Dialogue III

Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business[1]

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Seibert highlights the positives and negatives of organizational socialization in business and looks to Daniel for biblical responses. He then presents the implications of these biblical principles for Christians.

Clearly to fit into the corporate world, many people have to submerge at least some of their values. Those who can't get "in alignment," as senior managers are wont to say, end up calling themselves "entrepreneurs," "consultants," or just plain "unemployed."

This quote, appearing in *The Wall Street Journal* (Lancaster, 1997), illustrates the kind of pressure to conform to corporate life that people in the business world face. This pressure is especially strong on company newcomers as the organization works to transform "outsiders" into "insiders" through the process of socialization. The pressures to conform are intensified when the newcomer is young and inexperienced. Recent college graduates embarking on their first full-time professional jobs are a prime example. The purpose here is to discuss a biblical response to organizational socialization in the marketplace. In particular, attention will be given to the recent Christian college graduate who is about to begin a business career. The primary question of interest is, how does this person maintain his or her identity and values as a Christian when they collide with the socialization pressures of a secular business organization?

This paper is organized as follows: After introducing the socialization challenge faced by new graduates, the literature on organizational socialization in business will be briefly summarized. Positive and negative aspects of socialization will be highlighted. This will be followed by the core of the paper—a discussion of scriptural principles for maintaining one's identity and values in the face of organizational socialization pressures. These principles will be derived from Scripture and then illustrated by the life of Daniel. Finally, the implications of these principles for Christians will be explored.

Presumably most Christian business graduates are seriously committed to living their faith in all areas of their life, including their professional lives in the marketplace. But the reality is that their ideals will be severely challenged by the socialization processes of most businesses. At a superficial level, graduates are aware that this will happen. They realize their faith will be tested in the "real world." Based on my experience with graduating seniors and recent alumni, few, however, appreciate the tremendous strength and subtlety of the forces they will face. Many appear to be woefully unprepared for this.

Organizations do not overtly announce that newcomers will be "socialized." They *do* talk about things like probationary periods, orientation, and training, but the powerful socialization processes embedded in these activities are left unstated. Indeed, some employees undergo these experiences unaware that they are being socialized (Schein & Ott, 1962). Being influenced yet being unaware that one is being influenced is the most insidious form of power that can be exercised over a person (Lukes, 1974). With maturity and experience can come awareness, but that is no guarantee against conformity. Even executives admit that they struggle with this. Nash (1994, p. 262) quotes one of the participants in her study of evangelical CEOs:

Max De Pree was keenly aware of the subtlety of the co-option process that his ability to be successful in business unwillingly invited: "One of the problems of going from being Christian to being in a secular context is there is a reasonable temptation to adopt a secular standard. It happens without thinking about it. Unless somebody articulates something different, you are going to adopt a secular standard without even thinking about it."

If it is tough at the top of a company, it is even harder at the

bottom. Consider what new graduates experience when they join Accenture,[2] a leader in the consulting industry who recruits extensively from colleges. Groups of new hires receive a minimum of eight hours of training each day for their first six weeks. A glossy recruiting brochure exclaims, "We typically reinvest approximately $200 million per year on training" and invites the recruit, "You are here. At the beginning. Where the future is what you make it." This intensive orientation and training is designed not just to teach job skills, but also to *socialize* the newcomer into the Accenture way of thinking and behaving.

Smaller firms usually have shorter and more informal socialization experiences than Accenture; however, *every* company, for reasons that will be described below, socializes its newcomers.[3] Faced with socialization pressures that will attempt to transmit secular business values to newcomers, Christian graduates need more specific direction than the standard advice to be "in the world but not of it."[4] They need increased awareness of the underlying dynamics of organizational socialization processes, and they

need specific strategies for handling socialization pressures in ways that enable them to maintain their mission of impacting the marketplace for Christ.

Scholarly Literature on Organizational Socialization

Van Maanen (1978, p. 19) defines organizational socialization as "The structuring of the experiences of an individual-in-transition by others in an organization in order to direct and control the individual's behavior." Through it an organization seeks to inculcate new members with the values, expected behavior, and social knowledge required for assuming an organizational role (Louis, 1980).

New employees are potentially most likely to disturb the existing beliefs and customs of an organization because they are the least familiar with them (Hebden, 1986; Jones, 1986), hence the need for the company to engage in "people processing" (Van Maanen, 1978) in order to help newcomers "learn the ropes" of the organization (Van Maanen, 1982). Newcomers are initially viewed with some suspicion by the organization as being "outsiders." Will they fit in? Will they be able to adapt to

become one of us? It is only when newcomers learn the organization's accepted ways of thinking and acting that existing organizational members accept them as "insiders" and thus legitimate members of the organization (Jones, 1983).

The great strength of collective human action is that it enables people to accomplish more than they could ever accomplish working alone. A major weakness, however, is the accompanying loss of individuality. Argyris (1957) some time ago documented the way the structure and culture of formal organizations tend to stifle individuality and initiative and produce passivity and dependence in individuals. At about the same time, Whyte (1956) wrote his classic book *The Organization Man*, from which the term "company man" was derived. Whyte bemoaned the conformity that was commonplace among members of large organizations. Such conformity thrives in organizations to this day, with socialization processes being a primary cause.

The power of organizational socialization to create the individual in its image cannot be underestimated. Van Maanen & Schein (1979, p. 231) describe it

this way: "Like a sculptor's mold, certain forms of socialization can produce remarkably similar outcomes no matter what individual ingredients are used to fill the mold." In extreme cases, employees can even become "culted." Some firms exert such strong controlling influence on their employees that they demonstrate characteristics of cults (Arnott, 2000).

Research indicates that socialization has its greatest impact when people first join an organization (Van Maanen, 1982) and when they are at the early stages of their career (Morrison & Hock, 1986; Schein, 1978). Someone who is brand new to a particular organizational setting typically is cautious and experimental in the personal values he or she expresses (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In contrast, people who have been members of the organization for some time feel more comfortable being more independent in their value expression. Of course, by then the person is so much a part of an organization that his or her values have already been significantly shaped by the organization.

As it has been described so far, some might conclude that socialization is an inherently

malevolent phenomenon, stripping people of their individuality and, for Christians, threatening their core values. Such a conclusion would be in error. Although there is a real danger that socialization can have harmful effects, a certain amount of socialization is necessary if people are to work collaboratively in organizational settings.

From an organization's perspective, socialization is an important means for getting diverse individuals to work together. However, it also has important functional qualities even for the individual. Socialization helps facilitate the newcomer's adjustment to a new and unfamiliar setting. Research demonstrates that organizational socialization reduces newcomers' uncertainty and anxiety and clarifies expectations (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). It helps smooth the transition from outsider to insider.

Socialization is thus a necessary fact of organizational life. It also is something that can be done in ways that actually promote values consistent with Christianity. The ServiceMaster company provides an example of this. Although the company is a secular business, it strives to operate according to Christian values. The company is also deeply committed to educating and developing its employees. It deliberately socializes its new employees, but that socialization is based on the biblical principles of servanthood, integrity, and honor to God (Pollard, 1996). ServiceMaster demonstrates that *what people are being socialized to become* is an important criterion for evaluating any particular socialization process.

Another crucial aspect of organizational socialization is the issue of specifically how organizations go about the socialization process. What is now considered a landmark study of organizational socialization practices by Van Maanen & Schein (1979) resulted in a typology of socialization practices. According to the typology, organizational socialization practices vary along six dimensions: Collective vs. Individual, Formal vs. Informal, Sequential vs. Random, Fixed vs. Variable, Serial vs. Disjunctive, and Divestiture vs. Investiture. These are defined in Table 1.

Jones (1986) contends that, when taken together, the first socialization strategy in each pair of Van Maanen & Schein's typology produces an *institutional* orientation in newcomers,

Table 1

Six Dimensions of Organizational Socialization Practices
(from Van Maanen & Schein, 1979)

Collective vs. Individual – The degree to which individuals are socialized alone or as members of a group. Group processing provides more powerful socialization.

Formal vs. Informal – The degree to which the setting for socialization is segregated from the normal work context and the degree to which a person's role as a recruit is overtly publicized.

Sequential vs. Random – Whether socialization occurs through a series of pre-established, identifiable stages or with no set sequence being followed.

Fixed vs. Variable – The degree to which newcomers possess knowledge of the transition timetable for socialization and whether or not they all move according to the same timetable.

Serial vs. Disjunctive – The degree to which experienced organizational members personally groom those newcomers who will assume similar roles.

Divestiture vs. Investiture – The degree to which the socialization is set up to either dismantle or confirm the *incoming* identity of the individual.

whereas the second strategy produces a more *individualized* orientation. The institutional orientation encourages obedience and conformity, with the result that newcomers assume existing organizational roles in the way they are presented to them by the organization. In contrast, an individual orientation encompasses greater latitude for individuality and for shaping one's own role in the organization. Microsoft is an example of a company whose socialization produces more of an individual orientation in newcomers (George & Jones,

1996). That is not to say that a noticeable amount of conformity is still not demanded; no doubt a "Microsoft way" of behaving exists. It simply means that a greater value is placed on individual creativity in the expression of organizational roles.

In contrast to Microsoft is Accenture (described earlier). Its socialization is clearly designed to produce an institutional orientation. Newcomers are processed as a group (Collective) at the company's corporate training facility (Formal). All recent college graduates are subjected to the same six-week training program (Fixed; Sequential). Existing employees play a key role in the training, impressing upon newcomers what will be expected of them on the job (Serial). Lastly, there is an emphasis in the training on remaking the newcomer's identity in the Accenture image as opposed to reinforcing the identity he has brought into the firm (Divestiture). This institutional approach is a highly effective way to indoctrinate newcomers into the Accenture way of doing things.

An important empirical investigation by Ashforth & Saks (1996) examined the effect of socialization strategies on business college graduates of the 1990s. Their research again demonstrates the pervasive impact of organizational socialization on newcomers. They found the institutional socialization strategy to be associated with lower amounts of role innovation. This strategy induced newcomers to conform to established goals and methods and thus maintain the status quo of the firm. It also led to higher amounts of "organizational identification." Organizational identification refers to the extent to which an individual defines herself in terms of her organization. Thus, institutional socialization induces newcomers to define themselves in terms of their organizational membership, binding their self-concept with the identity of their firm.

An important yet potentially troubling contribution of Ashforth & Saks' research is the discovery that socialization impacts not just role performance but also the very core of a person. They found that institutional socialization was positively related to "person change." It encourages newcomers to internalize and accommodate to organizational norms, provoking changes in attitudes, beliefs, and even personality. Prior research assumed socialization stopped short of affecting stable personal characteristics like fundamental beliefs and personality. Ashforth & Saks found that even these things were susceptible to certain types of socialization.

A Biblical Response to Organizational Socialization

What can we learn from Scripture about this important issue? An inductive approach will be taken here by starting in Scripture and then moving to general principles of business (Johnson, 1996). The analysis will begin in the New Testament and then move to an illustration from the Old Testament.

The New Testament and Organizational Socialization

We should not be surprised that the New Testament does not directly address "organizational socialization," since this concept is a construction of modern social science. Scripture does, however, directly address the more basic issue of conformity to the world. This is a core theme throughout the Bible and one that has been the subject of much writing, both theological (e.g., Niebuhr, 1951) and practical (e.g., Kraybill, 1978). It is clear that Scripture calls believers to resist conformity to the world (e.g., Rom. 12:2). The socialization that occurs in a secular business firm can be considered one specific form of conformity to the world since it involves molding employees into an image that is desired by a secular organization.

A danger of worldliness is that it can lead to unfruitfulness (Matt. 13:22). The primary purpose of believers is to glorify God, and this occurs when they function as salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus teaches that salt and light need to maintain their basic character and purpose in order to be useful. But how does salt keep its saltiness and light shine unobstructed? The Bible provides a two-fold answer: the believer is to simultaneously resist the world and submit to God. A worldly life is repeatedly contrasted with a process of spiritual transformation or sanctification (e.g., Rom. 12:1-2; John 17:17). If secular socialization pressures are one way the world seeks to influence believers, then resisting worldly pressures and pursuing spiritual growth are the appropriate response.

Examining two of the passages that most explicitly address the issue of the believer's relationship to the world provides further insight into this issue. Romans 12 begins by encouraging believers to sacrifice their personal interests for those of God through the process of sanctification (v. 1). Paul continues: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (v. 2a, NLT). The first half of the verse refers to external behavior; the believer is called to *not* conform to the ways of the current age. The Phillips translation is: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold." But it is not enough just to resist the world; believers must also move toward Christlikeness.

The second half of the verse involves the believer's mind. The believer's thinking or mind (*noos* in the Greek)—the control center of a person's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Witmer, 1983)—is to be changed or transformed. "Transformed" (*metamorphousthe* in the Greek) is in the present passive imperative in the original text, indicating that the transformation is an ongoing process (Witmer,

1983). Just as worldly influence is ongoing, so must be a believer's spiritual transformation. But whereas the world works on a person from the outside-in, the Christian's transformation is to be from the inside-out (which is also implied in the meaning of *metamorphousthe*).

The contrast between the external influence of the world and the inner transformation of the believer is also presented in John 17. This passage is more specific about how to not conform to the world while at the same time becoming sanctified. Jesus is praying at the end of his ministry for his disciples and for the believers who will succeed them. Verses 14-21 are especially relevant to our discussion. Jesus indicates that believers are "sent … into the world," yet are "not of the world" (v. 18, 16). They are no more of this world than He is, and because of this the world hates them. At the same time, the Lord asks the Father *not* to take them out of the world. Rather Jesus prays that the Father would "protect them from the evil one" and "sanctify" them (i.e., set them apart for the service of God) (Tenney, 1994).

Sanctification is presented in this passage as involving four elements. First is the truth of

God's Word (v. 14, 17), second is *prayer* (v. 15, 20), third is the *unity of believers* (v. 21), and fourth is *Christ's own sanctification* (v. 19) (i.e., His sacrificial acceptance of the cross, which is necessary for humanity's redemption, but also serves as the supreme example of service to the Father) (Tenney, 1994). These four elements, then, are central to the transformation and sanctification of the believer. Earlier in His discussion with the disciples (chapter 16), Jesus also talked about the Holy Spirit. Here as well as elsewhere in the New Testament it is clear that the Holy Spirit also plays a central role in the sanctification of believers.

These passages from Romans and John go a long way toward describing how the believer is to simultaneously resist the world and submit to God. Seven principles are apparent. First, Christians are called to sacrifice their personal interests in favor of God's interests (Rom. 12:1; John 17:19; Phil. 2:5-8). Christ's sacrifice becomes the model for our living sacrifice. Second, the Christian is enjoined to disown

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the world's standards (Rom. 12:2). The believer's outward lifestyle should be different from that expected by the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. Third, there is the call to constantly renew the internal control center of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Rom. 12:2). "Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day" (II Cor. 4:16, NLT). Fourth, believers are commanded to feed on God's Word (John 17:14, 17). God's Holy Word changes believers and separates them from the world.

Additional principles are equally important. Continuing the list begun above, the fifth is to pray for God's protection from the evil one, but not to be removed from the world (John 17:15). Believers must depend on God to protect them from harmful influences. Sixth, Christians are called to unite with fellow believers (and with God) (John 17:21; Rom. 12:4-8). Jesus did not intend for us to try to resist the forces of the world alone nor to grow spiritually without others. Finally, believers should not expect to be well-

received by the world (John 17:14; Rom. 12:12). Non-conformity will often produce negative consequences from the world. These principles are summarized below in Table 2.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list. The New Testament includes several other disciplines (e.g., fasting, giving, service, worship) that a believer should practice to grow spiritually. The best antidote to worldly influences is growth in *all* areas of spiritual living. But the above seven principles are apparent in two key passages directly addressing how to avoid conformity, and as such they represent an excellent place for believers to begin. They also suggest how believers should respond to the specific form of worldly influence that is the focus here, namely organizational

Table 2

Scriptural Principles for Responding to Organizational Socialization

1. Sacrifice personal interests for God's interests.
2. Disown the world's standards.
3. Constantly renew one's mind.
4. Feed on God's Word.
5. Pray for God's protection.
6. Unite with fellow believers.
7. Do not expect to be well-received by the world.

socialization. It is best responded to through a combination of resistance to the world and submission to God in the ways just described.

An Old Testament Illustration: Daniel

Caution must be taken when using Old Testament narratives for business integration purposes. The book of Daniel was *not* written to provide biblical business principles. Attempting to find them there represents faulty hermeneutics (Fee & Stuart, 1993). The fundamental purpose of the first half of the book of Daniel is to show God's power and sovereignty over Gentile nations during the exile and His plan for preserving His chosen people (Archer, 1994). Nevertheless, as long as a narrative's primary purpose and

context are understood, and as long as it is used to *illustrate* rather than define integrative principles, Old Testament narratives can provide integration insights (Beadles, 1998). This is the approach taken here, with integrative principles having been first identified in other appropriate passages.

Recognizing that he lived in a time and culture very different from ours and that he was placed in an organization against his will, Daniel still provides a good illustration of the process of organizational socialization and a believer's response to it. Daniel was taken captive along with many other exiles to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar. There he and three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) worked in Nebuchadnezzar's court as advisors.

The narrative clearly describes the intentional and intensive worldly socialization (in the sense that it was not of God) to which Daniel and his friends were subjected. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that a number of promising young exiles undergo three years of formal "training" (Dan. 1:5). They were processed as a group, taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans, and given new

names that contained the names of false Babylonian gods and that eliminated the reference in their Hebrew names to the God of Israel (Pentecost, 1985). The exiles were teenagers (which is a period of significant susceptibility to social pressures) and were offered the best local food from the king's own kitchen. This socialization process seems to mirror the institutional orientation described earlier. Specifically, it is apparent how the collective, formal, fixed, serial, and divestiture nature of their socialization experience was effectively designed to remake their identities into Babylonians.

How did Daniel and his three friends respond to the socialization pressures they faced? The narrative suggests that they struck a delicate balance between rejecting Babylonian culture and conforming to it. The young men did accept Babylonian formal education (and in fact excelled as students), learned and spoke the language, and, at least to some degree, used their new names—Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is also clear that Daniel developed close personal relationships with both Nebuchadnezzar and one of his successors, Darius. Daniel

worked very conscientiously and effectively on the behalf of his pagan superiors. These are all clear indications of engaging the socialization they experienced. But while they were decidedly in the world of the Babylonians, they were also clearly not of it. There was still something very Jewish about these young men.

This is most readily seen in their refusal to conform to local religious laws that directly violated their commitment to the God of Israel. In doing so, they illustrate two of the principles described earlier (see Table 2). Specifically, they sacrificed their personal interests for God's, and they disowned the world's standards. Daniel's three friends were thrown into a blazing furnace for refusing to worship a statue that Nebuchadnezzar made. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions for refusing to stop praying to God. And all three young men refused to defile themselves by eating food that did not conform to the dietary laws of the Torah (Lev. 11; Deut. 14) and which probably had been prepared in connection with a pagan religious ceremony (Archer, 1994). In taking a stand on these issues, the men also accepted that their non-conformity would not endear them to the world (principle seven).

The narrative also illustrates the sixth principle: Unite with fellow believers. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood apart *together* in their eating habits, in facing the furnace, and in prayer. Prayer, the fifth principle, was essential to Daniel. We learn that while Daniel worked for Darius it was his normal custom to pray three times a day. He did not flaunt this behavior (he did it in his room), but neither did he hide it, praying before an open window. And he persisted even under the threat of being thrown to lions. Earlier, when faced with death if he could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel's response was to pray and to ask his three friends to pray also. Immediately after the meaning of the dream was revealed to Daniel, he offered a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. Daniel's dependence on God is demonstrated in his reliance on prayer and in the way he regularly credited God for his abilities and accomplishments. Daniel fully understood that God was the hero; he was merely an instrument.

In Daniel 9:1-2 we read that Daniel was "studying the writings of the prophets" (NLT). Thus Daniel also demonstrates the fourth principle: Feed on

God's Word. The text is silent, however, on the third principle: Renewing one's mind. No specific illustration of this activity is provided. But that makes it no less important when we remember that Old Testament narratives are useful in illustrating principles but not establishing them.

The basic implication of the Daniel narrative with respect to handling organizational socialization is that the forces of the world ultimately have no power to thwart God's plans and that God will support believers who depend on Him in the midst of worldly pressures. Daniel also nicely illustrates how several specific principles can be applied in responding to socialization pressures, as discussed above. One illustration from the Daniel narrative deserves elaboration.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to eat food prepared in the king's kitchen because doing so would violate a direct scriptural command. Their motivation was obedience to God. But their behavior had an additional secondary benefit. It effectively provided counterpressure to their socialization experience. To do it, Daniel and his friends together had to take an immediate stand

against a worldly pressure and *for* a godly value. They would have had to eat during the very first day of their training. Acting as they did set them apart immediately from everyone else. Standing apart early is helpful because it is easier to initiate a behavior in the first place than it is to change a behavior once a particular course of action has been undertaken.

Four characteristics of behavior that make it binding, that is, that commit a person who acted in a certain way to continue acting that way in the future, are explicitness, irrevocability, volition, and publicity (Salancik, 1977). The young men's dietary choice initially met three of these four criteria (and ended up meeting the irrevocability criterion as well once a ten-day trial period became permanent). Eating the way they did provided a tangible and ongoing reminder to themselves and others that they were still Jews. And since they were successful in accomplishing it, it made future attempts at non-conformity more plausible.

Finally, the manner in which Daniel went about asserting himself on this issue was significant in getting the Babylonian official to comply with his request. Daniel made no

demands of his superiors, rather he asked permission. When the official resisted, Daniel proposed a ten-day trial period. Daniel left it to the official to make the final decision based on the results of the trial period. Rather than being adversarial, Daniel worked with the official in order to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. His creativity and flexibility in approaching the issue helped avert a compromise. Thus Daniel's dietary action not only demonstrated his faithfulness to God, but was also an effective counter-socialization move as well. Socialization cannot be entirely resisted—newcomers do need to "learn the ropes." But they do not need to be strangled by them. Socialization can often be experienced without compromising core values and with allowing for some expression of individual preferences, if those preferences are expressed in a respectful way.

In Daniel we see a remarkably effective example of being in the world but not of it. Daniel was socialized enough to work productively for pagan kings. It is clear that he "work[ed] for the peace and prosperity of Babylon." These words were Jeremiah's advice to

the exiled Jews (Jer. 29:7), and they were modeled effectively by Daniel. However, it was also always clear to those who knew Daniel that he never became a Babylonian. His primary identity, values, and purpose remained intact. Daniel was able to work

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with a worldly system in order to stand, at least in crucial areas, *apart* from that system. As such he provides a useful illustration of a believer's response to socialization in business.

Unraveling the Socialization Knot

The analysis presented here has important implications for Christians entering the marketplace.[5] The opportunities there to advance Christ's Kingdom are substantial. But, as is the case with all secular professions, the marketplace offers significant challenges to the Christian who desires to serve God there. Consider the following advice: "... During the first year you do have to act like the company man or woman to a

large extent. ... It is just the way you break in" (Holton, 1991). This is typical of much of the world's advice to the new graduate. While much of Holton's advice is useful to business graduates, including the Christian graduate, believers must be suspicious of wholesale absorption of a company's ideals.

The best guard against succumbing to socialization influences is to be growing in one's relationship with the Lord. The seven principles presented earlier in this paper provide a minimal list of disciplines in which the believer in the marketplace should be engaged. Recent graduates would also benefit from increasing their awareness of the prevalence of socialization pressures. It is impossible to resist an influence without awareness that it is happening. If this paper does nothing but increase people's sensitivity to socialization influences, it will have served a useful purpose. Daniel was certainly aware of the deliberate attempts to influence him. Not all companies are so deliberate about socializing newcomers, but *all* organizations do exert socialization pressures. Often these pressures are quite subtle, but the careful observer

can notice them. Becoming aware of attempted influence efforts is a vital step to developing a response to those efforts.

God wants Christians to perform at their best in the workplace (Colossians 3:23). It is important to realize that a person does not have to be completely socialized and sell out to negative organizational values in order to be a high performer at work. High performance and maintenance of one's commitment to the Lord are not mutually exclusive, as Daniel clearly demonstrates. Indeed, pursuing excellence in one's performance will bring respect, which could lead to acceptance of idiosyncrasies that might make it more possible to openly live one's values.

Daniel nicely illustrates being in but not of the world. He also demonstrates that it is possible to be simultaneously *transformational* (i.e., working to redeem secular systems) and *countercultural* (i.e., offering an alternative to the prevailing secular model). Niebuhr's (1951) classic book, *Christ and Culture*, is relevant here. Niebuhr relates Christianity's major theological traditions to ways Christians have sought to relate to the world, or culture, in which they live.

How recent graduates relate to the world of business can be considered a small subset of the larger question Niebuhr addressed. Implied in Niebuhr's analysis is that the fifth approach of relating to culture—with Christ as the transformer of culture—is the best, if admittedly not perfect, strategy. Reflecting the reformed thinking of Calvin, Niebuhr's view proposes that the believer lives "in awareness of the power of the Lord to transform all things by lifting them up to himself" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 195).

Phillips & Okholm (1996) have argued that while this view was persuasive in the early 1950s when Niebuhr was writing, it is less so in today's post-Christian America. They state that it makes less sense today to try to overtly transform a culture that is essentially un-Christian. They propose instead an approach that *combines* elements of Reformed and Anabaptist theology. They have not abandoned transformation, but they see it being accomplished by different means. The church should seek to transform culture not by using the means of the prevailing culture, but by existing faithfully as the church in the world, supported by a community of like-minded believers. As they

say, "The church is to be *both* transformationist *and* countercultural, but it is to be the former *by being* the latter ... " (Phillips & Okholm, 1996, p. 284).

This approach seems to offer much to the issue of responding as a Christian to organizational socialization in business.[6] Anabaptist theology emphasizes helping believers relate to secular institutions in which they are involved without capitulating to the spirit of those institutions. "Anabaptists expect faith to conflict with the activities and priorities of the world rather than to be a natural complement, and they are concerned about the tendency of the believer to be bought out by the lure of success and power that the world offers" (Halteman, 1990, p. 12). At the same time, recent Anabaptist ideas take a more outward-looking view. There is more emphasis on the infiltration of secular structures (as opposed to simply modeling alternative Christian values) in order to bring some measure of redemption to those structures (Halteman, 1990). This perspective provides hope that believers can not only resist secular socialization pressures, but also exert godly influence on those pressures.

By being salt and light in the workplace (as Daniel was), faithful believers can produce good works which bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16). Christians can make their faith relevant to their daily business experiences, and doing so can make a difference in their firms.

Balancing the demands of being transformational *and* countercultural is not something that is best done in isolation. Rather, association with like-minded believers is necessary. This provides the person who would resist socialization pressures with a source of guidance, accountability, and support. According to the Anabaptist economist Halteman (1995, p. 183): "The best defense against a sellout to the world is a community of faith that articulates a doctrine of nonconformity to the world and then encourages its members to be faithful even when the costs are high." Recall that uniting with fellow believers against worldly pressures was one of the biblical principles illustrated by Daniel and his friends.

Not surprisingly a key predictor of the long-term faithfulness after graduation of Christian college students is whether they participate in a

Christian community that provides mutual support and accountability (Garber, 1996). Empirical evidence of the importance of community to nonconformity in business is also provided by Nash (1994) in her study of evangelical CEOs. Nash found that those CEOs who were able to integrate their faith with the demands of business formed *fellowship groups* with like-minded CEOs that functioned primarily as support groups. This, along with *prayer*, much of which occurred through these groups, was the major bulwark of these CEOs against the secularity of the marketplace.

Of course, it is important to remember that Christians who take a stand at work based on their faith may suffer despite being exceptional performers. They may be subjected to ridicule, passed over for promotions, or even terminated (recall the quote at the beginning of this paper). Wayne Alderson, the Christian executive who transformed a steel mill's productivity and labor-management relations by implementing the values of love, dignity, and respect, met with just such a fate despite his outstanding performance record (Sproul, 1980). There may also come a

time when a believer decides he needs to leave a firm in order to maintain his integrity as a Christian. A believer's ultimate allegiance is to the Lord.

Finally, when faced with socialization pressures, a believer should obviously not compromise on direct violations of biblical mandates. But what about issues that are more gray? There are no easy answers here. Instead, this requires a process of discernment, which should include seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit (through prayer and Scripture) and from mature believers. Grappling with such issues should not be seen as a burden, but as a stimulus to inner spiritual growth and outward fruitfulness.

Conclusion

A Christian response to organizational socialization in business requires spiritual maturity and practical finesse. Totally absorbing socialization pressures is unacceptable, but so, too, is total resistance of those pressures. Newcomers need to learn the ropes. But Christian newcomers need to be careful not to get strangled by those very same ropes. The key is to find that middle ground which allows one to operate as a part of an organization without

compromising one's mission to be salt and light to a needy world. In the end, everyone submits to something. The only question is, to what do they submit? The more fully graduates submit to the Lord and His purposes for their lives, the less they will be drawn to submit to the alluring power of organizational socialization.

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ENDNOTES

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[2] The information on Accenture's (formerly Anderson Consulting) socialization practices is based on discussions with former partners, current young employees, and a company recruiting brochure titled "Total Future: The Whole Story About Consulting Career Opportunities."
[3] The focus of this paper is formal socialization at the organizational level. It should be noted that sub-groups within organizations also exert socialization pressure, some of which may oppose and some of which may reinforce formal pressures.
[4] Although this exact phrase does not appear in Scripture, its meaning is most readily apparent from John 17:16, 18. This important biblical idea is explored later in the paper.
[5] The biblical analysis also has implications for the scholarly literature on organizational

socialization. Five stand out. One, the implicit assumption of the literature that socialization is a good thing deserves to be critiqued more thoroughly than it has. Two, as the work force becomes increasingly diverse, value conflicts between individuals and their organizations will probably become more common. The impact of such dynamics on socialization needs to be examined. Three, Daniel's example counters the prevailing belief that a high degree of organizational identification is necessary in order for employees to work the hardest for their company. Do contemporary examples exist that parallel Daniel's experience on this issue? Four, value expression at work has only recently begun to be researched (e.g., Briscoe, 1996; Nash, 1994). To my knowledge no research currently exists exploring the important intersection of organizational socialization and personal value expression. Five, more scholarly attention needs to be given to the reactions individuals have to socialization. What individual differences exist in how people react to socialization pressure? What do newcomers see as the benefits and liabilities of different types of socialization experiences?
[6] It is important to note that students who study business in school begin the process of socialization to the business world during their formal education. This has significant implications for Christian business faculty. Are we simply transmitting the world's value system vis-à-vis business to our students or are we providing theologically sound alternatives as well?

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