



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

**Volume 2, No. 2**

The *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* (JBPL) is a refereed scholarly journal that aims to provide a forum for international research and exploration of leadership studies focused on the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Representing the multidisciplinary fields of biblical, social-science, historical, and leadership studies, the JBPL publishes qualitative research papers that explore, engage, and extend the field of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of leadership as found within the contexts of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. To stimulate scholarly debate and a free flow of ideas, the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* is published in electronic format and provides access to all issues free of charge.

**Editorial Staff**

Dr. Corné Bekker  
Editor  
*Regent University*

Mrs. Ashleigh Slater  
Managing and Production Editor  
*Regent University*

**Members**

Dr. Andrew D. Clarke  
*University of Aberdeen*  
Scotland, UK

Dr. Jacob W. Elias  
*Associated Mennonite Biblical*  
*Seminary*  
Indiana, USA

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel  
*Dallas Seminary*  
Texas, USA

Dr. David J. Gyertson  
*Regent University*  
Virginia, USA

Dr. Charles de Jongh  
*Malyon College*  
Brisbane, Australia

Dr. Gary Kenney  
*Eastern Washington University*  
Washington, USA

Dr. Celia E. T. Kourie  
*University of South Africa*  
Gauteng, South Africa

Dr. John (Jack) W. Niewold  
*Living Hope Christian Center*  
Oregon, USA

Dr. Randall J. Pannell  
*Regent University*  
Virginia, USA

Dr. Bruce E. Winston  
*Regent University*  
Virginia, USA

**Production Staff**

Dr. Doris Gomez  
Website Design  
*Regent University*

Mrs. Julia Mattera  
Communications Specialist  
*Regent University*

Mrs. Sarah Stanfield  
Website Production  
*Regent University*



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## FROM THE EDITOR

---

Greetings,

Welcome to the 2009 Summer edition of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*. This is the largest edition of JBPL yet, and I am encouraged to report that the volume and quality of the submissions to the journal have significantly increased. We plan to publish a second edition later this year to accommodate the growth in submissions.

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 production editor, Ashleigh Slater, for her continued selfless service and commitment to excellence.

It is my growing conviction that an only clearer understanding of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures holds the promise of a resurgence of moral and values-based approaches to leadership today. Only when our understanding and practice of leadership is utterly informed and fueled by the Word of God will we have the kind of Christian leadership that will change our world.

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

Peace and all good,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Corné J. Bekker'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Corné J. Bekker, D. Litt. et Phil.  
Editor  
Regent University



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## ASSESSING THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PAUL AND CULTURAL CONGRUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT CORINTH USING PROJECT GLOBE CONSTRUCTS

MARK GREEN  
STEPHANIE KODATT  
CHARLES SALTER  
PHYLLIS DUNCAN  
DIANA GARZA-ORTIZ  
ESTHER CHAVEZ

Several studies have analyzed the Apostle Paul's leadership style. These studies have used situational leadership and analyses based on various roles in which Paul served. Over the last decade, the largest empirical study of leadership—Project GLOBE—was conducted. This project analyzes six dimensions of leadership and nine dimensions of culture in sixty-two different societies around the globe. Using the Project GLOBE dimensions of leadership and culture, this study posits what Paul's leadership style likely was, and what the cultural dimensions of the community at Corinth might have been. Project GLOBE provides detailed information concerning what forms of leadership work best with each dimension of culture. Using that baseline, this study finds that Paul's likely leadership style and the cultural preferences of the community at Corinth match on thirty out of thirty-six pairs of leader-culture agreement.

---

The apostle Paul was, arguably, the most successful proselytizer in history. As part of his missionary activities, he began a large number of Christian

communities during the period 40–60 C.E.

Undoubtedly, Paul was a leader. Many authors describe different aspects of his leadership style. Middleton, for example, argues we can see situational leadership in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>1</sup> Whittington posits that we can discern ten aspects of Paul's leadership style from his writings.<sup>2</sup>

At least four challenges belie attempts to describe Paul's leadership style. First, how societies viewed leadership two millennia were somewhat different from more egalitarian and democratic societies in the twenty-first century. Clarke provides an in-depth treatment of how Roman and Greek culture likely viewed leaders and leadership.<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite cultural differences, the general idea of leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal is timeless.<sup>4</sup> A similar definition used in Project GLOBE also seems to span the test of time. Project GLOBE defines leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members."<sup>5</sup>

A second challenge in describing Paul's leadership style is that he, like most leaders, almost assuredly grew and, to some degree, changed his leadership style as he gained experience. Doohan presents an argument that we can trace this growth in Paul's leadership.<sup>6</sup> He believes we can discern Paul's early leadership style by examination of the letters to the Thessalonians and Galatians. We see aspects of how Paul led through conflict in a community in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Doohan argues that we see a more refined form of leadership in Paul's letter to the Romans and his final perspective in his letter to the Philippians. One way to control for this possible evolution of Paul's leadership style is to focus an examination on a particular congregation during a smaller time span. For this analysis, that frame of analysis is the congregation at Corinth.

A third challenge in discerning Paul's leadership style is the limited amount of sources. Discerning Paul's leadership style is generally available

---

<sup>1</sup> Gordon Middleton, "The Epistle to the Ephesians: Instilling Values Using Situational Leadership," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 1, no 1 (2006), [http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol1no1/Middleton\\_JBPL\\_V1No1.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol1no1/Middleton_JBPL_V1No1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> J. Lee Whittington, Tricia M. Pitts, Woody V. Kageler, and Vicki L. Goodwin, "Legacy Leadership: The Leadership Wisdom of the Apostle Paul," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 749–770.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew D. Clark, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* (London: T & T Clark International, 2008); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth* (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Robert J. House, Paul J. Hanges, Mansour Javidan, Peter W. Dorfman, and Vipin Gupta, *Culture, Leadership and Organizations: The Globe Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 15–20.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Doohan, *Leadership in Paul* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984).

through two methods. One way of glimpsing his leadership style is to reconstruct aspects based on guidance from the surviving letters. Unfortunately, we must infer the context surrounding the responses Paul supplies. In doing so, we construct aspects of his leadership style. A second method is to examine the structure that emerged in the second century Christian communities, and infer underpinnings that might have been influenced by Paul. For this analysis, the first method, speculating from an exegetical interpretation of the three surviving Pauline letters to Corinth is used.<sup>7</sup>

A final challenge is that the aspects of leadership discernable from Paul's letters vary depending on the culture of the Christian community to which he was writing. We may see certain aspects in a letter to one community and other aspects in a different letter. This study addresses this challenge, by limiting the assessment of Paul's leadership style to an analysis of leadership to the community at Corinth.

## I. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Several scholarly analyses of Paul's leadership style have been done. One of the most comprehensive analyses is that of Andrew Clarke. Clarke analyzes Paul's leadership style and uses a model of agricultural, artisan, and household imagery. He argues that Paul's leadership style includes an emphasis on task orientation.<sup>8</sup> He argues that this task orientation is juxtaposed to a role reversal that, today, we would call *servant leadership*. Paul regularly preached that leaders should humble themselves, rather than serve as exalted figureheads.<sup>9</sup>

Doohan describes Paul's style of leadership using Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership paradigm.<sup>10</sup> She argues that during his apostolic career, Paul used a variety of leadership approaches depending on the challenges he faced at a particular community. She also believes that Paul matured in his leadership during his career, leading quite differently with the community in Thessalonica than that at Corinth.

Aspects of leadership that have not been used in an analysis of Paul's style of leadership are those developed for the GLOBE study of leadership. This article uses those leadership styles as its theoretical foundation. This article also uses those aspects of culture developed for Project GLOBE. To limit the focus of

---

<sup>7</sup> The authors subscribe to the view that 2 Corinthians is comprised of portions of two different letters.

<sup>8</sup> Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 119.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>10</sup> Doohan, *Leadership in Paul*; Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996).

the analysis, only Paul's leadership toward the community at Corinth is addressed.

## II. CHRISTIANITY AT CORINTH

In 146 B.C.E. Roman forces destroyed the Greek city of Corinth. After lying in ruins for a century, in 44 B.C.E. Julius Caesar had the city rebuilt. Caesar established the Roman method of government and brought mostly Roman colonists into the city. While there were some Greeks who still lived in and around Corinth, only the Roman colonists and their descendants were considered citizens of Corinth.

Corinth in the time of Paul was a major economic hub for trade between Italy and Asia. Engels posits that Corinth contained a variety of religious practices.<sup>11</sup> Gods and goddesses from both the Greek and Roman pantheon were worshipped, as were deities unique to Corinth itself.

Horrell and Adams provide a very helpful synopsis of the composition of Christian community at Corinth.<sup>12</sup> Founded approximately 49 C.E., the early community was likely comprised of Jews and a minority of Gentiles. Murphy-O'Connor suggests the Christian community at the time of the letter(s) found in 1 Corinthians numbered about forty to fifty in size.<sup>13</sup> The community likely met in homes, often referred to as house churches.<sup>14</sup> There are varied positions regarding the social status of the members of the Corinthian church. Theissen's position is that there were a significant number of poor among the Christian converts, but also a few middle and upper class members.<sup>15</sup>

## III. PROJECT GLOBE

### *Cultural Dimensions*

The GLOBE project consists of a total of 17,370 middle managers from 951 organizations in three industries (finance, food processing, and telecommunications). The GLOBE research provides empirical findings of each of nine cultural dimensions (performance orientation, future orientation, gender

<sup>11</sup> Donald Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Edward Adams and David C. Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2004), 1–50.

<sup>13</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (New York: Fortress Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Gerd Theissen, "Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community: A Contribution of the Sociology of Early Hellenistic Christianity" in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1982), 69–119.

egalitarianism, assertiveness, individualism, collectivism, power distance, humane orientation, uncertainty avoidance) in the sixty-two societies studied.<sup>16</sup> Each cultural dimension is measured from two perspectives and at two levels. First, respondents were asked to describe the extent to which they *valued* each of the nine cultural dimensions. Respondents were also asked to describe the extent to which they *practiced* each of the nine cultural dimensions. In addition to these two dimensions of value and practice, respondents were also asked to answer for two levels: their society and their organization.

For this article, the cultural dimensions of interest are those that relate to *organizational practices*. The authors believe this level/dimension best correlates to discussions of the culture of Pauline communities.

Table 1 provides a synopsis of the cultural dimensions used in Project GLOBE.<sup>17</sup>

### *Leadership Dimensions*

Project GLOBE also identifies six dimensions of leadership.<sup>18</sup> Charismatic/value-based leadership reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance outcomes from others on the basis of firmly held core beliefs. Team-oriented leadership is a dimension that emphasizes effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members. Participative leadership reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions. Humane-oriented leadership reflects supportive and considerate leadership but also includes compassion and generosity. Autonomous leadership refers to independent and individualistic leadership. Self-protective leadership focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the individual or group member. Table 2 provides a synopsis of the six leadership dimensions and their components.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> House et al., *Culture, Leadership and Organizations*, 91–101.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–20.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

Table 1. Project GLOBE cultural dimensions

Cultural Dimension	Definition
Power distance	The degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government
Uncertainty avoidance	The extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices
Humane orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others
Collectivism (institutional)	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action
Collectivism (in-group)	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families
Assertiveness	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships
Gender egalitarianism	The degree to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality
Future orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification
Performance orientation	The degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence



#### IV. PAUL'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

##### *Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership*

Project GLOBE defines charismatic/value-based leadership as “the ability to inspire, to motivate and to expect high performance outcomes from others based on firmly held core values.”<sup>20</sup> It is comprised of the characteristics of (a) visionary, (b) inspirational, (c) self-sacrifice, (d) integrity, (e) decisive, and (f) performance oriented. Paul generally demonstrated all aspects of this style of leadership quite highly.

It is prima fascia that Paul was visionary, inspirational, self-sacrificing, and had integrity. His record of arrests for his beliefs and his charisma in moving others to convert to Christianity all indicate a high level of charisma/value-based leadership. It is less clear, to what degree Paul was decisive. One can clearly point to his metanoia on the road to Damascus. Beyond that, though, it is difficult to discern from his letters the degree to which his leadership style was decisive.

He was also likely somewhat performance oriented. When considering this twenty-first century idea, we should most likely think of this leadership aspect as performance of the organizational mission. Since Paul's singular, driving mission was converting others to Christianity, it seems reasonable to infer that he was indeed a performance-oriented leader. Based on these aspects of the definition of charismatic/value-based leadership, the authors believe Paul was very high on this aspect of leadership.

##### *Team-Oriented Leadership*

Team-oriented leadership “is a leadership dimension that emphasizes effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members. This leadership dimension includes five subscales labeled (a) collaborative team orientation, (b) team integrator, (c) diplomatic, (d) malevolent (reverse scored), and (e) administratively competent.”<sup>21</sup> Paul was most likely a team-oriented integrator.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 675.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 675.

Table 2. Project GLOBE dimensions of leadership

Leadership dimension	Components
Charismatic/value based	Visionary Inspirational Self-sacrifice Integrity Decisive Performance oriented
Team oriented	Collaborative team orientation Team integrator Diplomatic Malevolent (reverse scored)
Self-protective	Self-centered Status conscious Conflict inducer Face-saver
Participative	Autocratic (reverse scored) Nonparticipative (reverse scored)
Humane oriented	Modesty Humane orientation
Autonomous	Individualistic Independent Autonomous Unique

For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:4-8 Paul rails against members of the community suing each other. One can see his emphasis on team orientation in his admonition.

<sup>4</sup> So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? <sup>5</sup> I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, <sup>6</sup> but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? <sup>7</sup> Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not

rather be defrauded? <sup>8</sup> On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

In most of Paul's letters we see evidence of administrative competence in his list of practical matters covered. Additionally, as there were no formal Christian documents at this stage of the spread of the *kerygma*, it seems evident, that without administrative capabilities, Pauline communities would never have formed and prospered. As a result, we also believe Paul was very high on team-oriented leadership.

### *Participative Leadership*

Participative leadership is a dimension that "reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions. The GLOBE participative leadership dimension includes two subscales labeled (a) non-participative and (b) autocratic (both reverse scored)."<sup>22</sup> Paul's practice of participative leadership was likely somewhat high. We see this tendency to participate in both the joys and sufferings of his followers in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5:

<sup>1</sup> And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Like team leadership, Paul believed in a strong sense of community. However, there was an autocratic sense in his style. Paul believed there was one purpose to life—serving God. For him this was manifest in his experience of God through Christ. Consequently, he believed in certain absolutes that were non-negotiable.

### *Humane-Oriented Leadership*

Humane-oriented leadership is "a leadership dimension that reflects supportive and considerate leadership, but also includes compassion and generosity. This leadership dimension includes two subscales labeled (a) modesty and (b) humane orientation."<sup>23</sup> As a leader, Paul would be relatively high on this dimension as well. Paul regularly called for members of his community to humble themselves. For example in 1 Corinthians 12:21–26, Paul concludes his explanation of the body of Christ by reminding the members of Corinth that no part of the body of Christ is greater than the other:

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 675.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 675.

<sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup> and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, <sup>24</sup> whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, <sup>25</sup> so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

### *Autonomous Leadership*

Autonomous leadership refers to "independent and individualistic leadership attributes. This dimension is measured by a single subscale labeled autonomous leadership, consisting of individualism, independence, autonomy and unique attributes."<sup>24</sup> To some degree Paul was independent and autonomous. To break from his devout Pharisaic upbringing and pursue his calling as an apostle undoubtedly required an independent mindset. As a leader, however, Paul advocated subverting one's individualism and autonomy for the overall good of the group. This viewpoint is conveyed well in 1 Corinthians 12:12–13:

<sup>12</sup> For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The authors believe that while Paul was clearly driven, his continued preaching on being one in the body of Christ indicates he was likely low on the leadership dimension of autonomy.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 675.

Table 3. Paul's leadership style using Project GLOBE dimensions

GLOBE leadership scale	Conceptual definition	Paul's style
Charismatic/value-based leadership	A broadly defined leadership dimension that reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance outcomes from others based on firmly held core values	Very high
Team-oriented leadership	This is a leadership dimension that emphasizes effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members	Very high
Participative leadership	This is a leadership dimension that reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions	High
Humane-oriented leadership	This is a leadership dimension that reflects supportive and considerate leadership, but also includes compassion and generosity	High
Autonomous leadership	This is a newly defined leadership dimension that refers to independent and individualistic leadership attributes	Low
Self-protective leadership	From a Western perspective, this newly defined leadership behavior focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the individual and group through status enhancement and face saving	Low

### *Self-Protective Leadership*

Self-protective leadership focuses on “ensuring the safety and security of the individual and group through status enhancement and face saving. This leadership dimension includes five subscales labeled (a) self-centered, (b) status conscious, (c) conflict inducers, (d) face saver, and (e) procedural.”<sup>25</sup> Paul was very low in this dimension of leadership. His willingness to undergo arrest and martyrdom for his cause as well as his regular admonition to his followers that

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 675.

they should subvert their individual needs for the benefit of the group and their faith are indicators of this low emphasis on self-protection.

## V. CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS IN CORINTH

### *Power Distance*

Although there was conflict in Corinth among social classes,<sup>26</sup> nonetheless, the overarching culture of the nascent community would be one of low power distance. The Corinth community did not have appointed leaders at that stage of its development. It is most likely that the community was a collection of house churches. Consequently, there was little distance between the head of the home who hosted the services and the members who worshipped.

In 1 Corinthians 12:20–25, we see Paul emphasizing that there should not be stratifications within the community:

<sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup> and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, <sup>24</sup> whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, <sup>25</sup> so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Clearly, in an earlier letter, members of the community had sent a message to Paul that they were unhappy with some members asserting themselves as more elite. Although some authors point to Paul's exhortation as evidence that there was class stratification, the fact that members had complained to Paul about the emerging stratification can also be seen as an indication that the overall community's culture was one of low power distance.

### *Uncertainty Avoidance*

Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices. Members of the Pauline community would almost certainly have been change-oriented individuals. The tenets of the Christian faith were quite foreign to Roman culture. This strangeness coupled with meetings in private homes would have almost assuredly have caused

---

<sup>26</sup> Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 23–29.

member's extended family members to worry that their loved ones had joined a strange cult.

Members of the Corinthian community had, by definition, experienced metanoia in their lives. They had abandoned their Gentile or Jewish heritages in order to adopt a lifestyle that was void of formal structures, formal leaders, and well-established norms. As a result of their willingness to abandon their traditional heritages, we believe the members of the Corinthian community would have been low on uncertainty avoidance.

### *Humane Orientation*

Humane orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.

One of the most famous biblical passages is 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13. In what some authors call a Christian hymn, Paul emphasizes that those at Corinth should seek *agape* love. He contrasts the value of spiritual gifts, acts of compassion such as donating to the poor, and even martyrdom with *agape* love. Paul's clear message is that the members of the community must not simply love each other in the way of *philia*, but in the way of *agape*.

Some might believe the Corinth community lacked humaneness, prompting Paul's letter. However, one can readily see acts of self-sacrifice such as selling possessions to help others. We believe that a humane orientation was a dominant cultural value of the community at Corinth. Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 13 was likely not a new message, but rather, one he preached emphatically during the period in which he was proselytizing members of the community. Consequently, we believe the Corinthian community would have been very high on humane orientation.

### *Institutional Collectivism*

Institutional collectivism is the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action. Luke's depiction of early Christian communities in Acts 4: 32-35 is one of extraordinary collectivism. His paradigmatic portrayal of what was likely a composite description of many early Christian communities describes members selling their possessions and distributing wealth jointly.

It is unclear to what degree this description applied to the Christians at Corinth. Most scholars believe the community consisted of several house-churches. These house-churches collectively comprised the *ekklesia* or church. While we have indications from Paul's responses to the Christians at Corinth that there may have been elements of factionism, this would not have been unusual

at all for a heterogeneous group of Gentile and Jewish converts, who likely represented a spectrum of social backgrounds.

MacDonald argues that any religious group that is missionary in character while concomitantly establishing cultural boundaries between believing members and the world will experience a struggle as the group attempts to find a balance of inclusivism and exclusivism.<sup>27</sup> Paul's responses about unity in his letters to the community at Corinth are likely clarifying the degree to which new converts to Christianity should completely abandon their former lives as they form a community of Christian believers. Although the imagery received from Paul is not as strong as that in Luke 4, we nonetheless believe the community at Corinth would have been high on institutional collectivism.

### *Future Orientation*

Future orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification. Assigning a cultural value for future orientation for the Christian converts at Corinth is difficult, as it revolves around the debate of whether the dominant Christology in Corinth was a realized or future eschatology.

Thiselton, for example, believes that many of the problems addressed by Paul in his letters to the Corinthians are based on an over-realized eschatology that revolved around "slogans" such as "everything is permissible for me."<sup>28</sup> Against this emphasis on a short-term oriented view, Paul stressed a strong future orientation, pointing to an epoch of divine glory.

Barclay also believes the Corinthian Christians tended to have a present-oriented theology, rather than a future-oriented eschatology.<sup>29</sup> He doesn't feel their eschatological orientation was as "over-realized" as does Thiselton, but does concur that Paul's theological outlook was much more future oriented than the Corinthians. We believe the Corinthian community tended to have a moderate future orientation.

### *In-Group Collectivism*

In-group collectivism is the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families. Although the concept of pride is somewhat opposed to traditional Christian characteristics such as

<sup>27</sup> M.Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 40.

<sup>28</sup> A. C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *NTS* 24 (1977): 510-26. Thiselton discusses the relevance of 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 as slogans used by the community.

<sup>29</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1992): 49-74.



humility and abandonment to providence, the aspects of in-group collectivism such as loyalty and cohesiveness in the community was likely a desired cultural norm.

Many analyses of the community of Corinth focus on factions that seem to have existed. First argued by Baur, the historical view has been one of a major division within the Corinthian community between Jewish Christians who tended to follow the teachings of Peter, and Gentile Christians who tended to follow the teachings of Paul.<sup>30</sup> A variety of authors have debated the exact nature of the factions to which Paul may be referring in 1 Corinthians 1:12. Munck, for example, argues whether there were factions and denies the presence of a Judaizer group.<sup>31</sup> Although there may certainly have been factions within the fledgling community, the sheer act, however, of joining the Christian group exhibits some evidence of pride and loyalty. There is some evidence that material goods were shared communally within the community. Because we believe there was likely pride and loyalty, yet a lack of complete cohesion at the time of Paul's letters, we rate the Corinth community as moderately oriented toward the cultural value of in-group collectivism.

### *Assertiveness*

Assertiveness is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships. Horsley posits that Paul advocated that the members of the Corinthian community withdraw from traditional Roman society, and, in turn, create an alternative society.<sup>32</sup> It is widely accepted that within Roman society assertiveness through hierarchical strata was practiced in both governmental and social realms. Horsley believes the small group of house churches in Corinth was at least attempting to establish as somewhat egalitarian community that served as an alternative to the aggression found in mainstream Roman society.

This view, though, is different from that advanced by Barclay.<sup>33</sup> He argues that the church at Corinth continued to regularly interact with the wider Corinthian community

Theissen, however, in one of the most influential essays on Corinth argues that social stratification continued to exist within the community between those Paul described as wise and of noble birth and the rest of the community.<sup>34</sup> If these few upper class individuals within what seems likely a predominantly

<sup>30</sup> F. C. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1873), 267–320.

<sup>31</sup> Johannes Munck, "The Church without Factions" in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, (London: SCM, 1959), 135–167.

<sup>32</sup> R. A. Horsley, "Gnosis in 1 Corinthians 8:1-6," *NTS*, 27 (1981): 32–52.

<sup>33</sup> Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth."

<sup>34</sup> Theissen, "Social Stratification."

poor community carried with them the culture of Roman society, they may have been causing conflict by being confrontational and aggressive.

Despite this possibility, when we consider the overall tenor of most early Christian writings, an image of communal subservience is a dominant cultural goal. Compared to the larger Greek and Roman influenced Corinthian culture, this group of new Christian converts were likely participating in some form of alternative living that was much less aggressive and assertive in social relationships than the norm of that time. Consequently, we have rated the Corinthian community as low on the cultural characteristic of assertiveness.

### *Performance Orientation*

Performance orientation is the degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence. When considering this cultural dimension, one must remember that an overarching value of the Corinthian community was a belief that the members should actively model their lives on Jesus as the ultimate model, and Paul and other missionaries as existing examples. Paul regularly exhorted the community to live by particular values and codes of conduct. Consequently, we believe the community was relatively high on performance orientation.

### *Gender Egalitarianism*

The final dimension of culture Project GLOBE uses is gender egalitarianism. This dimension is the degree to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality. The community likely met in private homes, the domain of women during that historical era. Also, Paul names at least one woman, Chloe, as a leader within Corinth. However, our twenty-first century conceptualization of gender egalitarianism is so different from the Pauline world that this dimension is not be used in this analysis.

Table 4. Project GLOBE cultural dimensions in Corinth

Cultural dimension	Conceptual definition	Corinth
Humane orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others	Very high
Collectivism (institutional)	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action	High
Performance orientation	The degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence	High
Future orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification	Moderate
Collectivism (in-group)	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families	Moderate
Assertiveness	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships	Low
Uncertainty avoidance	The extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices	Low
Power distance	The degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government	Low
Gender egalitarianism	The degree to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality	Not used in this study

## VI. COMPARING PROJECT GLOBE'S CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP FINDINGS TO PAUL'S LEADERSHIP IN THE CORINTHIAN COMMUNITY

In addition to studying cultural and leadership preferences in sixty-two societies, Project GLOBE also provides high-level relationships between the dimensions of culture and leadership. In essence, Project GLOBE provides what types of leadership seem to be most desired in each of the different cultural dimensions.

### *Power Distance*

When analyzing relationships between organizational level cultural practices and preferred leadership styles, Project GLOBE finds that the lower the preferred power distance in a community, the more the members of that group prefer participative leadership. Conversely, a low power distance culture prefers a leader who is low on self-protection. Using Project GLOBE relationships as a comparison, Table 5 indicates that Paul's style seems to match the low power distance preferred in the Corinth community.

Table 5. Organizational power distance and leadership<sup>35</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Power distance	Low	Self-protective	Low	Same
Power distance	Low	Participative	High	Same

### *Uncertainty Avoidance*

When analyzing relationships between organizational level cultural practices and preferred leadership styles, Project GLOBE finds that the lower the preferred uncertainty avoidance in a community, the more the members of that group prefer humane-oriented, participative, and team-oriented forms of leadership. The lower the preference for uncertainty avoidance, the less an organization prefers self-protective leadership. Table 6 indicates that Paul's style seems to also match the low uncertainty avoidance preferred in the Corinth community.

<sup>35</sup> House et al., *Culture, Leadership and Organizations*, 552.

Table 6. Organizational uncertainty avoidance and leadership<sup>36</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Self-protective	Low	Same
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Humane oriented	High	Same
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Team oriented	High	Same
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Participative	High	Same

### *Institutional Collectivism*

Project GLOBE finds that the higher the preferred institutional collectivism in a community, the more the members of that group prefer charismatic, team-oriented, participative, and humane-oriented leadership. The inverse is found for autonomous leadership. Table 7 indicates that Paul's style seems to also match the high institutional collectivism preferred in the Corinth community.

Table 7. Organizational institutional collectivism and leadership<sup>37</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Institutional collectivism	High	Charismatic	High	Same
Institutional collectivism	High	Team-oriented	High	Same
Institutional collectivism	High	Participative	High	Same
Institutional collectivism	High	Humane-oriented	High	Same
Institutional collectivism	High	Autonomous	Low	Same

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 643.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 496.

### *Humane Orientation*

Project GLOBE finds that the higher the preferred humane orientation in a community, the more the members of that group prefer charismatic, participative, and autonomous forms of leadership. Conversely, Project GLOBE finds that organizations that practice high levels of humane orientation do not seem to value team orientation and humane-oriented leadership. While these last two findings seem odd, the authors of that particular analysis within Project GLOBE speculates that perhaps for organizations in which the culture highly values humane orientation, the traits of team orientation and humane orientation may not necessarily be seen as important in leaders.<sup>38</sup> Using Project GLOBE's findings, Paul's leadership style only matches two of the five aspects of preferred leadership and humane-oriented organizational culture.

Table 8. Organizational humane orientation and leadership<sup>39</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Humane orientation	High	Charismatic	High	Same
Humane orientation	High	Participative	High	Same
Humane orientation	High	Team-oriented	High	Different
Humane orientation	High	Humane-oriented	High	Different
Humane orientation	High	Autonomous	Low	Different

### *In-Group Collectivism*

Project GLOBE finds that the higher the preferred in-group collectivism in a community, the more the members of that group prefer humane oriented, team oriented, and autonomous forms of leadership. The more the members of that group prefer in-group collectivism, the less they prefer participative leadership. Table 9 indicates that Paul's style seems to also match the low uncertainty avoidance preferred in the Corinth community.

<sup>38</sup> See chapter 18, Hayat Kabasakal and Muzaffer Bodur in House et al., *Culture, Leadership and Organizations*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

Table 9. Organizational in-group collectivism and leadership<sup>40</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
In-group collectivism	High	Team-oriented	High	Same
In-group collectivism	High	Humane-oriented	High	Same
In-group collectivism	High	Autonomous	Low	Different
In-group collectivism	High	Participative	High	Different

### *Assertiveness*

Project GLOBE finds that the lower the preferred assertiveness in a community, the more the members of that group prefer charismatic, team-oriented, participative, and humane-oriented forms of leadership. The lower the preferred assertiveness in a community, the less the members of that group prefer autonomy in a leader. Table 10 indicates that Paul's style seems to match the low assertiveness preferred in the Corinth community.

Table 10. Organizational assertiveness and leadership<sup>41</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Assertiveness	Low	Charismatic	High	Same
Assertiveness	Low	Team-oriented	High	Same
Assertiveness	Low	Participative	High	Same
Assertiveness	Low	Humane-oriented	High	Same
Assertiveness	Low	Autonomous	Low	Same

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 497-500.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 428-430.

### *Future Orientation*

Project GLOBE finds that the higher the preferred future orientation in a community, the more the members of that group prefer charismatic, team-oriented, participative, and humane-oriented forms of leadership. Table 11 indicates that Paul's style seems to match the future orientation preferred in the Corinth community.

Table 11. Future orientation and leadership<sup>42</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Future orientation	Moderate	Charismatic	High	Same
Future orientation	Moderate	Team-oriented	High	Same
Future orientation	Moderate	Participative	High	Same
Future orientation	Moderate	Humane-oriented	High	Same

### *Performance Orientation*

Project GLOBE finds that the higher the preferred performance orientation in a community, the more the members of that group prefer charismatic, team-oriented, participative, humane-oriented, and autonomous forms of leadership and the less the members of that group prefer self-protection in a leader. Table 12 indicates that Paul's style seems to match the high performance orientation preferred in the Corinth community on five of the six relationships found in Project GLOBE.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 330-332.



Table 12. Performance orientation and leadership<sup>43</sup>

Culture dimension	Corinth	Leadership dimension	Paul	Comparisons with Project GLOBE
Performance orientation	High	Charismatic	High	Same
Performance orientation	High	Team oriented	High	Same
Performance orientation	High	Participative	High	Same
Performance orientation	High	Humane oriented	High	Same
Performance orientation	High	Self-protective leadership	Low	Same
Performance orientation	High	Autonomous	Low	Different

## VII. CONCLUSION

Caution must be taken when retrospectively assessing a culture two millennia ago. Additionally, for the reasons outlined in the beginning of this paper, there are limitations to the extent we can retrospectively classify Paul's leadership style. Bearing those cautions in mind, however, Table 13 highlights that Paul's leadership style matched the cultural preferences we believe the community at Corinth held on twenty-nine of thirty-five relationships reported in Project GLOBE.

Few would doubt that Paul was one of the greatest leaders in the history of Christianity. This analysis lends an additional vantage point for understanding why Paul was so successful in his life-calling.

## VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a host of popular theories of leadership. The situational approach to leadership by Hersey and Blanchard is a part of almost every introductory textbook on leadership. Currently, the most widely researched model of leadership is Bass and Avolio's Full Range of Leadership Model. A model that is consonant with the Christian faith is Robert Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership. Doohan has already described Paul's style of leadership using

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 274–275.

Table 13. Summary of culture and leadership matches

Culture dimension	Corinth	Style matches	Style mismatches
Power distance	Low	Self-protective Participative	
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Self-protective Humane oriented Team oriented Participative	
Institutional collectivism	High	Charismatic Team oriented Participative Humane oriented Autonomous	
Assertiveness	Low	Charismatic Team oriented Participative Humane oriented Autonomous	
Future orientation	Moderate	Charismatic Team oriented Participative Humane oriented	
Performance orientation	High	Charismatic Team oriented Participative Humane oriented Self-protective Leadership	Autonomous
In-group collectivism	High	Team oriented Humane oriented	Autonomous Participative
Humane orientation	High	Charismatic Participative	Team oriented Humane oriented Autonomous

Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership paradigm. No published studies, however, seem to exist that analyze Paul's leadership style using the full range of leadership or servant leadership paradigms.

Table 14. Aspects of the full range and servant leadership

Aspects of the full range of leadership	Aspects of servant leadership
Inspirational motivation	Listening
Idealized influence	Empathy
Intellectual stimulation	Healing
Individual consideration	Awareness
Contingent reward	Persuasion
Management by exception active	Conceptualization
Management by exception passive	Foresight
Liaise faire	Stewardship
	Commitment to the growth of people
	Building community

Using the nine elements of the full range of leadership or the ten aspects of servant leadership would provide additional insight into one of the pillars of the Christian faith and one of the greatest proselytizers in history.

#### About the Authors

Dr. Mark Green is a professor of leadership studies at Our Lady of the Lake University. He holds a doctorate in educational administration, a master's in business administration, a Master of Science in Information Systems, a master's in education, and is completing his Master of Arts in Theology. He teaches leadership in his university's doctoral program in leadership studies, and has chaired more than forty doctoral dissertations in the field of leadership. Prior to his career in academe, he served as a military officer with assignments at the Pentagon and the Army Medical Department Center.  
Email:GreeM@Lake.Ollusa.edu

Dr. Stephanie Kodatt is an assistant professor of marketing at Northern University in South Dakota. She holds a master's in business administration from Creighton University and a doctorate in leadership studies from Our Lady of the Lake University.

Email: [stephanie.kodatt@northern.edu](mailto:stephanie.kodatt@northern.edu)

Dr. Charles R. Salter is an assistant professor of business administration at Schreiner University. He has held various community academic and corporate leadership positions specializing in leadership and finance. Charles holds a Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Georgia, a master's in business administration from the University of Houston, a master's in business administration with a concentration in finance from Western International University, and a doctorate in leadership studies from Our Lady of the Lake University San Antonio.

Email: [CRSalter@Lake.Ollusa.edu](mailto:CRSalter@Lake.Ollusa.edu)

Dr. Phyllis Duncan is an assistant professor of leadership studies at Our Lady of the Lake University. She earned a doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of the Incarnate Word, a master's in business administration from the University of Arkansas, a Master of Science in Industrial Engineering from Southwest University, and a Bachelor of Science in business administration from University of the Ozarks. Her twenty-year business career includes holding corporate positions of CEO, COO, and senior vice president in marketing and corporate quality.

Email: [PADuncan@Lake.Ollusa.edu](mailto:PADuncan@Lake.Ollusa.edu)

Dr. Diana Garza-Ortiz is an assistant professor of leadership studies at Our Lady of the Lake University. She holds a doctorate in leadership studies, and master's in business administration with a concentration in e-commerce, and a BBA with a concentration in information systems. She co-chairs dissertations and teaches leadership and management at Our Lady of the Lake University at the doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate level. Prior to becoming an assistant professor, Dr. Garza-Ortiz worked in a corporate environment developing information systems and managing projects.

Email: [DGarza-Ortiz@Lake.Ollusa.edu](mailto:DGarza-Ortiz@Lake.Ollusa.edu)

Dr. Esther Chavez is an assistant professor of leadership studies at Our Lady of the Lake University. She obtained her bachelor's in marketing from Texas A&M University and her master's in business administration from Our Lady of the Lake University. She worked as an executive in the consumer finance corporate environment for more than ten years. In 2009, she completed her doctorate in leadership studies from Our Lady of the Lake University.

Email: [ESChavez@Lake.Ollusa.edu](mailto:ESChavez@Lake.Ollusa.edu)



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## JOTHAM'S FABLE: A PEOPLE AND LEADERSHIP CALLED TO SERVE (JUDGES 8:22-9:57)

J. Lyle Story

This paper interprets the political saga of Gideon and Abimelech, particularly evident in different views of the monarchy (Jgs 8:22-9:57). While Gideon refuses the offered kingship, Abimelech ruthlessly seizes the kingship through a fearful fratricide. The various episodes reveal different attitudes towards kingship as Israel “feels its way” to the monarchy. Jotham’s fable, with its political caricatures, contrasts the arrogant, self-serving, and dangerous bramble (Abimelech) with the altruistic service of the horticultural trio (olive tree, fig tree, and vine), signifying the people of God and their leaders. Together they affirm that their true goal is to bring God’s blessing to others, to produce *fruitful* items that all may enjoy alike. Their purpose is not that of a fruitless rule over the people of God. The entire story affirms the truth that God alone is the foundation of his people and their rulers. Israel’s calling is that of service to God and the community. A flow-chart, labeled table 3, at the end of the article expresses the points of continuity and contrast in these episodes, and supports a unified narrative in its canonical form.

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

*God alone is the foundation of his people and their rulers. Israel’s calling is that of service to God and the community.*

Cartoons and satire play a telling role in the political processes of different countries. In American political commentary, after a long, drawn-out session filled

with rhetoric and heated argument between the president, Senate, and House of Representatives over some controversial topic, a skilled artist is able to perceive the real issues. She then draws a political caricature of the leading persons and their behavior, which sums up the whole debate. Witness, for example, the numerous cartoons found in the newspapers during times such as Watergate, the Enron scandal, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Cartoonists poke truthful humor at the leaders of involved countries, particularly. Animated satire conveys truth in a simplified manner—easy to grasp and hence, welcomed by the public. The Bible provides an excellent example of satirical writing in Jotham's fable (Jgs 9:8-15).<sup>1</sup>

It is argued that the use of the trio of horticultural images (olive tree, fig tree, and vine) in Jotham's fable refer to the vocation of service of the people of God and their leaders.

Recent work on the text of Judges 8:22-9:57 highlights other aspects of the full narrative.<sup>2</sup> Earlier scholarship highlights the sources<sup>3</sup> or unity with a

<sup>1</sup> Fables are found in the OT (2 Kgs 14:9; Ez 17) referring to political situations and in the Babylonian "contest literature" as noted by W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1960), 150. Others place it in the context of Sumerian disputation speech. These include Willy Schottroff, "Das Weingberlied Jesajas (Jes. 5:1-7): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Parabel," *ZAW* 82 (1970): 86; B. Landsberger, "Jahreszeiten im Sumerisch—Akkadischen," *JNES* 8 (1949): 259ff; J. J. A. Van Dijk, *Las Sagesse Sumero—Akkadischen* (Leiden, Neth.: E.J. Brill, 1953), 12-13; Silvia Tatu, "Jotham's Fable and the Crux Interpretum in Judges IX," *VT* 56 (2001):108-110. For an Egyptian origin, see Hermann Ranke, *Aegypten* (Tubingen, Ger.: J.C.B. Mohr, 1923), 429ff.

<sup>2</sup> In a helpful manner, Hayyim Angel portrays Gideon's positive and negative traits, which are further expressed through his two sons through idealism and realism in "The Positive and Negative Traits of Gideon as Reflected in His Sons Jotham and Abimelech," *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2006): 159-167. Volkmar Fritz argues for a complex series of sources for the entire saga, which builds on some of the contradictions in Judges 9, the first of which is the Gaal episode (9:26-41) in "Abimelech Und Sichem in JDC: IX," *Vetus Testamentum* 32, no. 2 (1982): 143. T. A. Boogaart argues for the centrality of the retribution theory—stone (9:5,53) for stone—which governs the narrative; he also notes the divine involvement in the story in "Stone for Stone: Retribution in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem," *JSOT* no. 32 (1985): 52. For further comment on retribution, see also Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltung in Alten Testament?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (1955): 1-42. Thomas A. Janzen, building upon Boogaart, gives attention to the "lone-woman" in 9:5, since the main events in Judges 9 reflect the decisions of men. He also looks to the singleness motif (one ruler better than 70), "upon one (אֶחָד) stone" in vss. 6 and 18, one "head" in 9:37, and the lone (אֶחָד) woman in v. 53. Schöpflin also argues for a retribution theory but understands the complementation between Jotham's prophetic comment on Abimelech's fratricide and its fulfillment in Abimelech's untimely death due to divine punishment. Schöpflin also argues for a retribution theory that expresses divine punishment. See Karin Schöpflin, "Jotham's Speech and Fable as Prophetic Comment on Abimelech's Story," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18, no. 1 (2004): 3-32. Tatu's article, "Jotham's Fable," pages 105-122, on the fable begins with a discussion of the metaphorical use of the trees of the Bible, with special attention to the genus of the "bramble" in vss. 14-15. Daniel Block argues for a comprehensive reading of the entire Gideon cycle, in which Gideon's positive behavior is countered by numerous negatives in "Will the Real Gideon Please Stand Up?: Narrative Style and Intention in Judges 6-9," *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 40, no. 3 (September 1997): 353-366.

process of Deuteronomic redaction.<sup>4</sup> While source-critical scholarship is helpful, it often overlooks the overall plot or theme that is inherent in the text in its present canonical form. In general, interpreters who divide the sources into J and E, view the fable as being derived from the E source in the north.

The Abimelech episode marks a turning point in the book of Judges, in that it shows the tragedy of the people of God and their ruler, who has not been chosen or anointed by Yahweh.

From Abimelech's time on, the land does not recover its peace; deliverance is less complete; Jephthah fails where Gideon succeeded in avoiding civil war. If the Samson episode is regarded as part of the central theme—and this is implied by 10:7-9—then at the very end there is lacking something which is normally regarded as basic to this theme; for Samson is a judge in Israel, but he does not effect any real liberation.<sup>5</sup>

The concluding Samson-cycle of stories reveals the way in which this “judge” uses his charisma to play practical jokes and to execute personal revenge.

However, in the context of Judges 9, the tree trio (olive tree, fig tree, vine) appear to belong to an old tradition that speaks about the people of God and their leaders, and their call to service—not a vain and posturing waving over the trees (9:9, 11, 13). While many scholars look to the evil, perpetrated by Abimelech and the men of Shechem, very little attention is given to the use of the metaphorical trio and the positive lesson to be gleaned from the fable and its application within the context of 8:22-9:57.

Jotham's fable may be the most crucial part of Judges in that it stresses how Israel's life will be conducted in the future. Previously they have been led by leaders chosen by Yahweh such as Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, who brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness to the land promised to Israel. The people were constantly on the move and only recently became settled in the Promised Land through a partial conquest of the land, which becomes complete under David and Solomon. The question is this: How will their lives be governed in the new land? Yahweh has been their leader and ruler. The designation of Israel's leaders as “servants” communicates much (Jo 1:11; 5:11). Will they be a ruling or serving people? This is the same issue, brought forward

---

<sup>3</sup> Hugo Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen* (Leipzig, Ger.: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer, 1897), 59-62; Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs and der historischen Bucher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 222-223; Cuthbert Aikman Simpson, *Composition of the Book of Judges* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 40-44; Otto Eissfeldt, *Die Quellen des Richterbuches* (Leipzig, Ger.: J. C. Hinriches, 1925), 59-62. L designates a less spiritual lay source as shown in Karl L. Budde, *Das Buch der Richter* (KAT) (Freiburg: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1897), 69-70. Robert Boling has a helpful chart in which he traces through the composition of Judges in *Judges* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Vincenz Zapletal, *Das Buch der Richter* (Münster in Westf, Ger.: Aschendorff, 1923), 162; Hugo Gressman, *Die Anfänge Israels* (Göttingen, Ger.: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1914), 215-222; M. J. Lagrange, *Le Livre des Juges* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1930), 181.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. U. Lilley, “A Literary Appreciation of the Book of Judges” *TB* 18 (1967): 98.

in 1 Samuel 8, occasioned by the Samuel's advanced age and his sons's debacle. The elders come to Samuel to ask him "to appoint for us a king to govern us, like other nations" (8:4ff). Is Judges 9 a kind of foreshadowing of what would happen one day? Yahweh tells Samuel that the "people have rejected me as their king" (1 Sm 8:7). Thus, we find a mixed attitude regarding the monarchy: (1) rejection of Yahweh, and (2) a divine accommodation to the people's request for a "kingly symbol" even when Samuel spells out the ugly and selfish consequences of their choice—not Yahweh's (1 Sm 8:10-18). These classic consequences parallel the fable's depiction of rulership as "swaying over trees."

The positive lesson from Gideon, the trio in the fable, and Jotham's explanation and prophetic curse are often left untreated. Further, the negative lessons concerning the people of God and their ruler highlight the positive example of service to God and the community of God.

Each of the three metaphors of the trio is used in parabolic fashion in both the Old Testament and New Testament, and one is often coupled with another. This is shown in table 1. In many of these passages, the writers equate the horticultural imagery with the people of God and their leaders. There is also a certain fluidity of symbolism wherein the thought changes from the fruit of the vine to the whole vineyard, sometimes by a parallelism of members (Hos 9:10). Further, in several passages, the combination of metaphors serves as an idiomatic expression of idyllic peace or paradisiacal fertility, "every man under his vine and under his fig-tree" (2 Kgs 18:31 = Is 36:16; 1 Kgs 4:25; Mi 4:4; Zec 3:10; also 1 Mc 14:12; Gn 49:11-12, 22-23). Indeed, one is able to find a metaphorical salvation-history through the lens of these horticultural images in a progressive work of reinterpretation through the history of both testaments.

Jotham's fable and its application within its context points to Israel's true servant calling which was to be heard and enacted in Israel's salvation history. That history began with the call to Abraham.

In the call of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3), God promised him: (1) a great name and nation, (2) a land, and (3) an influence that would be world-wide. While the vocation is unique, the stress falls on greatness. Isaac's blessing to Jacob affirmed, "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you" (Gn 27:29). In Genesis 49:8-9, Jacob foretold Judah's rule: "Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies, your father's sons shall bow down before you." This prophecy is also expressed in language of the vine (49:11-12, 22-24). These texts and many others speak in terms of greatness and superiority, and not of service.



Table 1. The Agrarian trio

Metaphor(s)	Biblical texts
Vine/vineyard	Genesis 49:11-12, 22-24; Isaiah 3:14, 5:1-7, 27:2-6, 28:4; Jeremiah 2:21; Psalms 80; Ezekial 15, 17, 19:10-14; Mark 12:1-12 <i>par.</i> ; Matthew 21:28-32; Jn 15:1-17
Fig tree	Jeremiah 24, 29:17; Amos 8:1-3; Mark 11.12ff. <i>par.</i> ; Matthew 21:28-32; John 1:45-51
Olive tree	Zechariah 4; Romans 11:11-24; Revelation 11:1-13
Vine/vineyard and fig tree	Hosea 2:12, 9:10, 16; Micah 4:4, 7:1; Jeremiah 8:13; Joel 1:7, 12; 2:22; 1 Kings 4:25; 2 Kings 18:31; Isaiah 34:4, 36:16; Zechariah 3:10; Psalms 105:33; Cant 2:13; Nehemiah 13:15; Luke 13:6-9; Matthew 7:16 = Luke 6:44
Vine/vineyard and olive tree	Job 15:33; Psalm 128:3; Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 6:11, 24:20-21, 28:39-40; Job 24:13; 1 Samuel 8:14; 2 Kings 5:26, 18:32; 1 Chronicles 27:27-28; Nehemiah 5:11, 9:25; Hosea 14:6-7; Micah 6:15
Vine/vineyard, fig tree, and olive tree	Judges 9:8-13; Hebrews 3:17; Jeremiah 5:17 (LXX); Haggai 2:19 (with pomegranate); 2 Kings 18:31-32; Amos 4:9; Deuteronomy 8:8

Jotham's fable, with its political caricatures, contrasts the arrogant, self-serving, and dangerous bramble (Abimelech) with the altruistic service of the metaphorical trio, each of whom affirms that the true goal in life is to bring God's blessings to others, to produce fruit that all may enjoy; in a word, to serve others. It is hard to imagine anything more contrary to the idea of rulership and monarchy, to the grandeur of a David or a Solomon. There is a unique depth to the fable as a forerunner to the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah and especially to the one who came not to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45). The Gideon episode, the fratricide by Abimelech, and Jotham's fable with its fulfillment and application, all combine to reveal the writer's serious doubts concerning the monarchy as well as his deep conviction that the people of God are here to serve—not rule or wave over the trees. The fable is set within the context of a book that depicts the cruelty and duplicity of life and exposes the shambles that the people of God make of their calling to service, even exemplified in some of the unsavory charismatic heroes or heroines. The perspective of this story (Jgs

8:22-9:57) is far larger than simple retribution theory and includes the positive goal of the people of God and its rulers. The purpose of the fable is, therefore, to reveal Israel's high calling and its leaders to serve others. It is presented in sharp contrast to the self-assumed, self-seeking, and cruel rule of Gideon's defiant son, Abimelech.

The Abimelech episode falls within the central section of the book (2:6-16:31), which unfolds the stories of the various charismatic heroes or heroines. The editor does not give Abimelech the title of judge but depicts him as "a man of perdition,"<sup>6</sup> an arch-enemy of God and his people. It is not said of him that he judged (שפט) but that he was made king (9:6) and that "he reigned" (וישר—9:22).

## II. INTERPRETATION

### *Prologue (Jgs 8:22-35): The Type of Service Seen in Gideon (Hero)*

The prologue connects the Abimelech episode with the Gideon saga(s) (Jgs 6-8). When Abimelech appeals to the lords of Shechem to make him king, he hints at the words of Gideon concerning rulership (9:2; cf. 8:23). It is vital for the interpretation of the fable to note that Israel offers the kingship to Gideon (8:22f). He refuses it not only for himself and his sons, but he proclaims emphatically, *the Lord shall rule over you* (יהוה ימשל בכם—8:23). His refusal lies in sharp contrast to the following demand by Abimelech for kingship, a demand that he executes by the murder of his brothers.

In denying the request for kingship, Gideon makes his own request—for the earrings that were plundered from the Midianite invaders. The request is honored and Gideon takes the gold and fashions an ephod, which became a *snare* (למוקש) to him and his household (8:27).<sup>7</sup> The snare led to the religious prostitution of worshipping the object, which presumably was some sort of golden figure, not the priest's garment. The narrator says that he died at a good old age (8:32), but his death also is understood as the removal of restraint. After his death:

The sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon), in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel. (9:33-35)

Thus, the people not only rejected the God of the covenant for the Baal of the covenant but they also denied any ongoing commitment to Gideon—two claims they should have honored.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Auzou, *La Force de l'Esprit* (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1965), 255.

<sup>7</sup> Angel interprets the ephod as an attempt to commemorate God's miraculous role in the victory (positive) and to establish Gideon's hometown as a shrine, and to bolster his sons's claim as future leaders as shown in "The Positive and Negative Traits of Gideon," p. 165.

*Historical Section (Jgs 9:1-6): Gideon's Antithesis Seen in Abimelech (Villain)*

*Introduction to Abimelech's speech (9:1).* The Abimelech episode begins with the words, "And Abimelech *went away*" (Qal—consec. impf.). The form connects the story with the prologue<sup>8</sup> —Gideon's refusal of kingship, fashioning the ephod,<sup>9</sup> and subsequent apostasy, his seventy sons (8:30-31), and *his concubine* (וּפִילִגְשׁוֹ) who bore to him Abimelech.

The name Abimelech, technically means, "my father (that is to say, Yahweh) is king."<sup>10</sup> The verb *reign* (מָלַךְ), so frequent in Kings and Chronicles, occurs with reference to Israel, only in Judges 9 (cf. Jgs 4:2 —"Jabin, king of Canaan reigned"). In chapter 9, the verb is found as an imperative (9:8, 10, 12, 14) and indicative (9:6, 16, 18), all in reference to Abimelech. Further, the noun *king* (מֶלֶךְ), occurs with reference to Israel and Abimelech only in Judges 9:6, 8, 15, and in the expression "there was no king in Israel," an expression found twice with the addition, "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25; 18; 19:1). Is there not intentional irony in the fable where Abimelech's name, *my father (Yahweh) is king* (occurring thirty-seven times in chapter 9) is juxtaposed to the root verb three times, "to make Abimelech king" (9:6, 16, 18)?<sup>11</sup> Josephus additionally notes that Abimelech "transformed the government into a tyranny, setting himself up to do whatsoever he pleased in defiance of the laws and showing bitter animosity against the champions of justice."<sup>12</sup>

*Abimelech's speech (9:2).* Abimelech comes to his clansmen with a proposal that he will be a fit king for them. The proposal is grounded by a two-fold argument: (1) monarchy is more efficient than oligarchy, and (2) family obligations demand it.

Abimelech comes to Shechem and speaks to the whole *clan* (מִשְׁפַּחָה) of his mother, so that they can reason with the leaders of Shechem.<sup>13</sup> It appears

<sup>8</sup> Haag, Simpson, Martin, and Lindars suggest two cycles of tradition which later became fused in this transition story: a Gideon cycle and a Jerubbaal cycle connected with the Abimelech episode. Herbert Haag, "Gideon-Jerubbaal-Abimelech," *ZAW* 70 (1967): 312; Cuthbert Aikmann Simpson, *Composition of the Book of Judges* (Oxford, UK: University Press, 1967), 41; James Martin, *The Book of Judges* (London: 1975), 111; Barnabas Lindars, "Gideon and Kingship," *JTS* 16 (1965): 315-326. However, the Jerubbaal/Gideon link is too strong and is too deeply entrenched in the Gideon stories to be so easily dismissed (6:32, 7:1, 8:29, 35).

<sup>9</sup> C. F. Burney believes that the presence of עֵפֹד in 8:27 points to the establishment of an Ephod cult in Ophrah in *The Book of Judges and the Book of Kings* (New York: KTAV, 1970), 241. See also John Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Greenwood, S.C.: Oliphants, 1952), 241.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Vincent, *Le Livre des Juges* (Paris: Librairie leCoffre, 1958), 79.

<sup>11</sup> Angel suggests a negative translation, "My father (=Gideon) is king," in "The Positive and Negative Traits of Gideon," p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, v. 233-4 (7:1). Begg draws many parallels and contrasts between Josephus's account and the biblical text. See Christopher Begg, "Abimelech, King of Shechem According to Josephus," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 72, no. 1 (April): 146-164.

<sup>13</sup> On the importance of Shechem in this period cf. W. H. Irwin, "Le sanctuaire central israelite avant l'établissement de la monarchie," *RB* (Avril, 1965): 170-175; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 421-422; G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), 323-341; Moore,

that Gideon, at Ophrah, valued Shechem, since he had married a Shechemite.<sup>14</sup> Abimelech requests his relatives to speak on his behalf—*speak now in the hearing of* (דברוֹנָא בְּאָזְנֵי) to the leaders or *proprietors of Shechem* (בְּעַלֵּי שֶׁכֶם).<sup>15</sup> The first line of argument is self-evident. Why should all the people favor a situation of many rulers (i.e., all chiefs and no Indians)? Will not one ruler be more efficient than seventy? His argument builds upon Gideon's experience of sole rule, which Abimelech seeks to claim.

The second argument concerns family obligation. Abimelech is a son of the deliverer, and the Shechemites would be in a more advantageous position by having a ruler of their own family. Zapletal notes, "The king must take care of his brothers to create for them the best positions and a profitable income."<sup>16</sup> The concept of family obligation, expressed in the words, "your bone and flesh," is similar in current idiom, "flesh and blood." Robertson-Smith notes that "both in Hebrew and Arabic, 'flesh' is synonymous with 'clan,' or 'kindred group.'"<sup>17</sup> Abimelech's apparent concern for efficiency and family obligation is merely a smoke screen for his real intent, personal gain through assuming the reins of power. Accordingly, he describes "the state of affairs as unfavorably as possible to the Shechemites."<sup>18</sup>

*Response to Abimelech's speech (9:3-5).* The appeal falls on fertile ground, and the leadership of Shechem stands ready to follow Abimelech. Nielsen comments:

When they said, "He is our brother," they certainly did not prefer him for reasons of pride. If this had been the case, they would have given him support in a more direct way than they actually did. Their reflections may have been something like this, "considerable risks are connected, therefore fetch some money from the treasury of the God; by means of this, Abimelech will be enabled to take care of himself, and no suspicion could be thrown upon us."<sup>19</sup>

The seventy shekels (one for each life?) are taken from the temple treasury of Baal-Berith (El-Berith in v. 46),<sup>20</sup> and a bodyguard of thugs (cf. 11:3; 1

*Judges*, 240; Hugo Gressman, *Die Anfänge Israels* (Berlin: Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1914), 218.

<sup>14</sup> cf. Gressmann, *Die Anfänge Israels*, 218; For the friendly relationship, cf. Friedrich Notscher, *Die Heilige Schrift* (Wurzburg: Echter Verlag, 1965), 688.

<sup>15</sup> Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 270; Moore, *Judges*, 241; Le P.M.J. Lagrange, *Le Livre des Juges*, 164. (Similar use in 1 Sm 23:11-12; 2 Sm 21:21.)

<sup>16</sup> Zapletal, *Das Buch der Richter*, 141.

<sup>17</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 274; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 5. On the *sadiqu* marriage, cf. W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), 77.

<sup>18</sup> Budde, *Das Buch der Richter*, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Nielsen, *Shechem: A Traditio-Historical Investigation* (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1959), 145.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, *Judges*, 242. Moore regards these as equivalent places with *el* as the *numen loci* and *baal* as god proprietor of the place. See also Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972), 48.

Sm 22:22) is hired and formed around Abimelech. The seventy shekels appear to be a fearful omen of what is coming.

With his hired body-guards, Abimelech goes to his father's home in Ophrah and murders his seventy brothers (cf. also 2 Kgs 10:1-14, 11:1-3). Zapletal notes, "Only by total extermination could the attacker assure himself that there would be no one left to carry on the blood feud."<sup>21</sup> The phrase, *upon one stone* (עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת), repeated in Jotham's speech (9:18) may suggest a sacrificial slaughter,<sup>22</sup> but it certainly prefigures the *lex talionis* ("law of just revenge" or retribution theory) narrated in 9:53 when an upper millstone crushes Abimelech's skull. Just as Abimelech kills seventy brothers upon one stone, so he is killed by a millstone (v. 53).

The extermination is not total, for Jotham, the youngest son, escapes. The youngest son of a family always held a special place in the hearts of the Israelites (Gn 42:13, 38). Thus, young Jotham as the "mediator of *this warning* would make the warning more acceptable in the eyes of the Israelite audience."<sup>23</sup>

*Coronation and setting of stage for fable* (9:6). After the fratricide, the Shechemites assemble together with all *Beth-Millo* (בֵּית מִלּוֹ)<sup>24</sup> and make Abimelech king (9:6). Since there is no mention of a federation of tribes, one concludes that the monarchy is of a limited scope. It is ironic that this is the first time that the term *king* is applied to an Israelite.

Thus, we find in this short historical section, a ruthless seizure of power, which Abimelech's father had refused for himself and for his sons. The motives of both Abimelech and the Shechemites are equally selfish. Abimelech proves to be the antithesis of what a king should be—selfish, arrogant, dishonest, cruel, and murderous. In a region where Israel and Canaan are living side by side, Abimelech proves that he is no judge, but an arrogant tyrant. The stage is set for Jotham's fable.

<sup>21</sup> Zapletal, *Das Buch der Richter*, 142.

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Sellin, *Wie Wurde Sichem eine Israelitische Stadt?* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), 26; Arthur Cundall, *Judges: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer's Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 127; Robert Boling, *Judges*, 171.

<sup>23</sup> Eugene Maly, "The Jotham Fable—Anti-Monarchial?" *CBQ* 22 (1960): 300.

<sup>24</sup> There is much to favor the meaning of citadel for Beth-Millo (Ha-Millo in 2 Sm 5:9; 1 Kgs 9:15, 24, 11:27; 2 Chr 32:5; perhaps 2 Kgs 12:21). If the term meant "house of the fortress" then it is easily identified with the tower of Shechem (9:46, 49). See Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 272.

*Jotham's Fable (Jgs 9:7-17)*

*Introduction to Fable (9:7).* This section opens with the words, “and they told it to Jotham” (4:7).<sup>25</sup> Of what is Jotham informed? Not the slaughter of his brothers which Jotham knew all too well, but rather the day of Abimelech’s coronation (v. 19; i.e., a time later than the massacre in Ophrah).<sup>26</sup> Jotham’s role as a hero is also bound up with the role of narrator himself, so much so that Jotham becomes the mouth-piece of the narrator. He speaks from a lofty precipice of Mt. Gerizim overlooking the city, where he can be seen, heard, and recognized, but at a distance which will not endanger himself.<sup>27</sup> Through Jotham’s fable and its explanation, we find the narrator’s theological interpretation of brutal violence in verses 1-6.

*Fable—Offer and refusal of kingship (9:8-13):* The fable begins with the words, “Once the trees went forth<sup>28</sup> to anoint a king to rule over them.” Immediately, there is an inconsistency with the prologue and historical section where the offer of kingship had been extended to Gideon (8:22), but not to Abimelech. Abimelech was not approached by the men of Shechem, but had offered himself as king. We find a certain looseness in the fable and application “quite consonant with the Oriental manner.”<sup>29</sup> However, the looseness need not suggest different sources; it is possible, however, that the expression hints at a monarchical leaning such as is encountered in 1 Samuel 8. This is the only place prior to Samuel and Kings where the verb *to anoint* (*māšāḥ*), is used of a king. Samuel will be commissioned to anoint Saul as king, and when he does so, Samuel says, “The Lord has anointed you” (1 Sm 10:1); to the people Samuel will say, “See the one whom the Lord has chosen” (10:24). Similarly, David is called the “anointed of the God of Jacob” (2 Sm 23:1). The trees initiate the search “to anoint a king,” while future narratives affirm that YAHWEH is the one who both chooses and anoints—not the people. True, the verb *māšāḥ* will be found frequently with reference to the consecration of priests, but not of kings and it is seen as a rejection of Yahweh’s rule.<sup>30</sup> The anointing becomes the

<sup>25</sup> Nielsen notes how the verb *nāgād* contains the idea of “informing” or “betraying” which is ‘almost the leitmotif of this whole story’; see vv. 29-31, v. 25, vv. 46 in *Shechem*, p. 146.

<sup>26</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 176; Nielsen, *Shechem*, 146.

<sup>27</sup> Zapletal recounts his own experience of speaking and shouting on Mt. Gerizim in *Das Buch der Richter*, p. 145. cf. W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (New York: Harper & Row, 1859), 2:209-210.

<sup>28</sup> Lit., “going, they went” (הלך הלכו) Hebrew font, with the infinitive absolute preceding the main verb and carries little emphasis. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 113.

<sup>29</sup> Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 275. The closest parallel is found in the Words of Ahikar as noted in A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century* (Oxford, UK: University Press, 1923), 224.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 2:324-327. Von Rad rightly distinguishes between the earlier pro-monarchical Saul source and the later anti-monarchical Samuel source to which this fable belongs. The later Samuel source “lacks the freshness and piety of the other” (p. 326).

means of investiture with the royal office, “the setting apart of its subject,”<sup>31</sup> with its dire consequences, later expressed by Samuel.

The offer of the trees is extended in succession to the olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which produced three of the most staple items in Palestine.<sup>32</sup>

The offer of the trees is extended in succession to the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine, which produced three of the most staple items in Palestine.<sup>33</sup> The horticultural trio refuses the offer and the reasons given are highly suggestive. In each case, the fruit-bearing plant or tree would have to abandon its essential character of service, which has a positive value for God and humans.

The beneficent quality, explicit in the olive tree and vine (i.e., to gods and men<sup>34</sup>), is also implicit in the fig tree. The fatness, sweetness, good fruit, and new wine are for people. Each of the three expresses a sense of destiny. Each must maintain its given identity in order to produce good things for others. Surely this is a sufficient reason for their united refusal of the offer to rule.

<sup>31</sup> Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, 244. Ernst Kutsch draws parallels with the Egyptian custom of anointing the Pharaoh in *Salbung als Rechtsakt* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelman, 1963), 56-7. Roland de Vaux points to the existence of anointing prior to the monarchy in Canaanite practice in *Ancient Israel: Religious Institutions* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965).

<sup>32</sup> J. C. Trever notes, “Use of the tree and its fruit for food, fuel, light, carpentry, ointments, medicines, etc., touched almost every phase of daily life” in “Olive-Tree,” *IDB*, 3 (1962): 596. Zapletal, in *Das Buch der Richter* (p. 146), comments from Columella de re rustica V, 8, by saying, “Olea . . . prima omnium arborum est.” For a description of this tree’s importance see George Adam Smith, *Jerusalem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 299-302. For the fig tree and bibliography cf. J. C. Trever, “Fig-Tree,” *IDB*, 4 (1962): 784-7. On the poetry and rhythm see Eduard Sievers, *Metrische Studien* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1901), 388-389; J. W. Rothstein, “Jotham’s Fable (Jud. 9, 7-15) rhythmisch-kritisch behandelt,” *ZAW* 26 (1912): 22-9.

<sup>33</sup> J. C. Trever notes, “Use of the tree and its fruit for food, fuel, light, carpentry, ointments, medicines, etc., touched almost every phase of daily life” in “Olive-Tree,” *IDB*, Vol. III, (1962) 596. Zapletal, in *Das Buch der Richter* (p. 146), comments from Columella de re rustica V, 8 by saying, “Olea . . . prima omnium arborum est” cf. For a description of this tree’s importance see George Adam Smith, *Jerusalem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 299-302. For the fig tree and bibliography cf. J. C. Trever, “Fig-Tree,” *IDB*, Vol. IV, (1962) 784-7. On the poetry and rhythm see Eduard Sievers, *Metrische Studien* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1901), 388-389; J. W. Rothstein, “Jotham’s Fable (Jud. 9, 7-15) rhythmisch-kritisch behandelt,” *ZAW* 26 (1912), 22-9.

<sup>34</sup> It is our suggestion that the form אלהים is best translated in the MT by “gods” rather than Israel’s personal God. The reason for doing so lies in the context of a mythical fable in which plants move, think, and talk. It would appear to be anomalous to introduce the reality of Israel’s God into this allegorical fable. Ultimately, the reality of the allegorical fable does point to the beneficent nature of Israel’s leaders as they serve as purposeful good for God and men. However, we argue that the initial fable speaks about the trees and their service oriented behavior to “gods and men.”

Table 2. The Agrarian trio's refusal to accept kingship

Fruit-bearing plant or tree	Reason for refusal of kingship
“to the olive-tree” (לַזַּיִת)—v. 8	“my fatness (אֶת־דִּשְׁנִי) which by me both gods and men are honored”—v. 9 <sup>35</sup>
“to the fig-tree” (לַתְּאֵנָה)—v. 10	“my sweetness and my good fruit” (אֶת־מִתְקִי וְאֶת־תְּנוּבַתִּי הַטּוֹבָה)—v. 11
“to the vine” (לַגֶּפֶן)—v. 12	“my new wine (אֶת־תִּירוֹשִׁי) which cheers gods and men”—v. 13

Yet there is another reason (i.e., a low esteem of kingship). To forsake fruit bearing for royalty constitutes a mere “waving over the trees,” repeated three times for emphasis (vss. 9, 11, 13). The verb *to wave, to sway* (נו) is the characteristic motion of a tree in the wind (Is 7:2), and is used here in the derogatory sense of “mere posturing in contrast to fruitful contribution,”<sup>36</sup> “authority over subjects to obey his beck and nod.”<sup>37</sup> The verb נוֹע is translated in the LXX A through the active infinitive ἄρχεῖν (“to rule”), while the LXX B

<sup>35</sup> The LXX A translates the MT by ἣν ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐδόξασεν ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωποι, “which by me, God and men glorify/honor,” while the LXX B provides the reading, ἐν ἧ δόξαζουσι τὸν θεὸν ἄνδρες, “in which men glorify God.” In contrast to the MT, the LXX A makes the MT object “gods” אֱלֹהִים into the singular and personal subject “God” in addition to making men the subject, not the object of the verb. The LXX B makes “men” the subject of the verb, and makes the singular, “God” into the direct object. The MT of vss. 9 and 13 are parallel in the MT, making “gods and men” into the objects of the verb, honored (v. 9), or “cheers” (v. 13). Both LXX A and LXX B translate the object by “God and men,” in distinction from the MT plural form אֱלֹהִים. The Vulgate translates the MT *qua et dii utuntur et homines*, “by which gods and men are honored,” which is close to the MT. It is our suggestion that there is a conscious parallelism with v. 13, in which the Piel form introduces the object, “gods and men,” whether the subject be “fatness” (v. 9) or “new wine” (v. 13). Josephus makes no such object of “honor” or “cheers.” Pseudo-Philo does mention that the apple tree provides sweet-smelling fruit *for men* (37:3) but “the gods” or “God” are not mentioned as beneficiaries. Naomi Cohen notes the relative infrequency of the idiom, “gods (God) and men,” which is only found in Proverbs 3:4 and here in Judges 9:9, 13, but also notes a greater frequency in the rabbinic sources in contexts of wine and the happiness it brings. Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo’s Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 203. Willem F. Smelik in the Targum Jonathan translates the MT expression, “by which gods and men are honored” (v. 9) or “which cheers gods and men” (v. 13), with the expression, “which they libate before the Lord and which the chiefs delight in.” He notes that God’s rejoicing is obliterated while the chiefs rejoice. He states that “the real sensitivity is related to the implication that God would have been enjoying wine.” He argues that the Targum’s general de-anthropomorphism would not expect that God could be influenced or affected by human behavior in *The Targum of Judges* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 524-5.

<sup>36</sup> Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, 244.

<sup>37</sup> Wolfgang Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1963), 250.



translates the verb by the passive infinitive, κινεῖσθαι (“to be set in motion,” “to be stirred,” “to be moved”).<sup>38</sup> Since the Hebrew verb נוּע is translated as “quiver, waver, wave, tremble, totter, scatter,”<sup>39</sup> generally in negative contexts, the LXX B is probably the better reading, since it conveys the idea of a “fruitless” rustling of leaves above the trees. Josephus does not include the verb “to wave” in the refusal of the horticultural trio, but expresses the reason for their refusal, “she refused (fig-tree) because she enjoyed the esteem that was all her own and not conferred from without by others.”<sup>40</sup> The horticultural trio find meaning in their *fruitful* purpose, not in a *fruit/less* position of rustling waving of leaves in the wind. Purpose is paramount against a requested position.

Pseudo-Philo notes that the trio consists of fig tree, vine, and apple, who similarly reject the initial offer of continued rulership while each member of the trio pronounces doom on Abimelech. The sense of destiny is expressed by the fig tree in the words, “Was I indeed born in the kingdom or in the rulership over the trees? Or was I planted to that and that and that I should reign over you?”<sup>41</sup> He says that the fig tree refused because she enjoyed the specific contribution she made to others. It is also interesting to note that Pseudo-Philo “out-allegorizes” the original allegorical fable with individual identification of each of the trees (fig tree = the people, vine = the ones before us, apple tree = chastisers) and the thorn as well. Jacobson notes that Pseudo-Philo’s version provides the reason for the trio’s refusal in the expression, “I am content to provide my fruit,”<sup>42</sup> without reaching beyond for the proffered kingship. Smelik notes that the Targum Jonathan translates the Hebrew metaphor לְנוּע (“to wave”) by the “realistic words לְמַעַבְד מַלְכוּ,”<sup>43</sup> “to exercise kingship.” It appears that the Targum Jonathan uses separate verbs for God and humans to protect God’s superiority. In keeping with the mythical language of the fable, the text using the metaphorical-pejorative, “waving over the trees” (Masoretic Text) is to be preferred over other readings that express the reality for the trees’ refusal (e.g., rulership or appointment to rulership).

The expression, *waving over the trees*, will be interpreted in ugly detail by Samuel (1 Sm 8:10-17). Samuel wants the people to face the negative consequences of their choice for a king. In contrast to kingly rule, the horticultural trio spells out their goal of service in contrast to rulership. The Abimelech episode represents an abortive attempt to *sway over*, namely rule. Their response may well foreshadow the ultimate disaster of both Israel and Judah in their

<sup>38</sup> Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 442.

<sup>39</sup> BDB, 631.

<sup>40</sup> *Josephus: Antiquities*, trans. and ed. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: 1926-1965), 5: 233-253. Josephus changes the order of the MT ordering of the horticultural trio (fig tree-vine-olive tree). Further, the second and third members of the trio follow suit with the fig tree’s response (e.g., “it made use of the same words as the fig-tree had used before”). Josephus also changes the language from direct discourse (second person) in the MT to indirect discourse.

<sup>41</sup> James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2: 363.

<sup>42</sup> Howard Jacobson, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 2: 930.

<sup>43</sup> Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 523.

destruction. The fruit trees and the vine have no time for such things. How can they leave their normal productive functions to adopt a ludicrous stance of fruit/less “waving over the trees: with no fruit in view? Theology is expressed through the events, Jotham’s fable, its application, and subsequent “fall-out.”

*Fable—Offer and acceptance of kingship* (9:14-15). Since a king could not be found among the fruit-trees, *all* (כָּל) the trees went in a desperate search for a candidate, and found one in *the buck thorn, or bramble* (הַאֵזֶד).<sup>44</sup> The bramble (Lat. *rharnus*) is of an opposite character. It can produce neither fruit nor shade (though it ironically offers its shade), but is rather a dangerous menace in the summer heat for the spreading of shrub fires. Furthermore, the arrogant response of the bramble (v. 15) is doubly ironic as evidenced in the two expressions, “if in good faith” and in the invitation, “take refuge in my shade.” Richter notes, “Nevertheless, the littler he is, the greater he acts. He offers his underlings to rest in his shadow, as if one could crawl under that thorny scrub of his, and as if there would be protection from the sun and rain. How could that little thorn bush possibly hover above the trees, next to the stately cedar?”<sup>45</sup>

The relationship of verse 15 to verse 18 is established by three individual terms—to *anoint, over them, a king*—with future consequences spelled out in Samuel’s warning. Even though kingship is a divine accommodation to people’s need for a secure symbol, Yahweh still will be the one who anoints kings; trees or people do not anoint leaders. The fable’s message (theology) is underscored in the contrast between productive trees and an unproductive/dangerous bramble.

Why then the sudden appearance of the cedars of Lebanon? Why was kingship not offered to them? We suggest that at one time in the pre-history of this fable, it was originally directed as a warning against the worthier members of the community, to the effect that if they did not themselves take on the task of kingship, then someone far inferior would. The result would be the destruction of the entire community, to the extent that the giant cedars of Lebanon would be threatened by the fire issuing from the bramble.

The consequences of the bramble’s election will either mean complete obedience or total destruction. Again, we sense irony in the rhetorical and conditional term, *if* (אִם), meaning the trees have not acted in good faith in making the bramble king, and therefore destruction will follow: destruction of the trees in verse 15 and of the bramble as well in verse 20.

The fable is directed to the men of Shechem and secondarily to Abimelech and portrays the positive and negative nature of leadership. Positively, the call for true leaders, representative of the people of God, means service to God and the community. Negatively, leadership or “kingship” becomes arrogant, deceptive, and self-destructive. The search of the trees for a king does not tally with the historical section (9:1-6), but it does agree with the former offer of kingship to

<sup>44</sup> Tatu interprets the extreme habitat, valuable shade, healthy fruit trees, but it is difficult to square with the dangerous aspects of the bramble/thorn-bush as susceptible to fire in “Jotham’s Fable,” p. 124.

<sup>45</sup> Richter, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 285.

Gideon (8:22). He declines with the words “Yahweh shall rule over you.” He, like the trio, refuses “to wave over the trees,” and views his own task in terms of service. It is not merely that the trio forms a sharp contrast to the bramble, but a contrast to the rest of the book of Judges. Why? Is it mere chance that the contrast is found, or does there emerge at this precise time an inherent purpose for the people of God and their leaders to discover that God is both their foundation and the one who calls them to serve God and his community? In the application which follows, Jotham reapplies the original message of the fable to his audience with a new twist.

### *Application of Jotham’s Fable (Judges 9:16-21)*

*Interpretation of Fable (9:16-18).* The words *and now* (ועתה) in verse 16 mark a new section that is joined to the conclusion of the fable (v. 15), which serves as a warning to Abimelech and the men of Shechem who have participated in the fratricide (9:6). The connection with the end of the fable is found in the words, *in good faith* (באמת —v. 15) *and in integrity* (ובתמים). In verse 15, the question concerned the good faith of the people to their new king, although the application pointedly questions their good faith to Jerubbaal. The conjunction *if* (אם) grammatically introduces a long conditional sentence, while the bitter irony of the application points to a very strong negation to the conditional sentence, “certainly not.”<sup>46</sup> “The triple protasis (“if-clauses” in vss. 16, 19a) is separated from its apodosis (“then clause,” v. 19b) by a parenthetical review of Jerubbaal’s deserts and the sins of the Shechemites.”<sup>47</sup> The awkwardness of the link between verse 15b and verse 16 has led some interpreters to suggest that verses 16b-19a are a later addition.<sup>48</sup> However, despite its awkwardness, the application does have a vigor and passion not usually found in glosses. Zapletal raises an important question: “Why should Jotham, especially when he brought a fable before them, which he himself had not invented, make no application? He found the opportunity to accentuate the service of Gideon to clearly show the unworthiness of Abimelech, and to condemn the unjust conduct of the Shechemites.”<sup>49</sup>

The theological lesson emerges in the application; Jotham both *interprets* and *prophesies*. He interprets the fable and echoes the danger and the warning; two tragic events have occurred in the slaughter of his brothers as well as in the coronation of the useless/dangerous half-brother Abimelech. At the same time, the unified voice of the trio reveals the positive goal for the people of God. Then

<sup>46</sup> Nielsen, *Shechem*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> Moore, 251.

<sup>48</sup> Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 275; Moore, 250-251; Boling, *Judges*, 123-174; Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *Die Bücher Joshua, Richter, Ruth* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 205; Frederick Eiselen, *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1929), 366.

<sup>49</sup> Zapletal, *Das Buch der Richter*, 149.

Jotham proceeds to prophesy what will happen (i.e., the mutual destruction of the Shechemites and Abimelech).

In interpreting the fratricide, Jotham looks back to his father Jerubbaal as the ideal of one who was engaged in service. Jerubbaal delivered Israel from Midian (Jgs 6-8) by *risking his own life* (וישליך את-נפשו, lit. *he cast his life before*), i.e. *he hazarded his life* (9:17) and by fighting for them with a disinterestedness for his personal security (עליכם — *on your behalf*). Abimelech, however, abetted by the Shechemites, had disregarded Jerubbaal's sacrificial service and murdered his seventy sons.

*Prophetic curse of the Fable* (9:19-20). In prophesying mutual destruction, Jotham (v. 19) returns to the theme of good faith and sincerity (v. 16). If the answer to his series of rhetorical questions is "yes," then Jotham wishes the Shechemites and their ruler well. But, if the answer is "no" (which it is), then the words become a prophetic curse of destruction. Maly comments:

If the revolutionary turns out to be a tyrant (and that is obviously the conviction of the author), they will learn that his rule will prove as beneficial to them as the protection offered by a bramble. But if they regret their act, they will discover that it is too late. Destruction will overtake them through Abimelech.<sup>50</sup>

Verse 20 makes it clear that *fire* (אש) will destroy both parties. Bramble and cedars will perish in the conflagration (i.e. both King Abimelech and his subjects will die).

*Wrap-up* (9:21). With this parting curse of mutual destruction, Jotham flees to Beer (v. 21), and the fable is complete. The way is open for God's intervention through a falling out of Abimelech and the Shechemites.

### *The Abimelech-Shechemite Falling Out (Jgs 9:22-55)*

Jotham's prophecy of mutual destruction (i.e., curse) is developed in the following narrative. The editor, committed to the overruling action of God, notes that "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem" (v. 23) for judgment and retribution (v. 24). This period includes initial difficulties between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (vss. 22-25), Gaal's conspiracy (vss. 26-29), Abimelech's two military campaigns (vss. 30-41, 42-45), and the destruction of Shechem's tower (vss. 46-49). The verb, *fight* (לחם) had only been used for wars against external foes; this is the first time the verb is used for internal warfare in Israel (vss. 38-39, 45, 52).

In verses 24-41, Gaal incites the people to revolt by appealing to ties of blood. Native Shechemites become pitted against the half-Israelite Abimelech (v. 28) and Zebul, his deputy. For Gaal, the conflict is motivated by the alternatives

<sup>50</sup> Maly, "The Jotham Fable," 304. See also Hermann Gunkel, *Das Märchen im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1921), 2:18.

of fighting or losing face. The Shechemites are defeated (vss. 39-41) and the city is captured, destroyed by fire, and sown with salt (vss. 42-49).<sup>51</sup>

From verse 50-55, we read of Abimelech's demise. When he attacks the city of Thebez, he is mortally wounded by a mill-stone and killed by his armor-bearer to avoid the ignominy of perishing at the hand of a woman. Ironically, the corporate memory recollects his embarrassing legacy of being killed by a woman (2 Sm 11.21). The reference to the mill stone (v. 53) is a vivid reminder of the one stone (vss. 5, 18) where the fratricide occurred; it conveys an exact retribution set in motion by Abimelech's fratricide.

### *The Moral (9:56-57)*

The theological interpretation of the story is found in verese 56 and 57 (i.e., divine retribution overtook both Abimelech and Shechem). The narrator claims, "God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech. God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem upon their heads" (v. 56). Jotham's prophetic curse is carried out by God; it corresponds to God's sending of an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (v. 23). The voice of God is absent in the narrative; God is known here by what he does. The people of God and their evil neophyte ruler have made a shambles of their call to service. The Hebrews overlooked secondary causes and the focus of editorial concern falls on God's direct activity in human activity. In addition, the moral is directly connected with the prologue (8:33-35), where it is said that the children of Israel apostatized again and went whoring after the Baals and made Baal-Berith their god. It is a tragic story of a people and a despot who forsook their calling to service. Boogaart has made a sound argument for the close correlation of Abimelech's encounter with the Shechemites (9:1-6) and that of Gaal's encounter with them (9:25-41) in six common incidents that are part of the narrative.<sup>52</sup> By veiling the truth, Jotham relates the fable, and then interprets it powerfully to the gruesome event in 9:1-6 as well as to what will yet occur (i.e. the destruction of Abimelech and the men of Shechem). The point is that the men of Shechem and Abimelech had not acted in good faith. Therefore the fable becomes a prophetic curse. In table 2, we note several points of continuity and contrast that are traced through the various sections.

<sup>51</sup> A. M. Honeyman, "The Salting of Shechem," *VT* 4 (1954), 192-5; Stanley Gevirtz, "Jericho and Shechem," *VT* 13 (1963), 52-62; F. Charles Fensham, "Salt as Curse in the Old Testament," *BA* 25 (1962), 48-50. The best line of reasoning, represented by Gevirtz and Fensham is to regard the salting of Shechem as the climax of destruction and curse. On the practice of such destruction and Canaanite parallels cf. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 200.

<sup>52</sup> Boogaart, "Stone for Stone," 50.

### III. SUMMARY

Von Rad notes that “Jotham’s fable is designated the most forthright anti-monarchical poem in world literature.”<sup>53</sup> There is a decided anti-monarchical thrust in the prologue (8:23) and the subsequent story of the unproductive/dangerous bramble-Abimelech. But there is more to be said about the fable. Servants of God such as Gideon, the olive tree, fig tree, vine, and Jotham recognize that God is the foundation of their life. “Yahweh shall rule” (8:23). Correspondingly the people of God, represented in their ruler, are to seek service to God and the community rather than power. Gideon and the trio of olive tree, fig tree, and vine serve as a *type* of service, while Abimelech and the men of Shechem serve as an antithesis—those who are self-seeking, deceitful, manipulative, and murderous. The people of God and their leaders should serve and not grasp after authority. This is the unique message of the fable. The theological interpretation is tragically missed by the people of God in the course of their salvation history. Though the story is depicted with a graphic realism, the story has another “hidden hero, namely God,”<sup>54</sup> who not only sends the evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (v. 23) but acts in judgment and retribution (vss. 56, 57). God fulfills the curse of His mouthpiece Jotham. Aggressive kingship is to die its respective death—for Abimelech and the men of Shechem, not only because of their evil motives and actions, but because the self-seeking principle must die as well. This very principle is developed in the unfolding phases of salvation history. And the issue of divine anointing, kingship, and leadership will be unfolded in Samuel’s list of the ugly consequences for the divine accommodation to provide a king, to be like the other nations (1 Sm 8:10-18). Other texts highlight the dark side of kingship that parallel the Abimelech story.

The short vignette, afforded in the book of Judges, through both hero and villain, offers readers both an old and new paradigm. The paradigm is old in that the servant model encompasses both testaments, and new, in that it will be ultimately fulfilled in the one who “did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).

---

<sup>53</sup> von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2: 59. However, Davies proposes that the J is simply a question of the wrong person as king. G. Henton Davies, “Jer. 8.22-23,” *VT*, 13 (1963), 156. cf. also Zvi Adar, *The Biblical Narrative* (Jerusalem: Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organization, 1959), who states that “the subject of the chapter is not the rise and fall of Abimelech alone, but the rise and fall of the tyrant of all generations,” p. 11. This is countered by Barnabas Lindars, “Gideon and Kingship,” *JTS*, 16, (1965), 315-326; A. E. Cundall, “Judges —An Apology for the Monarchy,” *ET*, 81 (1970), 178-181.

<sup>54</sup> Adar, *The Biblical Narrative*, 15.

---

### About the Author

J. Lyle Story, Ph.D., is professor of biblical languages and New Testament in the School of Divinity at Regent University, a position he has held for twenty-five years, and coauthor of *Greek to Me* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2002), *The Greek to Me Multimedia Tutorial* (CD-ROM), and other articles in journals, dictionaries, and encyclopedias.

Email: [lylesto@regent.edu](mailto:lylesto@regent.edu)

---

Table 3. Flow chart of Judges 8:22-9:57

Prologue (8:22-35)	Historical section (9:1-6)	Jotham's fable (9:7-15)	Application (9:16-21)	Abimelech – Shechemite falling out (9:22- 55)	Moral (9:56-57)
Gideon is a worthy man for kingship (22)	Abimelech is a gross caricature-satire of king (15)	Bramble is a caricature –satire of king (15)	Satire against those who made him king(16-19)	Destruction of king and people (45, 49, 54)	
People desire a king (22)	People are not looking for a king (1-6)	Trees go to anoint a king (8)			
Gideon refuses (23)	Abimelech seizes kingship (2, 6)	Bramble is eager and aggressive when kingship is offered (15)	Satire against the arrogance with the word “if” (16, 19)		
Played harlot with Baal-Berith (33)	Money from Baal-Berith (4)	Fable towards men of Shechem (7)		EI-Berith burned (46)	
No kindness to Jerubbaal (35)	Slaughter of Jerubbaal's sons (5)		“if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal's house” (16)		God repaid injustice to Jerubbaal's house (56-57)
Abimelech (31) is introduced, serving as a part of the prologue	Abimelech is central figure (1-6)	Jotham addresses men of Shechem—sows mistrust (7)	Jotham addresses men of Shechem—sows mistrust (7)		
	Abimelech's arrogance (2)	Bramble's arrogance and bartering lowers value of the kingdom (15)		Abimelech's arrogance at death (54)	



Prologue (8:22-35)	Historical section (9:1-6)	Jotham's fable (9:7-15)	Application (9:16-21)	Abimelech – Shechemite falling out (9:22- 55)	Moral (9:56-57)
	'upon one stone' (5)			Millstone for Abimelech's death (53)	
		Prophetic curse of destruction of trees made by bramble (15)	Prophetic curse of mutual destruction of Abimelech and men of Shechem (19)	Dual curse fulfilled by evil spirit from God (23, 49, 54)	God fulfills the curse
	Low view of monarchy—acquired by deceit and violence	Low view of monarchy, anointing means the pejorative, “waving over the trees”			
Apostasy (33) beginning with ephod (22)	Deceit (2)	“if in good faith” to bramble (15)	“if in good faith” to Jerubbaal (16)	Deceit (36)	
Monarchy (22)	Monarchy vss. Oligarchy (2)	Monarchy (8)	Hint that oligarchy was in order; everything goes well without a king		
		Point of fable—useful members of community have better things to do—serve and produce fruit (9, 11, 13). The useless rule and are dangerous.	Point of application—to interpret the deceitful actions and prophesy judgment for both parties		

Prologue (8:22-35)	Historical section (9:1-6)	Jotham's fable (9:7-15)	Application (9:16-21)	Abimelech – Shechemite falling out (9:22- 55)	Moral (9:56-57)
Israel and Canaan side by side (33)	Israel and Canaan side by side, "bone and your flesh"(2)	"fire"—אש (15)	"fire"—אש (20)	"fire"—אש(49)	"Which he had done"—עשה (56)
			Derogatory remark— "son of enslavement" (18)		



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## QUEEN ESTHER AS A SERVANT LEADER IN ESTHER 5:1-8

OLUFUNMILAYO O. AKINYELE

This paper explores the leadership of the literary figure of Queen Esther and the importance of the story in the institution of the Festival of Purim. Cultural intertexture analysis, honor, guilt, rights culture, and challenge-response/riposte place Esther within the domain of a servant leader demonstrating the leadership virtues Patterson identifies in her theoretical model of servant leadership. Although Esther's leadership fits within the framework of servant leadership, her self-sacrificial leadership goes beyond it. Additional research is needed to demonstrate how Esther's leadership model works within different socio-economic and multicultural contexts as well as how it fits within Bekker's proposed model of kenotic leadership.

---

This paper examines the leadership of the literary figure of Queen Esther in her approach to King Xerxes to plead for the life of the Jews. Hill and Walton indicate that the story of Esther was set during the Persian Empire of the early to mid-fifth century B.C. and conclude that it was written in the late fifth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> However, Gottwald suggests that 150-100 B.C.E. was the likely time frame when Esther was written.<sup>2</sup> He explains that Purim, referred to as "Mordecai's Day," is first mentioned in the period 100-50 B.C.E. and associated with Nicanor's Day, "when Jews celebrated a Maccabean

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 238.

<sup>2</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 562.

victory over the Syrians.”<sup>3</sup> Gottwald states that at the time, “relations between Jews and Hellenistic Gentiles were especially strained.”<sup>4</sup> Bechtel surmises that the opening phrase “this is what happened in the days of Xerxes” (Est 1:1) implies “a perspective after that fact.”<sup>5</sup> Berlin notes that it “provides the story of the origin of Purim, the blueprint for its celebration, and the authorization for its observance in perpetuity.”<sup>6</sup> Although the more ancient festivals are historicized and their observance mandated by the Torah, Purim is historicized and its observance mandated by the book of Esther.<sup>7</sup> One distinction of this mandate from those in the Torah is that God did not command it like the ones in the Torah.<sup>8</sup> Berlin surmises that Purim is quasi-traditional, finding the intersection between an historical event, similar to those in the Torah, yet using the contemporary Persian practice. She indicates that the form in which the holiday was instituted imitated the legal practice of Persia—“by means of a document written by the king or his authorized agent circulated throughout the empire.”<sup>9</sup> Berlin concludes that “the book of Esther, more than anything else, is responsible for the continued celebration of Purim.” She indicates that “it also made the way for the establishment of later holidays that, like Purim, could be instituted without divine command if they commemorated an event or served an important function in the life of the Jewish people.”<sup>10</sup>

The Festival of Purim, established as a celebration of the Jews’s lives being spared, is still celebrated in modern times. Gottwald indicates that the book of Esther “locates the origin of the Feast of Purim in a spectacular last-minute deliverance of all the Jews within the Persian Empire from a plot to annihilate them.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, the origins of the Feast of Purim remain speculative. It was the association of an older festival, also called Purim and may have previously existed, with deliverance from “anti-semitic programs in Maccabean-Hasmonean times that catapulted the Purim rites into prominence in Palestine and occasioned the Book of Esther.”<sup>12</sup> Carruthers asserts that Purim “celebrated Jewish deliverance in the Diaspora” and explains that “the symbols of reversals are interpreted theologically: the world turned upside down celebrates Jewish chosenness and the providential care of God over his chosen people.”<sup>13</sup> Carruthers indicates that the “Purim synagogue service frames how the story of Esther is

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 562.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 562.

<sup>5</sup> Carol M. Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Adele Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xv.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., xv.

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

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 561.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 563.

<sup>13</sup> Jo Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 11.

interpreted.”<sup>14</sup> She points out that “Deut. 25:17-19 is read on the Sabbath before Purim, Shabbat Zakhor, in order to tie the story to God’s injunction to the Jews to ‘Remember (zakhor) what Amalek did’, attacking them on their journey from Egypt to Canaan (Ex 17).”<sup>15</sup> Carruthers notes that “the story inspires a memorial, and even for some a provocation of hatred.”<sup>16</sup> Carruthers further observes that “for Jews, the assertion of providence is key to the festival of Purim, at which God’s care and supervision of his chosen people are celebrated.”<sup>17</sup>

Berlin notes that the book of Esther is “a Jewish book reflecting Jewish experiences and aspirations.”<sup>18</sup> She asserts that the main reason for the book of Esther is to “establish Purim as a Jewish holiday for all generations.”<sup>19</sup> Berlin points out that the book of Esther establishes the Jewishness of the holiday by providing a “historical event of Jewish deliverance to be commemorated and an authorization, through the letter of Mordecai, for the continued commemoration of the event.”<sup>20</sup> Regarding Esther, White concludes:

She is a model for the successful conduct of life in the often uncertain world of the Diaspora. The fact that she is a woman emphasizes the plight of the Jew in the Diaspora: the once-powerful Jewish nation has become a subordinate minority within a foreign empire, just as Esther, a woman, is subject to the dominant male. However, by accepting the reality of a subordinate position and learning to gain power by working within the structure rather than against it, the Jew can build a successful and fulfilling life in the Diaspora, as Esther does in the court of Ahasuerus.<sup>21</sup>

Roop summarizes the Jewish historical struggle: “Living as a minority community, dependent on the attitude and actions of the majority, has kept Jews always in a precarious position.”<sup>22</sup> Berlin emphasizes that Esther “strengthens the ethnic pride of Jews under foreign domination.”<sup>23</sup> Van Wijk-Bos indicates that the book of Esther is “about sexism, the ideology of patriarchy.”<sup>24</sup> She points out that the literary figure of Esther is a member of a vulnerable class in three ways: an orphan, a woman, and an alien who is a Jew.<sup>25</sup> Van Wijk-Bos states that “from Esther we learn also about the

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>18</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, ix.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., xv.

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

<sup>21</sup> Alice O. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 192.

<sup>22</sup> Eugene F. Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Ruth, Jonah, Esther* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 161.

<sup>23</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, xxxv.

<sup>24</sup> Johanna W. H. Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 105.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 105.

possibilities of overcoming the constraints designed by a patriarchal world and may discern the design of a pattern to overcome such constraints."<sup>26</sup> Roop discusses the importance of the story of Esther in addressing issues of gender: "The role of women and their options in social and political contexts."<sup>27</sup> Roop points out that "action in the political arena is inevitable even by those who, like Esther, prefer to avoid it" and that "the success of women in the social and political realm is especially difficult in cultures where men have decided who has access to the political arena, and also what strategies are available and permissible."<sup>28</sup> Van Wijk-Bos observes that the book of Esther demonstrates "the landscape of all systemic oppression and prejudice everywhere"<sup>29</sup> and shows "where race prejudice leads."<sup>30</sup> Van Wijk-Bos further indicates that Esther "provides an example of liberation through solidarity with victims of oppression."<sup>31</sup> She points out that "her stand is all the more valiant because it is not taken heedlessly but after much hesitation and demurral."<sup>32</sup> Minorities in a larger society, such as African American women or immigrants in North America, have limitations placed on them in the social and political arenas. The story of Esther can be inspirational, helping to instill a sense of hope that, as minorities, they do not have to remain marginalized and can gain a measure of control over their own lives.

The story of Esther is an important illustration for contemporary culture because it demonstrates effective leadership in the midst of difficult circumstances. She is marginalized in a marriage she has been forced into and is asked to risk her life to lead when she has no power. Esther's contribution as a leader is demonstrated in that she does not try to alter the patriarchal structure of her society but works within the system to achieve her goal of liberating her people. Furthermore, after her goal is achieved, rather than placing herself in the limelight, she relinquishes the power that comes with her effective leadership, and makes the choice to fade into the background. In doing so, she redefines the true value of leadership. Bellis notes that the book of Esther "calls its readers to reflect and presumably act in the challenges to human dignity that confront us today."<sup>33</sup> The literary figure of Esther is a personification of leadership wisdom from an unlikely source. There are groups of people in contemporary culture, such as African American women, Native Americans, and immigrants, who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and powerless. Bellis concludes that the book of Esther "gives us much to ponder: the nature of law, the ways in which women achieve their goals, especially in situations when they have little power, and the use of humor and satire to make important points."<sup>34</sup> The story of Esther demonstrates that there is hope for

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>27</sup> Roop, *Believers Church Bible*, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>29</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>33</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 194.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 195.

people without power to become effective leaders within their societies, in spite of the limitations imposed on them. They may not be able to change the structure of their various societies, but like Esther, they can exert influence within it.

Hill and Walton note that the Persian Empire ruled more territory than any of its predecessors.<sup>35</sup> Although Xerxes I is identified with the literary figure Xerxes/Ahasuerus in the story of Esther, many have drawn the conclusion that the book “is not intended as an accurate chronicling of events.”<sup>36</sup> Hill and Walton observe that the book of Esther “possesses many of the characteristics of the modern short story with fast-paced action, narrative tension, irony, and reversal.”<sup>37</sup> They suggest that “the genre of the book of Esther is unique to itself.”<sup>38</sup> Laniak observes that the book of Esther follows the challenge and honor pattern: honor is granted, challenged during a crisis, there is vindication which leads to reversal, and this causes a new status of honor.<sup>39</sup> Whitcomb asserts that “the book of Esther is a divine message of hope for Israel.”<sup>40</sup> Although the accuracy of the historical events depicted in the book of Esther is questioned, the demonstrated impact of the literary figure of Esther’s leadership is not.

During the time the book of Esther was written, the Jews were in exile. Van Wijk-Bos notes that “although the Jews were not actively persecuted during this entire period, Jewish identity and survival were major concerns at this time.”<sup>41</sup> According to Carruthers, exile signifies a “dispersed community in which identity is centered on a homeland.”<sup>42</sup> Bell explains that “Diaspora Jews were descendants of those driven into exile when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C.”<sup>43</sup> He explains that some had gone to Babylon and others to Egypt, however, after 538 B.C. some Jews returned to Judea and started the rebuilding process while others stayed in their newly established homes.<sup>44</sup> Bell observes that Greeks and Romans accused Jews of “being aloof, separatist, priding themselves on maintaining their identity.”<sup>45</sup> Berlin explains that Esther is “a story about Jews living in the Diaspora”<sup>46</sup> and that it “resembles several other books from the late biblical and early post biblical period.”<sup>47</sup> Berlin indicates that the books written during that time, including Esther, “present models of successful behavior for Jews living in the Diaspora,” designed to “promote pride in Jewish identity and solidarity within the Jewish

---

<sup>35</sup> Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 239.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>39</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 10-13.

<sup>40</sup> John C. Whitcomb, *Esther: Triumph of God’s Sovereignty* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 103.

<sup>42</sup> Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Albert A. Bell, *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of Jesus and the First Christians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, xxxiv.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

community and with Jewish tradition.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, they “reflect a situation in which Jews were a minority in a larger society and where it fell to the individual Jew, not the state, to ensure Jewish continuity.”<sup>49</sup> Holmes observes that exilic living is being “unmoored from the common rhythms of daily life.”<sup>50</sup> She indicates that this can include living in the middle of a Western city if one is homeless, attending a rich suburban school if one is poor, struggling to survive as an undocumented worker in a sweatshop, and living in alienation from the embrace of a nonresidential parent.<sup>51</sup> Holmes asserts that an exile’s sense of awareness is “more acute.”<sup>52</sup> Exiles generally do not have a choice and are helpless in the situations they find themselves in. Van Wijk-Bos points out that Esther is an alien, who has to hide her particular Jewish identity, and is confined to a Xerxes’s harem, which keeps her outside of the information loop.<sup>53</sup> The literary figure of Esther, a Jew in Gentile surroundings, is an exile that is not exempt from the powerless existence that personifies an exile’s experience in a foreign land.

Walfish maintains that Jews were “often prey to persecutions and expulsions in the various countries of their exile.”<sup>54</sup> Their focus, necessarily, was on survival and the preservation of their communities. A friend in the royal court is often found indispensable in maintaining the welfare of their communities.<sup>55</sup> White stresses that “oppressed people often must use whatever means are available for them to survive.”<sup>56</sup> Holmes suggests that “Esther is in survival mode when her life begins to unfold along unexpected paths.”<sup>57</sup> She has no choice in participation in the beauty pageant held in Xerxes’s court. Mordecai, a Jew, who worked in the palace, takes advantage of the opportunity that Vashti has inadvertently presented. Perhaps he has a plot against Haman the Agagite based on long standing cultural rivalries. As Carruthers states, Haman is “understood to be a descendant of the last Amalekite king, Agag.”<sup>58</sup> According to Walfish, “already in Midrash, Amalek is depicted as the eternal nemesis of the Jewish people, pursuing them relentlessly from the time both nations stepped onto the stage of history.”<sup>59</sup> Berlin explains that the story of Esther implies that Mordecai and Haman are “continuing an ancient rivalry between Saul and Agag, and an ancient enmity between Israel and Amalek.”<sup>60</sup> As a descendant of Saul, Mordecai may have perceived it as his responsibility to destroy Haman, completing Saul’s assignment in 1

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., xxxiv.

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

<sup>50</sup> Barbara A. Holmes, “Joy Unspeakable,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 2 (2006): 136-45.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>53</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 105.

<sup>54</sup> Barry D. Walfish, *Esther in Medieval Garb: Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Esther in the Middle Ages* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>56</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 192.

<sup>57</sup> Holmes, “Joy Unspeakable,” 139.

<sup>58</sup> Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Walfish, *Esther in Medieval Garb*, 89.

<sup>60</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, xxxviii.



Samuel 15 to completely destroy the Amalekites. Van Wijk-Bos indicates that “throughout the story, Mordecai shows singleness of purpose—opposition to Haman and all that he stands for.”<sup>61</sup> White points out that although “Mordecai is often hailed as the hero of the story, he initiates the crisis by his refusal to bow down to Haman.”<sup>62</sup> Omanson and Noss imply that Mordecai refuses to bow or kneel before Haman, who is referred to as “the enemy of the Jews” (Est 3:1), because of this generational rivalry.<sup>63</sup> Walfish points out that the literary figure of Esther, an orphan by virtue of her parents’ death, saves the Jews—orphans because of their sins—from the hands of the Amalekites, who are of dubious parentage.<sup>64</sup> The Jews are powerless against the Amalekites, who symbolize all the enemies of the Jews. Similarly, in the palace where she finds herself, Esther is portrayed as powerless against her enemies. Yet, she chooses to make the best of it. She emerges as an unlikely leader in difficult circumstances. This paper aims to explore the leadership of the literary figure of Esther, using the framework of cultural intertexture, honor, shame, and rights cultures, and challenge-response within the sphere of socio-rhetorical criticism. This study is limited to a literary rather than historical focus.

Cultural intertexture analysis portrays the literary figure of Queen Esther as a servant leader. A good descriptor for a servant leader is someone who looks out for others as well as himself or herself. Greenleaf posits that a servant leader is one who strives to meet others’ needs, while pursuing personal growth. Greenleaf asserts that the servant leader “is servant first,”<sup>65</sup> then “conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”<sup>66</sup> Esther is initially reluctant to put herself at risk (Est 4:10) but eventually makes the choice to place the welfare of her people above that of her own (Est 4:16). Esther is a woman caught between two worlds. She is a Jewish woman who marries a Persian, breaks a lot of dietary laws, and assimilates into Persian society.<sup>67</sup> She masters the art of enculturation by learning the appropriate behavior of her own culture and acculturation by learning the appropriate behavior of her host culture.<sup>68</sup> She is loyal to her Jewish heritage but also lives obediently in the role of a model Persian queen. Gottwald observes that “one can be both a good Persian queen and a good Jew.”<sup>69</sup> Malina notes that an honorable person of such enculturation “would never expose his or

---

<sup>61</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 106.

<sup>62</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 192.

<sup>63</sup> Roger L. Omanson and Phillip A. Noss, *A Handbook on the Book of Esther: The Hebrew and Greek Texts* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 89, 93.

<sup>64</sup> Walfish, *Esther in Medieval Garb*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 80.

<sup>69</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 563.

her distinct individuality”<sup>70</sup> but would be a person of “careful calculation and discretion.”<sup>71</sup> Esther displays this strategic planning in her interaction with Xerxes on behalf of the Jews. She does not expose her individuality but acts with calculation and discretion.

Grunlan defines kinship as “a ‘road map’ or structure of interpersonal relationships.”<sup>72</sup> He explains that kinship “establishes social patterns of behavior, obligations and responsibilities, and patterns of authority.”<sup>73</sup> Malina points out that kinship norms “deal with the selection of marriage partners as well as with the quality and duration of the marriage bond.”<sup>74</sup> As a Jewish woman with strong kinship ties, Esther obeys Mordecai’s plan to make her queen and his instruction to keep her identity secret, even after she becomes queen. As a Persian queen, Esther obeys the law that keeps her isolated in a harem and requires Xerxes to summon her if he desires, rendering her powerless even though she is queen. Regardless of her thoughts, opinions, or desires, Esther humbly obeys the two men representing the authority that govern her life. Groves points out that “women belonged to the men who were in authority over them.”<sup>75</sup> White explains:

The Jews in the Diaspora . . . are in the position of the weak, as a subordinate population under the dominant Persian government. They must adjust to their lack of immediate political and economic power and learn to work within the system to gain what power they can. In the book of Esther, their role model for this adjustment is Esther. Not only is she a woman, a member of a perpetually subordinate population, but she is an orphan, a powerless member of Jewish society. Therefore, her position in society is constantly precarious, as was the position of the Jews in the Diaspora. With no native power of her own owing to her sex or position in society, Esther must learn to make her way among the powerful and to cooperate with others in order to make herself secure.<sup>76</sup>

Esther is in a world where women are considered second class citizens, yet she manages, within an inherently powerless position, to exert influence over her designated authority to rescue the Jewish people in Susa from imminent annihilation. Ciulla asserts that “to have power is to possess the capacity to control or direct change.”<sup>77</sup> She states that “all forms of leadership must make use of power,” and that “the central issue of power in leadership is not will it be used, but rather will it be used

---

<sup>70</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 59.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>72</sup> Grunlan, *Cultural Anthropology*, 162.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>74</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 135.

<sup>75</sup> Sidnie W. Crawford and Leonard J. Greenspoon, eds., *The Book of Esther in Modern Research* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2003), 100.

<sup>76</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 191-192.

<sup>77</sup> Joanne B. Ciulla, ed., *Ethics, the Heart of Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 36.

wisely and well.”<sup>78</sup> The literary figure of Esther exerts influence, does not seek fame, nor does she seek to hold on to the power inherent in her leadership.

## I. EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

Malina asserts that “meaning inevitably derives from the general social system of the speakers of a language.”<sup>79</sup> He further states that to understand the Bible “requires some understanding of the social system embodied in the words.”<sup>80</sup> When personal experience is used as a norm for human behavior, it is considered ethnocentrism. He indicates that ethnocentrism involves “imposing your own cultural interpretations of persons, things, and events on other people,” and when applied to history, it is referred to as anachronism—“imposing the cultural artifacts, meanings, and behavior of your own period on people of the past.”<sup>81</sup> Malina maintains that the only way to avoid misinterpretations or “ethnocentric anachronisms is to understand the culture from which our foreign writings come.”<sup>82</sup> He encourages us to understand our own cultural story and realize that the cultural stories of other people, including those depicted in biblical documents, are different from our own. I examine the story of the literary figure of Esther using cultural intertexture, honor, guilt, and rights cultures, and challenge-response/riposte within the framework of a larger exegetical approach known as socio-rhetorical criticism.

### *Cultural Intertexture*

Cultural intertexture analysis is a type of intertexture analysis. Robbins notes that “cultural intertexture appears in a text either through reference or allusion and echo.”<sup>83</sup> He asserts that references “point to a personage, concept, or tradition,” and allusions “interact with cultural concepts or traditions.”<sup>84</sup> Grunlan and Mayers define culture as “the learned and shared attitudes, values, and ways of behaving of a people.”<sup>85</sup> In the book of Esther, there is a clear interaction of cross-cultures. There is an interaction of Jewish and Persian cultures, as well as an interaction of gender roles. Malina states that in the first-century Mediterranean society, there was collectivism rather than individualism.<sup>86</sup> He indicates that “persons always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded.”<sup>87</sup> Honor,

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>79</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>83</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 58.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>85</sup> Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 278.

<sup>86</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 62.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 62.

guilt, and rights, as well as challenge-response (riposte), are examined as part of cultural intertexture. Neyrey observes that honor is a pivotal value of the Mediterranean society.<sup>88</sup> Malina states that honor is “a claim to worth and the social acknowledgement of that worth.”<sup>89</sup> He indicates that honor could either be ascribed or acquired, that is, honor given simply by virtue of one’s identity, or honor obtained by excelling over others in the social interaction referred to as challenge and response.<sup>90</sup> Neyrey also acknowledges that honor is achieved by engaging in challenge and riposte.<sup>91</sup>

### *Cultural Echo within Cultural Intertexture*

Robbins defines an echo as “a word or phrase that evokes, or potentially evokes, a concept from cultural tradition.”<sup>92</sup> Cultural echo in Esther 5 alludes to the fact that as a Jewish woman Esther is expected to obey Mordecai even though she is married, as kinship ties are particularly strong. Malina indicates that kinship is “about naturing and nurturing human beings interpreted as family members.”<sup>93</sup> Grunlan and Mayers indicate that kinship is “more than a network of biological relationships, it is also a network of social relationships.”<sup>94</sup> Esther has obligations and responsibilities bestowed on her by her kinship ties with Mordecai. Van Wijk-Bos notes that in the beginning, Esther “represents beauty and charm.”<sup>95</sup> Roop echoes the thought and notes that prior to Haman’s decree of Jewish annihilation, Esther has been depicted as a beautiful and compliant woman.<sup>96</sup> Fountain echoes that Esther is initially presented as “a submissive, obedient, and loyal person.”<sup>97</sup> Jobes observes that “her Jewish character led her to obey Mordecai, which meant, paradoxically, that she must deny that character and live as a pagan.”<sup>98</sup> Mordecai is instrumental in her participation in the pageant that makes her queen (Est 2:5-7) and she does not reveal her Jewish identity secret “because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so” (Est 2:10). Roop reiterates that at first glance Esther is portrayed as obedient.<sup>99</sup> He indicates that the expectation was for Esther to be submissive.<sup>100</sup> Van Wijk-Bos explains that when Esther is selected as queen, “she is

<sup>88</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>89</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 60.

<sup>93</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 82.

<sup>94</sup> Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 162.

<sup>95</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 106.

<sup>96</sup> Roop, *Believers Church Bible*, 211.

<sup>97</sup> A. Kay Fountain, *Literary and Empirical Readings of the Books of Esther: Studies in Biblical Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 37.

<sup>98</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *Esther: The NIV Application Commentary, From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 138.

<sup>99</sup> Roop, *Believers Church Bible*, 164.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

beautiful, is able to charm people, and does a very good job of following the instructions of the men in her surroundings.”<sup>101</sup>

Cultural echo alludes to the fact that Mordecai expects Esther to follow his instructions and to appeal to Xerxes on behalf the Jews in Susa (Est 4:8) based on his prior experience of her compliance with his instructions. Mordecai expects Esther to continue to obey and submit to his instructions. Van Wijk-Bos asserts that Mordecai is “banking on the old relationship still being in place where he charged and Esther did as he charged her.”<sup>102</sup> Esther’s initial reluctance has a cultural echo of Mordecai’s disbelief and disappointment evident in his response. Bechtel observes that Mordecai seems to have interpreted Esther’s reluctance as “cowardice or selfishness.”<sup>103</sup> His response includes an implied threat (Est 4:12-14). Van Wijk-Bos notes that Mordecai presents Esther with a threat that she has little to lose in approaching the king as her life was also in jeopardy.<sup>104</sup> However, she observes that he also presents her with a possibility—perhaps “she is in the harem for a purpose, a greater purpose than that of pleasing the king.”<sup>105</sup> Jobes observes that “when the situation had come to a crisis, Esther was brought to a defining moment in her life by circumstances over which she had no control.”<sup>106</sup> Esther struggles between her sense of duty to her Jewish roots, and that of her Persian present and future. Jobes points out that Esther “seems caught between the Gentile world of the pagan court and the Jewish world in which she was raised”<sup>107</sup> and she is forced to choose between her Jewish and pagan identities. Jobes states that “in this moment, Esther has to decide who she really is.”<sup>108</sup> She has to choose who she is going to be, which group she is going to identify with, and what risks she is willing to take. Finally, she makes the choice to risk her life because of the potential to save the lives of her kin. White notes that “from this point on, she is in charge.”<sup>109</sup> Esther emerges as a leader, beginning with a role reversal with Mordecai. Previously he issues instructions which she obeys, now she issues instructions which he obeys (Est 4:17). Bechtel claims that Esther “has learned to think and act for herself, and is no longer content to take orders from Mordecai without carefully considering their wisdom first.”<sup>110</sup> Fountain asserts that this appears to be the point at which Esther truly becomes queen in her own right.<sup>111</sup> Van Wijk-Bos points out Esther’s transformation in the story: “From a charmer who hides her true self, she comes out of the shadows to claim her identity and to intercede successfully for her community. By overcoming the limits of her existence,

<sup>101</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 115.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>103</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 48-49.

<sup>104</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 129.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>106</sup> Jobes, *Esther*, 137.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>109</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroines*, 192.

<sup>110</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 48.

<sup>111</sup> Fountain, *Literary and Empirical Readings*, 45.

she rises from power that is a sham to true power. She becomes someone when she is able to lay claim to who she is and in that capacity is able to save her people."<sup>112</sup> Levenson notes that "there has also been a concomitant transformation in Esther's status."<sup>113</sup> White observes that the "powerless has become the powerful."<sup>114</sup> Levenson concludes that Esther "has moved from being the adopted daughter of an exile, to the winner of a beauty contest, to the queen of Persia and Media, to the pivotal figure in the crisis hanging over the Jews, able to issue effective commands to her foster father."<sup>115</sup> The young servile girl has become transformed into a queen, willing to lay her life down for her people.

At the point when Mordecai asks Esther to break the laws of land, there is a cultural echo that her influence over King Xerxes is tenuous at best. Although Xerxes is initially captivated by Esther's beauty (Est 2:17), after she became his queen she loses the newness he appears to crave. Groves points out that there is an allusion in Esther 2:19a to a second gathering of virgins that takes place during the years between Esther's coronation and the terrifying decision she faces in Esther 4.<sup>116</sup> Given the history of her predecessor, Vashti, Esther realizes the precariousness of the situation she is in. The king appears to have forgotten about her—not having called for her in a month (Est 4:11)—which meant that any influence she thought she had was nebulous. Mordecai, whom Esther trusts as having her best interests at heart, instructs her to directly defy Persian law, essentially signing her death warrant. Xerxes could be looking for an opportunity to depose of Esther because he may have found a new virgin he is pleased with and wants to make his queen, as he did with Esther after the first pageant. Bechtel points out that Xerxes "may not *mean* to do wicked and destructive things, but he does them nevertheless."<sup>117</sup> She states that Xerxes "may be a buffoon . . . but he is a dangerous buffoon."<sup>118</sup> Yet, Esther makes the choice to take the risk of approaching Xerxes without being summoned as required by law.

The phrase "Esther put on her royal apparel" (Est 5:1), a cultural echo, implies that Esther had to remove her mourning clothes and dress appropriately for presenting herself to Xerxes. Neyrey observes that "people took pains to craft their appearance in public for maximum social effect."<sup>119</sup> According to Omanson and Noss, sackcloth, representing mourning and grief, is forbidden in the palace.<sup>120</sup> This law causes Mordecai to stop at the gates when he is in sackcloth (Est 4:2). Omanson and Noss also point out that fasting is an additional sign of sorrow.<sup>121</sup> Moore explains that

<sup>112</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 106.

<sup>113</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 82.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Crawford and Greenspoon, *The Book of Esther*, 92.

<sup>117</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>119</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 25.

<sup>120</sup> Omanson and Noss, *A Handbook*, 117.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

“feminine strategy, as well as court etiquette, requires that Esther not appear before the king in sackcloth.”<sup>122</sup> Esther has to make the transition from mourning as a Jew to appearing as a dignified Gentile queen. Berlin observes that Esther is “dressed in her best for this important occasion, and more to the point, she is dressed in her official garb as queen.”<sup>123</sup> Jobes notes that “at the same time she decides to identify with her people, she also claims her authority and power as the Queen of Persia in going before the king.”<sup>124</sup> Groves suggests that Esther uses either her sexual appeal or her royal position, perhaps both, to appeal to Xerxes’s sense of pride in possessing a splendid queen.<sup>125</sup> Knowing his weakness for beautiful women, she hopes that she will capture his attention, thus distracting him from the fact that she has broken the law. The phrase “stood in the inner court of the king’s palace” (Est 5:1) contains a cultural echo of the law that Esther is breaking by her uninvited presence, which carries the penalty of death. Van Wijk-Bos indicates that Xerxes’s “power is real and firm, represented by the building, seat, and staff . . . ready to dole out life and death.”<sup>126</sup> She points out that Esther “stands outside of the king’s hall,”<sup>127</sup> while Xerxes “sits inside the palace on his ‘royal throne’.”<sup>128</sup> Omanson and Noss note that Xerxes is holding court and performing his official duties at the time.<sup>129</sup> Berlin suggests that “Esther sees the king sitting on the throne, and the king sees her standing in the inner court.”<sup>130</sup> The king and queen are able to observe each other before Esther comes into the room where Xerxes is sitting.<sup>131</sup> Omanson and Noss indicate that the inner court of the palace is where one could see the king on his throne.<sup>132</sup> Berlin explains that in the Greek versions, Esther’s attire and beauty are described in detail and that “her heart is frozen with fear.”<sup>133</sup> In the moment before Xerxes sees Esther in the inner court, knowing the impulsivity and impetuosity of the king, “Esther must have been exceedingly nervous.”<sup>134</sup> Perhaps Esther waits with bated breath, perhaps her young life flashes before her eyes, or perhaps she wants to turn and run away. Instead, she stands with dignity in her royal apparel, awaiting her fate in the king’s hands. Van Wijk-Bos proposes that “the king must make the first move otherwise she will indeed perish.”<sup>135</sup> Bechtel states that Esther has “a certain degree of savvy in her decision to stand in the court rather than

---

<sup>122</sup> Whitcomb, *Esther*, 81.

<sup>123</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 51.

<sup>124</sup> Jobes, *Esther*, 144.

<sup>125</sup> Crawford and Greenspoon, *The Book of Esther*, 104.

<sup>126</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 130.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>129</sup> Omanson and Noss, *A Handbook*, 138.

<sup>130</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 52.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>132</sup> Omanson and Noss, *A Handbook*, 127.

<sup>133</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 52.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>135</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 130.

barging directly into the throne room.”<sup>136</sup> Esther gives the Xerxes the illusion that it is his idea to invite her in,<sup>137</sup> which allows Xerxes to retain his honor.

When Xerxes sees Esther, he sees his queen and prized possession, so he calls her “Queen Esther” (Est 5:3). Berlin observes that “Esther immediately wins favor.”<sup>138</sup> Xerxes has not seen Esther in a month (Est 4:11). Berlin indicates that “Esther’s agitation is obvious to the king.”<sup>139</sup> Perhaps seeing her dazzling beauty arrayed in royal robes captivates his attention, which reminds him of how she had previously found grace and favor in his sight, pleasing him (Est 2:17). Neyrey suggests that finding favor in Xerxes’s eyes “translates as acknowledgment of worth and value”<sup>140</sup> in his sight. Weems offers an alternative view, saying that “the king’s experience with Vashti may have softened him up a bit,”<sup>141</sup> making him “more open to listen to her.”<sup>142</sup> Xerxes ascribes honor to Esther, which prompts him to hold out his golden scepter, a symbol of his authority as “a sign of clemency.”<sup>143</sup> Malina indicates that honor can be “ascribed to someone by a notable person of authority.”<sup>144</sup> By holding out his scepter, Xerxes ascribes honor to Esther who, probably with a sense of relief at the reprieve, “acknowledged his goodwill toward her by approaching the throne and touching the end of the scepter with her finger or hand.”<sup>145</sup> In one moment, Esther’s sentence is changed from condemned by law to being spared by grace. Furthermore, Xerxes appears to proffer the exact solution she needs for the problem that causes her to risk her life. He offers her anything she wants up to half his kingdom. The Jews in Susa at the time are less than half the kingdom and it appears that the issue is resolved. However, Esther chooses not to present her request immediately. Cultural echo alludes to the fact that she needs to woo him and his allegiance against his trusted adviser Haman.

Berlin points out that “Esther’s language is very formal and proper—she addresses the king in the third person.”<sup>146</sup> Recognizing and using the language of the court, Esther says, “If it please the king, let the king and Haman come this day to a dinner that I have prepared for the king” (Est 5:4). Cultural echo implies that Esther is aware of the need to honor Xerxes, adding Haman to the invitation list almost as an after thought. Bechtel points out that the way Esther words the invitation makes it clear that it is an invitation for the king, which literally reads, “Let the king come—and Haman—today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”<sup>147</sup> She explains that “the care with

<sup>136</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 52.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>138</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 53.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>140</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 24.

<sup>141</sup> Bellis, 191.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>143</sup> Omanson and Noss, *A Handbook*, 127.

<sup>144</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 32.

<sup>145</sup> Omanson and Noss, *A Handbook*, 139.

<sup>146</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 53.

<sup>147</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 52.



which this invitation is crafted reveals that Esther is very much aware of the need to flatter and the risk of giving offense.”<sup>148</sup> Cultural echo implies that Esther cannot ascribe the same level of honor to Xerxes and Haman. Bechtel notes that “it must not seem as if she views Haman and the king as being on the same level.”<sup>149</sup> She espouses that perhaps Haman’s inclusion is “anything *but* an afterthought”<sup>150</sup> because an advantage to having Haman present at the dinner is to catch him “off guard”<sup>151</sup> with no time lapse between the time Esther presents her case and the time Xerxes sees Haman.<sup>152</sup> Xerxes’s immediately sends for Haman so they can go to the dinner Esther has prepared. Van Wijk-Bos observes that “the king who once banished a queen because she refused his invitation is ready to bestow largesse on one who comes uninvited into his presence.”<sup>153</sup> It is ironic that at the beginning of the story, worried about his image, Xerxes banishes Vashti for her presumptuousness, and now he scurries to obey Esther. Van Wijk-Bos notes that Esther, in a role traditional for a woman, will be a hostess.<sup>154</sup> She points out that “her designs are not traditional, but it is clear that she does everything to prevent suspicions from arising and to ward off one of the king’s mood swings, from extravagant generosity to outrageous anger.”<sup>155</sup> White notes that “Esther’s plan uses indirect methods of persuasion common among oppressed people, including women.”<sup>156</sup> She notes that Esther was not only heroic but served as a model of the Jews in the Diaspora.<sup>157</sup> Esther demonstrates how a powerless person can exert a measure of influence over the person in a position of authority over her.

### *Honor, Guilt, and Rights Cultures*

Malina defines honor as “a claim to worth that is socially acknowledged.”<sup>158</sup> He asserts that it is the point where authority, gender status, or roles, and respect intersect. Malina defines authority, “a symbolic reality,” as “the ability to control the behavior of others.”<sup>159</sup> He defines gender status as “the sets of obligations and entitlements”<sup>160</sup> derived from “symboling biological gender differentiation.”<sup>161</sup> Malina further defines respect as “the attitude one must have and the behavior one is expected to follow

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>153</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 131.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>156</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 192.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>158</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 30.

relative to those who control one's existence."<sup>162</sup> In first-century Mediterranean society, honor is always negotiated in public. Neyrey notes that "a man's physical body served as the constant stage on which honor was displayed and claimed."<sup>163</sup> He explains that "it is one's standing 'in the eyes of others' which constitutes worth and reputation."<sup>164</sup> Neyrey points out that affronts occur "before the very eye of the insulted person, for them to constitute genuine challenges."<sup>165</sup> He acknowledges that first-century Mediterranean society is "fundamentally gender divided."<sup>166</sup> He indicates that the social construction of gender perceives that "male and female are two different species of human."<sup>167</sup> Neyrey notes that the "stereotype of a gender-divided world operated out of the pervasive cultural distinction between public and private."<sup>168</sup> He explains that this meant that male roles took them into the "public world outside the household," whereas female roles were confined to the "private world of the household."<sup>169</sup> First-century Mediterranean society was a patriarchal society, where people adhered to the defined roles and cultures of the time. Bellis summarizes patriarchal societies as "male dominated and oppressive of women."<sup>170</sup> Bird presents a picture of a woman in ancient Israel: "She was a legal non person, where she does become visible it is as dependent, and usually an inferior, in a male-centered and male-dominated society."<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Bird notes, where ranking was concerned, she was always inferior to the male and is only accorded status and honor as a mother, yet she is always subject to the authority of some male—father, husband, or brother—except when widowed or divorced.<sup>172</sup> Vashti's refusal to appear at the king's drunken summons is a clear violation of the rules of honor. Vashti clearly defies Xerxes's authority, violates gender status, and displays a lack of respect for Xerxes, who is in authority over her. In order to reclaim his honor, Xerxes banishes Vashti. Esther, aware of the rules of honor has to work within the rules of honor to achieve her goal of saving her people from annihilation.

Neyrey indicates that "most things in the world could be conceptualized as either male or female, that is, as appropriate to the gender stereotype of maleness and femaleness, such as space, roles, tasks, and objects."<sup>173</sup> He notes that "the two genders should be separate and not mix or overlap."<sup>174</sup> He concludes that "to be a male

---

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>163</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 24.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>170</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 21.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>173</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 29.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

meant *not* being female.”<sup>175</sup> Neyrey defines shame as “the reverse of honor, that is the loss of respect, regard, worth, and value in the eyes of others.”<sup>176</sup> Robbins points out that shame is the female version of honor and explains that shame “refers to a person’s sensitivity about what others think, say, and do with regard to his or her honor.”<sup>177</sup> Daube states that “shame has a decidedly negative meaning when it refers to the loss of respect and regard by some public.”<sup>178</sup> Mordecai, in refusing to bow before Haman (Est 3:5), did not ascribe the honor due to Haman. Mordecai’s negative challenge causes Haman shame and relegates him to the space, status, and role of a female, which Haman does not tolerate. Mordecai forces Haman to respond negatively. However, rather than respond solely to Mordecai, Haman decides to take his rage out on all the Jews and looks for a way to destroy them (Est 3:6).

Neyrey notes that shame had a positive connotation when applied to the social expectations for females in first-century Mediterranean cultures.<sup>179</sup> Neyrey asserts that females are “expected to display shyness, not concern for prestige; deference, not concern for precedence; submission, not aggressiveness; timidity, not daring; and restraint, not boldness.”<sup>180</sup> When females met the broad societal expectations, they “have honor when they have this kind of shame” and “are judged positively in the court of reputation.”<sup>181</sup> As a woman who was cognizant of societal expectations, Esther achieves honor in her liberation of the Jews by male means in the public sphere yet she chooses to reassume her predefined gender role, rather than hold on to power, to maintain that honor.

In the literary figure of Xerxes’s court, once a decree is issued it is irrevocable. Although Xerxes indicates that he is willing to give Esther anything she wants when she initially approaches, it is doubtful whether he would have acquiesced to her request at the outset, or simply have granted her immunity while the other Jews were destroyed. Berlin points out that Esther “deflected the king’s magnanimous offer.”<sup>182</sup> Esther could not risk failure and decides to wait until she can present her concerns in a way Xerxes will be honored. Groves asserts that Esther has to find a way for Xerxes to “extricate himself from culpability in the issuance of the decree and redeem his honor” in order to gain his sympathy and corresponding action.<sup>183</sup> Esther skillfully presents the issue of rescuing the Jews to Xerxes in terms of his honor being affronted.

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>178</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 30.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>182</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 53.

<sup>183</sup> Crawford and Greenspoon, *The Book of Esther*, 105.

### *Challenge-Response (Riposte)*

There are a series of challenge-responses in Esther 5 (see Table 1). Robbins indicates that challenge-response within the context of honor has at least three phases: (1) the challenge in terms of some action on the part of the challenger, (2) the perception of the message by both the individual to whom it is directed and the public at large, and (3) the reaction of the receiving individual and the evaluation of the reaction on the part of the public.<sup>184</sup> Esther initiates the first challenge—"a claim to enter the social space of another"<sup>185</sup>—by appearing in the inner court of the king's house. Robbins notes that there could be a positive or negative reason for a challenger to approach.<sup>186</sup> Esther has a positive reason for approaching as she wants to gain the king's favorable audience in order to save the Jewish people in Susa. Robbins indicates that the receiver looks at the action from the viewpoint of its potential to dishonor his self-esteem and self-worth and has to determine whether the challenge falls within the range of socially acceptable behavior.<sup>187</sup> The receiver filters the message of the challenger through his or her lens of perception of the message, and then reacts to the message in a way that retains his or her honor status in society. Robbins observes that the challenge-response dance was designed to take place among equals. The receiver is either honored or dishonored by the challenger's status in society.<sup>188</sup> Esther's uninvited appearance could have been seen as an implied dishonor since she was not considered equal to Xerxes. Yet, instead of condemnation and death, he responds positively to her approach. Xerxes ascribes honor to Esther as one who has authority over her.<sup>189</sup> This gives her the confidence to issue the second challenge. Esther wisely issues another positive, rather than negative, challenge. Xerxes is implicated in the plot to annihilate the Jews and would have protected his honor at any cost, as evidenced by his previous actions with Vashti. An invitation to dinner is a different matter as he is being honored by his beautiful and charming queen. In her appearance and speech, Esther pays obeisance to Xerxes, thereby preserving his honor.

The second challenge is issued at the first dinner Esther has prepared. This time, Xerxes issues the challenge, which is positive, asking Esther what her petition and requests are. Although Xerxes is initially portrayed as largely uninvolved and dependent on Haman and his advisors, he knows that Esther did not risk her life simply to ask him to dinner. As one who is in a position of highest honor as the king, it indicates that he has elevated Esther to his level by issuing the positive challenge. In her response, Esther begins her speech by retaining the language of honor, saying, "If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the dinner which I will prepare for them and tomorrow I will do as the king has said" (Est 5:8). Esther understands that in

---

<sup>184</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 80.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>189</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 32.

order to continue to receive a favorable response, she needs to continue to preserve Xerxes's honor. Groves points out that in first-century Mediterranean cultures, "what happened to women mattered only so far it honored and shamed the men to whom they belonged."<sup>190</sup> Esther presents her request as her obeying his instruction, while securing his commitment to give her what she wants. In Esther's approach to Xerxes, he ascribes honor to her (Est 5:2) and after the challenge and response, she has acquired honor (Est 5:8).

Cultural echo within the sphere of cultural intertexture analysis implies that the literary figure of Queen Esther is expected to obey Mordecai, following his instructions to appeal to the literary figure of Xerxes on behalf of the Jews in Susa. Cultural echo alludes to Mordecai's disappointment at Esther's initial reaction followed by her emergence as a leader and a reversal of their roles. Challenge and response in Esther 5:1-8, along with the underlying issues of honor and shame, demonstrate the positive challenges issued by the literary figure of Queen Esther, the positive responses by the literary figure of Xerxes, the preservation of Xerxes's honor, and the honor ascribed to and acquired by Esther leading to the salvation of the Jews from certain destruction. The literary figure of Esther, though initially reluctant to take leadership, displays wisdom in exerting influence from a position of powerlessness on the literary figure of Xerxes. She accomplishes her goal without striving to usurp his power, change the structure of the society, or lay claim to the inherent fame in her demonstrated leadership. Furthermore, after she achieves her goal of saving the Jews from annihilation, she does not seek fame or to hold on power but chooses to step out of the limelight and stay in her designated role as a woman.

## II. QUEEN ESTHER'S UNLIKELY LEADERSHIP IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Xerxes, Mordecai, and Esther all demonstrate some form of leadership. Roop notes that the designated leader, Xerxes, "fails at nearly every turn."<sup>191</sup> He concludes that Xerxes fails because he is "so dependent and disconnected from the significance of events in the palace."<sup>192</sup> Northouse explains that transactional leadership "focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers."<sup>193</sup> Initially Xerxes is portrayed as a transactional leader, operating on the basis of rewards and punishment. Vashti's disobedience to Xerxes's command was dethronement and banishment (Est 1:19-21). Bass and Riggio explain that laissez-faire leadership is "the avoidance or absence of leadership."<sup>194</sup> Xerxes is portrayed as one who also demonstrates laissez-faire leadership. Van Wijk-Bos observes that Xerxes is a "manipulable and obtuse ruler, who is scared of losing control," which makes him "putty in the hands of his adviser."<sup>195</sup>

<sup>190</sup> Crawford and Greenspoon, *The Book of Esther*, 100.

<sup>191</sup> Roop, *Believers Church Bible*, 166.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>193</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 176.

<sup>194</sup> Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2006), 8.

<sup>195</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 119.

Table 1. Challenge-response (riposte) in Esther 5

Verse	Challenger	Challenge	Type	Receiver	Perception by receiver	Response	Type	Evaluation by public
5v1	Esther	Stands in the inner court	Positive	Xerxes	Positive			Honor (ascribed)
5v2						Holds out scepter	Positive	Honor (ascribed)
5v2	Esther	Touches the golden scepter				Promises to grant Esther's request	Positive	Honor (acquired)
5v4	Esther	Invites Xerxes and Haman to dinner (already prepared)	Positive	Xerxes	Positive			
5v5						Xerxes summons Haman and attends dinner	Positive	Honor (acquired)
5v6	Xerxes	Inquires into Esther's request and promises to fulfill whatever it is	Positive	Esther	Positive			

Verse	Challenger	Challenge	Type	Receiver	Perception by receiver	Response	Type	Evaluation by public
5v8						Esther invites Xerxes and Haman to another dinner (to be prepared) and promises to reveal the request at the dinner	Positive	Honor (acquired)
5v9 5v10 5v11 5v12 5v13	Mordecai	Does not rise or tremble before Haman.	Negative	Haman	Negative	Haman is filled with wrath but restrains himself. Goes home, gathers wife and friends, boasts about status and complains about Mordecai	Negative	Shame
5v14						Haman has the gallows made	Negative	

Haman plans to annihilate the Jews (Est 3:6), indicates to Xerxes that they are a threat to Xerxes's kingdom (Est 3:8), and requests their destruction (Est 3:9). Van Wijk-Bos points out that "race prejudice addresses people at the point of their fear"<sup>196</sup> and Haman's speech combines elements that raise Xerxes's fears. The literary figure of Xerxes, knows that, as king the decrees he makes are irrevocable, Yet, he does not make any effort to get involved in obtaining details of the people in his kingdom that "do not obey the king's laws" (Est 3:8), giving Haman permission to issue a decree to annihilate them, with no requirement for Haman to surrender proof of his accusations. Bass and Riggio indicate that the laissez-faire leader "avoids getting involved when important issues arise."<sup>197</sup> Reluctant to get involved by verifying the truth of the allegations or seeking to discover what Haman's motives are, Xerxes cedes his leadership to Haman and gives his approval for the destruction of a people whose identity he is unaware of (Est 3:10-11). Van Wijk-Bos notes that although the literary figure of Xerxes represents the power in the Persian Empire, he "comes across as consistently weak, easy to manipulate, not too bright, at times completely bewildered and lacking in perspicacity."<sup>198</sup> Bechtel observes that Xerxes "seems largely out of touch with reality."<sup>199</sup> Van Wijk-Bos points out that "the real power in the kingdom is wielded by Haman, who represents every schemer that ever worked an administration to his advantage."<sup>200</sup> She goes on to say that Haman is "full of evil intent and a sense of self-inflated worth."<sup>201</sup> Van Wijk-Bos notes that Xerxes "has become such a hands-off administrator that he lets his adviser wreak havoc in the realm."<sup>202</sup> Finally, Xerxes is portrayed as one who demonstrates participative leadership. Yukl asserts that "participative leadership involves the use of various decision procedures that allow other people some influence over the leader's decisions."<sup>203</sup> He identifies four dimensions: (a) autocratic decision, where the leader makes a decision alone; (b) consultation, where the leader makes a decision after asking for input; (c) joint decision, where the leader makes a decision together with others; and (d) delegation, where the leader gives an individual or group the authority to make the decision.<sup>204</sup> Xerxes makes an autocratic decision when Esther presents the problem of averting the destruction of the Jews and then delegates the details and execution to Queen Esther and Mordecai to avert impending annihilation of the Jews (Est 8:7-8). Xerxes is initially identified as a transactional leader, then as one demonstrating laissez-faire leadership, and finally as one using participative leadership. The figure of Xerxes is shown to change from using ineffective leadership styles to one more effective in leading his kingdom.

---

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>197</sup> Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 9.

<sup>198</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 106.

<sup>199</sup> Bechtel, *Esther Interpretation*, 27.

<sup>200</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 106.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>203</sup> Gary G. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 82.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 82-83.



Mordecai is initially portrayed as a transactional leader, where he is concerned about potential rewards of getting Esther into the harem and the punishment from the hands of Haman. Yukl describes a follower as “a person who acknowledges the focal leader as the primary source of guidance about the work, regardless of how much formal authority the leader has over the person.”<sup>205</sup> Mordecai is shown to assume the position of a follower when Esther emerges as a leader. According to Northouse, transformational leadership is “a process that changes and transforms people.”<sup>206</sup> He notes that a transformational leader “plays a pivotal role in precipitating change.”<sup>207</sup> Transformational leadership has been defined as the ability to elicit support and participation from followers through personal qualities rather than through reward and punishment.<sup>208</sup> After Esther’s successful intercession with Xerxes on behalf of the Jews, Mordecai is portrayed as a transformational leader. Transformational leadership consists of four interrelated factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.<sup>209</sup> The idea of idealized influence means that transformational leaders “behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers”<sup>210</sup> Bass asserts that these leaders are “admired, respected, and trusted.”<sup>211</sup> Mordecai is “held in high esteem by his fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews” (Est 10:3). This implies that he was admired, respected, and trusted. The idea of inspirational motivation means that transformational leaders “behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their follower’s work.”<sup>212</sup> Mordecai’s victory over Haman and his activeness in protecting the Jews are instrumental in motivating the Jews in Diaspora to protect themselves against potential annihilation. Intellectual stimulation means that transformational leaders “stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.”<sup>213</sup> Mordecai stimulates the Jews in Susa to defend themselves against Haman’s edict of destruction. Berlin explains that although both Esther and Mordecai are empowered by the king to write the edict (Est 8:8), “Mordecai is the one who supervises its preparation,” making sure that the message goes far and wide in different languages.<sup>214</sup> This reflects “the practical necessity of conveying official information in forms that would be legible and intelligible to the recipients.”<sup>215</sup> Berlin asserts that “language is a code for

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>206</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 175.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>208</sup> Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 4.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>214</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 76.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 76.

ethnicity.”<sup>216</sup> Mordecai is astute in using language as leverage for communicating his message. Individualized consideration means that transformational leaders “pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor.”<sup>217</sup> Berlin indicates that at the end of the book of Esther, Mordecai’s popularity in the Jewish community and his concern for his people are emphasized.<sup>218</sup> Berlin concludes that “Mordecai is a model of Jewish success in the Diaspora.”<sup>219</sup> Mordecai is initially portrayed as demonstrating transactional leadership with getting Esther in Xerxes’s harem and refusing to bow to Haman under the king’s authority. He then takes the position of a follower when Esther emerges as a leader and operates using transformational leadership when Xerxes elevates him to a position of authority.

Patterson indicates that “servant leadership theory provides a whole new understanding of leadership by defining the heart of leadership as a focus on the well-being of followers.”<sup>220</sup> She points out that a servant leader is “one who leads an organization by focusing on their followers such that followers are the primary concern and the organizational concerns are peripheral.”<sup>221</sup> Patterson proposes a conceptual model of servant leadership and identifies the virtues of a servant leader: (a) demonstrates *agapao* love, (b) acts with humility, (c) is altruistic, (d) is visionary, (e) is trusting, (f) empowers followers, and (g) is serving.<sup>222</sup> Winston defines *agapao* as “moral love, doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason.”<sup>223</sup> Stone, Russell, and Patterson note that servant leaders have “an unconditional concern for the well-being of those who form the entity.”<sup>224</sup> The literary figure of Queen Esther demonstrates *agapao* love when she places the needs of the Jewish people above her own because it was the right thing to do (Est 4:10-16). She demonstrates humility by approaching the king in an honorable manner (Est 5:1) and by ceding authority to Mordecai, stepping back into her predefined background role as a woman (Est 8:2). Patterson sees altruism as the connection between good motivation and behavior. Scruton contends that altruism can range from unselfishly performing acts to selflessly sacrificing life.<sup>225</sup> The literary figure of Esther, initially selfishly thinking of her own well-being (Est 4:11), demonstrates altruism by having a willingness to defy Persian laws, risking death, for the potential salvation of her people (Est 5:16b). Writers on leadership explain that

---

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>218</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, 95.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>220</sup> Kathleen A. Patterson, “Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model” (doctoral dissertation, Regent University School of Leadership Studies, 2003), 3.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>223</sup> Bruce E. Winston, *Be a Leader for God’s Sake* (Virginia Beach, VA: School of Leadership Studies, 2002), 5.

<sup>224</sup> A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, “Transformational Versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus,” *The Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 25, no. 4 (2004): 355.

<sup>225</sup> Roger Scruton, “Altruism and Selfishness,” *American Spectator* 40, no. 8 (2007): 38-40.

vision is essential to leadership in order to “inspire others, to motivate action, and to move with hope toward the future.”<sup>226</sup> Esther helps to instill hope for deliverance in the Jews, motivating them to fast and pray along with her and her maidens (Est 5:16a). Banutu-Gomez asserts that “servant leaders elicit trust in followers because they respond to crisis by owning the problem.”<sup>227</sup> Esther demonstrates trust in God and also instills trust in the Jews because she responds to the crisis and takes ownership of doing what was necessary to deliver the Jews.

Although Esther is initially reluctant, she emerges as a servant leader. She humbly and selflessly works within the confines of the laws of the land to effect change, driven by love for Mordecai and her people and a vision for deliverance for them. She risks her life, placing the needs of her people ahead of her own. Esther skillfully manages to preserve the king’s honor while rescuing the Jews. Putting the follower’s needs first is the essence of servant leadership. Esther goes beyond simply placing the needs of the Jews ahead of hers and is willing to risk her life for their deliverance.

Ciulla points out that “empowerment conjures up pictures of inspired and confident people or groups of people who are ready and able to take control of their lives and better their world.”<sup>228</sup> She further indicates that “empowerment is about giving people the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to act on their own judgments.”<sup>229</sup> The celebration of the Feast of Purim serves as a reminder of the survival of the Jews. Berlin asserts that there is a type of psychological release embodied in Esther and Purim celebrating community survival.<sup>230</sup> The literary figure of Esther empowers the Jews, giving them a sense of hope that in the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation there is the possibility of deliverance.

Yukl asserts that “influence is the essence of leadership.”<sup>231</sup> He further states that “to be effective as a leader, it is necessary to influence people to carry out requests, support proposals, and implement decisions.”<sup>232</sup> The literary figure of Esther demonstrates influence with Mordecai, the Jews, and Xerxes. When she decides to approach Xerxes, she alleviates Mordecai’s suffering and is able to influence him and the Jews, asking them to fast on her behalf. She then influences Xerxes to prevent the annihilation of the Jews. Yukl states that “power involves the capacity of one party (the agent) to influence another party (the target).”<sup>233</sup> He further states that power “describes the absolute capacity of an individual agent to influence the behavior or attitudes of one or more designated target persons at a given point in time.”<sup>234</sup> He explains that there

<sup>226</sup> Myra L. Fairling, A. Gregory Stone, and Bruce E. Winston, “Servant Leadership: Setting the Stage for Empirical Research,” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 6, no. 1/2 (1999): 53.

<sup>227</sup> Michael Banutu-Gomez, “Great Leaders Teach Exemplary Followership and Serve as Servant Leaders,” *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 4, no. 1/4 (2004): 149.

<sup>228</sup> Ciulla, *Ethics*, 59.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>230</sup> Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary*, xlix.

<sup>231</sup> Yukl, 145.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

are different types of power that can be broken down into two categories: (a) position power, which includes potential influence derived from legitimate authority, control over resources and rewards, punishments, information and physical work environment, and (b) personal power, which includes potential influence derived from task expertise and potential influence based on friendship and loyalty.<sup>235</sup> Yukl asserts that authority “involves the rights, prerogatives, obligations, and duties associated with particular positions in an organization or social system.”<sup>236</sup> He claims that authority is “an important basis for influence.”<sup>237</sup> The literary figure of Esther does not have any position or personal power nor does she have any authority yet she manages to exert influence from an inherently powerless position as a woman and a Jew in Diaspora.

Yukl indicates that there are three possible outcomes of influence: (a) commitment, where the target person internally agrees with a decision or request from the agent and makes a great effort to carry out the request or implement the decision effectively; (b) compliance, where the target person is willing to do what the agent asks but is apathetic rather than enthusiastic about it and will make only minimal effort; and (c) resistance, where the target person is opposed to the proposal or request, rather than merely indifferent about it, and actively tries to avoid carrying it out.<sup>238</sup> Yukl suggests that “for a complex, difficult task, commitment is usually the most successful outcome from the perspective of the agent who makes an influence attempt.”<sup>239</sup> Esther, from an inherently powerless position with no authority, obtains commitment from Mordecai and the Jews to fast along with her for her safety and from Xerxes to carry out her request to prevent the annihilation of the Jews.

Tingley proposes that power and influence are inseparable. She indicates that “they are the essential assets for leaders to have and use when persuading people to do what they want them to do.”<sup>240</sup> Tingley explains that there are two methods of influence—direct and indirect.<sup>241</sup> She points out that the most important difference between the two is that “indirect influence attempts are planned as intentional by the leader, but viewed as unintentional by the target person.”<sup>242</sup> Esther’s method of approaching Xerxes fits in with the concept of indirect influence. Tingley proposes a six step framework to help in using indirect influence communication techniques: (a) decide what you want as an outcome of the communication, (b) read the other person in the current situation, (c) select an influencing method and technique—direct or indirect, (d) implement the technique, (e) reward yourself, and (f) evaluate the results.<sup>243</sup> Esther appears to follow all the steps in the given framework: She decides that she wants to

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>240</sup> Judith C. Tingley, *The Power of Indirect Influence* (New York: AMACOM, 2001), 10.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 36.

prevent the annihilation of the Jews, she approaches Xerxes in a manner that honors him—placing him in a position where she had an advantage—and she decides to invite Xerxes and Haman to two banquets, where the unsuspecting Haman's plot is revealed. Her request for a second day of killing by the Jews in Susa (Est 9:13) could be interpreted as a form of reward for her victory, and the celebration of the Festival of Purim an annual evaluation of the method that works in influencing one's authority from a position of powerlessness.

Kouzes and Posner describe five practices of exemplary leadership: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart.<sup>244</sup> The literary figure of Esther effectively models the behavior she expects from all the Jews when she initiates the three day fast (Est 4:16a). She inspires and instills a vision of freedom and salvation in the Jews with her willingness to appeal to Xerxes (Est 4:16b). She ventures out and is willing to challenge existing Persian laws for the greater good of her people in spite of the potential personal danger (Est 5:1). Esther makes it possible for the Jewish people to collaborate and act to defend themselves (Est 8:3) and encourages the hearts of the Jewish people through the generations by instituting the Festival of Purim (Est 9:29), which is still celebrated today.

### III. CONCLUSION

This exegetical analysis provides an important addition to the field of leadership studies in demonstrating the leadership effectiveness of the literary figure of Queen Esther in her approach to King Xerxes on behalf of the Diaspora Jews in Susa. Cultural intertexture analysis places Esther within the domain of servant leadership. Furthermore, she possesses an essential quality that is lacking in Patterson's servant leadership model. Kenotic leadership extends servant leadership by taking the lowest possible position, completely emptying the self of any privilege, no longer making the choice to serve but having the attitude of a servant, embracing one's humanity and that of others, and practicing radical humility and obedience to the call.<sup>245</sup> Esther demonstrates a self-sacrificial love that fits within Bekker's model of kenotic leadership.

The story of Esther demonstrates that a good servant leader does not cease to be a follower even after becoming a leader. Esther does not seek to change the patriarchal structure of her society, even after she obtains influence with King Xerxes. She chooses to keep serving in her position as queen and allows Mordecai to step into the position of authority she could have claimed. She does not seek fame, does not seek to hold on to power, or take any credit for the impossible feat she was able to accomplish. The literary figure of Esther stepped into the leadership role and steps out. Furthermore, Esther helps empower her people in the institution of Purim, which serves

<sup>244</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 13.

<sup>245</sup> Corné J. Bekker, "The Phillippians Hymn (2:5-11) as an Early Mimetic Christological Model of Christian Leadership" (paper presented at the Regent University PhD Residency, Virginia Beach, VA, May 14-23, 2008).

as a reminder to the Jews, and others, that no matter how powerless their situation may appear, there is the possibility of deliverance and empowerment.

Leadership is learned and it is possible for everyone to learn to lead.<sup>246</sup> Esther's story is a reminder that effective leadership, which can happen given difficult circumstances, has the potential to save lives. Neulander concludes that even in the twenty-first century, Esther is a "timeless model of feminine strength, integrity and courage for members of diverse racial, religious and ethnic communities."<sup>247</sup> Van Wijk-Bos states that "difference is the provoking element" and "such prejudices can be heard as easily today as they were in the day of Haman."<sup>248</sup> Esther's story shows that there is hope for people without power to become effective leaders within their society in spite of the constraints or limitations imposed on them. Masenya, an African-South African biblical scholar expresses some concerns about Esther, stating it is more about Mordecai than Esther, the upper-class nature of the story is not helpful to most African women, and it connoted painful resonances in the context where the indigenous South Africans were brutalized by Christian Europeans, similar to how the Jews, foreigners and God's chosen people brutalized many innocent Persians in revenge for Haman's plan, which was never carried out.<sup>249</sup>

The literary figure of Esther does not attempt to alter the patriarchal structure of society but works within it to achieve her goal. She relinquishes power and fame, fading into the background, thereby redefining the true value of leadership as stepping into leadership for a specific time or to achieve a specific task. Her leadership shows that it is possible to lead from an inherently powerless position and work effectively within an oppressive system without attempting to change the structure of the system. An area for further research is to explore the applicability of Esther's leadership model with oppressed people in different socioeconomic classes. Other areas for further research include a deeper exploration of the fit between the literary figure of Esther's leadership and the kenotic model of leadership, inquiry into the effects of her gender and multicultural approach on her successful influence, and whether her leadership represents a model that can be taught or developed in other organizational leaders.

---

<sup>246</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*.

<sup>247</sup> Crawford and Greenspoon, *The Book of Esther*, 199.

<sup>248</sup> Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 119.

<sup>249</sup> Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 195.

---

### About the Author

Olufunmilayo (Funmi) O. Akinyele is a doctoral student in organizational leadership at Regent University's School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship. She is a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC), a certified leadership coach, and a grief recovery specialist. Her interests include biblical leadership, women in leadership, leadership in Africa, cross-cultural studies, global leadership, and leadership development.  
Email: olufaki@regent.edu

---



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## FORMS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NEAR REALM OF GOD: GOOD NEWS FOR PENITENT VISIONARIES FROM MARK'S GOSPEL

SAMUEL R. D. MASSEY

In my experience, pastors casting visions unilaterally for their congregations can create conflict. Statistics suggest that vision casting by pastors, in spite of literature advocating them to do so, can lead to dissolution of the pastoral relationship. I examine the vision of the kingdom or realm of God cast by Jesus according to the gospel of Mark, specifically in Mark 8:22–10:52. From this vision, I attempt to identify three forms of leadership that I believe are implied by Jesus, those being selfless, hospitable, and empowering leadership. I compare these three forms to current leadership theory. Finally, I assess the identification of leadership with vision casting, and I conclude that Jesus' teaching in Mark on the realm of God does not lead to vision casting by pastors as a unilateral activity.

---

Are pastors and the congregations they serve helped or hindered by the pastors casting vision for their congregations? In 2002, I answered a call to provide visionary leadership to a congregation. Building upon the congregation's past and surrounding culture, I invited the staff and congregation into the goals, strategies, and consequences that the vision I cast entailed. By the summer of 2007, in spite of the realization of the vision cast, congregational conflict had erupted over it and other issues. By Christmas 2007, saddened and sick with pneumonia, for the peace of the congregation and my own sake, I felt I had little choice but to resign.

The failure of my ministry shook me with doubt as to my presuppositions for ministry. Specifically, my role in casting vision appeared to be the root of my difficulty.



This realization led me to reassess the question as to whether or not pastors should cast vision for congregations.

Kleinsasser addressed the writing strategy practiced by qualitative researchers in order for them to disentangle their personal biases from phenomena observed.<sup>1</sup> In this spirit I initiated this study on leadership forms in the kingdom or realm of God, as the latter is interpreted broadly within the Christian tradition. The study represented an anguished attempt to release pain, anger, and disappointment; and to redeem the failure, both for others caught in the same bind of vision casting and for me. As I hope the reader perceives, I wrote to address my own shortfalls rather than to blame the congregation for our mutual experience.

My experience and subsequent study, done in communion with scholars, colleagues, God, and my own conscience, convict me that pastors casting vision unilaterally for their congregations does not jibe well with the modesty identified with effective leadership,<sup>2</sup> or with other qualities associated with contemporary emerging leadership theory. Furthermore, I believe now that the unilateral casting of vision runs contrary to what Jesus, as found in the gospel of Mark, taught and exemplified behaviorally.

## I. THE EQUATION OF VISION WITH LEADERSHIP

I suspect that current pastors and congregations accept as conventional wisdom that pastors require the ability to cast vision in order to lead their congregations competently. It is a quality that leaders can develop through contemplation.<sup>3</sup> As an activity advocated in popular literature available to pastors, vision casting includes both the means and ends of church direction.<sup>4</sup> Judicatory executives lament the lack of vision in pastors.<sup>5</sup> But consider the following statistical report:

Where there is tension between pastors and lay leaders today, nearly 4 in 10 pastors see conflicting visions for the church as the greatest source of that tension. But this conflict was even more pronounced among pastors who were forced out—46% cite conflicting visions as the precipitating cause of their termination.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Audrey M. Kleinsasser, "Researchers, Reflexivity, and Good Data: Writing to Unlearn," *Theory Into Practice* 39 (2000): 155-162.

<sup>2</sup> Lucia M. Hamilton and Charlotte Knoche, "Modesty in Leadership: A Model of Level Five Leadership," *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 3 (2007): 139-176.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Doohan, "Servant Leadership and Reflection," *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 3 (2007): 281-301.

<sup>4</sup> Rick Warren, "The Purpose-Driven Pastor: How Big Is Your Vision?," *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*, #243, January 25, 2006, <http://www.pastors.com/RWMT/?ID=243>

<sup>5</sup> Adair T. Lummis, "Research Report Series 4: Getting Pastors for Churches and Clergy for the Judicatory," *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/denom/Research%20Rpt.%204.doc>

<sup>6</sup> J. C. LaRue, "Forced Exits: A Too-Common Ministry Hazard," *Your Church*, 42 (2006): Reasons for forced exit section, ¶1.

The LaRue study suggested that even if the vision is not problematic, the source of vision may lead to variation in leadership effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

This begs a question: Does vision created and shared between leaders and followers increase the possibility of vision acceptance? A comparative quantitative analysis of formal and informal leadership by Pielstick, in which these categories were defined primarily by the presence or absence of positional authority, found informal leadership to be more effective. As Pielstick stated it, the study demonstrated that:

While both formal and informal leaders develop shared visions, these initial data suggest informal leaders are more likely to include a moral and inspiring purpose, provide for the common good, and create meaning. It appears that the shared vision of informal leaders is more likely to be based on shared needs, values and beliefs than the vision of formal leaders.<sup>8</sup>

One reason offered by Pielstick for this difference lies in the use by informal leaders of listening and empathetic understanding in the context of interactive dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

In another study incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods, what is termed a bi-cycle model for leading organizational change emphasized the use of participative and transactional leadership (the two cycles) to empower vision. The use of participative leadership methods led to the discovery of visions, embedded latently in the organization. These visions were articulated by leadership, and then negotiated with followers in the mutuality of transactional leadership.<sup>10</sup>

Shared vision found mention also in one pastor's exploration of leadership theory: "Shared vision clearly arises from and expresses beliefs that are deeply and widely held."<sup>11</sup> Shared vision emerges gradually and constitutes a goal for ministry, also according to popular literature available to pastors.<sup>12</sup>

It appears that vision, as a product of a pastor's unilateral perspective, is less desirable than the shared vision that arises from mutual negotiation efforts by leader and followers. But is shared vision as a solely human phenomenon sufficient for the church? In the context of Christian community, as it is based on the Lordship of Christ and informed by the Bible, Jesus shares his own vision for the church with his disciples. Does Jesus' vision of the realm of God circumscribe the forms of pastoral and visionary leadership found in the church, and if so, how might these forms look in the contemporary ecclesiastical context?

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Reasons for forced exit section, ¶1.

<sup>8</sup> C. Dean Pielstick, "Formal vs. Informal Leading: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 7 (2000): 111.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Manz, David Bastien, and Todd Hostager, "Executive Leadership During Organizational Change: A Bi-Cycle Model," *Human Resource Planning* 14 (1991): 275-288.

<sup>11</sup> Carl C. Green, "Leadership Theory of a Protestant Minister," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 8 (2001): 77-95.

<sup>12</sup> Carol H. Merritt, *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2007).

## II. THE VISION OF THE REALM OF GOD

The background for the aforementioned citations is leadership in human institutions. For pastors and congregations, this means the church as bound by membership, denominational affiliation, sacred orders, worship, programs, missions, and the like. But in the opening chapter of her text on the realm of God, theologian Harkness observed this equation: “Jesus preached the kingdom of God. We preach Jesus. But can we preach Jesus or even understand him without understanding God’s kingly rule, the central note in all his preaching?”<sup>13</sup> In his evaluation of N. T. Wright’s New Testament theology, Hays stated:

Finally, Wright’s portrayal of Jesus performs a signal service for New Testament ethics by emphasizing Jesus’ agenda of building a community that will put his vision of the kingdom of God into practice. The community of Jesus’ followers is to be characterized by a strong sense of communal life; they are to forgive, to share their goods, to reach across ethnic and national boundaries and, of course, to live as a non-violent community. This vision cannot be carried out by isolated individuals seeking to cultivate a private spirituality; instead, all these practices are essentially relational.<sup>14</sup>

These quotations suggest that the ecclesiastical context for pastoral or any church leadership extends to the boundaries of the realm of God proclaimed by Jesus. Jesus’ vision of this realm appears to transcend, exceed, and precede the establishment of the church’s boundaries. The vision of the realm of God may be viewed as normative for all church functioning, including pastoral leadership.

Three key questions arise: What does Jesus’ vision of the realm of God mean for forms of leadership in the church? How does the leadership defined by the realm of God compare to the unilateral visionary leadership or the shared visionary leadership espoused in the popular contemporary literature readily available to pastors? How does realm of God leadership connect to contemporary leadership theory? As I seek my own answers to these questions, I invite the reader to evaluate the validity and reliability of my conclusions. Perhaps I can spare his or her ministry and congregation the trauma that my congregation and I endured.

## III. MARK’S GOSPEL, THE REALM OF GOD, AND LEADERSHIP

To what resource can pastors turn to find best expressed the forms of leadership in the realm of God? In my opinion, the equation espoused by Harkness above<sup>15</sup> finds its clearest articulation in the gospel of Mark. Of the four canonical narratives about Jesus, Mark alone self-describes as a gospel (1:1).<sup>16</sup> In translation, Mark announces in

<sup>13</sup> Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 17.

<sup>14</sup> R. B. Hays, “Victory Over Violence: The Significance of N. T. Wright’s Jesus for New Testament Ethics,” in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1999), 153-154.

<sup>15</sup> Harkness, *Understanding the Kingdom*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> New Revised Standard Version is used in this paper.

the opening of his narrative that he is sharing “the good news of Jesus Christ” (1:1). John the Baptist prepared “the way” (1:3) for the authoritative core of the gospel, Jesus Christ. Jesus proclaimed that “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near” (1:14, 15).

What does this proclamation mean for the anticipated praxis of the disciples, including leadership praxis, as they live as intentional citizens of the realm of God? The answer is believed to be found in the middle three chapters of Mark’s gospel. Depending on the commentator, the Markan scripture passage (pericope) describing discipleship praxis is identified as 8:22-10:52<sup>17</sup> or 8:27-10:52.<sup>18</sup> Exegetically, it makes some sense that the section on suffering and discipleship should be sandwiched between two stories of Jesus healing the blind.<sup>19</sup> In Mark’s gospel, Peter’s confession, followed by his expression of profound misunderstanding of his confession, signals Peter’s initial blindness to the meaning of Jesus’ messianic status and the implications of following the messiah (8:29-33). Consistent with this metaphorical story, the next few chapters see Jesus opening gradually the eyes of the disciples to the true content of praxis in the realm of God.

Arguably, the entire gospel of Mark contributes an understanding to the nature of the human phenomenon of leadership as informed by the realm of God. Searching for insight about realm of God leadership as a sub-category of discipleship, that is, within 8:22-10:52, I believe makes sense as a leap of faith. Leadership in the realm of God takes on the character of a learned discipline and it reflects a discipleship orientation. Granted this leap of faith, three selections from 8:22-10:52 in particular suggest leadership lessons that might connect to contemporary leadership theory: 8:31-37, 9:30-35, and 10:32-45. Immediately surrounding these texts nest additional ones that suggest illustrative expansions on the aforementioned three. My own outline of the entire pericope of Mark 8:22-10:52, in which these texts rest, lies below:

Introduction: Gradual healing of blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26)

Theme: Peter’s confession of Jesus as messiah as revelatory (8:27-30)

- I. First teaching on discipleship and leadership (8:31-9:29)
  - A. Son of man must die (8:31)
  - B. Rejection of the teaching (8:32-33) on the basis of clinging to self
  - C. General principle (8:34-37)—losing and finding self
  - D. Resistance to teaching (8:38)
  - E. The promise of the Kingdom (9:1-29)
    1. The transfiguration as fulfillment—the dialogue (9:1-8)

<sup>17</sup> Lamar Williamson, “Mark,” in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, eds. James. L. Mays, Patrick D. Miller, and Paul J. Achtemeier (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1983), 147-200.

<sup>18</sup> Pheme Perkins, *The Gospel of Mark: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, eds. Leander Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 8:621-656.

<sup>19</sup> Williamson, “Mark,” 147-200.

2. Teaching on Elijah (9:9-13)—reinforcement of selflessness
  3. Exorcism of the demon from the boy and conflict with the teachers of the law, the crowd, the disciples, and the father (9:14-29)
- II. Second teaching on discipleship and leadership (9:30-10:31)
- A. Son of man must die (9:30-31)
  - B. Rejection of the teaching (9:32-34) on the basis of personal prestige
  - C. General principle (9:35)—practicing hospitality
  - D. Teachings on treating others as included and significant (9:36- 10:31)
    1. Welcoming children (9:36, 37)
    2. A stranger/colleague in ministry (9:38-41)
    3. Warning about placing impediments to faith (9:42-50)
    4. Refraining from causing others to be excluded from community (10:1-31)
      - a. Divorcing wife (10:1-12)
      - b. Welcoming children (10:13-16)
      - c. Solidarity with the poor (10:17-31)
- III. Third teaching on discipleship and leadership (10:32-45)
- A. Son of man must die (10:32-34)
  - B. Rejection of the teaching (10:35-41) on the basis of power
  - C. General principle (10:42-45)—empowering others

Conclusion: Immediate healing of Bartimaeus's blindness as act of empowerment and symbol of revelation (10:46-52)

According to this outline, Mark presents Jesus offering three teachings on discipleship and leadership. Three times Jesus warns of his impending death, the disciples reveal their lack of understanding, and Jesus states a general principle that is elaborated by subsequent interactions. Only after the third statement of principle might the reader conclude that resistance to Jesus' teaching subsides, this conclusion based on the immediate healing of Bartimaeus. The healing suggests metaphorically that the teaching is completed and accepted, readying the disciples for events in Jerusalem. Hoping that the outline represents the organization of the pericope fairly, I characterize the three forms of leadership arising from discipleship as selfless leadership (8:31-9:29), hospitable leadership (9:30-10:31), and empowering leadership (10:32-45).

#### IV. JESUS' TEACHINGS AND CONTEMPORARY THEORY: INTRODUCTION

I believe, as this paper will suggest, that the entire notion of the realm of God signifies open-ended fluidity. This leads me to the conclusion that Jesus' three leadership forms, while distinct, flow into and amplify one another and should not be treated as exclusive schools or bodies of theory. Does this discovery find symmetry with contemporary leadership thinking? The bi-cycle model presented two interactive models

of leadership.<sup>20</sup> Anne Kezar contended that the move from hierarchical definitions of leadership to more participatory ones means that multiple leadership belief systems held by organization members come into play.<sup>21</sup> In her article on servant leadership, Geany introduced an additional leadership metaphor, the steward leader, which complements the metaphor of the servant leader.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of these citations of precedence, I submit humbly that multiple models of leadership can find joint root in an understanding of the realm of God.

## V. JESUS' TEACHINGS AND CONTEMPORARY THEORY: EXPLORATION

I label above the three forms of leadership in the realm of God, offered by Mark's Jesus, as selfless, hospitable, and empowering. I believe contemporary leadership theory gives helpful elaboration to these three forms. Furthermore, I believe the teachings of Jesus offer possible nuances to this same body of theory.

### *Selfless Leadership*

According to Mark, after Peter's confession that Jesus is the messiah, Jesus explains "that the Son of Man must suffer many things" (8:31). Peter rebukes Jesus, apparently for Jesus' assessment of the outcome of his messianic mission. It violates Peter's own convictional universe,<sup>23</sup> and in this regard he serves as a representational figure for all those who insist on perceiving the messiah and the realm of God in a triumphal manner.<sup>24</sup> Jesus lays down, for both the disciples and the crowd, the first principle of discipleship and leadership to be examined:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (8:34-37)

The Christian tradition of practiced self-denial as a solitary spiritual pursuit finds its basis in this and similar texts. As Kempis says:

For our worthiness, and the proficiency of our spiritual estate consisteth . . . in thoroughly enduring great afflictions and tribulations. . . . For both the disciples that followed Him, and also all who desire to follow Him, He plainly exhorteth to

<sup>20</sup> Manz, Bastien, and Hostager, "Executive Leadership During Organizational Change," 275-288.

<sup>21</sup> Adrianna Kezar, "Reconstructing Static Images of Leadership: An Application of Positionality Theory," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 8 (2002): 94-110.

<sup>22</sup> M. Geany, "Servant and Steward: The Steward Leader Model for Unleashing Human Potential," *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 4 (2007): 331-348.

<sup>23</sup> Perkins, *The Gospel of Mark*, 624; Williamson, "Mark," 153.

<sup>24</sup> Brian K. Blount, *Go Preach: Mark's Kingdom Message and the Black Church Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 132.

the bearing of the Cross, and saith, "If any will come after Me, let him to deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me."<sup>25</sup>

Does Mark 8:34-37 allow for a less individualistic and perhaps less mortifying interpretation than offered by Kempis, one that leans toward human interaction? I believe that it does. In Mark 9:1, Jesus promises that there will be some who will not taste death before experiencing the realm of God. Immediately thereafter the disciples see him transfigured suddenly and in dialogue with Moses and Elijah (9:2-8). Mark's gospel does not tell us the nature of the dialogue. It appears open-ended in light of Peter's interruption. But the gospel does tell us that God rejects the attempts of Peter, James, and John to congeal the dialogue into cultic activity. Rather than enshrining the interaction of law and prophets, God instructs the disciples to continue the dialogue with Jesus as they travel down the mountain. The structure of the text, that is, promise (9:1) and fulfillment (9:2-8), suggests that in open-ended dialogue that includes the Christ, through whom the law and prophets find interpretation and expression, lies the church's foundational experience of the realm of God. But this experience is quickly followed by other conversations and praxis that provide a foil to the mountaintop experience.

After Jesus' brief discourse on Elijah, Jesus then leads his disciples into another conversation (9:14-29). On this occasion the disciples and Jesus face a crowd, hostile religious authorities, a distraught father, and a demon. Hardened attitudes and diminished faith make this conversation a taste of hell. Later, once the demon is dismissed, the disciples ask Jesus how they might escape embroilment in such controversies. He responds that praxis requires prayer (9:29), the latter being conversation with God.

Defining the realm of God as based in dialogue between Jesus' disciples, and with Jesus himself, begs some deliberation of the myriad ways that individuals have interpreted the realm of God image. These range from Tolstoy's insistence on individual conversion to social truth, nonviolence and justice,<sup>26</sup> to the realm's connection to Christian mystic experience,<sup>27</sup> to an appreciation of the inherently tension-creating use of the image by Jesus,<sup>28</sup> to apocalyptic warning,<sup>29</sup> to name a few examples. The reason for this diversity may be best expressed by Jewish scholar Geza Vermes:

In retrospect, it is hardly necessary to stress that Jesus nowhere distinctly spells out his concept of "kingdom"; even in the metaphorical language of the parables his approach is oblique and his outline hazy. The Kingdom of God is a mystery attainable only with human cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

I believe that Mark's gospel emphasizes openness to human agency embedded in the realm of God. In Mark, Jesus self-refers frequently as the Son of Man, a

<sup>25</sup> Thomas A. Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1973), 76.

<sup>26</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, trans. Constance Garnett (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006; Orig. pub. 1894).

<sup>27</sup> Tom Chetwynd, *Zen and the Kingdom of Heaven* (Boston: Wisdom, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Keating, *The Kingdom of God is Like . . .* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Emily Griesinger, "The Shape of Things to Come: Toward an Eschatology of Literature," *Christianity and Literature* 53 (2004): 203-231.

<sup>30</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 146.

messianic title implying both humanity and human generation.<sup>31</sup> The realm of God both emerges through and activates human interactions.<sup>32</sup> Even the vision of the resurrected Jesus in the original text of Mark, does not come to full expression unless the disciples travel to it (16:1-8) and proclaim it.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this emphasis on human agency expresses the nature of vision, that is, it requires interaction between the divine and human. This reliance on human agency opens the question as to how to understand humans as acting selves.

If in Mark's gospel the foundational experience of the realm of God (9:1-8) is represented as the disciples's dialogical interaction with Jesus Christ and one another in the act of interpreting the law and the prophets, then perhaps the denial of self can be recast as something other than individual self-mortification. Rather, the calling may be to recognize that the self is a momentary, emerging, alterable being that arises through the dynamics of dialogical interaction with the divine and human Other. Griffin, basing his thought mainly on George Herbert Mead but calling upon brain research, spoke of the self in self-organizing interactions. He argued against the existence of a fixed, isolated self in favor of a responsible one "emerging in social interaction, forming and being formed by that social interaction."<sup>34</sup> Buddhist psychology contends that the fixed, isolated self is illusory and results from psychic pain and resistance.<sup>35</sup> Insistence on the fixed, solitary self leads to conflict and loss of communication.<sup>36</sup> If the sense of self can be suspended, however, communication can occur directly without the distortions created by a defended self. Release of self leads to communication that can create something new altogether.<sup>37</sup> Forgiveness that allows for dialogue, one that produces world understanding and positive change across disciplines, also promotes an understanding of self in relation to others.<sup>38</sup> I might posit that if forgiveness and reconciliation relate intrinsically to dialogue, and they imply the willingness to change through growth in relationship, then these healing interactions between persons may run counter to a too-human defense of a fixed, isolated definition of self.

I suggest that entering into dialogue with Jesus Christ and other disciples requires the suspension of a fixed, isolated self so as to enter into a new relational complex shared with one Lord and the larger community (Eph 4:5). We might hypothesize that within this participatory relational complex, Christ functions analogically as a partnering strange attractor who brings new order to the chaos of human

---

<sup>31</sup> For example, see Mark 10:45.

<sup>32</sup> Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus*, 146.

<sup>33</sup> Williamson, "Mark," 286.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Griffin, *The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 142.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Epstein, *Thoughts Without A Thinker* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, Sheila McNamee, and F. J. Barrett, "Toward Transformative Dialogue," *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 24 (2001): 679-707.

<sup>37</sup> David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> Shann R. Ferch and Matthew M. Mitchell, "Intentional Forgiveness in Relational Leadership: A Technique for Enhancing Effective Leadership," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 7 (2001): 70-83.



relationships, in the same way that in chaotic nonlinear dynamical systems order emerges due to physical strange attractors.<sup>39</sup>

What does this definition of self, as one shaped by emergent interactions between people and the Risen Christ, mean for the classical expression of the Lordship of Christ and the formation of a congregation? Griffin used language that suggests new understanding: "In other words, an individual, or a group of individuals, powerful or otherwise, can make gestures of great importance but the responses called forth will emerge in local situations in the living present where an organization's future is perpetually being constructed."<sup>40</sup> On this basis, perhaps lordship may be qualified as interactive, participative, and mutually constructive of the future with freely engaged humans.

I propose that selfless leadership in God's realm creates opportunities for dialogue, teaches the nature of dialogue as a self-suspending activity,<sup>41</sup> and introduces the mechanisms by which Christ communes dialogically with gatherings of persons according to church tradition. On this list of mechanisms are the study of scriptures, participating in the worshipping community, and interaction with the poor, as examples. Through all these strategies emerge the local, present interactions in which people share with Christ in the construction of an envisioned future. While the pastor shares in this construction with people, I conclude personally that a unilaterally imposed pastoral vision contradicts notionally the emergence of vision as a shared enterprise.

### *Hospitable Leadership*

Another way of expressing my conclusion above is that, from my perspective, the pastor must play host to emergent possibilities opened through dialogical interactions between Lord and people. In recent decades scholars have emphasized hospitality<sup>42</sup> as a non-negotiable core value in the Palestinian culture of Jesus' day.<sup>43</sup> According to Mark, the disciples's competitive conversation about personal greatness leads Jesus to teach that "if anyone wants to be first he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (9:35). Jesus then places a child in their midst. "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me," Jesus asserts (9:36-37). How does this ethic of welcoming hospitality relate to greatness? Greatness measured as hospitality recognizes the vulnerability of others, even the least, and provides for them even at

---

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999), 115-134.

<sup>40</sup> Griffin, *The Emergence of Leadership*, 173.

<sup>41</sup> Bohm, *On Dialogue*, 83-95.

<sup>42</sup> Hershey H. Friedman and Mitchell Langbert, "Abraham as a Transformational Leader," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 7 (2000): 88-95.

<sup>43</sup> G. T. Byamungu, "Grace as Subversive Surprise: A Reading of Psalm 130 and Luke 19:1-10," *The Ecumenical Review* 56 (2004): 334-341.

great inconvenience according to Luke's gospel (Lk 11:2-8). By implication great leadership embraces inclusively the presence, participation, and gifts of the least.

Jesus continues by admonishing the disciples to accept the ministry of another exorcist who calls on the name of Jesus. Jesus tells them that any who do ministry in Jesus' name will be rewarded. Those who diminish the gifts of others and drive them out of the faith community will find themselves cut off. Jesus ends with an exhortation to live peaceably with diverse gifts (9:38-50). Jesus extends this inclusive vision by speaking of welcome to those perceived culturally to have no value, that is, divorced women, children, the poor, and the apostles (10:1-31). While the contemporary church may struggle over the limits of hospitality, such as welcoming evil, Jesus focuses chiefly on pushing against the culturally exclusive boundaries of his day that denigrate the good. Hence, Jesus' teaching focuses attention on finding good in all persons and welcoming this good into community as made incarnate in persons.

Appreciative inquiry, as a contemporary strategy for leadership, exhibits similarities to hospitable leadership.<sup>44</sup> Appreciative inquiry insists on seeing the beauty in all circumstances and people, and using beauty observed as the basis for building a new and better future.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, magis leadership emphasizes discerning and choosing the best option, the "more," among alternative actions in order to achieve the greatest good. It includes seeking and discovering the greatest good already lying in circumstances, people, and organizations. To reach wholeness, individuals and organizations must connect to their sundry parts, even those parts previously discounted.<sup>46</sup>

It feels to me that any distinction between appreciative inquiry and magis leadership, and hospitable leadership, lies in nuance. From my perspective, hospitable leadership grants the presuppositions of appreciative inquiry and magis leadership, and then presses against the farthest ecumenical borders in order to affirm the value and gifts of all people, especially those persons previously excluded. Because as an activity it excludes others, my conviction is that unilateral vision casting by the pastor finds no support in hospitable leadership.

### *Empowering Leadership*

How does the inclusivity of hospitable leadership in the realm of God relate to the conditionality of unequal power relations, that is, to those power relations associated with hierarchical institutions such as the church that can feel so unwelcoming? Jesus' final teaching on discipleship and leadership espouses servanthood. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus frames it this way:

---

<sup>44</sup> D. L. Cooperrider and S. Srivastva, "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 1 (1987): 129-169 <http://www.appreciative-inquiry.org>

<sup>45</sup> Gail Johnson and William Leavitt, "Building on Success: Transforming Organizations Through An Appreciative Inquiry," *Public Personnel Management* 30 (2001): 129.

<sup>46</sup> Karen Norum, "Toward An Active Ontology of the Heart Through Appreciative Inquiry and Servant-Leadership," *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 2 (2006): 455-482.

<sup>42</sup> You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The Greek root for the words “servant” and “serve” implies providing support to table fellowship, suggesting both the work of a waiter and the liturgy spoken by a priest presiding over the sacramental table.<sup>47</sup> Servants empower participants to obtain sustenance, but they also provide linguistic and physical boundaries around hospitality. They serve with authority.

Additional key wording in this text concerns a life given as a ransom. The expression possesses a secular origin. Slaves, prisoners of war, and criminals could have their freedom purchased, a process well-translated as redemption. Jesus frames his ministry as an exchange of his life for the liberation of many, with the possible implication being all. The Bible describes the outcome of redemption for the redeemed in diverse ways, including receiving a new, refreshing form of servitude (Mt 11:28-30) and the freedom to serve in love (Gal 5:13-14).<sup>48</sup> This explains my election to call this leadership orientation empowerment rather than liberation. It appears to me that empowerment implies, for the redeemed, choice in participation but not the absence of a calling and an obligation to serve. Jesus contrasts the servanthood exercised by his disciples with the practice of the Gentiles who dominate their subordinates. By corollary, Jesus urges realm of God leaders to use their authority to empower others for service rather than to dominate them. Speaking to this distinction, Greenleaf posed these questions to leaders:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged of society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?<sup>49</sup>

The experience of my last pastorate raised a serious challenge to Greenleaf: Can servant leadership function authentically in all organizations? One author wondered if servant leadership practiced within a structure of overt command such as found in business doesn't create a confusing bi-polar organizational culture.<sup>50</sup> In a congregational setting, my experience lies in the antithetical situation. Often congregations presume behavior explained with language reminiscent of servant leadership, yet they can struggle against a notion of leadership that involves task

---

<sup>47</sup> Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 3: 544-551.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-200.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Greenleaf, *Servant-Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> Deborah Eicher-Catt, “The Myth of Servant-Leadership: A Feminist Perspective,” *Women and Language* 28 (2005): 17-25.

orientation, mission goals, and accountability. Nevertheless, I believe that a vision arising from any source needs these organizational components for successful implementation. In my opinion, Mark's Jesus creates the dilemma as to how leaders exercise oversight, that is, with the presumption of task orientation, mission goals, and accountability, yet without reliance on the dominance implied by hierarchical position.

A key ingredient to unraveling this dilemma in Jesus' teaching may be his presumption of covenant based in his Jewish context. Whereas contracts commit people to one another voluntarily and temporarily for task performance and then end, Anderson explained that covenants can be initiated as voluntary but then they seal people to God and to one another throughout changes in circumstances. In general terms, arising as they do in the Hebrew Scriptures and yet preceding them historically, covenants do not preclude unequal power held by the covenantal partners. Indeed, the initiation of covenant by one partner begins often with a powerful act of salvation for the other, with the other in turn being gratefully responsive to the saving partner. Nevertheless, all partners are bound by mutual obligations which, when fulfilled, represent a type of love. Due to the ephemeral quality of gratitude, covenants require regular remembrance of the saving narrative and renewal through recommitment to a shared future.<sup>51</sup> In covenants, commitment to relationships weighs as heavily as outcomes. Furthermore, covenants carry the presumption of permanence.<sup>52</sup> Greenleaf came close to the language of covenant:

A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions. Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants.<sup>53</sup>

Based on the notion of covenant, we might frame empowering leadership as a corollary of servant leadership in this manner. The leader possesses the authority to commit freely to serve and empower others. These others respond by using their freedom to commit to serve and empower others as well. Whatever unequal power relationships exist prior to the creation of the covenant, the covenant itself modifies these relationships. Within the context of committed, lasting relationships shared tasks are performed and leadership strives to mitigate implied unequal positional authority, that is, through the active empowerment of those once regarded as mere subordinates. Francovich said that however we "describe the general position of the servant-leader, servant-leadership nonetheless remains a fundamentally populist or bottom-up

---

<sup>51</sup> Bernhard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Joann Spillman, "The Image of Covenant in Christian Understandings of Judaism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35 (1998): 63–84.

<sup>53</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant-Leadership*, 10.

approach.”<sup>54</sup> These citations suggest that pastors committed to empowering leadership should view vision casting as a means to empower others to share their own diverse visions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study addressed three key questions. First, what does Jesus’ vision of the realm of God mean for leadership in the church? A warning surfaces: Vision casting toward the end of setting and inspiring church direction constitutes an exercise of power. Akin to other professionals, pastors should heed the exhortation that character development limits the use of unilateral power.<sup>55</sup> This warning leads to the second question: How does the leadership defined by the realm of God, as expressed by Jesus according to the gospel of Mark, compare to the unilateral visionary leadership or the shared visionary leadership espoused in the popular contemporary literature available to pastors? In my opinion, none of the three leadership forms advocated by Mark’s Jesus permit the unilateral imposition of the pastor’s vision. Jesus’ vision of the realm of God found in Mark’s gospel, specifically in 8:22–10:52, allows only for shared vision creation, but neither solely among church members nor even as a strictly human phenomenon. Vision creation is accomplished dialogically with Christ and other people, in a manner hospitable to divergent perspectives and persons, with the goal of eliciting vision through empowerment within a covenant rather than through dominance. Third, how does realm of God leadership identified in Mark connect to contemporary leadership theory? My analysis suggests rather than exhausts. Parallels can be drawn between selfless leadership and theory on self-adaptive interactions and dialogue. In particular, I believe that the surrender of self commanded by Jesus makes sense as a prerequisite for leadership once lifted out of its medieval, pietistic interpretation. Similarly, hospitable leadership and the positive valuation it gives to the least of our brothers and sisters (Mt 25:31-40) appear to be an expression of appreciative inquiry and magis leadership. Finally, empowering leadership makes sense to me within a covenantal context as an expression of servant leadership, focused as it is on both persons and task.

---

<sup>54</sup> Chris Francovich, “Book Review: Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations,” *The International Journal of Leadership Studies* 4 (2008): 373-378.

<sup>55</sup> Ray Blunt, “Leadership in the Crucible: The Paradox of Character and Power,” *The Public Manager* 32 (2003): 35-39.

---

### About the Author

Sam Massey is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Iowa City, IA, where he resides with his family. He earned his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry-Prin. degrees at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is grateful for the encouragement and tutelage of excellent professors at Gonzaga University where he is pursuing a doctorate in leadership studies.

Email: PastorSam@mchsi.com

---



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## THE NATHAN FACTOR: THE ART OF SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

MAURICE A. BUFORD

Seemingly within today's organizational cultures, the adage "the truth hurts" has hindered leaders from listening and intimidated followers from articulating. This has ultimately stalled corporations from maximizing their potential. The questions become: Where has the courage to stand up for and to flawed leadership gone? What does scripture have to say about this issue and does the text offer practical applications to the reader? Within this article, such questions are confronted as the life of the prophet Nathan, as recorded in 2 Samuel, is analyzed. This editorial contextually walks with the prophet as he navigates through five critical moments within the text. This journey consequently gleans lessons from this courageous follower and articulates a historical biblical methodology to relevantly speak truth to power in today's context.

---

A cursory glance at today's organizational cultures suggests that various entities are thirsty for personalities that would dare speak the truth to power. Military branches coveted such change agents when the Abu Ghraib prison scandal emerged from the shadows of Baghdad. The people affiliated with various businesses like Enron, retrospectively longed for such a person as they watched stocks crumble before their eyes. After the Challenger exploded, the nation tragically wondered why NASA or the Thiokol engineers did not have the moral vigor to embrace the adage of not being "afraid to challenge the pros, even in their own backyard."<sup>1</sup>

The overall intent of this article is to wrestle with the questions: What happens when power disregards truth? Is there a systematic method to speaking truth to power

---

<sup>1</sup> *Brainy Quote*, "Colin Powell Quotes," [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/colin\\_powell.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/colin_powell.html) (accessed April 19, 2007).

and what happens to both the messenger and the message after truth has been delivered? This deliberation provides an exegesis of five biblical pericopes. First, 2 Samuel 7:1-3 focuses on the probable leadership trait that empowered Nathan to become the next adviser to the king. Second, 2 Samuel 7:4-12 focuses on the driving force of this prophet—spirituality. Third, 2 Samuel 12:1-14 highlights the courageous followership of Nathan and illustrates how he skillfully spoke the truth to power. Fourth, 1 Kings 1:10-14 explores the emotional intelligence of the prophet as he navigated through negative political realities. Fifth, 2 Chronicles 9:29 explores the management capabilities of Nathan that consequently made him a credible asset within the king's court.

## I. THE PRELUDE TO THE POSITION

Scholars are baffled over the logistics of how Nathan emerged into the position of being a prophet.<sup>2</sup> Some suggest that his political abilities enabled him to succeed Samuel as the next advisor.<sup>3</sup> While others speculate that his poetic talent ushered him into prominence.<sup>4</sup> Bodner additionally asserts that biblical literature is relatively limited and consequently silent due to the lack of elaboration within the text.<sup>5</sup> Aside from the providence of God, perhaps another element may contribute to this dialogue. Consider 2 Samuel 7:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup> the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup> Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

This portion of scripture introduces Nathan to the reader for the first time during a season when David was enjoying a level of peace and abundant prosperity. Contextually speaking, David had no other advisors after the death of the beloved prophet Samuel (1 Sm 28:3). As such, the role of the consultant to the king was vacant.

The question becomes: How did Nathan secure his position and earn the confidence of the king in such a short span of time? I would contend that the confidence the king had in Nathan was a direct result of this prophet's nature. Cornwall and Smith assert that biblical "name(s) have meaning. So much so, that sometimes when God changed the nature of a person He also changed his or her name." For example, the Hebrew root of the name Nathan (נָתַן) can be transliterated "to give."<sup>6</sup> Harris, Archer, and Waltke suggest that the connotation of נָתַן could range from anything from

<sup>2</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, "II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary," in *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 210-31.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Bodner, "Nathan: Prophet, Politician and Novelist," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (2001): 43-54.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Judson Cornwall and Stelman Smith, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1998).



“physically handing a present, reward, person, or document to another to the less tangible granting or bestowal of blessing, compassion, permission, and the like.”<sup>7</sup>

I would argue that Nathan epitomized the essence of his name and served (gave of himself) his way into the king’s court. To reiterate, the text does not expound upon the particulars of how Nathan emerged as the king’s advisor but one can formulate a theory based on the Hebrew tradition of a name. For purposes of this article, we will refer to this idea as Nathan’s theory of position. To recap, this theory asserts that Nathan’s giving mannerism or servant nature escorted him into the position of being next to the king.

Contemporary scholarship would categorize both the essence of his name and the attributes thereof as servant leadership. Servant leadership has a noteworthy definition. Greenleaf asserts:

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. The conscious choice may bring one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or acquire material possessions. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?<sup>8</sup>

Spears maintains that servant leadership essentially possesses ten key elements.

They include:

1. Listening receptively to what others have to say
2. Acceptance of others and having empathy for them
3. Foresight and intuition
4. Awareness and perception
5. Having highly developed powers of persuasion
6. An ability to conceptualize and to communicate concepts
7. An ability to exert a healing influence upon individuals and institution
8. Building community in the workplace
9. Practicing the art of contemplation
10. Recognition that servant leadership begins with the desire to change oneself<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, “Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness,” In *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 27.

<sup>9</sup> Larry Spears, *Servant Leadership: Quest for Caring Leadership*. <http://www.greenleaf.org/leadership/read-about-it/articles/Quest-for-Caring-Leadership.html> (accessed April 26, 2007).

Spears notes, “Once that process has begun, it then becomes possible to practice servant-leadership at an institutional level.”<sup>10</sup>

The pericope at hand can demonstrate that this man of God displayed the above attributes and further amplifies Nathan’s theory of position. For example, the text shows Nathan listening receptively to David and offering empathy. Verse 1 says, “The king said to the prophet Nathan.” Nathan’s foresight, awareness, ability to persuade, and to communicate concepts as well as his healing influence points toward his title of being a “prophet.” Moreover, his discipline of contemplation and his brokenness are additional traits conducive of walking in the office of a “seer.”<sup>11</sup>

Maxwell frames this theory of Nathan’s position resulting from servant leadership as the effect of the law of sacrifice. The premise of this construct is “a leader must give up in order to go up.”<sup>12</sup> More specifically, one must constantly and unselfishly give (which is the meaning of the name “Nathan”) of oneself to an organization. Moreover, Maxwell asserts, “If leaders have to give up, then they have to give up more to stay up.”<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Nathan became the next consultant to the king simply because he was the only one at that time that dared to unselfishly give of himself when his audience was only God?

Nathan’s theory of position can empower the reader with principles on how to receive that promotion and become an advisor to our figurative “kings.” First, we must allow the principles of servant leadership to become a part of our being. So much so that others will rename our style of influence from narcissism to Nathan—one who gives. Narcissism can be defined as “an extreme need for esteem, need for power, weak self-control and indifference to the needs of others.”<sup>14</sup> Second, Greenleaf’s sentiments of the servant leader being a servant first must remain in the forefront of our minds. Such a posture may keep us grounded in the fact that ultimately, similar to Nathan, we are serving an audience of one—God. Finally, we must trust that God is faithful to execute his promises to the person that would dare to give. Luke 6:37-38<sup>15</sup> articulates it best:

<sup>37</sup> Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don’t condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you’ll find life a lot easier. <sup>38</sup> Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms of Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. M. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1897).

<sup>12</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 190.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>14</sup> Gary, Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002). 186.

<sup>15</sup> The Message.

## II. NATHAN'S SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The second critical component of a person that would dare to speak truth to power is spirituality in the workplace. This emerging concept of spirituality in the workplace has a plethora of meanings. Freshman asserts, "Not any one, two or even three things can be said about spirituality in the workplace that would include the universe of explanations."<sup>16</sup> He adds, "There is no one answer to the question, 'What is spirituality in the workplace?' Definitions and applications of spirituality in the workplace are unique to individuals. One must be careful not to presuppose otherwise. Therefore when planning any group or organizational intervention around the topic, again the suggestion is made to derive definitions and goals from the participants themselves."<sup>17</sup>

Building upon Freshmen's insight and gleaning from the ensuing pericope, I contend that Ashar and Lane-Maher's understanding of spirituality in the workplace is applicable. They assert:

Spirituality is an innate and universal search for transcendent meaning in one's life. In addition, although it can be expressed in various ways, we submit that spirituality at work involves some common behavioral components. Above all, it involves a desire to do purposeful work that serves others and to be part of a principled community. It involves a yearning for connectedness and wholeness that can only be manifested when one is allowed to integrate his or her inner life with one's professional role in the service of a greater good.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Marques, Dhiman, and King add that workplace spirituality has nineteen distinct traits (which may be evident in the life of Nathan). They include "ethics, truth, believe in God, respect, understanding, openness, honesty, being self-motivated, encouraging creativity, giving to others, trust, kindness, team organization, few organization barriers, a sense of peace, a pleasing workplace, interconnectedness, encouraging diversity and acceptance."<sup>19</sup>

Second Samuel 7:4-17 highlights Nathan's spirituality in the workplace and may demonstrate his sincere desire to be linked to the Holy while operating within his professional role. Observe:

<sup>4</sup> But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup> "Go and tell my servant David: 'Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?' <sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup> Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a

<sup>16</sup> B. Freshman, "An Exploratory Analysis of Definitions and Applications of Spirituality in the Workplace," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 12, no. 4 (1999): 318.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>18</sup> Hanna Ashar and Maureen Lane-Maher, "Success and Spirituality in the New Business Paradigm," *Journal of Management Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (2004): 253.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Marques, Satinder Dhiman, and Richard King, "Spirituality in the Workplace: Developing an Integral Model and Comprehensive Definition," *Journal of American Academy of Business* 7, no. 1 (2005): 87.

word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”

<sup>8</sup>“Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup> and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. <sup>15</sup> But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.’” <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

The above passage dramatizes Nathan’s intimate bond to the Holy. I contend, this relationship that God had with Nathan enabled this prophet to be an effective corporate man. Such spirituality made Nathan teachable, ethical, and more inclined to strive for excellence. Bodner suggests that though the passage under investigation is catered to David, the tone and style of the spiritual message is also directed at Nathan. Additionally, Bodner makes four bold assertions that consequently amplify Nathan’s strong sense of spirituality. He states:

The complexity of this speech in 7:3-16 is designed, among other things, to communicate four points to Nathan. First, the prophet is rebuked for blithely encouraging David “Go, do all that is in your heart; for the LORD is with you.” The rather acerbic edge to the divine words illustrates that the LORD is not pleased with either Nathan or David’s presumption, and unlike the two of them, speaks of “building a house” without any indirection whatsoever. Second, the prophet receives something of a theological education. Eslinger successfully draws attention to the rhetorical subtleties of this passage. However, one could take it a step further and suggest that part of the rhetorical thrust is aimed at educating the prophet. Third, Nathan receives instructions that are *minutely specific*—even to the point whereby *indirect discourse* is employed. This is designed to show the prophet how important this message is, and that it is imperative that he deliver it flawlessly. In other words he is being instructed not to tell the king simply to “Go, do all that is in your heart,” but rather to speak in

consonance with the divine instruction. Fourth, Nathan the prophet is given insight into the future promises to David's house.<sup>20</sup>

Bodner's observation points toward some critical elements of spirituality. First, the notion of Nathan being "rebuked for blithely encouraging David" possibly points toward this prophet's ability to be open.<sup>21</sup> This facet of openness or transparency can be a catalyst to organizational trust. This intangible element, according to Covey, can effortlessly increase the speed (effectiveness) of an entity and lower overall cost.<sup>22</sup> I assert that the ability to be open to receive correction from God is not only a sign of wisdom (Prv 3:11-12) but a critical element in decision making (Prv 3:6).

The idea of Nathan receiving "something of a theological education," secondly points toward Marques et al. workplace spirituality trait of understanding. According to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, understanding can be defined as, "the power of comprehending or the capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars."<sup>23</sup> This trait undeniably empowered the prophet to become relevant and competent in his deliberations. In an era of technology and constant change, it would behoove the person that would serve within the king's court to commit to the process of lifelong learning.

Thirdly, Nathan demonstrated the spirituality workplace mannerism of the "removal of barriers."<sup>24</sup> This concept can be inclusive of addressing and implementing new systems into an organization for the purposes of process improvement.<sup>25</sup> To reiterate, Bodner suggests that "Nathan receives instructions that are *minutely specific*—even to the point whereby *indirect discourse* is employed."<sup>26</sup> I would contend that such specific discourse from God to Nathan was a "divine" attempt to implement a system (word from the Lord not an opinionate utterance from the prophet) that would proactively debunk barriers that could potentially hinder organizational productivity.

The fourth spirituality workplace trait of Nathan is the encouragement of creativity. According to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, creativity can be defined as, "the quality of being creative or the ability to create."<sup>27</sup> According to Bodner's exegesis, "the prophet is given insight into the future promises to David's house."<sup>28</sup> I contend that such an insight enabled both David and Nathan to recast a vision large enough for generations yet to come, to grow. As such, according to Yukl, this construct is essential to corporations if they are to lead followers through change.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, I argue that Nathan's fourfold attributes of spirituality in the workplace vested him with a sense of ethical authority. His integrity (as a result of the

<sup>20</sup> Keith Bodner, "Nathan: Prophet, Politician and Novelist?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 95 (2001): 46-47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> David B. Guralnik, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (New York, Warner Books, 1987), 147.

<sup>24</sup> Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Bodner, "Nathan," 47.

<sup>27</sup> Guralnik, *Merriam-Webster's*.

<sup>28</sup> Bodner, "Nathan," 47.

<sup>29</sup> Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*.

above spirituality) may have established him to be a person of high corporate creditability. Such creditability empowered both God and David to believe that Nathan was trustworthy enough to be a steward over the deliberations of the team. Perhaps Nathan's example of workplace spirituality (being transparent, teachable, removing of barriers, and encouraging creativity) can be considered as a new paradigm for cultivating corporate creditability.

### III. THE COURAGE TO DECLARE, "YOU ARE THE MAN!"

Thus far we have made a case that servant leadership escorted Nathan into power and his spirituality in the workplace gave him a tremendous amount of corporate credibility. Those two leadership constructs set the stage to introduce to the reader the mechanics behind Nathan's ability to speak truth to power. Within this section of the article, an exegesis of 2 Samuel 12:1-15 is offered, the construct of courageous followership are engaged, key terms are defined (i.e., parable, speaking truth to power), and practical steps to courageously declare to your leader, "You are the man!" are articulated.

Second Samuel 12:1-15 essentially captures what most readers think of when the name Nathan is invoked. Notice his claim to fame:

And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor.<sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds;<sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.<sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die;<sup>6</sup> he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul;<sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more.<sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.<sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.<sup>11</sup> Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun.<sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

<sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan said to David, “Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child that is born to you shall die.”<sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house.

I would contend that this pericope essentially has five major components. First, the entrance of Nathan in verse 1, “And the Lord sent Nathan to David.” Second, verses 1b–12 highlight the mechanics of how Nathan confronted David. Third, verse 13a points toward David’s disposition when it says, “David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’” Fourth, verse 13b–14 demonstrates Nathan’s ability to engage in process consulting. Finally, verse 15 highlights Nathan’s exit strategy upon speaking truth to power.

Different scholars and practitioners are utilized to define the phrase speaking truth to power. Powell refers to this concept as not being “afraid to challenge the pros, even in their own backyard.”<sup>30</sup> Chaleff frames this process simply as *the courage to challenge*.<sup>31</sup> Chaleff further explains that here one “gives voice to the discomfort they feel when the behaviors or policies of the leader or group conflict with their sense of what is right. They are willing to stand up, to stand out, to risk rejection, to initiate conflict in order to examine the actions of the leader and group when appropriate.”<sup>32</sup>

This article embraces Yulk’s definition of power. He states that “the term power is usually used to describe the absolute capacity of an individual agent to influence the behavior or attitudes of one or more designated target persons at a given point in time.”<sup>33</sup> Hence, for the purposes of this article, the term *speaking truth to power* refers to a person not being afraid to challenge those agents that influence the behavior or attitudes of one or more designated target persons at a given point in time, even in their own backyard.

### *How to Approach Problematic Power*

Often times approaching a powerful person with leadership issues can invoke a creative tension. Scott amplifies this point in writing, “90 percent of workers are afraid to confront the boss. Getting fired isn’t the biggest concern. Instead people worry about being labeled troublemakers, being perceived as not being team players, suffering salary loss or career derailment or damaging future relations with the boss.”<sup>34</sup>

In light of Scott’s insight, Chaleff asserts that one must find equal footing with the leader if the “approach” is to be received and such stereotypes defused. I define *approach* as the methodology in which a follower comes into the presence of a leader for the expressed purposes of speaking truth to power. Chaleff explains, “Followers usually cannot match up to a leader’s external qualities, such as the trappings of formal power, and must find their equal footing on intellectual, moral or spiritual ground.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Brainy Quote*, “Collin Powell Quotes.”

<sup>31</sup> Ira, Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1995).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 147.

<sup>34</sup> Nancy R. Scott, “How to Confront the Boss and Win,” *Nancy Rathbun Scott*, <http://www.nancyscott.com/page50/page33/page33.html>

<sup>35</sup> Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower*, 26.

The first facet within the genre under investigation illustrates how Nathan acquired equal footing with David. To reiterate, verse 1a indicates, “And the Lord sent Nathan to David.” The term “sent” highlights to the reader how Nathan was able to move past David’s external qualities and make a receivable entrance. According to *Enhanced Strong Lexicon*, the Hebrew word “sent” שָׁלַח [*shalach* /shaw·lakh/] has several translations, including “to send off or away or out or forth . . . to let go or set free.”<sup>36</sup>

This notion of sending forth and setting free lays a threefold framework that’s essential to level the playing field between a follower and a leader. First, is divine intervention. Though the text does not specify, I first assert that the Lord was behind the scenes preparing the heart of David for Nathan. This assertion is not made in a vacuum. On the contrary, it’s based on the same Hebrew word “sent.” This term was also used when God commissioned Moses to speak truth to power in Egypt (Ex 3:14). Within that context, God hardened and softened the heart of Pharaoh long before Moses spoke any truth. In like manner, I believe the Lord was turning the heart of David before Nathan even interacted. Proverbs 21:1 supports such logic, “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD, he turns it wherever he will.”

The second element that must drive a person that would dare to speak truth to power is love. To reiterate, the text indicates that, “And the Lord sent Nathan.” From a Christian’s theological lens, it is understood that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). Thus, one can argue that verse 1a can possibly be interpreted as, “And Love sent Nathan.” Winston contends that the Greek language outlines four forms of love:

The first type of love, *eros*, is sexual love . . . the second type of love, *phileo* (is) brotherly love. . . . The third type of love, *agape*, is a self-sacrificing love that references total commitment even unto death. . . . A fourth type of love—*agapao* love. This Greek word refers to a moral love, doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason.<sup>37</sup>

Nathan’s agenda was to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason. I argue that the right thing required Nathan to think in a loving manner. This form of love requires one to challenge how one thinks toward others in the workplace. Winston asserts, “Leaders must then think in morally loving terms toward employees before they act.”<sup>38</sup> The alternative of not embracing such a paradigm shift is to be motivated by either selfish ambition or hatred.<sup>39</sup> This posture of being motivated by selfishness can possibly sabotage the message of the truth teller even before it’s delivered.

The final element that’s essential to the approach of one speaking truth to power is one’s attire. Freeman maintains, “The custom of biblical prophets was to wear the proper clothing. Such clothing identified them to be the spokes person of the Lord in the

---

<sup>36</sup> James Strong, (1996) *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996) S. G2384 Electronic ed.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Winston, “Leadership Theory: A Continuum” (PowerPoint presentation, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



tradition of prophets before them.”<sup>40</sup> I assert that since Nathan was a prophet, he embraced the same rituals. Bjorseth elaborates upon attire and declares, “A professional image—appearance and behavior—helps start the experience in the right vein since people decide 10 things about you within 10 seconds of seeing you.”<sup>41</sup> Bjorseth continues by stating, “What one wears reveals eight things—self-esteem, self-respect, confidence, organizational skills, soundness of judgment, attention to detail, creativity and reliability.”<sup>42</sup> It was as if Nathan was aware of Bjorseth’s posture on attire and proactively removed any barriers that may have derailed his message.

All in all, 2 Samuel 12:1a outlined three strategies for approaching power. First, one must make provisions for divine intervention and allow God to prepare the heart of a leader to receive the message. Second, the person that would dare speak truth to power should be motivated by a spirit of love. This mentality can better equip one in the sentiments of Winston, “to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason.”<sup>43</sup> Third, it would be advantageous for one to dress for success. This gesture may proactively remove potential barriers that could distract from the message. Nathan embraced such techniques and consequently set the stage for him to wisely declare, “You are the man!”

### *It’s Not the What, It’s the How*

Verses 1b–12 highlight a threefold methodology on how to speak truth to power. Upon approaching King David, Nathan invoked an innovative way to confront the behavior of his leader. Chaleff refers to such ingenuity as “preparing a leader for feedback.”<sup>44</sup> He cautions at this point, however, that:

There is little value in standing up and giving leaders feedback they cannot hear. The courageous follower’s role is to find ways leaders can receive the feedback they need. We can minimize defensiveness by prefacing our feedback with a defusing statement that conveys respect and reminds the leader of the value of honesty.<sup>45</sup>

Nathan’s technique of minimizing the defensiveness of David was with a parable. Copenhaver asserts, “A parable is a weapon of weakness. . . . A parable, however, can get past the defenses of our own behavior and reach the inner court where there is agreement about what is right and what is wrong.”<sup>46</sup> Nathan’s parable followed suit and defused the defensiveness of David as well as kept his leader in a position of power.

<sup>40</sup> James M. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Lillian D. Bjorseth, “Dress for Success: Creating a Professional Image,” *The Sideroad*, [http://www.sideroad.com/business\\_attire/dress-for-success.html](http://www.sideroad.com/business_attire/dress-for-success.html)

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

<sup>43</sup> Winston, “Leadership Theory.”

<sup>44</sup> Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 681.

<sup>46</sup> Martin B Copenhaver, “He Spoke in Parables,” *Christian Century* (July 13-20, 1994): 681.

This notion of preparing the leader for feedback with questions or with a parable made it advantageous for David to connect at an ethical level.<sup>47</sup> This second point of setting an atmosphere for the leader in the sentiments of Covey, to first understand, is a critical step before confrontation. David demonstrated he understood Nathan's parable when he acknowledged with anger in verse 5b-6, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Upon Nathan brilliantly preparing David for feedback with a parable and creating an atmosphere for the leader to understand, Nathan courageously spoke truth to power. Verses 7-12 outline the confrontation process.

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. <sup>11</sup> Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

The mechanics of speaking truth to power involved several components. First, Nathan helped David to see that he was indeed the source of the problem both in the parable and within his leadership. Second, Nathan specifically outlined the error of David's ways. Third, Nathan articulated what would happen as a result of David's poor decision making. Lastly, it must be noted that this entire process occurred privately. Hence, affirming the adage "praise in public and correct in private."

### *Creating an Atmosphere for Transformation*

This fourfold process of making the leader see that he is the source of the problem, specifically identifying his errors, projecting the consequences of poor decision making, and doing it privately helped David to transform. Verse 13 indicates that after this encounter, "David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.'" Chaleff rightly states, "Transformation occurs most readily in an atmosphere of 'tough love'—a genuine appreciation for the person and a steadfast stance against the behaviors that are detrimental to the person and the organization."<sup>48</sup>

I assert that the ultimate goal of a person that dares to speak truth to power is not to destroy the person but rather to usher them to a place within themselves to want to change. The fruit of such a broken state is inclusive of taking personal responsibility,

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower*, 131.

changing one's thinking, righting wrongs, remaining teachable, and becoming accountable to someone else. This fruit can flourish within a garden that's cultivated by tough love. Such was the case with David upon being confronted by Nathan, the king yielded the fruit of repentance and consequently wrote Psalm 51 as evidence.

### *The Road to Recovery*

Verse 13b–14 reveals three steps to help a remorseful leader move down the road of recovery. Upon David acknowledging his wrong, “Nathan said to David, ‘Now the LORD has put away your sin.’” This portion of scripture first demonstrates the empathy of Nathan. Salvey and Mayer define *empathy* “as the ability to comprehend another’s feelings and re-experience them oneself.”<sup>49</sup> They continue that at this place a person can stay in step with another’s emotions and can facilitate a leader’s growth.<sup>50</sup> I argue that without the trait of empathy, Nathan could not have gone any further on the road of recovery with David.

The second point that this text highlights is the importance of offering forgiveness. Elwell argues that forgiveness includes, “Pardon, involving restoration of broken relationships; ceasing to feel resentment for wrongs and offenses. Primarily, forgiveness is an act of God, releasing sinners from judgment and freeing them from the divine penalty of their sin.”<sup>51</sup> It was as if Nathan understood that in order for David to move on with his life, he had to experience God’s mercy in the midst of failure. Such mercy is often the hope needed in the sentiments of Maxwell, to motivate a leader to get up, get over it and get going.<sup>52</sup>

The final lesson one can glean from this portion of text is Nathan’s willingness to participate in the transformation process. Chaleff maintains, “If we wish to help a leader transform, we must ourselves be willing to participate in the process of transformation. We need to examine our own role in the relationship with the leader. That is the only role we potentially have full power to change. We need to notice what we potentially have full power to change.”<sup>53</sup>

In Nathan’s case, it was as if he fully understood his role and articulated, “you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child that is born to you shall die.” It must be noted that Nathan did not say he was resigning but implied that he was willing to stay with his leader (because he repented) even during dark times. I assert that this willingness to participate in the transformation process is the moral obligation of a follower upon speaking truth to power.

---

<sup>49</sup> Peter Salvey and John D. Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9, no. 3 (1990): 185-211.

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

<sup>51</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip W. Comfort, *Tydale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois:Tyndale House Publishers, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> John C. Maxwell, *Failing Forward* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower*, 129.

### *Nathan's Exit Strategy*

The question becomes: What does one do after one speaks truth to power? Verse 15 displays Nathan's possible methodology, "Then Nathan went to his house." The text does not indicate what the prophet specifically did once he arrived home or what he may have mused upon. Given the context of the situation, one can only speculate. I would venture to say that Nathan did three things—prayed for David, protected his confidentiality, and pondered how he would coach David through the storm.

First Timothy 2:1-3 indicates the importance of praying for leadership: First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup> This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

Though this is a New Testament principle, it was as if Nathan took this counsel to heart and immediately began to intercede for David. Perhaps the greatest gift one can give to a leader is the commitment to hold them up in prayer.

Second, I argue that Nathan held the confrontation process in strict confidentiality. Nesson defines this concept as, "the act of protecting from disclosure that which has been told under the assumption that it will not be revealed without permission."<sup>54</sup> When a person breaks the seal of confidentiality it can possibly destroy trust, hinder transformation, and marginalize a follower from speaking truth to power in the future.

Lastly, I believe Nathan took the time to ponder how he would coach David through the storm in the days ahead. Yukl indicates:

The primary purpose of executive coaching is to facilitate learning of relevant skills. Coaches also provide advice about how to handle specific challenges, such as implementing a major change, dealing with a difficult boss, or working with people from a different culture. Having a coach provides the unusual opportunity to discuss issues and try out ideas with someone who can understand them and provide helpful, objective feedback and suggestions, while maintaining strict confidentiality.<sup>55</sup>

Like any skill, one must meticulously think through strategies and plans in order to be effective. Such was the case with Nathan. Upon confronting the king I believe he went home and pondered his next steps.

### *Overview*

Within this section of the article we explored Nathan's pathway of speaking truth to power. First, the logistics of how to approach problematic authority was delineated.

<sup>54</sup> Craig L. Nesson, "Confidentiality: Sacred Trust and Ethical Quagmine," *Journal of Pastoral Care* (1998): 352.

<sup>55</sup> Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 389.

Namely, relying upon divine intervention, being motivated by love, and dressing for the occasion. Second a dialogue was engaged with regard to the mechanics of speaking truth to power. That included indirectly challenging with questions or parables, assuring the leader understands the gist of the questions/parable, and direct confrontation.

Third, it was emphasized that the ultimate goal of truth telling was not to destroy but to create a space for the leader to repent. Fourth, several steps were offered to the reader on how to help a leader recover, including being empathic, offering forgiveness, and being willing to participate in the transformation process. Finally, a threefold exit strategy was outlined—pray for the leader, hold the confrontation process in strict confidentiality, and ponder how one can coach a fallen leader through difficult times.

#### IV. NATHAN'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

First Kings 1:10-14 highlights the fourth undergirding element of a person that would dare speak truth to power—emotional intelligence. Consider the savvy ways of Nathan as he navigates through some problematic realities in verses 10-14:

But he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon. <sup>11</sup> Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king and our lord David does not know it?<sup>12</sup> Now therefore come, let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.<sup>13</sup> Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' <sup>14</sup> Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

Contextually speaking, this text places the reader at a moment when King David was old and near death. Adonijah decided to take advantage of the moment and appoint himself the next king without the endorsement of God, King David, or the prophet Nathan. This power play by Adonijah required a response if the organization were to be sustained.

I assert that Nathan's response was laced with emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey suggest, "Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth."<sup>56</sup> Holt and Jones add that emotional intelligence can be measured on the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory. This indicator that was derived based upon nineteen years of research consists of five composite scales:

1. Intrapersonal scales: Self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization.
2. Interpersonal scales: empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships.
3. Adaptability scales: reality testing, flexibility, problem solving.
4. Stress management scales: stress tolerance, impulse control.

<sup>56</sup> John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, *What is Emotional Intelligence?* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 87.

### 5. General mood scales: optimism, happiness.<sup>57</sup>

I argue that Nathan would have done enormously well on the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory. Verse 10 emphasizes Nathan's possible intrapersonal disposition when it says, "But he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon." This lack of invitation not only of Nathan but others (i.e., King David, Solomon, others) may have invoked problematic emotions (i.e., anxiety or rejection) within the prophet. Such emotions propelled Nathan to be assertive and respond quickly.

His response outlined in verses 11-14 highlights Nathan's interpersonal skills, his problem solving abilities, and how he effectively managed the stress of negative politics. First, he immediately found the key stakeholder (Bathsheba) and networked. I believe such networking would have been problematic if Nathan's interpersonal skills were weak. Second, Nathan demonstrated a keen sense of problem-solving ability when he advised Bathsheba on how to address the king (see verses 13-14). Finally, Nathan maintained an overall demeanor of optimism and projected a strong sense of stress tolerance.

Needless to say, due to Nathan's emotional intelligence the organization was able to defuse the agenda of a self-centered personality (see verses 28-53) and in the sentiments of Jim Welch, "put the right person in the right job." As such, it would behoove corporations to abstract principles from Nathan and become more emotionally intelligent. I assert that Goleman was right when he said, "Having great intellectual abilities may make you a superb fiscal analyst or legal scholar, but a highly developed emotional intelligence will make you a candidate for CEO or a brilliant trial lawyer." In the example of this article, a value added truth teller.

## V. NATHAN'S MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Second Chronicles 9:29 draws attention to the final influential component of an individual that would dare speak truth to power. According to Easton, the last biblical appearance of Nathan appears to be assisting David reorganizing public worship.<sup>58</sup> The text declares, "And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets."

I believe that this text demonstrates Nathan to be a proficient manager. Kotter states, "Management seeks to produce predictability and order by (1) setting operational goals, establishing action plans with timetables and allocating resources; (2) organizing and staffing (establishing structure, assigning people to jobs); and (3) monitoring results and solving problems."<sup>59</sup> Nathan's management skills were so proficient that his policies

<sup>57</sup> Svetlana Holt and Steve Jones, "Emotional Intelligence and Organization Performance," *Performance Improvement* 44, no. 10 (November-December 2005): 15.

<sup>58</sup> Matthew George Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Libronix, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> John P. Kotter, *A Force for Change: How Leadership Differs from Management* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

influenced the leadership of the fourteenth reigning King (Hezekiah) of Israel. Moreover, his ability to do things rightly literally wrote him into the history books. Consider 2 Chronicles 2:29a, “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet.”

Based on the text under investigation, I believe that as one’s ability to do the right thing (management skills) elevates <sup>60</sup>, so will organizational creditability. This trait possibly handed Nathan a megaphone to not only speak the truth but to influence others long after his era. Maxwell refers to this construct as the law of E.F. Hutton. That is, due to one’s creditability, competency and integrity others stop and listen. <sup>61</sup> Without question, Nathan was a manager par excellent.



Fig. 1. The five leadership constructs essential to speaking truth to power.

## XII. DISCUSSION

Figure 1 illustrates the five leadership constructs essential to speaking truth to power. I assert that if one construct is absent or weak, the message will lose its

<sup>60</sup> Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*.

<sup>61</sup> Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws*.

potency. To illustrate, if the element of being a courageous follower were removed, the messenger would be too passive to stand up to a leader. If the component of servant leadership were removed, the messenger would perhaps become too opportunistic and only pursue vain glory. If the element of spirituality were taken away, the messenger would perhaps approach power with the wrong mindset and would potentially seek to destroy the leader as opposed to help. If the aspect of emotional intelligence were weak, the messenger would not necessarily be savvy enough to formulate networks to solve problems. If the messenger lacks strong management skills, the perception of the lack of competence from the leader could compromise the essence of the truth that's trying to be articulated.

In essence, speaking truth to power is like rolling a wheel with five spokes up a hill. Given the right push and methodology, the wheel will make it to its destination. But if one of the spokes is broken or removed, it will cause the wheel to struggle and fall before it reaches the top. I believe that numerous tragedies have occurred throughout history simply because an element (i.e., courageous followership, spirituality, servant leadership, management, or emotional intelligence) within a messenger was missing or underdeveloped. Nathan's life teaches us that it's possible to speak truth to power. But are we willing to pay the price to develop the five constructs enabling us to keep our leaders listening?

## VI. CONCLUSION

The overall intent of this article was to abstract principles from the life of Nathan and struggle with the questions: Is there a systematic method to speaking truth to power and what happens to both the messenger and the message after truth has been delivered? This deliberation provided an exegesis of five biblical pericopes. First, 2 Samuel 7:1-3 focused on the probable leadership trait that empowered Nathan to become the next adviser to the king. Second, 2 Samuel 7:4-12 focused on the spirituality of the prophet and made a case that such a construct formulated his overall deliberations. Third, 2 Samuel 12:1-14 highlighted the courageous followership of Nathan and outlined how he skillfully spoke the truth to power. Fourth, 1 Kings 1:10-14 explored the emotional intelligence of the prophet as he navigated through an array of negative political realities. Fifth and finally, 2 Chronicles 9:29 explored the management capabilities of Nathan that consequently made him a credible asset within the king's court.



---

### About the Author

Lieutenant Commander Maurice A. Buford is a naval chaplain currently serving at the Marine Corps University at Quantico, VA. In addition to providing pastoral care to the members of this institution, he teaches ethics and leadership. He holds a Doctorate of Ministry, a Master of Divinity from the Interdenominational Theological Center, a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Human Resource Development from Regent University, and a Bachelor of Science from Tuskegee University. He is currently working on his doctorate in organizational leadership from Regent University. His areas of interest include servant leadership, emotional intelligence, community HRD, and spirituality. Note: The views of this article do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. military.

Email: MauriceBuford@aol.com

---



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## THE ROMANS 12 GIFTS: USEFUL FOR PERSON-JOB FIT

BRUCE E. WINSTON

The seven motivational gifts found in Romans 12—(a) perceiving, (b) serving, (c) teaching, (d) encouraging, (e) giving, (f) ruling, and (g) mercy—when viewed as a profile provide a base for person-job fit suitable for use with all people regardless of faith tradition. This paper argues that people have some combination of all gifts that is in contrast to the popular literature's perspective of people having one or two gifts. When people are placed in jobs that fit their motivational gift profile people seem to be self-motivated to perform the requisite tasks. This paper recommends that future research examine gift profiles in specific jobs to see if there is a common profile for those people that are satisfied and motivated.

---

The purpose of this article is to present the seven motivational gifts from Romans 12:3-8 as a profile useful for fitting an individual to a job. Frederick Taylor made a claim that every worker was a "first-class" worker at something and that it is management's job to determine what that job is.<sup>1</sup> While Taylor did not describe the means by which management should do this, it is the premise of this article that it can be accomplished by fitting a person to a job that uses the individual's profile of Romans 12 gifts. Wagner supports the notion of a profile of gifts: "I would suspect that probably the majority or

---

<sup>1</sup> Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper, 1911).

perhaps all Christians have what we would call a Gift Mix, instead of a single gift.”<sup>2</sup> This article presents an inner-texture analysis of the seven gifts along with Paul’s statement that God gives the gifts to all people, which by definition in the Greek *ανθρωπος* (*anthropos*) includes non-Christians. This article then references research done to measure the gifts and show that non-Christians possess the gifts, as well as a cluster analysis to present potential profiles. The article concludes with a call for more research to confirm the profiles and application to person-job fit.

Stitinger helps us understand the profiles of the Romans 12 gifts in his use of the idea of the need for people to seek to understand their “giftedness” rather than their gift.<sup>3</sup>

## I. INNER-TEXTURE ANALYSIS

Stitinger makes an important statement as preparation for conducting an inner-texture analysis:

Needless to say, opinion on the spiritual gifts—very little of which is based on sound biblical exegesis—varies widely. Positions are frequently motivated by experience or emotion, and fueled by logic-jumps.

Scholarship often assumes its outcome by adopting hermeneutical principles consistent with a preconceived bias. Serious study of the Scriptures is necessary if one is to say only what the Scriptures say about spiritual gifts.<sup>4</sup>

Romans 12:3—“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith”<sup>5</sup>—includes references to “everyone” (*παντι*) and “each” (*εκαστω*). *εκαστω* implies “each,” “every,” or “all”—used 1,242 times in the New Testament of which 731 times the word is used for “all.” *εκαστω*, in contrast, means “each man” or “every man” usually referencing the Greek *ανθρωπος* (*anthropos*) rather than limited to the male gender—*ανηρ* (*anir*). This notion of all people having the gifts is in direct opposition to the idea that only Christians have these gifts and that Christians only receive the gifts at the time of conversion as espoused by Walvoord.<sup>6</sup> In a like manner, the premise of this article is antagonistic to Engberg-Pedersen’s position that Paul was writing to an “in-group” and therefore the gifts are

<sup>2</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 40.

<sup>3</sup> James F. Stitinger, “Spiritual Gifts: Definitions and Kinds,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 14, no. 2 (2003): 149-150.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>5</sup> NASB.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Walvoord, “The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 1986): 109-122.

only applied to Christians.<sup>7</sup> If Engberg-Pedersen is correct then the Romans 12 gifts only applied to the then-current members of the church in Rome. If this was the case, then Paul's letter would have referred to specific people. There is nothing in the Greek that implies what Walvoord or Engberg-Pedersen espouse. Further to the issue of whether the gifts are for Christians or for all, is Jewett's notion that Paul was speaking to all of the Christians gathered together from the house churches in Rome and, as such, according to Jewett, that the gifts were only for Christians.<sup>8</sup> While it is logical to want to think that Christians have an advantage in the Romans 12 gifts, the text of Romans 12:1-8 simply does not support this. This logic is akin to saying that if I lecture the gifts to a group of MBA students then the gifts are only for those in business. Paul's letter includes nothing that limits the gifts to only those in attendance at the hearing of his letter. Jewett does go on to say that the Greek implies that everyone has gifts<sup>9</sup> which I believe supports the notion of multiple gifts and not just one gift as Newman and Nida claim.<sup>10</sup>

Bryant states that Paul in Romans 12 celebrates the "renewing power of God." Bryant goes on to tie the Romans 12 gifts to Christ.<sup>11</sup> Bryant does not show the textual support for this. If Bryant examined the 1 Corinthians 12 gifts he would see that Paul attributes those gifts to the Spirit (πνευμα), and in Ephesians 4, Paul references the source of the gifts/offices as Christ (Χριστος). In the Romans 12 gift passage Paul only refers to the grace of θεος (God). Of further interest to this present study, Bryant refers to the Romans 12 gifts as "spiritual" gifts yet Paul does not say this in Romans 12. Rather, Paul only refers to "gifts."

Paul's letter continues in 12:4—"for just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function"—and of particular importance to this article is Paul's inclusion of πραξις (*praxis*), which is used six times in the New Testament and refers to actions, deeds, functions, and practices. This ties specifically to the person-job fit focus of this article. Romans 12:5 continues the metaphor of body parts/members and the role of the gifts that Paul is about to present—"so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Paul's use of "one (εις) of another (αλληλων)" presents the metaphor of parts and whole as one of mutuality rather than individualistically, which continues the referent to person-job fit in that a goal of person-job fit is to create a workforce of different people each acting in mutuality for the completion of the organization's tasks.<sup>12</sup> Of interest it should be noted

<sup>7</sup> T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12-13: The Role of 13:1-10 in the Argument," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29, no. 2 (2006): 163-172.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Jewett, (2007) *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 738-740.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 739.

<sup>10</sup> Barclay E. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook for Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible Society, 1973), 237.

<sup>11</sup> R. A. Bryant, "Romans 12:1-8," *Interpretation* (July 2004): 287-290.

<sup>12</sup> Tomoki Sekiguchi, "Person-Organization Fit and Person-Job Fit in Employee Selection: A Review of the Literature," *Osaka Keidai Ronshu* 54, no. 6 (2004): 179-196.

here that the Romans 12 gifts differ from the 1 Corinthian gifts in yet another way. Paul does not make claim in the letter to the Romans that there is a hierarchy of gifts or that one gift is better than another as he does in his letter to the Corinthian church when he places a sense of order and value to the gifts. Thus, the Romans 12 gifts should be seen as a collection of equally-valued gifts and that the orchestrated use of the gifts should be used to the greater benefit of the community.

Paul claims in 12:6, "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith." Of interest here to this article is that this ties back to 12:3 in that Paul references faith (πιστεωσ), which is the same word used in 12:3 where Paul states that God (θεος) gives a measure of faith (πιστεωσ) to each person. Although 12:6 begins the listing of seven gifts, Paul's use of πιστεωσ ties the gifts to the faith given by God, thus linking θεος to the gifts.

Further to the understanding of Romans 12 gifts as applying to everyone, is that according to Stitzinger the interpretation of χαρισμα (charisma) is not the miraculous or extraordinary but rather it is used in commonplace every-day events and refers to favor rather than the miraculous.<sup>13</sup> Hunter helps understand this further in his claim that χαρισμα is a "particular actualization of this grace of God."<sup>14</sup>

### *Perceiving*

Popular press authors such as Bugbee, Kinghorn, McRae, and Wagner approach the spiritual gift προφητεια (propheteia) as meaning the same as the inference in 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>15</sup> However, other popular press authors such as Gothard, Flynn, as well as Fortune and Fortune, define προφητεια differently in Romans 12 than in 1 Corinthians 12 due to the contextual differences of Paul's two letters.<sup>16</sup> This current study follows the definition of Gothard, Flynn, and Fortune and Fortune in that προφητεια refers to "the Spirit-given ability to proclaim the written word of God with clarity and to apply it to a particular situation with a view toward correction or edification."<sup>17</sup> According to Liddel and Scott's Lexicon, προφητεια, specifically with the "ιαν" suffix (as used in Romans 12:6) carries a connotation of interpretation in the form of revealing,

<sup>13</sup> James F. Stitzinger. "Spiritual Gifts," 150.

<sup>14</sup> Archibald Macbride Hunter, *Probing the New Testament* (Richmond: Knox, 1971), 89.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce L. Bugbee, Don Cousins, and Bill Hybels, *Network Leader's Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976); William J. McRae, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976); C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*.

<sup>16</sup> Bill Gothard, *How to Understand Spiritual Gifts* (Oak Brook, IL: Institute in Basic Life Principles, 1986); Leslie Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Visitor Publishing, 1974); Don Fortune and Katie Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Leslye Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, 61.

manifesting, showing forth, making known, and divulging vital information.<sup>18</sup> The motivational gift of perceiving in Romans 12 is the extraordinary ability to discern and proclaim truth. The secularized definition of perceiving could be the ability to quickly and accurately discern good and evil and the ability to reveal truth for understanding, correction, or edification.

A review of the scholarly research in both the ATLA and Pro-Quest Religious databases reveals a paucity of studies on the Romans 12 gifts. Most entries in the databases were brief book reviews in which the book referenced a gift. No study was found that looked at the gifts as they relate to person-job fit or, for that matter, any use in organizations. Thus, a contribution of this study is the examination of scripture as a useful tool for day-to-day organizational life. St. Thomas Aquinas in his work *Truth: Volume 2*, addresses prophecy, but Aquinas's work seems to focus only on 1 Corinthians and how "knowing" aligns with or augments natural knowledge, what Aquinas relates to as "science."<sup>19</sup> Of interest in Aquinas's text is that he implies that the spiritual gift of prophecy/perceiving may work in conjunction with natural knowledge and results in enhancing the understanding beyond the natural senses. This ties well to the use of *προφητεία* in organizations in that the spiritual gift may enhance one's abilities to "see" and to "interpret" what the senses take in.

Of worthwhile note are the few scholarly works such as Jewett who claims that *προφητεία* during the first-century Roman setting included but was not limited to: (a) public declaration of revealed truth, (b) prediction of the future, (c) unsolicited advice, (d) exhortation, or (e) remonstrance. Jewett goes on to make a particular point of noting Paul's use of "analogy of faith" and posits that Paul is asking for a balance of logic and faith as two different elements weighted in a balance.<sup>20</sup> While interviewing people who seemed to have a high level of this gift, DellaVecchio and Winston found these people to have a high level of faith and believe in what they perceived and a sense of comfort, or faith that what they said would be well received.<sup>21</sup> We also found a decrease in the level of faith in self and in speaking the truth in the people who seemed to have a small amount of this gift.<sup>22</sup> Bryan contributes to the understanding of the gifts but offers no

<sup>18</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Truth: Questions x-Xx*, trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: S.J. Hackett, 1994), 2: 103, 109, 111, 126-129, 131, 355.

<sup>20</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 746-747.

<sup>21</sup> Dorena DellaVecchio and Bruce Winston, "A Seven-Scale Instrument to Measure the Romans 12 Motivational Gifts and a Proposition that the Romans 12 Gift Profiles Might Apply to Person-Job Fit Analysis" (working paper, Regent University's School of Leadership Studies, Virginia Beach, VA, 2004) <http://www.regent.edu/acad/sls/publications/other/workingpapers/pdf/DellaVecchio-Winston%20Romans%2012%20gift%20test%20and%20profiles%20manuscriptdv.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed study of the instrument and items please see the document at: <http://www.regent.edu/acad/sls/publications/other/workingpapers/pdf/DellaVecchio-Winston%20Romans%2012%20gift%20test%20and%20profiles%20manuscriptdv.pdf>

Table 1. Other verses with the word προφητεία (*propheteia*)

Verse	Text
1 Corinthians 12:10	And to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues
1 Corinthians 13:2	And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
1 Corinthians 13:8	Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.
1 Corinthians 14:6	But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?
1 Corinthians 14:22	So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.
1 Thessalonians 5:20	Do not despise prophetic utterances
1 Timothy 1:18	This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight
1 Timothy 4:14	Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery
2 Peter 1:20	But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation
2 Peter 1:21	For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God
Revelation 1:3	Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Verse	Text
Revelation 11:6	These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.
Revelation 19:10	And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."
Revelation 22:7	"And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."
Revelation 22:10	And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."
Revelation 22:18	I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book.
Revelation 22:19	And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book

specific definition of *προφητεία* (*propheteia*).<sup>23</sup> Mounce, along with Newman and Nida as well as Newell, claim that *προφητεία* refers to "speaking for God," however the Liddel and Scott Lexicon does not support this.<sup>24</sup> There are derivatives of *προφητεία* that refer to speaking the message of God/gods or being the voice of the oracle but the specific use of *προφητεία* seems to focus more interpretation. Grayston and Maly imply that *προφητεία* refers to "inspired utterances" that may tie with Jewett's notion.<sup>25</sup>

A search of the other locations of *προφητεία* (*propheteia*) in the New Testament resulted in the data found in table 1. Matthew 13:14 seems to imply the same

<sup>23</sup> C. Bryan, *A Preface to the Romans: Notes on the Epistle in its Literary and Cultural Setting* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 198.

<sup>24</sup> R. Mounce, *The New American Commentary: Romans* (New York: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 27: 234; Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook*, 237; William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse: A Classical Evangelical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), 464; Liddel and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Grayston, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 1997), 104; Eugene H. Maly, *Romans* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 99.



“perceiving” as presented in this article while the other contexts seem to be more about prophetic utterances than perceiving as defined above.

### *Serving*

The Greek word for serving is *διακονία* (*diakonia*), meaning to aid. It can be interpreted as the God-given ability to identify the unmet needs involved in a task and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals. This is not one-on-one or person-centered but task-oriented.<sup>26</sup> The secularized definition of serving used in this article is the ability to elevate any need for another (without concern or desire for rank or recognition) that will help or free that person to work more effectively. To some extent this has a sense of altruism to it. Collins adds to the understanding in his declaration that *διακονία* does not imply a position of low status for the one performing the service—rather, according to Collins, status is not related to this gift of service.<sup>27</sup> This helps differentiate the notion of service from servitude or slavery. The “server” chooses to serve rather than is left with no option but to serve. Quenardel adds to our understanding of this gift in his interpretation of the rule of Saint Benedict where Quenardel posits that it is the process of reciprocal *διακονία* that forms the base of “charity” in that one helps another as needed.<sup>28</sup>

Jewett posits that *διακονία* in first-century Rome carried a general meaning of waiting on tables, running errands, being ready and available to help, but not that the term connoted menial or subservient tasks or that the person serving was seen as a slave/servant.<sup>29</sup> Of interest regarding this reference to service, Paul focuses on the end result of the service when he wrote “*εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ*” that shows the server measured by the service. DellaVecchio and Winston’s work produced statements about servers that showed the server’s interest in “doing” rather than talking, showing feelings through service, doing the work rather than delegating, and offering to give practical service to others.<sup>30</sup> Newman and Nida confirm the notion of the practical nature of the service in their study and understanding of *διακονία*.<sup>31</sup>

While Bryant purports that *διακονία* probably included some form of leadership in the act of serving, he offers no support either from the Greek or from socio-cultural studies of probable actions during the first-century Roman culture.<sup>32</sup> There is nothing in the Greek that implies leadership as we know it in the contemporary time, but also nothing to exclude it.

<sup>26</sup> Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*.

<sup>27</sup> John Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Olivier Quenardel, “Cistercian Diakonia,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 41 (2006): 443-500.

<sup>29</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 747.

<sup>30</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston, “A Seven-Scale Instrument,” 3.

<sup>31</sup> Newman and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 237.

<sup>32</sup> Charles V. Bryant, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1991).

A search of the other locations of διακονία in the New Testament resulted in the data found in table 2.

Table 2: Other verses with the word διακονία (*diakonia*)

Verse	Text
Luke 10:40	But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."
Acts 1:17	"For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry."
Acts 1:25	". . . to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."
Acts 6:1	Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.
Acts 6:4	"But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."
Acts 11:29	And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.
Acts 12:25	And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.
Acts 20:24	"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

---

Verse	Text
Acts 21:19	And after he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.
Romans 11:13	But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,
Romans 15:31	That I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;
1 Corinthians 12:5	And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.
1 Corinthians 16:15	Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),
2 Corinthians 3:7	But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,
2 Corinthians 3:8	How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?
2 Corinthians 3:9	For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.
2 Corinthians 4:1	Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,
2 Corinthians 5:18	Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,
2 Corinthians 6:3	Giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited,
2 Corinthians 8:4	Begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

---

Verse	Text
2 Corinthians 9:1	For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;
2 Corinthians 9:12	For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.
2 Corinthians 9:13	Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,
2 Corinthians 11:8	I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you;
Ephesians 4:12	For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
Colossians 4:17	And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."
1 Timothy 1:12	I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service;
Hebrews 1:14	Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?
Revelation 2:19	"I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first."

### *Teaching*

The Greek word for teaching is διδασκων (*didaskon*), which means to instruct, clarify, elucidate, illuminate, simplify, and to illustrate for the sake of communication and understanding.<sup>33</sup> The secularized definition of teaching used in this study is the extraordinary ability to discern, analyze, and deliver information and truth so that others will learn. Jewett makes an interesting point in that the phrase "διδασκων εν τη διδασκλια implies one who is teaching and does not, as such, refer to an

<sup>33</sup> Bryant, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts*.

“office” of teacher. Jewett goes on to show the contrast with other locations in works attributed to Paul in which we find διδασκος.<sup>34</sup> Jewett includes in his evaluation of this the claim of both Rengstorf and Filson that Paul avoided the use of a term implying an “office” due to the then-accepted belief that all believers were teachers and that no one could be a successor to Jesus as the teacher.<sup>35</sup> Jewett downplays this thought in that there were established teachers of the faith in the first century and contents that it may as likely have been Paul’s intent to avoid exacerbating the leadership conflicts in Rome that he refers to elsewhere in the book.

There is a lack of agreement in the literature and to the meaning and intent not only as pointed between Jewett, Rengstorf, and Filson but also in that Mounce states that the position of “teacher” in the first century was an honorable position and that the focus of the teaching was on moral issues.<sup>36</sup> This seems to be in conflict to the use of διδασκων as a reference to “one who is teaching” rather than the position of the teacher.

Table 3: Other verses with the word διδασκων (*didaskon*)

Verse	Text
Matthew 7:29	. . . for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.
Matthew 9:35	Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
Matthew 26:55	. . . Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize me
Romans 2:21	You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?
Hebrews 5:12	. . . you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

<sup>34</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 749.

<sup>35</sup> Floyd V. Filson, “The Christian Teacher in the First Century,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60, no. 3 (1941): 317-3.

<sup>36</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The New American Commentary*, 235.

A search of the other locations of διδασκων in the New Testament resulted in the data found in table 3.

### *Encouraging*

Encouraging comes from the Greek word παρακαλων (*parakalon*). The word has two parts: one is “a call,” and the other is “companionship.” Together they mean to be with and for another.<sup>37</sup> The secularized definition of exhortation used in this study is the ability to call forth the best in others through encouragement and motivation. The secular definition used in this paper is the God-given ability to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counsel in such a way that others feel helped and healed.<sup>38</sup> Jewitt points out the application of this concept in the then-Roman culture as a process by which people associated with certain philosophical communities came under political and social ridicule and attack by those outside of the community. Jewitt posits that there was a need for what he calls the “care of the soul” in which certain folk came along side of others to comfort, encourage, as well as incite the people to continue in their cause. According to Jewitt this probably tied back to the Jewish tradition of consolation through the books of Lamentations and Job, among others.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting to note the use of “ειτε ο παρακαλων εν τη παρακλησει”(the one exhorting, in the exhortation) that implies that the measure of the gift is the resultant exhortation. In other words, the measure of the gift is in the result of the gift. It is not the doing that is important but the results that are important. Little seems to exist in the literature other than Jewitt to help understand this concept. Mounce simply says that “if teaching provides guidance for what people ought to do then encouragement helps them achieve it.”<sup>40</sup> Bryan does not address the concept beyond mentioning it in the context of verse 7.<sup>41</sup> Newell only admonishes those with this gift to be sure to walk the path that one calls others to walk.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Bryant, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts*.

<sup>38</sup> Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*.

<sup>39</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 750.

<sup>40</sup> Mounce, *The New American Commentary*, 235.

<sup>41</sup> Bryan, *A Preface to the Romans*.

<sup>42</sup> Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, 466.

Table 4: Other verses with the word παρακαλων (*parakalon*)

Verse	Text
Matthew 8:5	And when he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, entreating him
Luke 3:18	So with many other exhortations also he preached the gospel to the people
Acts 2:40	And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"
Acts 15:32	And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.
Acts 16:40	And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.
Acts 20:1	And after the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to Macedonia.
2 Corinthians 1:4	Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
2 Corinthians 7:6	But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

### *Giving*

The Greek word for giving is μεταδιδουσα (*metadidoussa*), meaning to turn over or to give over, share, or transfer. The definition of giving used in this study is the God-given ability to understand the material needs of others and then meet those needs

generously.<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting the change in pattern that occurs with this gift in that past gifts show the measure in the doing or in the outcome, but here it is noted that the measure is in the ἀπλοτητι (*aploiteiti*) simplicity of the giving. Liddell and Scott's Lexicon defines μεταδιδουσ as "giving a part of or giving a share" and they define ἀπλοτητι as frankness, sincerity, and liberality.<sup>44</sup>

Jewett infers that the word used here for giving most likely refers to the sharing of one's personal resources for use in the love feasts typical of this time in Rome. Jewett adds that it is in this context that one might find a sense of liberality. The notion of sharing/giving, according to Jewett, most likely seems to focus on physical goods rather than ideas or teaching since there is no need to withhold ideas.<sup>45</sup>

Jewett adds insight into the use of ἀπλοτητι by inferring that the word used here implies single-mindedness or integrity. This, according to Jewett, speaks of living a simple life and keeping what one needs and giving the rest away. This seems, then, to be in line with the Franciscan Third Order Regular rule of simplicity.<sup>46</sup> Jewett posits that the term ἀπλοτητι while meaning single-mindedness, integrity, and/or liberality does not translate into the use each of the three terms collectively, but rather, according to Jewett is best translated as "generosity." Newman and Nida concur with Jewett that the term translates as either integrity/sincerity or in the general sense—generosity, but Newman and Nida do not go into detail as to the meaning or purpose of this gift.<sup>47</sup>

Newell differs a bit in that he proposes that the concept embodied by this gift is the giving/sharing of what one has with others in a manner that is neither in secret or with reluctance. He implies that this is similar to the 2 Corinthians 9:7 concept of a "cheerful giver." Mounce concurs with Newell with regard to the gift implying a "cheerful giver."<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>45</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 751.

<sup>46</sup> Franciscan Friars, "About the Friars," *Franciscan Friars, TOR*, <http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/aboutus.php>

<sup>47</sup> Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook*, 238.

<sup>48</sup> Mounce, *The New American Commentary*, 235.



Table 5: Other verses with the word μεταδιδουσ (*metadidouss*)

Verse	Text
Luke 3:11	And he would answer and say to them, "Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise."
Ephesians 4:28	Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

### Ruling

The Greek word for ruling is προισταμενος (*proistamenos*), which means, according to Riddell and Scott,<sup>49</sup> to be put in front of or to placed as the head of; take a position of standing over one. Jewitt notes that προισταμενος is the passive participle and may have been specifically selected to denote either a collective leadership model or one in which people have asked someone to take the position of ruler.<sup>50</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston define this gift as the God-given ability to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in a way that they harmoniously work together for the glory of God.<sup>51</sup> Popular press authors Bryant, Fortune and Fortune, Flynn, Gothard, Kinghorn, and McRae confuse the gift of ruling (προισταμενος) with the gift of administration/governance (κυβερνησεις) in 1 Corinthians 12:28.<sup>52</sup> Gangel contributes to the confusion by implying that administration and management are synonymous thus the two gifts are the same.<sup>53</sup> However, the two terms προισταμενος and κυβερνησεις are quite different in meaning as can be seen in Liddell and Scott's definition of κυβερνησεις to mean the government of cities.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, it was sometimes used as a metaphor for piloting as in piloting a boat. Jewett adds to the clarification by reminding us that in the Roman church there were selected people put in charge of local churches. Newman and Nida concur with Jewitt in that they interpret προισταμενος as "one who has authority,"<sup>55</sup> while Mounce

<sup>49</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1482.

<sup>50</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 752.

<sup>51</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston, "A Seven-Scale Instrument," 4.

<sup>52</sup> Bryant, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts*; Fortune and Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts*; Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*; Gothard, *How to Understand*; Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit*; McRae, *The Dynamics*.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel, *Unwrap Your Spiritual Gifts* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983).

<sup>54</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1004.

<sup>55</sup> Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook*, 238.

confuses the issue by interpreting προισταμενος as leadership.<sup>56</sup> The confusion that Mounce adds here is that the modern day concept of leadership did exist in Roman context, but the notion of someone being placed in authority (followers are not needed) as well as the notion of people placed in positions of governing cities, did exist.

The use of the measure for this gift in the method by which the gift is demonstrated—the diligence σπουδη (*spoudei*)—is intriguing in that, according to Jewitt, during this time in the Roman culture aggressiveness and expediency were considered to be virtues.

Table 5: Other verses with the word προισταμενος (*proistemanos*)

Verse	Text
1 Thessalonians 5:12	And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
1 Timothy 3:4	He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.
1 Timothy 3:12	Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

### *Mercy*

The Greek word for mercy is ελεων (*eleon*) derived from ελεος, which means “have compassion on.”<sup>57</sup> The definition of mercy used in this study is the extraordinary ability to feel and to act upon genuine empathy for others who suffer distressing physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual pain.<sup>58</sup> Luke 10:37 uses this term in describing the Good Samaritan as “one who does mercy.” Wagner adds to the understanding by defining the gift of mercy as the God-given ability to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals, both Christian and non-Christian, who suffer distressing physical, mental, or emotional problems and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Mounce, *The New American Commentary*, 235.

<sup>57</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 532.

<sup>58</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston, “A Seven-Scale Instrument,” 11.

<sup>59</sup> Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*.

Jewett helps clarify the term by contrasting it with its opposite *ανελεημοναο* from Romans 1:31 in which the “merciless” is considered to have a reprobate mind. Jewett goes further to explain that the act of showing mercy was common in the Roman first-century church and was honored through “free and authenticity” of the act. The measure of this gift is in its “cheerfulness” (*ιλαροτητι*) that Jewett uses to tie the gift of mercy to the gift of giving by showing the relationship of cheerfulness to the LXX translation of Proverbs 22:8 about being a cheerful giver.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Jewett blurs the distinction between mercy and giving and indicates that both occur at the same time. However, for the sake of clarity this paper separates the gift of giving from the gift of mercy. A search of the New Testament did not reveal other locations where *ελεων* (*eleon*) was used.

## II. FROM EXEGESIS TO PERSON-JOB FIT

The prior section examined the seven Romans 12 motivational gifts through the lens of inner-texture by examining the meaning of the term and the probable intent of the term in the first-century Roman church. The meaning from the Greek and the secular definition used by DellaVecchio and Winston are summarized in table 6.<sup>61</sup>

Table 6: Summary of the definitions for the seven Romans 12 motivational gifts

Gift	Greek meaning	DellaVecchio and Winston
<i>προφητεια</i> ( <i>propheteia</i> ) (Perceiving)	The extraordinary ability to discern and proclaim truth	The secularized definition of perceiving could be the ability to quickly and accurately discern good and evil and the ability to reveal truth for understanding, correction, or edification
<i>διακονια</i> ( <i>diakonia</i> ) (Serving)	To aid and can be interpreted as the God-given ability to identify the unmet needs involved in a task and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the	The ability to elevate any need for another (without concern or desire for rank or recognition) that will help or free that person to work more effectively

<sup>60</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 754.

<sup>61</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston, “A Seven-Scale Instrument.”

Gift	Greek meaning	DellaVecchio and Winston
	desired goals. This is not one-on-one or person-centered but task-oriented	
διδασκων (didaskon) (Teaching)	To instruct, clarify, elucidate, illuminate, simplify, and to illustrate for the sake of communication and understanding	The extraordinary ability to discern, analyze, and deliver information and truth so that others will learn
παρακαλων (parakalon) (Encouraging)	To be with and for another	The God-given ability to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counsel in such a way that others feel helped and healed
μεταδιδουσ (metadidous) (Giving)	To turn over or to give over, share, or transfer	The ability to manage one's resources of income, time, energy, and skills to exceed what is considered to be a reasonable standard for giving
προισταμενος (proistamenos) (Ruling)	To be put in front of or to placed as the head of; take a position of standing over one	The God-given ability to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in a way that they harmoniously work together for the glory of God
ελεων (eleon) (Mercy)	Have compassion on	The extraordinary ability to feel and to act upon genuine empathy for others who suffer distressing physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual pain

### III. PERSON-JOB FIT

According to Sekiguchi, person-job fit can be defined as either the degree of match between the job demands and the person's abilities or the desires of the person and the attributes of the job.<sup>62</sup> It is in the latter description where the Romans 12 gifts fit in that the profile of the gifts becomes the desire of the person. Sekiguchi points out that a number of positive outcomes occur when the degree of person-job fit is high: (a) job satisfaction, (b) low stress, (c) high performance, (d) high attendance, and (e) high retention.

Saks and Ashforth point out that for much of the literature the focus on person-job fit has been from the view of the job or the organization and that there is a paucity of research done on person-job fit from the perspective of the person.<sup>63</sup> This current exegetical study helps to lay a foundation for using the Romans 12 gifts as a "person-perspective" in person-job fit.

DellaVecchio and Winston posit that certain gift profiles would be "best/better" matches for certain jobs.<sup>64</sup> McPherson tests this claim on a group of law enforcement officers and found that the officers with long tenure and high job satisfaction had a gift profile significantly different than the population that DellaVecchio and Winston tested.<sup>65</sup> In addition, McPherson's work found three clusters among the long-tenure, high-satisfaction officers that further supports the existence of a profile mix. According to McPherson:

The results of the cluster analysis indicate that three distinct clusters of Romans 12 motivational gifts could be identified. Cluster 1, or the "ruler" cluster, showed a profile of high level on the ruler scale and medium level for the rest of the six scales of motivational gifts. Cluster 2, or the "playing by the book" cluster, showed a profile of medium level gifts on five (Encourager, Perceiver, Ruler, Server, and Teacher) scales and low level on the rest of the two (Mercy and Giver) scales. Cluster 3, or the "enabler" cluster, showed a profile of high level on four (Encourager, Perceiver, Ruler, and Server) of the seven scales and medium level for the rest of the three (Mercy, Giver, and Teacher) scales of motivational gifts.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Sekiguchi, "Person-Organization Fit."

<sup>63</sup> Alan M. Saks and Blake E. Ashforth, "A Longitudinal Investigation of the Relationships Between Job Information Sources, Applicants Perceptions of Fit and Work Outcomes," *Personnel Psychology* 50, no. 2 (1997): 395-426.

<sup>64</sup> DellaVecchio and Winston, "A Seven-Scale Instrument."

<sup>65</sup> Clarence E. McPherson, "A Consideration of the Relationship of the Romans 12 Motivational Gifts to Job Satisfaction and Person-Job Fit in Law Enforcement" (doctoral dissertation, Regent University, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> McPherson, "A Consideration of the Relationship," 47.

#### IV. NEXT STEPS IN RESEARCH

DellaVecchio and Winston's seven scale instrument along with McPherson's study of the gift profile of police officers are two excellent bases upon which to build the next steps in research. There is a need for many more studies such as McPherson's in which specific groups of employees complete the Romans 12 gift test and we look for patterns of the gift profiles. This would require that participants are fully engaged and satisfied with their current jobs and perhaps asking for participation from professional organizations or from fraternal organizations. There is no limit of these studies since there are so many profiles that could be examined.

Studies are needed in which the Romans 12 gift test is used to screen candidates for jobs and then measure the "fit" compared to groups of people in which the Romans 12 gift test screen was not used for selection. Here again, there is no limit to the number of these studies since there are so many jobs and so many profiles. The more studies that are done the stronger the discriminate and content validity will be. Convergent validity could be determined if studies were done comparing/correlating scores on the Romans 12 gift test and Strong's Vocational Interest Battery test.

Case studies could be done with participants who are deemed by self or others as exemplars of specific gifts. While this was done to a limited extent by DellaVecchio and Winston, more specific grounded theory studies could be conducted on each of the seven gifts. The grounded theory studies might contribute to our contemporary understanding of the gifts.

---

#### About the Author

Bruce E. Winston, Ph.D., serves as both dean and associate professor of leadership at Regent University's School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship in Virginia Beach, VA. Dr. Winston teaches, trains, and consults in the areas of leadership and organizational development as well as university administration and strategic foresight. In addition, he has thirteen years of experience leading organizations in the commercial printing industry and seventeen years of experience leading academic units at Regent University. Dr. Winston has lectured and consulted in the United States as well as Canada, Europe, and South Africa. He also speaks and teaches in other areas including communication, quality improvement, and marketing.  
Email: [bwinston@regent.edu](mailto:bwinston@regent.edu)

---



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## ANCIENT ANSWERS FOR DEVELOPING MODERN-DAY CLERGY

A Review of *The Potter's Rib: Mentoring For Pastoral Formation*  
by Brian A. Williams

MIKE ONEY

The contention of Williams in *The Potter's Rib* is that ancient models of mentoring may hold significant hope in the development of clergy today. The value of exploring concepts relevant to clergy leadership development is easily reflected by noting the issues currently facing clergy. Many clergy feel demoralized, and performance objectives of many ecclesiastical contexts indicate the need for leadership development. The mentoring dynamics of biblical dyads such as Paul with Timothy and Titus, historical ecclesiastical leaders focused on developing clergy, and the input of modern era church leaders are noted to have effectively developed rising clergy. The writings of Gregory of Nazianzus, a fourth-century archbishop of Constantinople, are particularly noted with high relevance to issues reflected in relational conflict of church members and the personal struggles of ministers conceptualizing their call. Particular attention is given to the context of experiential ministry as the place of development with the necessary addition of reflection with mentors. Specific suggestions are made for contextualizing the mentor/mentee relationship. The key value of William's work is to move us into considered reflection on the role that apprenticeship can serve in the development of clergy today.

---

### I. SYNOPSIS

The unique title of *The Potter's Rib*<sup>1</sup> speaks of the instrument used by a potter to shape

---

<sup>1</sup> Brian A. Williams, *The Potter's Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005).

clay vessels on a spinning wheel. With this analogy in focus, Williams raises two central questions that lay a foundation for his book postulating that mentoring is an essential tool for clergy development. The two central questions that Williams asks are: “What is pastoral ministry to look like in the twenty-first century?” and “How is he or she to be educated and prepared in a culture that studiously marginalizes pastors to the unobtrusive fringe?”<sup>2</sup> With these questions in view, and the specific focus on the process of pastoral development as noted in the latter question, Williams moves directly into a model of pastoral development that has roots in the ancient practices of apprenticeship. The phrase noted by Williams regarding apprenticeship is “mentoring for pastoral formation.”<sup>3</sup> Key examples of mentoring are given, including Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Catherine of Siena, the apostle Paul, George Herbert, and Soren Kiekegaard, along with others. It is noted within this work that pastoral formation requires a keen focus of intentionality on the part of both mentor and mentee.

Williams contextualizes the focus of pastoral formation in the life of Gregory of Nazianzus, a fourth-century archbishop of Constantinople. Specifically, the work *In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, and His Return, After His Ordination to the Priesthood, with an Exposition of the Character of the Priestly Office* is noted.<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus is noted to have influenced substantial works in pastoral formation such as John Chrysostom’s *Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood*<sup>5</sup> during the fifth century, and Gregory the Great’s *Book of Pastoral Rule*<sup>6</sup> during the sixth century. It is noted that Gregory the Great’s *Pastoral Rule* served as a primary text for the development of clergy for a thousand years. Williams contextualizes the relevance of Gregory of Nazianzus to modern-day church life by noting his wisdom for dealing with the practical dimensions of discipling difficult people who are (a) ultra-conservative and unable to receive correction, (b) theologically misinformed, (c) arrogant, and (d) so steeped in relativism that they are unable to believe the truth.

Chapter one emphasizes the need of clergy spiritual formation, a deep understanding of a call to ministry, the necessity of theological undergirding within pastoral work, and practical pastoral skills. Each of these four areas is taken from Gregory’s *Flight* and has a sense of face validity with clergy issues today.

### *Personal Transformation*

Williams moves into the personal development of the pastor. This does not

---

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, “In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, and His Return, After His Ordination to the Priesthood, with an Exposition of the Character of the Priestly Office,” trans. C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 7:2.28-31. Hereafter, this work is referred to as *Flight*.

<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, *Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood*, 3.16.

<sup>6</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos, ed. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007).



simply include having a theological understanding, but more importantly experiencing theological transformation on a personal level. The words *sapience* and *habitus* are used to emphasize an internal wisdom through theology that is practically demonstrated in the life of clergy. The essence of this chapter focuses on moving beyond a simple knowledge basis for ministry to experiential understandings that will serve as a foundation for both interpersonal and intrapersonal ministry foci.

### *Mentoring*

Williams pointedly focuses on the dynamic of mentoring as a primary means for pastoral formation. The dyadic relationship between the mentor and mentee is centered in two concepts of place and space. Place is noted to be the context of ministry in a localized community. Space is used to reflect the idea of the interactions between the mentor and mentee. Williams postulates that the issues of place and space cannot be contextualized within the seminary itself. While he is respectful of the needed role of seminaries, he offers considerations that seminary training itself is inadequate in and of itself. The place and space issues noted for development include involvement in the areas of worship services, church administration, curriculum development and execution, counseling in formal and informal ways, outreach to those beyond the facilities of the church, and caring for the practical needs in a community. In chapter four, Williams notes that mentoring focuses on the maturation of another, which takes intensity and time. Human nature is highlighted in this chapter and is seen as a stumbling block that must be overcome in order for maturation through the means of mentoring to be accomplished.

Williams provides readers with an understanding of the necessity of a mentor to observe the developmental stages of a mentee and the value of interacting with mentee's for their development. Chapters five and six provide a sense of the depth of friendship and mutual commitment that are necessary for mentor/mentee relationships to thrive. Readers gain the understanding that mentors must make room for mentees, and mentees must allow perspectives from outside themselves to enrich and enlarge their lives.

### *Experiential Context*

Chapter seven returns again to the fourfold emphasis of ministerial development from Gregory of Nazianzus's *Flight*. Williams suggests several questions for each area of clergy development. Those with a deep interest in mentoring others will find these questions rooted in the value of transformation. The essence of these questions will lead the mentee into a deep understanding of their own motives and into a reflection on the practical means for extending transformational dynamics into the lives of those whom they lead. It is at this juncture that the realization may come to focus that mentoring requires experiential context. How else could such penetrating questions be answered such as: "How do I respond to the indigenous pressures and stresses of pastoral ministry? . . . How is ministry affecting my relationship with God? . . . Where do

others see the presence and power of God in my ministry?"<sup>7</sup> Any pastor with a passion for mentoring other clergy is likely to use these questions as a primary resource for helping others reflect deeply on the praxis issues of their lives.

### *Dyadic Examples*

Beginning with chapter seven, Williams takes us to the biblical and ecclesiastical justifications of pastoral mentoring. The key dyadic relationships of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and his disciples, and Paul with Timothy and Titus are noted. The ecclesiastical examples include both pre- and post-reformation examples from the time of Augustine of Hippo to such examples as Eduard Thurneysen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Karl Barth in the twentieth century. Williams brings readers back to practical questions and reflections for those involved in the mentoring process. Chapter nine also suggests various sources for further consideration of mentoring dyads and contexts.

The essence of what Williams offers readers today is a look through history at this issue of clergy development in the context of an apprenticeship. This book calls to mind the reflection of the Apostle Paul to Timothy when he said, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tm 2:2).<sup>8</sup>

### *Relevance*

The relevance of Williams's book can be easily observed through a reflection on the issues facing clergy today. Although not included in Williams's text, a review of crisis issues within the American church can serve as a helpful background for exploring the mentoring model of ministry development. In the American church there are many issues of concern. From an empirical perspective of church growth, Olson notes, "In no single state did church attendance keep up with population growth!"<sup>9</sup> Dudley and Roozen have indicated that within the United States 50% of all congregations are either plateauing or declining.<sup>10</sup> The issue, however, of ministerial crises goes well beyond church performance objectives. The Fuller Institute of Church Growth conducted a survey of pastors in 1991 which reflected serious concerns for clergy. This study found that 80% of pastors believe that the pastoral ministry has affected their families negatively, 33% say that the ministry has been hazardous to their family, 75% of clergy reported that they have had a significant stress-related crisis at least one time in their ministry, 50% of clergy feel unable to meet the demands that are placed upon them, 90% indicated that they were inadequately trained to cope with their professional

<sup>7</sup> Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 167, 173.

<sup>8</sup> NIV.

<sup>9</sup> David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 37.

<sup>10</sup> Carl S. Dudley and David A. Roozen, "Faith Communities Today: A Report on Religion in the United States Today," *Faith Communities Today*, March 2001, <http://fact.hartsem.edu/Final%20FACTrpt.pdf>

demands.<sup>11</sup> In America today, the average pastor lasts only five years at a church.<sup>12</sup> Nineteen percent of pastors have been forced out of their ministry at one point of their professional lives. London and Wiseman reflected the crises facing clergy today when they said:

Unprecedented shifts in moral, social and economic conditions are battering congregations. These changing circumstances and declining values directly affect pastors and their way of life. Many of these difficulties were almost unknown in earlier periods of history. These changes seem to be taking the Church in the wrong direction at breakneck speed.<sup>13</sup>

With this summation of clergy issues, Williams's focus on developing clergy through the time proven method of mentoring is welcome.

## II. DISCUSSION

### *Strengths*

There are several strengths that make Williams's book a welcome addition to this concern of clergy development. Perhaps the most important strength is that clergy development through mentoring is a time tested approach. This approach can be witnessed throughout the last several hundred years of ecclesiastical history. Williams brings focus back to the salient source of Gregory of Nazianzus's *Flight*, which has often been neglected in recent history as a salient resource in clergy development. This source has served as a key resource for such profound works as Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Rule*, which Williams notes was a key resource of ministerial development for a thousand years. To overlook these key resources is likely a major disservice to our serving and developing clergy.

Another key strength of this work is that it overviews the mentoring of clergy through church history and contemporizes a model for modern-day settings. The questions included in this work will serve as key tools to initiate deep reflection relative to personal motivations, theological considerations, and practical applications of discipleship practices. It is refreshing and encouraging to note that the crises in ministerial life are not new issues solely reflected in modern times. These issues in various forms have been noted since the inception of the church. This understanding lends credibility to the voices of the past to speak authoritatively to the issues of the present. Ecclesiastical history helps us conceptualize that the mentor/mentee dyad is not only helpful but possibly essential for modern-day clergy.

---

<sup>11</sup> Fuller Institute of Church Growth, *1991 Survey of Pastors* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> The Barna Group, "A Profile of Protestant Pastors in Anticipation of 'Pastor Appreciation Month,'" *Barna Group* (2001 September), <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=98>

<sup>13</sup> H. B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura: Regal, 2003), 35.

### Limitations

The essence of Williams's work deals with the practical development of personal formation. While aspects of this work deal with the practical dimensions of extending ministry to others, the focus is dominantly on personal fitness, competencies, and readiness. These concepts, along with effectiveness, are considered salient in ministerial assessments.<sup>14</sup> Fitness focuses on the potential of ministers relative to their motivations and beliefs. Competencies are reflected in maturity of skills for judging and relating to others. In essence, it would move from interpersonal considerations to intrapersonal factors. Readiness suggests that individuals are ready to embrace the responsibilities before them in ministry. What is not as strongly emphasized is the effectiveness of what appropriate fitness, competence, and readiness facilitates in terms of performance variables within a localized context of ministry. In essence, Williams provides an excellent overview of the personal development of a minister's life but is somewhat lacking in the professional foci on performance variables that are often necessary within ecclesiastical organizations.

One consideration that is not clearly addressed is the issue of collectivism and individualism within mentor/mentee dyads. Many of the references are from a collectivistic context, such as that represented by Gregory of Nazianzus. Contextualizing how this model rooted in a collectivistic culture would express itself within an individualistic culture like America today would be helpful.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Williams's work on clergy development serves to remind the church today of the necessity of transformation through mentor/mentee dyads. Empirical research regarding ministerial effectiveness has been established since 1955,<sup>15</sup> and has focused much on how to quantify ministerial effectiveness. It must be noted that there appears to be no consensus among researchers on how to specifically measure this elusive concept of the ideal minister today.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the apparent crises that ministers are facing today both personally and in regard to ecclesiastical organizational objectives, dealing with the ambiguities of clergy development appears to be deeply needed. Williams helps readers understand how mentor/mentee dyads serve to clarify both the personal and practical foci of clergy

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Hunt, John E. Hinkle, Jr., and H. Newton Malony, "Overview of Dimensions and Issues," in *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, ed. Richard A. Hunt, John E. Hinkle, Jr., and H. Newton Malony (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 13-18.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Nauss, "Assessing Ministerial Effectiveness: A Review of the Measures and Their Use" (unpublished manuscript, 1994); Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> J. E. Dittes, "Research on Clergymen: Factors Influencing Decisions for Religious Service and Effectiveness in the Vocation," *Religious Education* 57 (supplement; 1962): 141-165; H. Newton Malony, "Ministerial Effectiveness: A Review of Recent Research," *Pastoral Psychology* 33 (1984): 96-104; Alan Nauss, "Problems in Measuring Ministerial Effectiveness," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 11, no. 2 (June 1972): 141-151; Alan Nauss, "Ministerial Effectiveness in Ten Functions," *Review of Religious Research* 36, no. 1 (September 1994).

development. Williams argues for a return to an ancient form of clergy development through the concept of apprenticeship. This apprenticeship causes the overarching consideration that what we do and produce is deeply reflective of who we are.

There are few works today that explore the dynamics of clergy development from ancient ecclesiastical models. This work by Williams is a welcomed addition to the multidimensional nature of developing clergy.

---

#### About the Author

Mike Oney, senior pastor of Grace Assembly in Wake Forest, NC, has extensive background in executive denominational leadership, church planting, consulting, coaching, and mentoring. Mike holds ordination credentials with the Assemblies of God and is presently completing his dissertation as a doctoral candidate at Regent University.

Email: [mike@graceassembly.com](mailto:mike@graceassembly.com)

---



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## TOWARDS A THEORETICAL MODEL OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP<sup>1</sup>

CORNÉ J. BEKKER, D. LITT. ET PHIL.

It is surprising, that with the relative increase in scholarly focus on the phenomena of leadership, to see how leadership scholars in modernity have largely ignored the topic of religious leadership (McClymond, 2001). There has been little advance in theoretical perspectives in the processes of religious leadership in the twentieth century (Lindt, 1986) beyond the pioneering sociological studies of Weber (1968) and Wach (1944). But, the turn of the century and the accompanied turn to spirituality (Bekker, 2008a) have produced a focused return to the scholarly study of religious leadership (Freedman & McClymond, 2001) and in particular a focus on Christian leadership (Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, & Goodwin, 2005). The advent of academic journals in the new century devoted to the study of Christian leadership, such as the *Journal for Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* (JBPL) and the *Journal for Applied Christian Leadership*, serve to mark the emerging nature of this scholarly focus. This brief reflection serves to highlight some of the recent developments in the scholarly efforts to define Christian Leadership.

### I. THE TURN TO THE SCHOLARLY STUDY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

---

<sup>1</sup> The style and reference format for this leadership reflection that of the American Psychological Association (APA).

The recent interests in Christian leadership, popular and scholarly, have been varied in scope and research methodology and have been characterized by (a) studies of leadership approaches of biblical characters (Manz, 1998; Piovanelli, 2005; Whittington et al., 2005; Wildavsky, 1984); (b) historical, sociological, and contextual descriptions (Barnes, 1978; Bekker, 2006; Goetting, 2006; Guenther & Heidebrecht, 1999; Liftin, 1982; Nikkel, 1991; Papademetriou, 2003; Polomo, 1997; Sterk, 1998); (c) studies of historical Christian figures (Bekker, 2008b; Clarke, 1998; Karecki, 2008; Patrick, 2008; St. John, 1998); (d) ethical explorations (Karff, 1994; Kretzschmar, 2007; Wheeler, 1993; Willimon, 2002); (e) cross-faith comparative analysis (Freedman & McClymond, 2001); (f) formational process descriptions (Engstrom, 1976; Faulhaber, 2008; Kretzschmar, 2002; Miller, 2005; Robinson, 2005; Thiessen, 2005); (g) comparisons with leadership and management theories (Gary, 2007; Heuser & Klaus, 1998; Lamkin, 2005; Longbotham & Gutierrez, 2007; Middleton, 2006; Prosser, 2007); (h) exegetical studies (Clarke, 1992; Faulhaber, 2007; Hierberts, 1976; Poon, 2006; Rogers, 2006; Still, 2004); and finally (i) attempts at a proto-theory (Ayers, 2006; Bekker, 2006; Koening, 1993; Niewold, 2007; Sanders, 1967; Stott, 2002).

Although areas of convergence have been noted by most of the above authors, no attempt to date has been made to synthesize these varied approaches into a cohesive whole. The following is an attempt to highlight some of the areas of convergence amongst a few of the prominent and emerging descriptive and theoretical approaches to the study of Christian leadership. The choice of approaches is representative in scope and presented in chronological order, so as to illustrate some of the trends and scholarly developments in the study of Christian leadership.

Each of these descriptive and theoretical approaches to Christian leadership are briefly discussed, areas of convergence explored, and further avenues for research proposed.

### *Engstrom*

Engstrom's (1976) popular-press book on how to develop management and human relation skills as a Christian leader is a good example of the kind of popular ideas that were current in the mid-20th century and beyond. Engstrom, building in the ideas of Tead (1963), Gangel (1974), and Goble (1972), proposed a leadership model that emerged for the leadership trait theory popularized in the 1970s (Stogdill, 1974). Engstrom modified Stogdill's list and presented nine "personal traits" of leaders, interspersed with ethical and biblical injunctions. Engstrom's work did not include any indepth exegetical, historical, sociological, or contextual analyses, but is rather focused on an attempt to integrate a Christian Evangelical worldview with the management principles current in the 1970s.

Table 1. Emerging Descriptive and Theoretical Approaches to Christian Leadership

Engstrom (1976)	Clark (1992, 1998)	Kretzschmar (2002, 2007)	Whittington et al. (2005)	Bekker (2006)	Ayers (2006)	Niewold (2007)
"Personal traits of Christian leaders"	"Paul's model of leadership"	"Moral leadership: A Christian-ethical analysis"	"Legacy leadership of the Apostle Paul"	"Mimetic Christological model of Christian leadership"	"A theology of leadership"	"Martyrological (witness-based) model of Christian leadership"
Desire for achievement	Mimetic	Intellectual conversion	Worthy of imitation	Mimetic	Idealized influence	Expansionist
Acceptance of authority	Christological	Affective conversion	Boldness amid opposition	Kenotic	Inspirational motivation	Self-referential
Self-discipline		Volitional conversion	Pure motive	Servant posturing	Intellectual stimulation	Transformational
Creativity		Relational conversion	Influence without asserting authority	Embracing humanity	Individualized consideration	Public witness
Delegation		Moral action	Affectionate & emotional	Active humility		Vocational habitude
Decisiveness			Vulnerable & transparent	Missional obedience		
Persistence			Authentic and sincere			
Balanced Life			Active, not passive			
Faith & prayer			Follower-centered, not self-centered			
			Changed lives			



Engstrom's (1976) list of "personal traits" for leaders is as follows, with short descriptions of each:

1. *Desire for achievement.* Christian leaders are ambitious, but their ambition is tempered to an allegiance the "honor and glory" of Christ.
2. *Acceptance of authority.* Christian leaders accept their authority and yield it with a degree of competence and moral character.
3. *Self-discipline.* In order to "control others," Christian leaders must demonstrate high levels of personal self-control.
4. *Creativity.* Engstrom identified creativity as the ability to do "original thinking" by taking "imagination and organizing it through self-initiated plans" (p. 114).
5. *Delegation.* Christian leaders lead by allowing followers to "function responsibly in a given task" (pp. 114-115).
6. *Decisiveness.* Christian leaders are sure of the "will of God" and the "right course of action," and therefore act in a decisive and clear manner.
7. *Persistence.* Engstrom described Christian leaders as having a "firmness of conviction" that leads to leadership excellence.
8. *Balanced life.* Christian leaders have clear priorities and place value of family, community, and social relationships. They have the ability to prioritize and promote balance in what they do.
9. *Faith and prayer.* Engstrom added to the popular trait theory of leadership by adding a devotional trait that allows leaders to receive discernment and wisdom in their leading.

Engstrom's (1976) list of the "personal traits" of Christian leaders summarizes the prevalent attempts of the Christian faith communities in the mid- and later-20th century to integrate the demands and tenets of their Scriptures. The attempts are limited in critical analysis and critique on the secular theories and models of management and leadership.

### Clark

Clarke's (1992) pioneering doctoral dissertation on the secular and Christian leadership in ancient Corinth announced the advent of scholarly, exegetical and historical studies of Christian leadership. Clark's (1992, 1998) work traced the influence of secular leadership in the Christian communities of 1st-century Corinth and how the Apostle Paul attempted to modify Christian approaches to leadership through his writings. Clark identified two particular aspects of Paul's model of leadership: it is *mimetic* and deeply *Christological*. Through a thorough exegetical analyses of some of the key writings of the Apostle Paul, placing these in their respective historic and social contexts, Clark demonstrated a three-fold Pauline model of leadership. Paul's model of leadership is (a) Christ (ultimately depicted in the servant of the Philippian Christ-hymn), (b) he invites his followers to imitate his own mimesis of the Christ example, and finally (c) that the followers should ultimately direct their own model of leadership back to that

of Christ. Clark's work introduced the important idea of the role of Spiritual formation in the development of Christian leaders. It was a ground-breaking work that opens the door for further historical and exegetical studies.

### *Kretzschmar*

Kretzschmar (2002, 2007) approached the study of Christian leadership from the perspective of a Christian ethicist and philosopher. Set in the context of the moral failures of apartheid leaders in South Africa, Kretzschmar proposes a process description of leadership "conversion" that could produce "moral leadership." Building in the insights of Franciscan spirituality, Kretzschmar invited discussion concerning five distinct elements in the moral formation of Christian leaders:

1. *Intellectual conversion.* Christian leaders "constantly rethink or evaluate" their own and others "moral framework" and this involves the disciplines of "self-awareness and critique" in order to develop the virtue of prudence (correct judgment) (pp. 28-31).
2. *Affective conversion.* Christian leaders have a high regard for *othokardia* (right heartedness towards God). Leaders consider the ultimate location of their affections and adopt ascetic disciplines (such as the traditional Monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience) to guide their hearts back to God.
3. *Volitional conversion.* Christian leaders seek to have a "redeemed human will" that moves from willfulness (identified as arrogant self-sufficiency) to willingness (described as flexible receptivity).
4. *Relational conversion.* A Christian leader's "moral conscience" is formed and challenged in community. Christian leaders engage in "moral relational power" that brings personal and communal transformation to perceptions and applications of leadership.
5. *Moral action.* The intellectual, affective, volitional, and relational conversions of Christian leaders result in "moral action" that facilitates the wider conversion of the world in which these leaders operate.

Kretzschmar's (2002, 2007) work provides an erudite base for the inclusion of moral theology and spiritual formational studies to the ongoing quest to define Christian leadership. It deepens the discussion from mere concern of leadership effectiveness to the moral dimensions of personal and communal leadership.

### *Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, and Goodwin*

The appearance of the work of Whittington et al. on the leadership wisdom of the Apostle Paul in the 2005 edition of *The Leadership Quarterly* brought the field of Christian leadership studies to mainstream organizational leadership research. Whittington et al., building on the earlier attempts of Wildavsky (1984) to combine the disciplines of social science and biblical studies, proposed a model of "legacy leadership" based on an exegetical study of Paul's first letter to the church in

Thessalonica. Whittington et al. proposed ten qualities of effective Christian leadership observed in the “life and ministry” of the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians: (1) worthy of imitation, (2) boldness amid opposition, (3) having a pure motive, (4) influence without asserting authority, (5) affectionate and emotional, (6) vulnerable and transparent, (7) authentic and sincere, (8) active and not passive, (9) follower-centered and not self-centered, and finally (10) evident by changed lives of leaders and followers.

Whittington et al.’s (2005) work is limited in its exegetical analysis, but thorough its comparative analysis of the constructs with that of transformational leadership, servant leadership, leadership motive patterns, emotional intelligence, and ultimately spiritual leadership. The greatest benefit of this study does not lie in the exegetical work, but in the successful multi-disciplinary approach of the study that combines the disciplines of social science with that of biblical studies.

### *Bekker*

Bekker (2006), in an attempt to define a “proto-theory” of Christian leadership, turned to the “proto-text” of the New Testament (considered by scholars to be pre-Pauline and possibly the earliest text of Christianity), the Christ-hymn in the letter of Paul to the Christian communities in ancient Roman Philippi. Bekker’s work proposed an early mimetic Christological model of Christian leadership in Roman Philippi by exploring the judicial, rhetorical structure, and the social function of the Philippians hymn (2:5-11) as a *cursus pudorum* (course of ignominies) that stands in stark contrast to a *cursus honorum*, the formalized sequence of public offices in 1st-century Roman cities. The Philippians hymn challenged the notions and principles of the prevalent shame/honor social matrix of Roman societies by offering an alternative set of behaviors and values that stood in stark contrast with those of the dominant culture. The hymn makes use of a *cursus pudorum* in which the voluntary abasement, humility, and obedience of Christ becomes an exemplum that offers a critique of the tyrannies of the timocratic leadership style of Roman Philippi and offers an alternative vision of service oriented leadership rooted in humility and common mutuality.

Bekker (2006) proposed a mimetic “proto-model” of Christian leadership that is marked by (1) Christological mimesis, (2) kenosis (self-emptying), (3) servant posturing, (4) humane in its orientation, (5) active humility, and (6) missional obedience. The strength of Bekker’s model is that it provides an “early” historical picture of a counter-cultural, humane, and empowering approach to Christian leadership that was communicated in humility and radical mutuality.

### *Ayers*

Ayers published a paper on a possible theology of leadership in the inaugural edition of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* in 2006. Ayers proposed an area of convergence in the “languages of Theology and Leadership Studies” and uses

this area of convergence to explore a sacred texture analysis (a sub-section of socio-rhetorical criticism) of the Christ-hymn in Paul's Letter to the Philippians. Using the socio-rhetorical matrix of Robbins' (1996) sacred texture analysis of (1) deity, (2) divine history, and (3) religious community, Ayers compared the rhetorical injunctions of the Christ-hymn and compared his findings with the construct of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Ayers' work compares the results of a sacred texture analysis of the Christ-hymn in the Pauline letter to the Philippians with transformation leadership and finds its comparison "patterns" that are consistent with the four traits of this theory, namely (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Ayers did however point out that these four traits isolated from the Christ-hymn, and consistent with transformational leadership, are ultimately focused on Christ and mimetic in nature.

### *Niewold*

Niewold (2007) proposed an alternative model of Christian leadership based on the theological motive of *martyria*, or witness-based leadership. Niewold critiqued the easy adoption of the philosophies and tenets of servant leadership within Christian communities and observed that this has happened with little theological or philosophical scrutiny or reflection. Building on the biblical concept of *martyria*, which can be rendered as "witness" or "testimony," Niewold developed a theological model of Christian leadership distinguished by five characteristics. Martyrological leadership is: (a) expansionist, (b) self-referential, (c) transformational, (d) concerned with public witness, and finally expressed in (e) vocational habitude. Niewold's work provided a Reformist theological base for an alternative Christian leaders that desire to base their perceptions and ideas of leadership fully engaged of biblical Christology.

## II. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The turn of the century has brought a new era of academic exploration to the quest to define Christian leadership. Research has been varied in scope, methodology, and focus. Little work has been done to synthesize all these approaches and to provide a "mega-theory" of the concept. This might be due to the fact that so much of the exegetical, theological, philosophical, and historical context of Christian forms and approaches of leadership have not been explored yet. Some of areas of convergence have arisen though and these areas of convergence could provide a base for further exploration. Based on the small above review, the current theories and approaches agree that Christian leadership is (a) mimetic (Ayers, 2006; Bekker, 2006; Clark, 1992; Niewold, 2007; Whittington et al., 2005), (b) concerned with a correct understanding of power (Ayers; Bekker; Clark; Engstrom, 1976; Kretzschmar, 2002; Whittington et al.), (c) follower-centered (Ayers; Bekker; Clark; Kretzschmar; Whittington et al.), and ultimately (d) Christological (Ayers; Bekker; Clark, 1992; Engstrom; Kretzschmar; Niewold; Whittington et al.). The areas of convergence suggest that the next steps in

research should be focused on determined historical and sociological reconstruction of the leadership of Jesus, based on rigorous exegetical research, as well as renewed conceptual theory of leadership mimesis as found in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

---

### About the Author

Corné J. Bekker (D. Litt. et Phil.) joined Regent University in 2005. He previously served as the associate dean for academics of Bible College in Johannesburg, South Africa and now serves as an associate professor for the School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship (GLE). Dr. Bekker teaches in the GLE doctoral programs and is actively involved in research on the use of biblical hermeneutics and spirituality to explore leadership. He is the editor of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* (JBPL) and the co-editor of *Inner Resources for Leaders* (IRL).  
Email: clbekker@regent.edu

---

### REFERENCES

- Ayers, M. (2006). Towards a theology of leadership. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(1), 3-27.
- Barnes, D. F. (1978). Charisma and religious leadership: An historical analysis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 17(1), 1-18.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14, 21-27.
- Bekker, C. J. (2006). *The Philippians hymn (2:5-11) as an early mimetic Christological model of Christian leadership in Roman Philippi*. Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, Virginia Beach (VA), USA.
- Bekker, C. J. (2008a). The turn to spirituality and downshifting. In F. Gandolfi & H. Cherrier (Eds.), *Downshifting: A theoretical and practical approach to living a simple life* (pp.102-121). ICFAI Press: Hyderabad.
- Bekker, C. J. (2008b). Leading with your head bowed down: Lesson in leadership humility from St. Benedict of Nursia. *Inner Resources for Leaders*, 1(3), 1-10.
- Clarke, A. D. (1992). Secular and Christian leadership in Corinth. *Tyndale Bulletin*, 43(2), 395-398.
- Clarke, A. D. (1998). "Be imitators of me": Paul's model of leadership. *Tyndale Bulletin*, 49(2), 329-360.
- Engstrom, T. W. (1976). *The making of a Christian leader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Faulhaber, J. A. (2007). The role of tribulation and virtue in creativity: A sacred texture analysis of 1 Peter. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(2), 135-147.

- Faulhaber, J. A. (2008). *A biblical approach to developing the inner qualities of a leader*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Press.
- Freedman, D. N., & McClymond, M. J. (2001). *The rivers of paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as religious founders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Gangel, K. O. (1974). *Competent to lead*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Gary, J. E. (2007). What would Jesus lead: Identity theft, leadership evolution, and open systems. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(2), 89-98.
- Goble, F. (1972). *Excellence in leadership*. New York: American Management Association.
- Goetting, P. F. (2006). Openness and trust in congregational and synodical leadership. *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 33(4), 304-312.
- Guenther, B., & Heidebrecht, D. (1999). The elusive biblical model of leadership. *Direction*, 28(2), 153-164.
- Heuser, R., & Klaus, B. D. (1998). Charismatic leadership theory: A shadow side confessed. *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 20(2), 161-174.
- Karecki, M. (2008). Clare of Assisi: Foot-washing leadership. *Inner Resources for Leaders*, 1(1), 1-9.
- Karff, S. E. (1994, March). Religious leadership. *Christian Century*, 23-30, 300-302.
- Koening, J. (1993). Hierarchy transfigured: Perspectives on leadership in the New Testament. *Word & World*, 8(1), 26-33.
- Kretzschmar, L. (2002). Authentic Christian leadership and spiritual formation in Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 113, 41-60.
- Kretzschmar, L. (2007). The formation of moral leaders in South Africa: A christian-ethical analysis of some essential elements. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 128, 18-36.
- Lamkin, J. E. (2005). Systems theory and congregational leadership: Leaves from an Alchemist's journal. *Review and Expositor*, 102, 461-489.
- Liftin, A. D. (1982). The nature of the pastoral role: The leaders as completer. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1, 57-66.
- Lindt, G. (1986). Leadership. In Mircea Eliade et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of religion* (Vol. 8, pp. 485-490) London: Collier Macmillan.
- Longbotham, G., & Gutierrez, B. (2007). Upper echelons theory at work in the Ephesian church. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(2), 99-117.
- Manz, C. (1998). *The leadership wisdom of Jesus: Practical lessons for today*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- McClymond, M. J. (2001). "Prophet or loss? Reassessing Max Weber's theory of religious leadership," in D. N. Freedman & M. J. McClymond, *The rivers of paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as religious founders* (pp. 613-658). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Middleton, G.R. (2006). The epistle to the Ephesians: Instilling values using situational leadership. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(1), 28-48.

- Miller, W. J. (2005). The heart rediscovered: Hope for leadership transformation. *Direction*, 34(1), 43-53.
- Niewold, J. (2007). Beyond servant leadership. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(2), 118-134.
- Nikkel, J. (1991). Church growth Leadership theory and Mennonite brethren theology. *Direction*, 20(2), 72-88.
- Papademetriou, G. C. (2003). Leadership in the parish: A theology of ministry. *Greek Orthodox Review*, 48(1-4), 113-130.
- Patrick, M. (2008). The leadership aesthetics of St. Francis of Assisi. *Inner Resources for Leaders*, 1(2), 1-37.
- Piovanelli, P. (2005). Jesus' charismatic authority: On the historical applicability of a sociological model. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 73(2), 395-427.
- Polomo, M. M. (1997). The "Toronto blessing": Charisma, institutionalization, and revival. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36(2), 257-271.
- Poon, R. (2006). John 21: A Johannine model of leadership. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(1), 49-70.
- Prosser, S. (2007). *To be a servant-leader*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Robbins, V. K. (1996). *The tapestry of early Christian discourse: Rhetoric, society and ideology*. New York: Routledge.
- Robinson, A. B. (2005, October). Give and take: Leadership as spiritual practice. *Christian Century*, 4, 28-30.
- Rogers, D. (2006). Safety in uncertainty for Christian leadership: An inner texture reading of Hebrews 11:23-29. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 1(1), 71-82.
- Sanders, J. O (1967). *Spiritual leadership*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- St. John, M. R. (1998). Augustine's self-watch: A model for pastoral leadership. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 155,92-103.
- Sterk, A. (1998). On Basil, Moses and the model bishop: The Cappadocian legacy of leadership. *Church History*, 67(2), 227-255.
- Still, E. C. (2004). Divisions over leaders and food offered to idols: The parallel thematic structures of 1 Corinthians 4:6-21 and 8:1-11:1. *Tyndale Bulletin*, 55(1), 17-41.
- Stogdill, R. M. (1974). *Handbook of leadership: A survey of the literature*, New York: Free Press.
- Stott, J. (2002). *Basic Christian leadership*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Tead, O. (1963). *The art of leadership*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Thiessen, V. W. (2005). The great work to be born: Spiritual formation for leaders. *Direction*, 34(1), 55-63.
- Wach, J. (1944). *Sociology of Religion* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, M. (1968). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretative sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, eds., Vols. 3). New York: Bedminster Press.
- Wheeler, B. G. (1993). What kind of leadership for tomorrow's churches. *Word and World*, 8(1), 34-41.

- Whittington, J. L., Pitts, T. M., Kageler, W. V., & Goodwin, V. L. (2005). Legacy leadership: The leadership wisdom of the Apostle Paul. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 749-770.
- Wildavsky, A. (1984). The nursing father: Moses as a political leader. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Willimon, W. H. (2002, April/May). Back to the burning bush. *Christian Century*, 7-8.