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## **From the Editor**

Corné J. Bekker, D. Litt. et Phil.

*Regent University*

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Welcome to the 4232<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership (JBPL)*. This is again the largest edition of JBPL yet, and I am encouraged to report that the volume and quality of the submissions to the journal continue to show improvement .

This edition continues to build the base of scholarly perspectives and research on the phenomena of leadership in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. It is my hope that the articles in this edition will serve to further extend the base for rigorous and well-grounded exegetical research in leadership.

I want to thank the members of our international editorial board for their continued guidance and encouragement. I also want to extend my gratitude to our managing and production editor, Eileen DesAutels Wiltshire, for her continued selfless service and commitment to excellence.

We welcome any comments, suggestions, and correspondence from our readers. I look forward with great anticipation to our continued interaction.

Peace and all good.



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## the editorial board

Representing a diverse group of scholars in biblical, social-science, historical and leadership studies, from around the world, the JBPL editorial board aims to provide a much needed multi-disciplinary, as well as international perspective on current research and interest in biblical perspectives in the study of leadership. Each member of the editorial board has been selected because of their published research and focused interest in the exploration of leadership within the Christian scriptures and its application in the many varied contexts around the world. To contact the editorial staff, please send an e-mail to [jbpl@regent.edu](mailto:jbpl@regent.edu).

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## A BIBLICAL–THEOLOGICAL AESTHETIC OF IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY AND ITS APPLICATION FOR LEADERS

MICHELLE VONDEY

The complexity of today's organizations requires creative imagination on the part of both leaders and organizational members. One way for leaders to face the complex environment and to influence creativity in their followers is through a Biblical–theological aesthetic of imagination and creativity, which is concerned with values of beauty, truth, and goodness. Imagination and creativity are God-given gifts that allow human beings to evoke these values. Aesthetic leaders can cultivate these values within the organization by relating stories that stimulate both cognitive and emotive responses. The parables of Jesus offer an example of how leaders can imaginatively communicate a vision for the organization and inspire creativity in their followers.

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The nature of the world in which we live appears to grow more complex with each passing year. As Wheatley lamented, “Chaos and global interconnectedness are part of our daily lives. We try hard to respond to these challenges and threats through our governments, organizations and as individuals. . . . No matter what we do, stability and lasting solutions elude us.”<sup>1</sup> Organizations are facing a similar situation.

The complexity of today's organizations requires creative imagination on the part of both leaders and organizational members. Indeed, creativity has come “to be seen as a key goal of many organizations and a potentially powerful influence on organizational

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006), x.

performance.”<sup>2</sup> But how should leaders understand imagination and creativity in terms of their leadership? And how can leaders foster creative imagination among their followers? Mumford and colleagues have argued that leadership is related to creativity and innovation, and the type of leadership influences “people’s willingness to engage in, and the likely success of, creative venture.”<sup>3</sup> Leaders can face the challenges brought about by a rapidly changing global environment and influence creativity in followers by embracing a Biblical–theological aesthetic of imagination and creativity.

An outlet for leaders to express their imagination and creativity is through storytelling. The parables of Jesus offer leaders an example of how stories serve to communicate a vision and stimulate the creative imagination in others. In the following pages, Biblical and theological aesthetics is defined, and the relationship of Biblical–theological aesthetics to both imagination and creativity is explained. A description of how aesthetics can be understood in the context of the organization, including which leadership styles are aesthetic by nature, is offered. Leaders learn how parables can help them communicate a vision for their organization and inspire creativity in their followers.

## I. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

Aesthetics, traditionally, is the study of beauty and the psychological responses to it, generated through the five senses.<sup>4</sup> Many people think of art and artistic expression when the term *aesthetics* is mentioned. Biblical aesthetics, too, is understood in the traditional sense of what is beautiful in terms of God and God’s creation.<sup>5</sup> Dyrness explained that images in the Hebrew aesthetic included multiple sensations and were understood as “comprehensive content, which . . . was a matter both of meaning and of beauty.”<sup>6</sup> This understanding stands in contrast to the modern Western view that images are simply visual representations. Davidson pointed out that the Bible is replete with aesthetic detail, the primary example being the poetic language used throughout.<sup>7</sup> If we understand aesthetics as the psychological response to an encounter with the beautiful, then Biblical aesthetics is easily apparent in the imaginative recounting of dreams, visions, and parables seen in, for example, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation. The whole aim of these aesthetic modes is to effect a transformation in the hearers (and readers). This transformation is always intended as a turning toward God (the beautiful) away from the ugliness of sin. Indeed, as Davidson affirmed, “The biblical aesthetic is a holistic discipline, affirming the whole

<sup>2</sup> Michael D. Mumford, Ginamarie M. Scott, Blaine Gaddis, and Jill M. Strange, “Leading Creative People: Orchestrating Expertise and Relationships,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 13, no. 6 (2002): 705-750; here 705.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 706.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Agnes, ed., *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 22.

<sup>5</sup> See William A. Dyrness, “Aesthetics in the Old Testament: Beauty in Context,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 4 (1985): 421-32; Jo Ann Davidson, “Toward a Scriptural Aesthetic,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 101-111.

<sup>6</sup> Dyrness, “Aesthetics in the Old Testament,” 430.

<sup>7</sup> Davidson, “Toward a Scriptural Aesthetic,” 102.

being of a person. The senses, rather than being a peripheral aspect of human nature that is secondary to the mind, are the foundational means for grasping truth and knowledge.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, we can say that a Biblical aesthetic is concerned with what is beautiful, true, and good.

It is a natural course that theological aesthetics has taken to address what is beautiful and also what has moral significance.<sup>9</sup> *Theological aesthetics* is “concerned with questions about God . . . in the light of and perceived through sense knowledge (sensation, feeling, imagination).”<sup>10</sup> So, why think of aesthetics in terms of leadership? Duke suggested that leadership aesthetics is about creating meaning for an organization’s constituents, meaning for the roles leaders and followers play, as well as meaningful relationships between and among organizational members and their environment.<sup>11</sup> McKenzie and James understood aesthetics as the search for new structures for working with uncertainty and ambiguity by creating frameworks and opportunities for action.<sup>12</sup> These “acts of leading,” noted Duke, “constitute a form of artistry and may involve a variety of creative endeavors. . . . As those who observe leaders are exposed to creative acts of leading, they may begin to experience leadership. This experience becomes meaningful to the extent that it evokes certain feelings that are valued by the observer. These feelings are associated with identifiable *properties of leadership*. Properties are aesthetic in nature.”<sup>13</sup> It is from the imagination that these creative acts emerge. These acts serve, in turn, to capture the imagination of observers and followers. Imagination is the distinguishing feature of the aesthetic consciousness.

## II. AESTHETICS OF IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY

Imagination and creativity are God-given gifts that allow us to envision and bring into being what is beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. “Scripture,” according to Green, “is the concrete exemplar in the life of the believing community, by which it is enabled to imagine God, and hence to imagine the world in its essential relation to God.”<sup>14</sup> Creativity is a natural result of the imagination. Berdyaev argued that creativity is “God’s claim on and call to man. God awaits man’s creative act, which is the response to the creative act of God.”<sup>15</sup> The Bible provides evidence of the creative act of humans as a response to God. Bezalel and Aholiab, along with “all the gifted artisans,” were selected by God to construct and adorn the tabernacle (Ex 31:2-11). The lead artisan, Bezalel,

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (London: SCM, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 1.

<sup>11</sup> See Daniel L. Duke, “The Aesthetics of Leadership,” *Education Administration Quarterly* 22, no. 7 (1986): 7-27.

<sup>12</sup> Carole McKenzie and Kim James, “Aesthetics as an Aid to Understanding Complex Systems and Decision Judgment in Operating Complex Systems,” *Emergence* 6, no. 1/2 (2004): 32-39.

<sup>13</sup> Duke, “The Aesthetics of Leadership,” 14.

<sup>14</sup> Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 123.

<sup>15</sup> See Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Lampert (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 277; Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 276-281.

was “filled . . . with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (Ex 31:3). Craftsmen, skilled in creating both beautiful and utilitarian objects, were hired by kings to build and decorate the temple (1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 34:11). Other individuals used their creativity to overturn negative situations. Queen Esther saved the Jews from execution with creative planning (Est 5, 7), and Joseph recommended to Pharaoh a creative strategy for mitigating the effects of a seven-year famine (Gn 41:33-36). Jesus and the Apostle Paul were both creative storytellers able to stir up the imagination of their listeners while delivering important truths.

Our imagination allows us to be transformed and reformed continually and is the “source of creativity.”<sup>16</sup> As Berdyaev asserted, “Without imagination there can be no creative activity.”<sup>17</sup> In response, we reveal God to others through our creative acts. It is our creativity that “constitutes [our] relationship and response to God.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, imagination and creativity are significant both for our understanding of God and for a proper response to God, which is to glorify Him through our actions. In turn, the creative process, informed by our imagination in its desire to please God and glorify Him, allows the leader a greater freedom in leading the organization through complex changes. Leaders are less constrained by rational processes and liberated to imagine creative solutions.

### III. AESTHETICS OF LEADERSHIP

In terms of the organization, Degot considered management just as much an art as the traditional view a science, and thus the manager is an artist who creates works of art.<sup>19</sup> These manager artists have “an acute sense”—a “vision”—of what is needed at that moment in the organization’s [hi]story.<sup>20</sup> “The manager himself is a creative artist . . . who designs the action taken . . . [and who is] able to leave his personal imprint on it.”<sup>21</sup> Unlike modern managers who make decisions based on rationality and logic, “the reality [is] that managers, and particularly senior-level managers, do and have to operate largely on aesthetic principles.”<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, Strati was able to state that “creativity therefore plays an important part in the constitution of organizations and of the specific forms that they assume.”<sup>23</sup>

Contra the idea of aesthetics as synonymous with art or beauty, Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer defined aesthetics as sensory knowledge and felt meaning. “Aesthetics involves meanings we construct based on feelings about what we experience via our

<sup>16</sup> John P. Mackey, *Religious Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 3. See also F. Burch Brown, “Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning,” in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 266-269.

<sup>17</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, 280.

<sup>18</sup> Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> See Vincent Degot, “Portrait of the Manager as an Artist,” *Dragon: The Journal of SCOS* 2, no. 4 (1987): 13-50.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> John Dobson, *The Art of Management and the Aesthetic Manager* (Westport, CT: Quorum, 1999), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Strati, *Organization and Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1999), 176.



senses.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, they believed that an aesthetics of leadership “lies at the conjunction of two current movements in leadership research. The first movement . . . is leadership as the management of meaning. . . . The qualities we highlight within these approaches are transformational/visionary leadership, charisma, and authenticity. The second movement is toward follower-centric models of leadership.”<sup>25</sup> Hansen and colleagues’ recognition and connection of transformational/visionary and charismatic leadership with an aesthetics of leadership resonates with the particular aspects of these theories, such as stimulating the intellect (through meaning creation using symbols and images), and inspiring visions of the future by appealing to feelings and emotions. As Hansen et al. explained, “Transformational leadership involves creative insight . . . and followers are also inspired to be more innovative and creative. . . . [Consequently], aesthetics stands to bring new insights to these more inspirational and creative aspects of transformational leadership.”<sup>26</sup> In a similar vein, charismatic leaders work to express a compelling vision of the future and “engage in personal image-building which produces favorable perceptions of themselves to followers that results in favorable outcomes for the organization.”<sup>27</sup> Empirical evidence has shown that transformational leadership does influence the creativity of followers.<sup>28</sup> Murphy and Ensher provided evidence that charismatic leadership may be an appropriate leadership style for leading creative teams.<sup>29</sup>

Another vehicle for understanding the role of creativity in leadership, *paradoxical leadership*, as conceived by Regine and Lewin, is both an authentic and a follower-centric model of leadership because of the centrality of mutual relationships between leaders and followers and between organizations and communities.<sup>30</sup> The authenticity of leaders toward followers allows for a healthy feedback loop, which in turn allows for creative and adaptive solutions within the organization. Regine and Lewin proposed paradoxical leadership as a paradigm for leading organizations at the edge of chaos, arguing that “paradoxes are not problematic, something that needs to be solved. Instead, they create a tension from which creative solutions can emerge.”<sup>31</sup> The Bible, and the theological doctrines which evolved from it, is full of paradox, and Jesus’ leadership was replete with paradoxical actions, teaching, and stories. For example, Christians accept that Jesus was both equally human and divine (Jn 1:1, 14) and that to

<sup>24</sup> Hans Hansen, Arja Ropo, and Erika Sauer, “Aesthetic Leadership,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 18 (2007): 544-60; here 545.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 549.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 550.

<sup>28</sup> John J. Sosik, Surinder S. Kahai, and Bruce J. Avolio, “Transformational Leadership and Dimensions of Creativity: Motivating Idea Generation in Computer Mediated Groups,” *Creativity Research Journal* 11 (1998): 111-22; Dong I. Jung, “Transformational and Transactional Leadership and their Effects on Creativity in Groups,” *Creativity Research Journal* 13 (2001): 185-97.

<sup>29</sup> See Susan E. Murphy and Ellen A. Ensher, “A Qualitative Analysis of Charismatic Leadership in Creative Teams: The Case of Television Directors,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2008): 335-352.

<sup>30</sup> Birute Regine and Roger Lewin, “Leading at the Edge: How Leaders Influence Complex Systems,” *Emergence* 2, no. 2 (2001): 5-23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

be reconciled to God humans must be “born again” (Jn 3:3). Jesus was the Son of God, yet He washed His disciples’ feet and sacrificed Himself for others. To understand these paradoxical acts requires creative imagination to conceive of the truth behind these paradoxical conundrums.

#### IV. STORIES AS CREATIVE USE OF THE IMAGINATION

The Biblical parables provide a noteworthy example of the creative use of the imagination. Fodor explained that “the literary form of the Gospel parables both discloses to and invites the hearer/reader to participate in that which is . . . true, good, and beautiful.”<sup>32</sup> For TeSelle, “Parables are stories about ordinary men and women who find in the midst of their everyday lives surprising things happening.”<sup>33</sup> As McIntyre suggested, “We can be sure that in understanding how [the parables] are structured and how they work, we are glimpsing something of how the mind of Jesus acts imaginatively.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, as an extended metaphor, parables serve to disrupt ordinary reality and help the audience envision the extraordinary.

For McIntyre, the imagination is the means by which Jesus communicates imagery that people can understand. Jesus used parables to communicate His care for people, His vision, and purpose. “It was his intention that his hearers grasp what he had to say in the terms in which he said it.”<sup>35</sup> Stories in general are an effective means of communication “because they conjure up complex cognitive images and can appeal to both emotions and intuition.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the hearers and readers of the parables are required to engage their imagination in order to comprehend the truth behind the parables.

Leaders can approach the parables two ways: first, as a means to get wisdom for leading, and second, as examples of how to stir up the creative imagination of their followers; in the first case, “seeking the will of God for a specific situation through ‘searching the Scriptures’ . . . is essentially an activity of the imagination.”<sup>37</sup> McIntyre described this activity as proceeding “from the understanding of a parable or a biblical situation which was quite specific and non-general in character, to a . . . specific course of action.”<sup>38</sup> This ability to apply Biblical principles to the here-and-now “is conditioned by our being able imaginatively to enter into the intention of the original situation, and equally imaginatively to make the transition to a world and a time remotely distant from

<sup>32</sup> James Fodor, “‘Alien beauty’: Parabolic Judgment and the Witness of Faith,” in *Theological Aesthetics after von Balthasar*, eds. O. V. Bychkov and J. Fodor (Hampshire, England: Aldershot, 2008), 187-200; here 189.

<sup>33</sup> Sallie McFague TeSelle, “Parable, Metaphor, and Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42 (December 1974): 630-645; here 630.

<sup>34</sup> John McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1987), 21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Nick Forster, Martin Cebis, Sol Majteles, Anurag Mathur, Roy Morgan, Janet Preuss, Vinod Tiwari, and Des Wilkinson, “The Role of Story-telling in Organizational Leadership,” *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 20, no. 1 (1999): 1-17; here 8.

<sup>37</sup> McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination*, 86.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

. . . the original.”<sup>39</sup> For example, in Luke 14:28-30, Jesus invited His listeners first to imagine that they were going to build a tower and they started building without figuring the cost to complete it, and then to imagine how they would feel when they discovered they could not finish the project and were ridiculed by others. The listeners were invited to imagine how they would react if they discovered they did not have the resources they needed. This short creative parable provides a leader seeking God’s will for any business endeavor an immediate understanding of the wisdom behind strategic planning.

The second use of parable for the leader centers on the leader’s need to communicate the vision for the organization and to stir up creativity in followers that can be guided toward achieving that vision. One way to communicate a vision and inspire followers is through storytelling. As Forster et al. remarked, with the increasingly complex environment in which organizations exist, “Leaders have to be able to make sense of this fast changing world and convey this to their employees. . . . Through their words and actions they have to influence the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of their followers. . . . [C]reating a mental picture . . . helps the listeners discover who they are . . . where they are currently, and where they should be headed.”<sup>40</sup>

Storytelling, then, “affirms a basic faith that our lives are not meaningless and lived out in a haphazard world.”<sup>41</sup> A study by Taylor on the aesthetics of leadership storytelling found a correlation between a story’s performance and the felt meaning derived from it.<sup>42</sup> Storytelling serves to remind listeners of a shared experience, “allowing people to relate as humans with feelings.”<sup>43</sup> Not only is there a psychological response to the story, but also the creation of joint meaning, which serves to bind the organizational members together. Gardner explained, “Most individuals attach meaning and value to the ideas that they develop . . . about themselves and their group. . . . But most human beings also crave an explicit statement . . . on what counts as being true, beautiful, and good. . . . At times of stability, the accepted norms may be adhered to without discussion. But particularly in times of crisis or cataclysmic change, individuals crave a larger explanatory framework.”<sup>44</sup> Leaders provide this framework by relating stories that provide answers to important questions, such as the purpose of work.<sup>45</sup> The parables that Jesus told held a deeper meaning than was immediately apparent, but it was the telling that first got people’s attention and then the content that involved listeners in the story itself. Thus, leaders do not tell just any story. “What’s generated becomes a new narrative to live by . . . and capable of being put into practice. The newly emerging narrative is constructed both from the ongoing stories of the people and their organization, and the new story put forward by the leader. It is born in the listeners’ minds as a more compelling version of their ongoing life stories. . . . What the leader

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>40</sup> Forster et al., “The Role of Story-telling,” 9.

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Leary, “Parables and Fairy Tales,” *Religious Education* 81, no. 3 (1986): 485-499; here 486.

<sup>42</sup> Steven S. Taylor, “The Aesthetics of Leadership Storytelling” (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 2000).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>44</sup> Howard Gardner, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 55-56.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

says is . . . a catalyst to a creative process going on inside the listener."<sup>46</sup> The way leaders express the vision for the organization (communication style), are able to inspire others by communicating that vision, are able to provide meaning and purpose for the organization, and enable others to act are all achievable through a carefully crafted story. These characteristics are what Kent, Crotts, and Azziz found to be the primary factors of transformational leadership behavior.<sup>47</sup> Gardner called these master storytellers *visionary leaders*.<sup>48</sup>

## V. IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY FOR LEADERS

For all its advantages, a leader's creative imagination should be more than a means to an end. A leader's creative "vision is the result of grace: of having our moral imagination and aesthetic sensibilities infused by the Spirit of God who enables a 'right seeing.'"<sup>49</sup> A creative vision should both sustain the organization during times of stability and through times of crisis and change. Furthermore, the creativity and the imagination that a leader brings to the organization should pervade throughout the system so that followers feel welcomed to express their own creative imagination in the pursuit of both organizational objectives and personal fulfillment. The mutuality between the leader and followers' creative imagination serves as a ballast to the chaotic environment in which the organization exists. Our human creativity is an expression of our response to God; whether we are Christians or not, the creative act is an outgrowth of our own createdness.<sup>50</sup> "We express our being by creating. Creativity is a necessary sequel to being."<sup>51</sup> Gardner suggested that "the artful creation and articulation of stories constitutes a fundamental part of the leader's vocation."<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, creativity and imagination are aesthetically proper for leaders as long as the use of the imagination and what is created is consistent with Biblical principles.

It is both promising and possible, then, for organizational leaders to imagine themselves as *creators* of the organization's vision, as change *artists*, as *co-creators* of organizational products or services. Yet, leaders must take the understanding of creativity further. "Creativity is not only necessary for the innovation of new products and services; it is the conduit for knowledge to be generated, disseminated, utilized and managed throughout the organization."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, it requires imagination to transcend the limitations of part-and-parcel thinking and envision the organization and its environment holistically. In order for leaders to think about the various systems of the organization and how they interact as parts of larger environmental systems, they must

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Denning, "How Leaders Can Use Powerful Narratives as Change Catalysts," *Strategy & Leadership* 36, no. 2 (2008): 1-15; here 14.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas W. Kent, John C. Crotts, and Abdul Azziz, "Four Factors of Transformational Leadership Behavior," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 22, no. 5/6 (2001): 221-229.

<sup>48</sup> Gardner, *Leading Minds*.

<sup>49</sup> Fodor, "Alien Beauty," 191.

<sup>50</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, 276-281.

<sup>51</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Gardner, *Leading Minds*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> Jacqueline McLean, "The Art of Thinking Outside the Box," *The British Journal of Administrative Management* 16 (October/November 2007): 16.

engage their creative imagination to see the “big picture.” Green has noted that “when we seek ‘imaginative leadership,’ we are not looking for a leader who . . . sees things that aren’t there, but rather for one who is especially gifted at seeing what *is* there and able to envision new possibilities for realistic action.”<sup>54</sup>

Creativity and imagination are not just about seeing, however. They are about perceiving what is good and true and beautiful through the other senses as well, what can be “heard, handled, [and] felt” (cf. 1 Jn 1:1).<sup>55</sup> These “perceptive faculties” yield knowledge about the organization that is not necessarily recorded in a policies and procedures handbook, and allow the leader to take “intentional action.”<sup>56</sup> What results is the fruit of the leader’s creative imagination. Indeed, Koestler defined the creative act thusly: “It combines, reshuffles, and relates already existing but hitherto separate ideas, facts, frames of perception, associative contexts” when faced by the “traumatic challenges to the environment.”<sup>57</sup> Hausman argued, “The creator must not only exercise critical judgment in deciding what to accept and reject when possibilities occur to him, but he must also form, refine, and integrate these, even though he knows only with a degree of imprecision what the final integration will be . . . and . . . he must assume responsibility for what he brings into being.”<sup>58</sup>

The creative leader, then, is not someone who takes to flights of fancy. Rather, imagination is “the whole mind working . . . involving perception, feeling, and reasoning.”<sup>59</sup> The creative act is both a cognitive and emotive process driven by what McKenzie and James called “the imaginative faculty which ensures . . . that we desire to create and go beyond the given.”<sup>60</sup> The creative leader combines tacit knowledge, discernment, and the imagination for what could be an intentional action without necessarily knowing the end. In a word, the creative leader is courageous. Courageous leaders beckon their followers to join them on the journey to discover the end together by creating a dynamic vision of the possibilities.

For leaders, then, it is not only important to create a vision, but also vital to communicate that vision in a way that followers can in turn imagine a positive future. McKenzie and James have asserted that “an ‘aesthetic approach’ and the development of an aesthetic attitude are essential for all genuine understanding of complexity. . . . In our efforts to understand the complexities of a chaotic world we admire intuition and imagination in problem solving. We admire creativity and we strongly desire to be creative ourselves.”<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the need is great for leaders to nurture their own imagination both in order to engage the imagination of their followers, and to prevail over complex challenges from the environment.

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<sup>54</sup> Green, *Imagining God*, 63.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Strati, *Organization and Aesthetics*, 2; Green, *Imagining God*, 66.

<sup>56</sup> Strati, *Organization and Aesthetics*, 2 and 92.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Koestler, “The Three Domains of Creativity,” in *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, eds. D. Dutton and M. Krausz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 1-18; here 2, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Carl R. Hausman, “Criteria of Creativity,” in *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, eds. D. Dutton and M. Krausz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 75-90; here 85.

<sup>59</sup> Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 113.

<sup>60</sup> McKenzie and James, “Aesthetics as an Aid,” 35.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

## VI. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper, it was recognized that complex organizational issues call for creative responses from all organizational members. Creative ideas allow the organization the flexibility it needs to respond to the challenges facing the organization in order to become a better organization. A Biblical–theological aesthetic of imagination and creativity was suggested as a way for leaders to think about leading others to creative solutions. Leaders take the lead by imagining a dynamic vision and relating that vision with a compelling story in order to inspire creativity from their followers. The stories that leaders tell, like the parables of the Bible, contain images that are easy to understand but powerful enough to transform the listeners. A Biblical–theological aesthetic of imagination and creativity frees leaders to create meaning and value for the organization with the confidence that the leaders themselves are fulfilling their purpose.

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## INTEGRATING LIFE COACHING AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY WITHOUT LOSING OUR THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

KARL INGE TANGEN

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the reflection on how one can integrate the late modern practice of life coaching with practical theology by employing Biblical perspectives on this practice. I present the so-called coaching revolution, and try to frame questions that may be followed up in later papers and discussions. I begin by describing coaching as a concrete practice, before I locate it within a larger socio-cultural process and take a closer look at the psychological theories and worldviews that have grounded and now guide the practice. This presentation of what I loosely define, as the coaching paradigm is followed by theologically motivated questions that I see as crucial on the journey of integrating late modern coaching into Evangelical theology and Pentecostal spirituality. In this process, Biblical perspectives are employed in order to facilitate a constructive and critical analysis.

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### I. INTRODUCTION: THE COACHING REVOLUTION

Coaching is an interesting phenomenon for several reasons. First, coaching is a new way of leading, becoming increasingly more popular in late modern organizations. It is in this context that David Logan has proclaimed a coaching revolution.<sup>1</sup> Second, the concept of life coaching is also a powerful trend that seems to spread with the globalization of late modern individualism. An interesting

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<sup>1</sup> David Logan and John King, *The Coaching Revolution: How Visionary Managers Are Using Coaching to Empower People and Unlock Their Full Potential* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2004).

demonstration of this trend is the book, *Therapist as Life Coach*, written by the clinical psychologists Patrick Williams and Deborah Davis, who recommend that psychologists and psychiatrists transform their practice from “therapeutic counselling” to “life coaching.”<sup>2</sup>

Third, I also suggest that the coaching revolution is influencing practical theology in several ways. Christian literature on coaching is growing fast,<sup>3</sup> and several pastors and theological educators are starting their own businesses as life coaches, as a supplement to their more traditional vocations. Courses on coaching are also increasingly introduced to the theological education. Theological educators Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl go as far as suggesting that coaching is the most important format of training in the “missional church of the future.”<sup>4</sup>

## II. HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVE, METHOD, AND PURPOSE

The basic method of this analysis is hermeneutical, in the sense that it employs an interpretative approach to both science and reality, an approach that also embraces dialogue with other interpretative perspectives. My point of departure, which is Pentecostal theology, shares the Evangelical perspective that gives epistemological priority to the Christian story (the Bible) over other life and worldviews. Thus, the Biblical story of history as a theo-drama is understood as both the first and as the integrative horizon.<sup>5</sup> Yet, this analysis nevertheless draws on important elements in Don Browning’s model of critical correlation, and therefore seeks to facilitate an open dialogue with other perspectives that seek to both listen and learn from other interpreters.<sup>6</sup>

## III. THE MEANING AND ETYMOLOGY OF “COACHING”

The word *coach* has, as Gary Collins notes, interesting etymological roots.<sup>7</sup> From the 1500s and onward, the word described a horse-drawn vehicle. From around 1880, the word was given an athletic meaning, identifying the person who tutored rowers at Cambridge University to “move from one place to another.”<sup>8</sup> So even if late modern-life coaching may have its major roots in modern individualist psychology, the image of a “sports coach” who comes alongside someone (or a team) to help people move from one place to another, may possibly be used as “deep metaphor,” or root-metaphor of this practice. Simply defined then, *coaching* is

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Williams and Deborah C. Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach: An Introduction for Counselors and Other Helping Professionals*, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Coaching: Helping Others Turn Potential into Reality* (Nashville: Navpress, 2001); Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl, *Transformational Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World* (Nashville: B & H, 2008); Joseph Umidi, *Transformational Coaching* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Ogne and Roehl, *Transformational Coaching*, 10-21.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Browning’s model is embraced with some caution. For a critical review of the model see Ray Sherman Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001); Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Collins, *Christian Coaching*, 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



a practice in which one person comes alongside another in order to help him or her achieve certain goals.

At this point it may be useful, however, to clarify the distinction between life coaching and performance coaching. *Performance coaching* is, according to Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl, orientated towards effectiveness in a distinct area, such as job performance (in a Christian context, ministry).<sup>9</sup> It focuses on the larger context or personal life of the leader *only if* this has negative impact on performance. In contrast, holistic life coaching approaches the whole person and seems to value “personal authenticity and character as well as the person’s relationships to others and community.”<sup>10</sup> Williams and Davis’ secular approach is just as holistic.<sup>11</sup> Their model of the life balance wheel includes several dimensions in this form of conversation, including: life purpose, family and friends, finances, romance/intimacy, health/self-care, social fun, personal and spiritual development, and one’s physical environment. I find Williams and Davis’ model to be of particular interest because it is more philosophically conscious than many other models.

#### IV. LIFE COACHING: KEY PRACTICES AND VIRTUES

For this reason, it might be useful to look at what Williams and Davis define as the basic practices of coaching, and the associated virtues. In their model of coaching, the coach is primarily given the role of a partner in a conversation on the client’s or PBC’s (Person Being Coached) life. But what does this partner do? According to Williams and Davis, a coach on a basic level mainly practices “listening” and “truth-telling” in four (well-prepared) steps:

1. Listens and clarifies
2. Reflects what he or she is hearing
3. Listens more
4. And requests action<sup>12</sup>

The coach should, according to Williams and Davis, primarily listen for what the PBC wants to accomplish and wants to be. The coach should look for and identify people’s goals and strengths—and compliment and endorse these—while at the same time also listen for the gap between where the person is and where he or she wants to be. In this process, the coach is “solution focused” rather than therapeutic, in the sense that he or she looks for possibilities rather than for pathology, history, pain, and psychological blocks.<sup>13</sup>

What does it mean to tell the truth? Telling the truth is about pointing out potential incongruence or intuitions about problem areas, and pointing out the client’s strengths. It might be useful to note here what telling the truth is not. It does not mean to confront and, more importantly, the good coach listens for and with the client for the client’s agenda, not what the coach thinks the agenda and direction should

<sup>9</sup> Ogne and Roehl, *Transformational Coaching*.

<sup>10</sup> “This transformational paradigm helps leaders live authentically and ‘incarnationally’. . . . A good coach is focused on the holistic development of the leader. A coach must focus on the four areas, helping the leader clarifying calling, cultivate character, create community, and connect with culture.” Ogne and Roehl, *Transformational Coaching*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Williams and Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-103.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

be.<sup>14</sup> For many coaches, this is an important absolute, to the degree that they reject other forms of counseling and guiding conversations. In his extensive work on Christian coaching, Gary Collins gives the following review of the coaching literature: “A perusal of the many available books on coaching shows that most authors emphasise the ability of the PBCs to ‘look inside’ with the help of their coaches, to listen for the values, the purposes and visions that are deep within, to focus on inner strengths, and to discover their passions and life purposes. There are no absolutes and few rules in this thinking.”<sup>15</sup> However, it’s worth noticing that “listening for the solution” is a great obstacle to great coaching, according to Williams and Davis, because it blocks the powerful process of discovery, “uncovering,” and creative ideas that come from the coaching conversation.<sup>16</sup> The latter point is important because it means that the person being coached is, at least ideally, not only his or her own visionary lawgiver (*autonomos*), he or she is, at least in a narrow sense (not necessarily ultimately), also his or her own self-creator (*autopoesis*).

Coaching then, is a practice of empowerment providing or aiming at providing a particular kind of freedom, in terms of individual self-creation or, if one likes, self-actualization. Freedom here means the ability to set one’s own holistic life goals and the ability to achieve those goals “from within.” That this approach and perspective is an important value in this paradigm is affirmed by some of the advanced skills and practices that Williams and Davis promote, such as:

- Purposeful inquiry, which basically means to move together, guided by curiosity
- Never make the client wrong, which means that the coach should focus on what the client needs, and not on what the coach thinks he or she needs
- “Possibility thinking,” which means to see and encourage courageous and positive thinking
- “Standing for,” which means “remembering the dreams of their clients. And believing in the possibility of realizing them”
- Reframing, which means to help the PBC to see situations in new and different perspectives.
- The use of metaphors and parables to stimulate the PBC’s imagination<sup>17</sup>

## V. LIFE COACHING IN A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### *Forms of Individualism and Social Systems: The Modern Project*

Some of these skills are presented in more depth later. At this point, however, it might be useful to see coaching within a larger sociological perspective. I suggest that Robert Bellah’s analysis of late modernity in general and American culture in particular, may be useful in this regard, since the coaching revolution has emerged in an American context. The great project of modernity, according to Bellah, is freedom, understood as independence from social and religious coercion.<sup>18</sup> Like Charles

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 101-102.

<sup>15</sup> Collins, *Christian Coaching*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Williams and Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>18</sup> Robert N. Bellah and Steven M. Tipton, eds., *The Robert Bellah Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and

Taylor, he identifies a massive “subjective turn” in the history of modern culture, in terms of a turn from external authorities to the self as a source of significance.<sup>19</sup>

The modern project is, however, also shaped and driven by social systems. Following Jürgen Habermas, Bellah makes an important distinction between “life worlds” and “systems.”<sup>20</sup> Somewhat simplified one might say that the life world is the realm of mutual understanding and meaningful relationships, while systems on the other hand are organized through nonlinguistic media, exemplified by modern market capitalism and the administrative nation–state.

Modernization, according to Habermas, involves two complementary processes: the rationalization of the life world through modern forms of rationalities, and the differentiation of the systems from the life world.<sup>21</sup> The problem with differentiation is that the systems become autonomous to the degree that they are no longer anchored in the moral universe of the life world, instead they seek to subordinate the life world to forms of “functionalist reason,” meaning that concerns for efficiency and profit invade the moral realm.

### *Different Languages and Types of Late-Modern Individualisms*

Thus, certain cultural forms or interpretative repertoires may feed on these systems, and in particular what Bellah calls utilitarian individualism. In a classic study, Bellah and his colleagues originally identified four kinds of late-modern “individualisms”<sup>22</sup>—all sharing the basic belief in the dignity and “sacredness” of the individual.<sup>23</sup> However, only two of these qualify as forms of individualism, and in a more narrow sense as “first languages.” These interpretative repertoires see the individual as the primary reality, whereas society is a conceived second-order construct.

### *Utilitarian Individualism*

*Utilitarian individualism* has its philosophical roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>24</sup> It has affinity to a basically economic understanding of human existence, and views human life as an effort by individuals to maximize their self-interest relative to their given ends. Thus, it is highly compatible with market capitalism. “The utilitarian self,” according to Steve Tipton, asks: “What do I want? Or, what are my interests?”<sup>25</sup> His answer to this first question then defines “goodness of consequence.” Ethics is primarily understood in terms of procedures of fair exchange (between self-maximizing individuals), and freedom is understood as freedom to

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Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Bellah et al., *The Robert Bellah Reader*, 107-109.

<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *In Theory of Communicative Action and System* (Cambridge, MA: Beacon Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*.

<sup>23</sup> See the authors’ own assessment of these terms in Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 334.

<sup>24</sup> See Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, ch. 2. Here Bellah explicitly mentions Thomas Hobbes and John Locke as philosophical fathers of this tradition.

<sup>25</sup> Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 369.

pursue one's interests.<sup>26</sup> The realizations of these interests are often referred to as success. Bellah and his colleagues propose that there are several key images to the utilitarian mode of thinking, such as the independent citizen, the self-made entrepreneur, and the successful manager (or organizational leader).<sup>27</sup>

### *Expressive Individualism*

What Bellah calls expressive individualism has its roots in the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, and arose in opposition to the utilitarian life mode. It represents a search for a deep understanding of what it means to be "an authentic self," or "a whole person."<sup>28</sup> In its classical "romantic form," it holds that each person has a unique core of feelings and intuitions that should unfold or be expressed.<sup>29</sup> As Heelas and Woodhead suggest, expressive individualists go deeper in their catering of themselves, and the search for subjective well-being includes a quest for authenticity, creativity, personal growth, meaningful relationships, and the experience of harmony or holism.<sup>30</sup> In Bellah's material, this also leads people into different therapeutic practices, in which the individual tries to deal with both external authorities and internal anxieties that obstruct the individual's freedom to develop and express one's "true self." The holistic self-accepting and self-actualizing individual, as well as the therapist, may therefore be seen as typical characters of the narratives of expressive individualism.

This ethics has been described (critically) by Charles Taylor as "an ethics of authenticity,"<sup>31</sup> and may have two components. First, it thinks of an action as morally right if one acts, in any given situation, in a way that fully expresses oneself, specifically one's inner feelings and one's experience of the situation.<sup>32</sup> Second, it may include what Bellah and Tipton call *therapeutic contractualism*: "Thus sharing of feelings with somebody that in turn responds similarly. Thus sharing of feelings between similar, authentic, expressive selves—selves who to feel complete do not need others and do not rely on others to define their own standards or desires—become the basis for the therapeutic ideal of love."<sup>33</sup> In its ideal typical form, the therapeutic attitude denies all forms of external obligations in relationships, replacing them with the ideal of open and honest communication and "fair psychological exchange."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Bellah et al., *The Robert Bellah Reader*, 268.

<sup>27</sup> The role of the professional manager is important because the modern bureaucratic organization may be perceived primarily as a utilitarian corporation. See Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 39-46.

<sup>28</sup> The idea of the inner voice could also be combined with orthodox theism, but in many cases this belief develops towards pantheism or secularism. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 334.

<sup>30</sup> See Heelas and Woodhead, *Religion in Modern Times*, 370; see also Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> See Tipton's analysis in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times*, 370.

<sup>33</sup> Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 121-130.

<sup>34</sup> Giddens calls this "the pure relationship." See Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1992).

### *Individualism as Loose-Transactional Connections*

I suggest that in a sociological perspective, moderate individualism does not primarily mean forms of social independence, or forms of eremitism. Individualism is, in a sociological perspective, primarily a way of relating to others. The utilitarian individualist obviously needs others to succeed.<sup>35</sup> *Therapeutic contractualism* may come closer to an arena where altruistic proximity and authentic care is performed, but “the other” is primarily in this paradigm a partner who acts both as client and coach, in a transactional process.

Win–win solutions in the paradigm of individualist languages are therefore basically transactional deals between two sets of individual interests, rather than the transformational idea of the common good that benefits all, including those not present in the transaction. “The other” is therefore always in danger of being used, or being reduced to an audience for utilitarian (success) or expressive self-actualisation. The American sociologist Robert Wuthnow suggests that this development means that forms of solid communities (including churches) are transformed into forms of “loose connections.”<sup>36</sup>

The practical theologian and leadership theorist Robert Banks offers a theological perspective on this process. He claims that covenantal relationships, understood as “binding two parties unconditionally for a particular purpose or length of time,” are steadily replaced by “contractual relationships of limited duration, with built in conditions.” He argues that “this trend” is noticeable “even” in marriage, friendships, and church.<sup>37</sup>

From a more European perspective, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck Gernsheim suggest that collective identities, such as the identity of class, seem to wither away in the post industrial economy, and that the national welfare state also seems to fuel the process of individualization, since it is designed to support individuals, rather than groups.<sup>38</sup> Zygmunt Bauman proposes that we now live in a “liquid modernity,” shaped by the post industrial transition from “production to consumption,” which is shaping both professional relationships and intimate partnerships in the image of “until further notice rationality,” based on mutual use and consumption. This logic transforms interpersonal intimacy to “episodic” or “liquid” love.<sup>39</sup>

Strategies of individual self-actualization are therefore not only a choice in the late-modern context, but Beck and Beck Gernsheim suggest that late-modern people are condemned to individualization,<sup>40</sup> in the sense that they must stage and manage

<sup>35</sup> Even Ridderstråle and Nordström, who celebrate the funky ethos of late-modern individualism, admit that one needs the competence of others to be “on the edge.” Jonas Ridderstråle and Kjell Nordström, *Funkey Business: Talent Makes Capital Dance* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2000), 210-212.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Loose Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Robert J. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), 89-91.

<sup>40</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, 4.

their own biography, and adapt adequately to the dialectics of local and global systems.<sup>41</sup> At this point, I suggest that the metaphor of being condemned might imply a too strong form of *sociologism* (viewing individual thoughts too much as an epiphenomena of the socio-cultural contexts). Yet, even if Beck and Beck Gernsheim are only partially correct, both their and Bellah's perspectives might explain why life coaching is becoming so popular. It obviously addresses urgent individual needs, and the emphasis on individual self-creation provides hope corresponding to the dominant interpretative repertoires.

## VI. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS OF LIFE COACHING

From a theological perspective, one must ask what kind of worldviews and ethics are embedded in the practice of coaching. Davis and Williams suggest that Sigmund Freud had a dramatic influence on society's view on both mental illness and human behavior in general. They state, however, that Freud's theories have little applicability to life coaching, instead Freud and his students lay the foundation for the paradigm they call *traditional therapy* or *old style* counseling. They see the following characteristics as typical of this psychoanalytic paradigm.<sup>42</sup>

- Deal primarily with pathology
- Orientated towards the inner world of process and feelings
- Approach this world with "why questions" towards the client's past/ biography
- Basically a medical model where the therapist is expert (doctor) and the client is a patient

Models of life coaching may find their theoretical antecedents among Freud's students. Williams and Davis put forward that both Carl Jung and Alfred Adler "broke away from Freud's theories of neuroses and psychosis," and propose that they "posited theories that were more teleological and optimistic about human potential."<sup>43</sup> Adler saw each individual as the creator and artist of his or her own life, and involved his clients in goal setting, life planning, and inventing their own future. Happiness was eventually found in a sense of social connectedness and significance. The same applies to Jung's journey towards a higher self (individuation), which was also an act of self-creation, through visionary and purposeful living that culminated in self-transcendence.<sup>44</sup>

Williams and Davis also see Carl Rogers book, *Client-Centred Therapy*,<sup>45</sup> as a major contribution to later models of coaching. Together with other theorists, like Abraham Maslow, Rogers formed the "third force" of humanistic psychology, focusing more on personal development towards self-actualization and well-being, rather than on pathology. His contribution is of particular importance because it defined counseling and therapy as a relationship in which the client was assumed to have the ability to change and grow. The principle of unconditional positive regard saw affirming the client as the key to change, and this redefined the former imbalanced

<sup>41</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 214-215, 243.

<sup>42</sup> Williams and Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach*, 11, 40-46.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

relationship between the therapist and the client into a more equalitarian “therapeutic alliance.”<sup>46</sup>

The main psychological basis for coaching is, however, found in what Williams and Davis call “solution focused approaches,” associated with the father of American hypnosis, Milton Erickson, and his students Bandler and Grinder, who formed the paradigm of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) in their landmark study, *The Structure of Magic*.<sup>47</sup> Solution-focused approaches do not depend on insight or depth psychology; they focus less on pathology and the past, and more on behavioral change through increased awareness, and choices that allow for a desired future (cognitive psychology). Language and questions that focus the client “towards what works, rather than towards what is broken,” are seen as powerful and transformational tools for a process of personal development. Typical characteristics of these transitional models are therefore:

- The client is “supported” rather than cured in a therapeutic alliance
- A “move away from the focus on pathology” to a “paradigm of solution”
- A more “brief” solution-focused approach, orientated towards “outcome”
- Language is seen as a primary tool for desired change (also for the inner conversation)<sup>48</sup>

Williams and Davis suggest that models of life coaching have evolved from a variety of solution-based approaches that include NLP, systemic family therapy (Haley, Madnes, Satir), Ellis’ rational emotive therapy, and Glasser’s reality therapy. Their own model may probably also be seen as a relatively eclectic psychological hybrid that also incorporates impulses from performance coaching in organizational development, and models of personal development, such as that of Anthony Robbins,<sup>49</sup> which is focusing on possibility thinking and visionary living. Coaching, according to their model is characterized by:

- Paradigm of possibility and human potential
- A move from “Why?” to “How?”
- Action from the inner to the outer world (inside-out) through transformative language and practices orientated towards an outcome
- Outcome is defined by a larger vision of the future
- Focus on a holistic life
- Coach is seen as a co-creator in “a partnership of equals”
- Thus, providing freedom from “managed care”<sup>50</sup>

Overall then, Williams and Davis sum up the major distinctions between traditional therapy and coaching in four broad categories:

1. *Past versus future*. Therapy focuses on the past and has a problem that needs solving, whereas coaching focuses on the future assuming that “the client is whole and capable of having a wonderful life.”
2. *Fix versus create*. Clients seek therapists as a source of fixing or eliminating their problems; clients seek coaches to help them to get more out of their life.

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<sup>46</sup> Williams and Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 12-15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 40.

3. *Professional versus collegial*. Therapy sees the therapist as an expert, whereas coaching sees the coach as a partner who supports the client in his or her attempts to create an even better life.
4. *Limited versus open*. Therapists are limited in the way they generate clients, whereas coaches can approach others more openly about their services, and discuss their services. For therapists, coaching therefore opens new business possibilities.<sup>51</sup>

## VII. DEEP METAPHORS, ETHICS, AND WORLDVIEWS IN THE HUMANIST ROOTS OF COACHING

It seems clear that these interpretative repertoires, used during both therapy and coaching, are far from being as value neutral. At the level of culture one may also ask if it represents a philosophy or a form of religious hope, meeting deep existential needs, and providing what the British sociologist Anthony Giddens calls a sense of ontological security, based on hope and trust in human potential.<sup>52</sup>

Don Browning has pointed out that there are deep metaphors, and even a relatively explicit cosmology, in humanistic psychology.<sup>53</sup> They share the deep metaphors that express images of harmony with the Jungian tradition (although this tradition is more cosmologically sophisticated). Here theorists like Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow may be fruitful figurants to study since they seem to have been pioneers in defining the good life and health, in terms of self-actualization based on autonomy and *auto poesis* (or self-regulation, to use Perls' term). Browning shows that these theorists share an organic model of self-actualization. Roger's client-centred therapy is based on the following assumption: "The organism has one basic tendency and striving—to actualize, maintain and enhance the experiencing organism."<sup>54</sup> Rogers states that in the patients with whom he has worked, the forward direction of growth is more powerful than the satisfaction of remaining infantile. Like Maslow, Rogers also suggests that spontaneous expressiveness (or what he calls "flow"), in terms of doing "what feels right," may be a trustworthy guide to decision making in all aspects of life, including the moral realm.<sup>55</sup> Maslow believes that the self-actualized person who has overcome external obstacles to growth, and been placed in a proper environment for self-actualization, also possesses good values including kindness, courage, honesty, love, unselfishness, and goodness.<sup>56</sup> This belief is also grounded in a cosmological belief. Based on his reflection on "peak experiences," Maslow concludes, "The philosophical implications here are tremendous. If for the sake of argument, we accept the thesis that in peak-experiences the nature of reality itself may be seen more clearly and its essence penetrated more profoundly, then this is almost the same as saying what so many Philosophers and Theologians have affirmed, that the whole of Being is neutral or

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 41-48.

<sup>52</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*.

<sup>53</sup> Don S. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 69-76.

<sup>54</sup> Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy*, 490.

<sup>55</sup> Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); see Browning's analysis, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 63-65.

<sup>56</sup> Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1962), 147.



good, and that evil and pain or threat is only a partial phenomenon, a product of not seeing the world as whole and unified.”<sup>57</sup> What does “whole and unified mean”? Don Browning has tried to show that there is a quite similar implicit worldview embedded in Perls’ metaphor of self-regulation and Rogers’ metaphors of flow and process.<sup>58</sup> This worldview is harmonic in the sense that it assumes that social justice and harmony are almost automatic by-products of people living out their inner potential. This grand assumption is not empirically-based; instead it seems to be grounded in an implicit metaphysics that gravitates towards a monistic worldview with strong affinity to Eastern, and some versions of Western, mysticism. Monism is, according to Browning, characterized by the idea that the sacred is a united, motionless, timeless, and unconditional self-caused perfection and, furthermore, the human self in its depth is a manifestation of the divine life itself.<sup>59</sup> It’s worth noticing here that evil (e.g., sin or the devil) is ontologically absent; evil is basically a product of not seeing the world in the right way (and acting on that).

This suggestion should in my view not be accepted out of hand of practitioners of coaching, but it should be explored if one tries to integrate secular models of coaching into Christian practices. Another suggestion that may stimulate inquiry is Browning’s proposal that humanist concepts of health and self-actualization include ethical assumptions that have affinity with the tradition of ethical egoism or ethical individualism, clearly formulated by philosophers like David Norton.<sup>60</sup> In this tradition, life is primarily a matter of bringing forth or leading out (*eudamonia*) one’s unique set of potentialities (one’s *daimon*). This does not threaten social community, according to Norton, because all potentialities are unique and do not duplicate each other. Thus, this form of metaphysical complementarity seems very compatible with the paradigm monistic humanistic psychology.

## VIII. THE DEEP METAPHORS AND THE ETHICS OF NLP COACHING

The emphasis on self-realization is certainly present in the new psychological paradigm, but there are some differences. NLP emerged, at least according to the classic introduction by O’Conner and Seymor,<sup>61</sup> as a technique of “modeling” or learning from successful practitioners. The root-metaphor of mental programming, and the frequent use of technique in NLP literature, may indicate that this paradigm primarily intends to produce human technology orientated towards outcome. However, there are some basic filters in these techniques, referred to as behavioral frames that color how one learns. These are important because they are important for how NLP practitioners may be reframing certain aspects in the coaching situation. According to O’Conner and Seymor, there are five such frames, some of which we are already familiar:

1. One is orientated towards outcome rather than problems. The problem orientation is referred to as the “blame game,” asking the question: “Whose fault is it?”

<sup>57</sup> Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 77.

<sup>58</sup> Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 68-76.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-68.

<sup>61</sup> Joseph O’Conner and John Seymor, *Introducing NLP: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People* (London: HarperCollins, 1990).

2. The second is to ask “How?” rather than “Why?” questions.
3. The third frame is feedback rather than failure. According to O’Conner and Seymor, there is no such thing as failure, only results, and these can be used as helpful feedback.
4. The fourth theme is to consider possibilities rather than necessities, meaning that one should look at what one could do rather than on possible constrains.
5. Finally, NLP adopts an attitude of fascination and curiosity, rather than making assumptions.<sup>62</sup>

To the latter frame, one might ask if this in itself, like the other frames, actually entails certain assumptions about what the world is and is not. In terms of ethics, one may ask if frame one and three in practice, at least if they become fundamental for how people assess situations, strongly exclude other views of the world, which might speak about guilt and failure. I suggest that the influence of NLP may indicate that also expressive individualism is threatened by the outcome orientation of utilitarian individualism. In other words, the material power of market capitalism may also invade the realm of counseling, threatening to replace models of value-based authenticity with models of success.

On the other hand, it’s worth noticing that NLP may provide some moral resources that individualistic–humanist psychology associated with expressive individualism possibly fails to provide. The final frame of choosing an outcome is, according to O’Conner and Seymor, that of ecology.<sup>63</sup> Since “no one” exists in isolation, people should also reflect on the unintended consequences of action in relation to family, work, and society in general. Thus, there might be an imperative in this model that moves to a utilitarian or consequential model of ethics that incorporates systems thinking and open systems theory, and therefore forms a more comprehensive utilitarian ethical model.

It is also worth noticing that NLP is flexible in its orientation towards learning. For this reason NLP authorities like Robert Dilts (2003) argues that the role of the coach may be too narrow in relation to the PBC.<sup>64</sup> He suggests that one should be flexible and include other roles, such as that of the “awakener” in the coaching relationship. This means that one should “define the types of contexts and situations which call upon the capital ‘C’ coach to focus on a particular role—i.e., caretaker, guide, coach, teacher, mentor, sponsor, awakener—and to provide a specific tool set for each role.”<sup>65</sup>

## IX. CAN WE INTEGRATE AND LEARN THEOLOGY THROUGH DIALOGUE WITH THE COACHING PARADIGM: 7 KEY QUESTIONS

I suggest that one should approach the coaching movement with two of their own values: (1) the idea that most people operate out of positive intentions and (2) the idea that one should approach any phenomena with curiosity. I also suggest that one should ask for what one can learn from this movement before one asks the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Dilts, *From Coach to Awakener* (Capitola, CA: Meta, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> Robert Dilts, *From Coach to Awakener*, <http://nlpu.com/Coach2Awakener.htm>

classic critical theological questions. We should meet these seekers with an attitude of curiosity, and include self-critical questions, even when our purpose (as in this article) is not cross-paradigm dialogue.

I therefore begin by asking seven questions of curiosity—and then break the rules of coaching, when answering them, as well. I suggest that the following questions might be a useful starting point:

1. How can insights from coaching help us redesign our training relationship towards a partnership in learning (from and with God)?
2. In which way can coaching as metaphor help us understand the work of God's Spirit?
3. How may insights from coaching inspire us to explore and use Scripture in a new way?
4. In which way does coaching teach new ways to nurture spiritual processes in ourselves and others—including new ways of mediating the gifts of the Spirit?
5. How can we nurture healthy individuality and help people discover their uniqueness—in God?
6. Can the coaching paradigm teach us to see new possibilities in other people?
7. What can practical theology learn from solution-based coaching—in terms of building “the new man,” rather than refurbishing “the old man”?

How can insights from coaching help us redesign our training relationship towards a partnership in learning (from and with God)? I suggest that the coaching paradigm may help us to rethink our roles as pastors and theological trainers. Here Jesus' teaching on training seems to correspond to some key values in the coaching paradigm: What did He mean when He said that we should have only one teacher, Jesus, and that we should not call anyone else “father” or “teacher” (Mt 23:1-8)? I am not suggesting that this is the only way to do training—one might also model and teach by example, as Paul suggests when he encourages the Corinthian church to follow him as he is following Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Yet, the purpose of teaching and training is always the maturity and empowerment of others (Eph 4:11), not absolute model power or dependency (Rom 12:3). In this perspective, coaching may provide new insight and new practices, and expand our repertoire of educational genres. This may lead to a more fundamental question.

In which way can coaching as metaphor help us understand the work of God's Spirit? In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is described as a *paracletos*, meaning, “one which is called to one's side.” In the Gospel of John, He is portrayed as one who comes to exhort, encourage, and comfort (Jn 14:16)—or should we employ coaching terminology, and suggest that God's Spirit is standing for us? Since this is a key description of the Spirit in the Gospel, which most frequently speaks about the Spirit, and since Luke and Paul describe this function of encouragement as well (Acts 4:31; Rom 5:5), one might suggest that coaching, as way of “being in the world,” may correspond to fundamental aspects of God's. This metaphorical connection may at least be worth exploring, though critically in dialogue with Scripture.

How may insights from coaching inspire us to explore and use Scripture in a new way? We may for instance reread Jesus' use of parables and metaphors, asking how we can form stories that create reflection and teaching that “teases the mind into

imaginations,<sup>66</sup> rather than just providing finished answers with almost pornographic theological clarity. This practice may generate new questions about how spiritual and personal development is stimulated.

In which way does coaching teach new ways to nurture spiritual processes in ourselves and others—including new ways of mediating the gifts of the Spirit? I suggest that Pentecostals and Charismatics may reread John 4 and the story about the woman with five ex-husbands, and ask whether prophetic facilitation, at least in many instances, is a preferable alternative to prophetic confrontation. Even though the supposed value neutrality of coaching is a (unintended?) hoax, the coaching movement may show us how to interact with people in ways that make them develop themselves, or even repent, through participatory processes that take place with rather than against their inner conversation. Here Pentecostals and Charismatic Evangelicals may have the advance over non-Charismatic Evangelicals, since we may be more familiar with processes that move from prelinguistic experiences to intelligible knowledge,<sup>67</sup> without being controlled by an external word in the process, even though the final result may be tested and affirmed or refined by Scripture.

How can we nurture healthy individuality and help people to discover their uniqueness—in God? First, coaching meets an urgent need in the runaway world of late modernity that our teaching might ignore, namely the needs and questions about how one should be defining personal identities. As Evangelicals, we may ask if we have overlooked some Biblical resources that could provide answers to these questions. As Joseph Umidi suggests, the Bible (e.g., Ps 139) may also offer a creational theology of individuality.<sup>68</sup> Second, even though some of us may share Robert Bellah's concern about the lack of a robust conception of the common good in the thinking of the late-modern individualist,<sup>69</sup> we must nevertheless approach people where they are and both affirm and challenge people's needs to come to terms with their individuality—before we move on to call for a moral conversion.

Can the coaching paradigm teach us to see new possibilities in other people? Could we learn something about human potential that may help us to see new potential in the people we encounter? Although the anthropology of humanist psychology may have significant flaws, it is not nihilistic in the bad post-modern sense of nurturing apathy or ecstatic irony. It gives hope. Human life can be good and there are certain goals for which are worth striving. As Evangelicals, we might ask ourselves: Have we overlooked human potential, both before and after conversion? This is a pertinent question, since the Pentecostal–Evangelical tradition may lack a robust theology of creation, including a robust theology of individual potential. First, we may ask: Do we think and speak too simplistically negative about human nature? Should we develop forms of contagious trust that may encourage and transform people with whom we relate? Second, based on our theology, we also have the privilege of asking: What does faith in Jesus and the presences of the Spirit add to the potential of the new man in Christ?

What can practical theology learn from solution-based coaching—in terms of building “the new man,” rather than refurbishing “fallen human nature”? Even if the solution-based approach may have its obvious shortcomings, one may ask if it can

<sup>66</sup> John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1990).

<sup>67</sup> See 1 Cor 14:13-17.

<sup>68</sup> Notes from Seminar HLT at the Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology, November 2008.

<sup>69</sup> See Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 2008.

teach us, or at least inspire us, to reflect on what Paul means when he states that God is creating new men in Christ, rather repairing humanity in the “old Adam” (2 Cor 5; Rom 5-6).

#### X. SEVEN AREAS TO WATCH AS WE ARE INCREASINGLY INFLUENCED BY THE COACHING PARADIGM

However, as we become enthusiastic about the practice of coaching and its underlying paradigm, we must also ask critical questions and identify paradoxes that may help us to integrate insights from the paradigm without losing our theological integrity. For this reason, I break another rule of coaching and employ a problem-orientated approach, looking for important areas that we need to watch as we try to integrate coaching into our practical theology.

1. The question about coaching as a dominant paradigm: How do we avoid that coaching represses other theologically valid modes of training?
2. The issue of models of human nature: Can we encourage people without losing sight of a realistic view of man?
3. The issue of relational responsibility: What do we lose if the language of guilt and reconciliation is overwritten by a solution-based paradigm?
4. The issue of community and individuality: How do we avoid that our coaching may nurture unhealthy forms of individualism—and even repressive narcissism?
5. The issue of worldview: How do we coach people to be God-centred, rather than self-centred?
6. The issue of power: How do we identify and manage the hidden power-mechanisms of coaching?
7. The issue of money: How do we avoid that coaching accelerates the businessification of church?

One must ask whether coaching is enough to lead people into their calling as humans and Christians. This question emerges out of a more fundamental question: What is the responsibility of a pastor, elder, or ministry gift? (Eph 4:11-12). The push and pull from the late-modern social context may direct us to prefer coaching as an educational genre to the degree that it may become so dominant that it, in practice, represses other modes. Against this challenge we must keep asking ourselves: Are we as theological trainers true to our calling if we let go of our responsibility to lead, teach, and protect the Church of God in other ways, including teaching, mentoring, and even politically incorrect confrontational proclamation, if it is needed? Here Ogne, Roehl, and Umidi seem to provide a theologically valid answer. They suggest that coaching should be understood in the context of discipleship and moral transformation, and thus be reframed in light of Scripture.<sup>70</sup>

Yet, acknowledging this on the level of theory is not enough. We should also monitor our own practice and see if it is faithful to models of teaching provided by Christ, seeking to develop a balanced and varied approach to learning, which also transcends the idea of partnership in terms of making training a form of servant leadership that empowers others out of love for them and for Christ.

As theologians, we should also question the coaching paradigm’s view of human nature. Can we encourage people without losing sight of a realistic view of

<sup>70</sup> Ogne and Roehl, *Transformational Coaching*; Umidi, *Transformational Coaching*.

man? Some coaches suggest that obstacles exist only if you believe in them. Is this vision of individual potential realistic? This is, in my view, at best a partial truth, which in the long run may promise more than it delivers, and lead to disillusionment. Constructively then, we may ask how we can combine confident speech about a person's possibilities as a creature created in God's image and as a participant in new realities that come with Christ—with the realism that is drawn by the theodrama, in terms of humankind's fallen nature and limitations in an unjust world that is far from fully redeemed—and in the final instance, humankind's relational dependence upon God.

As theologians, we must therefore dare to ask questions concerning humankind's, at least in part, sinful nature: Does it exist, and in what way does it influence what we pursue, how we pursue it, and how we act in coaching conversations? Is the will to power, exposed extremely by the shocking story of Joseph Fritzl (the man who imprisoned and abused his own daughter), an aspect of human nature that to some degree influences what we want, how we pursue it, and how we coach others? This question might become even more difficult to handle if we try to integrate coaching and Charismatic spirituality, since the latter at times may have a tendency to neglect that the Kingdom of God is not only already, it is also not yet. Yet, both secular and Christian triumphalism may have dangerous consequences in terms of blinding us to our factual sins and the consequences they have for others, as life is lived and not only imagined or confessed.

For this reason, we must also ask: What do we lose, if we lose the language of guilt, atonement, and reconciliation, to a solution-based monopoly? I believe that it is advantageous to use solution-based language in our inner conversation. As I suggested above, I think the New Testament idea of the new creation that comes in Christ is the solution-based approach—and that this teaching, as well as the presence of the Paraclete, stimulates courageous faith and opportunity thinking. Yet, since God's kingdom is already but not yet, we must also ask: Why does the New Testament also teach us the art of confessing sins in relation to God and each other? (1 Jn 1:6-10). On the individual level, we must ask: May we deprive individuals of an important form of wholeness, when we deny people a critical assessment and insight of their past? Why did Jesus confront Peter with his three denials (Jn 21), rather than just referring to it as "in the past"? Might it help Peter to live with himself more authentically afterwards? May a one-sided solution-based approach in the long run lead to a dangerous form of self-denial (ref. 1. Jn), which makes it hard to create a true, and at the same integrating, self-narrative?

May we lose even more on the level of relations? If one should exclude every kind of "blame game" from our thinking, it would be preferable to approach the tyranny of Joseph Fritzl primarily in terms of a need for feedback and learning, and frame his main responsibility as identifying his "improvement potential" in relation to himself, rather than as a responsibility of confessing his sins to his eldest daughter and other children. In a relational perspective, the second is most important. The Fritzl case might be read as an odd or extreme example, but I suggest that it shows us that this switch of language is problematic also in less critical cases. And this turn to a pedagogical and individualist language that focuses on personal growth rather than on relational responsibility seems to take place in the Church, as well. My own research on late-modern conversion stories shows that the old atonement—plot,

entailing images of sin, atonement, and reconciliation to a large degree is being replaced by images of health and personal growth.<sup>71</sup> This leads us to the next issue.

The issue of community and individuality leads us to ask: How do we avoid that our coaching may nurture unhealthy forms of individualism? This question is obviously more relevant for individual coaching than team coaching. Does this kind of conversation inspire interdependency, or does it basically form instrumental individualists that evaluate relationships based on transactional (utilitarian) rationality or unrealistic (harmonic) expectations (expressive) of what feels right. I suggest that we should watch whether we start to drift away from communitarian relationships as we are coached towards realizing what I really want out of life. The “I” here needs to see itself in reference to a relational and communal context, where individuality is found not only in autonomy and difference from others, but also in a personal calling to serve others with one’s unique gifting. Moreover, the Biblical vision implies that people should be exhorted to commit to and then fight hard for the relationships that God has intended to be covenantal, such as the relationship to one’s spouse, one’s children, and one’s church. I am not suggesting that leaving such relationships is wrong in every case, but it should be a last option, based on ethical premises.

Yet, this must also be balanced. I maintain that individuals should develop reflective distance to both people and norms in a given community, which might empower them to live in forms of critical loyalty. Alternatively, one might speak about liminality. Inspired by Victor Turner, Don Browning suggests that at least some people may need a “liminal phase,” in which they “step out” of their tradition before they are reintegrated into their community.<sup>72</sup> Kierkegaard also provides a quite similar approach in *Either-Or* and in *Stages on Life’s Way*, where the protagonist moves from an unreflected bourgeois commitment to a more reflected commitment, through an uncommitted aesthetic phase.<sup>73</sup>

I suggest that liminality possibly may be an option for a short period of time, but not a necessity. In any case, we should ask: How then can the coach inspire transformational and covenantal relationships—and nurture commitment to common goods, and not only personal goals—and at the same time guard the client’s need for reflective space? At this point, Biblical stories and metaphors may be used as resources for reframing. It’s worth noticing, however, that reframing raises questions about model power.

From such a theological perspective one must also ask: Is the coaching paradigm fundamentally anthropocentric and individualistic? While we affirm individuality, we may also ask critically if the anthropocentric mode of development in the long run may nurture unhealthy forms of individualism—perhaps even repressive narcissism. One way to approach this problem is to ask whether coaching leads to a God-centred or self-centred life. From the perspective of a Pentecostal and Evangelical theology, one may ask: Is not Christianity fundamentally communitarian? If the Christian community is God’s dream and vision for the world,<sup>74</sup> becoming a Christian (and therefore also to become authentically human) then is to learn to

<sup>71</sup> Karl Inge Tangen, “Ecclesial Identification Beyond Transactional Individualism?” (Ph.D. Thesis MF, The Norwegian School of Theology, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Enten-eller: et livs-fragment* (København: C.A. Reitzel, 1843); Soren Kierkegaard, *Stadier paa Livets Vei* (København: Gyldendal, 1966).

<sup>74</sup> See Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*.

belong and depend on a community, in which one serve others within the frame of a vision that is not only our own initiative, but God's. In this sense, becoming a Christian is to die to oneself (as one's own lawgiver and creator), and to find a new source of freedom and creativity in relationship with Christ and His Church.<sup>75</sup> This is, in my view, a key challenge for Christian coaching.

This question is tricky, since it is possible to solve this problem by equating God with the God one finds in one's inner conversation. As I have suggested above, from a Pentecostal perspective, this is a partly valid suggestion, since we believe that there is a theologically valid Spirit mode in the inner conversation, in which one can interact with the Spirit of God.<sup>76</sup> However, joining the Evangelicals, we will still maintain that God is transcendent, and not only immanent in the "I" or the inner process (as in monistic forms of mysticism). This might imply that personal transformation is based on a relational (encounter) spirituality even though it also includes intrapersonal process, as well. How then, can both the coach and PBC learn to discern the work of the Spirit in and outside of the inner conversation? In the final instance, this becomes a question of how the inner conversation, as well as the coaching conversation, relates to Scripture. Is it possible to give relative authority to the inner conversation, and nevertheless make the PBC and the coach accountable to the God of the Scriptures at some point in the process? And finally, how can coaching be reconciled with the idea of dying to the self, with Christ—for the Kingdom and the Church—with rather than against inner reflexivity? This obviously raises questions about power.

How do we identify and manage the hidden power mechanisms of coaching? I suggest that power is an aspect of all forms of conversation, even those forms of dialogue that are designed for a partnership for learning. The practice of reframing, where the coach helps the client to see a situation in a new perspective by means of finding other words or descriptions for the problem (or challenge) is, according to Williams and Davis, a classic skill exercised by great teachers and mentors.<sup>77</sup> This practice can be found in the roots of the Western tradition. In Plato's description of Socrates' dialogues, Socrates can be interpreted as a midwife who delivers truth in the conversation. The problem with this approach is, as Stein Bråten points out, that the questioning mediates certain models of the world, thus giving the mentor or coach a privileged epistemological position in the relationship—or what Bråten calls *model power*—in the sense that the PBC is empowered towards the world on the coach's premises, and thus de-empowered in relation to him or her.<sup>78</sup>

I suggest that reframing can be, and in most cases is, a very useful practice. The reason is that we need frames or different forms of preunderstanding to understand the world. In my view, reframing, in most cases, may be considered a useful form of power, as long as both actors openly acknowledge it, so that it may be

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<sup>75</sup> See 2 Cor 5:17-21.

<sup>76</sup> See Rom 8:11-14, 9:1-3.

<sup>77</sup> Williams and Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach*, 108.

<sup>78</sup> Bråten's "model power" theorem suggests that the conjunction of the simulation version of theory of mind and the Conant-Ashby theorem (every good regulator of a system must be a model of that system) implies in certain conditions the following: if you regard the other as the source of the only valid model of a domain, D, and try to overcome your subordination in a closed interaction situation of decision-making on D, by adopting the other's model, you thereby enhance the other's control by giving him the power to simulate even your simulations. See Stein Bråten, *Dialogens vilkår i datasamfunnet* (Oslo: Universitetsforl, 1983).



challenged, in particular by the PBC. Reframing is a problem, however, if the idea of partnership and the experience of drawing one's own conclusion make the PBC blind to the factual model power of the coach. And it may become outright dangerous if the coach's perspectives over time are allowed to establish forms of model monopoly. Thus, coaching in general and reframing in particular, can become a way of seducing the PBC into a certain way of seeing the world.

At this point, we may also encounter a classic problem in humanistic education. As Steinar Kvale points out in his analysis of the way Socrates is questioning Agathon in the classic dialogue, *The Symposium*, not only does Socrates lead his client to a conclusion by way of powerful questioning, his form of questioning also presupposes a specific theory of knowledge—the belief that man is an immortal soul, and that learning is recognition of what the “soul already knows.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, instead of being a value-neutral deliverer of truth, this conversation mediates certain anthropology, with roots in Plato's philosophy (which might be compatible with philosophical monism). Thus, on a meta-level, the idea of value-neutrality is in itself a highly seductive form of power. In a theological perspective, seduction may be considered as dangerous as more outright raw oppressive power yielding.<sup>80</sup>

The issue of money raises the question: How do we avoid that coaching accelerates the businessification of church? To put this differently: How should we approach the possibility of new roles and new ways of earning money for pastors and educators? There are obviously some good opportunities here, in particular for church planters and tentmakers who need funding for their ministry because their church can't provide it. On the other hand, there are also obvious dangers when the pastor also becomes a businessman. When pastors become coaches, every event, including our children's birthday parties and our sermons, become potential marketing events. How do we manage double roles in a morally responsible way? How do we avoid choosing the easiest and richest clients over the seemingly hopeless ones (that we could leave to underpaid counselors)? If we don't handle this challenge properly, Habermas may become our prophet, since this development obviously may exemplify how the instrumental rationality of the market invades the ecclesial life world, as well as our own inner world.

## XI. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

This article has shown that coaching and the coaching movement is an interesting dialogue partner for practical theology, and that it offers both valuable insights and important questions to the practical theological discourse. I have also shown, however, that several critical questions need to be asked if we shall integrate these insights without losing our theological integrity. This calls for a continuous process of asking new questions and answering them from theological perspective.

I suggest that the following questions may sum up and dialectally integrate both the seven affirmative and seven critical questions addressed in this paper:

1. How can we inspire healthy individuality without nurturing unhealthy and sociologically naive forms of individualism? What questions do we ask?

<sup>79</sup> Steiner Kvale, (1996). *Inter Views*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996, 23.

<sup>80</sup> In the Biblical description of the theo-drama, evil repeatedly seems to seduce first (concealing its power) before it uses its power to oppress the believers more openly (e.g., Rv 13-14).

2. How do we nurture forms of relational spirituality that help people to discern the work of the God of Scripture in their life—and in their inner conversation—without drifting to monism?
3. How can we coach people to become God-centred—through a process of dying to themselves for the Kingdom—without quenching their inner voice and individuality?
4. How do we inspire faith and help people to be possibility thinkers who develop a faithful vision for life without losing a Biblical vision for life in this age?
5. How do we help people to develop authentically relational and ethical life strategies—and to avoid a mainly instrumentalist view of others (as resources)?
6. What are the main strategies that help us as coaches to be led primarily by our calling to serve others and the Church—and manage all the possibilities, challenges, and temptations associated with coaching, including the economic ones?
7. How can we learn to coach and stimulate people's inner conversations in ways that make them and us more acquainted with and dependent upon God and less dependent upon us?

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## THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL: A PIVOTAL AND INSTRUCTIVE PARADIGM

J. LYLE STORY

In this article, I argue for the centrality of the Jerusalem Council in the Book of Acts and the ways in which Luke provides direction for his community in resolving conflict in such a way that leads to the advance of the gospel (Acts 15:1-16:5). This is a critical moment in terms of the relationship between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. This narrative of conflict-resolution–advance serves as a case study for Luke’s readership in terms of various processes that help the community find the will of God in changing circumstances. Dynamics include the divine initiative, the inclusionary and saving activity of God, commitment to unity, shared stories of experience and precedent, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, decisions, compromise, and clear communication. He helps the early communities to relive the event and its nuances, to embrace and to adopt his point of view in the process of conflict resolution in an ever-changing landscape. Such elements in the conflict resolution process possess implications for leadership and groups in understanding and application of the text to twenty-first century contexts.

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How ought the Church understand its identity and how should the Church practice its identity when confronting conflicts? Luke provides a pivotal and instructive example in his story of the Jerusalem Council. The aim of this paper is to establish that Luke uses Acts 15:1-16:5 not only to legitimize the Gentile mission, but in being one of a series of case studies that demonstrates a process of conflict–resolution–advance of the Christian message, it reveals how the Church can resolve its conflicts, which will lead to an advance in terms of internal strength and numerical growth. This is especially true as the Christian message progresses into new geographical areas with new ethnic

groups with pressing issues and conflicts. The story of the Council is the lengthiest of several case studies involving conflict resolution. In this essay, I propose:

1. The pivotal role of the Jerusalem Council in the book of Acts
2. The various elements of conflict (threats)
3. The numerous dynamics that are part of the resolution
4. The ways in which the process advances the Christian message

The entire process of conflict–resolution–advance reflects a careful interplay of narrative, stories within the narrative, theology, and implied praxis for Luke's readership. Luke wishes that his readers both understand and embrace the process and its implications; the narrative offers a “lived theology” for Luke that continues the story of what Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1) through the witness of the Church. As such, the story becomes prescriptive for the early Church to follow as they encounter conflicts.

Other critical approaches have been taken to the Acts 15 narrative: text-criticism,<sup>1</sup> source criticism,<sup>2</sup> historical-criticism<sup>3</sup> and the relationship of Acts 15 to Galatians 2,<sup>4</sup> redaction criticism,<sup>5</sup> and rhetorical/linguistic criticism.<sup>6</sup> Often such approaches atomize and control the text with a specific agenda in mind. Such disciplines frequently deal with the archaeology of the text,<sup>7</sup> but do not offer a holistic approach to the text as it now stands.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparative analysis of the Western text with the Alexandrian text. Eldon Jay Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966); B. D. Ehrman, “Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” in *Hearing the New Testament*, ed. Joel Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 127; F. S. Spencer, “Acts and Modern Literary Approaches,” in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Settings*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 410.

<sup>2</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009); Clayton N. Jefford, “Tradition and Witness in Antioch: Acts 15 and Didache 6,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (1992): 409-419; Clayton N. Jefford, “An Ancient Witness to the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15?” *Eastern Great Lakes Bible Society* (1981): 204-213.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> David Trobisch, “The Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 and Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *Theological Exegesis* (1999), 331-338; Hal Taussig, “Jerusalem as Occasion for Conversation: The Intersection of Acts 15 and Galatians 2,” *Forum (New Series)* 4, vol. 1 (Spring 2001): 89-104; F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 298-302. For opposing views, see Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 40-41 and Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 269.

<sup>5</sup> Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Enyinwa Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise as a Conflict–Resolution Model: A Rhetoric–Communicative Analysis of Acts 15 in the Light of Modern Linguistics* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> My purpose is not to reconstruct the historical events but to probe into the transformative value of the story and its appropriation by various faith-communities as they seek to discover God’s will in the midst of conflicts.

## I. THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The narrative of the Jerusalem Council is pivotal in the Book of Acts, for it functions both to divide Acts into two panels (first panel = Acts 1:1-14:28; second panel = 16:6-31) as well as to serve as a hinge, joining both panels. Luke's story of the Council contains many elements: geography, biography, history, case studies, and theology that are inherent in the first panel, addressed in the Council, which then extend in the second panel of Acts.

### *Geography*

In Acts 15, Luke focuses upon Antioch and Jerusalem. The problem raised in Antioch (15:1-2) is discussed, resolved, and formalized in Jerusalem (15:2b-29); from Jerusalem, the emissaries of the letter return to Antioch to communicate the Jerusalem resolve in letter and person (15:30-35). Finally, some of the emissaries return in peace to Jerusalem (15:34). Had the issue not been resolved in Jerusalem, the danger and consequence of a divided Church (one in Jerusalem and another in Antioch) would have posed a real threat to the unity of the early Church. Implicitly, Jerusalem possesses the authority to resolve the question; for the Jews, Jerusalem was regarded as the center of the world.<sup>8</sup> Luke locates the previous ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch for a full year (11:25-26) and calls the readers' attention to the fact that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (11:26). Further, Luke also notes that at Antioch, the prophets and teachers were Spirit-directed to set Barnabas and Saul apart for a divinely-called work (13:1-3). It is vital for Luke that there is harmony between the two places.

The two cities belong to the broader geographical progression from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Luke highlights Jesus' promise (Acts 1:8) to the nascent community, which includes its witness in concentric circles emanating from Jerusalem (1:1-5:42) to Judea (6:1-8:1) to Samaria (8:1-40) and to the ends of the earth (9:1-28:31). What Jesus began to do and teach in the Gospel (1:1), He will continue to do and teach through the Spirit-empowered witness of the early Church in various geographical areas. The narrative of the Jerusalem Council (15:1-35) directly follows the beginning of the Gentile mission (9:32-11:18) and the mission from Antioch to Asia Minor (11:19-14:28); it is followed by Paul's missionary journeys in Macedonia and Achaia (15:36-18:17), Asia Minor (18:18-20:38), and Paul's arrest and imprisonment (21:1-28:31). The first campaign in Antioch and Asia Minor (11:19-14:28) precipitated the conflict on the terms of admission for the Gentiles (Acts 15). Luke writes a narrative

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<sup>8</sup> See Ez 5:5, 38:12; Is 2:1-3; Mi 4:1-2; Jub. 8:19; 1 En 26:1. Bauckham states, "It was entirely natural that the first Christian community, which saw itself as the nucleus of the renewed Israel under the rule of his Messiah and the leadership of its twelve phylarches, should have placed its headquarters in Jerusalem." Richard Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 422-423.

that depicts how the Christian campaign bursts through the narrow confines of Judaism, reaching out to include new persons at various locations in ever-widening circles.

### *Biography*

Luke's hinge (Acts 15) reveals three persons or groups involved in the Church's leadership who will shift in Luke's second panel. First, the initial portion of Acts narrates numerous stories surrounding Peter (58 references to Peter in 1:13-12:18).<sup>9</sup> There are two references to Peter or Simeon in Acts 15, but in the second panel of Acts, Peter is never mentioned; either Luke does not know of Peter's activity or consciously omits any further reference to him. In Luke's hinge, both Peter and Paul are involved in the deliberation; however, after this narrative, Paul takes precedence (113 references to Paul); initially Paul and Silas convey the message to Derbe and Lystra (16:1-5).

Second, there is a noteworthy development in terms of "apostles and elders." From 1:2-14:14, there are 23 references to apostle(s). Prior to the Jerusalem Council, Luke states that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church (14:23). The hinge brings together both apostles and elders (six references to apostles, five of which are paired with elders). Foakes-Jackson notes, "It is noteworthy that we hear nothing of the Twelve as the ruling body of the Church."<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the only reference to apostles is found in 16:4 where Luke mentions the decision by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. With respect to elders, there are two further references in the latter portion of Acts (20:17—Ephesian elders; 21:18—all the elders present in Jerusalem).<sup>11</sup> In Acts 20, *elders* (πρεσβυτέρους, 20:17) are also defined as *overseers* (ἐπίσκοποι, 20:28) with a pastoral role, "keep watch . . . over the flock" (ποιμνίον, 20:28, cf. 20:29) with the complementary infinitive of purpose, "to shepherd" (ποιμαίνειν) the Church of God (20:28).

Third, there is a transition in Acts between the respective role of James and that of Paul. Luke notes that the brothers<sup>12</sup> of Jesus (including James) were waiting in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit (1:14). In 12:17, Peter sends a message to James and the brothers—"evidently a person of such consequence that he needs no description."<sup>13</sup> In Acts 15:13, James emerges as "first among equals" (*primus inter pares*), as a leader and chief spokesman for the Council. Paul holds only a minor role in the deliberations while James' position is major. In 21:18, James and the elders greet Paul and company and warmly receive them and their report about successful Gentile ministry. However, they also raise the caveat by Christian Jews about Paul's relaxation

<sup>9</sup> See Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 233-238, for analysis of Peter's role within the book of Acts and Gal 2.

<sup>10</sup> F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 137.

<sup>11</sup> These elders are to be contrasted with the unbelieving Jewish elders, used in pejorative contexts, often in tandem with chief priests (Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15).

<sup>12</sup> James is noted as the brother of the Lord in Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55.

<sup>13</sup> C. K. Barrett, *Luke* (ICC) vol. II (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 722. In Gal 1:19, James is noted as the "brother of the Lord" joined with the "pillars" (στυλοὶ in conjunction with Cephas and John) and "those who were reputable" (οἱ δοκοῦντες) in Gal 2:2, 6—twice, 9.

of Jewish customs. They propose some measures of “damage-control” (purification, expenses, shaved heads of four men, 21: 23-24) to which Paul submits (21:26). Even though Paul yields to the social pressure of James and the elders, it makes no difference, for the Jews’ behavior towards Paul leads to his arrest (21:33-36). Paul’s role is major in his final campaign while that of James is lesser when Paul arrives in Jerusalem; even though Paul submits to James’ proposal, it fizzles. Instead of a peaceful resolution suggested by James, the narrative tells of a riotous mob (21:27-32) leading to Paul’s arrest and subsequent trial scenes.

### *Case Studies*

Luke’s hinge (Acts 15:1-6:5) belongs to a coherent series of case studies in resolving conflicts that follows a pattern of: (1) conflict, (2) resolution, and (3) advance of the Christian message. Joseph Tyson provides a similar outline of: (1) peace, (2) threat, (3) resolution, and (4) restoration.<sup>14</sup> My term *advance* is an extension of a resolution that Tyson calls *restoration*. Often, resolution is seen as the final goal of a conflict story; however Luke’s stories narrate that the process of conflict–resolution also leads to an advance through the strengthening of the Church and the numerical growth of believers. For example, the conflict related to Ananias and Sapphira’s hypocrisy is resolved through the death of both (5:1-10) and advances with respect to religious dread (5:11, 13), praise of the apostles (5:13), the continuation of signs and wonders among the people (5:12), and the numerical addition of believers (5:14). Luke’s adverb, “now more than ever” (μᾶλλον, v.14), points to the paradoxical multiplication of believers and the numbers of people who are healed and exorcised (5:15-17) to the extent that people believed that even Peter’s shadow might heal them (5:15).

Similarly, the divisive conflict surrounding the prejudice against Hellenistic widows is resolved by a communal *ad hoc* decision to appoint seven deacons to fairly administer the funds (6:1-6). In turn, this decision and its implementation leads to the advance of the Christian message since the apostles are free to concentrate their undivided attention to the “Word of God” (6:2). Luke notes the advance, “so the word of God spread,” that is linked with a rapid numerical growth of disciples in Jerusalem and the large number of priests that become obedient to the faith (6:7). Further, Steven, one of the appointed deacons (6:15), advances the Christian message through his person (“a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,” 6:3), his miraculous activity (God’s grace and power, wonders and miraculous signs,” 6:8) and through his faithful and fearless witness to the hell-bent religious authorities (6:13-7:53).<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, a conflict arises about Paul’s credibility as a Christian witness (9:19b-21, 26). To resolve the issue, Barnabas comes to Paul’s defense (9:27). Once Paul’s

<sup>14</sup> Joseph B. Tyson, “Themes at the Crossroads: Acts 15 in its Lukan Setting,” *Forum (New Series)* 4, vol. 1 (Spring 2008), 110.

<sup>15</sup> Luke also informs the readers that the result of the persecution expanded the Christian witness, “those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4) and were accompanied by miraculous signs and exorcisms (Acts 8:5-8).

credibility is resolved in Jerusalem, Luke notes the advance through Paul's early ministry of a bold witness, debate, peace, strengthening, and encouragement, resulting in the growth of the Church in numbers (9:31). The problem related to Peter's table-fellowship with uncircumcised men (11:1-2) is resolved through the joint visions of both Peter and Cornelius (11:4-11), which is accepted by the apostles and brothers in Jerusalem (11:1, 18) when they state "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). Luke records the advance, "The Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (11:21). As is proposed in this paper, the same structure of conflict–resolution–advance of the Cornelius-episode is followed in 15:1-16:5.

In 18:24-28, Luke raises the problem of Apollos' inadequacy that "he knew only the baptism of John" (18:25). Priscilla and Aquila resolve the issue when they explain to him the way of God more adequately" (18:26). Subsequently, Apollos' witness advances the Christian message: "He was a great help to those who by grace had believed" and was vigorous in his proclamation and debate (18:27-28).

### *Theology*

Luke's hinge highlights the legitimacy of Gentile-inclusion; there are seven positive references to the Gentiles (Acts 15:3, 7, 12, 14, 17, 19, 23). Luke's first panel prepares the reader for the theological and practical issue raised in the Jerusalem Council. Luke narrates the story of receptive Gentiles on the Day of Pentecost (2:5-12), the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40), Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (9:15), and most importantly for Acts 15, the detailed Cornelius story (10:1-11:18). Acts 11:19-30 includes a substantial witness among the Gentiles at Antioch and is followed by Barnabas and Paul's missionary tour in which Gentiles receive the Christian message (13:1-14:28), well expressed by the statement, "now we turn to the Gentiles" (13:46). Charles Talbert observes that "the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles is followed by an episode of Jerusalem approval."<sup>16</sup> The issue of Peter's table-fellowship with Cornelius and its significance is thoroughly narrated; the various pericopes serve as introductory material for the issue of Gentile-inclusion, so important for Acts 15. In the process of debate, both Peter and James look to the precedent established through Peter. It is also important that during the Council there are two versions of the Jerusalem compromise (15:20, 29), reference to the decrees (δόγματα, 16:4) and one version in Luke's "second-half" (21:25), again at Jerusalem. There are five references to (un)circumcision in Luke's first panel (two of these refer to Abraham's covenant—Acts 7:8), four in 15:1-16:5, and one reference in Luke's second panel (21:21). Luke also refers to the Gentile ministry sixteen times in his second panel no longer as a question or theological issue but as a settled matter; the conclusion of Acts expresses the certainty that "God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen" (28:28).

<sup>16</sup> Acts 11:18, 22-24; 15:1-29; 18:22; 21:17-25. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 136.



The entire process of conflict–resolution–advance of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is pivotal for Luke in terms of geography, biography, history, and theology—specifically related to Gentile inclusion. Given the facts that Acts 15:1-16:5 is a detailed story that coheres with other similar case studies, that the Jerusalem Council occurs midway in the book of Acts, that chapters 10:1-14:28 are introductory to Acts 15, that the issue of Gentile-inclusion is resolved, that Acts 15 is pivotal in the book of Acts, that a ministry to the Gentiles has already been affirmed (13:47) with signs and wonders (14:3), and that the door of faith to the Gentiles has been opened (14:27)—all combine together to affirm that Luke wants his readership to look at both the pivotal decision of the Council and the instructive process by which a landmark decision was reached. Referring to the Apostolic Council, Hans Conzelmann states, “It is the great turning point, the transition from the primitive church to the ‘contemporary’ church.”<sup>17</sup> The introductory chapters build with intensity to the summit meeting in Acts 15; a problem has been brewing, which deserves careful attention. As Dunn notes, “Luke had already prepared the ground to deal with this potential crisis.”<sup>18</sup> Luke is concerned with the advance and victory of the Christian message in spite of the problems (internal and external) encountered by the Christian community. In the Acts 15 narrative, the issue of Gentile-inclusion is of such a magnitude that the Antiochene Church sends Paul, Barnabas, and others to Jerusalem to resolve the issue (15:2). And in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders felt that the problem was weighty enough to warrant looking into the issue, resolving, and communicating a decision.

## II. THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE CONFLICT (THREATS)

### *Terms of Admission for Gentile Salvation–Circumcision*

Conflict begins in Antioch by some men who came from Judea and taught in Antioch that circumcision of the Gentiles is the necessary requisite for salvation: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved” (15:1). The “practice of Moses” (τὸ ἔθελ τῶ Μωϋσέως) refers to “the whole of the cultic law attributed to Moses,”<sup>19</sup> and is extensively used by Luke.<sup>20</sup> In 15:5, some Christian Pharisees in Jerusalem made the requisite even more pointed, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses.”<sup>21</sup> The implicit question is also present: Can Gentile Christians live among Jews without becoming proselytes? Later in the narrative, the Jerusalem compromise reveals the related issue of table-fellowship

<sup>17</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115. Minimized by Pervo, *Acts*, 368.

<sup>18</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), 195.

<sup>19</sup> Otto Preisker, “ἔθος,” *TDNT* 2, 373.

<sup>20</sup> Lk 1:9, 2:42, 22:39; Acts 6:14, 15:1, 16:21, 21:21, 25:16, 26:3, 28:17.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Segal argues for a multiplicity of views within Judaism and more specifically Jewish Pharisaism with respect to the Gentile’s place in God’s scheme of things. “There is not a single answer . . . or policy on the status of the Gentiles.” Alan Segal, “Acts 15 as Jewish and Christian History,” *Forum (New Series)* 4, vol. 1 (Spring 2001), 64.

(15:20, 29) between Jews and Gentiles, expressed as Gentile concessions to Jewish sensibilities. The necessity of Gentile circumcision and keeping of the Mosaic Law are the presenting problems, noted early in the discussion, while the issue of table-fellowship is taken up in the decision and its formal expression. The problems concern personal and group identity and praxis.

Although not explicitly stated, the Jewish “hard-liners” possess a great deal of ammunition for their cause. The Torah expresses a categorical commitment to the practice of circumcision as a sign of covenant-relationship through Abraham’s example (Gn 17:9-14). Males who refused the sign were regarded as “cut off from the people of God” be they Jewish males, their immediate offspring, generations to come, aliens (Ex 12:44, 48) or purchased slaves; the physical sign was “everlasting” (17:13) that affected Jewish identity and praxis.<sup>22</sup> The demand is categorical with no negotiating room. Support for circumcision could also be also garnered from the history of the Jews during the Maccabean revolt; the Syrians were committed to destroy Israel’s unique traditions, including the sign of circumcision (1 Macc 1:48, 60-61). During a prolonged military conflict, Mattathias and company “circumcised by force the children that were not circumcised” (1 Macc 2:46). Since the Syrians regarded circumcision as a capital offence, many loyal Jews lost their lives during the Syrian occupation. Further, from the witness of the four gospels, Jesus was circumcised (Lk 2:21) and made no comment in his ministry about the abrogation of circumcision.

The main conflict lies in the denial of salvation for Gentile believers who have not been circumcised and have not kept the Jewish Law and are thereby excluded from table-fellowship. Theological and practical issues are linked. The Jewish Christian group sees salvation in terms of exclusion—not inclusion. In Acts, the verb *to save* (σώζειν) is used fourteen times and the noun *salvation* (σωτηρία; σωτήριον) occurs seven times,<sup>23</sup> and is augmented by numerous other terms of the salvific word-family. The salvific terms, so central for Luke, are comprehensive and relate to numerous benefits for the people of God. I suggest that salvation in the book of Acts involves a personal trust in the whole of the past Jesus-event (particularly the suffering, death, and vindicating resurrection of Jesus),<sup>24</sup> a present and personal experience of the risen Jesus and

<sup>22</sup> See also Ex 4:24-26; Jo 5:2-9; Lv 12:3; Acts 7:8. Texts such as Ex 12:48 provide provision for Gentiles becoming native Jews. Josephus’ Izates narrative (Ant. 20.34-38) is an interesting story that “depicts Izates’ progression from Gentile, to God-fearer, who kept all Jewish practices, except circumcision, to Jew—the status . . . of the approving narrator, allowed him only after circumcision.” Daniel R. Schwartz, *God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law: On Acts 15 and Josephus’ Adiabene Narrative, Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion* (Tubingen: J C B Mohr, 1996), 26.

<sup>23</sup> The book of Luke also contains a preponderance of the save word-family. While the OT emphasized that salvation means a rescue or victory from one’s enemies, Luke highlights the metaphorical use of *salvation* that is eschatological in nature.

<sup>24</sup> Thus, many of the speeches in the book of Acts narrate the story of the Jesus-event (Acts 2:22-36, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 10:34-43) with an aim of eliciting a trust–response from the listeners (e.g., “be saved from this corrupt generation,” 2:40). In 4:12, Peter makes it clear that salvation is only to be possessed in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified but resurrected (= “the name”). Jesus is also the savior to whom God has exalted to his right hand (5:31).

attendant benefits, mediated through the Holy Spirit<sup>25</sup> and a hope in a future consummation of salvation.<sup>26</sup> It is clear that Luke orients the community to the universal offer of salvation for all, irrespective of racial, ethnic, or religious limitations (2:21; 3:11-12; 4:11-12). Thus, Luke uses exclusionary conflict stories to emphasize the universal appeal of salvation with all of its attendant benefits (10:1-11:18; 15:1-35).

Earlier, Peter's introductory report of the Gentile Cornelius was met with praise by the apostles and brothers, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). However, the hardliners were either ignorant of the event or detracted from its significance, since the Cornelius story took place years prior to the Council. Perhaps the argument was made that this was an anomaly, an ad hoc situation, a personal story, or an exception to the rule. Dunn notes, "Its strength had yet to be tested."<sup>27</sup> But what about Gentile conversion *en masse*? Previous narratives in Acts 13-14 reveal Paul's commitment to the Gentile ministry in Gentile areas and their joyous response:

- "the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to *you (Gentiles)* . . . *everyone* who believes" (13:38-39)
- "we now turn *to the Gentiles*" (13:46)
- "I have made you a light *for the Gentiles*, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (13:47 from Is 49:6)
- "When *the Gentiles* heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (13:48)
- "a great number of Jews and *Gentiles* believed" (14:1)
- "how he (God) had opened the door of faith *to the Gentiles*" (14:27)

Thus, there is a cause-effect relationship between the "door of faith opened to the Gentiles" and the exclusionary attitudes of the Jewish hardliners in 15:1, 5.

<sup>25</sup> The presence of salvation includes the response of repentance, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-40, 11:14-15), physical healing (Acts 4:9), personal joy and the joy of seeing others experiencing salvation (5:41, 8:39, 11:23, 13:48, 15:31), eternal life (13:48). See Graham H. Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 46-47. Salvation is contingent upon a trust-response (16:31).

<sup>26</sup> Texts such as Acts 2:20 speak of a future salvation, "And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." There is a transposition from Yahweh to Jesus in the quote from Joel 2:32 to Acts 2:20. See also Acts 5:31; 13:23, 26. Many of the occurrences of the save word-family can embrace more than one aspect of salvation. While other similar texts may not explicitly use the save word-family, nonetheless they orient the community to the future with confident expectation: "repent turn to God, sins wiped out, times of refreshment may come from the Lord and that he may send the Christ . . . until the time comes for God to restore everything" (Acts 3:19-21).

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 198.

### *Gentile Adherence to the Law*

The Christian Pharisees in Jerusalem not only required circumcision but adherence to the Law as a corollary (15:5). As Barrett notes, “There would be no point in being circumcised and then neglecting to keep the Law.”<sup>28</sup> The Law (νόμος) here signifies “the Law which Moses received from God.”<sup>29</sup> From the Jewish perspective, circumcision and obedience go hand in glove; relaxation from circumcision is tantamount to rejection of Torah or “the Jewish way of life.”<sup>30</sup> Christian Pharisees could hardly imagine that their trust in Jesus would also mean a suspension from obedience to the Law. Up until this point, commitment to the Law is presupposed in Luke’s earlier narratives. From the practical point of view, the Jewish mission would have failed if there was a clear abandonment of the Jewish way of life. Now, in a situation of conflict, “the community and its Head would be condemned from the very outset in their eyes. . . . The practical consequences were naturally difficult in mixed congregations.”<sup>31</sup>

### *Table-Fellowship*

Although table-fellowship was not part of the presenting problem, the compromise, in its three forms (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25), reveals that table-fellowship between Christian Gentiles and Christian Jews was a practical issue. Just as Moses was linked with the practice of circumcision (v. 1) and the Law (v. 5), so Moses is drawn in with the issue of table-fellowship; “for Moses is being read” (v. 30) as support for the compromise (v. 29). In the introductory story of Cornelius, the initial critique from the apostles and brothers links the issue of circumcision and table-fellowship, “the *circumcised* believers criticized him and said, ‘You went into the house of *uncircumcised* men and *ate with them*’ (11:2; emphasis added).

### *Expressions of Conflict*

Luke expresses the conflict through numerous nouns and verbs, such as *dissension* (στάσις)<sup>32</sup> and *sharp debate* (ζητήσις<sup>33</sup> οὐκ ὀλιγή—litotes 15:2; see 14:27) in Antioch, and linked to “this controversial matter” (ζήτημα) in Jerusalem (15:3) and “this matter/question” (ὁ λόγος οὗτος, 15:6) and “much dispute” (πολλή ζητήσις, 15:7). Together, the expressions reveal the turmoil caused by the hardliners. Through Peter’s speech, Luke expresses the demand as a “yoke (ζυγός) that we neither we nor our fathers have been able to obey” (15:10), which is also expressed in v. 28 as a “burden”

<sup>28</sup> Barrett, *Luke*, 698.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich (hereinafter BDAG), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 542.

<sup>30</sup> A favorite expression of Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 200.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Gutbrod, “νόμος,” *TDNT IV*, 1066-67.

<sup>32</sup> “turmoil” (Acts 19:40; 23:7,10; 24:5).

<sup>33</sup> or “sharp dispute” (18:15, 23:29, 25:9, 26:3).

(βάρος).<sup>34</sup> Luke also indicts the Jewish Christians for “challenging God” (“why are you challenging God?” τί πειράζετε τὸν θεόν [15:10]).<sup>35</sup> In 15:19, Luke (through James’ speech) understands that the exclusionary demand is a form of “harassment.”<sup>36</sup> Luke uses two other verbs, which express the result of the hardliners’ demands: “they disturbed” (ἐτάραξαν) you and were “troubling (ἀνασκευάζοντες) your minds by what they said” (v. 24). Further, the narrative also repeats the verb, “to become silent” (σιγᾶν [15:12-13]), which contrasts with the previous heated discussion. From the way that Luke constructs the narrative, the hardliners’ argument is not expressed other than the minimal references in 15:1, 5. Given the fact that Luke already knows the way in which the conflict was resolved, it is only natural that specific support from the hardliners receives only minimal attention. Obviously, there is much by way of argument and counter-argument that is unrecorded.

### *Threat to the Unity of the Christian Community and Its Leaders*

Luke provides numerous summaries in the book of Acts, which are marked by an idyllic picture of unity (e.g., 2:42-47, 4:32-35, 5:12-14, 16:5). Tyson remarks, “For Luke, authentic Christianity is marked by peace and concord among the leaders and members.”<sup>37</sup> Such unity is well expressed in 14:26-28. At the same time, Luke is realistic; this idyllic picture of the community’s life is often threatened. In terms of unity, the conflict also threatens to separate the apostolic leaders as well the two centers (Jerusalem and Antioch). How will Barnabas and Paul’s more liberal policy fare with the more conservative apostles in Jerusalem? And will there be division between the mother church in Jerusalem and the daughter church in Antioch to the extent that there will be two headquarters with two separate missions, one for the Jewish Christians and one for the Gentile Christians? The threat and danger are real. Can both Christian groups be Christians *together*? And if so, what are the important considerations?

### III. THE DYNAMICS THAT ARE PART OF THE RESOLUTION

The dynamics for successful decision making are both multiple, interdependent, and instructive for Luke’s readership. They include:

<sup>34</sup> It appears that Luke has simplified the Jewish understanding of the Law as a “delight, privilege and joy” (e.g., Ps 119). See Barrett, *Luke*, 719, and Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 429, which would characterize Luke’s time and environment. The pejorative sense of “yoke” and “burden” are clearly expressed in Mt 11:28-30, 23:4.

<sup>35</sup> For the use of *peira/zein* as “to challenge” see Ex 17:2, Mt 4:7, and Lk 4:12 from Dt 6:16.

<sup>36</sup> *παρενοχλεῖ* “cause trouble, difficulty, annoy,” BDAG, 625. Aptly translated by Johnson as “harass.” Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992), 226.

<sup>37</sup> Tyson, “Themes at the Crossroads,” 109.

### *Sensitivity to the Divine Initiative*

Luke consistently affirms *the divine initiative* in Gentile-inclusion<sup>38</sup> noted through verbal forms:

- “everything God had done through them” (ὅσα ὁ θεὸς ἐποίησεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ [15:4])
- “God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe” (ἐν ὑμῖν ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ στόματος μου ἀκούσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου καὶ πιστεῦσαι [15:7])
- “God, who knows the heart witnessed (guaranteed) to them” (ὁ καρδιογνώστης θεὸς ἐμαρτύρησεν αὐτοῖς [15:8])
- “[God] by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us” (δοῦς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καθὼς ἡμῖν [15:8])
- “He made no distinction between us and them”<sup>39</sup> (οὐθὲν διέκρινεν μετὰ ἡμῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν [15:9])
- “[God] by cleansing their hearts by faith” (τῇ πίστει καθάρισας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν [15:9])
- “the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them” (ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἐν ἔθνεσιν δι’ αὐτῶν [15:12])
- “God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for his name” (ὁ θεὸς ἐπεσκέψατο λαβεῖν<sup>40</sup> ἐξ ἐθνῶν λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ [15:14])
- The quote from Amos uses three verbs in four expressions in the first person singular, where God is the speaker: “I will return” (ἀναστρέψω); “I will rebuild” (ἀνοικοδομήσω) twice; “I will restore” (ἀνορθώσω [15:16]). Further, the last line also affirms the divine initiative, “says the Lord who does these things” (λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα [15:17])

Thus, Luke provides a total of fifteen expressions that affirm the divine initiative and activity in Gentile-inclusion. Luke intends that his readers sense that human figures, engaged in resolving the conflict, are acknowledging God’s prior initiative and action. They are in fact “catching up” with God’s purposeful activity and ought to raise the question, “Where is God already at work in our community?”

<sup>38</sup> God’s purposeful activity is also intimated in Acts 13:47 (Is 49:6), “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>39</sup> The verb with its negative, “he made no distinction” (οὐθὲν διέκρινεν) expresses the divine determination of the divine/human story of the former vision (Acts 10:9-16, 20; 11:2-17). Through the visionary-lesson, Peter interprets God’s decision.

<sup>40</sup> An infinitive of purpose, again reinforcing the divine initiative and action.

### *Discernment of Saving-Activity of God*

Whereas the hardliners argued for an exclusive salvation (v. 1), Luke argues for an inclusive salvation, “No! We believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved,<sup>41</sup> just as they (Gentiles) are” (v. 11). The reversal of language is both surprising and revealing; it is a new paradigm that the Gentile’s salvific experience becomes the gauge by which Jewish Christians are measured. Johnson notes, “God uses the salvation of the Gentiles to reveal to Jewish believers the true ground of their own salvation.”<sup>42</sup>

While Luke summons his readership to reflect divine-inclusion, he is also committed to the essentials (e.g., trust in the grace of the Lord Jesus [15:9, 11], the gift of the Holy Spirit [15:8], turn to God [15:19], and salvation [15:11]). However, there is a freedom from a binding “nonessential” (i.e., circumcision). Due to Luke’s irenic tendencies and the burgeoning Gentile mission (14:1-28:31), he wishes that his readership adopt an open stance, emphatically expressed in the closing verses, “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen” (28:28). Luke does not advocate a “replacement theology,” wherein Christianity replaces Judaism or that the Church is a “completed Judaism.” Instead, the unfolding mission couples Jewish restoration with the Gentiles, called by God’s name—but not converts to Judaism (vss. 16-19); the divine initiative includes both groups. Thus, the community should not make it difficult for Gentiles, who turn to God; in no way should Gentiles be required to be circumcised (v. 28).

Luke’s book of Acts reveals his fundamental commitment to the mission of offering salvation to all. To those who are preoccupied with the immediate restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (1:6), they are called to the world-wide missionary task, “you shall be my witnesses” (1:8), subsequent to their empowerment by the Holy Spirit. Pentecost assures the nascent community of the Spirit’s manifest presence and power. To those who might be discouraged that the Parousia would ever occur, they are promised that the Lord Jesus would return in the same fashion as they saw Him go into heaven (1:11). In between Pentecost and the Parousia (or “the times of regeneration” in 3:20), the Church is Spirit-empowered for responsible and faithful witness. Jesus would “continue to do and to teach” (1:1) through the witness of the ever-expanding Church.<sup>43</sup> Further, it is significant that Luke concludes his book in an open-ended fashion, crowned by God’s salvation, the Kingdom of God, and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ (28:28-30). Graham Twelftree notes that Luke “expects readers to take up in their lives what has become Paul’s story. Though Paul dies, he lives in their ministry; the end of his mission

<sup>41</sup> The aorist infinitive “to be saved” (σωθηῖναι) may be rendered “we shall be saved” as a statement of purpose. Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Luke’s summaries (2:42-47, 4:32-37, 5:12-16, 6:7, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20) often stress the numerical growth of added disciples (e.g., 3,000 in 2:41; “more and more men and women believed” in 5:14; “grew and multiplied” in 12:24). See Twelftree, *People of the Spirit*, 178.

is the beginning of theirs—to the ends of the earth (1:8).<sup>44</sup> Through people, the descriptive narrative of Jesus' saving-activity becomes the prescriptive “marching-order” for the Church of Luke's day. God's saving activity for all is all-inclusive. The witness of Jesus is to be constantly on the move, never satisfied with the status quo of a past era, geographical place, or an exclusionary group. Good things happen when the Church is scattered even as a result of persecution (8:1—Samaria).<sup>45</sup>

### *Clarion Call to Unity*

Unity is revealed through the numerous people involved in the deliberation who come to a common consensus:

- Apostles and elders (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23)
- Apostles (15:33)
- Church (15:3, 4, 22)
- Whole body of members (πληθός, <sup>46</sup> 15:12, 30)
- Brothers (15:1, 3, 7, 13, 22, 23 twice, 32, 33)
- Men (15: 7, 13, “leading men” in 22 twice, 25)
- Certain ones (15:1, 2, 5, 24)
- Key individuals by name (Paul and Barnabas—15:2 twice, 12, 22, 25, 35), Peter/Simeon (15:7, 14), James (15:13)
- Prophets (Judas and Silas, 15:32)
- Divine persons (God—15: 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19; Lord Jesus—15:11, 26; Holy Spirit—15:8, 28)

The numerous “stake-holders” (both human and divine) affirm a communal search for the will of God in this particular conflict; the forum demonstrates respect for people holding different values and opportunity is given for personal expression from all parties.<sup>47</sup> It implies a shared willingness to find common ground. The engagement and agreement by the Council and all persons are critical. The process uses the leadership structures that were somewhat formalized by this time, specifically with the repeated mention of the apostles and elders and an apostolic leader (James). To be sure, within this group, certain individuals “carry more weight,” but this does not negate the communal participation and approval of the decision. Although James' argument and decision are climactic, the entire church is engaged in the decision and its implementation (15:22).

For Luke, unity is essential for communal life and witness and is well expressed by one of Luke's favorite terms, “of one accord” (ὁμοθυμαδόν, v. 25). The term is found

<sup>44</sup> Twelftree, *People of the Spirit*, 178.

<sup>45</sup> A successful mission in Samaria (8:4-25) comes as a result of scattering, noted twice (8:1, 4).

<sup>46</sup> A technical term of religious communities . . . fellowship, community, church. BDAG, 668.

<sup>47</sup> However, there are two pejorative statements: (1) Peter's rebuke of the hardliners, “Why do you challenge God?” in v. 10, 2 and the disavowal of the hardliners by James, “some went out from us without our authorization” in v. 24.



almost exclusively in Acts<sup>48</sup> and is frequently found in Luke's summaries (Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12).<sup>49</sup> Another related Lukan expression (not found in Acts 15) is "to be\come together" ("at the same place," ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ),<sup>50</sup> which also is found in Luke's summaries (Acts 1:15; 2:44, 47; 4:26). The terms reflect Luke's idyllic and idealized portrait of the early Christian communities. Tyson links these expressions with the "internal harmony of the community."<sup>51</sup> In Acts 15, the expression "of one accord" means that the decision and its implementation express the idea of harmony, peace, wholeness, and agreement by all the parties concerned in the conflict. No word of dissension is heard at the time of the decision or the letter's composition. Delegates from the Jerusalem Council are sent to Antioch and then return to Jerusalem; this course of action highlights the continuing positive relationship between the mother-church in Jerusalem and the daughter-church in Antioch. Further, accord is well expressed by the three-fold use of the verb, "to think, seem, consider" (δοκέω) with a following infinitive. BDAG translate the impersonal use of the verb by "it seemed best to."<sup>52</sup>

- v. 22: "it seemed best (ἐδοξε) to the apostles and elders . . . to send (πέμψαι)."
- v. 25: "it seemed best (ἐδοξε) to us . . . to send (πέμψαι)."
- v. 28: "it seemed best (ἐδοξε) to the Holy Spirit and to us . . . not to lay upon (μὴ ἐπιτίθεσθαι)."

This is not authoritarian language, but reasoned communication that is communal in nature, involving the whole church, its leadership, and the Holy Spirit. The decision does not read "as a power play by one faction dictating its will to the rest."<sup>53</sup> It is also interesting that there are only two imperative verbs in the entire story ("listen to me" [ἀκούσατε μου], v.13; "farewell" [ἔρρωσθε]); therefore, the decision is set within the context of politeness, respect, and fairness.

### *The Role of the "Story"*

Shared experiences play an important role in resolving the conflict. The shared stories are not incidental or accidental but are vital for Luke's purpose. Stories reveal a "lived theology." In the broader Lukan context, the story of Jesus (Luke) is incomplete without the various stories of individuals, who advance the Christian message (Acts).

Barnabas and Paul's story is initially introduced in Acts 14:27-28, as a precursor for the Jerusalem Council. The text states that the pair arrived in Antioch and stayed there a long time. There are four stories told using identical or similar language:

<sup>48</sup> Rom 15:6 is the only other occurrence of the term in the NT.

<sup>49</sup> Other uses of ὁμοθυμαδόν in Acts are in contexts of a united and aggressive front against Christians (e.g., 7:57).

<sup>50</sup> Literally, "at one place," BDAG, 288.

<sup>51</sup> Tyson, "Themes at the Crossroads," 109.

<sup>52</sup> BDAG, 202. Admittedly the verb does not contain, "good" or "best," but the context suggests the best approach.

<sup>53</sup> Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 208.

- In Antioch, upon their arrival, Luke states that they narrated their story to the “gathered church” and “were rehearsing all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (ἀνήγγελλον ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν καὶ ὅτι ἤνοιξεν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν θύραν πίστewς [14:27])
- In Phoenicia and Samaria, the pair are “describing the conversion of the Gentiles (ἐδιηγούμενοι τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν)”; the report being met with great joy (15:3)
- In Jerusalem, “they rehearsed everything God had done through them” (ἀνήγγειλαν τε ὅσα ὁ θεὸς ἐποίησεν μετ’ αὐτῶν [15:4])
- In Jerusalem, during the deliberations, the pair are “telling the story about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them” (ἐξηγουμένων ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν δι’ αὐτῶν [v. 12])

All four verses include a verb of “telling” (ἀναγγέλλω used twice), the substantive, “all that” (ὅσα) is used three times, the verb “to do” (ποιέω) and its subject “God” are used three times, the prepositional expression “with them” (μετ’ αὐτῶν) or “through them” (δι’ αὐτῶν) is used three times and there is mention of Gentiles (ἔθνη) in three verses.

Luke intends that his readers appreciate the value of the pair’s shared experience. He stresses the happy welcome of the pair in Phoenicia and Samaria and Jerusalem (vss. 2-4). Although Peter and James are more prominent in the Council itself, the pair’s story provides a steady support both before and during the Council for the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>54</sup> The pair’s experiential voice is not too suppressed or minimized; the shared story needs to be told and well-received. The repetition of the story possesses an implicit power to convince. In these texts, no propositional or theological argument for the inclusion of Gentiles is offered. “Their position is communicated best by the recountal of their experience of God’s work.”<sup>55</sup>

The pair’s “story” is not only their story alone, but a story which must also become a communal story and part of the corporate memory of the Council. The shared story must also be interpreted by the community as solid evidence for the gathered community. The narrative is a story about what God has done through people on behalf of the Gentiles. In 11:17, Peter had raised the rhetorical question, “Who was I to think I could oppose God?” The Jerusalem community must ask the same questions, “Who do we think we are who could oppose God’s patent saving-activity for the Gentiles?” “How can we demand the Jewish way of life from those whom God has so clearly included?” In the shared story of God’s activity, both the Jewish and Gentile persons and groups find their identity, meaning, and calling to be Christians *together*. The shared memory of the past also contains an implicit meaning for both the present deliberations of the

<sup>54</sup> See especially how Luke uses Is 49:6 in Acts 13:47 to argue for Gentile inclusion through Paul’s mission: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>55</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Decision-Making in the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 80.

Council and the future of the community as “the opened door of faith to the Gentiles” (14:27) opens even in wider dimensions in the second panel of the book of Acts.

Peter’s story is also an important part of the Council’s process. While the pair’s story was general in nature, Peter’s story is particular in the Cornelius episode (Acts 10:1-48) and its retelling in Jerusalem (11:1-17) prior to the Council. In the Council (Acts 15), this is the third telling of the story in summary form by both Peter and James; Peter’s introductory statement, “you know” (ἐπίστασθε) affirms that the audience is already familiar with Peter’s experience. Peter’s statement, “some time ago” (lit. “from the days of old” [ἀφ’ ἡμερῶν] v. 7), refers to the Cornelius episode (esp. 10:44-46; retelling in Acts 11:1-17). What did the Cornelius story convey? The story highlighted the divine activity for Gentile inclusion, by orchestrating two complementary visions, one to Peter and the other to Cornelius, in different places and its climax when the two persons come together. While Peter’s vision was first puzzling to him, he understands the vision’s significance when he encounters Cornelius and his friends. He now knows that he is not to discriminate (10:28—“I should not call any man impure or unclean”; see 11:9), that “God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation” (10:34), the Holy Spirit had been poured out *even on the Gentiles* (10:45), and that God has cleansed their hearts by faith (15:9)—without adopting the Jewish way of life, including circumcision. Thus, the story becomes a “classic prototype,”<sup>56</sup> by which Peter transposes a personal story into a vigorous theological affirmation.

God is the subject of each of the verbs in Peter’s story, and thus, Peter also witnesses with the pair as to the activity of God. At the same time, the tellers of the stories make it clear that this is their *own* story of God working through them or with them. The conflict arose in Jerusalem over the issue of table-fellowship with the Jewish Peter and the Gentile Cornelius (“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them” [11:3]) and concludes with the apostles’ and brothers’ affirmation that “God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life” (“without circumcision” [11:18]). The personal narratives of Barnabas, Paul, and Peter witness to a united and shared story that contributes to a common affirmation by the entire Council. Three stories coalesce into one common witness that divine grace, met with human trust, is the only means of salvation for both groups (“we in just the same way as they” [15:11]). It leads to Peter’s summative statement of corporate belief, “We believe” (15:11).

A subtext may be inherent in Luke’s narrative of Peter’s story. Peter had been a reluctant missionary in his vision. In the vision Peter was strongly “religious” in his emphatic refusal, “No way Lord” (Μηδαμῶς κύριε [10:14; 11:8]),<sup>57</sup> which may be the reason for why the vision of the sheet occurred three times (10:16). His prejudicial attitude needed to be overcome and is done so that he learned and lived a new way of thinking. Correspondingly, the hardliners express exclusionary attitudes that Peter had once felt. Thus, the hardliners who share affinity with Peter’s initial reluctance may be encouraged to overcome their own prejudice as well.

<sup>56</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 116.

<sup>57</sup> “. . . by no means, no, certainly not” stating a negative reaction,” BDAG, 517.

James, as the leader of the apostles and brother of Jesus,<sup>58</sup> puts his stamp of approval on Peter's experience with Cornelius and its bearing upon the present decision as well as its future implications (15:14). There are two aorist tenses, which refer to a particular point in time with respect to the Cornelius-story: "Simeon rehearsed" (ἐξηγήσατο) and "God concerned himself with" (ἐπεσκέψατο).<sup>59</sup> The adverb, "first" (πρῶτον) links back to Peter's speech as well ("some time ago" [ἀφ' ἡμερῶν] v. 7). James' argument affirms Peter's experience and its clear announcement of the divine purpose of "taking from the Gentiles a people for himself" (15:14). In the expression, "from the Gentiles, a people for his name" (ἐξ ἔθνων λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ), there is a contrast between the "Gentiles" and "a people." Hitherto, the Gentiles ("no people") did not constitute God's people by way of race or racial mark. However, God has done the paradoxical thing in the Cornelius story, to make "a people" for his name (i.e., "for himself"), from what was regarded as no people.<sup>60</sup> Thus, James along with Peter confirm that God's purpose of calling the Gentiles parallels God's calling of the Jews; they belong together. Peter's story has convinced James of the implications of Peter's precedent.

### *Awareness of the Holy Spirit*

Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit in the process in the deliberations of the Jerusalem Council. There are two explicit references to the Holy Spirit (15:8, 28). In 15:8, Peter narrates the thrust of the Cornelius story to stress the comparison between Cornelius and the apostles in their shared experience of the reception of the Holy Spirit:

- "by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us"  
(δούς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν [15:8])
- "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message"  
(ἐπέσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸ λόγον [10:44])
- "that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out had been poured out even on the Gentiles"  
(ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται [10:45])
- "They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have"  
(οἵτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς [10:47])
- "the Holy Spirit came on them just as he had come on as at the beginning"  
(ἐπέσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ αὐτοὺς ὡς περ καὶ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ [11:15])
- "God gave them the same gift as he gave us"  
(τὴν ἴσην δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν [11:17])

Four of the six references draw comparison between the experience of Cornelius and friends with the event of the earliest community on the Day of Pentecost ("All of them

<sup>58</sup> Acts 1:14; Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19.

<sup>59</sup> Also parallel with the aorist, "God chose" (ἐξελέξατο [v.7])

<sup>60</sup> The clearest OT link is Zec 2:11 (2:15 in Heb), "many Gentiles . . . will become my people."

were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit was enabling them” [καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντας πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ ἤρξατο λαλεῖν ἑτέροις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς] 2:4). The experience of Cornelius and his friends’ “speaking in tongues” (10:46) also provides a tangible link with the Day of Pentecost. Luke’s readers understand that the brief references in Acts 15 to the coming of the Spirit upon Cornelius and friends (Acts 10-11) are of one piece with the recipients of the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. Dunn notes, “As elsewhere in Acts, the Spirit is the central feature in the process of conversion-initiation,”<sup>61</sup> understood by Dibelius as a “regularizing tradition ‘of a good while ago’—a classical meaning.”<sup>62</sup> When previously questioned as to why Peter shared table-fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles, Peter substantiated his freedom through the shared experience of the Spirit in his appeal to the Pentecostal event. As a result of the Spirit’s activity in both instances, the apostles and brothers had concluded that God was now granting life to the Gentiles on the basis of faith (11:18).

Luke also forges an implicit link with the Holy Spirit, expressed through Barnabas and Paul’s story of “signs and wonders” (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα [15:12]).<sup>63</sup> This is a favorite Lukan expression to refer to the tangible means by which God witnesses to the Jesus-event and is often found in Luke’s summaries.<sup>64</sup> Signs and wonders are associated with the means by which God witnessed to Jesus being the Christ (2:22); the common life among believers (2:43); the prayers of the early community (4:30-31); extensive healings (5:12); the empowerment of Stephen, “full of grace and power” (6:8); the ministry of Philip (8:4-8); and the witness of Paul and Barnabas (14:3). In Acts 15, one of the “signs and wonders” certainly refers to the coming of the Spirit upon Cornelius and friends. For Luke, the manifest presence of God is itself a form of preaching; “signs and wonders” elicit conversion (2:37-42), “fear and faith” (2:43), a powerful shaking of a physical place and the fullness of the Spirit (4:30-31), “fear” (5:11), “togetherness” (5:12), attraction, revulsion (fear), and multiplication (5:13-16), hostility (6:9), “joy” (8:8), division, and further evangelization (14:2-6). Just as verbalized preaching elicits a complex of responses, the same can be said about the preaching role of signs and wonders; they both attract and repel people, who are either predisposed to reception or rejection of the Jesus-event. For Luke, the reception of the Spirit is manifest and is recognized by others, who are assured of their new life and empowered for the witness of their new life. Luke would have his readership be people of the Spirit, whose lives are marked by faith, signs, and wonders, even as they wrestle with particular conflicts in their communities. The shared recognition of the work of the Spirit in different lives is critical for the apostolic decision.

<sup>61</sup> Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 201.

<sup>62</sup> Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 145.

<sup>63</sup> The frequent word “power” (δύναμις) designates the same witness as “signs and wonders” and are often used in the same context (Acts 2:22, 3:12, 4:7, 4:33, 6:8, 8:13, 10:38, 19:11; “powerful” [δύνατος] in 7:22)—in reference to Jesus and the early missionaries.

<sup>64</sup> Through Stephen’s speech, “signs and wonders” of the early Church find their support in Moses (7:36—Ex 3:12, 4:1-17)

Luke also says that the Holy Spirit is active in the decision-making process (15:28), “it seemed best (ἔδοξε)<sup>65</sup> to the Holy Spirit and to us.” Who did it seem best to? In verse 22, it applies to the *apostles, elders and the entire church*, in verse 25 it is “to us,” and in verse 28, it refers “to *the Holy Spirit and to us*.” In the first two occurrences, it refers to the selection of certain men to carry the decision by letter to Antioch; the third use of the verb refers to the decision itself (v. 28). By the similar construction of the three verses, it is reasonable to conclude that the people and their leadership sensed that the Spirit was at work in the decision to send certain people to convey the decision as well. Conzelmann states, “This verse contains the Lukan concept of church and Spirit.”<sup>66</sup> The text suggests the close engagement of the human and the divine in much the same way as the commission of Barnabas and Saul, when the Holy Spirit spoke through prophets and teachers as to the selection of the pair “for the work which I have called them” (13:2). Through the entire process, the divine and the human work in tandem. Since the Spirit was active among the Gentiles (notably in Cornelius) even before an apostle arrives and since the Spirit was at work in Gentile conversion (Acts 13-14), then the Spirit is also at work in helping the Jerusalem church and its leaders to enlarge their ways of thinking, feeling, and discerning, “so they can participate in the world of God’s reign—the world of the Spirit’s power—a world, not limited by a particular set of social, ethnic or religious prescriptions.”<sup>67</sup>

Readers are not told how the Spirit made its will known; it is interesting that Luke records no charismatic gifting in the Council’s deliberation (e.g., a prophecy or vision), simply the statement that the Council that is genuinely open to God’s will, can generate such an important decision that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s power is evident in concrete human activities, here in the context of sharing in the stories of others, Scripture, deliberation, debate, compromise, decision making, and communication. The world of the Spirit is not to be isolated from human thinking, feeling, and acting, especially when there is a commitment to be Christians *together*.

### *The Role of Scripture*

Luke also emphasizes the Scripture as a means by which important decisions are made.<sup>68</sup> The text says that the Scripture agrees (συμφωνοῦσιν) with the

<sup>65</sup> See above.

<sup>66</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Lois Malcolm, “Conversion, Conversation and Acts 15,” *Crux* 22, no. 3 (Summer, 2002), 252.

<sup>68</sup> For Luke, the Scriptures reveal that OT prophecies (ca. 40 explicit quotations from the LXX) are fulfilled in Jesus, the righteous and suffering Servant of Isaiah (Is 49:1-6; the eunuch in Acts 8:32-33) and the nascent community (choice of a replacement apostle in 1:16-20; 2:17-35; 4:26-26; Stephen’s speech in Acts 7:2-53) as its mission expands through its witnesses (13:16-52 with the affirmation of a Gentile mission; leaving the rejecting Jews and turning to the Gentiles). The numerous quotations express Luke’s view of the continued relevance of the Scripture for the Church, its mission, and its human witnesses. Similar to Jesus’ Parable of the Wise Householder (Mt 13:51-52), Luke provides a continuity with the old and an openness to the new; both parts of revelation constitute the “treasure.” Luke intends that his readership be conversant with the OT word of promise and the new word of fulfillment found in

narrative/experience of Gentile inclusion (15:15). As Johnson notes, “He does not say, ‘This agrees with the prophets,’ but ‘The words of the prophets agree with this.’”<sup>69</sup> It is quite a reversal, similar to the way in which the Gentiles’ experience of salvation is the gauge by which Jews are measured (v. 11). Current experience finds support in the sacred text. Thereupon, James appeals to the LXX of Amos 9:11-12 to support the new experience.<sup>70</sup> The Hebrew and LXX text of Amos 9:11-12 are at variance.

Table 1. Comparison of the Hebrew (Am 9:11-12) and LXX texts in Acts 15:16-18

Hebrew text of Amos 9:11-12	LXX text in Acts 15:16-18
<p>“In that day, I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins and build it as it used to be, so that <i>they may possess</i> the remnant of <i>Edom</i>, and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the Lord who will do these things.</p>	<p>“After this, I will return and rebuild David's<sup>71</sup> fallen tent. I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it, so that the remnant of <i>men may seek</i> the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages.”</p>

The Hebrew text says nothing about Gentile inclusion in the people of God but affirms that God will restore David’s fallen tent, “so that *they may possess* the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name.”<sup>72</sup> However, the LXX suggests the inclusion of other people and nations, “the remnant of men may seek the Lord.” It appears that the LXX reads “they may possess” (MT יירשו) with “they may seek” (יירשו) and “Edom” (אֱדוֹם) with “men” (אָדָם) as the basis for its translation. The similarity of sounds of the two pairs no doubt caused the confusion of translation with an addition or transposition of a Hebrew radical. Thus, the LXX text affirms the missionary message of the Old Testament with the inclusion of the Gentiles. James’ argument from the Old Testament is clearly at odds with the Jewish Christian critique of verses 1, 5. On Luke’s

Jesus and His mission through the Church. The new and the old are inextricably knit together. The word is old in that it has been hidden since the foundation of the world (Mt 13:35 = Ps 78:2); it is new in that the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been granted to the new community of faith.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *Decision-Making in the Church*, 84.

<sup>70</sup> Perhaps the opening expression is drawn from Jer 12:15-16 and the closing phrase from Is 45:21-23.

<sup>71</sup> John Christopher Thomas notes the Lukan concern for David in both Luke and Acts. John Christopher Thomas, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: A Pentecostal Hermeneutic as Test Case,” in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 118.

<sup>72</sup> Michael A. Braun argues for a Vorlage to James’ testimony that was a Hebrew text divergent but superior to the MT. Michael Braun, “James’ Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps Toward a Possible Solution to the Textual and Theological Problems,” *JETS* (1977): 113.

use of Amos 9:11-12, Robert Wall suggests, “Gentile conversion does not annul God’s promise of a restored and redeemed Israel, but rather expands it; nor does faith (rather than Torah observance) as the condition of Gentile conversion contradict God’s plan of salvation, but rather confirms it. The second half of Acts provides a narrative that supports and explains this theological consensus reached at Jerusalem.”<sup>73</sup>

The Spirit is at work in Luke’s reinterpretation of the Amos text. “Once again, we cannot fail to be impressed by the extent of his sources and his ability to make effective use of his scriptural material.”<sup>74</sup> As John Christopher Thomas states, “It appears that the experience of the Spirit in the community helped the church make its way through the hermeneutical maze.”<sup>75</sup> Thus James’ appeal to an Old Testament precedent clearly “trumps” the Jewish–Christian precedent.

New Testament writers, such as Luke, possess five important sources that interact with each other in a dynamic way: (1) the experience of the person and ministry of Jesus, (2) the believing community, (3) stories, (4) the Old Testament, and (5) the interpreting Holy Spirit. The personal and communal experience of the early Christians with Jesus coupled with the interpreting person of the Holy Spirit gave them the clue to understanding and interpreting the Old Testament in a community context. “This approach *does* make room for illumination in the Spirit’s work, but it includes a far greater role for the work of the Spirit in the community as the context for interpretation, offering guidance in the community’s dialogue about the Scripture.”<sup>76</sup> The use of Scripture is also noted in 15:21, “For Moses has been read in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.” Mention of the Scripture, including Amos and Moses, here paves the way for the decisive prescription that follows (15:19-21). When the Scripture dialogues with present experience (personal and corporate), then the interpreting Spirit allows for a fresh reinterpretation of Scripture, since God continues to reveal Himself in the narratives of His people.

### *Decision with Compromise*

The communal search for the will of God leads to a consensus with compromise so that Christian Jews and Gentile Christians can be Christians together. If the community fails to make a decision or makes a decision without compromise, the consequences would no doubt be negative. Indecision would lead to confusion and divisiveness; if there is no compromise, the backlash from the Jewish Christians might be substantial. If there was a casual or offhanded dismissal of the problem, then the

<sup>73</sup> Robert Wall, “Israel and the Gentile Mission in Acts and Paul,” *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 449-450.

<sup>74</sup> Anthony Tyrell Hanson, *The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1983), 87.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions,” 118.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions,” 119. See also F. L. Arrington, “Hermeneutics,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 387-388.



failure to deal with the issue might well lead to increased tension, demoralization, or a deadly festering.

James' speech begins with the logical result, "therefore" (διό) to be drawn from the preceding discussion and is followed by his statement, "It is my opinion/judgment" (ἐγὼ κρίνω [15:19]). Their shared experience is finally what matters most. Both groups must give and take so as to create a consensus that will mean a "win-win" decision for both groups; the voice of each group has been heard and respected. Consensus is highlighted in 15:25, "So we all agreed." The final decision does not come by way of advice or suggestion; the decision stands good since it is authorized by the Jerusalem Council (leaders and church). The decision is made from the Jewish perspective as to: (1) how Jews are to celebrate Gentile inclusion based on divine grace and Gentile faith, (2) how Jews are not to harass Gentiles (third person in 15:19) and how the Jews are not to burden "you" (Gentiles [second person in 15:28—Gentiles in Antioch]) with anything more than some essentials. The Gentiles are to be sensitive to Jewish sensibilities. Since there are at least three versions<sup>77</sup> of the decision, discussions abound as to the exact minimal restrictions that the Gentiles must concede and their nature, ritual, moral, or a combination of both.

Table 2. A comparison of prohibitions

Acts 15:20 (discussion)	Acts 15:29 (letter)	Acts 21:25 (later narrative)
Pollution of idols	Idols	Idols
Sexual immorality	Blood	Blood
Strangling of animals	Strangling of animals	Strangling of animals
Blood	Sexual immorality	Sexual immorality

Charles Savelle, along with others, provides extended discussion for each of these terms,<sup>78</sup> which lie outside the focus of this essay. It is unlikely that Luke would have concerned himself with minute distinctions between ritual and moral stipulations. Suffice it to say that the items on the list are practices that would have been abhorrent to Jewish Christians: meat that had been offered to idols (pagan worship), sexual

<sup>77</sup> Textual traditions offer varied forms of this four-fold list. The Western text ethicizes the items (idolatry, sexual immorality, bloodshed, and the negative form of the Golden Rule, "and not to do to others whatever they do not wish to be done to themselves"), while the uncials B and  $\delta$  combine both the ritual and ethical (food sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, meat of strangled animals, eating blood—no mention of the Golden Rule).

<sup>78</sup> Charles H. Savelle, "A Reexamination of the Prohibitions in Acts 15," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (October-December 2004): 449-68; Marcel Simon, "The Apostolic Decree and its Setting in the Ancient Church," *BJRL*, no. 52 (1969): 437-460.

immorality (obvious), and the eating of meat of animals that had been strangled, since the blood was still in the meat. Since blood was associated with life, it was reserved for God alone (Lv 17:10-12). This concession represents the will of the Spirit and these stipulations are not overly burdensome for the Gentile (15:28). Even though the restrictions are labeled as “essentials,” they are not “essential for the salvation of the Gentiles” (15:11); they are “essential” for table-fellowship between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles. Dunn calls them “minimum terms for mutual recognition and association . . . rules of association.”<sup>79</sup>

The Council tries to make things uncomplicated for the Gentiles (15:19, 28). The Jews are to accept Gentile salvation without circumcision and the Jewish way of life, while the Gentiles concede to restrict their behavior that would be offensive to Jewish Christians; an inclusive community will lead to a common table. Indeed, the initial accusation from “apostles and brothers” to Peter, was directed to Peter’s table-fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles (Acts 11:3). The decree concludes with the statement, “If you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well” (15:29). It suggests that Gentile sensitivity to Jewish sensibilities would be in concert with the will of the Holy Spirit and be relationally beneficial for the Jerusalem church and Jewish Christians. Talbert observes that “although Gentiles are free from the Law in the sense of ethnic markers like circumcision, they are expected to refrain from selected things required of resident aliens in Leviticus 17.”<sup>80</sup> Craig Blomberg notes that the four abstentions are of an ad hoc nature<sup>81</sup> and is supported by Weiser’s understanding of them as “a cultural phenomenon.”<sup>82</sup> Luke’s later narrative of Paul also reflects such sensitivity to Jewish concerns: Paul circumcises Timothy (16:3), Paul takes a Jewish vow (18:18), continues to quote the Law (23:5), and shares in the purification of a group of Jewish men (21:23-26). He remains a faithful Jew, keeps the Law, and does not dissuade other fellow Jews from keeping the Law.

### *Clear Communication by Letter and Supporting Emissaries*

The language of the letter is reciprocal and collegial. It is noteworthy that Barnabas, Paul, Judas, and Silas (both prophets) were not entrusted with the oral report of the decision alone. Although Barnabas and Paul (with others) were sent from Antioch to Jerusalem with the question, they are not the sole bearers of the decision. The decision is formalized into a letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Antiochene church; the four men serve a supportive role in communicating Jerusalem’s authoritative decision. The letter’s bearers could no doubt complement the contents or answer possible questions from the readers. The worth of the four is stated; Barnabas and Saul are worthy in that they have risked their lives for the Christian message, while Judas and Silas are identified as leading men (15:22, 25-27) and prophets (15:32). They will

<sup>79</sup> Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 204.

<sup>80</sup> Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 142.

<sup>81</sup> Craig Blomberg, “The Christian and the Law of Moses,” *Witness to the Gospel*, 409.

<sup>82</sup> Artur Weiser, “Das’ Apostelkonzil,” *BZ* 28 (1984): 161.

verbally confirm what the letter says, (lit.: through a word re-announcing the same things" [διὰ λόγου ἀπαγγέλλοντας τὰ αὐτά]). Perhaps the Jerusalem Council thinks that since the Antiochene church would already know where Barnabas and Paul stood on the issue, a verbal report alone would be clearly biased in nature.

## IX. THE WAYS IN WHICH THE PROCESS ADVANCES THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

The various aspects of the resolution process lead to a warm reception and a happy advance of the Christian message.

### *Joy*

Upon receipt of the letter and its public reading, the Antiochene community (πληθος) "rejoiced for the encouragement" (εχάρησαν ἐπὶ τῇ παρακλήσει [15:31]) that the letter brought. Evidently, they were hoping not only for a resolution but for a decision that they wanted. The original conflict in their community did not arise from within the community but from some unnamed individuals who had come from Judea (15:1).

### *Encouragement and Inner Strengthening*

Joy is linked with "encouragement" (παρακλήσις) that the letter brought and is linked to the active role of two prophets, who "said much to encourage<sup>83</sup> and strengthen the brothers" (διὰ λόγου πολλοῦ παρεκάλησεν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ ἐπεστήριξαν [15:32]). Doubtlessly, the community is relieved that their identity and practice are confirmed both by the letter and its emissaries; Gentiles are glad to make accommodation to Jewish Christians so that they might live together and share table-fellowship. In addition, the community is also at peace since they send the two prophets back to Jerusalem "with peace" (μετ' εἰρήνης [15:33]). While the prophets report back to the Jerusalem community, Paul and Barnabas, with many others remain in Antioch, "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord" (διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι . . . τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου. [15:35]) for a significant period of time. No doubt, this extended time provided opportunities for further dialogue, input, reflection, and questions (implications or intimations).

### *Further Success of the Christian Message*

Advance is also noted in the next two paragraphs (15:36-41, 16:1-5). Both paragraphs introduce the narrative of 16:6-18:22, which extends the mission into Macedonia. Even though Paul and Barnabas experience a painful separation, there is still an advance of the Christian message. Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus, while Paul

<sup>83</sup> While Barrett translates the noun, παρακλήσις as "comfort" and the verb, παρακαλεῖν as "to encourage," the close proximity of the terms would suggest a similar meaning, "encouragement" and "to encourage." Barrett, *Luke*, 748. Surely "encouragement" is part of prophetic gifting (1 Cor 14:3).

and Silas travel to Syria and Cilicia, “strengthening” (ἐπιστηρίζων [cf. the same verb in 15:32 of Judas and Silas<sup>84</sup>]) the churches (15:41). Paul then retraces his steps on his first missionary journey—in Derbe and Lystra (16:1-5) before the more extensive journeys unfold into Europe. Talbert notes, “Nothing can stop the gospel, not even divisions among missionaries.”<sup>85</sup> Two items stand out: (1) Paul’s circumcision of Timothy, and (2) Paul’s delivery of the Council’s decisions. Since Paul has lost Barnabas as his companion, he enlists Timothy to accompany him for his subsequent missions (16:3). In view of the fact that Timothy is half-Jewish and half-Gentile and that his uncircumcised Jewish status would be offensive to the Jews in that region, Paul circumcises Timothy (16:3). Timothy’s circumcision appears to be motivated by expedience, “to make an honest Jew of him,”<sup>86</sup> just as Paul is an “honest Jew.” In the case of a mixed-marriage, Jewish identity appears to have been transmitted through the mother and Luke makes a point of noting that Timothy’s mother<sup>87</sup> was a believer herself (16:1); the practice is assumed in 16:1-3. The Jerusalem Council had determined that circumcision was unnecessary for Gentile salvation, but the deliberations suggest that Jews would continue to practice circumcision and the Jewish way of life. Even though Paul’s ministry would be primarily Gentile in scope, he still was driven by a missionary impulse to his own people. An uncircumcised Jew would have been offensive to Jews in Jewish synagogues; thus, Paul removes a potential roadblock that would hinder his proclamation. From Luke’s perspective, Paul’s circumcision of the half-Jew Timothy would serve to negate the later charge leveled against Paul in Jerusalem: “you teach all the Jews . . . to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs” (21:21). This is supported by the fact that in the same paragraph (21:20-25), the Jerusalem compromise is mentioned (21:25).

In 16:4, Paul delivers the decisions from the Jerusalem Council (“they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey”). The word *decisions* (δόγματα) belongs to the same word family as the repeated verb, “it seemed best to” (δοκεῖν) of 15:22, 25, 28 and clearly relates to necessary behavior growing out of the Jerusalem Council; the decisions are formal and cannot be regarded as mere suggestions or advice. Originally, the extent of the Council’s decision involved Antioch, Syria, and Celicia (15:23), but now the decisions extend beyond these places.

### *Numerical Growth*

Luke makes another summary statement<sup>88</sup> in 16:5, which highlights the advance of the Christian message as a result of the Jerusalem Council: “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.” The imperfect verbs “continued to

<sup>84</sup> Luke does not seem to be aware of the apparent discrepancy of Silas’ return to Jerusalem (15:33) and his travel with Paul congruent with Paul’s choice of Silas (v. 40).

<sup>85</sup> Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 145.

<sup>86</sup> Barrett, *Luke*, 762.

<sup>87</sup> Noted in 2 Tm 1:5 as Eunice.

<sup>88</sup> See the same pattern above in the summary statements.

be strengthened” (ἐστεροῦντο) and “continued to grow” (ἐπερίσσευον) affirm the ongoing growth in the community’s inner life and numerical growth.

## V. IMPLICATIONS

Although Luke does not definitively voice his opinion or speak in his own name, he does provide a skillful, artful, pivotal, and instructive episode of the Jerusalem Council that serves as the hinge for the book of Acts. It is a theological narrative that says much about the joint involvement of the divine and the human, as the community of faith seeks to discern God’s will in changing circumstances. Luke provides sufficient detail as to the nature and elements of the conflict that could have been disastrous for the early Church: terms of admission for Gentile salvation—circumcision, exclusionary demands, the role of the Law, table-fellowship, and threats to the unity of the Christian community and its leaders. In his narrative, Luke takes these issues seriously, for they must be dealt with for the advance of the Christian message. He also provides numerous dynamics that are part of the process of resolving the conflict(s): sensitivity to the divine initiative, discernment of God’s saving activity, a commitment to the internal unity of the Church, various stories that are told in the process of resolving the conflict, the role of the Holy Spirit, importance of Scripture, decision with compromise, and the clear communication of the Council’s decision through a formal letter and supporting emissaries. These are not isolated “steps” but are interdependent aspects or important considerations in resolving this important conflict. The conflict resolution story in Acts 15 belongs to a coherent set of case studies in Acts in which the stories actually lead to an advance of the Christian message; the conflicts do not lead to the detriment or division of the Church.

The Jerusalem Council represents a great moment in salvation history. In the search for Gentile identity, the Jewish community rediscovers and redefines its own identity.<sup>89</sup> Luke shifts from the threats or costs to both groups to the benefits for all Christian groups. Perhaps Luke might say to the Church, “When conflicts arise, do not avoid them, but welcome them and take them seriously. Look to the positive potential of resolving conflicts by which the Christian witness will advance through the inner and numerical growth of the Christian community.” Through the story, Luke invites his readers to experience and feel the various points of tension, to see how the conflict was managed and, indeed, advanced the Christian message—to be changed and then return to their own communities with this instructive paradigm. He helps the community to live and relive the event and its nuances and thereby, adopt and embrace his point of view in changing thoughts, attitudes, and behavior as to how the Church ought to discern the will of God in an ever-changing landscape. Even though Luke is irenic in his approach, he is honest enough to provide a discursive narrative about a critical situation, which desperately needs resolution if the Church is to achieve a unified, effective and Spirit-empowered witness (1:8).

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<sup>89</sup> Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise*, 279.

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## PILATE'S UNJUST CONDEMNATION OF JESUS IN MATTHEW 27:11-26: HOW GOD BRINGS TO LIGHT HIS STANDARD OF JUSTICE IN GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP AND OVERTURNS MAN'S CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF JUSTICE

JACQUELINE FAULHABER

Most accounts of Pontius Pilate associate the trial and crucifixion of Christ as an unjust act, and this author is in agreement with that assessment. Yet, when the act of Pontius Pilate is evaluated under its social-cultural context of the first-century, many fascinating aspects of the pressures Pilate faced beg the inquiry of whether leaders today might have done the same. The goal of this research is to shed light on what might be learned from Pilate's ethical failure, of which is also recognized that God allowed to occur to bring salvation to all of mankind. This paper addresses the following areas: first, how justice is defined by Plato and Cicero in an effort to identify philosophical and political discourse on the topic of justice that could have influenced Pilate; second, Pilate's decision in light of its first-century social-cultural context; third, Pilate's personality and vice (lack of virtuousness) characterizations; fourth, the role of religion and the influence Claudia (Pilate's wife) had on Pilate's decision; fifth, God's standard of justice interpreted through the trial and crucifixion of Christ; and sixth, some questions leaders can ask themselves to ascertain if they exemplify Christ's character of holiness, or that of the world.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In many instances, there is much more to the complex events of history than what is portrayed, as is the case with Pilate's crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In these events, we try to make sense of why such an unjust act could occur. Yet, by exploring the context of these events, it might be possible to understand the dynamics injustice manifests itself in. By understanding these dynamics, a leader might be better equipped to understand whether or not their choices and decisions are just or not, recognizing that justice also plays an important role in *authentic* transformational leadership. Bass and Steidlmeier assert that justice, particularly distributive justice, is a foundational virtue necessary for authentic transformational leadership.<sup>1</sup> Eberlin and Tatum further assert an intimate relationship between leadership style, decision making, and organizational justice.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, Aubrey Malphurs and others indicate various aspects of leadership activities result from values.<sup>3</sup> While research on values focuses on defining and living by core values, further work on the development of virtue necessary for good leadership is needed. The work of Lawrence Kohlberg and James Rest, a neo-Kohlbergian who based his four components of morality on Kohlberg's post-conventional stage of moral development, are helpful in identifying how morality is developed and functions.<sup>4</sup> Greater value to this discussion, however, could be enhanced by gaining a clearer picture of the pressures of human weakness and viciousness—that is in the sense of lack of virtue—of the human flesh and spirit in the midst of its environmental context on making a morally sound decision. It is here an investigation of Scripture may shed light on the topic of justice in leadership, governing, and ruling. Namely, a study of Pilate's condemnation of Jesus Christ in light of the political-social-cultural context of the first-century, with God revealing which barriers are necessary to overcome to uphold His justice, may prove beneficial to virtue in leadership discourse.

In Christianity, the Apostle Paul calls believers a new creation,<sup>5</sup> and it is possible to be this new creation through reliance on the Holy Spirit, prayer, and keeping one's mind focused on the right things in Christ.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, the Apostle Paul provides a glimpse of how one's flesh or sinful desires counter godliness.<sup>7</sup> He goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that in his own weakness he is made strong through Christ, thus communicating to believers in 2 Corinthians 15:57 that God has won victory over the sins of humankind. What the Apostle Paul suggests is that while Christ has won the victory, each day is marked by struggles of the flesh a Christian must learn to

<sup>1</sup> Bernard M. Bass and Paul Steidlmeier, "Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 10 (1999): 181-218.

<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Eberlin and B. Charles Tatum, "Making Just Decisions: Organizational Justice, Decision Making, and Leadership," *Management Decision* 46 (2007):310-329.

<sup>3</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> J. Rest, D. Narvaez, and S. Thoma, *Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor 5:17.

<sup>6</sup> Phil 4:8.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor 12:7.



overcome. One has to imagine the difficulty with which a Christian refrains from sinful acts and choices, and how much more difficult it is for someone without the Holy Spirit to make godly ethical and moral decisions. For even the Apostle Paul had been known to have persecuted Christians before his encounter with Christ.<sup>8</sup> In every aspect, he acted unjustly. It is at this juncture that the leadership and governance of Pontius Pilate, procurator according to Josephus<sup>9</sup> or prefect of equestrian rank,<sup>10</sup> is discussed and analyzed in relationship to Jesus' trial and crucifixion within the account of Matthew 27:11-26.

Most accounts of Pilate, having ruled Judea from 26 to 36 A.D.,<sup>11</sup> associate the trial and crucifixion of Christ as an unjust act, and the author is in agreement with that assessment. Rather than focusing on what Jesus went through (understanding that most find this as God's most significant act of grace), it is explored in Matthew 27:11-26 the dynamics surrounding Pilate's unjust actions with the constant awareness that some today would do the same. Thus, this paper seeks to address the following areas: first, how justice is defined by Plato and Cicero in an effort to identify philosophical and political discourses on the topic of justice that could have influenced Pilate; second, Pilate's decision in light of his first-century social-cultural context; third, Pilate's personality and vice (lack of virtuousness) characterizations; fourth, the role of religion and the influence Claudia (Pilate's wife) had on Pilate's decision; fifth, God's standard of justice interpreted through the trial and crucifixion of Christ; and sixth, some questions leaders can ask themselves to ascertain if they exemplifying Christ's character of holiness or that of the world.

In interacting with these textual elements, one might find some principles that could guide ethical decision making for today's public, administrative, and governing leaders. Or, it may assist other leaders who must make tough decisions regarding an employee or person brought before them for a determination, evaluation, or judgment. Exploring these potential causal influencers will further help leaders understand how human nature and its failings make the task of walking as Christ as one not of ease, but often as one of great internal struggle and potential suffering. For it is within this struggle, within the very act of resisting temptation, that one finds great strength when his or her reliance is upon Jesus Christ, who is not only one's model but giver of the Holy Spirit who assists in resisting temptation. As Chryssavgis states:

If God is right there, in the middle of our struggle, then our aim is to stay there. We are to remain in the cell, to stay on the road, not to forego the journey or forget the darkness. It is all too easy for us to overlook the importance of struggle, preferring instead to secure peace and rest, or presuming to reach the stage of love prematurely. It is always easier to allow things to pass by, to go on

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 22:6; Gal 1:13.

<sup>9</sup> Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius, the Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 63.

<sup>10</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 128.

<sup>11</sup> *Jewish Antiquities in Josephus: The Essential Writings*, trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 63.

without examination and effort. Yet, struggling means living. It is a way of fully living life and not merely observing it.<sup>12</sup>

It is within this struggle with temptation that Jesus Christ Himself was able to overcome Satan's temptation. Yet, for the Christian knowing that sin still seeks to rule body and soul, something positive may be learned through Pilate's failed struggle to bring about godly justice. This cannot be accomplished, however, without investigating what justice meant in classical and New Testament times.

## II. DEFINING JUSTICE IN CLASSIC AND NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Since the time of Plato's *The Republic*, written in mid 300 B.C., the ideal of a just society and person has kept the attention of many philosophers. Definitions vary, but influencing many philosophers over time to include thinkers of the first-century is Plato's definition of justice. He argued justice was accomplished in performing well one's function, place, role, or job in society, and not delving into the business of other functions or roles. The function or role of a person's life was established by the role or economic class one was born into. And this socio-economic status determined one's capacity for virtuousness. Even by the first-century A.D., those living in the Roman Empire had already been influenced by Greek culture, and further believed that only the wealthy could afford to be virtuous, or honest, as the poor were more apt to lie, steal, or cheat in order to survive.<sup>13</sup> As well, it was considered that virtue was achieved with one's high social-economic status, or was ascribed through building a reputation prized by the group,<sup>14</sup> which was not a status that the majority would have had the opportunity to progress toward. In Plato's mind, the military leader (who belonged to the higher economic echelon) did justice when he performed his job well and did not interfere with the job of the politician, who typically was also from a higher socio-economic status. But once the military man interfered with the politician he had interfered with another man's job, and thus would have been seen as acting unjustly. In other words, "justice is the principle which has in fact been followed throughout, the principle of one man one job, of 'minding one's own business,' in the sense of doing the job for which one is naturally fitted and not interfering with other people."<sup>15</sup> And justice at the individual level was "now defined analogously to justice in the state."<sup>16</sup> Collectively, justice manifests itself from each individual living out their proper role, function, or job. According to Plato, a man was just in virtue when there was harmony between the three elements of the mind (e.g., "spirit and appetite are in proper subordination to reason").<sup>17</sup> Corresponding to these three elements in the collective, Bhandari writes that the philosopher or ruling class represented reason, the warriors and defenders represented spirit, and the

<sup>12</sup> John Chryssavgis, *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mother* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2003), 104.

<sup>13</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 189.

<sup>14</sup> David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Dowers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 28.

<sup>15</sup> *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (Penguin Books: New York, 2003), 130.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

farmers and artisans as the lowest rung of the ladder represented appetite. Each one of these classes should perform their particular function to ensure harmony in the society; any crossing of these boundaries was unjust.<sup>18</sup> This harmony also, however, would reinforce the strong cultural norms of honor toward rulers, the “reason” of the collective.

Today’s view on what is just and what determines a just act is quite different from that of the first-century. It is difficult to imagine that virtuousness was not found in persons from all socio-economic classes. When the modern person assesses Pilate’s crucifixion of Jesus Christ as unjust, it is difficult to understand how Pilate’s focus was not on our Biblical or current-day understanding of carrying justice out equally under the law, but instead was considered carried out when protecting the interests of Rome and the emperor. Thus, it was considered just to ensure these interests were protected. Jeffers writes, “Romans did not govern primarily for the welfare of the people of the provinces. Their system was not designed, even had it worked ideally, to promote justice among the provincials. It was designed to support the interests of the leaders back in Rome, whether that meant collecting the maximum amount of taxes possible or protecting the Empire from threats to its stability from within or without.”<sup>19</sup>

Rulers of the Roman Empire had learned from past experience that local political turmoil and revolt could be minimized by allowing some self-governance within the provinces conquered so long as the province remained loyal to Rome.<sup>20</sup> Rather than allowing itself to be conquered by Rome, by 140 B.C., Judea gave Roman overlordship a try and as a result became a semi-independent state.<sup>21</sup> This allowed Judea’s elite to maintain some self-governance, but also required a strong relationship with Roman rule. These relationships, however, would become a stumbling block in ensuring Hebraic justice could thrive. Justice would be constrained by maintaining right relationships that promoted each party’s interests. Consideration must be given, however, to the fact that Pilate in Matthew 27:23 recognizes Jesus as a just man. It is possible, as well, that Pilate’s evaluated justice based on Cicero’s teachings.

Cicero (influenced by Plato and Zeno<sup>22</sup>), a practicing Roman lawyer, experienced administrator, “fighting statesman,”<sup>23</sup> and author of *On Duties* (written around 44 B.C.), may have influenced Roman students of the first-century. Cicero projects justice (known as *justia*) in two parts: (1) not doing harm to others, unless provoked by a wrongful act, and (2) “using common things as common, private possessions as one’s own.”<sup>24</sup> He further “observes that the failure to prevent an injustice is itself an injustice,” that trickery must be avoided, and adversaries should be treated with honesty and respect, thus

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<sup>18</sup> D.R. Bhandari, “Plato’s Concept of Justice: An Analysis,” *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* (August 1998) <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Anci/AnciBhan.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 110.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 306.

<sup>22</sup> R. James Ferguson, “Essays in History: Politics and Culture,” *The International Relations and International Cultures Portal*, 1999, <http://international-relations.com/History/Stoics.htm>

<sup>23</sup> William Ebenstein and Alan O. Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*, 5th ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Hartcourt Brace College Publishers, 1991), 141.

<sup>24</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, “Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid: Cicero’s Problematic Legacy,” *American Society of Arts & Science*, [http://www.amacad.org/blvlivn3/blvlivn3\\_38.aspx](http://www.amacad.org/blvlivn3/blvlivn3_38.aspx)

placing a limit on vengeance and punishment.<sup>25</sup> Imperial unity could then be attained only through liberty, self-government, and the *rule of law* that sought not to equalize wealth and innate ability, as this was impossible, but to instead provide legal rights equally among its citizens.<sup>26</sup> In Judea, the noncitizen thus may not necessarily experience justice under the rule of law as Cicero would have advocated. It would be assumed as well that Jesus who was not a Roman citizen would also not benefit from the protection a citizen would have received.

Regarding one's position on the social order, Plato, and later Cicero along with other Roman aristocrats, looked down upon and held in contempt or "disgust" for the lower classes "because they had no money."<sup>27</sup> This attitude could have certainly influenced how justice was defined and who would receive justice. Because of the Roman social-cultural norm and belief that wealth was "an essential requirement of the virtuous life," as well as its value of honesty,<sup>28</sup> perplexity arises when considering how Pilate could have so quickly given up on ensuring this just man was not condemned.

The question remains then the extent to which both Plato and Cicero would have impacted Pontius Pilate's philosophy on justice. In Plato's perspective, Jesus the carpenter—an artisan belonging to the lower class—would have acted justly so long as He stayed within the boundaries of His appointed position or job. But being accused of or called "King of the Jews" would have looked unfavorably as others would have assumed He asserted Himself in another social function. This would have been frowned upon and considered unjust under a Platonic philosophy and understanding of justice. Pilate further might have viewed assuming this title as potentially seditious in terms of revolt against the emperor, and if guided by Platonic philosophy, would not have only considered this as usurping the emperor, but also unjustly taking on a role that was not in His social standing. However, if Pilate was influenced by Cicero's philosophy, Pilate would have tried to ensure injustice did not prevail, as failing to prevent injustice from occurring was unjust in itself.<sup>29</sup> In the end, however, Pilate recognized only one charge that would be of interest to Rome, whether or not Jesus was guilty as charged by the Jewish leaders of claiming kingship, and it was the attempt to overthrow Roman rule; it would be a charge that would not only be in Rome's best interest, but in Pilate's best interest as well to investigate.<sup>30</sup> Pilate then goes on to say in Matthew 27:23, "Why, what κακός has He [Jesus] done?"<sup>31</sup> *Kakos*, Greek for the word "evil," may be defined as worthless, depraved, bad, injurious, or wicked.<sup>32</sup> In the remaining verses 24-26, the crowd, chief priests, and elders provide no explanation or reasoning for the desired conviction of Christ. Furthermore, Pilate appears to inherently understand that Jesus is

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers*, 141.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 58, 189.

<sup>29</sup> Nussbaum, "Duties of Justice."

<sup>30</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh. "Jesus Before Pilate: Part II (John 18:28-19:16)" *Bible.org*, <http://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-pilate-part-ii-john-18282111916>

<sup>31</sup> KJV Plus in e-Sword, ver. 9.8, <http://www.e-sword.net/>

<sup>32</sup> *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary* in e-Sword, ver. 9.8, <http://www.e-sword.net/>

innocent, as he declares to the crowd that he is “innocent of this man’s blood”<sup>33</sup> as noted in the New American Standard Bible version. In the New King James version, however, Pilate refers to Jesus as righteous, δίκαιος or *dikaïos*, meaning equitable, innocent, or holy.<sup>34</sup> According to Matthew 27:24, because Pilate saw that a riot was starting to develop, he washed his hands clean of his verdict. Washing clean one’s hands was customary among Jews, Greeks, and Latins to indicate they were “pure from any imputed guilt.”<sup>35</sup>

### III. PILATE’S DECISION IN LIGHT OF THE FIRST-CENTURY SOCIAL—CULTURE CONTEXT

Also important to consider is the social intertexture of Matthew 27:11-26. Social intertexture, according to Robbins, accounts for social knowledge generally accessible to people through interaction in a particular culture, which manifests itself in social roles and identity, institutions, codes, and relationships.<sup>36</sup> Social intertexture differs from cultural knowledge in that the latter is “taught with careful use of language and transmission of specific traditions,”<sup>37</sup> which can interact with the way social codes and relationships are created and maintained. Knowing these codes in the text can help alleviate problems associated with interpreting twenty-first century guilt and individualistic cultural perspective rather than first-century honor–shame and collectivistic or group-oriented cultural perspective.<sup>38</sup> It is with the later cultural framework that the following paragraphs seek to interpret the events in Matthew 27:11-26. For this paper, social role and identity, dyadic and individualistic personalities, patron–client, and challenge–riposte aspects are addressed next.

#### *Social Role and Identity*

Pilate’s role as prefect under the oversight of legate in Syria,<sup>39</sup> drawn from the equestrian rank (.01 percent of the population<sup>40</sup>) and normally sent out for one year at a time with *imperium* type power, “formed the middle rank of Roman nobility” and “provided suitable men for a variety of essential public offices ranging from military commands to the collection of taxes and jury work.”<sup>41</sup> Power accorded to the prefect allowed Pilate to govern as he saw fit so long as he honored specific tax exemptions, and allegiance to Rome remained strong.<sup>42</sup> His priority was first and foremost then to

<sup>33</sup> Mt 27:24, KJV Plus in e-Sword.

<sup>34</sup> Mt 27:24, *Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionary* in e-Sword.

<sup>35</sup> *Clarke’s Commentary* in e-Sword, ver. 9.8, <http://www.e-sword.net/>

<sup>36</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996), 62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 128.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>41</sup> Helen Bond, “Pontius Pilate,” *The Ecole Initiative*, <http://ecole.evansville.edu/articles/pilate.html>

<sup>42</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 114.

promote Rome's interest in ensuring that taxes were collected, the empire was protected, and stability within Judea was maintained; within these functions, however, many governors also sought to make as much money as possible, which might have included corruption.<sup>43</sup> Pilate's concern then would not necessarily have been directed at how he could increase the welfare, just treatment, and predictable rule over Judean citizens.<sup>44</sup>

All efforts to maintain order and stability were also mitigated by limited administrative staff<sup>45</sup> and military resources. For the latter and during the trial of Christ, Pilate would have been under significant pressure knowing that he would not have the support of the Roman legions in Syria, as Tiberius kept Syrian legate Aelius Lamia in Rome for the first six years of Pilate's term in office.<sup>46</sup> To maintain order and prevent a riot or revolt, Tiberius would have expected Pilate to maintain order in Judea and minimize the risk of a riot. One can assume that authentic and godly justice in the Hebrew tradition would have been sold out in order to maintain order. This author asserts that Pilate, given the Scripture readings in Matthew and its historical context, would have internally struggled in making the decision to hand over Christ to crucifixion. It would be well within this historical context to suggest that national allegiance was paramount to any individual right to justice. Again, this is quite different from our present rights-based culture that does not allow the trampling of individual rights for the sake of national supremacy ruled by public leaders who govern at their own whim. And, this largely supports a thesis that Pilate's personality is largely dyadic in nature that again hinders the carrying out of godly justice.

### *Dyadic and Individualist Personalities*

In Mark 15, Pilate's dyadic personality (one that perceives him or herself as embedded in other individuals) consistently checks his own status based on the crowd's perception;<sup>47</sup> this seems to apply as well in Matthew 27. The historical context and situation of Judea in the first century also appears to demand close relationships between the Roman and local leaders. Also needing consideration, according to Jeffers, is that Judea may have caused enough trouble that direct Roman control was necessary.<sup>48</sup> Judea, having only a small number of non-Roman auxiliary troops,<sup>49</sup> would have been able to call upon the Roman army under the Syrian legates control if necessary (but these troops would not have been available in 33 A.D., as noted earlier).<sup>50</sup> Because Judea's local Jewish Sanhedrin was given much political and self-governing power, Pilate had to ensure good relations were maintained in an effort to avoid uprisings, of which appears the Jewish leaders knew could work to their favor.

<sup>43</sup> Bond, "Pontius Pilate"; Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Bond, "Pontius Pilate."

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 78.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 128.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Bond, "Pontius Pilate."

The Jewish elite, functioning similar to a senate, came from leading families<sup>51</sup> who traditionally arose to this level of power in the first-century. Thus, the combination of Roman practices of allowing local self-governance and having few resources to counter dissatisfaction could have resulted in revolts and uprisings. A fine balance then of supporting Rome and maintaining local peace would be a challenge. If Pilate was effective, it would support Rome's experience that power and control could be maintained so long as the governed allowed it, and by convincing local upper classes to buy into their system (partly out of greed and a sense of self-preservation).<sup>52</sup> It appears that both of these historical lessons were applicable to successfully controlling Judea until 70 A.D.

Within this context, Jewish leaders had much at stake, as they also did not want to jeopardize their status, honor, prestige, and power. This was evident in the jealous and envious power of the chief priests noted in Matthew 27:18. As Jeffers notes, if the Romans were able to keep Judea's ruling elite (the Herodians) pacified, they could also keep the Jewish people pacified.<sup>53</sup> Not mentioned in detail in this paper is the relationship of Herod Antipas to Pilate. What is known is that according to Luke 23:12, Antipas and Pilate became friends "that day" because Pilate referred Jesus' case to Antipas for consideration.<sup>54</sup> This was not necessarily because Herod believed he had the right to try the case, but could be because it would be perceived in public that he had political power. Neither making a decision nor by showing his unwillingness to support a person supposedly fomenting rebellion against Rome, Jeffers asserts Antipas' actions were politically savvy.<sup>55</sup> As well, local elites to include the priests and Sadducees appear to have been satisfied and collaborative in nature with Roman rule, as revolts (primarily from those of lower status) in Judea were the exception not the rule.<sup>56</sup> Over time, it is quite possible that Pilate saw himself not so much as an individual elite in Judea, but came to see himself being integrated into the local non-Roman elite structure, thus envisioning his own status embedded in personality of the local elite. This might be a possible reason then for him seeking inquiry from the Jewish high priest and elders along with the crowd, as noted in Matthew 27:11-26, as to what to do with Jesus.<sup>57</sup> One could only imagine what was going through Pilate's mind when the ruling elite did not want Jesus to live. At this moment in time, Pilate might have realized the magnitude of the situation, which influenced him to wash clean his hands noted in Matthew 27:24, indicating his innocence of spilling Jesus' blood. While Pilate's personality exemplifies a dyadic personality nature that is embedded in the personality of other elites, Jesus does not exhibit this. Instead Jesus views Himself in relationship with God rather than humans; Jesus' personality is embedded in God's.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 128.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>57</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 78.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Patron–Client*

Far more important than modern Western culture was the first-century cultural element of “reciprocal ties of friendship,” a patron–client relationship that ruled the Roman culture and aristocracy.<sup>59</sup> The patron in many respects served as protector over the client in terms of “legal help and protection from powerful enemies,” and it was in this culture that the term *beneficia* would establish the norm of the client owing the patron respect, deference,<sup>60</sup> and support of patron–political action.<sup>61</sup> Also, a patron’s status in many instances was determined by the status and number of his clients.<sup>62</sup> The status system in the first-century was not measured by the income level one belonged to where mobility between classes was possible; instead, a person was born into a social class that prescribed a *order* of who one could or could not marry, or who received or did not receive honor and privileges.<sup>63</sup> Other indicators of higher status were also mediated by attainment of a good education rather than not being educated, Roman citizenship rather than noncitizenship, patron rather than client, ethnic Roman/Latin rather than not, voluntary ally rather than conquered enemy, and male rather than female.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the emperor, from the time of Augustus on, the emperor functioned “as the single patron of the Empire,” paying the “expenses of the governors in the imperial provinces,” to include the soldiers’ salaries.<sup>65</sup> Not seeing himself as a philanthropist, the emperor used “revenues from taxation in the imperial provinces” and other sources to fund expenditures “as well as to pay for his building projects and personal needs back in Rome.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, Emperor Tiberius would have possibly served as a powerful patron to Pilate, allowing Pilate to advance to his position based on Tiberius’ or his friend Sejanus’ patronage.<sup>67</sup> Pilate then would have been expected to support Tiberius’ policies to maintain order. In terms of Pilate’s worldview of justice regarding the trial of Jesus, Pilate could have also been biased by Jesus’ lower social status, non-Roman citizenship, non-Roman–Latin ethnicity, and nonclient status. It is possible, as well, that not having a patron may have proven difficult to receive justice at court, noting that Jeffers subscribes that this was typical of the early Republican years (although this tendency weakened over the subsequent years with more powerful clients; yet still important to understand is that Jesus was not a client at all of Pilate).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 192.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>67</sup> Bond, “Pontius Pilate.”

<sup>68</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 299.



### *Jesus' Silence*

To Pilate's amazement, Jesus did not answer a single charge<sup>69</sup> of the elders and chief priests.<sup>70</sup> *Clarke's Commentary* explains, "Silence under calumny manifests the utmost magnanimity. The chief priests did not admire this because it confounded them; but Pilate, who had no interest to serve by it, was deeply affected."<sup>71</sup> Why did not Jesus respond? *Clarke's Commentary* goes on to comment that this was expected as Isaiah prophesied: He would be as a lamb led to the slaughter and a sheep before her shearers He opened not His mouth.<sup>72</sup> God, displaying retributive justice in His love and mercy, sends Jesus Christ as sacrifice for His innate inability to be indifferent to good and evil.<sup>73</sup> Thus, justice in the Scriptures is conceived as the action of God's mercy; justice and mercy are then joined together and is now redemptive in nature.<sup>74</sup> Jesus in keeping silent not only fulfills Old Testament prophecy, but also embodies God's character of justice and mercy, of which He further refuses to participate in the culture of the day that demands a response to preserve His own honor.

Jesus' actions change the cultural paradigm from one that supported benefactor–patronage–client relationships from man honoring man to one by which the new benefactor would be God, refocusing Christ's followers to follow the patron God. This new relationship would redefine how one living within a cultural milieu would now define justice. Justice would incorporate mercy, loving one's enemies (referred to as an innovation in teaching ascribed to Jesus that opposes Jewish teachings on attitude toward evil people),<sup>75</sup> and serving God rather than people or the culture. Because Christ died for the world and saves all regardless of social–economic class, justice would now not be limited to only the wealthy or as the situation demands. Instead, justice would now be based on the redemptive act of Christ's death and resurrection prompted by God's grace, which seeks to restore a correct relationship between God and humanity. God's redemptive justice would, in essence, deal a "deathblow to the whole Judaistic scheme of merit and reward."<sup>76</sup> Jesus' silence then would have been seen as very counter-cultural in Pilate's eyes. Reflecting on Jesus' actions may very well have influenced Pilate in Matthew 27:23 to ask, "Why, what evil has He done?" and in verse 24, to seek to wash his hands clean of Jesus' innocent blood.

In addition, given the potential influence of Pilate's amazement of Jesus in Matthew 27:14 along with his wife's warning, Pilate's character reveals another difficult area to address when Pilate's character is compared to a Biblical definition of justice or righteousness. Noted in the *Biblical Encyclopedia*:

<sup>69</sup> Mt 27:14, KJV Plus, e-Sword.

<sup>70</sup> Mt 27:12, KJV Plus, e-Sword.

<sup>71</sup> Mt 27:14, *Clarke's Commentary*, e-Sword.

<sup>72</sup> Is 53:7, KJV Plus, e-Sword.

<sup>73</sup> Hb 1:13 referenced in "Justice," *Bible Encyclopedia*, <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/justice.htm>

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, "Jesus Before Pilate: Part II (John 18:28-19:16)," *Bible.org*, <http://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-pilate-part-ii-john-18282111916>

<sup>76</sup> "Justice," *Bible Encyclopedia*.

In Christian thought the idea of righteousness contains both a permanent and changing element. The fixed element is the will to do right; the changing factor is the conception of what may be right at different times and under different circumstances. Throughout the entire course of Christian revelation we discern the emphasis on the first factor. To be sure, in the days of later Pharisaism righteousness came to be so much a matter of externals that the inner intent was often lost sight of altogether (Matthew 23:23); but, on the whole and in the main, Christian thought in all ages has recognized as the central element in righteousness the intentions to be and do right. This common spirit binds together the first worshippers of God and the latest.<sup>77</sup>

Pilate, given the opportunity to *do* and *be* right failed at this intent. God provided him a way out. While it appears that Pilate desires to do what is right and just by seeking to change the minds of the crowd, he fails in that he seeks to placate the crowd instead of judging appropriately under the law. One must remember, however, that because he failed to act justly, this failure does not necessarily constitute that he did not desire or *will* to do right. If one had to weigh the evidence, however, given his other decisions as ruler over Judea (discussed in the next section), one would probably garner greater support that his will was to serve the overall interests of Rome, the Emperor Tiberius, and further maintain his own political power. His commitment was toward his own nation and cultural tradition on delivering justice.

In no doubt, however, can one argue that he was not somehow impacted by Jesus' behavior, and thus spiritually impacted. This spiritual impact then may have been very counter to even Pilate's own cultural worldview of religion, as religion in the pagan world was very much about ensuring correct ritual practice to ensure the gods were pleased,<sup>78</sup> rather than internal moral and spiritual development. This may have occurred with the Jewish leaders of the time by which they lost their focus on what God desires for His children: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"<sup>79</sup>

Also, at work, however is the cultural practice of challenging one another socially to displace honor. While the conversation with Jesus does not reflect a social game typical of the first-century to dispose another of honor, the dialogue between Pilate, the chief priests, and the elders appears to engage in this game.

### *Honor Culture Mediated through Challenge–Riposte*

Place of honor, a claim to one's worth, in the first-century determined one's rightful place and was determined by one's social standing.<sup>80</sup> An honor culture also prescribes what is noble, right, wrong, and profitable, thus playing an important role in moral instruction, and sanctions through disgrace or defense of honor in all spheres of life.<sup>81</sup> It either was ascribed passively in that one was born into it through, "birth, family

<sup>77</sup> "Righteousness," *Bible Encyclopedia*, <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/justice.htm>

<sup>78</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> Mi 6:8, ESV, in e-Sword, ver. 9.8, <http://www.e-sword.net/>

<sup>80</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 76.

<sup>81</sup> deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 24.

connections, or endowment by notable persons of power,<sup>82</sup> or it was acquired honor that could be attained by either persisting in virtuous behavior prized by their group<sup>83</sup> or through actively seeking honor at the expense of one's equal through a social contest of challenge and response.<sup>84</sup> The acquiring of honor occurs between Pilate and the chief priest and elders. In this dialogue, one seeks to usurp the power of another, thus depriving another of his reputation, thus losing credibility and reputation in the crowd.<sup>85</sup> In Matthew 27:20-23, Pilate appears to lose honor among the crowd as the crowd is persuaded by the chief priests and elders to release Barabbas rather than Jesus; the crowds did not support the decision of Pilate (as ruling governor), but were instead emboldened by the influence of the Jewish leaders. The loss of honor results in this event in the release of Barabbas and the scourging of Jesus. It is interesting to note that Jewish beliefs, as annotated in Proverbs 21:21, gives value to pursuing justice in dealing with others, as it would lead to honor.<sup>86</sup> This does not occur, however, in the pursuit of Jesus' condemnation. Jesus instead is disgraced and dishonored by His own people. The Jewish leaders act more in accord with their cultural system than within their own faith system. A critical piece that is worth considering is how these leaders seek to potentially shame those who follow Christ back into group norms by using Christ as an example of what happens to people who thwart their social status. As deSilva notes, strategies that seek to bring "wayward" people back into the fold include using shame to dissuade others from activities or attitudes that could hinder the group's survival.<sup>87</sup>

The end result, and as one might infer, is that the social game of challenge–riposte also heavily influences the ethical form a decision takes. In this instance, Pilate's decision that should have been based on a legal basis, exemplifying retributive justice, bears more resemblance however to a utilitarian focus that bases its decision on achieving the greatest good for the greatest number and self-preservation or egoistic ethics rather than virtuous-based ethics, one that focuses on doing good regardless of the consequences. Likewise, the Jewish leaders' behavior does not result in the virtuous behavior based on its own Hebrew Scriptures. Regarding Pilate's decision, it should not be completely surprising given Pilate's typical pattern of behavior, as noted his other decisions documented by Josephus and Philo.

#### IV. PILATE'S PERSONALITY AND VICE (LACK OF VIRTUOUSNESS) CHARACTERIZATIONS

Some researchers argue that Pilate was not the "weak" ruler that the Gospels portray.<sup>88</sup> Deffinbaugh writes, "Concerning Jesus' executioner, Pontius Pilate, we have a considerable body of data that contradicts the largely sympathetic portrayal of him in the

<sup>82</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 76; deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 28.

<sup>83</sup> deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 76.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>86</sup> deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 25.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>88</sup> Bond, "Pontius Pilate."

New Testament. Even among the long line of cruel procurators who ruled Judea, Pilate stood out as a notoriously vicious man. He eventually was replaced after murdering a group of Samaritans. The Romans realized that keeping him in power would only provoke continual rebellions.”<sup>89</sup> One should remember, however, that the points of view offered on Pilate’s character were influenced by the Jewish historian Josephus and Jewish philosopher Philo and were subject to some bias. Maier notes Josephus as having written with some prejudice, as most historians write, in that his Jewish culture had a proud culture of having a highest form of belief; he is also known to have exaggerated, particularly with numbers.<sup>90</sup> And Philo, who lived in Alexandria at the time, was related to the Herodian family (of which it is noted that at least one prince disliked Pilate as noted in Lk 23:12) and would have heard about Pilate from a Herodian,<sup>91</sup> thus potentially lending greater bias to his account. Yet, their perspectives cannot be entirely dismissed either or construed as false on account of these points, as Maier points out on the writings of Josephus.<sup>92</sup>

Lendering asserts that in telling essentially a Jewish story,<sup>93</sup> Pilate may not be deliberately provoking the Jewish when he brings into the holy city Jerusalem (soon after his transfer to Judea) “busts of the emperor attached to military standards.”<sup>94</sup> According to Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities*,<sup>95</sup> Pilate is instead deeply affected that the Jewish were willing to die for their beliefs, thus he removed the standards.<sup>96</sup> In this instance, it appears that Pilate shows extreme insensitivity and lack of common sense to the Jewish faith, and appears to be in a catch-22 between pride of not removing what he set up and realizing that the Jewish leaders would complain about Tiberius’ views on respecting Jewish beliefs.<sup>97</sup> In the other events that Pilate blundered on, as recorded by Josephus—building an aqueduct using temple funds (keeping in mind that use for civic needs was permitted according to Skekalim), repression of a Samaritan uprising of potentially armed persons of which leaders were executed, and refusal to remove golden shields that had no images but a inscription dedicated to Tiberius of which the people protested—Maier notes Pilate has been faulted for his performance as governor in most histories, and yet close investigation of each account reflects Pilate attempting to make the best of these most difficult administrative situations.<sup>98</sup> In the golden shields incidence, Philo refers to Pilate as inflexible, of a cruel disposition, and stubborn.<sup>99</sup> If one wishes to learn anything from Pilate’s unjust acts, evaluating the conditions and contexts within which all people experience these temptations will hopefully reveal conditions the leader must discern and avoid.

<sup>89</sup> Deffinbaugh, “Jesus Before Pilate.”

<sup>90</sup> *Jewish Antiquities*, 13.

<sup>91</sup> Jona Lendering, “Pontius Pilate,” *Livius: Articles on Ancient History*, <http://www.livius.org/pm/pilate/pilate04.html>

<sup>92</sup> *Jewish Antiquities*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Lendering, “Pontius Pilate.”

<sup>94</sup> William Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 590.

<sup>95</sup> *Jewish Antiquities*, book 18, ch 3, para 59.

<sup>96</sup> Whiston, *The New Complete Works*.

<sup>97</sup> Lendering, “Pontius Pilate.”

<sup>98</sup> Paul L. Maier, “The Fate of Pontius Pilate,” *Hermes* 99, no. 3 (1971), 363-364.

<sup>99</sup> Lendering, “Pontius Pilate” based on Philo’s *On the Embassy of Gaius*, book 38, ch 299-305.

## V. RELIGION OF FIRST-CENTURY AND CLAUDIA'S DREAM HAVING LITTLE INFLUENCE ON DECISION

Matthew 27:19 records the following warning of Claudia, Pilate's wife, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of him."<sup>100</sup> Claudia recognizes Jesus as righteous, already defined earlier as one who is equitable or holy.<sup>101</sup> It is uncertain as to what form this dream came in, if it was while she was sleeping or a vision provided while she was awake, as expressed by ὄναρ, or *onar*, meaning "of uncertain derivation."<sup>102</sup> Gill's commentary notes that this dream was not necessarily inspired by Satan in an attempt to thwart God's plans because it may have been more effective to choose the chief priest or an elder; instead it is argued that the dream was from God.<sup>103</sup> Interesting, however, is that she "suffered" in the dream; her πάσχω or *pascho* serves as a verb to indicate that she experienced a typically painful sensation, or experienced passion.<sup>104</sup> The experience was enough to indicate action was necessary.

One might ask why this dream was not given to Pilate rather than Claudia. One can only speculate about the influence of religion in her life; there are no available substantial historical records that indicate her following Christ's ideals, only tradition that indicates she became a Christian.<sup>105</sup> The dream, however, seems to reveal to us God's just character. In this passage, one can see how the death of Jesus was necessary to save humanity from its sins, yet it also indicates God by virtue of His own holiness and goodness would warn someone to have nothing to do with a man who is right, just, and holy. God still in His goodness warns a person who might have influence, namely Pilate's wife. It reveals how open she was to spiritual concerns. It also reveals that Pilate may not have been able to be reached or open to this divine knowledge. While it appears that Pilate does try to heed his wife's warning,<sup>106</sup> why does he fail? As mentioned already, the political pressure to maintain order and the social-cultural reliance upon maintaining strong relations with the elite in Judea, of course, including the Jewish leaders, could have impacted his decision to allow Christ's crucifixion. However, Matthew 27:24 reveals that the former had greater impact in that a riot was starting. But why is it that all of the gospel accounts except Matthew mention this warning? Is there another nuance one could investigate? It is possible that it reveals how a strong social culture can prevent one from doing what God asks, such as when political considerations outweigh God's direction?

<sup>100</sup> *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary*, e-Sword.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Gill's Commentary* in e-Sword, ver. 9.8, <http://www.e-sword.net/>

<sup>104</sup> *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary*, e-Sword.

<sup>105</sup> Origen's *Homilies on Matthew* indicates she became a Christian, as quoted in "Pontius Pilate," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://newadvent.org/cathen/12083c.htm>

<sup>106</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 132.

### *Role of Religion*

In the first-century, Roman culture took the role of religion very seriously; religion was not viewed as separate from the state, but played an important role in public affairs or politics.<sup>107</sup> It would not have been unusual then for politicians or statesman to have considered the gods in the decisions they made. Important to remember, however, was that rules established by religion were not focused on any code of behavior, but instead governed how a person carried out a ritual such as blessing or sacrificing an animal so that could remain in good standing with the gods.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Pilate may not have overly concerned himself with any feelings he might have experienced in condemning Jesus. Interesting enough, again, is the idea that Pilate refers to Jesus as “innocent” in Matthew 27:24 and is aware of his wife’s reference to Jesus as “righteous” in verse 19. But because religion in this first century did not necessarily establish codes of behavior, it would not have played a role in this decision except for the fact that Claudia had a dream to have nothing to do with this man.

As Jeffers notes, however, eventually political leaders, even priests of the gods, were “motivated more by social and political goals than by religious belief.”<sup>109</sup> In fact, the wealthy increasingly started to doubt the existence of the gods.<sup>110</sup> It also appears that emperor cult worship, while a method to garner control over the provinces, may not have played a large part in this case in that Judea was granted special exemption to emperor worship so long as they “revered” the emperor; yet, because Jesus was charged with taking on role of “king” it may have antagonized Pilate a bit knowing it could be a seditious act.<sup>111</sup> Taylor, however, notes that Pilate was engaged in the promotion of the emperor cult in Roman Judea, as evidenced in the numismatic coins issued by Pilate.<sup>112</sup> It is known, however, that Cicero who called Judaism a “barbarous superstition” in the work *Against Flaccus*, reveals a general attitude toward Judaism that Pilate might have also shared.<sup>113</sup> Yet again, Pilate’s determination is that Jesus is “innocent.” Pilate’s assertion that Jesus is innocent is very powerful in that it really indicates an intuitive assessment, and most likely spiritual assessment, that Jesus is just. Even given this conclusion, Jesus is crucified. While Pilate strongly believed Jesus was innocent and the outcome was very different poses difficulty in assessing Pilate’s values, character, and thought process. Jesus was crucified for a crime not well argued, for a crime he did not commit, and by a crowd who served as judge and jury with no compelling and supporting arguments. A culture based on a false sense of who is the patron and who is the client, glued together through a false idea of who a person’s personality is embedded in, and a false sense of what determines honor and who is given honor, and finally the incapacity to listen and heed God’s warning, won out that

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 102, 122.

<sup>112</sup> Joan E. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judea,” *New Testament Studies* 52 (2006): 555-582.

<sup>113</sup> Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 106.

day. In the midst of this very unjust situation, however, God redefines these social-cultural aspects through the death and resurrection of Christ so that those who believe in Him will find the ability to lead justly as God does.

## VI. GOD'S STANDARD OF JUSTICE INTERPRETED THROUGH THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

In Christ's death, humanity experiences the moral justice of God at work in that sin (deemed a moral debt now for those who believe in Christ) and the death of Christ a ransom or atonement for that debt.<sup>114</sup> What now is the new obligation that is very consistent with the cultural context of the first century? It is for the receiver of that payment of debt to give their self to the payer of that debt, thus in a first-century social-cultural context, the patron is now God, to include Jesus Christ, and the client is each person receiving that gift. In terms of the honor-shame culture, in Jesus' response to Pilate, Jesus overturns Pilate's and the world's system of honor to one that instead gives Jesus honor. Jesus thus redefines culture in that as a believer the patron and recipient of honor is God, transacted by God's morally just act of Christ payment of the penalty or debt for sin. No longer does man in a patron role serve as the protector of the client, but God is seen as the protector. As deSilva notes:

No member of the Jewish community or the Greco-Roman society would have come to faith or joined the Christian movement without first accepting that God's perspective on what kind of behavior merits honor differs exceedingly from the perspective of human beings, since the message about Jesus is that both the Jewish and Gentile leaders of Jerusalem evaluated Jesus, his convictions and his deeds as meriting a shameful death, but God overturned their evaluation of Jesus by raising him from the dead and seating him at God's own right hand as Lord.<sup>115</sup>

What does this mean? While historical interpretation has proven time and time again that Jesus' crucifixion was not just, it might be said that in the eyes of God, Jesus paying the debt for mankind was morally just. Although, God would not have had to do this and could have allowed divine retributive justice to place its mark on humanity where the eternal consequence would be eternal death, instead His divine love and mercy found a creative place in God's act of moral justice to redeem humanity. Whether or not one supports Pilate as a cruel or just a weak ruler, one cannot dismiss the requirement placed upon the believer of Christ to contemplate how this one act by our patron God now requires us to understand and live out just lives as persons or leaders. Our new understanding of justice then cannot be established solely on traditional retributive justice based on retaliation or equity for wrongful actions, but instead is mediated by redemptive mercy and grace that seeks to restore a person to a rightful relationship with God. And, by this one act incorporated into social justice, structural

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<sup>114</sup> "Andrew Fuller on Pecuniary on Pecuniary and Penal Satisfaction and the Role of the Metaphor," <http://calvinandcalvinism.com>

<sup>115</sup> deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 51.

justice, or retributive justice, leaders, rulers, or those in positions of power ought to find room for integrating a redemptive quality into that decision. In this age, however, it might prove quite difficult to do given our inherent nature to want revenge for wrongs committed and punishment based on reciprocity for wrongs done (e.g., the “eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth” approach). While justice cannot neatly fit into one category or definition of justice, each form of justice (retributive, utilitarian, restorative, and distribute) should be mediated and infused with love and mercy. This requires creative leadership that integrates structurally into legislation, policies, procedures, reward and punitive systems, and other aspects of leadership decision-making redemptive qualities that focus on restoring individuals. As history reveals, the “will to do right, and on the other, the difficulty of determining in a particular circumstance just what the right is” is not always clear.<sup>116</sup> As exemplified in the trial of Christ, making the right choices with ample guidance from God is a challenge for every person to live out in social-cultural systems that at its very heart seeks to work against God rather than for God. Yet, to consider God’s ways and will to do so is living righteously before God. Awareness of these particulars, although not in direct reference to a religious context, assists reaching Rest’s fourth stage of moral character of implementation that includes the ability to overcome “opposition, fatigue, distractions, and other factors” formidable barriers to ethical action, which takes persistence, strong will, and a strong internal locus of control.<sup>117</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Righteousness is not an elusive idea, but is deeply embedded in one’s walk with Jesus Christ. It is the basis for one’s moral spirit, and to walk without it within the depths of heart leaves a person quite vulnerable to accepting a worldly view of righteousness. In describing righteousness, the Bible Encyclopedia notes:

In Christian development increasing place is given for certain swift insights of the moral spirit. We believe that some things are righteous because they at once appeal to us as righteous. Again, some other things seem righteous because their consequences are beneficial, both for society and for the individual. Whatever makes for the largest life is in the direction of righteousness. In interpreting life, however, we must remember the essentially Christian conception that man does not live through outer consequences alone. In all thought of consequences the chief place to be given to our inner consequences. By the surrender of outward happiness and outward success a man may attain inner success. The spirit of the cross is still the path to the highest righteousness.<sup>118</sup>

For Christian leadership that involves the frequent consideration of justice. To ensure that the leader leads justly, he or she must consider the barriers presented in his or her

<sup>116</sup> “Justice,” *Bible Encyclopedia*.

<sup>117</sup> J. R. Rest, *Research on Moral Judgment in College Students*, in *Approaches to Moral Development*, ed. A. Garrod (New York: Teachers College Press) in Michael Z. Hackman and Craig E. Johnson, *Leadership: A Communication Perspective*, 5th ed. (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2009), 346.

<sup>118</sup> “Righteousness,” *Bible Encyclopedia*, <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/justice.htm>



social context that prevents him or her from leading justly. Furthermore, a leader might want to consider the following questions in his or her leadership to ensure justice is carried out in his or her leadership.

*View of myself in relationship to God:*

1. Is my benefactor or patron God, thus making our patronage to Him our priority?
2. Do I listen to His voice and His means of communication to guide and direct my actions and decisions?
3. Is merely willing to do right enough when God provides the Christian leader the means to resist temptation enough to bring about the righteousness God expects?

*View of myself in relationship to others:*

1. When do I exhibit injustice based on socio-economic status (e.g., paying patronage to the wealthy, poor, or middle class)?
2. Do I see my identity through the ideas, concerns, and others rather than as an individual distributor of justice based on being a follower of Christ?
3. How have I allowed myself to feel obligated to reciprocate and depend on those who hold over me certain benefits, honors, and necessities of life? What may I do differently to break free from those bonds so that I may serve justly in God's eyes?
4. Are my decisions of carrying out justice ever fully mediated or influenced by what might lose as a result of not serving the benefactors, those we depend on financially and socially in our lives?

*Views on justice:*

1. Do I incorporate mercy into justice, or do we merely focus on justice as equity for what a person has done or not done? In other words, do I view justice as a spiritual and ethical matter,<sup>119</sup> rather than intellectual exercise over what someone deserves or has a right to?
2. Do I take for granted that all will be rendered according to his deeds in God's eyes?<sup>120</sup>
3. Do I see in my decisions, policies, and actions justness integrated with mercy that bears a redemptive quality?

*Views on human nature:*

1. Do I recognize how human nature will desire to protect one's own social status, esteem, privilege, and honor at the sake of someone else's due justice?

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<sup>119</sup> "Justice," *Bible Encyclopedia*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

*My behavioral tendencies:*

1. Do I ever sacrifice justice for the individual to serve the nation, community, society, or organization?
2. Systemically, do I reinforce injustice in our organizations or society through establishing policies, procedures, and strategies counter to carrying out godly justice?

It is when a leader has answered these questions in light of Scripture, and has practiced the virtue of justice, that he or she is better able to withstand the pressure of culture. In doing so, one can then confidently say they have done justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God.<sup>121</sup> Always remembering, however, that it is within the struggles of doing good that a leader learns to examine his or herself and is better able and equipped to lead in greatness where God is the guide and not the world. It is further within these struggles that one finds God and an opportunity to grow in holiness and righteousness. Ultimately, what a leader could encounter in the midst of practicing justness and justice is living as a model for others to follow.

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<sup>121</sup> Mc 6:8, ESV, e-Sword.



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## THE SEASONS OF ECCLESIAL LEADERSHIP: A NEW PARADIGM

RUSSELL L. HUIZING

The contemporary model of spiritual realization (completing or accomplishing specific experiences as a sign of spiritual maturity) is an insufficient model of spiritual growth. Rather, researchers and theologians should adopt a seasonal paradigm. This work applies this model to ecclesial leadership, recommending the seasons of calling, formation, role identification, and praxis. This model suggests that these four seasons are recurring in the life of the ecclesial leader with perennial growth as the outcome. Additional research is recommended to confirm that these seasons are the best descriptions of an ecclesial leader's development and whether other seasons exist.

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All too often, American Christians think of their spiritual lives as “plug and play components.” The plug and play terminology comes from the computer field where the user can add supplementary components to a computer system simply by plugging them in. The component is equipped such that once the user plugs it in, whatever software is needed is automatically added to the computer and the component is immediately ready for use on the system. In the contemporary spiritual realm, the reigning paradigm seems to be one suggesting that so long as one has added the right components to their spiritual system, everything should be ready to move forward and onward from whatever has been holding the individual back spiritually. This is perhaps no more true than in the role of ecclesial leader. Those leaders who, over some

arbitrarily chosen timeframe, have shown competence in leading a small group, prayer meeting, corporate gathering, fellowship meal, communion, visitation, baptism, wedding, and funeral are likely ready to be considered pastoral material. When limitations arise in an individual's skills in any of these areas, there is a seminar and/or book—an “upgrade” of sorts—available to fix the problem. Yet, are these the measures that researchers should use when identifying ecclesial leadership? Is this mindset—one where components of skills and experiences are added to the individual's life—the type of paradigm that should drive the pursuit of ecclesial leadership? Perhaps a different paradigm for thinking of ecclesial leadership is needed.

## I. FOUR SEASONS

Rather than particular skills and experiences that a leader can pick and choose from, maybe a better way of thinking of ecclesial leadership is as a seasonal activity. Typically, our years are broken up into four seasons—winter, spring, summer, and fall. Once we have gone through winter once, it would be foolish to think that we know everything there is to know about winter. It would be even more foolish to think that we need not—nor will not—go through it again. It is part of the cyclical nature of this world we live in that every year winter will come around. Some years will certainly be worse than others will be. Some years will be highlighted by activities that are memorable and others that cause lasting scars. Still, every year winter will come around and the hope of winter is that spring is on its way. So it goes with all the seasons. What are the seasons that an ecclesial leader can anticipate going through as he or she grows in their effectiveness as a spiritual leader?

### *The Call*

As with every other aspect of our relationship with God, the genesis begins with Him. It is no different for the ecclesial leader. The leader's seasons begins with a call from God to the role of leadership. Though believers should see any vocational calling by God within the framework of revealing His glory in all corners of creation, the calling to nurture the bride of Christ has high stakes. Chrysostom states, “It is not the management of corn and barley, oxen or sheep, that is now under our consideration, nor any such like matters, but the very Body of Jesus. For the Church of Christ, according to St Paul, is Christ's Body, and he who is entrusted with its care ought to train it up to a state of healthiness, and beauty unspeakable, and to look everywhere, lest any spot or wrinkle, or other like blemish should mar its vigor and comeliness.”<sup>1</sup>

Chrysostom also notes that this calling is not only a spiritual responsibility, but also a public and community responsibility. Due to the conspicuous nature of ecclesial leadership, the one called to this position is likely to have all the faults and strongholds of their heart publicized across the experience of their vocation.<sup>2</sup> Those who remain steadfast and firm throughout their vocational ministry are to be admired by all,

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1. David A. Davis, “St. John Chrysostom on Ministry, Discernment, and Call,” *Theology Today* 62, no. 3 (2005): 410.

2. *Ibid.*, 412.

according to Chrysostom.<sup>3</sup> In this way, the call to ecclesial leadership is a calling that may put the respondent's spiritual life under great pressure, even in some cases to the point of breaking. One might think past experiences that develop physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual maturity would shelter the ecclesial leader from such pressures. However, Hicks found that there was no significant relationship between second-career ecclesial leaders and satisfaction, maturity, or morale.<sup>4</sup> Thus, whether called by God early in life or later in life, God has called the ecclesial leader to a particularly difficult role within His family.

When one considers the role that God calls the ecclesial leader to, these difficulties are put into proper context. Although God calls all of His people to imitate Christ within their own vocation, the ecclesial leader is the role model of this imitation to the rest of the ecclesial community (1 Cor 11:1). Maliti listed seven ways in which leaders are visible and living imitations of Christ: (1) as a priest interceding for others, (2) as a life sacrificed, (3) as an image of communion together with God and His family, (4) as a limitless witness of God's love, (5) as a model of becoming one with the mind and attitude of God, (6) as a practical demonstration of the characteristics of God, and (7) as an example of enablement to holiness.<sup>5</sup> If the ecclesial leader is called to be the primary representation of a deepening knowledge of Christ, an expression of the supernatural power of Christ's resurrection, a public example of the fellowship of sharing in Christ's suffering, and as one constantly becoming like Christ in His death, then it is no wonder that the calling is a difficult one (cf. Phil 3:10). No one lives up to it completely and perhaps this is where the calling is most fraught with danger. God calls the ecclesial leader to live a life that is impossible to accomplish fully while at the same time reminded and burdened by even the faintest hint of sinfulness. "Saints are needed. Therefore the church calls persons to be pastors to help the rest of us be more than the persons we would be if we had been left to our own devices."<sup>6</sup>

However, as changes occurred to the way that ecclesial leaders obtained their positions, so also changes occurred to the way that congregations began to think of their pastors. The Reformation broadened the idea of vocation to extend out to every form of employment that benefited humanity.<sup>7</sup> However, for much of Protestant Christianity, this meant the pastor's vocation had a virtual equality with the farmer's vocation and the machinist's vocation and the academic's vocation. Rather than a hierarchal ecclesial organization deciding on the placement of pastors, for many Protestants, the local church was the primary arbiter on the pastor's placement as leader.<sup>8</sup> In addition, after the Reformation, a pastor's method of support often shifted away from denominational or governmental support to the local church body supporting

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3. Ibid., 412.

4. Thomas H. Hicks, "A Study of the Background, Level of Job Satisfaction, Maturity, and Morale of 'Delayed Vocation' Catholic Priests," *Review of Religious Research* 22, no. 4 (1981).

5. Patrick M. Maliti, "Priesthood: A Call to Imitate Christ, the Good Shepherd," *African Ecclesial Review* 39, no. 2 (1997): 90.

6. William H. Willimon, "Why a Pastor Should Not Be a 'Person,'" *Theology Today* 50, no. 4 (1994): 585.

7. Willimon, "Why a Pastor," 585.

8. For example, Waldemar W. Wehmeier, "Calling a Pastor: How It Evolved in the Missouri Synod," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4, no. 5 (1977).

the pastor. In many people's eyes—including pastors—this amounted to the church hiring the pastor just as any non-ecclesial organization would hire a blue or white-collar worker. Today, nineteen percent of pastors are forced from ministry at least once during their pastoral life.<sup>9</sup> Another six percent are fired from their churches.<sup>10</sup> Although the most effective pastoral years are in years five through fourteen, the average tenure of a pastor in one location is five years.<sup>11</sup>

Willimon provided a helpful resource through the liturgy of ordination for a bishop in the *Apostolic Tradition* in Hippolytus. This resource reminds the Church of the importance of seeking the called rather than seeking to fill a position.<sup>12</sup> First, the ordinate would be one chosen by the community of believers. Though this seems to be more congregational than is typically thought of for third-century churches, and may refer to a council, the language throughout the liturgy suggested an affirmation from the local congregation as a whole. Only after this acceptance by all in the congregation, would the formal service of ordaining the individual occur as an act of worship (on the Lord's Day) with both the leadership of the local church body as well as leadership from the larger church community. Once the agreement of the church was affirmed by the other ecclesial leadership present, those who had prior ordination would pass on the blessing of ordination through the laying on of hands. Then everything was silent as all asked for the Spirit's presence. Only after the descent of the Spirit were the bishops to intercede vocally for this new ordinate. Rather than siding with a purely episcopal or congregational approach, the liturgy wisely sought affirmation from both the local gathering of believers as well as the broader body of Christ in recognizing the calling on an individual's life. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the liturgy directed further substantiation through the presence of the Holy Spirit on the gathering of believers. Though the liturgy is not explicit on how such a visitation of the Holy Spirit is identified, that believers were dependent on the presence of the Holy Spirit in affirming the calling of the individual is a step perhaps overlooked in today's ordination process.

The calling, then, of an ecclesial leader is no small thing. It is a high and honorable calling for a sinful and broken human to imitate the life of Christ in such a way that it highlights both the leader's own incapacity (and, thus, the greater perfection of Jesus) and reflects the glory of the Savior. All this is done in such a way as to encourage others in their own calling from God to shine His glory throughout all of creation. The ecclesial leader is truly not a professional, but rather an incarnation of the ministry of Jesus in the life of the community of God who can only have a truly effective ministry through the calling of God.

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9. H. B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 34.

10. *Ibid.*, 34.

11. *Ibid.*, 34.

12. William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 31-32.

### *The Formation*

Even a cursory study of the men and women of faith illustrated in Scripture shows that simply because God has called a particular person to ministry in no way suggests that the person is ready for that ministry. Even Abraham, the father of faith, was sidetracked in his travels to the Promised Land, lied along the way about his relationship to Sarah, and generally tried to fulfill God's promises in his own way. Yet, over the years, his faith was formed in such a way that when called to sacrifice his son, he obediently got up early the next morning and proceeded to trust God, as exhibited by his actions. In the same way, an ecclesial leader should not expect that when God has called that they are already spiritually formed. Instead, they may simply be at the beginning of a great journey of deepening faith. In fact, in keeping with the promises of God that He is restoring our whole being, spiritual formation is only part of what God is accomplishing in our lives, which also includes vocational and personal formation.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the importance of the leader growing in their spiritual formation is integral to effective pastoral ministry, not the least reason being that the spiritual formation of the leader will deeply affect the spiritual formation of the people that the leader leads.<sup>14</sup> Nor should one allow the paradigm of "plug and play" to obfuscate the image of spiritual formation. A seasonal paradigm recognizes every phase of human life and development as an opportunity for spiritual development. One is never too old to be developing spiritually.<sup>15</sup>

Most expect spiritual formation for the ecclesial leader to occur during some level of Christian education. Certainly, spiritual formation cannot be divorced from Christian education without divorcing the very means through which much of Scripture seeks to form spirituality.<sup>16</sup> From the teaching of the Law, to wisdom literature, to the teachings of Jesus, and through the directives of the epistles, Scripture is filled with the idea of education being one way, if not one of the primary ways, through which spiritual formation must occur. However, the pursuit of service, holiness, mission, practical organizational skills, internship, prayer, preaching, sacrament, community-mindedness, justice, sincerity, and leadership cannot be taught solely within the classroom environment.<sup>17</sup> Some other means is necessary in addition to Christian education. The search of this other means led Hess and Kariuki wa Karega to suggest that the spiritual formation of the ecclesial leader begins with an understanding of who the leader has

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13. Cosmas A. R. K'Otienoh, "Formation of Priests as Agents of Evangelization for the Church-as-Family of God (I)," *African Ecclesial Review* 41, no. 4-6 (1999): 248-257.

14. Ruth Haley Barton, "It Begins With You! How the Spiritual Formation of the Pastor Effects the Spiritual Formation of the Congregation," *Common Ground Journal* 7, no. 1(2009): 26-36.

15. William J. Bryan, "Lessons From the Exodus Elders," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 21, no. 1/2 (2009): 17-35.

16. Sophia R. G. Steibel, "Christian Education and Spiritual Formation: One and the Same?" *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 340-355.

17. Raphael S. Ndingi Mwana 'a Nzeki, "Vocation and Formation of Priests," *African Ecclesial Review* 32, no. 1 (1990): 16-28; Ojil C. Bernard, "Formation of Priests as Agents of Evangelization for the Church-as-Family of God (II)," *African Ecclesial Review* 41, no. 4-6 (1999): 264-265; A. N. O. Ekwunife, "Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation," *African Ecclesial Review* 39, no. 4 (1997): 201-207.

been created by God to be.<sup>18</sup> As Kariuki wa Karega notes, this spiritual identity must correspond to the intimacy, transcendence, integrity, and priesthood promulgated throughout Scripture.<sup>19</sup> Yet, as Hess notes, this must be in the context of the skills and abilities placed in the individual by God as well as within the context and environment of ministry.<sup>20</sup> It is here that Hess points out the inherent inadequacy of Christian education being the only means of spiritual formation. Christian education will “necessarily displace, disorient, and redevelop participants from where they are (where they have lived before, whom they have been personally)” and thus becomes an obstacle to true spiritual development if used in exclusion of other spiritual formation practices.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, spiritual formation will necessarily include certain characteristics that are nurtured over the course of time. Stewart highlighted this by adapting non-ecclesial leadership theory on complex social organizations for the church environment.<sup>22</sup> In Stewart’s model, an effective leader is accomplished in three proficiencies: (1) the leader must be able to identify “ill-defined, non-routine problems,” (2) the leader must be able to develop the skills necessary to address the identified problems, and (3) the leader must be able to develop the skills necessary for followers to address the identified problems.<sup>23</sup> Leadership styles used to address these problems can vary in at least seven distinct ways depending on the spiritual maturity and formation of the leader.<sup>24</sup> Added to this, McKenna, Yost, and Boyd found five primary events in ecclesial leadership development: (1) prevocational ministry events, (2) ministry transition events, (3) leadership experiences, (4) interpersonal events, and (5) educational and training events.<sup>25</sup> Finally, there is a developmental process in the ecclesial leader’s own faith, which includes six stages.<sup>26</sup> As might be expected, the formation of an ecclesial leader is a complex process. Based on the research cited, however, an ecclesial leader must be able to show effectiveness in their ability, leadership style, experience, and faithfulness.

What is not recommended is to quantify this all in such a way to identify a “recipe”—a final, completed product—for the perfect ecclesial leader. The formation of an ecclesial leader is not as simple as combining certain ingredients with the unique pinch of this or that element. Instead, the formation of an ecclesial leader is more like the nurturing of a fruit tree. It has certain characteristics that suggest seasons of

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18. Lisa M. Hess, “Formation in the Worlds of Theological Education: Moving From ‘What’ to ‘How,’” *Teaching Theology & Religion* 11, no. 1 (2008): 14-23; John B. Kariuki wa Karega, “Priestly Formation: Challenges, Problems and Prospects,” *African Ecclesial Review* 48, no. 4 (2006): 242-266.

19. Kariuki wa Karega, “Priestly Formation,” 247.

20. Hess, “Formation in the Worlds,” 17-18.

21. *Ibid.*, 19.

22. Alice C. Stewart, “The Workplace of the Organised Church: Theories of Leadership and the Christian Leader,” *Culture & Religion* 9, no. 3 (2008): 301-318.

23. *Ibid.*, 308.

24. Brian Hall, “Leadership Development and Spiritual Growth,” *Anglican Theological Review* 9, (1984): 100-121.

25. Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 186.

26. Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield, 2005), 7.



fruitfulness—healthy limbs, strong roots, blooming flowers, and green leaves. The fruit from this tree is pleasing to the eye, good to the taste, and healthy to the body. Such is the outcome of spiritual formation. As Quevedo so aptly described, the formation of an ecclesial leader is one who is growing closer and closer to a person reflecting the leadership of Christ including mature, God-experiencing, God-submitting, catholicity on a loving mission to the poor in spirit through community, dialogue, peace, humility, and with a compassion to invite others to adoption into the family of God.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Role*

Even a cursory review of ecclesiology over the past 100 years shows the tectonic changes that have shifted ecclesial leadership responsibilities far beyond anything imagined by a vast majority of pastors in times past. IDAK Group listed the top ten typical contemporary ecclesial leadership responsibilities: (1) providing vision, (2) communicating God's word, (3) directing evangelism, (4) counseling, (5) studying and research, (6) overseeing ministry programs, (7) mentoring and developing leaders, (8) supervising volunteers and staff, (9) directing finances and budgets, and (10) performing other pastoral duties including visitation, baptism, weddings, funerals, and other community events.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, it is easier to grasp the function of pastoral roles by using images to describe the vocation. Trulear described the ecclesial leader as an interpreter and organizer who through word and deed makes sense of followers' spiritual journeys.<sup>29</sup> He also used the image of the ecclesial leader as a parent who nurtures, mentors, and assists in the maturation of the rest of the church family.<sup>30</sup> Looking at the role of ecclesial leaders from the leader's perspective, Forward qualitatively collected over twenty different images from pastors who were asked for appropriate metaphors for their ecclesial roles.<sup>31</sup> He was able to categorize these images into three primary groups: (1) dominant leadership roles, (2) submissive leadership roles, and (3) affiliative leadership roles.<sup>32</sup> What Forward's research suggested is that there are situational cues as to the role that a leader is expected and needs to take in order to be effective.<sup>33</sup> McKenna et. al's identification of key events in ecclesial leadership development also tended to support the situational approach to leadership role.<sup>34</sup> As might be expected, perhaps the best images for the role that an ecclesial leader is to fulfill comes from Christ Himself. Willimon described the ecclesial leader's role as priest, pastor, interpreter of Scripture, preacher, servant, counselor, teacher, evangelist, and prophet.<sup>35</sup> Willimon noted how each of these images has their

27. Orlando B. Quevedo, "Notes on the Formation of Priests," *Philippine Canonical Forum* 9 (2007): 257.

28. IDAK Group, Inc., "Your Church's Leadership Needs," *Maximizing Team*, March 27, 2008.

29. Harold Dean Trulear, "Standing in the Gap: Pastoral Theology in the African-American Church," *Journal of Religious Thought* 57/58, no. 2/1-2 (2005): 32.

30. *Ibid.*, 29-32.

31. G. L. Forward, "Clergy Stress and Role Metaphors: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 23, no. 2 (2000): 158-184.

32. *Ibid.*, 181.

33. *Ibid.*, 178.

34. McKenna et al., "Leadership Development," 182.

35. Willimon, "Why a Pastor."

initiation in Christ. Thus, it only makes sense that if the calling of the ecclesial leader comes from God and the individual is being formed into the image of Christ, then the role that the ecclesial leader must fulfill will have its roots in Christ as well. Seeing Christ's relationships with His disciples and other followers as the image of what pastors are called to accomplish provides a rich tapestry of images for the pastor to imitate.

Much of contemporary non-ecclesial leadership theory focuses on the question: What do we do to attain certain outcomes? On the other hand, one of the primary driving questions that Britton suggested must drive a theology of leadership is: Why do we do what we do to conform to Jesus?<sup>36</sup> This shift in question has significant effects on the images used to describe the role of the ecclesial leader. If one starts with the question of outcome attainment, then images of a CEO, coach, or visionary are likely to surface.<sup>37</sup> Though ecclesial leaders can learn lessons and skills for leadership from these images, they do not seem to connect with the same images that Scripture uses to describe leadership. However, if the framing question of ecclesial leadership seeks to pursue practices that conform us to the image of Christ, then very different images surface, such as shepherd, gardener, and learner.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, the role of the ecclesial leader is to conform increasingly to the image of Christ. Though the ecclesial leader's contemporary role within the church necessarily has more logistical aspects, the leader must never allow these logistical concerns to smudge the developing image of Christ Himself in his or her life. Following the example of the apostles in the early church, an ecclesial leader must not leave the ministry that he or she has been called by God to fulfill for the sake of waiting on tables. Though there are, no doubt, organizational aspects to the church, it is something more—an organism that is living, growing, and maturing. Though organizational skills need to be present in order to lead the organizational aspects of the church effectively, one must never forget the far greater calling of assisting Christ in showing the beauty of His bride by ironing out the wrinkles and wiping away the blemishes. Any image(s) selected to represent the role of the ecclesial leader must have this organic responsibility in the forefront.

### *The Praxis*

It is in the area of praxis that the philosophy of ecclesial leadership becomes most imprecise because each distinctive expression of a calling, formation, and role identification is going to be expressed uniquely by each ecclesial leader. Still, several general practices, expressed in a myriad of unique ways, tend to give form to the leader's practice. Since the leadership in question is specifically ecclesial leadership, worship must be a practice expressed in any ecclesial leadership role.<sup>39</sup> To be properly ecclesial leadership, rather than simply organizational leadership, the ecclesial leader

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36. Joseph H. Britton, "Something to Say: Pastoral Leadership and the Word," *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 1 (2009): 93-105.

37. Forward, "Clergy Stress and Role Metaphors," 171-172.

38. *Ibid.*, 172-173.

39. Willimon, "Why a Pastor," 91-109.

must create a sacred environment focused upon the glorification of God.<sup>40</sup> Any other focus of the Church distracts it from its primary purpose—to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Thus, the praxis of the ecclesial leader will be wholly concerned with extending the glorification and enjoyment of God both in the leader's life and in the life of those who follow the leader. This practice of whole-life worship is within the context of God's Word.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, this contextualization of God's Word results in teaching but not as the first effect of God's Word on the leader. Instead, the leader must submit his or her own life to be molded by the power of God through His Word, allowing God to transform and recreate the individual in His own image.<sup>42</sup> Such a transformation does not happen quickly and requires patient prayer on the part of the leader.<sup>43</sup> However, as the leader submits their own life to God's Word and approaches Him in faith through prayer, they will see not only their own lives transformed but also the lives of the people that they lead. This will provide the leader with opportunities to be used by God to further mature and nurture the spiritual lives of others who grow as disciples of Christ.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the ecclesial leader, regardless of calling, formation, or role, will have the characteristics of whole-life worship, a Scripture-transformed life, prayer-expectant faith, and disciple-making transformation. Obviously, how a senior pastor, parish priest, church elder, or diocese bishop work these characteristics out in their life is going to be as unique as the individual and the ministry context. However, such praxis will accomplish both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and in doing so reflect Jesus in His own fulfillment of these commands and promises.

## II. CONCLUSION

As can be seen, following the paradigm recommended in this work will require a far longer term outlook on ecclesial leadership development. This does not suggest that leaders must be older—Paul seemed quite content on putting younger people who exhibited conformity to the image of Christ into important ecclesial leadership positions (1 Tim 4:12). However, it does suggest that simply obtaining a degree or having certain prerequisite experiences is insufficient in determining the suitability and effectiveness of an ecclesial leader. To follow the paradigm suggested is to follow a life-long learning experience. The four seasons identified in this work are not intended to be a one-time experience or event, but rather a series of events that the ecclesial leader will continually come around to as God sows, cultivates, harvests, and allows the leader's life to lie fallow. As God calls an ecclesial leader to a particular expression of vocation, He will prepare that leader through spiritual formation. As God forms the leader spiritually, the purpose, strengths, and weaknesses of the leader's role will begin to be defined, which in turn will define the praxis of the leader. However, as time goes on and the good works that God has prepared ahead of time for the leader (Eph 2:10) come to

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40. Ibid., 91.

41. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1986), 115-117; Willimon, "Why a Pastor," 93.

42. Willimon, "Why a Pastor," 91.

43. Strauch, 120.

44. Strauch, 107.

a conclusion, it can be expected that a new calling will be extended by God and thus a new “year” of seasons will begin. Peter provides an exemplar of this seasonal aspect of ecclesial leadership. At the beginning of Peter’s experience with Jesus, he is called by Jesus to be a fisher of people (Mt 4:19). Peter’s spiritual formation culminates in his willingness to follow Jesus, even when walking on water (Mt 14:28), immediately followed by his declaration of Jesus as the Messiah (Mt 16:16). This declaration of Jesus as Messiah by Peter cements his role within the future of the Church (v. 17-20). Peter would attempt to practice this role to the best of his ability at that time (Mt 17:4, 26:33). Though Peter fails in completely practicing the role that Jesus had called him and formed him for, this should not be seen as a total loss. It is specifically in the context of these failures, that Jesus can usher in the next calling in Peter’s life (Jn 21:15-19) as a shepherd of His sheep.

Several areas of further study will assist in building on the foundation of this paradigm. The most obvious question is whether the four seasons identified are the only seasons that an ecclesial leader goes through. Although four seasons nicely fit into our common concept of seasons, there is no specific reason to believe that there need only be four seasons. Nor is it even necessary that the ones identified are the most descriptive of the seasons that an ecclesial leader goes through. Additional research into the seasons of an ecclesial leader will assist in clearing up this ambiguity. In addition, research determining the means of assisting the ecclesial leader to understand their current season would be helpful. In the meteorological context, it is possible to know technically which particular season one is in based on solstices or informally by weather conditions. In the same way, there are probably both formal and informal means of identifying the seasons of a leader. Identifying such seasons can assist the leader to know what is ahead, prepare for the anticipated difficulties in the next season, and rejoice in the blessings associated with the upcoming season. Finally, an outcome of this work is the drawing together of the research by Hagberg and Guelich, McKenna et al., and Stewart. Finding a means of combining their research into a multi-dimensional assessment would be of incalculable worth not only in ecclesial leadership but also more generally in the spiritual formation of all followers of Christ.

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## DYSFUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP'S CONTENTION WITH ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

RAYMIE GRUNDHOEFER

In a global knowledge-based economy, organizational learning and innovation are the most critical assets for achieving sustainable organizational performance with a competitive edge.<sup>1</sup> A learning organization is a culture where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. Still, dysfunctional leadership fails to foster supportive learning cultures or implement tools shown to improve employee development and increase the propagation of information. Narcissistic leaders, for example, stagnate learning by devaluing autonomous learning, social collaboration, communication, and democratic staples such as strong shared values, empowerment, participation, and creativity in organizations.

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### I. DYSFUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: AN ANTITHESIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Leadership dedicated to an organizational learning culture commits to cultivate their organization and its members by providing a steady support system of

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<sup>1</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

encouragement for individual development, creativity, and innovation. Consider Paul: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul was describing knowledge creation as a constant and gradual process that requires leadership’s support for proper communication, social support, and learning opportunities, and, most importantly, autonomy. Learners must be provided the opportunity to grow autonomously with the confidence and cleverness to ask new questions in order to innovate.<sup>3</sup> Boa suggests that Paul’s desire was for the Colossian church to become a learning church where people could receive more than a lecture. Disciples of this organization could “come and, in the context of healthy relationships, experience, connect, reflect and test the fundamentals of the Christian faith.”<sup>4</sup> This Biblical illustration of organizational culture embraces learning where all participants are encouraged and expected to aggrandize, be part of the knowledge creation process, and develop innovative solutions to serve the organization and all of its members.

In a global knowledge-based economy, organizational learning and innovation are the most critical assets for achieving sustainable organizational performance with a competitive edge.<sup>5</sup> A learning organization is a culture. It is where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. Although research has uncovered a strong relationship between organizational learning, innovation, and organizational performance,<sup>6</sup> many leaders disregard these facts due to ignorance, arrogance, and egotism. These leaders exhibit a dysfunctional style by setting a tone of callousness and avoidance.

Rather than support organizational learning values, dysfunctional leadership avoids implementing productive and transformational learning initiatives, policies, and tools. The debilitating leadership may cite cost, security, and unknown effectiveness as reasons for their apprehension to support a learning organization, however the most common reason for hesitancy is actually an unwillingness to support a solution that is more geared towards sustained organizational growth than the immediate return of recognition. Dysfunctional leaders point to the need to advance initiatives that offer

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<sup>2</sup> Col 1:9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Learning Organization,” *Bible.org*, <http://bible.org/seriespage/learning-organization>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective Reading* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1978); David A. Garvin, *Learning in Action: A Guide to Putting the Learning Organization to Work* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

immediate and known return on investment rather than policies that currently have few validated measurements.

The continued success of a learning organization can only be realized through deliberate and unremitting development of a supportive culture that fosters communication and democracy. The culture aggregates autonomous learning and social collaboration to develop organizational members and induce knowledge creation processes. Although a learning organization culture has become synonymous with the steady and continuous success and abilities of organizations,<sup>7</sup> the narcissistic characteristics of dysfunctional leaders disallow the necessary organizational changes and policies that foster long-term organizational learning.

## II. DYSFUNCTION

Barbara Kellerman, research director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, has developed a list of common leadership tendencies of dysfunctional leaders: incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, and evil. Although this list of traits is not exhaustive and is likely in a persistent state of evolution given our fast-paced global society, the overall theme is a general persona of egoism and an inability to put the organization's needs before his or her own—*narcissism*.<sup>8</sup> While it may be difficult to immediately recognize these traits and identify a dysfunctional and narcissistic leader due to his or her deceitfulness, the consequences of allowing such a leader to remain in authority are toxic and will spread through ill-conceived policies, follower selection, and the cultivation of a noxious culture.

Kofman and Senge (1993) argue that certain leaders' overemphasis on competition makes looking good more important than being good.<sup>9</sup> The authors claim that the fear of not looking good is what deters dysfunctional and narcissistic leaders from pursuing organizational learning. Egotism prevents them from acknowledging that they don't know everything and deters them from allowing the organization's members to take part in innovating organizational practices and policies. Dysfunctional leaders view the need to implement a learning culture as a sign of weakness, incompetence, and/or a personal character flaw. Chris Argyris refers to leaders' ability to avoid organizational learning as "skilled incompetence," or the skill of protecting the ego while turning a blind eye to potential incompetence.<sup>10</sup> In place of real learning, Kofman and Senge posit that dysfunctional leaders will implement quick fixes to solve competitive

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<sup>7</sup> Anthony J. Dibella, (2003). "Organizations as Learning Portfolios" in *Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management*, eds. Mark Esterby-Smith and Marjorie A. Lyles (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 145-160.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Downs, *Beyond the Looking Glass: Overcoming the Corporate Culture of Corporate Narcissism* (New York: Amacom, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Fred Kofman and Peter M. Senge, "Communities of Commitment: The Heart of Learning Organizations," *Organizational Dynamics* 22, no. 2 (1993): 4-23.

<sup>10</sup> Argyris and Schön, *Organizational Learning*.

difficulties. These ill-considered solutions are produced as a means “to show results, and fast, regardless of the long-term, system-wide consequences.”<sup>11</sup>

Policies and tools that inspire a learning organization develop mature cultures rich with organizational values such as innovation, creativity, autonomy, and democracy.<sup>12</sup> The potential of mature cultures based on organizational learning cannot be realized when organizational decisions are determined in haste by ego-centric leadership. Egotistical leaders have been found to stagnate learning by devaluing democratic staples such as strong shared values,<sup>13</sup> empowerment, participation, and creativity in organizations.<sup>14</sup> The narcissistic leader that continues to avoid creativity and innovation will ultimately lead organization-wide incompetence from the top down. Dysfunctional rigidity will devastate an organization as the leader is unable or unwilling to adapt to the needs of an evolving modern organization. Kellerman describes such dysfunction as a means of fostering incompetence due to the lack of will or skill (or both) to sustain effective action.<sup>15</sup>

## II. FOLLOWERSHIP

The ability to attract and develop capable human resources is considered by many to be one of the most important competencies of modern organizations. In a healthy leader–follower relationship, creativity and innovation are nurtured through cultures driven by strong shared values.<sup>16</sup> Employees need to feel empowered to produce creative solutions. They need to know that all ideas will be heard and respected, and that their ideas will stimulate prompt action. Followers in a healthy organizational environment also expect and require some degree of influence over organizational decisions, particularly when the decision directly affects their team, working conditions, motivations, or environment. A complete lack of influence over organizational decisions may lead quality members of the organization to frustration due to a sense of powerlessness and lack of cohesion. Being an advocate for follower empowerment, participation, and creativity has surfaced as one of the most important traits of successful leadership. Although it is known that personnel must continue to transform to keep pace with change and to survive in the world economy,<sup>17</sup> the narcissistic leader argues that change is a process of boosting productivity rather than improving workers lives and increasing worker influence.

<sup>11</sup> Kofman and Senge, “Communities of Commitment,” 10.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard, *Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Merrelyn Emery, *Participative Design for Participative Democracy* (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Peter M. Senge, “Personal Transformation,” *Executive Excellence* 11, no. 1 (1994): 17-19.

<sup>17</sup> R. Moilanen, “Finish Learning Organizations: Structure and Styles,” *The Entrepreneurial Executive*, no. 4 (1999): 1-40.



Even though Kellerman argues that “to insular (dysfunctional) leaders, human rights in general are less important than the rights, and even the needs and wants, of their specific constituencies,”<sup>18</sup> dysfunctional leaders cannot act alone. All leadership requires followership. Leadership requires individuals that are willing to align themselves with the vision set forth by the leader and work towards achieving common organizational goals. Dysfunctional leadership is no different and will likewise attract dysfunctional followers that contribute to the organization with many of the same dysfunctional and narcissistic traits that the leader possesses. A leader cannot maintain authority with dysfunctional characteristics such as being callous, corrupt, or insulated without follower support.

Riggio, Chaleef, and Lipman-Blumen suggest that followers may be the directing force in the leader–follower dichotomy.<sup>19</sup> This would suggest that leaders are “malleable products of cumulative followership actions,”<sup>20</sup> and that a dysfunctional leader is attracted to an organization due to the dysfunctional attributes of its members. Regardless of the level of follower influence, the relationship between leaders and followers is a partnership that must be substantiated and acted out. In order for narcissistic leadership to disallow a culture of organizational learning, a partnership of dysfunctional followers have to support the omission.

### III. LEARNING ORGANIZATION

One of the most difficult challenges facing organizations is to develop information processing mechanisms capable of coping with variety, uncertainty, coordination, and an unclear environment (Daft & Lengel, 1986).<sup>21</sup> To cope with this challenge, organizations are taking on learning as a core value of their environments and culture.<sup>22</sup> Organizational learning processes are the key to the continuous success of the organization and are derived from learning-based organizational changes and environment adaptation.<sup>23</sup> The primary concern of the learning organization is enhancing organizational capacity through a learning process that is performance-based and tied to business objectives.<sup>24</sup> From this perspective, it is the structural aspects of the learning organization that promote and enhance the continuous learning

<sup>18</sup> Kellerman, *Bad Leadership*, 169

<sup>19</sup> Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleef, and Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Art of Followership* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel, “Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness and Structural Design,” *Management Science* 32 no. 5 (1986): 554-571.

<sup>22</sup> Ji Hoon Song, “The Effects of Learning Organization Culture on the Practices of Human Knowledge Creation: An Empirical Research Study in Korea,” *International Journal of Training and Development* 12, no. 4 (2008): 265-281.

<sup>23</sup> Argyris and Schön, *Organizational Learning*; Garvin, *Learning in Action*; Karen E. Watkins and Victoria J. Marsick, *Sculpting the Learning Organization: Lessons in the Art and Science of Systematic Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Michael J. Marquardt, *Building the Learning Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996); Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

process and, in turn, create organizational values.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately the shared organizational values developed in a learning organization will lead to individual development and process innovations.

Knowledge creation has become a core measurement of success for an organization with a culture of learning. Bossidy and Charan argue that if organizations fail to embrace practices that enhance knowledge creation they will lack the experts necessary to sustain long term competitiveness.<sup>26</sup> The “flatter” structure of modern organizations naturally leads to the need for increased knowledge creation through democracy, intrinsic motivation, and empowerment. Narcissistic leaders may allow the flattening of the organizational hierarchy as long as their personal influence and authority is maintained. However, flatter organizations often result in a lack of expertise separation requiring functional leaders to encourage followers to develop deeper skills. Successful leaders will combat the consequences from expertise separation through the promotion of effective knowledge creation processes. Dysfunctional leaders, however, will choose to implement basic learning programs that produce simple but quick measurable results rather than foster the deep specialization. In this case, the potential long-term success of the organization will be stifled.

#### IV. DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNICATION

Organizations implementing a culture of learning have thrived in a world of increasing interdependency and change.<sup>27</sup> When we speak of a learning organization, we are not describing a random phenomenon or labeling an independent reality. A learning organization is derived from a common set of democratic and communication factors that promote continuous and effective learning throughout the organization.<sup>28</sup> A learning culture shapes an environment that proactively adapts and innovates<sup>29</sup> through encouragement, support, and rich collective learning opportunities that promote communication to effectively manage knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Organizational learning involves setting the roles for all members as learners as well as facilitators in a common system.

The value of organizational democracy in the workplace is not a new concept. In 1970, Freire argued that a democratic society, which encourages participation by all its members, is needed to replace the learned helplessness.<sup>31</sup> Knowledge creation and distribution is at the heart of a learning organization and encouraging these methods of organizational development is a democratic process. Democracy, however, threatens

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<sup>25</sup> J. H. Song, “The Effects of Learning Organization Culture on the Practices of Human Knowledge Creation: An Empirical Research Study in Korea,” *International Journal of Training and Development* 12, no. 4 (2008): 265-281.

<sup>26</sup> Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York: Crown, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Senge, “Personal Transformation.”

<sup>28</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*. Watkins and Marsick, *Sculpting the Learning Organization*.

<sup>29</sup> Song, “The Effects of Learning Organization Culture.”

<sup>30</sup> Marquardt, *Building the Learning Organization*.

<sup>31</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970).

the narcissistic leader because ideally it results in more distributed and collaborative leadership. Dysfunctional egotistical leadership can obstruct organizational learning simply by disallowing democratic processes.

Learning cannot be accomplished in an environment where the majority of the members' needs, wants, and wishes are discounted and ignored. Callous leadership thwarts democracy and communication as it is too uncaring to value the voices of the organization's members. Further, the insulation of a dysfunctional leadership usually minimizes the motivation to sincerely value the welfare of others.

### *Communication*

Leaders need to energize, empower, support, and communicate.<sup>32</sup> Communication is a critical component to implementing organizational learning as it is the underlying conduit of successful collaborative objectives and emergent knowledge. Effective organizational communication improves knowledge transfer and change processes, allows learning to happen through the development of the organization's members, and results in greater commitment and involvement. More than organizational and technical processes, communication and knowledge creation are the result of cultivated human factors and therefore rely on nourishing human emotions and physical feelings. Dismissing the value of human factors, narcissistic leadership defines organizational structure in terms of unmalleable rules. They develop processes that ensure data flows structurally within the context of the leader's intention. It is vital to the egotistical leader that all organizational information exchange is either created by leadership, appears to be created by leadership, or has gone through processes that have been configured by leadership.

## V. AUTONOMOUS LEARNING AND SOCIAL COLLABORATION

During the first eighteen years of a person's life we rarely have any concept of knowledge creation. Instead we are fed information, provided all the materials, assignments, lectures, and homework to successfully pass class curricula and progress with a feeling of accomplishment. To the shock of those leaving high school, *surface learning* that is fed to you is no longer adequate; life suddenly requires deeper learning<sup>33</sup>—a product of knowledge creation and self-directed autonomous learning skills.

Developing a culture that is conducive to learning and the knowledge creation process requires greater clarity in the methods we communicate our expectations. Moreover, increased attention must be directed towards *developing* the *skill* of autonomous learning.<sup>34</sup> We are agents of change in this world as long as we apply

<sup>32</sup> Emery, *Participative Design for Participative Democracy*.

<sup>33</sup> David Newble and Robert Cannon, *A Handbook for Teachers in Universities and Colleges: A Guide to Improving Teaching Methods* (London: Kogan Page, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Diane Railton and Paul Watson, "Teaching Autonomy: Reading Groups and the Development of Autonomous Learning Practices," *Active Learning in Higher Education* 6 (2005): 182-193.

ourselves and are encouraged to apply ourselves to understanding and developing the world around us. Consider the leadership of King Josiah. When he desired to seek God's heart, he reconsidered the understood significance of the altars Solomon had built for his foreign wives nearly 300 years earlier (2 Kgs 23:13) and the altar in Bethel, where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf. After contemplation, Josiah recognized that Jeroboam had become distinguished as the man "who made Israel to sin" and therefore issued orders to destroy the Pagan altars and repair the temple of the Lord. These actions led to a rediscovery of the Book of Law and a reinstatement of the Passover Celebration. Due to autonomous action and innovation, Josiah accomplished what no king before him could.

The construction of autonomy, in its individual and collective dimensions, is in fact very close to the construction of the person's identity, both personal and social. The process of autonomization and the construction of the identity are intimately linked, and both depend on interactions with the other.<sup>35</sup> Developing the skill of autonomous learning coincides with the awareness of self as learner.<sup>36</sup> This in itself strips degrees of influence from the leader and is unacceptable for the narcissist. Therefore, rather than nurture autonomous development, dysfunctional leaders use social interactions to encourage a culture of dependency, disallowing followers to contribute to their personal growth intellectually.

Yorke argues that autonomous learning is most effective when "performance goals" are not "elevated above learning goals."<sup>37</sup> Autonomous learners develop through engaging and communicating with each other. Participation is part of the learning process such as in leader and peer discussions and debates. However, dysfunctional leadership does not commend a follower for exploring the range of possibilities. Instead, dysfunctional followers are praised only when aligning themselves with the "right answer." There is no emphasis on the learning process because it takes away organizational resources, and potential failures are often deemed to be a personal reflection of the leader.

### *Social Collaboration*

Labelle defines *autonomy* from the perspective of personal development through relationships with others.<sup>38</sup> While summarizing the theory of educational reciprocity, Blanchard and Jollivet-Blanchard state that education is an effect and not the cause of the relationship (i.e., reciprocity is educating more than educational).<sup>39</sup> Similarly,

<sup>35</sup> Jerome Eneau, "From Autonomy to Reciprocity, or Vice Versa? French Personalism's Contribution to a New Perspective on Self-Directed Learning," *Adult Education Quarterly* 58 no. 229 (2008): 229-248.

<sup>36</sup> Mike Rawson, "Learning to Learn: More than a Skillset," *Studies in Higher Education* 25, no. 2 (2000): 225-228.

<sup>37</sup> M. Yorke, "Formative Assessment in Higher Education: Moves Towards Theory and the Enhancement of Pedagogic Practice," *Higher Education* 45, no. 4 (2003): 477-501.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Marie Labelle, *Educational Reciprocity* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996).

<sup>39</sup> Eric Blanchard and Chantal Jollivet-Blanchard, *The Experience of Cooperation in Education: Why? How?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

autonomy is founded on the paradox that attachment to others is a quest for detachment (i.e., autonomy is more a form of interdependence than an illusion of independence). Therefore, when the aim of organizational learning is autonomy it must be constructed through attachment to others, exchange, and reciprocity.<sup>40</sup>

Social collaboration is a synergetic form of organizational learning that stimulates the knowledge creation process, transmission of knowledge, and the means by which organizational members maintain high levels of proficiency. Proficiency preservation is most evident when contrasting social collaborative learning to traditional techniques such as instructor-led classes. Most traditional methods of learning aim to make an immediate impact to learners' levels of proficiency, but learners are immediately subject to the gradual loss of retention, particularly if the skill is not directly and continually practiced. Social collaboration, on the other hand, moderates the knowledge drain by maintaining a constant stream of materials and learning opportunities, bolstering and maintaining individual and organizational knowledge levels.

Autonomous and social collaborative learning are continuous developmental tasks that provide little immediate value or return to the narcissistic leader. The egotistical characteristics of dysfunctional leadership have little concern for organizational members' long-term understanding or identity and the controlling characteristics of dysfunctional leadership view autonomous and social collaborative learning as unmaintained and unmediated. A dysfunctional leader positions themselves as a task and process manager rather than a human resource developer.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Knowledge itself is not fixed and permanent, but negotiated and permeable. Learning is an ongoing process that takes place within a network of complex social relationships.<sup>41</sup> Learning organizations require autonomous learning practices to progress beyond simply applying knowledge. Autonomous learning leaders, facilitators, followers, and students all contribute to knowledge creation and should be viewed as equal and one amongst many. This, unfortunately, is a direct assault on narcissistic leadership's egoism and appetite for authority.

Learning cultures represent a long-term systematic process focused on the continued development of followers rather than immediate returns and recognition for leadership. Due to narcissistic and other debilitating characteristics (incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, and evil), dysfunctional leadership cannot foster supportive learning cultures or implement tools shown to improve employee development. Although failure to support an organizational learning culture is a failed policy for the organization and its members, dysfunctional leadership is only as strong and able as the followers that support it. Leaders and followers co-create and co-constitute leadership in the organization. Kellerman urges followers to take an active role in organizational life when they observe bad leadership. She encourages bold

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<sup>40</sup> Eneau, "From Autonomy to Reciprocity."

<sup>41</sup> Railton and Watson, "Teaching Autonomy."

action asserting that followers have a right, even a duty, to take a stand against bad leadership.<sup>42</sup> Do anything less and followers will get the leadership they deserve.

Rather than practicing avoidance and ignoring continuous developmental opportunities for followers, leaders can decrease dysfunction by increasing communication and democratic processes while welcoming followers' contributions with attentiveness, confidence, and empathy.<sup>43</sup> Stifling communication through self-absorbed leadership will only limit creativity and innovation. By stimulating creativity and innovation through an organizational learning culture, successful leaders are able to capitalize on followers' abilities and create a productive environment that sustains ongoing organizational success. Reconsider the parable of Josiah. He commanded his people to spread God's Word openly. As the people shared the Word, the extent to which errors were being propagated and not hidden spread across the land and eventually reached King Josiah himself. He autonomously contemplated the misinformation, repented, and changed his ways.<sup>44</sup> Josiah's reform further magnifies the power of organizational learning including the social collaborative relationship to autonomous learning and innovation.

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#### About the Author

In the tradition of transformational and servant leaders, Raymie Grundhoefer's mission is to serve others through learning achievement. Currently completing the disertation phase of his doctorate in the organizational leadership program at Regent University, he has already earned a master's degree in organizational leadership from Gonzaga University, as well as a servant leadership certificate. Organizational learning has evolved as his primary research interest due to its direct relationship with personal interests: culture and innovation.

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<sup>42</sup> Kellerman, *Bad Leadership*.

<sup>43</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Chr 34:27-33.



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## INVESTIGATING CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND PRUDENCE: GLOBALLY, IS THERE A CONNECTION?

PAULA A. TUCKER

This paper shares a socio–rhetorical intellectual discourse analysis of Christian leadership and prudence in global organizations as it relates to the Christian Scripture pericope of Philippians 1:1-17. This paper also defines Christian leadership and prudence from the aspects of scholarly publications and journals to examine the connection of both constructs. The paper proposes a qualitative case study research to help clarify the issue of Christian leadership and prudence in a local church. Additionally, the paper shares an exploration of Christian leadership and prudence in times of economic crisis and financial ruins, along with a proposal for a future quantitative research from the data collected from the qualitative case study findings.

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Christian leadership is viewed as a way of leading followers in churches and Christian organizations with servant leadership attributes, which as posited by Greenleaf, means “the servant-leader is servant first.”<sup>1</sup> However, there is more to the contentious issues of Christian leadership in global organizations. For example, several

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25<sup>th</sup> ann. ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

researchers, authors, and students share a different perspective of Christian leadership in organizations globally. Clark explores the secular world and the Christian leadership perspectives of Paul and the Corinthian church, positing that Paul had several issues with the Christian leadership of the Corinthian church and the church with Paul.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, DeSilva posits Christian leadership as the leadership of the apostles of Jesus Christ in leading the Jews, Gentiles, and other generations to Christianity;<sup>3</sup> Feddes shares Christian leadership is about caring for God's household as a leadership paradigm;<sup>4</sup> Hutchison posits Christian leadership is about servanthood and a true Christian leader is one who is a spirit-led leader.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, Lawrence posits Christian leadership is a distinctive approach where one seeks to pursue the purpose of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in every leadership perspective.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Eims emphasizes we need to look at leadership from the standpoint of the Bible as this is God's way of revealing His way to becoming a Christian leader globally.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to explore the controversy of Christian leadership and prudence. The paper shares an ideological intellectual discourse socio-rhetorical analysis of prudence and the Christian leadership of Paul from prison. This paper resonates the research question: Does Christian leadership and prudence in global organizations enhance followers' perspectives in times of economic crisis and financial ruins? Adversely, can this be analyzed to clarify the controversy of Christian leadership and prudence in times of economic crisis and financial ruins in a future quantitative research analysis?

## I. CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND PRUDENCE

According to Ortberg, Christian leadership is a leader who seeks to lead with prudence in times of crisis and setbacks in any organization.<sup>8</sup> Ortberg shares Christian leaders should not be leaders who sit back and avoid mistakes; however, these leaders should be prudent in discerning right from wrong when leading in organizations. Ortberg also shares prudence is not hesitation, procrastination, or moderation—it is a time of discerning what is best for the organization before critical circumstances come upon stakeholders globally. Ortberg posits Paul is a prominent example from the Scriptures of someone who led with prudence as a Christian leader in times of emotional distress. Paul was imprisoned for professing the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the

<sup>2</sup> A. D. Clark, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An introduction to the New Testament* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> D. J. Feddes, "Caring for God's Household: A Leadership Paradigm Among New Testament Christians and Its Relevance for Church and Mission Today," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 43 (2008): 274-299.

<sup>5</sup> J. C. Hutchinson, "Servanthood: Jesus' Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 53-69.

<sup>6</sup> W. D. Lawrence, "Distinctives of Christian Leadership," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (1987): 318-319.

<sup>7</sup> Leroy Eims, *Be the Leader You Were Meant to Be* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> J. Ortberg, "Today's Most Devalued Virtue," *Leadership Journal* (April 26, 2010).

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/currenttrendscolumns/leadershipweekly/devaluedvirtue.html>



Savior of the world. However, while in prison, Paul reached out to the Philippi leaders in letters of prayer to share (1) thanks, (2) love, and (3) peace during his crisis. In essence, prudence comes very close to Paul's prayer for the believers of Philippi, where the Scripture shares in Philippians 1:9 -11, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." In this, Paul discerned issues in the Philippi church and wrote a letter to encourage the believers to seek what is good and discern what is bad—and only pursue what is best for the church. According to Willmington, Paul prayed for the pastors, deacons, and all Christians in Philippi—every time he thought about the Philippians from prison—because Paul's Christian leadership style was full of prudence and in favor with God.<sup>9</sup>

## II. PRUDENCE

According to Kane and Patapan, the history of prudence from Aristotelian *phronesis* (practical wisdom) to Latin *prudencia* to Machiavellian *virtù* and thus to our own concept has, according to the literature, been one of sad decline.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle posits practical wisdom was an accomplishment of a character that had been molded by habit, wise mentorship, and broad experience. It was demonstrable only in the concrete judgments made by an intelligent individual acting in specific circumstances.<sup>11</sup> In an attempt to define prudence from a scholarly approach, consider prudence as a noun that is about having discretion/discernment in practical affairs and knowing how to avoid embarrassment or distress when leading global organizations. Several researchers and writers have also explored prudence from different aspects of leadership. For example, Kane and Patapan share prudence, or practical wisdom, is the ability to make sound decisions under complex, ever-changeable conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Dobel posits the ethics of prudence focuses upon the obligation of a leader to achieve moral self-mastery, to attend to the context of a situation, and through deliberation and careful judgment to seek concrete outcomes that are legitimate and durable;<sup>13</sup> and Smith described prudence as a virtue relating to the proper care of an individual's (1) health, (2) fortune, (3) rank, and (4) reputation.<sup>14</sup> Prudence is also considered one of the four natural virtues in leadership attributes, along with (1) justice, (2) fortitude, and (3) temperance. Ortberg posits a Christian leader should have prudential moments of thinking in the following areas:

<sup>9</sup> H. Willmington, *Willmington's Guides to the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999)

<sup>10</sup> J. Kane and H. Patapan, "In Search of Prudence: The Hidden Problem of Managerial Reform," *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 5 (2006): 711-724.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1905); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Kane and Patapan, "In Search of Prudence."

<sup>13</sup> P. Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 1 (1998): 74-81.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Smith, *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1853/1969).

1. When they are figuring how to navigate change
2. When they are choosing which battles to fight and which battles to skip
3. When they are calculating decisions and outcomes
4. When a team member is not contributing well
5. When the congregation is growing restless, or complacent, or fatigued
6. When a course direction needs changing<sup>15</sup>

The author of Proverbs 8:5 writes, “You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.” In this, a Christian leader who is leading without prudence in global organizations perhaps could be considered simple and foolish. Furthermore, the leader should seek to gain understanding in leading followers with prudence to help sustain leader–follower exchange within organizations globally. Additionally, prudence is also defined as the trait of understanding what is morally good to do in a particular situation and how to do it (understanding how to act based on moral truth); the application of moral truth to directing action.

It must also be noted that the author of Proverbs 8:12 shares, “I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discernment.” Is this where God wanted Christian leaders to know that without prudence there is no wisdom, knowledge, or discernment in global organizations? Moreover, prudence is moral wisdom: the ability to handle situations of life well and live in a morally good way. Is this the type of Christian leadership that leaders are suppose to mirror in times of economic crisis and financial ruins? From the interpretation of the Scriptures, perhaps leaders globally should consider the Bible as a compass to leading in organizations to sustain the missions, goals, and values of the followers and stakeholders. Respectively, the Bible shares many verses on (1) prudence, (2) prudent, (3) wisdom, and (4) discernment as it relates to the Christian leader and the leader’s role in global organizations. As such, it is important that one seeks to lead with prudence to avoid costly mistakes and downturns during economic crisis and financial ruins. For example, in 2 Chronicles 2:12, the author shares, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! He has given King David a wise son, endowed with intelligence and discernment, who will build a temple for the LORD and a palace for himself.”<sup>16</sup> Is this where God has given Christian leaders the understanding of knowing how prudence is important in leading others to making intelligence decisions in time of economic crisis? Moreover, in Ephesians 1:8-9, the author shares, “He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ.” Can this be God’s way of letting Christian leaders know that the gift of prudence is important in understanding what is right or wrong, and how to understand God’s wisdom and purpose for His people? Additionally, the authors of Proverbs share many verses concerning prudence and prudent leaders. As such, in Proverbs 14:8, it is written, “The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.” In Proverbs 14:15, the author shares, “A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his

<sup>15</sup> Ortberg, “Today’s Most Devalued Virtue.”

<sup>16</sup> Paraphrased.

steps.” Proverbs 15:5 states, “A fool spurns his father’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.” Moreover, in Proverbs 16:21, the author shares, “The wise in heart are called discerning and pleasant words promote instruction.” Respectively, in Proverbs 18:21, it is written, “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.” In this, perhaps Christian leadership is a phenomenon that must seek out to lead with prudence—to help followers discern what is right or wrong in time of economic crisis and financial ruins. Finally, in Proverbs 22:3, the author shares, “A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.” Clearly, the authors of Proverbs are sharing with us that Christian leadership and prudence must have a connection in order to survive economic crisis and financial ruins in global organizations. As such, I propose a case study to investigate the connection of Christian leadership and prudence in a local church that is global as it relates to their mission, visions, and infrastructure.

### III. CASE STUDY: PROPOSAL

Creswell proffered that case studies are strategies of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals.<sup>17</sup> Stake also posits that case studies are bounded by time and activity and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, prudence is a virtue that is needed by Christian leaders to ensure a stable unity of global organizations and with organization citizens.

However, to explore this phenomenon, much clarity is needed to justify that Christian leaders who lead with prudence are full of discernment of knowing what is right or wrong—and knowing how to choose what is best for the organization. Moreover, Girden posits case studies involve extensive observation of a single individual, several individuals, or a single group of individuals as a unit.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Taleb shares that a qualitative approach to research is advantageous when compared with quantitative research as it allows for an in-depth examination of situations in which complex questions are posed.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, a case study approach data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher has chosen to understand in-depth, regardless of the number of sites, participants, or documents involved in the study.<sup>21</sup> Case studies have been cited in the research methodology literature as an appropriate approach when the researcher has no control over events and is not able to manipulate relevant

<sup>17</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> R. E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Ellen R. Girden, *Evaluating Research Articles from Start to Finish*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 23.

<sup>20</sup> H. M. Taleb, “Gender and Leadership Styles in Single-Sex Academic Institutions,” *International Journal of Educational Management* 4, no. 24 (2010): 287-302.

<sup>21</sup> J. H. McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research Education: A Conceptual Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

behavior.<sup>22</sup> Interesting to note, a frequently cited definition of the case study method provided by Yin is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.<sup>23</sup> Thus, this method can yield a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes to be studied.<sup>24</sup> Finally, a case study of open-ended semi-structured interviews and observations of events, activities, and gatherings of St. Paul's Baptist Church could establish a connection of Christian leadership and prudence in global organizations.

#### IV. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

According to Creswell, a qualitative study states research questions, not objectives.<sup>25</sup> The research question assumes two forms: (1) a central question, and (2) associated sub-questions. In this, the qualitative research question uses more of a central question that is broad and explores a central phenomenon or concepts in a study. Thus, I propose the following question to be conducted in a qualitative case study.

$P_1$ : Will a Christian leader who leads with prudence in times of economic crisis and financial ruins in global organizations be viewed as a positive leader from the perspectives of followers?

$H_1$ : When Christian leaders lead with prudence in times of economic crisis their leadership style is viewed as positive from the followers' perspectives.

$H_2$ : When Christian leaders lead with prudence in times of financial ruins their leadership style is viewed as positive from the followers' perspectives.

$H_3$ : When Christian leaders fail to lead with prudence in times of economic crisis their leadership style is viewed as negative from the followers' perspectives.

$H_4$ : When Christian leaders fail to lead with prudence in times of financial ruins their leadership is viewed as negative from the followers' perspectives.

The research question will be measured in a case study by conducting in-depth, open-ended questions through semi-structured interviews with focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observations of events and activities of the church.

The case study of Christian leadership and prudence will be conducted at St. Paul's Baptist Church, where the organization has four different worship locations. Those locations are as follows: Henrico County, Virginia; Richmond, Virginia; Petersburg, Virginia; and another location in Chesterfield, Virginia. The global organization is led by Dr. Lance Watson along with several board members and trustees. The organization is global, whereas, the church has a financial infrastructure of

<sup>22</sup> Ann R. J. Briggs and Marianne Coleman, *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2007); Charles C. Ragin and Howard Saul Becker, *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Enquiry* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2003), 13

<sup>24</sup> Tim Morris and Stephen Wood, "Testing the Survey Method: Continuity and Change in British Industrial Relations," *Work Employment and Society* 5, no. 2 (1991): 259-82.

<sup>25</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*.

the following entities: (1) a federal credit union, (2) bookstore, (3) child daycare, (4) adult daycare, (5) after school programs, (6) Angel food bank, (7) culinary arts ministry, (8) online worship center, (9) care shelter, and (10) a performing arts center. The church also has a member population of more than 10,000 and growing. The strategic framework of the church is GROW which covers the church's four core values of (1) gather, (2) relate, (3) offer, and (4) witness. Moreover, the vision statement of the church is as follows: "Our vision is to touch the world with love, communicate the positive power of Christ to our generation by finding needs and meeting them, finding hurts and healing them, finding problems and solving them."<sup>26</sup> The mission statement is as follows: "We exist to empower people to grow into the persons that God created them to be by celebrating God's goodness in worship, connecting with each other in small groups, caring for each other and the world and contributing to the transformation of the world through gifts-based ministry in the name of Christ."<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the prudent leadership of Dr. Lance Watson to discern what is right and wrong is astonishing as he leads the people of God. It is also interesting to note that his ability to select what is best for the organization and God's people is an empirical study to be considered for future research. However, prudence and the Christian Scripture can be viewed from different aspects of the readers based on culture, beliefs, and values. The next subsection of this paper analyzes an ideological intellectual discourse of Philippians 1:1-17, based on this writer's perspectives of prudence and Christian leadership.

## V. LIMITATIONS OF A CASE STUDY

It is important to stress the limitations of this proposed research. Although every care will be taken to limit various potential sources of bias in the validity and reliability of questions, interviewing is often regarded as a subjective technique that always carries the danger of bias.<sup>28</sup> Another aspect to consider is the reason for the case study and the nature of intervention along with the objectivity of interviewee.<sup>29</sup> Girden also posits if more than one case study is not being conducted at the same time, the objective measures of behavior can produce internal validity.<sup>30</sup> In spite of the constraints and limitations, the in-depth semi-structured interviews should produce rich data, themes, coding, and structured generating hypotheses to conduct a quantitative research as it relates to the correlation of Christian leadership and prudence in global organizations within six months from the onset of the case study.

<sup>26</sup> Lance Watson, "The Saint Paul's Church: Celebrating Our Legacy and Pursuing Our Destiny." [http://www.myspbc.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=35490](http://www.myspbc.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=35490) (Retrieved June 21, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> J. Bell, *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science*, 4th ed. (London: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen R. Girden, *Evaluating Research Articles from Start to Finish*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

## VI. IDEOLOGICAL SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

According to Robbins and Gager, ideological texture is about politics, as interpretation of early Christian texts has the potential to be intense when it involves competing ideologies or competing views of the same ideology.<sup>31</sup> Gager presented three critical moments in the history of early Christianity as it relates to intense levels of ideological views.<sup>32</sup> The three are as follows:

1. Conflict with Judaism over the claim to represent the true Israel
2. Conflict with paganism over the claim to possess true wisdom
3. Conflict among Christian groups over the claim to embody the authentic faith of Jesus and the apostles<sup>33</sup>

In essence, ideological socio–rhetorical criticism occurs in four special locations: (1) in texts, (2) in authoritative traditions of interpretation, (3) in intellectual discourse, and (4) in individuals and groups.<sup>34</sup> As such, the prudence and foresight of Paul’s letters to the Philippians could be viewed from several different perspectives of the reader. Table 1 shows an ideological intellectual discourse interpretation of Philippians 1:1-17 as it relates to understanding the Scripture, Christian leadership, and prudence.

Firstly, one must relate with Paul’s environmental conditions while writing the letters to the Philippians and others. Paul was imprisoned in Rome for professing the salvation of Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. Prior to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, Paul had suffered hard things in Philippi while being a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul was scourged and put into the stock.<sup>35</sup> However, Paul had no less kindness for the place where he met such harsh treatment. So why would Paul send letters of thanks and encouragement to the believers of Philippi during his time of isolation? Paul’s Christian leadership was full of prudence and love toward the people of God and he discerned that evil and confusion would come upon the believers of Philippi. In this, he sent words of wisdom and love to the leaders to help them prepare the people of God to help them sustain the church and believers of God. Secondly, Paul’s Christian leadership and prudence in writing the letters to the Philippians was to share thanks for the gifts that they had sent him for the church in Philippi.

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<sup>31</sup> Vernon E. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2005); J. G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

<sup>32</sup> Gager, *Kingdom and Community*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 75

<sup>35</sup> Acts 16:23-24.

Table 1. Intellectual discourse ideological socio–rhetorical analysis

Philippians 1:1-17		Intellectual discourse analysis
<i>Verses 1-2</i>	Paul sends greetings in the name of Jesus to the Philippi bishops and deacons and all saints with the peace and grace of God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.	Paul is sending letters due to the boredom of imprisonment. But he wanted to send joy and love with sincerity to Philippi.
<i>Verses 3-4</i>	“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.”	Paul has time to reflect and pray for all those he met and established Christian fellowship with and he is overjoyed.
<i>Verses 5-6</i>	“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”	Paul’s prudence in Christian leadership is encouraging the leaders to preserve until the coming of Jesus.
<i>Verses 7-8</i>	“Even as it is meet for me to think of this of you all, because I have you in my heart . . . ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, I greatly long after you.”	Paul has compassion for them and longed after them with the affection of Jesus Christ—and since he was imprisoned only God is his witness, as God knows his heart.
<i>Verses 9-10</i>	“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”	Paul’s Christian leadership and prudence in (discerning) things to come upon the believers of Philippi is revealed in his letters of to encourage the leaders to stay strong until the return of Christ.
<i>Verse 11</i>	“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.”	Paul prays that they be filled with the fruits of righteousness (salvation) as to keeping the peace and joy of God no matter what comes

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Philippians 1:1-17	Intellectual discourse analysis
<p><i>Verses 12-14</i> “that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel . . . that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places . . . and much more bold to speak the word without fear.”</p>	<p>upon the church.</p> <p>Paul’s Christian leadership and prudence exalts the name of Jesus while he is imprisoned and he finds that his imprisonment has served to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.</p>
<p><i>Verses 15-17</i> “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one who preach Christ of contention, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.”</p>	<p>Paul’s prudence has encouraged the Philippi leaders to increase their efforts in proclaiming the gospel.</p>

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Moreover, Paul’s letter pulsates with encouragement and joy—regardless of his circumstances; he wanted to send love, joy, and words of wisdom (prudence) to the people of Philippi to prepare them for things to come against the move of God. As such, Paul wanted the leaders of Philippi to know that they must love their enemies and continue to confess the name of Jesus Christ until His coming—no matter what persecution they may encounter in the future. Again, Table 1 shows the intellectual discourse ideological interpretation of Philippians 1:1-17 from the perspective of this writer and my understanding of how Paul’s prudence enhanced the believers of Philippi to prepare for crisis within the church. Moreover, Robbins shares reconstructing the points of view of other vices in the discourse can exhibit a fuller, thicker, more even-handed view of the situation at Philippi.<sup>36</sup>

This pericope of Christian Scripture perhaps reveals many different ideological socio–rhetorical interpretations from the perspectives of the reader. In this, I stand on the fact that the imprisonment of Paul enhanced his prudence to discern with wisdom the things that were to come upon the leaders of Philippi. I also interpret that Paul wanted the leaders to know that (1) prudence, (2) Christian leadership, and (3) the fruits of righteousness would enhance their faith and endurance to be conquerors in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior in times of crisis. Furthermore, Ortberg posits prudence is the most undervalued and under discussed Christian leadership attribute nowadays.<sup>37</sup> Ortberg shares prudence is not caution; prudence is foresight and far-sightedness, in

<sup>36</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*.

<sup>37</sup> Ortberg, “Today’s Most Devalued Virtue.”



which Christian leaders should have to sustain the move of God globally in secular and Christian organizations.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, DeSilva posits the letters of Paul represented the following: (1) the fact of absence and the means by which Paul kept his friends in mind, (2) Paul's assurance of interest in the affairs and affirmation of the Philippians' church and leaders, and (3) Paul's expression of confidence in the interest of the church.<sup>39</sup> In this, Paul shows himself most solicitous about the Philippians' circumstances, and his plans to send Timothy to procure news about their affairs and how things stood with them in the church.<sup>40</sup>

In essence, Paul's Christian leadership from prison was prudent and full of wisdom and knowledge.

## VII. LIMITATION OF PROPOSITION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any proposal, there are limitations in the field of research. As such, this proposition limitation are as follows: (1) Christian leadership does not have a reliable instrument to test the variables of what is a Christian leader, and (2) prudence is a natural virtue of the Scriptures, however, this variable has never been tested to be prove reliability and credibility in an empirical research.

However, in light of these limitations, I also propose a future quantitative research to be conducted by consulting a panel of experts in the field of Christian leadership to construct what attributes a Christian leader should posses to lead others in global organizations. In this, I will design a quantitative questionnaire to present to a panel of experts and 100 students at Regent University to test the reliability and credibility of Cornbach's alpha that measures a range from 0 to 1, with values of .60 to .70 deemed the lower limit of acceptability.<sup>41</sup> Finally, I will also construct a prudence questionnaire that asks leaders to share what attributes on the questionnaire best describe a leader who leads with prudence. After gathering the data, I will construct a quantitative questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale that measures from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This will build reliability and validity to the findings after the case study is complete and the collected data is transcribed and coded to further the research on Christian leadership and prudence quantitatively in global organizations.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

In sum, this paper shares a socio-rhetorical intellectual discourse analysis of Philippians 1:1-17 that discusses how Christian leadership and prudence is an important aspect of leading organizations globally in times of economical crisis and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity, 2004), 653.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph F. Hair, William C. Black, Barry J. Babin, and Rolph E. Anderson, *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 92.

financial ruins. Furthermore, Christian leaders perhaps could avoid embarrassing mistakes by seeking to lead with prudence, love, and temperance when discerning the good and evil and selecting what is best for the citizens of the organization. Additionally, this paper shares a proposition for future research in a case study as it relates to Christian leadership and prudence from the perspectives of followers in times of economical crisis and financial ruins in organizations.

Moreover, this paper also shares a proposal for a future quantitative research based on the themes, patterns, and coding of the qualitative case study. Christian leadership and prudence are variables that have very little research. In this, there is a need to explore this proposal in global organizations to find if there is a correlation. As noted, many writers have explored the relationship of prudence and the importance of leading with this virtue in global organization to help sustain ethical and moral judgment of followers and stakeholders. On the other hand, there is no empirical research on Christian leadership and prudence in global organizations. As such, Christian leadership and prudence could perhaps open the door to new endeavors concerning the connection of these constructs.

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#### About the Author

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## FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY: A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 4:11-16

JIMMY D. BAYES

Are the gifts Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) references to ministry offices or ministry functions? This question is considered using Robbins's method of socio-rhetorical analysis. This study specifically considers the social and cultural texture of Ephesians 4. Textual analysis determined that there is some support for the designation of the offices of prophet and teacher, but there is little support for the designation of office of apostle, evangelist, or pastor. Textual evidence does suggest that the five gifts of Ephesians 4 are functions of individuals in the New Testament and through the first century.

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According to the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance's website, the population of the world is now over 6.5 billion.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-two percent of the world's population is considered Christian, but that percentage is dropping even while the world's population is increasing. It will take strong Christian leadership to reverse this trend and to help complete God's plan in the world.

Paul, the great church planter, revealed to the Ephesian church part of God's strategy. "God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some

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<sup>1</sup> "Religions of the World," *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm>

pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Many teach that Ephesians 4:11 describes a five-fold ministry paradigm that is God’s design for the modern church.<sup>3</sup> David DeSilva writes, “Ephesians 4:11-16 articulates a healthy model for ministry, one that needs to be universally grasped and enacted if the church hopes to keep up with the needs of the world.”<sup>4</sup> Ministries such as Asian Outreach list the five-fold ministry among their core ministry essentials. However, this pattern of ministry is not without controversy. Others teach that the five-fold ministries passed away along with the original apostles,<sup>5</sup> and the office of apostle and prophet in particular have ceased.<sup>6</sup>

It is often asked whether functions or offices are involved in the lists of Ephesians 4:11.<sup>7</sup> An *office* is the public recognition by the Body of Christ that an individual has a certain gift and is authorized to minister that gift in what might be termed an *official* capacity.<sup>8</sup> Some writers view the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as offices,<sup>9</sup> while others view these five gifts as functions of the individual.<sup>10</sup> Some writers point to the overlap in the gifts and functions of the five-fold ministries making it difficult to assign office or function to a particular individual.<sup>11</sup> Yet, other writers

<sup>2</sup> Eph 4:11-12.

<sup>3</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 164-178; Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1987), 423-427; “The Five Fold Ministry” *Christ International Churches*, <http://christchurches.org/TheFiveFold.htm>; “The Five-fold Ministry” *Churchlink*, [http://www.churchlink.com.au/bible\\_studies/bia3.htm](http://www.churchlink.com.au/bible_studies/bia3.htm); Bill Hamon, “Restoring the Fivefold Ministry,” *The Christian Broadcasting Network*, [http://cbn.com/700club/guests/bill\\_hamon\\_042304.aspx](http://cbn.com/700club/guests/bill_hamon_042304.aspx); Homepage, *Five-Fold Ministry*, <http://fivefoldministry.net>; “Five-fold Ministry,” *Set Free Ministries International*, <http://www.apostle.org/lectures/ffm.htm>

<sup>4</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: Sage, 2004), 731.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bowman, “The Faulty Formation of the Five-Fold Ministry,” *Christian Research Journal* (Fall 1987): 31, <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/f09.html>; “What is the five (5) fold ministry?” *Got Questions*, <http://www.gotquestions.org/five-fold-ministry.html>

<sup>6</sup> Dave Miller, “Are There Modern-Day Apostles?” *Apologetics Press*, <http://www.apologeticspress.net/articles/2279>; “Are there Apostles today?” *Christian Research & Outreach Ministry*, <http://www.craom.net/apostlestoday.htm>; “Apostles Today,” *Learn the Bible*, <http://learnthebible.org/apostles-today.html>; “Apostles and Prophets Today,” *Let Us Reason Ministries*, <http://www.letusreason.org/pent1.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln. “Ephesians” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 252.

<sup>8</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1999), 109.

<sup>9</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1979), 60; Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 424.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 707; Ben Witherington III, *The Letter to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 290-291.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur G. Patzia, “Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon” in *The New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 238; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 547.

are ambiguous regarding function or office and just stress the leadership aspect of the five-fold gifts.<sup>12</sup>

Do individuals with any of the five-fold gifts receive the title of apostle, prophet, etc., simply because they perform certain functions from time to time or because they occupy some clearly defined position within their communities? Clarification of this issue will enable the church to more aptly fulfill the plan of God.

## I. APPROACH

Research questions act as directional signposts for research. The research question for this study is: Are the ministries Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11-12 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) references to ministry offices or ministry functions? This question is considered through the use of textural analysis (a subset of socio-rhetorical analysis) of Ephesians 4:11-16. Specifically, the cultural and social texture of this text is examined.

### *Scope and Method*

This study examines the roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher in the New Testament and the writings of the apostolic fathers. Robbins describes socio-rhetorical analysis as a form of exegesis that focuses on the culture in which action takes place as well as on the intended message the author had for the audience.<sup>13</sup> The social and cultural texture of a text refers to the social and cultural nature of a text as a text. Robbins goes on to state:

A text is part of society and culture by the way it views the world (specific social topics), by sharing in the general social and cultural attitudes, norms, and modes of interaction which are known by everyone in a society (common social and cultural topics) and by establishing itself vis-a-vis the dominant cultural system (final cultural categories) as either sharing in its attitudes, values, and dispositions at some level (dominant and subcultural rhetoric) or by rejecting these attitudes, values, and dispositions (counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture rhetoric).<sup>14</sup>

This study focuses on the cultural and social texture of the New Testament and the apostolic fathers. There are several limitations to this study. First, Robbins states that it is not possible to be exhaustive in one's socio-rhetorical analysis. Second, the size of this study requires the focus to be limited to one texture of socio-rhetorical analysis. Therefore, this study is limited to the social and cultural texture analysis of the New Testament and the apostolic fathers (specifically the 1 and 2 epistles of Clement, the letters of Ignatius, the letters of Polycarp, and the Didache).

<sup>12</sup> Ken Hemphill, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 131; Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas, eds. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 58.

<sup>13</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation," <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/index.cf>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## Definitions

The word *apostle* is a transliteration of the Greek word *apostolos*, meaning “a messenger” or “one sent on a mission.”<sup>15</sup> Apostles were literally commissioned messengers carrying out their sender’s mission. They were backed by the sender’s authority to the extent that they accurately represented that commission.<sup>16</sup>

*Prophets* were spokespersons for God, whose role was known from the Old Testament and continued in the New Testament church. A prophet is one who is divinely inspired to communicate God’s will to His people and to disclose the future to them.<sup>17</sup>

Literally, an *evangelist* is “one announcing good news.”<sup>18</sup> In the New Testament, the good news is the death, burial, resurrection, and the ultimate ascension of Christ.

*Pastors* were literally “shepherds.” The term *pastor* is found only once in the English text of the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> However, the Greek word *poimen* is found about eighteen times in the New Testament, translated once as “pastor” and the remaining instances as “shepherd.” Most notably, *poimen* is found in John 10 where Jesus is revealed as the good shepherd. Only in Ephesians 4:11 is shepherd found in reference to a function or office in the Church.

*Teachers* were expounders of the Scriptures and the Jesus tradition.<sup>20</sup> If they functioned like Jewish teachers, they probably offered Biblical instruction to the congregation and trained others to expound the Scriptures as well.

There has been some discussion as to the distinction of pastors and teachers.<sup>21</sup> In the Greek text of Ephesians 4:11, an article proceeds each of the ministry gifts, but the article is omitted before “teachers.” This omission has led some to claim that it is an indication that the two groups are the same. This distinction becomes important in deciding if these five ministries are offices or functions. It is more likely that a person has multiple functions than a person having multiple offices (this paper considers pastor and teacher separately).

## II. SOCIAL AND CULTURE TEXTURE ANALYSIS

Socio-rhetorical interpretation is not a new method of Biblical interpretation, but rather a model for analysis that encourages full use of exegetical skills.<sup>22</sup> According to Robbins, social and cultural texture uses anthropological and social theory to explore the social and cultural nature of the voices in the text.<sup>23</sup> The goal of this analysis is to

<sup>15</sup> Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 425.

<sup>16</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*.

<sup>17</sup> Merrill Unger, “Prophets,” in *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Merrill Unger, “Evangelist,” in *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Eph 4:11.

<sup>20</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Renewal Theology*; Gaebelien and Douglas, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*; Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary*; Patzia, *New International Biblical Commentary*; David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Spirngfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2008), 106.

<sup>22</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 23-24.

<sup>23</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 144.

determine the social and cultural significance of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in the writings of the New Testament and the apostolic fathers. “Socio-rhetorical criticism uses the term ‘cultural’ to refer to the status of a phenomenon that appears in a wide range of literature that spans many centuries.”<sup>24</sup> This study begins by examining the socio-cultural texture of the five ministry gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11.

Robbins lists three dimensions of social and cultural texture: (1) the specific topics, (2) common topics, and (3) the final topics. Specific social topics are the arena of the social and cultural texture of a text.<sup>25</sup> Specific social topics, the first dimension, are thoughts, ideas, and subjects that are central to a particular kind of social discourse. These topics distinguish one kind of social discourse from another. The specific social topics in socio-rhetorical interpretation of religious texts concern conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, gnostic-manipulation, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian discourse. The *conversionist* response to society considers the outside world to be corrupted and salvation is available only through a profound and supernatural transformation of the person. The *revolutionist* response to society declares that only the destruction of this world will be sufficient to save people. The *introversionist* response to society sees the world as irredeemably evil and encourages retreat from the world and enjoyment of the security granted by personal holiness. The *gnostic-manipulation* response to society does not reject the world and its goals, but says that salvation is possible in the world and that evil can be overcome if people learn the right means to deal with their problems. The *thaumaturgical* response to society seeks immediate relief from their present circumstances through an act of divine intervention and seeks compensation for personal losses rather than the specific quest for cultural goals. The *reformist* response to society believes that the world is corrupt because its social structures are corrupt, but if the structures can be changed (and sanctioned by the believers) then salvation will be present in the world. The *utopian* response to society asserts that people should establish a new social system free from evil and corruption to run the world. Robbins states that it would be rare for discourse in a text as long as a gospel or an epistle to contain only one kind of social response to the world;<sup>26</sup> rather, two or more responses interact, creating a particular social texture for the discourse.

Ephesians 4:17-18 states, “This I say . . . no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart.” This verse (directly following the text regarding the ministry gifts) is a conversionist response to society. The conversionist response is characterized by the view that the world is corrupt and the people need to change in order to change their society. Paul states that one of the purposes of the ministry gifts is to “mature manhood.”<sup>27</sup> This conversion process is ongoing as indicated by the phrase

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>25</sup> Robbins, *Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*.

<sup>26</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 150.

<sup>27</sup> Eph 4:13.

“until we all attain” and the ministry gifts are meant to facilitate this conversion and maturing.

The second dimension of social–cultural texture is common social and cultural topics. Common topics concern the social and cultural systems and institutions that the text presupposes and evokes.<sup>28</sup> Individuals living in an area know common social and cultural topics either consciously or instinctively. Individuals raised in these common areas learn these common social and cultural values, patterns, or codes. Common topics listed by Robbins include honor, shame, legal contracts, challenge–response, economic exchange, and purity codes.

Each of the five ministry gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher) are common social/cultural topics. The first ministry gift listed, apostle, has significant meaning for the first-century church. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews refers to Jesus as the apostle (*tón Apóstolon*) and the High Priest of our confession.<sup>29</sup> The Jewish high priest was a specific “office” in the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament did not have an office of a “sent one” or “apostle,” but the imagery of the sending of individuals to another with authority was not unknown. Moses was sent unto Pharaoh<sup>30</sup> and Gideon sent out messengers throughout Manasseh.<sup>31</sup> In classical Greek, usage of the Greek verb *apostéllō* generally referred to the sending of a fleet or embassy, but it was also used by Epictitus to describe Zeus’ sending a teacher of philosophy as his messenger.<sup>32</sup>

In Jesus’ day, the word *apostle* was used often, mostly in reference to the twelve disciples. Luke 6:13 says that Jesus called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also called apostles. Paul regarded himself as an apostle and was accepted by the early church as an apostle. Most of the approximately eighty times the word *apostle* appears in the New Testament refers to Paul or the twelve. Along with Paul’s listing of the ministry gifts in Ephesians 4:11, he seems to refer to the office of an apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:28.<sup>33</sup>

Two chapters from Clement’s First Epistle to the Corinthians address leadership appointment and succession of the apostles. Chapter 42 states:

The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus, the Christ, was sent from God. Thus, Christ is from God and the apostles from Christ. In both instances the orderly procedure depends on God’s will. And so the apostles, after receiving their orders and being fully convinced by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and assured by God’s word, went out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit to preach the good news that God’s Kingdom was about to come. They preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this any novelty, for Scripture had mentioned bishops and deacons long

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>29</sup> Heb 3:1.

<sup>30</sup> Ex 3:10.

<sup>31</sup> Jgs 6:8.

<sup>32</sup> William C. Robinson. “Apostle” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 192-195.

<sup>33</sup> “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”



before. For this is what Scripture says somewhere: “I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.”

And chapter 44 states, “Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave themselves instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in ministry.”

These two chapters refer to the leadership succession of the apostles, but the office or function of an apostle is not referenced. However, the offices of bishop and deacon are specifically mentioned. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp) have no mention of an apostle referring to offices or functions other than the twelve apostles or Paul. The Didache, however, makes reference to apostles and prophets: “Now about the *apostles and prophets*: Act in line with the gospel precept. Welcome every *apostle* arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false *prophet*. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false *prophet*.”<sup>34</sup> Some have argued that this reference to apostle indicates the possible succession of the office of apostle. However, the reference to apostle in the Didache likely refers to the itinerate minister. The New Testament even used *apostle* in a more general sense (Rom 16: 7; 1 Thes 2:6). There is no evidence that an office of apostle existed outside of the designation of the twelve and Paul. However, the function of apostle (Biblical and extra-Biblical) existed before and after Paul’s epistle and was likely to continue.

The second ministry gift listed in Ephesians 4:11 is the prophet. Prophecy has an ancient history. Prophecy and soothsaying were known throughout the ancient near east including Egypt and Babylon.<sup>35</sup> During the intertestamental times, the Jews recognized that prophecy had ceased, but they did look forward to a revival of prophecy during the messianic age.<sup>36</sup> In Jesus’ day, the Jews and Jesus considered John the Baptist to be a prophet (Mt 11:9-14, 14:5, 21:26; Mk 11:32; Lk 20:6), and many recognize that Jesus Himself was a prophet (Mt 21:11; Jn 4:19). Paul recognized the gift of prophecy (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 14:1) and seems to recognize the office (or vocation) of prophets (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20, 4:11). NT warnings against false prophets (Mt 7:15; 2 Pt 2:1; 1 Jn 4:1) presupposes the existence of authentic prophets. The Didache acknowledges prophets and prescribes a test for false prophets. As with the apostle, the Didache acknowledges the role of prophet. The office of prophet is well documented in the Old Testament and New Testament and there is evidence that prophecy and the office of prophet continued through the first century and beyond.

The third ministry gift listed in Ephesians 4:11 is the evangelist. The role of evangelist seems to begin in the New Testament. *Evangelist* literally means “one who

<sup>34</sup> Didache 11:3-6.

<sup>35</sup> Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press), 19.

<sup>36</sup> Gary V. Smith. “Prophet” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans), 986-1004.

proclaims good news.” There are three references to an evangelist. Philip is designated as an evangelist in Acts 21:8. This is the only instance in the first-century Christian literature that an individual is given the title of evangelist. The second mention of evangelist is Ephesians 4:11 where Paul lists it among four other ministry gifts, and the third mention of evangelist is Paul’s admonition to Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. There is no corroborating evidence that the “office” of evangelist existed. However, Paul’s instruction to Timothy indicates that the function of evangelist exists and is important. There are no references to an evangelist in the writings of the apostolic fathers.

The fourth ministry gift listed in Ephesians 4:11 is the pastor or shepherd. The term *pastor* is an anglicized form of the Latin/French word for shepherd, but it has not appreciable metaphorical significance.<sup>37</sup> *Shepherd* evokes a mental image from the Old Testament, especially Psalms 23. Jesus also used this imagery in John 10 where he indicates that disciples are sheep and that He is the good shepherd. Pastor/shepherd seems to indicate the basic functioning of ministry: love, compassion, care, protection, provision, etc. As used by the New Testament, *pastor* designates both an endowment for ministry and the one who fills that ministry, but implies no fixed office.<sup>38</sup> There is no further mention of the term *pastor* as a function or office in the first-century Christian fathers.

The fifth and final ministry gift listed in Ephesians 4:11 is teachers. Teaching and schools were known throughout the ancient near east and included the Greek philosophers. *Teaching* is common throughout the Old Testament using words and phrases such as train, learn, instruct, tell, show, make to know, cause to know, and expound. While the Old Testament contains no specific references to academic instruction, several allusions to public instruction or to teaching at court or sanctuary appear.<sup>39</sup> Examples include Moses’ instruction of the Israelites (Dt 31:12f), Eli’s instruction to Samuel (1 Sm 2-3), Nathan’s counsel to King David (1 Kgs 1:11-40), Jehoshaphat’s programs of instruction in the law (2 Chr 17:7-9), and Isaiah’s relationship to a group of disciples (Is 8:16). The basic assumption regarding teaching in the Old Testament appears also in the New Testament.<sup>40</sup> Paul established teaching as a gift (and perhaps an office) in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. The ministry of teaching (and likely the office of the teacher) continues in the first century. The Didache states, “You must then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you.”<sup>41</sup>

The third dimension of social–cultural texture is the final cultural category. The cultural location of a reader, writer, or the text is categorized through the final cultural

<sup>37</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 21.

<sup>38</sup> William R. Harris. “Pastor” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 679.

<sup>39</sup> Clayton N. Jefford. “Teach” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans), 743-745.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Didache 15:1, 2.

categories of social–cultural texture.<sup>42</sup> It is concerned with the manner in which people present their propositions, reasons, and arguments both to themselves and to other people (i.e., rhetoric). Uncovering the cultural location (in contrast to the social location) of a reader or writer reveals their dispositions, prepositions, and values which influence the writing and reading of a text. Robbins states that these topics separate people into one of five final cultural categories: dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture.<sup>43</sup>

*Dominant culture* rhetoric represents a system of attitudes, values, dispositions, and norms that the speaker either presupposes or asserts are supported by social structures vested with power to impose its goal in a significantly broad territorial region. A *subculture* rhetoric imitates the dominant culture and claims to enact them better than the members of dominant status. Subcultures differ from one another according to the prominence of one of three characteristics: (1) a network of communication and loyalty, (2) a conceptual system, and (3) ethnic heritage and identity. *Counterculture* rhetoric rejects the explicit and mutable characteristics of the dominant or subculture rhetoric to which it responds. Counterculture rhetoric evokes the creation of a “better society” not by force or legislation, but by offering alternatives and hopes that the society will “see the light” and adopt a more humanistic way of life. *Contraculture* rhetoric is a short-lived, counterculture deviance, primarily a reaction–formation response to a dominant culture, subculture, or counterculture. They inherently have more negative than positive ideas. Finally, *liminal* culture rhetoric lasts only momentarily. Liminal culture appears and disappears as people move from one cultural identity to another, or consists of people or groups that have never been able to establish a clear social and cultural identity in their setting.

The final cultural dimension determines a text’s cultural location. Cultural location concerns the manner in which people present their propositions, reasons, and arguments to themselves and others. Of the five final cultural dimensions presented by Robbins, Ephesians 4 reflects conceptual subculture rhetoric. Subcultures differ from one another according to the prominence of a network of communication and loyalty, a conceptual system, and ethnic heritage and identity. The most prominent feature of a conceptual subculture is their basic assumptions of life, the world, and nature. Paul is not preaching to reform the world or the Mediterranean culture, but is preaching a diversion from the Gentile world (“you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,” Eph 4:17b). Being different from the world is the goal. It is through the ministry gifts the church will be able to change the world.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

It was determined through examination of the common social and cultural topics of the five ministry gifts, that there is evidence that the office of prophets and teachers existed prior to Paul’s writing of the Ephesian epistle and the continuation of these offices was likely through the first century and beyond. Although the Greek word *apostéllō* is found in the Greek literature and the concept of an official “sendee” is not

<sup>42</sup> Robbins, *Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*.

uncommon in Greek and Hebrew literature, the official designation of apostle seems to be unique to the New Testament. There is the specific designation of apostle for the twelve and Paul and the general designation of apostle for others “sent” in an official capacity, but there is no evidence that an office of apostle existed. As with the apostle, the designation of evangelist seems to be a New Testament concept. However, Philip was specifically designated an evangelist and inductive reasoning tells us that evangelists will continue in the Church age to fulfill the Great Commission. The most uncommon designation is the pastor (shepherd). While the role and image of the shepherd is common in the Old Testament and Jesus brought the imagery into His ministry, there is no other textual evidence to suggest there is an office of pastor. The basic functioning of the ministry is shepherding, therefore the function of the pastor/shepherd continued through the first century.

Our research question is: Are the ministries Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) references to ministry offices or ministry functions? To summarize the findings: cultural and social analysis of the NT text and apostolic fathers determined that while there is some support for the designation of the offices of prophet and teacher, there is little support for the designation of office for apostle, evangelist, or pastor. Textual evidence does suggest that the five gifts of Ephesians 4 are functions of individuals in the New Testament, through the first century and beyond.

#### IV. FUTURE RESEARCH

The conclusions of this paper should be taken as only one step to answering the question: Are the ministries Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11 references to ministry offices or ministry functions? As noted in an earlier section, this paper was limited to one texture of socio-rhetorical analysis. Future research should include analysis of Ephesians 4:11 exploring the inner texture, intertexture, ideological texture, and sacred texture of socio-rhetorical analysis.

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## LEADER EMERGENCE AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTS 2

JULIANNE R. CENAC

Are leaders born or made? To provide additional consideration to this question, this paper suggests that leaders emerge. Based in the theoretical studies of leader emergence, a socio-rhetorical analysis is performed using Acts 2 as a text. Subjects of leadership traits, leadership development, and leadership emergence are analyzed within the scriptural text to determine if strong support or evidence of leader emergence exists. Through the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit, the findings show there is strong support for leader emergence as a viable consideration of leadership origin beyond innate traits and training or development.

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Among the most contested questions in the field of leadership is this: Are leaders born or made? While both positions can be substantiated in the literature, this paper asserts that it is possible neither position is completely true in absolute terms, and that leaders, in the truest sense, are neither all born nor all made. At initial consideration, this statement seems controversial in nature and without merit. However, through closer examination of phenomenological examples of leadership in early periods of history, a third and rarely discussed alternative is revealed. That is, leaders emerge.

*Emergence* is defined in the lexicon from the intransitive verb *emerge*, meaning to rise from obscurity, coming out into view, or manifesting.<sup>1</sup> For the individual in

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<sup>1</sup> "Emerge," *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emerge>

leadership, this burgeoning area of study depicts emergence as conceptually evolving, not necessarily stored nor inherent in any one individual, but rather called forth or revealed through social interactions or within certain contexts.<sup>2</sup> Emergence as a concept suggests fluidity, meaning (1) emergence is not previously observed in the system under observation, (2) emergence involves coherence and integration yet maintains some of its original identity, (3) it occurs at a global or macro level, (4) it is dynamic, and finally, (5) it has ostensible qualities. To that end, from this theoretical basis, it seems appropriate to explore the ideals of leadership emergence in a spiritual context to further illuminate understanding of the phenomenon itself.<sup>3</sup>

For example, in addition to an emergence theory, what is to be said of the more contemporary positions that leaders are born or made when also viewed through the lens of Scripture? Therefore, using the text from Acts 2, the following examines this question using socio-rhetorical criticism to find support for perhaps a more precise perspective of leadership origin. But, first, before reviewing the scriptural relevance for leader emergence, the following provides a theoretical understanding of the three leadership suppositions in question.

## I. LEADERS ARE BORN

Trait theories of leaders seem to provide the greatest support to the supposition that leaders are born. Trait approaches to leadership are among the earliest studied by scholars and focused on innate qualities and characteristics of the leader.<sup>4</sup> Also referred to as great man theory, trait theories differentiate between those traits found in leaders versus followers.

At the root of all trait theories are the assumptions posed originally by Galton's 1869 work titled *Hereditary Genius*.<sup>5</sup> Galton's two focal points of research asserted that leaders are extraordinary individuals whose actions can influence change, and leaders uniquely possess certain traits that are innately acquired to enable their leadership. For example, Ralph Stogdill's work provided the initial basis for trait theory and personal characteristics.<sup>6</sup> His survey of leadership traits originally measured attributes including: (1) intelligence, (2) initiative, (3) self-confidence, and (4) sociability among others.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, in an effort to provide a stronger taxonomy and structure for understanding traits, social science researchers later developed what is now known as the five-factor model. Its conception is traced to the work of Tupes and Christal and has been widely

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas Griffin, *The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Goldstein, "Emergence as a Construct: History and Issues," *Emergence* 1 (1999): 49-73.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Bass, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 79-85.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Galton, "Francis Galton," in *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences*, Gavan Tredoux, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1869), <http://galton.org/books/hereditary-genius/text/pdf/galton-1869-genius-v3.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ralph M. Stogdill, "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: A Survey of the Literature," *The Journal of Psychology* 25 (1948): 35-71.

<sup>7</sup> Bass, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*, 79-85.

adopted for its application in leadership studies.<sup>8</sup> The five factors include the traits: (1) extraversion, (2) agreeableness, (3) conscientiousness, (4) emotional adjustment, and (5) openness to experience.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, research provides additional perspective in understanding trait theory and its application to innate leadership. For example, a study found that two of the five-factor model traits showed the traits of agreeableness and extraversion with the strongest significance related to transformational leadership.<sup>10</sup> Since it is believed that traits are innate, the findings of this study provide a small but meaningful consideration to the notion that even contemporary models of leadership may in fact support the reasoning that leaders are born. A recent theoretical study filters through decades of trait theory studies from across the social sciences related to leadership.<sup>11</sup> In this study, an integrated model is proposed to better understand traits within leadership. What is interesting to note within Zaccaro's comprehensive model is the acquiescence that traits merely make up a leader's cognitive and social repertoire, and that it is the result of other environmental factors and variables that play a role in leadership emergence, effectiveness, and advancement. This acknowledgement or inclusion of the term *emergence* related to leadership seems to hint at Zaccaro's evolved perspective from earlier acknowledgements of innate leadership.

## II. LEADERS ARE MADE

Juxtaposed to the argument of leaders being born is likely to be the supposition that they are made. Leadership development is not only a thriving area of research but is also a thriving industry. If an individual lacks innate ability, those who support the notion that leadership can be learned, would assert that training and development could substantiate leader deficiencies or gaps.<sup>12</sup> For example, leader development at the individual level largely focuses on intrapersonal dynamics, skills, and abilities.<sup>13</sup> Or, in addition to traditional approaches, current leadership development also emphasizes social processes that leaders must engage and navigate.<sup>14</sup> Training to develop these areas then requires greater flexibility in conceptual approaches.

However, if the approach is taken that leaders are made and therefore learning leadership is an extension of social learning for the leader, the more complex nature of viewing and developing the leader within the organizational environment is lost. In other words, the development is still focused on enhancing and honing the individual absent

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<sup>8</sup> Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal, "Recurrent Personality Factors Based on Trait Ratings," Technical Report ASD-TR-61-97 (Lackland Air Force Base, TX: U.S. Air Force, 1961), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy A. Judge and Joyce E. Bono, "Five-Factor Model of Personality and Transformational Leadership," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85 (2000): 751-765.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 757-758.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen J. Zaccaro, "Trait-based Perspectives of Leadership," *American Psychologist* 62 (2007): 6-16.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Brundrett and Ann Dering, "The Rise of Leadership Development Programmes: A Global Phenomenon and a Complex Web," *School Leadership & Management* 26 (2006): 89-92.

<sup>13</sup> Julian Barling, Tom Weber, and E. Kevin Kelloway, "Effects of Transformational Leadership Training on Attitudinal and Financial Outcomes," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 81 (1996): 827-832.

<sup>14</sup> David Day, "Leadership Development: A Review in Context," *The Leadership Quarterly* 11 (2000): 583.

the greater context and setting that include other actors such as followers, dissenters, constituents, and environment.

### III. LEADERS EMERGE

Just as distinct chemical elements form new properties under certain conditions, leadership can emerge within individuals and organizations in certain environments. The dynamics affecting leadership today call for leaders to balance more, know more, and contend with complex challenges.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, that they are responsive to the complexity and adaptive nature of their organizations and their environments.<sup>16</sup> Different from Robert Clinton's leadership emergency theory, which examines how Christian leaders develop throughout their lifetime, emergence in this context implies a more finite occurrence.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, examining leadership as a more fluid and dynamic phenomena may provide a fresh perspective that goes beyond the assertions of leadership origin beginning within the individual or the training intervention.

For example, a historical study examined two groups of twenty supervisors.<sup>18</sup> Within the test group, individuals that emerged as leaders were noted and pulled from the test group. The test group was then observed over subsequent weeks to determine what would happen within the group. The results found that each time emergent leaders were pulled out of the test group, an additional set of leaders would emerge. In the control group, with the same few individuals emerging to lead the group, these individuals were left in to continue leading. This resulted in fewer occurrences of leader emergence than the test group.<sup>19</sup> The implication here is that given certain conditions or environmental context, leaders will emerge. This supports the Zaccaro model described earlier.<sup>20</sup> So then, while other more recent empirical studies have been conducted on the subject of leader emergence, they are not sufficient in number—compared to the areas of trait theory or leadership development—to offer as rigorous an analysis within this limited context. Therefore, additional interdisciplinary approaches to the study of leader emergence seem to offer greater course for observation.

### IV. SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF ACTS 2

While the leadership literature provides substantive support for understanding the premise and origin for leadership from a theoretical view, comparatively it is said that we seem to know very little from the literature about its origin.<sup>21</sup> In other words, how does

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Manz and Henry P Sims, *The New Superleadership: Leading Others to Lead Themselves* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 56-57.

<sup>16</sup> Griffin, Douglas, *The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 57.

<sup>17</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theory: A Self-Study Manual for Analyzing the Development of Christian leaders* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Eugene Jennings, "Forced Leadership Training," *Personnel Journal* 31 (1952): 176-179.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen J. Zaccaro, "Trait-based Perspectives of Leadership," *American Psychologist* 62 (2007): 6-16.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Bass, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*, xi.



leadership emerge? What is the context for emergence? What are the characteristics that are present in leaders as they lead? Are these characteristics innate or learned? And finally, what is to be said of those individuals who have never led, yet assume leadership roles and lead effectively? To answer these questions from an empirical approach is seemingly difficult given the experimental and ethical nature of what would be required to observe answers to these questions over time.<sup>22</sup> Yet, if the observed phenomenon of what occurs during leadership as it emerges could be examined more deeply, it might provide rich and in-depth examples for analysis.

Therefore, the following provides an examination of the emergence of leadership in historic leaders from Biblical accounts. These historic leaders serve as suitable sources for observation, particularly those from Scripture, because of the numerous narrative accounts that exist and illustrate their lives, their emotions, and thoughts along with their leadership. While any number of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures would provide a wealth of examples, in particular, the events surrounding Pentecost and the transformation of the disciples in Acts 2 make it an ideal and provocative background to observe leader emergence through the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit. Within Acts, (1) the transformation of followers to leaders takes place, (2) the formalization of their leadership transformation occurs before the most influential of all Jerusalem, and (3) the study of the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit is made richer because of the detailed narrative recorded by its likely author, Luke.<sup>23</sup>

Acts 2, traditionally authored by the disciple Luke, is divided into three segments: (1) the empowering event by the Holy Spirit and witness, (2) Peter's sermon and the crowd's response, and (3) the early community of Christ.<sup>24</sup> According to the text, the disciples were now gathered together in Jerusalem and had been there waiting, as Jesus' instructed before His ascension, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> And it is here, at this point, the stage is set for a greatly anticipated transformation. Through the methods of rhetorical analysis, additional perspective can perhaps be gained in understanding what is about to take place within these segments of Scripture as the socio-rhetorical techniques unfold greater meaning within scriptural text.<sup>26</sup>

### *Significance of the Setting*

To begin, looking at the setting of the disciples in Acts 2, perhaps requires understanding the verses that immediately precede it. Acts 1:15 tells of Peter among the disciples and close followers to put in context the betrayal of Judas and exhort the

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<sup>22</sup> David V Day and Charles E. Lance, "Understanding the Development of Leadership Complexity Through Latent Growth Modeling," in *Leader Development for Transforming Organizations: Growing Leaders for Tomorrow*, ed. David V. Day, Stephen J. Halpin, and Stanley M. Zaccaro (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 41-69.

<sup>23</sup> Nelson P. Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders: The Apostles in the Ritual of Status* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 210-228.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Wittherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 128.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 1:4-8; Jn 15:26-27, 16:1-8.

<sup>26</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 3.

need to replace him. Examining Peter's charge through a socio-cultural texture, the significance is revealed. The prevailing social attitudes of honor and shame in the passages prior to Acts 2 reveal the social significance of the disciples' need to replace Judas with a twelfth member.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it was critical in that day for the shame associated with Judas' betrayal and suicide to be rectified and the honor of what Jesus' ministry represented. The future work of the disciples and success of the Jewish–Gentile ministry was dependent upon it.

Returning to Acts 2, within the first three verses, there are examples of sensory–aesthetic texture, which evokes the senses, emotions, and thoughts.<sup>28</sup> There is evidence of this as Luke presents the reader with the sights, sounds, imagery, and even fear or reverence as the Holy Spirit enters the room.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Luke is described as purposeful in using the powerful imagery and metaphor “like a blowing of a violent wind” or “tongues as of fire.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, the author provides a sense of community in the emotion of the disciples being gathered together in one place. The upper room, as it is sometimes described, is symbolic as a place of gathering, prayer, and a place set apart from the others for purging and the ritual of transformation to take place among the disciples.<sup>31</sup> The power and omniscience of the Holy Spirit here combined with the formality and set apartness of the disciples seems to almost foretell or establish the significance of the event.

Furthermore, in verses 2:5 and 2:8-10, Luke describes with great detail who precisely is observing this event. In verse 5, he notes through the social texture of the text, “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” The distinction here is that the Jews had gathered in Jerusalem as *pious* or devout Jews, and that the significance of this term *eulabeis* or *pious* is always referred to the Jews who were permanent residents of Jerusalem—not likely Jews who had journeyed for the feast.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to understanding there were resident Jews present, there were others gathered in the crowd. Scripture denotes it was the day of Pentecost. Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks because it occurred on the fiftieth day after Passover, was among the most significant festivals where all Jews gathered in celebration.<sup>33</sup> In fact, through the social texture, it is noted that the population of Jerusalem at that time of Pentecost was estimated to have been as high as 180,000-200,000, with the largest crowds forming in the temple precincts.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, based on these observations from the text, the setting becomes even more elaborate as the disciples are now gathered together, in the most central area of Jerusalem, at the most heightened significant time of year, with the largest influx of people, in the most populated district of the city as a background for the Holy Spirit's arrival.

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<sup>27</sup> Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders*.

<sup>28</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 2:1-3.

<sup>30</sup> John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: Acts* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders*, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Polhill, *The New American Commentary*.

<sup>33</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 130-131.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

However, the social tapestry of the text provides even more significance to this setting. In verse 4 from the text, we know that everyone in the room was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. It is conceded that a great debate remains as to the precise nature, ability, and implication of this verse for first century and modern times. However, scholar William Shepherd asserts, perhaps for the context of merely understanding more about the function of the Spirit, traditional differences of the text can be diminished:

My goal in making use of these literary theorists is to determine how the character of the Holy Spirit functions in the narrative—how it works, what it represents, and why. I will finally be asking, in light of the close correlation between charters and people, what Luke’s characterization of the Holy Spirit implies for the God of Luke’s proclamation. My thesis is that in Luke–Acts, the character of the Holy Spirit signals narrative reliability, and that ultimately the Spirit’s presence and action is that of God.<sup>35</sup>

So then, as the Scriptures note in verse 4, that as the Spirit gave utterance all those present in the house began to speak in other languages, Luke in verses 6-8 is careful to describe a list of languages being spoken. These languages are of the native countries from which the *godly* Jews had migrated. Moreover, the *godly* Jews are hearing these Galileans speak about the glorious works of God not in Aramaic, their native tongue, but in the various specific languages and dialects of the diverse crowd.<sup>36</sup> Among the nations and territories listed, all had extensive Jewish communities.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the Lukan phrasing is distinct, using a rare word in the phrase: “as the Spirit enabled them.” The wording here, he posits, means to *utter, to declare, to speak with gravity* and is the same wording as used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for prophesying as noted in 1 Chronicles 25:1, Ezra 13:9, and Micah 5:12.

Therefore, in summarizing our understanding of the setting and the crowd through the sensory–aesthetic and social textures, it can be said that the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is intended to be a significant event with as many observers as possible to witness firsthand the power of God and the transformation of the twelve disciples to apostles, even leaders to carry forward the ministry of Jesus. Yet, through additional analysis, there may be even greater perspective gained.

### *Significance of the Spirit*

Beyond understanding the setting and the crowd within this first section of Acts, there is also the work of the Holy Spirit and the crowd’s response to His presence. The empowerment by the Holy Spirit is described as a way to signify the disciples’ witness was authorized by God.<sup>38</sup> The demonstration of the relationship between the divine

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<sup>35</sup> William H. Shepherd Jr., *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke–Acts*. (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1994), 101.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 2: 4-13.

<sup>37</sup> Polhill, *The New American Commentary*.

<sup>38</sup> Ju Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke–Acts* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 228-230.

nature and human nature is the essence of sacred texture within the scriptural text.<sup>39</sup> For instance, in Acts 2:14-42 is perhaps one of the most compelling charges given by Peter not only explaining the presence and demonstration of the Holy Spirit but also recounting the context of the event within the prophetic words of Joel. The result of Peter's proclamation of the gospel is so provocative that the crowd was "cut to the heart" and needed to know what to do in response to his charge.<sup>40</sup> This again, illustrates within the text the relational dynamic of the sacred connecting with humanity.

In addition to the sacred, there are other layers that form the tapestry of the text and basis for interpretation of this passage. These dimensions of the social and cultural texture of a text reflect the very same institutions and structures of a society.<sup>41</sup> Two examples from Peter's discourse in 2:14-42 are the mention of the time of day and, secondly, the mention of prophecy from Joel. Nine in the morning was a customary prayer hour, the third hour of the day.<sup>42</sup> Traditionally, the Jews would eat in the fourth hour; therefore, to be drunk at this time was unlikely, particularly during feast season as most of the drinking would customarily take place at night.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, Peter's defense or explanation of the Holy Spirit's actions may have perhaps been to assure the crowd of the legitimacy, authenticity, and power of God's presence they had just witnessed. Ironically, Peter's own boldness and self-efficacy in this discourse, as a result of the filling of the Holy Spirit, may have done more to convince and convict the crowd than the actual rhetoric of his argument itself. In other words, the disciples underwent a significant transformation to fulfill the ministry of Jesus, and by receiving the Holy Spirit, any previous deficiencies were mitigated as they prepared to continue Jesus' work.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, Peter's reference to Joel was to direct the crowd of Jews' attention to the fulfilling of prophecy. "Peter's conviction was in keeping with the rabbinic consensus that the Spirit no longer rested on all Israel but would return as a universal gift at the end time."<sup>45</sup>

Additional occurrences of the work of the Holy Spirit are found throughout the Scriptures. Examining the historical texture or intertexture of this Acts 2 passage, there are numerous connections to understanding the phenomenological experience of the Holy Spirit and the inner workings of leaders throughout Biblical history. Throughout the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, there is evidence of God's Spirit, the Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit endowing certain leaders, judges, kings, or prophets with power or special ability. This endowment is not predictable for every individual that held a leadership office, but rather, that God conferred His Spirit at will on certain individuals, and reclaimed it from others as evidenced in 1 Samuel 16:14.<sup>46</sup> To that end, Table 1

<sup>39</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 120-126.

<sup>40</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 153.

<sup>41</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Polhill, *The New American Commentary*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Martin W. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark, International, 2004), 88.

<sup>45</sup> Polhill, *The New American Commentary*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit*, 43.

provides a select list of leaders who have experienced the Holy Spirit in some way in their work or ministry.

Table 1. Holy Spirit phenomena and select Biblical leaders

Scripture phenomenon	Leader	Holy Spirit
Exodus 31:3	Bezalel	I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts
Numbers 11:17	The Seventy	Portion of the Spirit taken from Moses and put upon the leaders
Numbers 27:18	Joshua	Who has the Spirit in him/Full of the Spirit of Wisdom
Deuteronomy 34:9		All the Children of Israel listened to him, He led Israel
Judges 14:6	Samson	The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power
1 Samuel 11:6	Saul	The Spirit of God came upon him in power
1 Samuel 16:14		Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul
1 Samuel 16:13	David	From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power
Isaiah 61:1	Isaiah	The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor
Matthew 3:16	Jesus	He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and

Scripture phenomenon	Leader	Holy Spirit
Luke 4:1		lighting on him. Full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert
Luke 4:14		Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit
Acts 2:4	Peter	And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit
Acts 4:8		Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit

Persons of various statuses were called into their roles of leadership by virtue of God's spirit filling them or enduing them with a special grace, power, or ability. "God is depicted selecting several individuals and raising them up as warriors/leaders on whom he bestows the miraculous power of leadership through his Spirit."<sup>47</sup> Hur continues noting the characteristics of this endowment are not permanent and that the Holy Spirit empowerment with judges was temporal, even repeated, and often given to individuals at times of national crisis.<sup>48</sup> This perhaps presents a glimpse into the God-ordained purposes of leadership, particularly when the Holy Spirit is imparted or employed. Therefore, the most notable demonstrations of the Spirit endowment phenomenon are (1) prophesy, (2) supernatural power or extraordinary ability, (3) impenetrable wisdom, and (3) religious/ethical sustaining power.<sup>49</sup>

### *Significance of the Early Church Ethos*

Finally, in probing the third and last segment of Acts 2, the ideological texture and intertexture seem to reveal a foundational setting for the followers and the early Church. Acts 2:42-47 helps the reader further understand the Lukan view of the early Church and its practice. As it is nearly impossible for any narrator to remain objective without influence or impartiality from the world around them, their ideology will inevitably frame or prejudice the reader of a text accordingly.<sup>50</sup> So then, while some scholars have criticized the author's account of the Acts of the Apostles as blissful and aggrandizing, even the life of the early Christians identified in Acts 2:42-47, Acts 5:1-10 reveals from

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>50</sup> R. Allen Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 42-43.

the Lukan perspective the commitment required to follow Christ.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the empowering of the Holy Spirit with the disciples would not have merely been to endow them with power to witness and lead others, but rather, the coming of the Spirit was also to prepare the disciples for suffering and persecution, a part of the ministry of Jesus.<sup>52</sup> This view is supported by another socio-cultural observation in that the apostles were leaders and that their type of public leadership would normally carry with it a level of status similar to that of public officials who would often receive gifts in exchange for obligations and honor.<sup>53</sup> The portrayal in Luke 22:24-27, however, calls for a breaking of this “patron–client relationship” and calls for service to be performed without expectation of status or honor in return.<sup>54</sup> This principle is significant as it depicts the now apostles as entering into a leadership role of service rather than prestige. The communal depiction of the believers under their leadership in Acts 2:43-47 seems consistent with this observation.

## V. DISCUSSION

This paper sought to examine the supposition that leaders are neither born, nor made *per se*, but rather that leaders emerge. Through extensive perspective and tapestry of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, there is evidence that the notion of leader emergence has a preponderance of support in Scripture. First, consider the perspective of trait theory and leaders being born. From the analysis provided in Scripture, it does not appear that God favored traits. This is evident in the consistent selection or empowering of individuals to lead who not only, in many cases, did not possess outward traits to lead, but if anything would have been the last considered to lead (e.g., Moses to address Pharaoh, yet not gifted in speech; David, to be anointed king of Israel as the youngest of his brothers and vocation of a shepherd). In fact, it was the people of Israel who pled with Samuel to give them a king so that they could be like the other nations because Samuel had grown old and had appointed his own sons as judges over them.<sup>55</sup> Also, it is interesting to note, even while it was God who led Samuel to anoint Saul king, that Saul happened to fulfill the traits of great man theory, as the Scriptures say, “He was an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others.”<sup>56</sup> The point is that the analysis from Scripture indicates leaders do not have to possess innate abilities or skills to lead.

Secondly, from the analysis, leadership is not about the leader himself. Luke’s account in the latter verses of Acts 2 provides a glimpse of an ethos intended for the early Church and thereby an implication for its leaders. The findings from within this section seem to illustrate a counter purpose for leadership than that found in the literature today. That is, leadership, as demonstrated in Scripture, is not for the leader. It

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<sup>51</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 153-157.

<sup>52</sup> Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts*, 134.

<sup>53</sup> Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> 1 Sm 8:1-9.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Sm 9:2.

is not an ability for individuals to possess for their own purposes and fulfillment. Rather, in Scripture we see the phenomena of the Holy Spirit nearly always equipping, empowering, and endowing individuals with power, wisdom, skills, abilities, and insight to do the work of the Father. The Holy Spirit is most often bestowed upon an emergent leader to give them extraordinary faith, boldness, or power for the good of the people, the followers, and the work of the ministry. This assertion turns the traditional thinking of leadership upside down. By altering one's perspective to see leadership as a fluid, mutable concept that can occur in one as much as another, is a divergent path from the origins of leadership studies, which seem to focus on leadership as a characteristic one owned or possessed that was favored from birth.

Finally, there is one last observation to the analysis of this text which requires only a brief review of the life of Peter as depicted as a follower, disciple of Christ, and the apostle of the Church to grasp the concept and significance of leader emergence. From the timid, unconfident, even neurotic behavior demonstrated throughout his time with Jesus—particularly at the trial prior to the crucifixion of Jesus<sup>57</sup>—to the emboldened leader speaking and directing in Acts 2:14-42, it is evident that the empowering of the Holy Spirit enabled Peter with gifts and abilities he did not demonstrate prior. This is consistent with Goldstein's definition of emergence provided earlier.

In conclusion, while the limitations of this analysis are the focus of a particular event in history as documented in Scripture, there are implications for leadership and the future study of leadership that can be realized. Leadership is perhaps a far more perplexing subject than current research reflects. To observe and truly understand leader emergence, additional socio-rhetorical studies of the phenomenon as well as actual experimental studies may be warranted. The findings of this research should stir others to consider the potential of this area of leadership. How many great, but undiscovered, emergent leaders have been overlooked or presumptively ignored (in research and practice) because they did not resemble society's subjective outward credentials. Perhaps the initial discussion from these findings will provoke further study of leader emergence in other contexts.

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<sup>57</sup> Jn 18.



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### About the Author

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***LEADERSHIP REFLECTION:***  
**LEADERS DO THE RIGHT THING: A POPULAR PHRASE OR A  
REAL PRACTICE?**

MICHAEL HARTSFIELD, PH.D.

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A band of extremists carried out a plan they believed to be the right plan executed in the right way at the right time. Their concept of right meant 2,993 people died as two planes flew into New York's Twin Towers, and a third plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field on September 11, 2001, a day that will forever be remembered. Citizens of the United States, and many other nations around the world, stood in total disbelief that something so wrong could have been perpetrated on humanity, while other parts of the world celebrated the event as right and just. The age-old philosophical argument over what is right and wrong once again led to the tragic reality of war with thousands on both sides paying the ultimate price.

The question of what is right and wrong is one we deal with everyday. We walk through life lavishing praise and casting blame in our constant moral evaluation of who is right and who is wrong. The statement, "Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right," is often quoted to make a distinction between managing processes and leading people.<sup>1</sup> The obvious implication of this

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Bennis, *An Invented Life: Reflections on Leadership and Change* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1994), 78.

statement is that leadership is about always doing the right thing. This is, no doubt, what every leader aspires to do, but can anyone always do what is right? To do the right thing naturally requires knowing what is right and, conversely, what is wrong. Problems arise when what one person perceives to be right does not align with right as defined by someone else.

It is easy for leaders to approach the responsibilities of leading from a competency perspective. If the right theories and principles are applied at the right time in the right situation, then right decisions are made and the leader does the right thing. If only this were true. The problem with this way of thinking is that right is still determined by the leader and his or her application of these competencies. Right is still determined by the person and not by a less subjective standard; a set of absolutes that may define right in a manner much different than those prescribed by a set of leadership concepts and principles. This means right is not determined by competencies, but by alignment with an unchanging standard that must be written on the heart, and not just the mind, of every man and woman who accepts the responsibility of leading.

Leaders can live in a lonely and dangerous place where right, as defined by their own personal preferences, is never challenged. The positional power that accompanies the leader's role too often serves as insulation from correction and critique. This can be dangerous for a leader, since it is a human tendency to believe the way we see the world is correct and the decisions we make are based on sound logic and right thinking. This desire to be right is driven by strong innate cognitive and emotional processes that continually interpret what we are experiencing. Attempts to better understand these often reflexive processes have continued for centuries.

## I. A NATURAL STANDARD FOR RIGHT

Four hundred years ago, Sir Francis Bacon discussed a concept psychologists today call *confirmation bias*. Bacon said, "The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate."<sup>2</sup>

Confirmation bias causes us to hold tightly to what we believe even when there is abundant evidence our beliefs and perceptions are incorrect. Contemporary research has confirmed the anecdotal observations made by Bacon centuries ago. Kuhn found that both children and adults, when presented evidence of discrepancies in a theory they accepted, failed to acknowledge the discrepancies or addressed them in a distorted manner. "Identical information was interpreted one way in relation to a favored theory and another way in relation to a theory that was not favored."<sup>3</sup> In fact,

<sup>2</sup> Francis Bacon, "Novum Organum," in *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*, ed. Edwin A. Burt (New York: Random House, 1939), 24-123.

<sup>3</sup> Deanna Kuhn, "Children and Adults as Intuitive Scientists," *Psychological Review* 96 (1989): 674-689.

confirmation bias actually causes people to become more firmly entrenched in their way of thinking when presented with strong evidence their way of thinking is flawed. Research done at Emory University used brain scans to study this phenomenon. Parts of the brain associated with reasoning showed almost no activity when participants were given information contrary to what they believe, while large amounts of activity took place in those feeling and emotion centers of the brain that create a sense of reward or relief.<sup>4</sup> This suggests confirmation bias is real and quite subliminal. People are often more motivated to escape negative feelings and emotions than to change their opinions, even when logical and rational evidence says they should.

Peter Senge (2006) discusses a similar phenomenon with his concept of mental models. Senge says, "Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action."<sup>5</sup> Senge also points out that we often have no conscious awareness of mental models or the effect they are having on our behavior and thinking. We judge people and situations based on the mental models we have formed over a lifetime, and changing these mental models is difficult to do on our own. Senge says changing mental models requires "the ability to carry on 'learningful' conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others."<sup>6</sup> Opening up to this kind of scrutiny can be most difficult for leaders who believe being right is their number one priority. Right or wrong, their mental models often persist throughout the organization.

Unfortunately, confirmation bias and mental models can dictate how leaders see the people around them. Mistaken perceptions of those they lead can be embraced as an accurate assessment of the followers and their contribution to the organization. This can be devastating for the followers who gain knowledge and skills to increase their contribution to the organization only to have the leader constantly see them as they were and not as they are. These often erroneous but firmly held perceptions can keep leaders from practicing what French philosopher Gabriel Marcel called *creative fidelity*.<sup>7</sup>

Creative fidelity is the willingness to be faithful and committed to someone because of who they are today and not who they were in the past. In a marriage relationship, fidelity to a spouse does not end because that person no longer looks or acts as they did years before. Creative fidelity is the result of a decision to love and honor that person though they have changed over time. The same principle applies with parents, friends, and even colleagues at work. The term creative fidelity seems contradictory, since fidelity implies constancy and creative implies change and adjustment. This is what makes Marcel's concept so intriguing. It points out the contradiction leaders are so often required to embrace. It is much easier to see a person in the role they have held in the organization for years rather than seeing them

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<sup>4</sup> Drew Westen, Pavel S. Blagov, Keith Harenski, Clint Kilts, and Stephan Hamann, "Neural Bases of Motivated Reasoning: An fMRI Study of Emotional Constraints on Partisan Political Judgment in the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 18, no. 11(2006): 1947-1958.

<sup>5</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 2006), 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

as the person they have become. Creative fidelity means a leader must allow people to grow and change. Right would then be based on what is best for the follower today and not on preconceived notions from the past.

## II. WHO IS QUALIFIED TO DETERMINE RIGHT?

Perhaps these concepts are being addressed in Matthew 13 when Jesus told the parable of the weeds. In that parable, the enemy sows weeds among the wheat while everyone is sleeping. The wheat and weeds sprout together prompting the servants to ask the owner of the field if they should pull up the weeds. The owner instructs the servants to let the wheat and weeds grow together or else wheat may be pulled up with the weeds. The weeds would be removed once the wheat is mature. This parable has implication for leaders, since it makes clear that deciding who is wheat and who is a weed is not a decision made by human understanding and intellect. Indeed, at points in the maturation process, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the wheat and the weeds. This is God's job, and in time He will reveal right and wrong, good and bad. In this regard, confirmation biases and mental models are only reminders that creative fidelity or any attempt to see people in the totality of their intentions and motives, is beyond human capability. It requires Divine input and a willingness to submit our flawed perceptions to the perfect knowledge of an omniscient God.

The willingness to examine self and these internal processes on which we base our definition of right attitudes and behaviors is not a natural and spontaneous disposition for most people. This is especially true for those who lead and often feel an extra pressure to meet the expectation from others that they always know what is right and respond correctly in any given situation. After all, is this not what leaders do? At the very least, this is what leaders should aspire to do, which makes it imperative that right is determined by an absolute standard and not the often fickle thoughts and feelings that accompany human decision making. Doing the right thing then becomes a decision based on truth and not feelings. We see a Biblical example of right decisions in the life of Barnabas, who chose to overcome his confirmation biases and mental models to practice creative fidelity in his relationship with the Apostle Paul.

## III. A HIGHER STANDARD OF RIGHT

When great leaders in the Bible are discussed, Barnabas is rarely mentioned. He did not lead armies, create a great personal following, or do any other exploits commonly associated with leadership greatness. What he did do was make right decisions when making wrong decisions would have been easier and more highly endorsed by others.

We see in Barnabas a key characteristic of measuring right. Barnabas was a man who looked for and celebrated evidences of grace rather than measuring right through the lens of criticism. In Acts 11, we see this lived out in Barnabas. When the church in Antioch began to grow, it was Barnabas who was sent by the church in Jerusalem to be an ambassador of encouragement in Antioch. "When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain

true to the Lord with all their hearts.”<sup>8</sup> Barnabas focused on the evidence of grace he saw in what was being done right rather than negatively focusing on what was wrong in this young and developing Antioch church. This is the same characteristic we see in the way Barnabas embraced Paul, a man radically transformed by his conversion experience on the Damascus road.

When others could see Paul only as the persecutor of the Christians he had once been, Barnabas chose to see him in the light of grace as a man changed and called to an effective work for the cause of Christ. It was Barnabas who brought Paul into the fellowship of the church in Jerusalem when the Christians there did not trust that his conversion was real.<sup>9</sup> It was Barnabas who would, years later, bring Paul to Antioch to become part of the leadership there. It was Barnabas who joined with Paul to form the church’s first missionary team. It was Barnabas whose leadership during this critical time in the New Testament church was instrumental in raising up the man who would become Christianity’s chief theologian and one of the most significant figures in all of Christianity. History has shown Barnabas made right decisions concerning Paul, but what must he have overcome to do so?

The earlier discussion of confirmation bias and mental models shows how these processes can be innately driven by the natural default settings of our mind and emotions. There is no reason to believe the same natural processes were not at work in Barnabas. He, no doubt, had tangible evidence of Paul’s mistreatment of Christians, but he also knew firsthand the transformative power of Jesus. His definition of right, in regard to Paul, was not based on the opinions of the Jerusalem church or the natural inklings of his humanness. Barnabas was a man of faith who understood the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The way Barnabas walked out his faith has implications for leaders today. It was his willingness to walk as a man of faith directed by the Spirit that compels us to see him as a model leader. His faith was tangibly expressed in his constant focus on others and not self. His real name was Joseph, but his generous gift to the church with the money he received from the sale of a field earned him the name Barnabas, son of encouragement. It was this same selflessness he showed when coming alongside and endorsing Paul. It was also an act of selflessness on the part of Barnabas when he stood in support of John Mark after a dispute arose between Paul and Mark.<sup>10</sup> This resulted in Barnabas and Paul going their separate ways. Just as Barnabas saw potential in Paul, he also saw potential in Mark and chose to invest in him just as he had in Paul earlier. For Barnabas, the role of leading was to mentor young leaders. Doing the right thing was doing what was best for others and not for self.

Did Barnabas make the right decision with Mark? Historical evidence would say yes. His investment in Mark was not wasted and Mark became a valuable part of the church. Paul eventually referred to Mark as his “fellow worker.”<sup>11</sup> Near the end of his life, Paul found himself imprisoned, discouraged, and abandoned by all but his closest

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 11:23.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 11:26-27.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 15.

<sup>11</sup> Phlm 1:24.

friends. It was at this low point Paul wrote to Timothy and made this request, "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me."<sup>12</sup> Barnabas chose to overlook the past failings of both Paul and Mark to see through the eyes of the Spirit who they were now and not who they had been in the past. This was creative fidelity in practice. He exercised creative fidelity and overcame the natural tendency toward confirmation bias and mental models that can determine how we judge right and wrong. Barnabas chose to focus on the evidence of grace in Mark's life rather than critically focus on mistakes made, just as he had done with Paul.

#### IV. THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF RIGHT

Leaders are not perfect and none have the definitive answer to what is right and wrong in any and every situation. Maybe we are now narrowing in on what it means to do the right thing. It is not the result of following a prescribed method or the correct administration of five steps to right thinking and behavior. The life of Barnabas would teach us that leaders do the right thing when their concern for others is greater than their concern for self. Right decisions are made when we allow people to change and no longer judge them for who they once were but accept them for who they are now. Doing the right thing is looking for evidences of grace so we can focus on the good in people instead of assigning ourselves to the role of critic and faultfinder. Doing the right thing is to be a faith-filled leader who recognizes the Holy Spirit is always right, even when our confirmation biases and mental models tempt our mind and emotions to see people and situations in a contrary light. This is the absolute on which right and wrong must be determined. We have learned from Barnabas that the fruit of doing right, as determined by the Spirit, may not be instantly revealed, but it will be revealed in time. A day will come when the Owner of all things will say the wheat and the weeds are fully grown and the wheat is ready for harvest; pull up the weeds and harvest the wheat. What is absolutely right will be fully known on that day.

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#### About the Author

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Tm 4:11.



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