The Disciplined Writer: Two Steps to Creating Academically Legitimate Integration Papers

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ABSTRACT: *The academic vocation has two parts: teaching and scholarship. As a matter of practical spirituality, there are increasing calls for Christian business professors to do research, particularly faith-integration research. This paper outlines the process by which faith-integration scholarship can be mapped on the academic writing process. Specifically, the key issues of legitimacy - quality and rigor - are discussed. Finally, we offer two practical principles for the writer of academically legitimate integration papers: The Rule of Three, and The Rule of Ten Thousand and give examples of how to apply each.*

INTRODUCTION

The vocation of a Christian academic is generally considered to consist of two parts: teaching and scholarship (Johnson, 2005; Marsden, 1997). Historically, business faculty at Christian universities have focused on teaching. However, professors are becoming increasingly aware that teaching is only a part of academia, and there is also a need for scholarship. As a result, many are embracing what has been called the practical side of scholarship (Tushman, O'Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007) – writing and publishing research.

This change arises from several sources: Marsden's (1997) call for Christian scholarship, the drive for separate business school accreditations by Christian business programs, and particularly the understanding that being excellent at one's spiritual vocation should involve academic legitimacy in the larger society (Martinez, 2004). Increasingly, Christian business faculty are trained in research and are comfortable with scholarship as part of their vocation. As an additional and practical consideration, many Christian universities are making publication part of the criteria for raises and promotions.

The intent of this paper is to assist those Christian scholars who desire to be spiritually practical by publishing academically legitimate integration writing. We approach this task with humility, understanding that we are not as expert as some of our colleagues. Nevertheless, in these pages we undertake to address a vital topic: what is academic legitimacy and how can the Christian professor develop academically legitimate integration topics and papers?

Academic legitimacy is a function of approval by peers in the academy. Academic scholarship is the creation of research or theory that is overviewed and approved by other scholars in the discipline (Lambie, Sias, Davis, Lawson & Akos, 2008; Tushman et al., 2007). Peers review a work as to whether it appropriately extends knowledge in the discipline and as to whether it demonstrates familiarity with the accepted style of academic argument in the discipline (Cryer, 1996).

Many see this as a positive trend. There have been calls for Christians to be published in the business disciplines (e,g, Chewning, 1995, 2001; Martinez, 2004). However, one of the unique purposes of Christian higher education is to train students in a holistic faith – one that touches all parts of life (Marsden, 1997; Smith, 2005). As a result, many Christian universities explicitly prefer that their professors pursue an integrated research focus. In addition, many Christian scholars desire to combine their spiritual life with their vocation by writing papers that integrate Scripture with their discipline.

To integrate is to blend different issues or perspectives into a unified functioning whole (Smith, 2005). In the case of Christian integration, the perspectives desired are the Scriptures or Christian thought and the academic subject or subjects. In the rest of the paper we will refer to this as faith-integration research.

Unfortunately, historic movements in the academic business disciplines present difficulties for the faith-integration scholar. Shortly after World War II, business schools in the United States began to make a distinction between holistic and more "scientific" research, placing increasing emphasis on research design and evidence (Campbell, Daft & Hulin, 1982; Stokes, 1997). As a consequence, business scholars have been trained to largely produce work that is discipline specific, narrow, and often published in journals that value a context-free or "generalizable" orientation (Hoffman 2004; Singh, Haddad, & Chow, 2007). Integration between different disciplines and particularly integration with spiritual issues is neither widely understood nor encouraged.

Nevertheless some of the academies are beginning to realize that more holistic orientations might be needed for the overall advancement of scientific knowledge (Singh et. al., 2007; Stokes, 1997) and that cross-discipline integration is important for creativity and innovation (Campbell et.al., 1982; Schwarz, Clegg, Cummings, Donaldson, & Miner, 2007). Thus, though in the past there have been relatively few publication outlets for faith-integration writing (Martinez, 2004), this is changing. For example, the "spirituality and management" division of the academy of management is very strong, and various "top" journals, such as the *Journal of Management Inquiry* are friendly to cross-discipline papers. In addition, CBFA has two journals, both of which are legitimate academic venues.[i]

However, the move into legitimate faith-integration scholarship can be difficult for some scholars. Professors trained in the conventional research processes sometimes find it awkward to think and write in a more integrative manner. Few people have the innate skill to do integration without practice. Additionally, mid-career professors who have not written for some time are faced with the necessity of re-learning academic skills. Thus, those attempting faith integration scholarship can easily become overwhelmed. Where does one go to get appropriate ideas and topics? How can legitimate research happen outside the training of the discipline? What journals should be targeted and why?

Scholarly articles have addressed a number of these concerns (i.e. Abbott, 1981; Hoffman, 2004; Starkey & Madan, 2001). However few of them focus on the unique issues of faith-integration writing. This paper is intended to begin filling that gap. The goal is to assist Christian scholars who wish to do the spiritually fulfilling work of writing legitimate faith-integration papers and thereby allow them to further combine their spiritual and professional lives. However, to discuss the entire faith-integration writing process is beyond the scope of this paper.

Therefore on the next pages, we will focus on two key issues in creating legitimacy: finding a good topic and linking it to the literature (Gray, 1998; de Lange, 2005). For many scholars, the difficulty is not so much in the actual writing, but rather in finding an appropriate topic and developing it in ways that create academic legitimacy (Schwarz et. al., 2007). Finding the right approach is half of the work done (Hart, 2006).

In the following pages, we will do three things. First, in order to create a context for this discussion, we will present a full model of the faith-integration writing process based on a standard writing schema. Next, we will discuss how finding a good topic and developing it appropriately leads to legitimacy in the academies. Finally, we will outline two practical principles for doing this - The Rule of Three and The Rule of Ten Thousand - and give a number of examples as to how these rules can be applied.

THE HART WRITING PROCESS

Academic articles are written with the intent to persuade (Gray, 1998). The purpose of writing an article is to present the scholar's thinking in such a way as to persuade peers that he or she has done the due diligence (Schwarz et. al., 2007).

In this section, we present a well-known model of the persuasive writing process that has proven to be helpful for many. While we understand that academic writing in general and faith-integration writing in particular is not an easily transferred skill, it is still useful to see what has successfully worked in other fact-based writing professions. From journalism, Jack Hart recommends a writing process to those he coaches, several of whom have won Pulitzer Prizes (Hart, 2006). The Hart process moves from idea generation and refinement through information gathering to writing, and ends with the final polishing of what has been written. We mapped the integration research cycle found in academia onto Hart's process, specifying where faith-integration thinking would be most active (Table 1).

Table 1: The Academic Integration Writing Process Explicated

Step	The Hart Process (Statesman, 2007)	Revised Steps	Academic Integration Translation
1	Develop and refine a good idea	1A	Develop and refine a good idea
		1B	Make integration question or hypotheses explicit
2	Gather appropriate information	2A	Determine appropriate research methodology
		2B	Do appropriate literature review in conjunction with integration activities
		2C	Do integration research activities
3	Find a focus in what you've written.	3A	Identify audience for research outputs
		3B	Identify appropriate journals for various outputs
		3C	Begin writing processes (may happen concurrent with Steps 1 & 2)
		3D	Begin writing "So What" section from work in Step 1
4	Create a structure that emphasizes the focus and contains the information gathered.	4A	Continue writing in a "targeted" fashion
		4B	Craft first draft
		4C	Solicit Feedback
		4D	Continue revisioning and revising
		4E	Solicit co-authors' and/or mentors' inputs
5	Write so that voice (style & tone) comes through.	5A	Do style editing
		5B	Solicit co-authors' inputs
6	Polish	6A	Solicit feedback
		6B	Submit to journal

Explanation of the Model

In considering the writing process, Hart's (2006) initial stage, "Develop and refine a good idea," creates the foundation of academic legitimacy: quality and rigor (Theilheimer, 2003). The second stage, "Gather appropriate information," addresses legitimacy by requiring the author to provide evidence from earlier research and argue the efficacy of the topic for other scholars in the discipline (Tushman et.al, 2007). We will develop these ideas in detail in the next sections of the paper.

In his stage "Find a focus in what you've written," Hart implicitly argues that the author needs to make the "so what" claim explicit for the reader. Why should the reader care about what is written? He continues with the recommendation that the organizing feature of the written work be that claim or focus. This stage also includes the appropriate disclosure of how the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted, an inherent part of the information-gathering process in academic work. Said differently, this stage expands and justifies the claim of rigor via the very structure of the work (McCloskey, 2000). Both of these stages can be linked to the persuasive orientation of a work. If the contribution is not known and the structure does not provide logical support for it, the paper will not persuade skeptical peers that the work was done correctly (Baker, 1984).

Hart calls for a consistent style of writing in the next stage, "Write so that voice (style and tone) comes through," he argues (Hart, 2006:196). This is important for the persuasive aspects of academic writing; it also provides explicit linkages to the methodologies or worldviews of the scholars involved and to those of their target audience. The worldview of the faith-integration writer will be reflected in this step of the process.

Hart's last recommendation is simply "Polish." This refers to the need to get the basic mechanics of writing in place. Incoherent writing or poor grammar and syntax will eliminate an otherwise interesting manuscript from being considered any further for publication.

As previously stated, our intent in this paper is to discuss academic legitimacy in faith-integration writing by exploring the first and second steps: developing a good idea and gathering appropriate information. In the next sections, we will explore these in more detail.

LEGITIMACY AND THE FAITH-INTEGRATION PROCESS

A previous statement must be repeated here: academic articles are written with the intent to persuade (Gray, 1998). Persuasion is the core of legitimacy and the people to be persuaded are one's academic peers. Those peers must be convinced that the writer has done due diligence in the topic (Theilheimer, 2003) – explicitly that he or she has adequately addressed two key issues: quality and rigor (Ellison, 2000; de Lange, 2005). We will discuss each in turn.

Quality

Quality deals with the level of importance of the research question or issue, how it extends current knowledge, and the inherent interest that others in the discipline would have in it (Campbell et. al., 1982; Schwarz et.al., 2007). The core of quality is peer interest. Basically, quality addresses the "So what? Who cares?" questions. Why does the paper matter? Why would peers find it useful to read? Why is this research important to the discipline?

Quality means that two potential audiences must find the work relevant and important: the broader research community in the discipline and the audience for whom the paper is written (Tushman et.al., 2007), namely the readers of the journal to whom the writer intends to submit the paper. By considering both audiences, the writer is able to make stronger relevance and importance claims.

Each journal has its own audience and the writer needs to understand that audience. The simplest way to understand the audience of a journal is to read the statement of purpose and manuscript guidelines. It is also helpful to read one or two articles from the journal. What style are the articles written in? How do other authors address the "so what" question?

Another simple procedure is to look at the cumulative index for the journal. What themes appear frequently? What themes appear recently? Assume, for example, that the journal has published four articles on environmental justice in the past two years. The author must ask whether his or her paper on environmental justice says something both interesting and different enough to submit to this journal. At the least, the paper should cite the other articles from the journal. Once a writer understands the audience of a journal, he or she will have increasingly good chances of publishing in that journal.

Rigor

Rigor addresses the question of how the paper relates to the seminal papers and research streams in the discipline. The core of rigor is trust. The scholar must understand the academic work in his or her area sufficiently so that peers will trust the argument and conclusions in the paper. He or she demonstrates understanding by appropriately discussing the works that the paper is built upon (Tushman et al., 2007). This implicitly codes the scholar's understanding of the norms in the discipline.

Rigor requires that the scholar demonstrate that his or her work holds together internally and links to the work of other scholars. A work with rigor will be logical, internally coherent, and will relate accurately to the research already done in the discipline. Good rigor shows that the author correctly understands previous academic work that influences the idea and adds validity to the quality claim.

Integration

To reach both standards of legitimacy the scholar must know and understand the literature in his or her field of scholarship. When a scholar intends to integrate two fields, such as the Bible and marketing, he or she must have sufficient understanding of the literature of both. This is, apparently, a daunting requirement. However, as we will demonstrate below, it is not only possible but practical for the busy Christian professor to do legitimate faith-integration writing.

Our thinking is based on previous work regarding the integration of the Christian faith in the business disciples. We examined the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* (JBIB)[ii], the *Christian Business Academy Review* (CBAR) [iii], and the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) [iv] conference proceedings for papers that discussed the practical aspects of integration research and supplemented these with articles on the writing process. We distilled these discussions into two practical principles, which are as follows:

I. The Rule of Three – finding quality ideas

II. The Rule of Ten Thousand – creating rigorous papers.

THE RULE OF THREE: FINDING QUALITY IDEAS

The purpose of the Rule of Three is to create ideas that are both interesting to peers and extend knowledge. The Rule of Three states that when developing a faith-integration idea, the scholar should blend three ideas or perspectives. As an example of blending three ideas, an author could discuss entrepreneurship theory, Christ's divinity/humanity, and the way Christ simultaneously acted as God and man in beginning the church. The Rule of Three could also mean blending two ideas and adding an additional perspective, such as time or focus. For example, a paper where Chaos theory is compared to the Christian life could focus on the long-term effects of this comparison.

Why blend three ideas? Why not blend two? When an academic area is relatively young, it is sometimes sufficient to blend two ideas in order to create a topic that extends knowledge. The literature of Scriptural integration with business is fairly recent, academically speaking, and there are many subjects still unexplored (Smith, 2005). However, though the blend of two ideas might extend knowledge, adding a third adds complexity and interest. Generally the articles that are most interesting to other scholars, and most frequently cited by them blend at least three ideas (Campbell et.al., 1982). Justification of this statement is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the authors challenge the reader to look at "best" articles in his or her area of interest and see if this is not true.

The Rule of Three can be utilized in many ways. In the section below, we suggest two applications of this principle and give examples of how these can be used to create quality ideas.

The Rule of Three, Application 1: Blend Three Different Ideas

Though the faith-integration literature is young, certain topics are favorites. For example, leadership, justice, vocation, and teaching are often explored in the CBFA journals and conference. However even when a topic has been studied extensively, blending three ideas can turn a basic idea into an interesting one. Take, for example, the topic of job satisfaction, a very popular topic in organizational behavior. By 1990 more than 12,000 job satisfaction studies had been published (Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim & Carson, 2002) and hundreds more have been published since then. So when a friend spoke to us about his intention to write an article on job satisfaction, we were not excited. He had, however, something to contribute. He added a second topic, life-satisfaction, to the job satisfaction models and created a well-written article describing his new model. But, sadly, only a minor journal was interested in this minor addition to the literature. So my friend added a third topic, religion, and suddenly the paper expanded into a series of connections and the resulting propositions. This paper is now under review at a good journal. An illustration of this process is below. In the interest of brevity, we have outlined only three of the many connections.

Step 1: Two topics. T1: Job satisfaction antecedents + T2 life satisfaction = new model of job satisfaction.

Step 2: Add a third topic. T1: Job satisfaction antecedents + T2 life satisfaction = new model of job satisfaction. Add T3: religion.

Connection 1: Work values. According to the literature, people who have life satisfaction tend to be more satisfied with their jobs. Religion is a major component of life satisfaction. Conclusion: Religious people might have higher job satisfaction. Aspects of this have been studied in the job satisfaction literature. This connects also with the work-values literature.

Connection 2: Organizational commitment. Conscientious work is a primary or secondary value for many religions. Therefore people of those faiths may be more conscientious at work. The reason managers want employees to be satisfied on the job is so they will be productive and conscientious. Conclusion: in some circumstances, religion might be a substitute for job commitment.

Connection 3: Job dissatisfaction. Even when the job creates dissatisfaction, a person whose religion values conscientious work might be more conscientious than another dissatisfied person, all things being equal. He or she is less likely to slack off, sabotage the boss, or leave as quickly as a non-religious person.

The Rule of Three, Application II: Blend Two Topics and Add a Perspective Such as Time or Focus

A second way to create quality in faith-integration ideas is to blend two topics and then change the perspective. Adding time to the mix or narrowing/broadening the focus can create interest and extend knowledge. For example, rather than writing about justice in Scripture, a more focused author might discuss justice in the Ten Commandments or in one of the Ten Commandments.

Narrowing the focus will often force more detailed thinking and stronger faith-integration.

It is our opinion that when blending Scripture and academic topics, the best effect occurs when the author keeps at least one aspect narrow. Keeping both dimensions broad or medium creates gargantuan papers, lends itself to unspecific language, and in our experience, creates less interesting papers. It is better to create two or three moderate-sized papers than one enormous one.

Example: Leadership. Leadership is a popular subject in the both the management and faith-integration literature. For example, approximately 15 percent of the papers presented at the CBFA conference from 2000-2008 had the word "leadership" in the title. A scholar interested in presenting an article on the principles of spiritual leadership in the Old Testament might begin by narrowing the topic by a magnitude of three. We describe the process below and offer a table that might make this idea more clear.

Broad Topic 1: Spiritual leadership in management and in the Old Testament.
Comment: This is a huge topic, much too big for one paper. It would be difficult to say anything that had not been said before.

Narrow step of magnitude to Medium: Dysfunctional leadership in Proverbs
Comment: There are approximately 17 dysfunctional leadership traits discussed in Proverbs. This is also a very large topic for one paper. The writer might choose two or three traits to compare with the organizational literature.

Narrow step of magnitude to Particular: Narcissistic leadership behaviors of Solomon.
Comment: this paper could be a description of two narcissistic leadership behaviors found in Proverbs as compared and contrasted with the same behaviors discussed in the management literature. Solomon, the author of much of Proverbs, displays narcissistic leadership and can be used as an illustration. This is also an example of combining three topics: 1) narcissistic leadership; 2) in Proverbs and management 3) illustrated by Solomon.

An example of the narrowing process is illustrated in the table below. The choice of cell for research will depend upon the preferences of the author.

Table 2: Perspectives and Focus

	Concept 2: Leadership in the Bible			
	Perspective	**Broad**	**Medium**	**Particular**
Concept 1: Leadership in Management	**Broad**	Spiritual Leadership in the Old Testament (OT)	The leader in Proverbs	Solomon as CEO
	Medium	Dysfunctional Leadership in the OT	Dysfunctional leadership in Proverbs	Dysfunctional Leadership of Solomon
	Particular	Narcissism as an element of dysfunctional leadership in the OT	Narcissistic leadership in Proverbs	Narcissistic leadership behaviors of Solomon

THE RULE OF TEN THOUSAND - DEVELOPING RIGOROUS IDEAS

The Rule of Ten Thousand is a rule of expertise (Anderson, 1978). What creates rigor in an article is internal consistency and accurate linkages to the research already done in the discipline (Hoffman, 2004). Therefore, the writer must be an expert, or be gaining expertise, in his field of scholarship. When the intent is to integrate two fields - in this case the Bible and business scholarship - the scholar must have expertise in the literature of both. Expertise involves knowing a volume of information and having a complex understanding of that information (Meystel & Albus, 2002). Anderson (1978) argues that it is necessary to have at least 10,000 hours of deliberated training to reach the top level of expertise.

Fortunately for the faith-integration scholar, it is not necessary to reach the top level of expertise in order to begin but rather to be "sufficiently" expert. What is "sufficient" expertise? Christian professors, most of whom agree that vocation can be a spiritual state (Davis, 1948; Packer, 1990), will often include in that state a striving towards excellence (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988; Hochwarter, Perrewe, Ferris & Brymer, 1999). Sometimes that excellence is demonstrated by degree or professional accreditation. Always it is demonstrated by expert handling of the literature.

Many scholars who desire to become expert in the integration of Scripture and business areas are already expert in their academic fields. The difficulty often comes in the proper handling of Scripture. It is intimidating for a business professor to assume that he or she must have a seminary degree in order to properly integrate Scripture.

Fortunately, to become an expert in the Scripture is not a matter of credentials but a matter of the Rule of Ten Thousand. While this rule can be applied in many ways, we offer three that are practical for the busy Christian academic.

The Rule of Ten Thousand, Application I: Reading the Bible for 10,000 hours

Dr. Richard Chewning has said in various venues that if every Christian business professor would read the Scripture for 10,000 hours, there would be no need for him to do integration articles or workshops (e.g. Integration Workshop, CBFA conference, 2004). A scholar does not need academic degrees to become an expert in the Scripture. Rather, each Christian becomes expert as he or she is obedient to the command of God to read and meditate on the Old[v] and New[vi] Testament Scriptures. How quickly one reaches an acceptable level of expertise is a function of the time spent in training (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Top expertise takes about 10,000 hours. At an hour a day, this takes about 27 years.

Fortunately gaining a level of "sufficient" expert knowledge to write legitimate faith-integration papers is not a linear process. Rather as the quantity of information increases, knowledge transforms from short-term memory into long-term memory and exponentially increases in complexity (Chi & Glaser, 1988; Meystel & Albus, 2002). For example, the first time one reads an article on Godly vocation, one is fascinated. By the third or fourth article, one is picking out the contradictions, omissions, unstated assumptions, and deeper principles of the subject. As one begins to saturate one's life with Biblical truth, one gradually reaches "excellent effect in a certain number of activities in an area" (Chi & Glaser, 1988:25). In other words, one's worldview becomes Biblically based. This effect is not unlike that of concept mapping described by Southerland and Katz (2005).

Nor is it necessary to become an expert on the entire Bible to begin writing. The scholar can begin by gaining Biblical understanding in the areas where he or she already has expert academic knowledge. Another help is to find a co-author from a local seminary or from the religion area of the university and let him or her provide the necessary expertise.

The Rule of Ten Thousand, Application 2: Use 10,000 Bits and Bytes

There are other short cuts for professors eager to begin faith-integration writing. Modern computing has put the knowledge of the experts at our fingertips. A good Bible study program can simplify the expertise process; in just a few hours the faith-integration scholar can systemize and synthesize the knowledge others have developed. For example, the database of the *PC Study Bible Version* 4.2 (Biblesoft, 2005) includes eight Bible translations and paraphrases, four commentaries (Geneva, Henry, Suess, Jamison), two concordances (Strong, Young), four Bible dictionaries (Easton, Hickcock, Nelson, Fausset), Vines, Naves, and selected works of Martin Luther, John Owen, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Bunyan, and Andrew Murray. A simple search brings up the collected wisdom of hundreds of hours of study by Godly experts. There are other and more resent versions of this software and also other Bible study programs that provide the same help.

The Rule of Ten Thousand, Application 3: 10,000 Words of Prayer

A third way to gain expertise in the Scripture is to ask the Author, God, for help. If the purpose for gaining expertise in faith-integration writing is to exercise one's God-given vocation, then God is actively interested in the process. Ask him constantly and regularly for wisdom in this area of expertise. He will not fail to give it.[vii]

CONCLUSION

Christian business professors who desire to incorporate their spiritual life with their academic life frequently are motivated to write academically legitimate faith-integration articles. However, this direction can be overwhelming for those who are not trained in the methods of integrating research and writing. In this paper, we argued that faith-integration writing can be mapped on the academic writing process and can be legitimized by quality ideas and rigorous processes. Quality ideas are more readily found by professors using the principle of the Rule of Three. Rigor involves expertise. Here the Rule of Ten Thousand (and short-cuts) will help the professor take the necessary steps to begin faith-integration writing and publishing.

Using the framework of finding interesting and rigorous ideas, we gave practical ways of integrating spiritual ideas into stronger and more interesting papers. We know the difficulties of doing so, but we present this paper in the spirit of good fellowship and with the desire to join with others in "creating good works."

ENDNOTES

[i]The *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* and the *Christian Business Academy Review* are both blind peer review journals with acceptance rates around 25-30 percent. See the listings in *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities*.

[ii]We examined all copies of the JBIB from the years 1995-2006 for articles with the word "integration" in the title and re-read those that discussed "how to" integration issues. For the list of specific articles, contact the authors.

[iii]We examined all copies of the *CBAR* from the years 2006-2008 for articles with the word "integration" in the title and re-read those that discussed "how to" integration issues. For the list of specific articles, contact the authors.

[iv]We examined the CBFA conference proceedings from the years 2000-2008 for articles with the word "integration" in the title and read those that discussed "how to" integration issues. For the list of specific articles, contact the authors.

[v]"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Holy Bible, Joshua 1:8).

[vi]"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who…correctly handles the word of truth" (Holy Bible, II Timothy 2:15).

[vii]"If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (Holy Bible, James 1:5).

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