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## ARTICLE

### **Lifelong Learning in Christian Vocation: Being Equipped for Every Good Work**

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*For this reason also, since the day we heard of [your faith in Christ Jesus], we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9-10*

Lives of faith often are experienced as uneven journeys composed of wilderness wanderings, desert temptations, daily joys and sorrows, and occasional epiphanies (cf. Chrysavgis, 2000). Little scholarship, however, has been devoted to understanding how faith and work interact over the course of an individual's career. Considering how strands of faith and work

are woven together over time can help business students anticipate possible challenges and life stages ahead, appreciate the disciplines that contribute to spiritual formation, and learn from others who have preceded them. Attention to the intertwining of faith and work beyond college is an expression of lifelong learning consistent with and unique to the mission of many Christian higher education institutions.

Our aim is to propose two models that describe the scope of Christian vocational formation and its influences. The models are prescriptive in that stages and catalysts for work and spiritual formation are described, but they are descriptive in that they avoid forcing individuals into a particular developmental pattern. We begin by defining terms and

assumptions and then propose a five-stage model of vocational formation. In the second half of the paper, we attempt to identify influences that leaven Christian workers toward ever-broadening lives of vocation. Further research directions also are suggested.

## Definitions

Dettoni (1994, p. 16) defines spiritual formation as “an internal, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is found in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples.” Although such a definition is broad, it is uncommon for spiritual formation discussions to specifically address work. Thus, we have chosen to use the term “vocation” to refer to work-inclusive spiritual formation because it emphasizes a call to live in the gospel and it intimates that labor and work are a sub-set of that call. “Vocation” (from the Latin *vocare*, or “to call”) is often used to refer to an occupation, or more narrowly, as a call to a clerical or monastic role. But in a broader sense, vocation denotes a general calling to responsible co-creation and love

for neighbor expressed through productive work (cf. Gaiser, 2005; Grieb, 2005; O’Connell, 1993). Vocation incorporates being fully human, connecting with a primary community, and exercising gifts in service to others (Naughton, 2006). In contrast to the more limited concept of a “career” (Roels, 2003), a vocation is an expansive, all-encompassing call to be formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ, with work, family, the community of faith, care for the poor, and other aspects of Christian discipleship being expressions of that vocation.

## Assumptions

Spiritual formation is often likened to a journey — such as is described in John Bunyan’s classic, *Pilgrim’s Progress* — or to a developmental process as in Fowler’s stages of faith (1991). Helpful as these metaphors may be, spiritual formation eschews rigid social science modeling, in part because God is involved (Dykstra, 2005). Biblical narratives demonstrate that mixtures of personality, environment, and divine intervention produce unique spiritual journeys. For

this reason, models of spiritual formation should allow for a variety of developmental paths and be humble in their formulation. Three assumptions set the stage for better understanding the nature of vocation and its development.

***Assumption 1: Vocational Formation is from God, not us***

Haughey (2004) suggests that growing in vocation requires constant conversion — conversion intellectually to live in reality as “attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible” beings (p. 3); conversion morally to the “ever-unfolding good, to the ways of being and doing that are seen as the right and valuable way of choosing to be” (p. 4); and conversion from a good life to a life that abides in love which “affects and heightens the energy that goes into all of one’s choices” (p. 6). Conversions like these do not result from attempts at personal reform. Desire and discipline may be necessary, but they are insufficient forces to bring about spiritual formation. Spiritual formation occurs through a surrender of one’s will to God, rather than an assertion

of it. de Waal (2001, p. 78) puts it this way:

...the journey is based on that Gospel paradox of losing life and finding it. An anxious preoccupation with my personal and spiritual growth is disastrous. The goal of my changing life is not self-fulfilment.... My goal is Christ.... Seeking God is not about acquiring something or excelling in something, but making progress towards God through our total dependence on his grace.

Vocational formation begins in receivers. Formation often occurs not in working on Scripture but in allowing Scripture to work on the individual; not by bringing Christ to the workplace but by finding Him already at work there in co-workers and creation. Oft-repeated, these sayings may be trite, but the perspective they convey is critical. Being receptive, humble, and quiet stands in sharp contrast to the take-charge, action-oriented climate that commonly is cultivated in business settings.

***Assumption 2: Vocational Formation Transforms***

Vocation creates change and permeates all of life, yet it does not require that all things be clear. Spiritual formation often produces wisdom but it does not culminate in the mind — the goal is not a clearer cognitive reconciliation of faith and business. Rather, the gospel ripples through life, changing perceptions, reordering priorities, and altering actions. Horrell (1997, p. 105) suggests that Christian vocation ends in “Christological praxis” not “theological principles,” and likely there are other elements involved as well (e.g., will, affections). Theological and spiritual formation may result in clearer vision and assurance but faithful discipleship can occur alongside intellectual and spiritual uncertainty as well. Perhaps *especially* in times of conceptual fog is faith demonstrated. As Vander Veen (1997, p. 11) has written alluding to Kierkegaard, “...it is in the acting where faith is integrated in a meaningful way, a faith continuously doubted by fear and trembling.” Finally, just as

spiritual formation is not relegated to cognition, neither is it in its mature expression, a separate, “religious” dimension of life. Mature faith radiates through life activities in transformative ways rather than merely punctuating daily life with spiritual moments. Instead of being demonstrated in an increase in the proportion of “sacred” thoughts or activities crowding out the “secular” ones, thought and life activities *become* vocation, expressions in love for God and others of one’s calling as a disciple of Christ. Formation permeates and encapsulates all of life, even when we see but a poor reflection (1 Cor. 13:12).

***Assumption 3: Vocational Formation is Stretching and Paradoxical***

Life experiences prompt new or renewed learning as do experiences with Scripture, spiritual disciplines, and life in the Christian community. As human beings, however, there is an opposing reality at work — a constant tendency toward spiritual and intellectual myopia. Biblical Scriptures are filled with counsel and examples about the tendency to forget covenants

(Deut. 8) or to become spiritually dull of hearing or myopic (Isa. 58; Matt. 13:13b-15; 2 Cor. 3:13-18). Thus, although learning may occur throughout life, so can stagnation; vocation requires a life receptive to stretching — both in terms of change and holding firm — as lead by the Spirit.

Regarding its paradoxical nature, vocational “obstacles” can have a variety of effects, including becoming doorways to spiritual formation. As Cummings (1986, p. 4) states so well about spiritual formation, “We are always beginners, beginning once again to seek and find, because there is always more of the living God to be experienced.” Spiritual insights fold back on themselves in a type of optical illusion so the more we are formed in Christ’s image, the more keenly we realize our distance from Him. Spiritual formation includes mountaintop experiences, plateaus, and valleys, and Scripture attests to the paradoxical observation that there is often more faith development in the valleys than on the mountaintops (Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-9). As Dykstra (2005, p. 36)

states, the journey is “...ever endangered by powers and principalities and the threats of sin.” Failures at work can be the soil of growth or disillusionment; successes can be the same. More theological knowledge can result in diminished clarity or increased hubris, or it can bring new insights, reframing both person and work. Because of the paradoxical nature of spiritual formation, simple linear models do not capture the breakthroughs or the beginning-again nature of spiritual journeys.

Our three beginning assumptions of spiritual formation are summarized in the writings of St. Gregory, here conveyed by Leclercq (1982, p. 33):

The Christian life...is, one might say, a progress from one humility to another; from acquired humility to infused humility, humility nourished by the desire for God in a life of temptation and detachment, deepened and confirmed through loving knowledge in contemplation. ...these successive stages... are constantly renewed....

## Vocational Scope

Several typologies have been constructed to describe the development of Christian faith generally (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Westerhoff, 2000), as well as the integration of business and faith (e.g., Nash & McLennan, 2001; Van Loon, 2000). General faith development models typically provide a comprehensive, prescriptive set of stages, emphasizing the increasing internalization of faith. General models often do not specifically address work life and sometimes are general enough to incorporate a variety of religious traditions. Business integration models, such as Nash and McLennan's, often depict various tones of harmony between faith and work, from the two being played on different

scales to their being dissonant and consonant. Integration models generally focus on the belief aspects of faith and work and views them as atemporal stages — development over time is seldom addressed. Falling somewhere between these models is what's often overlooked: A model which attends to the development of vocation.

Our model (here, it is similar to other business and faith integration models) suggests stages of Christian vocation (see Figure 1). The stages are represented as arcs rather than stairs or points along a line to soften the visual suggestion of a linear progression; the broader the arc, the more expansive and inclusive the vocational expression. Each arc adds a dimension

Figure 1: Vocational Scope



to the level immediately beneath it. Individuals may live under a particular arc for long or short periods of time and may move to broader and/or narrower arcs over time. Autobiographical and spiritual writing over many centuries — from Paul to St. John of the Cross to Thomas Merton — suggests that although spiritual formation stages may be systematized and linear in progression, the journeys of disciples often across them are not.

The two narrowest arcs — ignorance and irrelevance — depict low-levels of perceived relevance between faith and work. Although they may be arrived at honestly, these steps suggest a distorted vocational divide between faith and work. Individuals under the next broader arc — seeking — acknowledge that faith and work are linked although the ability to find direction may not be clear. The most inclusive arcs — application and incarnation — incorporate a growing transformation of heart, mind, and action. The inside two arcs are restrained in their degree of vocational development. The

outer two are less encumbered in their demonstration of faith. We'll pause to describe each.

### *Ignorance*

Under the ignorance arc, faith and vocation reside as independent spheres of life. One lacks an awareness of faith having anything to say about work, or perhaps one has a disposition to isolate life activities (Le Cornu, 2005b). An individual may live under the ignorance arc if things of the Spirit are viewed as the stuff of theologians. Or, one may have stagnated vocationally, intentionally making faith impotent by isolating it as an activity or belief system devoid of any life-altering meaning. The ignorance stage suggests a lack of acquaintance with biblical or theological literature, a deficit of exposure to examples in the Christian community, and/or the presence of a personal obstacle to the Spirit's transforming work. Whatever the cause, when Christian faith is kept at bay from other aspects of life, it ceases to be Christian faith.

As a response, it is difficult to put a spade in the biblical text

without unearthing issues of work, poverty, material possessions, justice, labor, trade, slavery, and other business-related topics (cf. Sider, 1997). Further, clericalized theology is a concept foreign to the New Testament (Stevens, 1999). The term “laity” (*laikoi*) refers to the people of God (1 Pet. 2:9) and “clergy” (*klēros*) to those appointed or endowed by God with a Christian mission — or in other words, any follower with a vocation (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:12).

### ***Irrelevance***

The irrelevance arc suggests that faith may be the ideal but work constitutes reality. Individuals living under the irrelevance arc acknowledge that Scripture alludes to work-related topics but the content is too dated to be useful — there is simply too much dissimilarity between the ancient and modern worlds for anything beyond the most general ethical teachings to be useful. Society has changed, technology advanced, and the economy has become more sophisticated. Much of Christian ethics are viewed as largely

uninformed about the realities and challenges of modern business, germinating in an economy whose major issues include land tenure, usury, artisan and agricultural trade, and foreign occupation. In contrast, modern economies and society are characterized by constantly emergent structures and ethical issues that are simply beyond the reach of ancient documents.

Respecting societal, economic, and other differences between the ancient and modern worlds is a healthy exegetical practice, a prophylactic for doing injustice to the biblical text. But foundational ethical issues of covenant, the treatment of the disenfranchised, the meaning of work, and the use of material goods are arguably as relevant today as they were to audiences in the ancient world.

### ***Seeking***

The seeking vocationalist desires to live an integrated life, although some seekers struggle with hearing the direction of the call. Knapp (2005) had no difficulty accumulating dozens of ethical situations from interviews



with businesspersons who desired to identify a Christian response but couldn't always do so. A lack of vocational direction may result from confusion about the "what" of the biblical and theological message, or confusion about the "how" — the application or expression of faith.

Those aware of the ocean of literature on faith and work know that the spectra of views produced have been incredibly broad, with perspectives branching in disparate directions. One scholar compared the views of Christian economists regarding economic systems to that of a shotgun blast (Anderson & Langelett, 1996). The individual living under the seeking arc sees these examples of faith-integration and desires to integrate biblical and theological teachings in their work, but the myriad of perspectives and practices leave them confused about direction and often paralyzed. Apostolic letters were often written to clarify the Christian call amid the fog of ancient culture and practice. Scriptures offer insight into faith and work (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Heb. 4:12), but also witness to the

tendency of individuals to become confused in their search for faithfulness. In their comprehensive study of Christians in business, Nash and McClennan (2001, p. 5) concluded that "even deeply faithful Christians in business tend to feel a strong disconnect between their experience of the church or private faith, and the Spirit-challenging conditions of the workplace." This inability to find direction in Scripture may result from asking questions inappropriate of the text, confusion in discerning spiritual direction from the Christian community, or other sources.

### ***Application***

Application adds action to the previous stages. This is possible because a possibly imperceptible yet significant transformation begins to occur in the Christian worker. Up to this point, faith and work are isolated from each other and one or both may reside largely outside the individual. The application arc is possible because a greater internalization of both faith and work occur. The boundary separating faith and work is

permeable, lessening the knowing and doing gap. Garvey (2004, p. 39) helps describe this shift by contrasting career and vocation:

A career...identifies work that is instrumental. A vocation, by contrast, involves human effort that is integral to the person. Stated more concretely, a career is a way to make money or achieve status and power, while a vocation is a contribution of oneself to something of value to society.... The difference...reflects the attitude of the actor rather than the nature of the function. Accordingly, a career becomes a vocation when the actor approaches the position as a free, moral person wishing to contribute to the common good.

In accord with virtue ethics, the more one practices integrity in the details of life, the more one becomes a person of integrity; all of one's actions contribute to who one is (cf. Kotva, 1997). In this way, virtue ethics describes the propelling nature of feedback in the application stage of Christian vocation.

### ***Incarnation***

In incarnation, one's work and faith are not separate or external to the individual, but work exists as an expression of faith. Adapted from his description of the church, Martin (2001, 256-57) says it this way:

From an incarnational perspective Christ is not merely an exemplar or model of Christian praxis that we should imitate. More profoundly, Christ is the ground of our very being....in which we are invited to live.... Following Christ means living...such that the redemptive life of the Spirit manifests itself among and beyond the visible fellowship of *koinonia*.

With these stages briefly described, we move to our second model which proposes influencing factors in vocational formation.

### **Vocational Influences**

Because life experiences and faith insights are not linear, vocation does not broaden at a constant rate; for many, faith spirals over time through

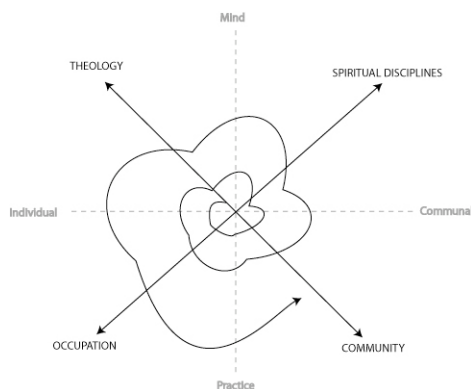
various stages of predictability, disillusionment, clarity, and hope (Rinehart, 1993). Likewise, individuals may move to broader or narrower arcs of faith-work integration as life events occur. Consistent exposure to certain influences tends to broaden vocation and counter spiritual ossification. Patterned after Hart's (1968) hermeneutical spiral, Figure 2 depicts the endless journey of formation. The spiral is uneven, however, suggestive of the varied experience of vocation by many individuals. The figure suggests that vocation widens under the leavening of four influences that are extracted from a wide swath of theological and biographical writing. The four influences are theology, spiritual disciplines,

community, and occupation. These influences occur alongside two continua which simply help in characterizing differences among the four influences: The continua are the individual-communal and mind-practice. These continua correspond with commonly-used spiritual dimensions of being, relating, doing, or mystical, intellectual, and institutional (Holt, 2005). Of the four influences, two are primarily mind-oriented and two are largely practice-oriented; two influences are explored more individually and two tend to be communal.

### *Reflection and Steadfastness*

Adult learning, religious education, and career research indicate that reflection can aid in distilling learning from

**Figure 2: Vocational Influences**



experience (Jarvis, 2004; Le Cornu, 2005a; Seibert & Daudelin, 1999). Goal-setting, feedback, and self-regulation have long been shown by psychological research to enhance learning as well (Latham & Pinder, 2005). Thus, although the formative process is a divine act and not self-reform, feedback and reflection reminds one of the source and centrality of one's calling and provides an opportunity to reflect on life experience. A commitment to Christian vocation and reflection about that commitment are likely to enhance the degree to which each of the four influences in the model contribute to spiritual formation. This combination of contemplation and action has long been recognized by spiritual writers over the centuries (Servais, 2003), being reflected in the Ignatian counsel of "finding God in all things" (*in actione contemplativus*). Burns (2004, p. 40) summarizes the role of contemplation in vocation thusly:

Wisdom calls us to a thoughtful, contemplative attitude toward all aspects of living. Insight and understanding reside in the experiences of

our relationships. We contact this wisdom with a listening heart. The call of creation into human existence invites us into relationships in which we are fruitful and have dominion. Wisdom guides us in this call by summoning us to live attentively, with a listening heart.

So we begin with the assumption that the vocational laborer desires to live faithfully and reflects upon that desire in light of his or her surroundings.

### ***Influence 1: Theology***

We start with Scripture and theology because conceptions of faith and vocation are formed and corrected by them. The Holy Spirit works on us through Scripture to remake our mind, will, and affections — the biblical "heart" (Chewning, 2005). The study of Scripture and theology are not ends in the Christian life but watering holes which continue to call us to biblical understanding. Scripture may be read in many ways — as literature, through various critical lenses, with biblical imagination, as *lectio*

*divina*. The challenge is to respect the biblical text with its unique literary, theological, and historical nature, while avoiding limiting it to a human plain, or uncritically projecting contemporary culture, agendas, or personal views onto it.

Although the majority of marketplace Christians have rudimentary exegetical skill, there are some interpretative principles that can go a long way in equipping non-textual scholars in understanding Scripture (e.g., Cosgrove, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Packer, 1999; for a business application, see Lynn and Wallace, 2001). Individuals must constantly examine their approach to Scripture, however, not just their exegetical tools. Keck (1996, pp. 136-37) underscores the necessity of engaging Scripture humbly, recognizing that vocations are formed by God, not exegetical prowess:

When something is used, it becomes a tool by which to accomplish something, and its value depends on the degree of success the user has with it.... So too, when we use the Bible we are in charge.

It becomes a tool in our hands by which we accomplish our aims, whether to win an argument or to achieve a valid goal. Moreover, the skill of the user, the hermeneutical prowess, easily becomes the most important factor in its use. Then it is not long before we do the talking. When that occurs, it is difficult for the text to interrogate and interpret us.... The likelihood that we and our questions are confronted by the Bible is, on the other hand, precisely what is enhanced if we live with it as a companion partly because its diversity increases the chances that some voice within it will catch us unaware.

Theological sub-disciplines, other than exegetical studies, can contribute significantly to vocational understanding as well. For example: Christian ethics may be explored in practical theology, insights into biblical vocation across Christian traditions can be discovered in historical theology, and a theology of care for creation could be evaluated in systematic

theology. Archeology can provide insight into the life and teachings of Jesus on vocational ethics and issues, as well as on the ancient economic environment. From studies on Galilee, Reed (2000), for example, offers insights into urbanization, economics, politics, monetary exchange, taxation, and construction trades — all topics which illumine the message of biblical passages relevant to work and commerce.

The kaleidoscope of Christian tradition offers differing emphases and insights — such as reading John Wesley on poverty and justice along with Catholic Social Teaching and Mennonite authors. Diverse ideas can stretch and test entrenched and tacit beliefs and practices. In sum, there is a lifetime of learning in reflective exposure to the storehouses of Scripture and theology and nothing replaces the centering nature of Scripture for the Christian vocationalist.

### ***Influence 2: Spiritual Disciplines***

The modern Coptic ascetic, Matta El Meskeen (Matthew the Poor, 1984, pp. 20, 24, 26), differentiates between an

intellectual approach to biblical study and a practical, spiritual approach:

There is no intellectual means of entering into the Gospel, for the Gospel is spiritual. It must be obeyed and lived through the Spirit before it can be understood.... [P]ractical meditation builds an inner life with God that impregnates a person's words, thoughts, and teachings with divine power.... Reading remains useless, understanding powerless, and memorization a mere repetition of empty words, unless we obey the commandment...no matter what sacrifice, cost, hardship, or scorn we may bear.

Spiritual disciplines are often considered a primary vehicle for spiritual formation because they engage the person in heart and will. But spiritual disciplines require thinking and transform the mind as well as the heart (Willard, 2002); they address a broad, active, Christian vision of life, not just spiritual practices entered into in isolation.

Willard (1988) divides spiritual disciplines into two categories: Abstinence, which includes disciplines such as solitude, silence, fasting, and frugality; and, engagement, which includes disciplines such as celebration, service, prayer, and confession. (Willard includes study and worship as spiritual disciplines, but we have assigned these to other influences.) Spiritual disciplines may be argued to be practice-oriented rather than mind-oriented but they are included at the top of the diagram because they are often emptying engagements which require a simplicity and quieting of one's spirit distinctly different from the action-orientation of experiential engagements. The practice of spiritual disciplines readies the mind and spirit to receive and practice the word in community and provides space for growth that comes through new insights and recentered living. Thus, spiritual disciplines are communal as well — communal between God and individual for the purpose of living out one's vocation.

### ***Influence 3: Community***

Biblical teaching and tradition clearly support the idea that spiritual formation finds expression and enhancement in community with others. Formation is nurtured by modeling, enculturation, and witness by the alternative community of faith (Westerhoff, 1985), as well as in the practice of forgiveness, conflict resolution, acceptance, and mutual care. Formation occurs in worship, fellowship, and service to others in communities that are real and not always ideal. Matthaai (2004, p. 57) states that “while the faith community's efforts do not cause...transformation, they provide the environment and opportunities for lives to be transformed by God through the process of faith formation.” Vocation is enhanced through the support, dialogue, and discernment of the Christian community. As Knapp argues (2005, p. 79):

If we conclude, then, that deliberate compartmentalization is neither a faithful nor satisfactory option, the alternative is for the church to

actually support the business person in strengthening the vital connection between Christian faith and that portion of life that accounts for most of his or her waking hours and productive years.

Vocation is shaped in community in several ways. For example, community tends to soften Western individualism, as Webb-Mitchell (2003, p. 80) suggests:

The real problem of radical individualism is selfishness and stridency, which are contrary to life in Christ's body. We are reminded that the reason we are not individuals is the catholicity of this body of Christ, in which the focus is on the many who make up the one body; an often overwhelming characteristic that keeps people forever changing is that they are becoming more like Christ and less like themselves.

Community also shapes vocation by teaching us about the nature of God. Zizoulas (1985, pp. 16-17) argues that patristic church leaders viewed the trinity as suggestive of God's communal nature, and that God can be

known only through "personal relationships and personal love best expressed as communion.... Without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of God." Persons come to be through relationship, not only sociologically but theologically because we are called to mutual compassion and service. Thus, for theological and sociological reasons, vocation is tested, modeled, and exercised in community.

#### ***Influence 4: Occupation***

As the incarnation arc suggests, Christian faith is lived rather than simply codified in theological statements. Daily labor — paid and unpaid — contributes to vocation by providing opportunities for faithful co-creation and love of others (Gaiser, 2005; Sorg, 2003). The call of Christ in the workplace may be expressed in other ways including in the exercise of wisdom when dealing with ethical dilemmas, in the faithful execution of honorable work, and in the application of talents toward mutual care. Occupation also may provide stretching opportunities which



bring new challenges to Scripture, spiritual disciplines, and the community of faith.

Although directed toward managerial careers, Dotlich, Noel, and Walker (2004, p. 15) suggest that adversity — failure or difficulty at work — and diversity — interesting, stimulating projects, assignments, and roles — stretch workers. These punctuations to the routine require new skills or learning. They may include events such as joining a company, dealing with significant failure for which one is responsible, coping with a bad boss or competitive peers, losing a job or being passed over in a promotion, working for a firm that goes through an acquisition or merger, moving across functions, working internationally, or accepting responsibility for a business. The uneven journey in occupation provides opportunities to explore and test faith, to awaken to divine fingerprints in work and life, and to query and assist the Christian community.

## **Conclusion: Integration, Practice, and Future Research**

### ***Holistic Integration: A Multiplier Effect***

As has been mentioned, vocational influences are most potent when they interact with and catalyze one another rather than are practiced in isolation. Fitch (2005) suggests, for example, that Christian social justice is defined by Scripture but understood in practice: “If we do not practice justice among ourselves as Christians under Christ’s lordship, we will not have the skills to discern it out in society either” (p. 154). Biblical understandings are not simply learned through private or even meditative study, but are illuminated through collective interpretation and practice within the Christian community:

With modernist confidence, scriptural exegesis is a matter of objective science for evangelicals. We believe there is no communal cultural hermeneutic needed to interpret Scripture.... We do not readily see how faith interpretation

of Scripture requires the culture of his body to test it and authenticate it under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. We do not understand that faithful interpretation requires discovering the justice of Christ one situation at a time in the body. (p. 159)

Thus, biblical and theological teaching informs spiritual disciplines which prepare us for life in the community of faith equipping us for co-creation and service. New insight and discipline from one influence enables development in another.

### ***Practicing Vocational Development***

Vocational development may be buttressed in a multitude of ways — informally through small groups of Christians who gather for prayer or accountability, through mentoring by other Christians (Emmerich, 2000), or by beginning anywhere in the cycle of influences, such as with theological reading or service to others. In many cities, small groups meet to explore vocation (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 2006; Kilgore,

2000; Woodstock Theological Center, 1999). Regardless of the approach, anecdotal evidence and focused research suggest that some mechanism for integration and practice is helpful for many individuals to connect one influence with another and continue growing in Christ.

### ***Future Research***

A lifelong approach to vocational formation opens a rich vein of possible research and raises numerous questions. How, for example, is vocational formation nurtured in students and in the workplace? Vander Veen and Smith (2005) have begun exploring curricular design that gives attention to lifelong learning and spiritual formation, and Emmerich (2000) has explored how mentoring for vocation occurs. Service learning (Schaffer, 2004) and internships might mirror future work settings and provide opportunities for students to reflect about their vocation. Archetypal patterns of vocational development might be explored empirically through psychometrically-tested instruments applied longitudinally or cross-sectionally across ages,

gender, and occupations. Scholarship on spirituality and aging studies could inform understandings of vocational formation as well (Kimble, McFadden, Ellor, & Seeber, 1995; Paloutzian & Park, 2005), as could career stage literature (Super, 1990). Plentiful biographical and monastic writings of Christians who labor are available to provide insights into vocational formation. In summary, lifelong vocational learning is ripe for further exploration.

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