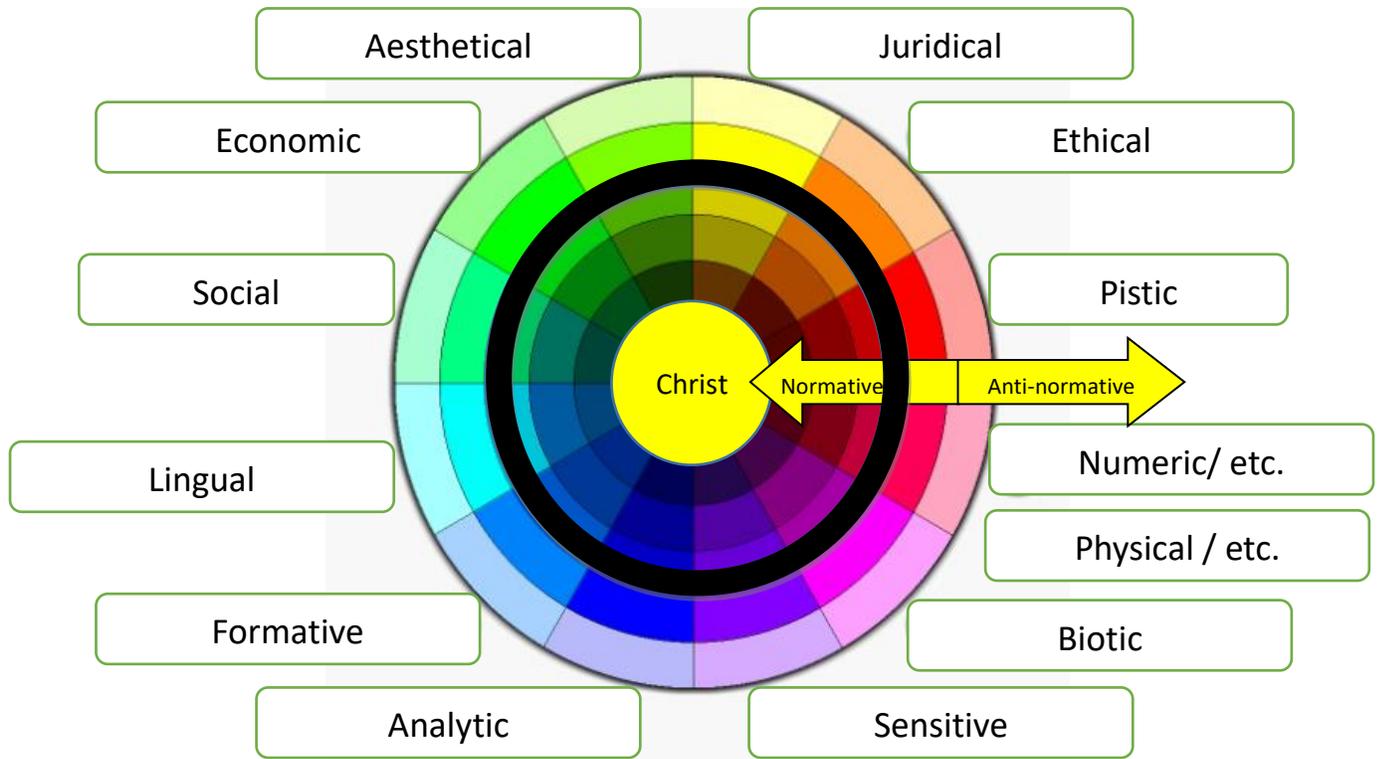


The proposed framework suggests that there are intricate and complex relations between subjects and objects in creation. Subjects (for example, a creator of the *Federici* advertisement, see picture) are the “active” participants, originators of an action. Objects play (as if) a passive role as recipients of the subject’s actions (the aforementioned ad. itself), all operating under God’s laws within a specific aspect. Thus, under all modalities or aspects there exist both laws and phenomena (i.e., subjects and objects) that operate under these laws. Chaplin (2011) also concludes that Dooyeweerd’s “normative principles” or “rules of conduct,” which appear in all post-sensitive modalities, “are thus much wider in scope than the field designated by the term ethics in contemporary philosophy and theology; it includes, unusually, norms of language, aesthetics, and even faith. What he [Dooyeweerd] terms ‘ethical norms’ are merely one variety of normative rules of conduct” (p. 62):

The general conceptual model that I propose based on Dooyeweerd’s philosophy for identification and analysis of the normative dimensions of creation is presented in Figure 1. The model unequivocally assumes the centrality of Christ, the Redeemer and Reconciler, as well as the ultimate source of normativity. The “rays” represent different spheres of normative sovereignty or modal aspects, ranging from numeric to pistic. The dark circle that cuts across the rays signifies the “boundaries” between normative, Godly practices and anti-normative or ungodly ones. Hence, a practice or an activity may be examined and judged in terms of its functioning “well” along each dimension or modality. For example, a magazine advertisement for a car may appear to “do justice” and treat properly all parties involved in the production of the promotional material. Alternatively, it may apparently conform to aesthetic norms, however, lack integrity in pistic modality by appealing to idolatry and utilizing sacrilegious language.

**Figure 1**

*A Conceptual Model for Multi-Aspectual Analysis*



Finally, according to the Kuyperian and, particularly, Dooyeweerdian view, marketing is a law- and norm-governed social structure. Marketing is a set of individual things, events, and social relationships (e.g., advertising billboards, new product launches, and interactive sales presentations, respectively) that function in all modal aspects. The model of fifteen modalities or ways in which an entity can function suggests, for example, that a promotional video: can be counted (numerical aspect), can be interpreted (logical aspect), can evoke emotion (psychic aspect), and can be the advertiser’s property (juridical aspect). Following this view, the task of any culture-making human activity, and that of marketing in particular, is to “positivize” or to responsibly discern and apply those norms in value exchanges and other marketing mix activities in a God-pleasing fashion. The author of the normative dynamic development is God himself. Therefore, believers, whose role as

image-bearing agents is to discover and creatively apply such norms throughout creation, must recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Dooyeweerdian theory of created order redefines the concept of human flourishing as proper, good, and God-glorifying functioning in all aspects and in all subject-object relations. Dooyeweerd also argued that our harmonious functioning, and particularly in the normative laws of aspects (above the *sensitive*) leads to a healthy, godly life, whereas violations of such laws result in harmful, unholy living, which is unsustainable. Shalom-enhancing activities attempt to bring peace and balance in relations among members of society and elements of creation even in the absence of the agent of reconciliation. For example, the positivised relationship between a believer and her client improves and enhances relations between that client and her own customers, or positively influences her environmental stewardship practices (i.e., relations with the elements of creation in the context of value-creation). I am convinced, through my own research and classroom experiences, that Christian educators and practitioners cannot only share such shalom-enhancing marketing activities but can also educate and convince their co-workers and other organizational stakeholders to implement the normative practices.

### **Applications in Marketing**

The presented multi-aspectual approach allows for simultaneous and comprehensive analysis of functioning in all aspects of all forms of being. For example, we can consider an application of such an analysis for an analysis of the aforementioned *Federici* ice-cream ad. We will forego the analysis of the non-normative (*pre-sensitive*) elements of the ad. as they constitute evaluation of its technical, physical characteristics. The normative aspects require us to discern God's laws and norms for the well-functioning of the ad. and the consumer's interaction or relationship with the ad (but also all others who are involved in activities related to the conceptualization, design, sale, and even disposal). Notice here that we stress "relationship" rather than *usage* or *consumption* of the product or

its advertisement in general to include the multitude of possible interactions with a consumer, including idolatrous attachments and conspicuous consumption. We need to distinguish between wholesome or shalom seeking states and harmful deviations.

As Christian researchers we may turn to many disciplines besides theology to find answers to the following questions: What kind of advertisement features (e.g., colors, size) may facilitate normative social interactions and which ones would be harmful? What advertisement imagery and wording characteristics allow for an effective communication? What kind of features may prompt the viewer of the ad. to become susceptible to idolatry (i.e., a distortion in the pistic modality)? Notice, however, that most of these “normative” features contain a potential for abuse and misdirection in the hands of the consumer or user (i.e., an advertisement may serve as a tool of promoting hate speech, as some have in the past or condone racism) beyond the marketer’s control. At the very least we may use aspectual analysis to identify issues from multiple perspectives and share such awareness with others in our workplaces or in academic research.

### **New Horizons in Marketing Practice and Research**

How can Christian marketing researchers, in collaboration with experts in other fields (including people of other faiths and secular researchers), contribute to conceptualization and measurement of normativity in each of the post-*sensitive* modalities proposed by Dooyeweerd?

The concept of normativity is certainly not new in marketing literature. Hunt and Vitell (1986) argue, for example, that marketers have “prima facie” duties which constitute moral obligations. These normative obligations include fidelity, justice, beneficence and non-injury, and much research has been completed on these moral imperatives. I have successfully used virtue-based methods to advise marketing professionals on normative practices. However, the proposed Dooyeweerdian framework provides a much richer and more comprehensive view on normativity with its multi-dimensional focus. Because normativity is so central to the Dooyeweerdian

framework, exploration of possible measurement scales and their application in empirical studies may prove to be a fruitful area for an innovative research agenda.

What are the possible sources for developing such normative measurements? Normative characteristics are often associated with virtuousness and often find their roots in virtue ethics. A growing body of research on human flourishing and holistic development has been emerging in the field of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Despite its numerous shortcomings (e.g., focus on self-centeredness of individual's "happiness"), this field of psychology may provide with a lucrative harvest for developing psychometric tools for possible assessment of normativity. For example, one can modify and apply the various developed scales to measure extent to which justice is exercised or present in the design of the vacation cruise or how the virtue of prudence (e.g., efficient fuel consumption in a car) does justice to the user's relationship with creation. A Christian marketer who recognizes and clearly distinguishes the normative dimensions of marketing practice will interfere with tactics that appeal to envy, jealousy, anger, hopelessness, and other vices to promote a product or service.

Furthermore, we may research the normativity of marketing-related activities, such as purchasing behaviour and its effects on others. The author has attempted to construct such scales for ethical and pistic modalities in my research on ethical marketing and business practices, which was tested in developing countries. Preliminary results indicate that managers can intuitively gauge normative aspects of various marketing practices. What are the implications for further development of the normative marketing theory and its empirical testing, especially from a Christian perspective? The following section is a discussion of possible applications of various marketing research methodologies and an invitation to my fellow like-minded colleagues to explore and methodologically test the suitability or adaptation of those methods in examining normativity (e.g., develop measurement scales) inspired by the Dooyeweerdian framework.

Perhaps it is first helpful to establish the scope of the proposed investigation. Advertising industry has been particularly criticized for anti-normative or ethically questionable practices (Drumwright & Murphy, 2009). Although there appear no “normativity” or “anti-normativity” scales per se, researchers may find sources to gauge the various aspects in the existing marketing literature. Basden’s (2008) discussion on multi-aspectual analysis, for example, offers suggestions on “flourishing” and dysfunctional expressions of functioning (e.g., for the lingual aspect: conveying truth, understanding vs. deceit and misunderstanding). Hence, Basden’s framework points to methodologies that use semantic differential scales. Basden suggests that “beneficial or positive repercussions come from functioning in line with the laws of aspects and detrimental or negative repercussions come from going against the laws of aspects. Each aspect yields a distinct type of Good and Evil, such as: (2008, p. 78)

- Biotic aspect: Vitality, health vs. disease, threat to life
- Sensitive aspect: Sensitivity vs. sensory overload or deprivation
- Analytical aspect: Clarity vs. confusion, illogicality
- Formative aspect: forming, creating, achieving vs. destroying
- Lingual aspect: Conveying truth, understanding vs. deceit and misunderstanding
- Social aspect: Friendship, respect vs. enmity, disrespect
- Economic aspect: Care, frugality vs. waste, squandering resource
- Aesthetic aspect: Harmony, fun vs. disharmony, boredom
- Juridical aspect: Justice, giving due vs. injustice, denial of what
- Ethical aspect: Generosity, giving, sacrifice, hospitality vs. selfishness, taking advantage of others, competition
- Pistic aspect: Loyalty, trust, orientation to true God vs. disloyalty, idolatry.

Hence, how can we evaluate normativity of an advertisement and how can we apply the proposed framework? Which methodologies or scales would provide the most suitable solutions for the implementation and empirical testing of the proposed framework? How would conceptualizations of “normative aspects” common in the extant literature can be compatible with the framework’s definitions?

We will focus on just a few of the aspects in our discussion of the *Federici* ad. For example, how can one measure the analytic “normativity” of the ad? The analytical aspect “of distinction, conceptualizing, and inferring” (Basden, 2008, p. 64) offers an typical challenge to a marketing researcher and practitioner. How helpful are the following measurement methods or scales in gauging the analytic aspect? For example, Feltham’s (1994) Judgment of Ads-Viewer Judgment of Ads: The Persuasive Disclosure Inventory (PDI), which measures *ethos* (persuasive appeals that focus on the source of the ad. rather than its message), *pathos* (affective or emotional appeals), and *logos* (appeals to information or evidence) may serve as a starting point. The PDI scale consists of bipolar adjective sets of statements and uses a 7-point response format. The following items appear particularly promising (*logos* scale items):

*“Please check the box which you felt best describes the commercial you just saw.”*

*Not rational / rational*

*Not informative / informative*

*Does not deal with facts / deals with facts*

*Not logical / logical*

The sensitive aspect “of the qualities of both perception and feelings” (Clouser, 2010, p. 4) or “of sense, feeling, and emotion” (Basden, 2008, p. 64) may need further concept refinement and its measurement may benefit from the Consumption Emotions Set (CES) (Richins, 1997). Richins’ 4-point scale (not at all likely = 0 to very likely =3) assesses emotions most frequently experienced in

consumption contexts. A few of the useful items for exploring normativity are presented below (among other items).

*Anger* (measured by frustrated, irritated)

*Envy* (envious, jealous)

*Love* (loving, warm hearted)

*Joy* (pleased, joyful)

Furthermore, Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), which measures involvement as the respondent's perceived personal relevance of the object (e.g., an ad.) based on inherent needs, values, and interests, offers an expanded variety of scales to gauge the sensitivity aspect and its normativity. The 7-point semantic differential scale offers a few potentially useful items to "judge (product category) against a series of descriptive scales according how you perceive..." (p. 349), which are presented below.

*Boring – interesting*

*Unexciting – exciting*

*Mundane – fascinating*

The aesthetic aspect of "harmony, fun vs. disharmony, boredom" (Basden, 2008, p. 78) may benefit from Zaichkowsky's (1985) scales, as well as Feeling Toward Ads scale (Edell & Burke, 1987) which measures the respondents' "reaction to the ad" rather than how they would describe it. Some of the most promising items are presented herein.

"Please tell us how much you felt each of these feelings while you were watching this commercial. If you felt the feeling very strongly ... put a "5"; ... "not at all ... put a "1."

List of feelings (Edell & Burke, 1987):

*Attractive, creative, inspired, bored, disinterested, dull.*

For the “ethical” aspect of “generosity, giving, sacrifice, hospitality vs. selfish, taking advantage of others, competition” (Basden, 2008, p. 78) or moral aspect as “humanitarian love for one’s neighbour” (Kalsbeek, 1975, p. 102), one may explore Widing, Hoverstad, Coulter, and Brown (1991) scales of Sexual Embeds in Advertising: VASE Scales, which offers four scales that measure attitudinal aspects of subjects finding the use of sexual embeds in advertisements to be objectionable, manipulative, morally harmful, and sufficiently controlled. The respondents were asked to respond to or finish the following statements.

*I feel the use of sex in advertising that the viewer is not intended to be consciously aware of is ...*

Moral dimension

*Morally harmful – not at all morally harmful*

*A cause of lower moral values – not at all a cause of lower moral values*

Objectionable dimension

*Very objectionable – not at all objectionable*

*Very offensive – not at all offensive*

*Very unethical – not at all unethical*

A number of scales have been also developed to measure viewers’ response to commercials that encompass a few of the aforementioned aspects or dimensions in one instrument (e.g., Leavitt’s (1970) now classic Reaction Profile, which originally produced 525 words that could be used for scaling ads. or Reaction Profile for TV commercials (Wells, Leavitt, & McConville, 1971) which may further enhance our understanding of the multi-aspectual analysis. Indeed, much of the reviewed literature lacks cohesive, useful scales to measure the more nuanced, if not elusive, aspects: pistic and juridical. (For example, how does the “Immaculately conceived” tag-line affect the viewer’s perception of the ad’s appropriateness or normativity from the pistic perspective?) Hence, we may create and test semantic differential scales to measure consumer attitudes toward ads or products

with items ranging from “deceptive” to “truthful” and “dull” to “interesting” or “promotes greed” to “encourages generosity, justice.” Once again, one ought not to appeal to envy, jealousy, anger, hopelessness, and other vices to promote a product or service. Thus, the proposed framework allows for a systematic development of scales, and we may apply *exploratory* and *confirmatory factor analysis* in refining the various measurement items.

Qualitative research methods also provide fruitful soil for elaboration on the nature of normativity in marketing activities and artifacts. Photo sorts, for example, encourage study participants to express their attitudes towards brands by sorting through a stack of pictures of brand-sponsored advertisements with different imagery and text, which are designed to appear as either normative (e.g., context-appropriate imagery and virtue-promoting accompanying text, such as “Good to the last drop” by Maxwell Coffee or “Grace. Space. Pace.” by Jaguar) or non-normative (e.g., explicitly seductive bodies of male models and “Cheat on your girl-friend, not your work-out” accompanying text). Consumers then connect those ads with the brands they are likely to purchase or use. Furthermore, individual in-depth interviews, focus groups and Delphi panels, as well as hermeneutic research techniques, which focus on interpretation of consumers’ motivations for purchase of a product in an open conversation with the researchers and usually without a predetermined list of questions (see Table 2 for some examples), will also shed light on how consumers perceive normativity and deviations in different modalities. Probing customers’ deep motives for a decision may reveal normative elements in the desire to purchase or use an item. Nevertheless, we must recognize the incapacitating effect of sin that affects both our efforts to properly devise methods, assessment instruments, etc. and the study subjects’ or respondents’ judgments and responses, including but not limited to bias, misunderstanding, deliberate distortions, to name a few.

In conclusion, the proposed framework appears to hold much promise in discovery of normative marketing practice. Furthermore, a single, comprehensive multi-aspectual measurement instrument is presently missing. This working paper is an attempt to propose a research agenda and invite fellow interested researchers to collaborate on this project.

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**ABSTRACTS****Accounting**

WE Ministry Accounting Services: Using Business Skills to Enhance Church Ministries (Panel)

Craig Walker, *Oklahoma Baptist University*  
Rich Rudebock, *Oklahoma Baptist University*  
David Greenwell, *Oklahoma Baptist University*

WE financially empowers constituents to transform lives with the Gospel. The Ministry Accounting Services platform provides church accounting and payroll services, contribution tracking, and online giving capabilities. Through a panel discussion with Ministry Accounting Services employees, we describe the services provided and the opportunities created for students to use business skills to help churches share the Gospel.

**Economics**

Toward a Biblical View of Consumption (Poster)

David Arnott, *Dallas Baptist University*

The United States is entering the end of a golden age of consumerism, where inexpensive products encouraged conspicuous consumption. This age will end because of five effects: Inflation, declining real wages, tariff increases, supply-chain disruptions, and shrinking world trade. This will encourage a more Biblical view of consumption.

Finite Human Beings, Infinite God (Paper)

David Tucker, *The College of Idaho*  
Craig Walker, *Oklahoma Baptist University*  
Alesha Graves, *Asbury University*

The rational choice model lies between zero choice and infinite choice. Zero choices are those made for humans by the Creator. Infinite choice is only available to the Creator. The Creator transcends all categories that He created, and the Creator is immanent within all categories.

An Internal Threat to US Monetary Stability: A Critique of Modern Monetary Theory (Poster)

Anthony Sawyer, *East Texas Baptist University*

In current world affairs, the United States is experiencing increased competition from around the world to maintain its status as the world's military and economic superpower. In the presence of such powerful external threats, it may seem odd to suggest that our greatest threat to monetary stability is internal. However, we may be facing a situation that brings to mind a phrase from a Pogo comic. "We have seen the enemy and he is us." Modern Monetary Theory is a theory that could potentially lead to the unthinkable possibility of hyperinflation in the United States.

The Post-Christian Markets: Is the Moralizing Mission of the Scholastics in a Steady State? (Paper)

Christopher Warburton, *Houghton College*

Christian scholars (Scholastics) continued to teach the economic views of ancient Greek philosophers and the Scholastics presented market transactions from a moralizing perspective that was integrated into theological teachings. The normative connotations of Christian teachings and Roman law were transported over to the secular arrangements of market transactions, arguably suggesting an isomorphic existence of virtue in the post-Christian order. This paper analyzes the effects of the normative transposition after five centuries or more. Using information from 2000 to 2020 and unavoidable indicators of profits, income disparities, changes in the general price level, and factor analysis, the paper concludes that the moralizing ambitions of the Scholastics have been in a virtual steady state because of the human inclination to acquire money and maximize utility.

## Entrepreneurship

How to Create an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem at a Christian University (Panel)

Jeff Haymond, *Cedarville University*  
 Diedrich Prigge, *Cedarville University*  
 Dan Sterkenburg, *Cedarville University*  
 Jon Austin, *Cedarville University*

In this panel, we will discuss the following aspects of Cedarville University's (ongoing) effort to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem. While our approach leverages some of the unique talents of our faculty members, we believe the approach can be used as some part of the foundation for other Christian Universities, should they desire to pursue this approach, and that therefore, this panel discussion could be beneficial to CBFA faculty from other institutions.

Is Business Ministry Only Western? Training International Cupbearers for the King of Kings (Paper)

Eveline Lewis, *Evangel University*  
Yvonne Smith, *University of La Verne*

CBFA members are significantly interested in overseas ministries and have developed robust research streams in global business evangelism such as great commission companies and BAM. However, these models imply that westerners go overseas. This paper suggests an entrepreneurship model that could be utilized by Christians in every nation.

## **Ethics**

Ethics, Leadership and Global Environments (Poster)

Christina King-Johnson, *Spartanburg Methodist College*

This paper examines the ethical question of whether it is ethical for global companies to either fail to have a code of conduct or fail to enforce a code of conduct that addresses child labor within their supply chain.

Shaping Future-shapers (Panel)

Matt Fuss, *Geneva College*  
Curtis Songer, *Geneva College*  
Denise Murphy Gerber, *Geneva College*

Faith-based, ethical living and working are integral elements of the business marketplace and areas with which Christian educators must lead the way for our students. Faith and ethics must be woven into the business department's various sub-disciplines allowing for the learning and then empowerment of students so that they can become future shapers in their personal lives and in their careers.

Jesus and Artificial Intelligence: A Look into Marketing Ethics of AI Usage (Paper)

Emory Hiott, *Charleston Southern University*  
Darin Gerdes, *Charleston Southern University*

The emerging technology of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently the wild west in terms of ethics. This paper examines the question: "Would Jesus approve of companies using Artificial Intelligence?" By using the theory of Virtue Ethics, we compare and contrast the ways that AI is being used by organizations.

## Faith Integration

### Work as Recreation (Paper)

David Arnott, *Dallas Baptist University*

This paper uses scripture and the Christian Worldview to explain two views of work: The Christian view says work is a part of creation, and therefore is good. The non-Christian view is that work is part of the fall and is bad. The paper makes the conclusion that God wants us to work, to re-create His world.

### Biblical Race Theory (Paper)

Mark Bell, *Wayland Baptist University*

A qualitative method of hermeneutical analysis applied to various Old and New Testament texts with these results: 1) all persons share the same ultimate human ancestry, and recognizable differences in people based on geography, language, or physical features do not negate the common lineage 2) the preferred behavioral approach when interacting with other people involves self-regulation and considering the other person's preferred treatment in the same situation. The author presents Biblical Race Theory—a concept indicating there is only one race, the human race, and members of that race should treat each other how they would like to be treated themselves.

## Finance

### Peer-to-Peer Personal Finance Coaching at Christian Institutions of Higher Education (Paper/Best Practice)

Larry Lindsay, *Ron Blue Institute*  
Heather Chadwick, *Charleston Southern University*  
Boyce Smith, *Charleston Southern University*

The need for personal finance coaching of college students has become recognized by universities recently due to the United States Financial Literacy and Education Commission. This panel proposal discusses how the Ron Blue Institute at Indiana Wesleyan University developed the first Christian university peer-to-peer financial coaching program and has helped several other universities start such a program.

## Higher Education Administration

### GPA Rising? Building a Model of Grade Inflation (Paper)

Mellani Day, *Colorado Christian University*  
 Bren Triplett, *Colorado Christian University*  
 Bob Brooks, *Colorado Christian University*

Grade inflation continues to be a concern in higher education. A model of 13 potential influencing factors is proposed and tested with grades that cover a 16-year period from a case university in the western United States. The model is presented for others to adapt and use.

## Leadership

### Followership: A Model Based on Theory (Poster)

Crystal Brown, *Spartanburg Methodist College*

This manuscript, an exploration is pursued of combining two theories that involve a leader's perception of a follower's level of engagement action as an independent variable affecting high level of support as a leader as a mediating variable that, in turn, affects long-term commitment and the dependent variable work engagement. Level of independent thinking is also a mediating between engagement action and long-term commitment and partnership with leader.

### Prisms of Leadership: How Volodymyr Zelenskyy Demonstrated Empowering, Transformational, and Servant Leadership (Paper)

Darin Gerdes, *Charleston Southern University*  
 Justin Irving, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*  
 Maxwell Rollins, *Charleston Southern University*  
 Connie Allison, *Liberty University*

Volodymyr Zelenskyy rose to become a household name after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. He has been widely praised for his leadership. In this paper, we seek to examine Zelenskyy's first 100 days as a war-time leader through the lenses of empowering, transformational, and servant leadership.

### Leading People into Redemption: Applying the Redemptive Leadership Behaviors of Jesus (Poster)

Joe Bucci, *Regent University*

The working out of God's redemptive plan is ongoing (Philippians 2:12-13). This work is fully demonstrated in offering 2nd chance opportunities to failed employees. We empower students to be

future shapers by identifying the Redemptive Actions in the leadership of Christ. A model of His Redemptive Leadership is provided.

The Leader as a Broker of Reality (Paper)

Crystal Brown, *Spartanburg Methodist College*

The manuscript discusses the leader as a broker of reality with respect to an exegetical analysis of English Standard Version Bible, 2011, Revelation 2:1-7 and Reicher et al.'s (2005) social identity categorizations. Specifically, the juxtaposition of the churches at Smyrna and Ephesus are explored using John's letters to each church.

## Management

Articulating Corporate Social Responsibility Through Workplace Policies and Practices:  
The Art of Caring for Employees' Wellbeing (Poster)

Josephine Ganu, *Adventist University of Africa*

Every year, organizations appease their stakeholders by donating billions of dollars to society. This paper contends that an authentic socially responsible organization cares for the wellbeing of both external and internal stakeholders in equal measure. Through a review of literature, this article examines the concept of CSR in the context of care and employees' wellbeing and develops a conceptual framework to show how organizations can improve employees' overall wellbeing.

Examining Motivational Factors' Effects in Faith-Based Organizations (Paper)

Ronnie Chuang-Rang Gao, *Trinity Western University*

Kevin Sawatsky, *Trinity Western University*

Through a survey in four Christian universities or colleges in Canada, we empirically confirm that personal faith is positively related to job satisfaction among faith-based organization employees, but only among employees high in perceived fit. We also confirm that motivation fully mediates the relationship between perceived fit and job satisfaction. In addition, TL has a direct effect on job satisfaction and an indirect effect through the partial mediation of motivation.

On Earth as it is in Heaven: Exploring the Counter-Effect of CSR Promotion (Paper)

Julia Dare, *Point Loma Nazarene University*

This paper examines certain conditions under which a firm may initiate CSR and self-promotion of CSR. This research offers a unique viewpoint to extant literature that may aid stakeholders in valuing and interpreting the latter. Likewise, it may offer a novel signal of firm character, as well as evidence of the endurance of Scripture in business.

## Marketing

A Reconciliatory Approach to Marketing: A Case of the Marginalized (Paper)

Mauvalyn Bowen, *Bethel University*

This paper integrates the use of Biblical principles in the discussion about marketing practices and shares a vision for ways that marketing can be reconciliatory and God-honoring. It further detailed some perspectives of how marketing may be considered in the context of the kingdom of God. An example of a case of “the marginalized” was presented to demonstrate the redemptive nature of marketing. The paper then concludes with a call for Christian educators to do some heavy lifting in presenting the discipline of marketing to students to empower them to be cupbearers and future shapers.

## Research

Achieving Your Academic Journal Publishing Goals: An Insider View of the Academic Journal Editorial Process with Advice for Authors from Manuscript Reviewers and Advice for Reviewers from Manuscript Authors (Panel)

Larry Locke, *University of Mary Hardin-Baylor*  
 Andy Borchers, *Lipscomb University*  
 Emmett Dulaney, *Anderson University*  
 Marty McMahon, *University of Mary Hardin-Baylor*

Utilizing the CBFA’s own sponsored journals, the Journal of Biblical Integration in Business and the Christian Business Academy Review, the approach of this panel will be to examine academic writing from the standpoint of a peer reviewer, and to examine peer reviews from the standpoint of an academic author.

On Becoming Cupbearers to Our Academic Colleagues: Alternative Publication Outlets for CBFA Members (Panel)

Robert Holbrook, *Ohio University*  
 Andy Borchers, *Lipscomb University*

Representatives from Management Teaching Review and the Society for Case Research will present information about the organizations’ journals to inform CBFA members about alternative publishing outlets. This presentation is meant to complement the regular CBFA journals panel and to suggest a path to meaningful scholarship for CBFA members.

### How to Publish 95% of the Papers You Write (Paper)

Paul Lewis, *Evangel University*

Writing for journals is time-consuming, but necessary for our Christian vocation and general career. A key is to be efficient, as well as effective, in publishing. This presentation offers techniques to streamline the publication success.

### Teaching Traditional Undergraduates

#### How to Foster Psychological Safety for Students to Risk the Interpersonal Vulnerability of a Character-Building Exercise in the Classroom: Principles and an Empirical Test (Paper)

Andrew Herrity, *California Baptist University*

This session is on how to foster psychological safety for students to risk the interpersonal vulnerability of a character-building exercise in the classroom. Goes into depth on how the presenter implemented and improved psychological safety for students over four years of using a research-informed assignment for developing resilience, adaptability, and openness to others. Discusses how the presenter integrated faith into the assignment and reports on his own four-year qualitative study of what happened. The study reports student observations on the development of their resilience, adaptability, and openness and evaluates the role of psychological safety on the effectiveness of the assignment.

#### Cookies for Cupbearers: An Exercise to Examine Differences in Perception (Paper/Best Practice)

Robert Holbrook, *Ohio University*

Dan Slater, *Union University*

As we consider what it means to be Cupbearers, we must realize that Christians seeking to influence others in business will necessarily have different perceptions than their non-Christian counterparts. Our pedagogical paper describes an experiential exercise for exploring perceptual influence factors to understand how individuals may differ in their perceptions.

#### Exploring How International Business Short-term Travel Studies Can Be a Stepping-stone for Personal and Spiritual Transformation (Paper)

Brian Albright, *Trinity Western University*

Brian 't Hart, *Trinity Western University*

This trip to Kenya combined multiple strategies, including partnering with African university students; exploring government, social enterprise, and nonprofit roles; and viewing “the whole picture” from the village to slums, across 10+ industries, engaging with both Kenyans and expats. Students’ reflection on self-interest, corruption, and poverty showed the most change.

Empowering Students to Shape the Future: Reflections of Graduating Business Majors Regarding How Well Their Christian University Education Prepared Them to Become Future Shapers (Panel)

Kevin Hughes, *Mount Vernon Nazarene University*  
Melanie Timmerman, *Mount Vernon Nazarene University*  
Jim Dalton, *Mount Vernon Nazarene University*

A panel presentation to discuss preparedness of graduating business majors as they head into their professional lives. Results from graduating students will be compared with those of business program alumni. The panelists have a combined century of academic and administrative experience, and all have had leadership roles in the CBFA.