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## The Y Factor

J. Ray Doerksen  
*Seattle Pacific University*

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The Sabbath issue is finished. Now it is time to take a rest (pun intended). I probably benefited from my study of the issue more than any of you, but that is what I love about education—there is so much to learn. In “The Y Factor,” I usually focus on the noun in the title of this journal, addressing issues of librarianship. Today, I want to concentrate on the adjective—“Christian”.

There is a reason for the title of this column, “The Y Factor.” The reason is that I ask “why?” quite frequently. I have a lot of questions. Some of them arise from my observations of other Christians, of the church in American culture, and of my experiences with Christian higher education and librarianship. As I see and hear things going on around me in the library, higher education, the church, and the world, I wonder:

- Why do Christians try to do something that is expensive (education) so cheaply, yet claim high quality?
- Why are Christian politics in higher education the same as “secular” politics, despite all the rhetoric about the integration of faith and learning?
- Why is so much of current American Christianity an exercise in the social sciences (psychology and sociology) rather than an exercise of Scripture?
- Why does it not bother us that the therapeutic version of Christianity extant in North

America promises endless benefits to us but offers so little to God?

•Why does the kind of Christianity I meet when I sit down and read the New Testament seem so foreign to the kind that I

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experience, see, and hear about in my daily life?

•Why do Christian relationships in the workplace more closely resemble hockey than lawn bowling?

•Why are doctrinal distinctives so important in the hiring of librarians when they are so unimportant in doing the job?

•Why are Christian institutions of higher education seeking a reputation so eagerly when it usually demands conforming to the world’s criteria?

In my writing I have focused on the issues that pertain particularly to Christian librarianship. I would love to write on the questions listed above. There is a danger, though, in concentrating on things “out there.” One can become proud, entertaining self-congratulation as the failures of others are noted. As Christians, however, our standard is not others, but Jesus Christ. I have come to the place in life wherein the most important questions, and the most uncomfortable, arise from within and concern my own life. It has been interesting to read some recent books by Philip Yancey and discover that he

asks many of the same questions as I do, which may be because we share a certain degree of skepticism. Some of these questions are:

- Since God is so good, why do I constantly sin against Him?
- Why does God seem so distant at times?
- Why does my intimacy with God fall so far short of what it should be given the promise that He lives within me?
- If God is the great change agent in producing “new creations,” why I am so much like my old self?
- Why is the Christian life that I am experiencing so pallid, contrasting with the abundant life offered in Scripture?

I am seeking answers that satisfy me. I recommend that you read Yancey if you are asking some of the same questions.

One other author—and book—that I want to highly recommend to you is Dallas Willard, who wrote *The Divine Conspiracy*. It continues to be a pivotal book in stimulating me toward exercising a Christian mind. I asked my wife to read it; I have recommended it to my son. Now I commend it to you. It is a book I want to constantly revisit, in the same way I often go back to *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis.

Seeking answers to the questions I am asking takes time—time that I am now giving to other pursuits, such as writing “The Y Factor.” Therefore, this will be my last column in *The Christian Librarian*. The longer I live, the more I appreciate the grace of God, and the more I know God, the more it increases my desire to know Him even more intimately—to walk with Him through life’s triumphs and tragedies. That is where I want to put my energy.

As a young man, I used to hear older men say that they loved their wives more as they matured than they