Biblical Theology for Ethical Leadership

Leaders from Beginning to End

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Biblical Theology for Ethical Leadership

Leaders from Beginning to End

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Introduction: Getting Theologians and Leaders Around the Table

Introduction

I felt my pulse quicken and my temperature rise. On the one hand, the stakes were low because I was surrounded by friends. I knew they would let me off the hook. On the other hand, the stakes couldn't have been higher because I was among *friends*. I knew these men and I wanted to be in their company, to impress them, and to serve them. The five of us were huddled around a slick-topped, paper place-matted table in a Greek diner in Johnson City, New York, a manufacturing town keen on knowing what to do next.

Situated just outside Binghamton, New York, with its university of growing repute, Johnson City had an air of academic life, though none of us were specifically academics (although I hurry to add that one was Harvard educated and several had advanced degrees). There were four managers—variously from manufacturing, health care, aerospace engineering, and the energy sector—and me, assistant pastor at their church and the group's convener. I had learned from each of these friends—about leadership, faithfulness, parenting, encouragement, hard work—and respected their learning through MBAs, hard knocks, and diligent reflection. So, I couldn't think of a better group with whom to journey through a technical leadership textbook.

Which brings me to my rising temp and elevated heart rate. I was sitting there, expected to lead discussion, but grossly unprepared.

I knew the jig was up. These friends came prepared to be led deeper into reflection, discussion, and analysis only to have the leader falter.

Have you ever been in that setting? I'm sure your situation is different, but you might know what it's like to have eyes on you, expecting that you see something clearly that others only see dimly. To have ears tuned into what wisdom you have to share, the fruit of reflection, analysis, and synthesis of various viewpoints. To have feet ready to move if only you can make the destination clear and compelling.

I help to train pastors. I like training pastors because they are often some of the most courageous men and women I encounter. They often lead stubborn, struggling people with only a few resources. Inevitably somewhere along the line—whether in class or at lunch, over Facebook or on the phone—we reflect together whether this is what they *really* want to be doing because at some point they have sat at the table, among friends, wondering if they are letting down those gathered around them. One of the earliest Christian leaders, Gregory of Nazianzus, Archbishop of Constantinople in the fourth century, warned people not to take up leadership in the church if they hadn't applied or learned to speak the wisdom of God. If these would-be leaders didn't see themselves in the community of the church or submit to the demands of Jesus of his followers, then they would wisely avoid leading in the church. Why? Because leadership without godly wisdom, both learned and proclaimed, might lead to success and then utter failure. For Gregory, leadership without theology was an extreme danger (Nazianzen, n.d.).

I don't know if you are a pastor or not. I like being around leaders of all sorts, so if you've picked up this book, I expect I'd like to sit down at a slick-topped table with you and talk about what you're reading. I like leaders because, whether or not they are pastors, true leaders get the stakes of leadership. Leaders *get* Gregory's warning, have heard it in the words of their own mentors and have said it to others under their influence. Regardless of the field in which you're leading, I want to help introduce you to Gregory's warning from his own perspective. I want to talk to you about theology and leadership. Which might invite this question.

WHAT'S THEOLOGY HAVE TO DO WITH LEADERSHIP?

That's the question, isn't it? Theology is about God and the implications for thinking right, believing right, and aiming right, but less concerned with getting things done…*right*? Isn't leadership about getting

things done, getting people on board, getting systems designed, getting processes implemented, holding teams and individuals accountable? So, what does theology have to do with leadership? And what does leadership have to do with theology?

This kind of question—"What does theology have to do with _____?"—has been asked for a long time. Tertullian (c. 155–c. 240), an early Christian leader *and* theologian asked it like this: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian was asking what philosophy (represented by Athens) has to do with theology (represented by Jerusalem). Don't they seek to know different things?[1]

I expect that drawing together theologians with leadership practitioners and thinkers might prove to be tough. But I like leading, and leaders work at getting the right people speaking with each other. I also like theology and I can't have a conversation without it. So, let's see if we can get theology and leadership into a mutually beneficial conversation.

Tertullian was asking what philosophy and theology have to do with one another, yet asking what leadership has to do with theology is even tougher because leadership is hard to define and narrow as a field (Yukl 2002, 2–7). *Leadership Quarterly*, one of the leading journals of leadership research, champions various disciplines in leadership studies including economics, organizational behavior, management, sociology, history, anthropology, and various psychologies. Leadership reaches into many fields, but does it stretch to include theology? If leadership researchers and practitioners, interested in all potential avenues of leadership research, are asking the question, maybe they should also ask:

- "What do Washington, Beijing, Ottawa, Brasilia, and Moscow—and other *political* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?" In other words, what does theology have to do with politics?

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[1] The question was used a decade ago by Christian philosopher and theologian James K.A. Smith to introduce a new series, the *Church and Postmodern Culture Series,* which would introduce readers to postmodern philosophy, based mainly in Europe, in a nontechnical way and illustrate postmodern philosophy's application for church communities. Fittingly, Smith shifted the question: "What has *Paris* to do with Jerusalem?" (Smith 2006, 10). This book tries to bring subjects together, as well. While at times it will utilize philosophy, it mainly is concerned with leadership and theology. And it aims to bring them together in a largely nontechnical way.

- "What do New York, London, Amsterdam, and Hong Kong—and other *financial* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?" In other words, what does theology have to do with business?
- "What do Hollywood, Bollywood, Kallywood, and Nollywood— and other *cinema* centers of the world—have to do with Jerusalem?" In other words, what does theology have to do with entertainment?

Politics, business, and entertainment: three areas where leadership is alive and well, but what does theology have to do with them?

I can hear the theologians answering the question loud and clear, "Everything! Theology has *everything* to do with those cities and questions and issues! Theology is already at work in Washington, London, and Bollywood. It's not *whether* there's a theology at work in those places, but *what theology* and *how good a theology* is present. And we can help."

So, why does theology matter? Because everyone has beliefs about God. *Everyone* is a theologian! Even if a person does not believe in God, they still have beliefs about what they are not believing in or what others believe when they use the word "God." The sum total of one's beliefs about God is the content of their theology. Theology can be simple ("God is love") or complex ("Jesus Christ is one person with two natures—divine and human—indivisible and unmixed"); conscious (I hold the two examples above intentionally and consciously) or embedded—beliefs about God and God's work that are held without one's awareness, hidden and buried and assembled from prior teaching, experience, texts, and other inputs. The discipline of theology can help make a leader's beliefs *precise* and uncover the presence of beliefs in a system so that embedded theological beliefs can be observed, strengthened, replaced, and corrected.

Emboldened with this clear answer, the leadership experts might have a similar answer to the question, "What does leadership have to theology?" "Everything!" they shout. "Leadership is *always* at work everywhere! Wherever you have relationships, you have forms and types of leadership. It's not whether leadership is happening in relationships and organizations—even churches—but what *kind* of leadership and what *level* of leadership. And we can help!" So, leaders have to think about theology because theology is about everything *and* theologians must think about leadership because leadership is everywhere. So far, so good. Our conversation is off to a tentative start and both theologian

and leader are present at the table—maybe even starting to see a mutual resemblance. The theologian is seeing herself as a kind of leader and the leader is seeing himself as a kind of theologian.

Now before going further, I need to make my own theology explicit. I am a Christian theologian and I operate within that frame and story.[2] I invite people of other faiths and no faith to read this book and to see part of why and how Christians engage in leadership. I also invite Christian leaders to read this book because mission-focused Christian leaders have been talking and thinking about leadership for a long time—sometimes without the theologians. These are the folks who know that not only has the world come to *them* through TV/Internet, investment portfolios, and pop culture, but that *they* are charged to go to the world. And they are determined to do so! If you are this kind of leader—charging ahead with the mission and focused on results, then I hope this book deepens your faith and increases your effectiveness, because while God isn't a magic genie or the X-factor of effective leadership, good theology will make a difference in your leadership.[3] And your effective leadership in service to God and people will help to validate theology and its importance (Migliore 2014, 7).

But those not so theologically invested might be wondering about something written above—a little idea subtly slid into the conversation but that can't go unchallenged. Theology is about *everything*? Really? Well, from my view, yes! Since there is a God who created, then reality simply *is* theological and leadership should be thought about theologically. Let me be quick to add: this does not deny that humans form and shape reality as well. Leaders know that human action shapes reality— what is *real* is brought about to a great extent by what human beings have done—intentionally and without intention. Leadership, of course, is about forming the intentionality and increasing the effectiveness of those who are intentional. Christian theology doesn't deny that human beings play a role in crafting what is real or forming reality. Both of these

[2] I can't spell out my entire theology here and certainly some Christians will disagree with it, but I want to be upfront so that my claims are understood not to be made blindly or assuming that everyone agrees, but that I am self-aware.

[3] Some missional theologians and scholars are even reclaiming space for the act of God in the study of history. (See Noll 2014, 99–108.) In a Christian worldview, at least some successful leadership not only *may*, but *must* be attributed to divine intervention and specific aide.

thoughts are put together in what Christians call the Incarnation, the teaching that the invisible God became visible in a specific man—Jesus of Nazareth, a first century Jew. The Incarnation means that God, who is spirit, became flesh without ceasing to be God. Notice how this theological teaching captures both ideas—that reality is theological and that human beings contribute to reality.[4] One of the earliest Christian writers, theologians, and leaders, Paul of Tarsus, wrote that all things were created through Jesus and are in Jesus (Colossians 1:16–18). Yet Jesus, as a human being, impacts this reality—living, breathing, teaching, eating, and leading. The invisible God contains all of what is real and has taken on flesh to act, forming reality within God's self and forming reality from within the creation. All this to say, Christian theology does not deny that human activity really matters; in fact, it invites human activity and validates human activity.

This talk about reality is not foreign to leadership and leaders. By now the leaders in this conversation are thinking about Max DePree and his famous description of the first responsibility of the leader: *to define reality* (1989, 11). But while defining reality might simply mean observing it and saying what it is, DePree may have had in mind that *defining* reality involves *constructing* reality.

Let's dig a little deeper into this idea of defining and constructing reality. When we *define* a word, we don't *give* meaning to it, but we *state* its meaning—how the word is being used and what it is being used to convey. When defining reality, leaders don't simply *give* meaning to reality, but *see* what is truly there. However, words change meaning over time—not because somebody who said it meant something radically new with it, but simply because the word came to be used in a new way. And just like words change meaning, so does reality change. Just like defining words in current use and constructing new meaning of words over time are not unrelated acts, so defining reality and constructing reality are not completely separate acts, either. Leaders define and construct reality. When a leader looks at a state of affairs and defines it one way when someone else might define it another way, they are not just seeing reality, but constructing reality. Christian theology doesn't deny this truth, but it does draw a helpful distinction: Some reality can only

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[4] For a deeper theological investigation, see O'Donovan (1994).

be defined and cannot be changed (we might call this Reality—with a capital R) and some reality can—no *should* and *must*—be changed. The key is knowing which is which—and theologians and leaders can help one another *know Reality* and discover how to *change reality*. Essentially what I'm saying is that theology and leadership mix—they *must* mix from my point of view. I want Christian leaders to know it; I want theologians to know it; I want non-Christian leaders to be intrigued by the claim and to keep reading.

Why Should I Keep Reading?

Perhaps those last few paragraphs got a bit heady and some are still questioning whether or not they are theologians. So, let's slow it down a little bit. Do an experiment with me. Consider yourself a theologian *and* a leader and see which of the following claims resonates with you about why leaders should care about theology and how theology can help leaders.

Theology Can Keep Leaders Going

More than hoping you read this book, I hope this book keeps you going. I hope it gives you something you need. I recently recovered some notes from my very first systematic theology course from about fifteen years ago. My professor, Dr. Ken Gavel, was previously a pastor, a leader of a local church. It showed in the way he taught theology. Scratched across the top of one of my many pages of handwritten notes, underlined, *and* boxed in for effect was this statement: "Theology helps to gird people up for death."[5]

That's some strong stuff. I hope this book's theology gives you a reason (a God-logic or *theology!*) to get out of bed those mornings when the world seems too dark and too far-gone. When leaders meet dead ends, a strong theology will carry them forward. Is your theology strong enough? Does it penetrate with sufficient depth into why you do what you do so that when you've forgotten or grown apathetic you still find yourself with a logic—a theology—that overcomes breakdowns and breakups? You know the challenges leaders face: Projects die.

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[5] Karl Barth speaks of this same idea in an address given at the meeting of the "Friends of the Christian World." He states that the people of church "do not need us [ministers of the Word] to help them live, but seem rather to need us to help them die" (1957, 188).

People quit. Plans fade. Good theology will keep a leader going, will sustain a leader, will help them recover when their leadership efforts hit dead ends.

Theology Can Clarify a Leader's Vision

Vision is about the future—what the leader wants and believes should be achieved. Theology is always thinking about the future and has developed thoughts and logic about the future. Theologians call this "eschatology"—the study or logic of the end. Among other things, "end" can mean finale or boundary—as in, "The play came to its end" or "That is the end of the property." But "end" can also mean purpose, as in, "You want to be rich? To what end?" Theology brings these two meanings together: Eschatology is about the end—the end of reality as we know it; and eschatology is also about purpose—God's purposes for this world. Leadership is about both as well. Theology can help leaders realize what they do not want to see come to an end and so must work to sustain, prolong, and increase. Theology can also help leaders realize what they see as the purpose of what they are doing—what the late nights, large dollars, and long hours have been about. Purpose and finality. It is not whether or not there is an eschatology in your leadership, but what eschatology exists. Theology can help.

Theology Can Expand the Leader's Imagination

A logic that involves God is already a big topic. Because leadership is such hard work, it can become easy to get tunnel vision, focusing strictly on the problems directly in front of us or the people that shout loudest. The squeaky wheel gets the leadership grease. But leaders know that learning matters. Ongoing learning is a mark of being human and provides competitive advantage to organizations (Senge 2006; Lencioni 2012). So, leadership can be analyzed psychologically, sociologically, culturally, and from other angles.[6] Each of these vantage points could provide a set of questions to study leadership. Theology is concerned

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[6]These are a few of the different angles of study offered on the website for *Leadership Quarterly*. https://www.journals.elsevier.com/the-leadership-quarterly/. Accessed September 7, 2017.

with learning as well. Theology, as the word implies, is a kind of *logic*.[7] Theology, no less than any other approach, is a potential route into the field of leadership. It provides a new posture, a new logic, for leaders to use. Theology can help expand the leader's vision to reevaluate priorities and directions, to expand the leader's imagination for solutions and also what she sees as problems and potentialities.

Andy Stanley (2015), communications expert, pastor, and leader says that leaders learn to ask "What would my replacement do?" This kind of question drives us to reexamine what we see is reality—just like Max DePree demanded. But it also causes a kind of imagination—a putting on not just our own thinking cap, but some else's. "What would my replacement do?" gets me out of my head and into another's. This kind of expanded imagination takes reaching up to scratch your head, but then moving your hand out to scratch six inches into the air, forcing your imagination to extend that far.[8]

But imagination isn't simply about thinking "out there." It's also about seeing "in here." Imagination is not simply about the big, but about the small. Here's what I mean. Human beings have found that reality extends out very far, so we have invented telescopes and rockets and satellites and rovers. We take pictures of far off places. But reality also extends in very deep, so we have microscopes and nanobots. We have functional magnetic resonance imaging to capture places previously hidden. Human beings have a drive to *know*. Leaders know that imagination doesn't just go *out*, but *in*. Leaders might call this a kind of second look or a *second loop in the learning cycle*. Leadership scholar Chris Argyris notes that double loop learning means correcting and changing underlying values revealed in actions and systems (1977). Theology can reveal (or create) underlying values in leadership. As a lens of value inspection, theo-logic reveals values that may otherwise have gone undetected. It helps give an imagination for a new world that lies beneath the

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[7]There are various ways to "do theology," including systematic theology, which analyzes different teachings (doctrines) in light of other teachings, presenting conclusions in orderly, consistent manners. In this book, we will delve into a certain kind of theology, biblical theology, which involves the analysis of texts from the Bible for what they reveal about God and God's work.

[8]I was given the image by Professor Clinton Branscombe when talking about philosophy. "Sometimes when you're thinking about philosophy, you scratch your head *out here*," he said, scratching about 6 inches away from his head. Leadership is no different!

surface. As a method of value formation, theo-logic creates values that may otherwise go unformed.

Let's see how what goes unnoticed might be unearthed with theology. Peter Senge (2006) famously described three levels of observation: event, behavior, and structure. The hardest of these to observe is *structure* because observers inhabit the structures they are trying to observe. It is like looking at one's own face from within the mirror. You know the mirror is there, but you can't observe it or with it because your face is in it. However, with a little help and without haste, we can observe structures. For instance, in my pastoral counseling work, I would often find people wanting to get to the bottom of an event, even the most heartbreaking of events—perhaps infidelity in marriage, dishonesty in the home, the urge to quit yet another job, and so on. To help get a sense of understanding, I would try to help the person to stop thinking about the event (for example, "My daughter lied to me about her grades!") and stop thinking about the behavior ("My daughter's been lying to me since she turned 13!"), and instead to think about the structure of their home. In this case, the structure of the home would involve its values and norms. I might ask questions like: "What's considered to be important in your home?" "What's expected about what's important?" In this example, if successful grades outweigh honesty in practical terms for this family, then the daughter's behavior is quite reasonable! Does honesty, even in reporting hard to hear truths, get rewarded or does what the honesty *revealed* get punished? Or, is there a complex relationship when both reward and discipline are affected? If honesty doesn't outweigh success in how it is valued in the home, then the daughter's behavior makes sense and will continue leading to more painful events. The *structure* contributed to the behavior and can only be changed by being observed. Theology gives people an opportunity to observe the leadership structure—not simply events, whether desired or not, or behaviors, whether good or bad, but the structure of thought and the co-inherence of values that led to behaviors and contributed to events—because *theology* expands the leader's imagination.

Theology Can Contribute to a Leader's Accurate Self-Perception and Perception of Others

What does it mean to be you and how do you know you are being truly yourself? These are key questions because authenticity has become a key concept and word, especially in leadership circles (Gardner et al. 2011).

People don't like fake; they want *real, authentic*. Leaders should be people who are genuine.

But what is genuine? Christian theology has its own approach to the question. Valuing authenticity in the Christian community means valuing a place where you can be exactly who you are. But leaders know that authenticity does not mean license to be at your worst—worst attitude, worst language, and worst behavior. Christians, too, believe that authenticity matters because God is transforming people into their authentic selves and theology gives authenticity an aim: Jesus of Nazareth. For Christians, being an authentic person is being like Jesus, who is our model. But anyone who is aiming at becoming like Jesus knows there's a tension between who you are now and who you are becoming. So, we might say it like this: authenticity in Christian community is more *becoming* real than *being* real. Authenticity is more about *becoming* a certain kind of person than revealing the person I am today. Authenticity is not permission to be your worst self, but permission to aim at being your best self right where you are—without us condemning you as pretentious. Authenticity in Christian community is not simply accepting who a person is, but an unwavering commitment to seeing a person become their authentic self who is like Jesus. This takes effort. It may even feel like someone is acting like a new person as they practice being a new kind of person in Christ.

Leaders know this tension between *being* and *acting*. Self-leadership is about keeping oneself in a kind of tension between who the leader is and who the leader is becoming. If transformation is real and self-leadership is possible, then who you are is not as *authentic*, not as *real*, as who we are becoming. So, theology can give leaders their aim. Leaders know that sometimes they need to act into a person they are not yet—a person they have not yet become. If leaders haven't thought about their aim in authenticity, then theology can help clarify.

Theology can help with authenticity by giving others the picture we want to become and allowing them to hold us accountable to this aim. Here's what I mean. Not only did Tertullian proffer the famous quote we used near the start of this conversation, but he also noted the "rule of faith"—the affirmation that religious belief was the final authority for Christian life and devotion. When there is the "rule of law," it means that the law and not whoever is in charge has the final say. Likewise, the early church championed that the common faith has the final say. The rule of faith may take different forms, but for one whose faith is formed theologically, then theology will provide guidelines and values

when issues of effectiveness in leadership come into tension with issues of faithfulness to the faith. The faith rules, so pragmatism doesn't. The faith rules, so the whims of leaders don't. Leaders can look at themselves and ask, "Am I living up to the deepest part of who I am?" and can ask of others the same. "Does what you say you believe about God influence how you act in the world?"

But theology helps us not only perceive ourselves but also perceive others—and how they ought to be treated. Theology can help tease out the depth of leadership and hold leadership practices against what a leader claims to believe. Here's an example. Orthodox Christians affirm that God is three persons in one being in perfect relationship (Migliore 2014, 83). God does not have three parts; God is one who is three. This belief, once fleshed out and clarified, forms the doctrine of the Trinity. At the center of all reality then, God forms the basis of self-understanding, the importance of relationship, love, and communality. If God is three-in-one, then human beings are also relational beings; if God has not three parts, then perhaps integrity is vital to being human. Specifically, when applied to leadership, the doctrine of the Trinity might address forms of totalitarianism or the dark side of charisma in leadership. The dark side of charismatic leadership can include risky behavior leading to failure, lack of awareness of weaknesses, overly cautious followers, insecure followers, and lack of leadership succession (Yukl 2002, 251–252). By contrast, the relational nature of God can illuminate the destructive behaviors of dark charismatic leadership, such as a lack of submission, dearth of humility, shortage of freedom for followers, or the shortage of dignity afforded followers. This is individualism and idolatry (Migliore 2014, 83). Further, the doctrine of the Trinity reveals that violence is not the core of reality and that its use, whether rhetorical or physical, may reveal an attempt to set oneself in the place of God (Ramachandra 2008, 84). The Triune nature of God, of mutual giving, being given and other receiving, undermines any notion of the utilitarian nature of a human being. Human beings are not meant to be utilized! There are not multiple ways to put a human being to use. Leadership is not about utilizing people, but enabling, empowering, and inspiring right action! Thus, even if one does not claim the doctrine of the Trinity as part of their own confession, they may be given new lenses to see the misuse of influence and the malpractice of leadership among those who claim Christian faith.

Theology Takes Us Deep

It's easy to mistake *deep* for *complex*. But depth is not about complexity; it is about profundity. Depth is about greatness, intensity, and weight. Relationships are deep. (They are complex, too, of course, which is why we want to study relationships from a number of angles.) Leaders who treat relationships as light and shallow have missed a great deal about leadership. Theology helps us examine the profundity of everything. Nothing is light and shallow. Yet, we are presented with shallow at every turn. Spiritual theologian Richard Foster (2001) writes, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people" (1).

Leaders must be deep people, people who recognize how profound it is to be a human being, made up of will, emotion, and intellect. But individuals are not simply profound; the *world* is profound. Further, the world is *religious* and the world is *interconnected* (Jenkins 2006, 2011; Senge 2006, 3). As a result, theology is part of the world's approach to leadership. If we do not use theology to go deep, we will ignore important differences between groups and cultures, masking differences and denigrating them with an unhelpful superficiality.

Even if not all readers will share the theology included in this book, God remains a subject of deeply held beliefs throughout parts of the world and in leadership systems. People must be known and understood deeply.[9] Even though there are deep differences, the world is interconnected. Under stress, teams disintegrate (Senge 2006, 25). Stress creates environments where people do not know what to do and do not want to admit they do not know what to do. There is a (sometimes literally) deadly combination of ignorance and arrogance. Theology, on the other hand, because it helps us see people in deep ways, can help leaders know people and maintain a level of coherence and unity. A shared theology does not ignore differences, but can work to see similarities and provide common goals and language.

Here's an illustration that might help. Have you ever met Star Trek fans who called themselves "Trekkies," argued Kirk vs. Picard, wished that one another would "live long and prosper," asked an invisible

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[9] See Gortner (2009), to see how human beings are made up of multiple realities and must learn to coexist alongside others of multiple realities.

"Scotty" to "beam them up," and who wanted to "boldly go where no man has gone before" all the while saying that it was *your ideas* that were "highly illogical"? *That's a TV show's text creating community.* My family and I watch a lot of cooking shows—in part because they entertain, educate, and elicit conversation between adult and children alike. I recently noticed cooking phrases from the TV show *Chopped* being stirred into our dinnertime conversation: To the meal's preparer: "What have you prepared for us today?" or "You have been chopped! Just kidding!" "The gravy has a smooth texture and the lime on the chicken adds a pop of flavor." The texts created by the movies and TV shows form communities of the fans.[10] Likewise, theology when it is used to know people deeply and provide language for people to share about the depth and profundity of their beliefs and thoughts can help teams share language and selves to keep them united in common purpose.[11]

THEOLOGIANS AND LEADERS WORKING TOGETHER: A POST-CRITICAL CONVERSATION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon—it has multiple causes, effects, angles for examination, and lenses to focus observation. Theology, as seen in the list above, is a useful addition to this matrix. While some pragmatic approaches to leadership simply focus on increasing the effectiveness of the leader without considering the leader's character or direction, theology reminds leadership that justice is always a consideration for good leadership. Theology serves to name and confront idols, including efficiency, effectiveness, and economic returns.[12]

But perhaps you simply couldn't see yourself as a theologian and consider the reasons listed above for putting theology and leadership

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[10] Philosopher-theologian Merold Westphal (2009, 115–118) follows the philosophy of a German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900–2002) affirmation that texts create communities as people use them to model their conversation.

[11] It could be said that theology contributes to groupthink, a phenomenon where people set aside outside perspectives, assume their own moral and intellectual superiority, hide information from leaders, and refuse to voice disagreement. Of course, it can! Yet, as I recently heard from my brother Tim, the solution to groupthink is not more "silo-ed" groupthink.

[12] Theology is that consistent reminder that secularist paradigms can encroach, even in contexts where they might not be expected (Ramachandra 2008, 9).

together. You struggled to think beyond a pragmatic approach to leading and purpose for reading other than tips and tricks. But sit back down. Don't leave the conversation yet. You, leader, bring an indispensable voice to the conversation because you will remind the theologian that effectiveness is not simply neutral, but often a *requirement* for doing good. You know in your bones that a good act with a good end is not as good as a more efficient good act that achieves more good. Effectiveness in righteous actions is a good (Gortner 2009; Willimon 2002, 2016). But even while I affirm effectiveness and urge you to stick with the conversation, theologians remind us leaders that some idols only become so when they are misused and disordered in our desires. For example, both leaders and theologians desire justice. But while justice is a common term, it is not a uniform concept, varying among cultures (Ramachandra 2008, 162). A goal of justice strictly from leadership may leave unconsidered its *aim*, whereas a theological affirmation of justice may leave unattended its *accomplishment*. Here's what I mean: We started by saying that theology is about God and thinking right, believing right, and acting right and leadership is about getting things done. Theology and leadership belong together because only together do they join forces to get the *right things done right*.

So, we are after a mutually informing relationship. This is why I am after a conversation and offer the following chapters as its beginning. In more technical language, this book is a kind of post-critical conversation on leadership that uses biblical theology as a starting point or possibility. Post-critical means holding an appreciation for the objectivity of the critical method championed through the Enlightenment where the subject matter is placed at arm's length from the observer and analyzed, yet recognizing that human persons are not detached from the objects of their study.[13] In other words, I want to talk about leadership and theology knowing that not all leaders see themselves as theologians and not all theologians see themselves as leaders and that both groups will bring values that might not be shared across boundaries, but are invaluable to the conversation!

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[13]This study appreciates the relational ontology of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur did not believe it wise simply to set aside questions of being (ontology), but to recognize that human beings are enmeshed in the language and experience of being. Ricoeur, leaning on theology and pointing to the self-revelation of God through history and relating to people, notes that ontology is *relational* rather than *about essence* (Wood 2005, 64–71).

I think we can keep the conversation fair and interesting by admitting our values upfront and by thinking about what is the right thing to do (ethics). Specifically, I want to talk about ethical leadership. Joanne Ciulla (2014) said that ethics in leadership is about expanding the field of leadership to be comparable to other fields of applied ethics. Because ethics "generally consists of examining questions about right, wrong, good, evil, virtue, duty, obligation, rights, justice, fairness, and responsibility in human relationships with each other and other living things" and because "leadership entails a distinctive kind of human relationship with distinctive sets of moral problems," then questions of ethics intersect with the topic of leadership deeply (Ciulla 2014, 4).

I've been upfront about my theology and I'll delve even more deeply into it in the second section of the book as I cover the Bible and some of its contents for leadership. But because my ethics are rooted in my theology, I don't think they should simply be dismissed. The relational, post-critical approach does not completely subjectivize ethics, swallowing them up in the personal (or communal) story of the holder. I'm not out here shouting, "My ethics are my own and I don't care if you believe them!" No, instead, I present them humbly and invite you to consider them. My ethics are rooted in my story. I care that you hear them and I value your response. To put it another way: I think theology matters, I know I think theology matters, and while I don't demand you to agree right now, I hope you might agree once you read the second part of the book![14]

In participating in this conversation, I hope that both leaders and theologians can be formed in character. While reflecting on theology and ethics—the right things done right—to internalize truth and to practice what is true, our characters are formed. They are formed because stories are intertwined and shared. Thus, conversation is not simple disagreement or conversion—presenting our personal truths, demanding they be

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[14] Ricoeur's relational ontology forms two arguments for this kind of study. First, a relational ontology lends to the subject of ethics and, second, it lends to the access of one's narrative. The second part of this book considers aspects of the Christian narrative, which the author holds as authoritative for ethics and action. Ricoeur (1992) writes, "In other words, narrative theory can genuinely mediate between description and prescription only if the broadening of the practical field and the anticipation of ethical considerations are implied in the very structure of the act of narrating" (115). In this study, the aim is not to subjectivize ethics, but to narrate them; to call others into a world by telling the story of a theological world.

accepted and honored. Instead, conversation is a mutually informing and forming shaping of character through the working out of truth, recognizing that the theologians will say that truth is internalized, not simply internal.[15] It comes to us from God. So, of course there will be points of disagreement, tension, and decision. But this working out of ethics through narrativizing conversation can help us to become better people by forming our characters.[16]

I will share my story in section two using biblical theology. With its access to the breadth and depth of the biblical story, biblical theology provides an ideal avenue into this conversation from the perspective of theology. Biblical theology both describes the story being told, but may also move into the prescription of ethics. Biblical theology helps me as a conversation partner say what I want to say (description of my story) and why you might want to hear it (ethics). Narrative, and biblical theology as seen as revealing part of the theo-logic of the narrative of the Bible, provides such an intersection because stories invite complex and rich moral and ethical reflection that leads to action.[17] The biblical story invites reflection from the past into the actions of today through the values displayed and affirmed in the text.

So, leadership ethics are formed through biblical theology and in our conversation as we are formed in conversation. For the one whose story is the text under examination (me!), there is not a naïve acceptance and encouragement for you to believe the text, but there is a critical affirmation. I am presenting this biblical theology of leadership not just because it is mine, but because I believe it is true (hopefully for good reason). For the one whose story is not the text under examination but who is open to its voice for the subject of leadership (you!), there is an opportunity to converse. We are both aware of our embeddedness in a story (or system/structure), but we also value each other's perspective

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[15] I'm leaning on Ricoeur. For Ricoeur, character is that which maintains an identity. We might say that character is what makes a self a self, even as the self changes over time. "[C]haracter assures at once…permanence in time which defines sameness…. Character is truly the 'what' of the 'who'" (122).

[16] Ricoeur writes, "By narrating a life of which I am not the author as to its existence, I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning" (162).

[17] Ricoeur (1992) noted the intersection of prescription and description that narrative provides because it "function[s]…as a guiding idea for an extension of the practical sphere beyond the simple actions described in the framework of the analytic theories of action" (170).

that we bring to the conversation.[18] Conversation partners are both parts of systems, but are also drawn out by the other (Senge 2006, 77). In so doing, this book hopes to make more explicit the story and (theo-)logic of Christian leadership action in a way that is both helpful and winsome.

CONCLUSION

There are Jerusalems (theologies) in this world. There are Athenses and Washingtons and Mumbais and Hollywoods and Amsterdams and Hong Kongs (leadership practices and perspectives) in this world, too. I have attempted to introduce why theologians and leaders should speak to each other and how it can be done without setting aside personalities and values. We are after a conversation that I unashamedly hope will convince you, strengthen you, and inspire you in right and good leadership.

This book is divided into two sections. The first section (Chapters 2–4) attempts to continue marking the way just described. If you have questions, then stick with me a little bit longer. The first three chapters will hopefully connect with you on the issues of ethics, leadership, and biblical theology. Chapter 2 discusses some of my findings from others on ethical leadership, introducing readers to the broader subject in the field of leadership and illuminating weaknesses and noting opportunities for further reflection and research. Chapter 3 attempts to make the case for theology as a source for ethics. While this case was started above, Chapter 3 attempts to include an historical approach, as well, narrating how these subjects became separated and how we might put them back together. I have tried to keep the technical reading confined mainly to notes, where enough markers are contained to give you new conversation partners should you so desire. Finally, Chapter 4 introduces the reader to how biblical theology can be a leadership discipline—what it is and why it is helpful in leadership ethics. Chapters 3 and 4 have been introduced above, but will be further analyzed and supported below.

The second section (Chapters 5–8) attempts what section one argued is necessary and possible. If you're already convinced about the importance of ethics and leadership, and feel like you have a working knowledge of biblical theology, then you might jump right there.

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[18]The conversation can be a mutual participation in social reasoning. Amaladas (2015) sees this move, from a leadership perspective, as key to overcoming private reason that never sees appropriate or significant change (76–77).

Chapter 5 explores the doctrine of creation and theological anthropology to see human beings as leading beings. Chapter 6 not only explores the dynamic and paradoxical leadership of Jesus as the crucified one but also as the one who reigns, presenting Jesus' self-understanding from his Scripture, the Old Testament, as both Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52–53) and Son of Man (Daniel 7). Chapter 7 considers how the Christian doctrine of eschatology creates a context of leadership practice and philosophy. This chapter does not utilize a specific eschatology, but the broader affirmation of the coming reign of Jesus of Nazareth, attempting to validate the research that was just shown in the previous two chapters. This chapter also considers apocalyptic, the in-breaking of an outside Kingdom. While eschatology forms the theo-logic and validates our efforts in leadership, apocalyptic reminds us that God is doing what we cannot do and that what we do, even if it is relatively faithful, will be so remade that its goodness must be attributed to God primarily. One of the most significant discoveries of twenty-first century leadership studies is what James Collins called a paradoxical blend of fierce resolve and personal humility (2001, 20). We might say that eschatology forms bold leadership while apocalyptic forms humble leadership and that both need each other. Finally, Chapter 8 explores a first century leader, Paul, who used both Christian values and cultural values to form leaders under his direction, showing the tension of leadership from within a culture but that is rooted in a different story.

A final word to you. When I say I'm after a conversation, of course that's a bit misleading. You cannot write in the margins, scratch out what you don't like, yell at the book, or ask questions out loud. Well, I suppose you could, but I won't read them, hear you, or write an alternative. So, in a sense, this is a one-way conversation. These final chapters, then, are constructed as the beginnings of conversations. I'm a preacher and I have no doubt they could sound and feel like sermons. But at least I'm aware of it. I unashamedly hope these final theological pictures will convince you, strengthen you, and inspire you in right and good leadership. And feel free to let me know if they do—and even if they don't.[19]

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[19] Oliver O'Donovan (1996) notes in *Desire of the Nations* that appropriate ethical conduct may emerge in a moment, be preached in 20 minutes, and accounted for intellectually across decades (ix). I hope it is clear that though this book is not the work of decades—nor does it pretend to be so—that it is still appropriate to direct for momentary acts within the leadership field, aiming at that accomplishment with a more flowing, sermonic style in Chapters 5–8.

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Ethics, Leadership, and Ethical Leadership

INTRODUCTION

It's easy to think that theology is simply about religion, but we've been broadening our view. Theology is about everything—including the study and practice of leadership. By using an analogy from grammar, we can see that theology is about leadership because it is about everything. I grew up with a couple of brothers who would consistently correct my grammar. Catching someone using "there" instead of "their" or "your" in place of "you're" would bring a healthy dose of ridicule. Breaking grammatical rules was not the same as breaking the rules of the house, but it was breaking the rules of language. Grammar can be thought of as the rules to be followed for one to use language correctly. But living languages change, so their rules change. Grammar is not about discovering or deciphering the eternal Form of the English language that exists outside the actual use of the English language. English grammarians, instead, describe the current rules of the use of the English language that will inevitably change over time.[1] In a similar way, theology provides the rules, not just of language, but of *living*. Theology helps to define the rules of living well, even while what constitutes living well is dynamic and changing according to time and culture. Yet theology does not seek

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[1] I owe this illustration to my colleagues John Drury and Tim Perry who both provided it, but in different contexts from each other and separate contexts from leadership studies.

simply to describe *how* people are living in a given time, but how people *ought* to live in light of the work and will of God. Because leadership is part of the function and activity of life, theology helps to provide the rules of *good, true* leadership.

By rules of leadership, I don't mean leadership maxims, those general principles that are often wise for leaders to adopt, such as Stephen Covey's (2004) principle, "Seek to understand before you seek to be understood."[2] While some maxims—the best ones, we might say—are also rules, others are not because some might apply in certain situations of life, while not in others. By rules I mean leadership actions that correspond to reality—that reflect the mind and will of God. So, theology helps to provide the rules of leadership in all situations.

To do theology that produces good and true leadership, let's begin with the connection of ethics and leadership. Because the subject of ethics covers issues of value, goodness, and the right, it has a natural connection to theology. Thinking that ethics and theology are separate is not an old idea; it has only been around a couple of hundred years. While we will examine ethics as a post-Enlightenment construct—a field of study split from its theological roots—in the next chapter in more detail, I begin by locating ethics and leadership side-by-side because leadership studies often simply assume ethics as a subfield of leadership. That is, leadership is a phenomenon already happening to which we might want to bring some ethical consideration. By starting this way, I am neither championing that ethics and theology must remain separate nor am I complaining about this current reality. Instead, I am attempting to begin with current research and present theology as an appropriate conversation partner. The current situation is briefly presented in this chapter; the appropriateness of theology as a conversation partner with leadership will be deepened in the following chapter as theology is reconnected with ethics.

DEFINITIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

What is the relationship between leadership and ethics? Let's start with a few standard definitions of leadership. From Peter Northouse: "Leadership is the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (2007, 5). Gary Yukl offers a similar but

[2] This illustration is one of the general maxims presented in Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (2004).

expanded definition: "Leadership is the process of influencing others *to understand and agree about what needs to be done* and *how it can be done effectively*, and the process of facilitating individual and *collective* efforts to accomplish the shared objectives" (2002, 7, italics mine). Finally, a definition from a book on ethical leadership: Leadership is "a set of *role behaviors* performed by an individual *when there is a need* to *influence* and *coordinate* the activities of a group or organizational members towards the achievement of a common goal" (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 29, italics mine). Each definition includes elements of process or behaviors, influence of others, and achievement of a goal that correspond to leadership ethics issues of processes, outcomes, and the very act of "convinc[ing] other people to believe and/or act in certain ways" (Rost 1993, 157).

Let's tie aspects of these definitions to ethics. Ethics involves the "whole field of moral science" (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 13). Classical ethical thought has broken into three categories: deontology, character/virtue, and teleology.[3] In leadership language, these categories help us to evaluate acts, motives, and outcomes. These categories shouldn't be too sharply divided. After all, a leader's intentions (including character) to do the *right* thing (deontology) *and* a leader's effectiveness (teleology) are all part of good leadership (Ciulla 2005). Right motive, effective action, and the duty of the leader all combine in consideration of ethical leadership, although different traditions and cultures will emphasize one or two over the others. Here are a few ways that ethics and leadership have been considered.

Character (Virtue) and the Ethics of Leadership

We know different leaders worth following, but only some of whom we are not only *willing* to follow, but who we *want* to be *like*. Character and the ethics of leadership concern the internal life of the leader. The following questions might fit under these reflections:

- What *kind* of person is the leader?
- What is the appropriate character for a leader?
- What kind of person do leadership actions make?
- How do leaders become people whose actions line up with their words? (Palanski and Yammarino 2007, 178)

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[3] Peter Northouse uses the same taxonomy in his book *Leadership* (2007).

Let's make a few other connections.

Character and leadership might be concerned about forming good conscience in the leader.[4] Leaders ought to be those who are not only true to their conscience, but who have also formed a *good* conscience. Such leaders might balk at certain "gray areas" of behavior or avoid unnecessarily risky behavior (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 105). Good conscience can help keep a leader from simply saying, "No harm, no foul"—that if a bad outcome had only minimal effect, then the preceding leadership action didn't really matter.

Character and leadership ethics are also concerned about developing virtue—certain moral excellencies—in leaders. Right character may include the classical virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and prudence, or other virtues deemed appropriate in various contexts. Virtue and leadership are naturally connected because virtue is often seen as necessary for happiness or blessing (Levine and Boaks 2014, 238). So, ethical leaders seek not only to see themselves developed as certain kinds of people, but to help followers become certain kinds of people too.

Character provides an excellent consideration for leadership ethics, yet important considerations such as effectiveness and duty ought not to be neglected, especially when some virtues might be more valued than others in complex scenarios.

Outcomes (Teleology) and the Ethics of Leadership

There are a number of ways that teleological ethics inform leadership ethics. While at first this may seem crassly utilitarian—that leadership is just about results, we must remember that leaders are often appointed or elected or driven because of challenges to be taken up and problems to be solved. Leaders are expected to be effective! While we might elect a leader with courage to take up a challenge or wisdom to solve a problem, we also expect them to get the job done. In some cases, being effective *is* being ethical. If change is needed and possible, then achieving an appropriate outcome is being ethical (Ciulla 2005).

But leadership ethics are not simply concerned with effectiveness because appropriate outcomes might change. At one point in time,

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[4] Oliver O'Donovan has an extensive critique of the subjectivity of conscience and how conscience might be misleading as an ethical guide. See *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (1994).

teleological leadership ethics might aim at raising the benefit of an entire community, whereas in others it would be necessary to increase a benefit for fewer people, while in others a leader might need to consider what is best for the leader in addition to other considerations, possibly anticipating a trickle-down effect (Rost 1993, 170; Northouse 2007). Examples could be developed from complex, controversial scenarios of health care, public safety, and education. The point is that outcomes based ethics will be part of the conversation.

So, teleology is a helpful point of view for ethics and leadership. However, while teleology does have certain appeals because of the necessity that leadership involves being effective, there is no necessary cause-and-effect connection between leadership and ethical action. Leadership *process* and *accomplishment* may not be related (Rost 1993, 163). In other words, the *right* act may not achieve a desired end and a *wrong* act may produce a *desirable* end. This is a conundrum for ethical leadership, which leads to the third consideration.

Rules (Deontology) and the Ethics of Leadership

Finally, the ethics of leadership may be considered in light of rules or duty-based ethics, traditionally called deontological ethics. If there are overarching rules, then there are duties to follow and responsibilities to fulfill. German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is well known in rules-based ethics with his idea of the categorical imperative. A categorical imperative is a direction that must always be obeyed, without condition, in all circumstances.[5]

One example of Kant's categorical imperative is that human beings are always ends and never means. In other words, human beings are not to be used for greater purposes, but are purposes in themselves. For leaders, following this ethic means that people must always be valued, never simply for what they can accomplish for the leader, but in who they are as persons (Bowie 2000; Gardner 1990, 73). This value has been part of transformational leadership where followers are valued and invested in by the leader. Transformational leadership helps followers to achieve their best, and this is an ethical imperative based on the inherent value of followers. The leader's *duty* is to see followers thrive (Burns 1978).

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[5]We will explore Kant's impact on ethics and theology more fully in the next chapter. For now, I will simply introduce how it has been used in leadership ethics.

Culture and the Ethics of Leadership

Obviously these three angles influence one another and might be subjected to one another. At times we might call for courage, at others a practical wisdom to know that discretion is more needed than valor. These considerations about how leadership and ethics connect are also dependent on culture. Communities are consistently evaluating the "rightness and wrongness of conduct" by leaders (Gardner 1990, 76).

So, what you consider to be ethical in leadership will likely depend on your community. Now, this admission does not lead to radically different approaches to the ethics of leadership. Empirical research has shown that while there is complexity to what a variety of cultures consider ethical leadership, there are also some similarities (Den Hartog et al. 1999).

Yet, if you've ever taken a vacation with two separate families, then you know that the right choice is not always clear—and that's just for supper. Further, it's not always clear what is the right *way* to get appropriate agreement. When there is a clash or connection of cultures, cultures (including smaller units like families) compare and judge moral attitudes for leadership and the desired leadership ends. But, which culture is right? Should jointly vacationing families go to the *Olive Garden* for portions, *Cracker Barrel* for price, or somewhere local for personality? Now expand the complexity of the issue. From which culture may this critical comparison be made? What vantage point holds a privileged perspective from which to make appropriate judgments? These kinds of questions show how culture becomes a conversation in leadership ethics.

Communities can also be the drive and energy of ethical leadership. Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995), a French philosopher, contributed to this point of view with his concept of the *Other*. The Other is that which confronts our own points of view and rationales for believing what we do or leading where we are going. The Other "expresses itself" (Levinas 1991, 51), creating an obligation because we cannot ignore the need of the Other (Knights and O'Leary 2006; Levinas 1991, 200). If you have found your opinion and action changing because you were confronted with the face of another person who caringly and clearly communicated a different point of view—even with just a look—then you have encountered the power of the other. Sometimes encountering the other doesn't simply change a mind, but gives us a mind—in one of two ways. We might be given a mind in that we are given an opinion of the right way to go or the right action to take. We also might be given a mind that we

must do something, as in, "I have a mind to buy this leadership book and give away a dozen copies!" The Other can convince that leadership is a necessary action, even if we haven't yet determined what needs to be done. The Other's "very existence makes us morally responsible, a responsibility which is…undeniable" (Knight and O'Leary 2006, 133).[6]

This ethic might be strengthened with the philosophy of personalism. "Personalism is an affirmation of the absolute value of the human person" (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 16).[7] Because people are naturally social, people will congregate to form organizations and in these organizations, assign roles. Those with leadership roles bring direction to organizations, impacting people and the public. Organizations, then, have a moral responsibility to the public to perform good (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 1–3). Thus, the end of leadership is for public good. Leaders do not simply organize and make accessible material goods as part of ethical leadership. Ethical leadership behaviors offer a full expression of being a human person in community.[8]

But suppose that two "Others" come in competition with each other and a leadership judgment is made. Both have considerable claim to the leader's loyalty or for the leader, or leadership team, to rule on their behalf. Here the value of each person seems to outweigh even what evidence might be presented in their favor. For example, does more education necessarily make a person a better candidate for a job given that they are both of inestimable value?[9] In such quandaries, leaders might decide based on the broader community: *the right thing to do is what the community considers virtuous.*[10] But this formulation creates two challenges. First, which community is the best for making this decision? After all, "Others" can come from the same broader community or they can come from smaller communities, each

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[6]We could also consider transformational leadership in light of the follower as the Other to be valued. The Other might complicate leadership even while making it clear that something must be done and leadership is necessary. See Ron Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 1994.

[7]While Mendonca and Kanungo develop more the philosophy of personalism, it emerges, they note, from the theology of Karol Wojtyla who would become Pope John Paul II.

[8]Mendonca and Kanungo (2007) describe the leader's role as being the "soul of the organization" and to bring "legitimacy and credibility to vision" (3).

[9]Knights and O'Leary (2006) mentioned that such dilemmas are why laws help give clarity, but they say they do not succumb to Levinas' openness to deontology (laws are grounded in duty and moral obligation that is universal).

[10]Knights and O'Leary (2006) take this approach.

worthy of consideration. The second challenge of appealing to community is perhaps even more important. If community helps to judge between individuals, then how might a leader bring correction to the community? One generation's scoundrel is sometimes regarded as another generation's leader because of how they challenged the community.

So, if the community decides what is right, how does the leader help transform or offer ethical conviction to a wayward community? There are a couple of potential answers to this question. A leader might challenge a community by reminding the community of the community's own values. Leaders often appeal to the best of a community's values when posturing for its elected leadership. But if you watch election debates separated by a mere decade or two, you might see how one generation's value for immigration becomes another generation's value for safety. Community values change because circumstances change. The second answer might challenge changing values by appealing to unchanging virtues: A leader might challenge a community to determine just what *kind* of community does the community want to become. But, again, that a community might change from one *kind* of community to another means that virtues might be malleable, as well. Virtues come from *somewhere* and are valued by *someone* before they are valued here and by all.

Spirituality and the Ethics of Leadership

Because much of this book will look at theology and ethical leadership, I only want to mention spirituality here. Of course, spirituality and theology are not completely distinct fields because a person's theology will influence their spirituality (Marshall 2015). In addition to the above approaches, leadership ethics have also been analyzed from a religious and spiritual angle because leaders draw upon "inner spiritual strength, upon their spirituality" (Mendonca and Kanungo 2007, 85). There are various approaches to spirituality. Spirituality is not the same as religion, which involves codes of conduct and specific teachings and beliefs. Rather, spirituality is a personal, inner life that nourishes meaningful work (Ivancevich et al. 2008, 51). Some leadership experts see spirituality as different from the material world; spirituality is something deeper than the world around the leader.[11]

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[11] One might also consider Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, 2009.

Blended Approaches and the Ethics of Leadership

Naturally, the ethics of leadership are not analyzed with strict lines between any of the above categories. Outcomes blend with virtues, which are connected to cultures, which hold different desired ends, which might be sought through laws. Some of the examples I've noted branch into a variety of ethical frameworks. In one key article, Joanne Ciulla (1995) argued that ethics is a necessary component of leadership studies, combining right *and* effective action—both deontology and teleology. Ciulla so argued, in part, because leadership is not strictly about leadership but about *good* leadership, and that good leadership is *both* right and effective (1995). Moral leadership, in a blended approach, is about being a "moral person" (character) and a "moral manager" (teleology) (Trevino et al. 2000).

But we all know that *good* leadership becomes subjective because effectiveness is rarely binary. Effectiveness is not like a light switch— either off or on. Leaders are not simply either effective or ineffective. If it was so clear, party politics would be in serious trouble. Effectiveness is always complex—effective for certain ends but not for others; effective to certain extents but not to desired amounts; or there might be a forthcoming effect—only to be seen in another board vote of confidence, a second term, or another majority government!

In the complexity of effectiveness, *good* leadership might appeal to deontology/rules: "I don't know what the outcome will be or when we will know it, but it's the *right* thing to do!" This appeal only makes sense if *good* leadership requires *good* action and deontology and teleology, rules and outcomes, are deeply intertwined in leadership ethics. In a more recent work, Joanne Ciulla (2014) put three specific ethical questions side by side for the leader: "Did the leader do the right thing? Did [the leader] do it in the right way? And did [the leader] do it for the right reason?" (18). These are not in competition with each other, but each is necessary.[12]

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[12]Wendell Nekoranec (2007) agrees that there is a relationship between ethics, leadership, and effectiveness. Through conducting interviews with executives, Nekoranec found that leaders believe integrity, honesty, responsibility, and trust as integral to their leadership. Yet these values were only expressed in *doing* the *right* thing for others, the situation, and themselves—*in this order.*

Silke Eisenbeiss ([2012](#)) also uses a blended approach for ethical leadership.[13] Ethical leadership is made up of four orientations (focuses or directions):

- humane orientation: treating others as ends and not as means, with value and respect;
- justice orientation: leaders do not discriminate, but make fair decisions;
- responsibility and sustainability orientation: having long-term consideration that seeks to benefit society and the environment;
- moderation orientation: leaders are balanced and refuse extremes and personal indulgence in leadership (795–797).

Eisenbeiss blends deontology (humane orientation), teleology (responsibility and sustainability orientation), virtue (moderation orientation and justice orientation), putting them all as necessary orientations components of ethical leadership ([2012](#)).[14]

The blend of ethics in leadership is not limited to western culture. The Global Leadership Organizational Behavioral Effectiveness project, perhaps one of the most comprehensive studies (approximately 17,000 surveys from multiple, diverse cultures), found that multiple cultures agreed that "character and integrity, ethical awareness, community/people orientation, motivating, encouraging and empowering, and managing ethical accountability" all played a role in ethical leadership (Resick et al. [2006](#), 346). *People orientation* is helping others because of concerns for the common good and the greater good (deontology).

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[13]Eisenbeiss ([2012](#)) combined religion, philosophy, and social scientific research.

[14]While Eisenbeiss ([2012](#)) claimed to consult Christian faith in this development, there are openings in her summarizing chart that reveal further consideration of Christian Scripture would be appropriate. Under the orientation of sustainability and responsibility, Eisenbeiss did not list Christian faith whatsoever. However, Christian leaders would be expected to ground part of their approach to leadership as being made in the image of God, which includes a component of creation stewardship. (For a recent treatment, see Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation* 2015.) For example, Beale ([2004](#)) argued that the Garden of Eden is described as a sacred space that is a forerunner to the temple. The mission of human beings when placed in Eden is not to remain in Eden but to turn the rest of creation into a sacred space resembling Eden from where human beings emerged. This kind of leadership includes appropriate care for the creation because it is affirmed as good. We will explore this more fully in the chapter on human beings as leaders.

Motivating means inspiring through putting the needs of others ahead of the leader and developing a deep connection with followers (deontology and virtue). *Encouraging* and *empowering* involves helping followers sense and achieve growth in their own capacity (deontology and teleology and virtue). *Managing ethical accountability* involves using transactional actions to promote ethical activity and conduct through rewards and punishments (teleology). You can see how approaches to leadership ethics are deeply bound up with each other! No angle is completely separate from the others.

The Emergence of an Ethical Leadership Theory

With a variety of approaches, values, and cultural interests engaging in leadership ethics, it might be surprising that the study of ethical leadership began to *narrow*. Perhaps the complexity of the subject invited a kind of simplicity to advance the study of ethical leadership. After all, if good leadership is about being effective, then finding a way to understand and measure leader effectiveness with ethics in mind is important. But with this narrowing, ethical leadership became not a way of considering and improving leadership as a whole, but as a specific *kind* of leadership. Ethical leadership became a theory of leadership in itself—distinct from other leadership theories. Let's take a look at how study of the theory of ethical leadership blossomed.

Joanne Ciulla, in her 1995 article mentioned above, argued that ethics is a necessary component of leadership studies. In this initial study, though, she did not offer any particular *theory* of ethical leadership. Rather, she suggested that research into leadership ethics facilitates research questions around who should lead and the personal character of ethical leaders. That is, ethics provides a critical examination of leadership *qualifications*. However, ten years later, Ciulla (2005) noted the conceptual development in the use of ethics in leadership. By examining common textbooks and job descriptions, while Ciulla found a great diversity in approaches to ethics and leadership, she also saw a shift from ethics as the qualifications for leadership to ethics as the *practices* of leadership. This shift from qualifications to practices provided two measurable qualities to focus a study of ethical leadership.

Around the same time in 2006, Brown and Trevino examined ethics not as a *component* to other leadership theories like transformational leadership or servant leadership, but as a separate theory in

itself, comparing it with spiritual leadership, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership. Ethics was not part of all leadership styles and actions, but ethical leadership was becoming a distinct style of leadership in itself. This distinction meant that ethical leadership became a definable approach to leadership that could be used to explain why certain behaviors are effective and to predict which behaviors will be effective and to what extent in certain contexts.

Most importantly for the study of ethical leadership as a theory has been the work of Brown et al. (2005). These researchers considered ethical leadership in light of social learning theory, which suggests that human beings learn from modeling, imitation, and motivation. So, human beings learn not strictly cognitively by mental inputs, but also through behaviors and reinforcement of punishment and reward.[15] Brown, Trevino, and Harrison saw that leadership ethics included issues such as "consideration behavior, honesty, trust in the leader, interactional fairness, socialized charismatic leadership, and abusive supervision" (2005, 117), meaning that ethical leadership is formed and passed on socially with several of the approaches mentioned above. They said that ethical leadership *is* "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making" (Brown et al. 2005, 120). The authors subsequently developed a tool to measure ethical leadership (the Ethical Leadership Scale). The scale comprised 10 considerations of the leader:

1. Listens to what employees have to say.
2. Discusses business ethics or values with employees.
3. Asks "What is the right thing to do?" when making decisions.
4. Makes fair and balanced decisions.
5. Can be trusted.
6. Has the best interests of employees in mind.
7. Defines success not just by results but also the way that they are obtained.
8. Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards.
9. Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics.
10. Conducts his or her personal life in an ethical manner (125).

[15] For more on social learning theory, see Albert Bandura (1971).

With this definition and scale, "ethical leadership" was found to predict perceptions of leader effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and dedication.[16] Suddenly, *what* ethical leadership *is* was linked to certain behaviors that ethical leaders supposedly *do*.

This definition and scale have been widely used in social scientific research for a variety of issues connected with ethics and leadership, including workplace relationships (Stouten et al. 2010), employee misconduct (Mayer et al. 2010), ethical development (Mayer et al. 2009), psychological well-being (Avey et al. 2012), and even ethical leadership and employee performance in the People's Republic of China (Walumbwa et al. 2011). Brown, Trevino, and Harrison developed and offered what has become the standard definition and theory of ethical leadership.[17]

Reopening the Ethical Leadership Question

Undoubtedly analyzing what has been called ethical leadership has been helpful and useful, but it has had an unfortunate limiting effect. It does not keep open the questions of character, deontology, and teleology. It does not have us reexamine what it means to be a human being, lead human beings, or follow human beings. Instead, this definition allows a research endeavor focused mainly on the consequences of *one* description of a set of behaviors and attitudes that might be considered ethical, but is not the *whole* consideration of ethics in leadership (Eisenbeiss and Giessner 2012).

The appeal to a standard definition is strong for good reason. Leadership is fast-paced, with high demands and sky-high stakes. Leaders want to be effective and to make a difference and many times jobs and reputations are on the line. Leaders do not simply *want* to be effective, they *need* to be effective—both for their standing as leaders and ongoing salary. I do not say this as a critique. Good leaders are often effective

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[16]One can sense here Ciulla's (1995) affirmation that ethical leadership is concerned with effectiveness.

[17]This has become the most cited definition of ethical leadership for empirical, quantitative research. For more research on the use of this definition, see Eisenbeiss (2012) and Hunter (2012).

leaders and ineffective leaders are often bad leaders. Under this pressure, it is alluring to offer practical tips and pointers.

Consider how Brown, Trevino, and Harrison opened the article where they defined ethical leadership: "Recent ethical scandals in business have raised important questions about the role of leadership in shaping ethical conduct" (2005, 117). There is already a bent to do something; there's a problem to fix! To help be a solution to these ethical scandals, certainly a worthwhile endeavor, Brown, Trevino, and Harrison offered their definition, built a scale to measure ethical leadership, and sought to demonstrate its utility in predicting outcomes (2005, 118). Yet this definition and scale measures only *one* formulation of leadership that has certain practices *deemed* to be of ethical value. It is not the final consideration of the relationship between ethics and leadership.[18] One doesn't need to reflect very long on how disciplining employees who violate ethical standards (consideration #8 in the ethical leadership scale) might result in a conversation about who gets to set ethical standards and whether there is room to challenge or modify such standards.

Further, in spite of a growing consensus of a definition of ethical leadership as a theory with a tool for measurement, what counts as ethical leadership may still be ambiguous. Several issues remain up for consideration. Should an ethics of leadership consider a leader's personal ethics outside their leadership role or whether leadership is actually ethical? Should ethics of leadership consider social laws, human rights, or universal values in the pursuit of certain ends (i.e., whether or not deception was used) (Yukl 2002, 402)?

Recently when scrolling through my Twitter feed, I came across a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory." I have no idea if Emerson actually said that, but it's an idea that I encounter relatively often. We have the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words" and the split between "real world" and "perfect world" and "book smart" and "street smarts." The problem, of course, is that many actions are carried along with the weight of some theoretical

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[18]Ciulla (2014) points out the philosophical deficit in this consideration of ethics and leadership: "The name 'ethical leadership' is somewhat misleading in that the instrument used in these studies only measures people's *attributions* of ethical leadership to their leaders. Again, the fact that the majority of people attribute ethical qualities to a leader is not sufficient to say that the leader is ethical" (25, italics mine).

tonnage. Ciulla says that the quantitative research focused on the Brown, Trevino, and Harrison definition of ethical leadership is part of a "search for Rosetta stone of leadership in positivistic world" (2014, 8). In other words, "ethical leadership," when defined and narrowed, is part of the search to find clues, cues, and tricks to help crack the leadership code. However, we must take care that leadership ethics do not simply become tactics to desirable ends. Desirable ends are already grounded in ways of seeing the world that may or may not be helpful or ethically sound. So, how might we limit the effects of limiting the notion of ethical leadership?

CROSS-DISCIPLINES FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

One way to keep open the conversation on ethical leadership is to welcome a variety of disciplines to contribute. Philosophy, for instance, can get at such things as values, worldviews, symbols, and so on. Joanne Ciulla helps get at this potential for philosophy when she writes, "scientists examine what makes a good leader [and] philosophers focus on what keeps a leader from being good" (2014, 7). By this, she means that social scientists study leadership effectiveness and philosophers explore leadership morality.

Cross-disciplinary analysis provides different perspectives to what counts as ethical and to the purposes of leadership. Ciulla (2014) concluded that previous studies have left "quite a bit of territory still waiting to be explored concerning what is and is not ethical in leadership" (25), so it makes sense that she and Eisenbeiss (2012) both noted the value of engaging ethical leadership from multiple perspectives and various disciplines, and engaged philosophy, religious studies, history, and other humanities.

Philosophy has contributed to multiple areas of study. De George (1986) noted that a cross-disciplinary approach has consistently been used by philosophers in order to engage multiple original fields of study. For example, a philosopher might consider the field of economics in order to answer questions pertaining to the morality of policy or practice of multinational corporations. Philosophers can thus explore theory and appropriate application of moral norms because of cross-disciplinary work in this particular field.

De George also noted that when there is a hardened separation between philosophy and theology, it is believed that when theologians analyze terms and explore presuppositions they are doing so as

philosophers and not as theologians (1986, 424). This strict separation leads some to believe that theologians ought to be self-conscious of minding their own field. While this perspective may be able to be traced to the natural theology of Thomas Aquinas in Aquinas' effort to study God from the limited perspective of human reason, it is not necessarily the case that theology must submit to philosophy (Allen 1985). De George affirmed that the converse of the philosopher believing that theologians engage in presuppositional questions as philosophers is a theological affirmation that "*if* there are theological tasks to do, there is little reason to think the philosophers will do them" (1986, 424). Instead, such questions should be asked by theologians. So, theologians are appropriately engaging in cross-discipline work as theologians because such a field of study may, in fact, exist. The current study analyzes the biblical text with theological conviction with the purpose of contributing to ethical leadership because theology is a necessary condition in the study of ethics if there are theological tasks to do. In other words, while there will not be absolute agreement about theological conclusions (Does God exist? What is God like? What does God want one to do?), waiting until such conclusions are made to engage in theological consideration of other fields will forfeit the work of theology as a contributing discipline to fields such as leadership in the here and now.

Leadership provides just such a discipline that may benefit from cross-disciplinary research because it concerns human activity and worldview. Leadership includes judgments of what is right, good, and effective (Ciulla 2014). Engaging these questions philosophically is helpful, yet limited. Leadership, as a discipline that benefits from cross-disciplinary consideration, may benefit from theological analysis, too, and so to this list of appropriate conversation partners, I want to add theology.

THEOLOGY AS AN APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE?

But theology isn't a frequent conversation partner with leadership.[19] So, why not? There are several potential reasons. First, maybe we fear that theology is divisive—that instead of leading to specific, strong,

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[19] This is not to say that theology has been silent. For more on how theology has entered the leaders conversation, see Chris Bounds, "A Theology of Leadership for Wesleyans;" Don Howell, *Servants of the Servant*; Skip Bell, *Servants and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*; Arthur Boers, *Servants and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*.

and effective leadership, theology will break conversation partners into different branches and then send them further apart, spread out on weaker limbs. While there are connections between cultures for certain ethical dispositions, attitudes, and behaviors, there is still no "consensus to the higher moral ground" (Rost 1993, 165). Ethical leadership must consider and offer reflections for leadership when "leaders and followers cannot agree on…what the higher moral ground is concerning any number of changes that they may propose to solve the complex problems which real human beings face in the modern world" (Rost 1993, 165). But does theology bring more agreement? Perhaps theology only increases the gap.

Second, perhaps there is a void because of the fear of being perceived as dogmatic—stuck in religious beliefs that are antiquated and not subject to critique. From an Islamic perspective on ethical leadership, rather than leaning on the Qu'ran, Islam's sacred text, Kasim Randaree (2008) argued that ethical leadership be considered in light of modernization and tolerance. Why would a Muslim not delve into sacred text when addressing ethical leadership? Randaree pointed repeatedly to an early Islamic scholar, Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazzali, who advocated for the principles of good government like (in addition to tolerance) wisdom, justice, and knowledge (2008). Yet these values are markers of Modernity, as well, which included a separation of theology from ethics—a subject to be explored more in the next chapter. The values purported are good and helpful and commendable, but leave theology and sacred text to the side in a subject that might clearly welcome them to contribute to the conversation.

Third, perhaps theology is seen to be slow and impractical. By noting that theology can provide a voice, let me reiterate that I am not against providing solutions or being effective in leadership. I value practice deeply, especially when questions of ethics are consistently arising in burgeoning fields like E-ethics for online contexts (Lee 2009) and where ongoing international corporate scandal (Monahan 2012) and banking breakdowns (Knights and O'Leary 2006) are not going away. International judgment, threats of war, economic disparity and poverty do not call for fewer solutions, but more! If theology is impractical, making no effective difference, then it will be dismissed and ignored. For theology to provide an aide, it must be intentional about helping bring change (good effect), aim at agreement and unity when possible, and be open to critique. In reality,

however, theology might remain slow and impractical, might lead to dogmatism and distinction—and perhaps wisely so! So, instead of seeing theology as aiming at change, agreement, and unity, these traits should be reminders of who *theologians* ought to be. Theologians ought to be hospitable and welcoming of various viewpoints to model leadership in the intellectual world.[20]

CONCLUSION

I hope this final note about theologians being the kinds of people who engage these questions for the purpose of tackling tough leadership issues in the right way is clear. This is what having a post-critical conversation means. Values and norms ought not to be set aside in the conversation; instead, there is humility that these values and norms already exist and must be argued and presented in winsome, respectful ways while welcoming other perspectives.

So, we recognize that solutions without appropriate full-orbed considerations only leave more complex problems. We do not need fewer solutions, but *more* and *better*! But solutions, as I hope is now clear, are always rooted in previous values, norms, and symbols. There will not be the best solutions we can offer and there will not be the best leadership that you can give without adding theology to the conversation.

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[20] Greg Waybright, in a presentation on science and theology at the Conference for Pastoral Theologians in 2017, described intellectual hospitality—not simply being civil to other points of view, but welcoming other points of view. Again, this was not to value a kind of radical relativism, that truth is an illusion because all perspectives are equal, but to value the pursuit of truth.

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CHAPTER 3

Reconnecting Ethics and Theology

Introduction

Elizabeth McCord, the Secretary of State in CBS's political drama *Madam Secretary*, faces ethical issues with global implications every episode. Threat of war, diplomacy, sanctions, stick or carrot—you get the idea. Her job involves complex scenarios and high stakes. Yet McCord's tenderness and care for her three children often truly reveals her depth. McCord quips at one point that while dictators might be moody, self-centered, and unpredictable, she deals with *teenagers* every day.

In one storyline, the children's electronic devices have been compromised, illicitly used to acquire information and images from the McCord household. Elizabeth and her husband, Henry, are faced with a dilemma: Do they tell their children the truth and cause worry or do they simply say the confiscation of computers and cell phones is regular procedure, just run of the mill security protocol. Leaning in the "It's just procedure" direction, Elizabeth asks Henry: "You sure you're good with that?" Henry, a professor of military ethics at the National War College with a background in religious studies, responds, "You mean ethically?" Elizabeth's response is noteworthy: "Well, you're the religion professor."[1]

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[1] *Madam Secretary*, Season 3, Episode 2, "The Linchpin." 3:19 (*Madam Secretary* 2016).

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I wonder if Elizabeth's simple assumption—religion and ethics go together—remains common. Certainly, the plethora of leadership ethics viewed last chapter without theological context might suggest otherwise. Yes, there are remnants of those who seek religious leaders for answers to questions of right and wrong, guidance in ethical matters, and to discern moral duty, but I expect the connection is waning. As is clear by now, I think that theology is a valuable voice in leadership studies, especially leadership ethics. Theology has a place at the postcritical conversational table. Yet the fact that I've reinforced this conviction repeatedly reveals a rift between these two subjects previously intertwined. This chapter explores how theology and ethics became disconnected and why they should be put back together.

Divorce of Ethics and Theology

So, how did a divorce occur between theology and ethics? Let me offer two distinct though related answers to that question. First, ethics became separated from theology because of the Enlightenment. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas (2001) argues that Christian ethics is an *invention* of modernity. This is not to say that Christians began asking questions of how to live their lives as Christians because of the Enlightenment. Rather, it is to say that in the Enlightenment ethics became a *distinct part* of a person's life rather than the whole of a person's life under God (37–38). Three seeds sowed the division. First, Christian ethics developed in response to individual cases of sin and repentance. Specific acts of penance or repentance at a given time or place were developed to be applied in a variety of cases.[2] By developing laws and rules for specific cases of sin without reflecting on the application doctrine, theology was disconnected from ethics. Instead of performing theo-logic, there was reliance on precedent and canon law. Second, Hauerwas notes the split between ethics and theology as St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* was not considered as a whole. The *Summa* was meant to be a summary of Christian faith and life, but in analyzing the text simply for its teaching on right living, its theology and ethics were separated, an effect that Hauerwas believes Aquinas never intended. While Aquinas intended to

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[2] Hauerwas (2001) notes The *Penitential of Theodore* in the sixth century and the development of the *Summae Confessorum* under the guidance of Pope Gregory VII [1020–1085] in the eleventh century as two examples.

maintain ethics within his doctrine of God, others removed it from this context and considered ethics on its own. Third, Hauerwas notes that the "polemical terms of the Reformation could not help but reshape how ethics was conceived in relation to theology" (42). Some Protestants became skeptical of ethics because such actions could be considered as works in pursuit of making oneself right and acceptable to God. Summarizing this Protestant worry, Hauerwas writes: "Faith, not works, determines the Christian's relationship to God…. [W]orks became associated with 'ethics,' particularly as ethics was alleged to be the way sinners attempt to secure their standing before God as a means to avoid complete dependence on God's grace" (42).[3]

Thus, there developed a breach between theology and ethics. But the overarching context for the application of rules remained baptism and church, so ethics was not yet cut loose from theology altogether. Until, that is, modernity. Modernity is the age that emerged after the medieval era and emphasized critical thinking, rejected tradition, and championed personal freedom. Unmoored from tradition, people desired something beyond "conventional" and "arbitrary" ethics (Hauerwas 2001, 44). In this vacuum, a rationalistic ethics emerged, most clearly in Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, briefly introduced last chapter. Perhaps the clearest expression of a categorical imperative is that one should "[a]ct only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant 1959, 39). Note carefully that Kant's maxim is *not* tied to theological value or religious teaching; this kind of rule is "free of all religious and anthropological presuppositions" (Hauerwas, 45). It is an ethical law that can be acclaimed and accepted simply by reason. Here is a nontheological ethic that, it would seem, any reasonable person can accept.

So, what was Christian theology to do? How could it be a resource of right living that was not conventional and arbitrary? How could theology try to reconnect to ethics if ethics could be done on its own? *By looking for common ground with the goals developed by nontheological ethics.* If the church and the world could agree on the *end result*, common goods like education and improved life, then theology could provide another rationale for these ethics (Hauerwas 2001, 45–46).

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[3] Hauerwas (2001) notes that Calvin and his followers "were not as determined by the polemical context of the Lutheran reformation" (43), although justification by faith remained central for Calvin.

Theology could be of service to the ends that reason deemed valuable. Here Hauerwas points to the great theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and his efforts to defend the church and promote her existence for "the development of humanity" (46). Thus, in the wake of the Enlightenment, rather than ethics and theology being a package deal, ethics became the necessity and theology the potentially useful aide. Theology was in service of ethics, but only insofar as it was useful to the common end.

Let me offer a second, related account of the split between ethics and theology. Oliver O'Donovan (2013), an Anglican moral theologian, considering the same relationship of ethics and theology, sees the beginning of a divide between ethics and theology in the sixteenth century (67). Prior to the sixteenth century, ethics was present in scholasticism to "signal an engagement with the philosophical legacy of the classical past" (O'Donovan 2013, 68). For the medieval period, O'Donovan argues, discussions of "conscience, virtue, and responsibility" remained in the context of theological *Summas* (as noted above) and ethical duties were presented in "homiletical exposition of the Decalogue" thus showing that theology and ethics were tied together (68). In the sixteenth century, however, the Reformation's skepticism toward canon law and the Renaissance's desire for autonomous (if not wholly theologically unmoored) disciplines like law and politics started to loosen the knot. While Catholic moral theology, reformed in the Council of Trent (1545–1563), focused pastoral training on the requirements of religious law in the cure of souls, Protestantism did not so clearly succeed in keeping ethics and theology together (O'Donovan 2013, 68). O'Donovan, like Hauerwas, points to Kant and the Enlightenment, but also to the devotional literature of the time, such as William Law's (1686–1761) *Serious Call to the Devout and Holy Life* (published 1729). The devotional literature took seriously the "religious significance of moral duties with urgency but little theoretical grounding" (O'Donovan 2013, 69). The wake of both Enlightenment and devotional literature led to the concerted effort to recover the value of theology for ethics by Schleiermacher, as seen above. Yet for Schleiermacher, ethics is not necessarily connected to church teaching as he developed *both* theological and philosophical ethics. And even theological ethics are descriptive of the Christian's way of life that *emerges* from religious feeling and experience (O'Donovan 2013, 85). Instead of ethics being rooted in Christian teaching, both ethics *and* theology, respectively, flow from religious experience.

Thus, with a combination of relational breaches, training for the cure of souls, efforts at advancing human potential, recovering church influence, and the waning dominance of the church, there emerged a widening gap between ethics and theology. Right behavior in a given situation now was its own field. Ethics was on its way to becoming an autonomous discipline.

Leadership Ethics Without Theology?

So, why write a theology for leadership ethics? Because I expect that even theologically inclined leaders still suffer the same divide. Leaders often think carefully about what they are to do, but how often does theology form their action? And how important a role does it play? I expect that the affirmation of leadership for the benefit of society and the historical affirmation of theology for the benefit of society can continue to let leadership be its own field: Since both leadership and Christianity supposedly have the same goal, then social benefit is its own validation, and Christian witness, outreach, and mission are more easily validated by effectiveness at building churches and influencing society, than by faithfulness to Christian faith. This state of affairs leads to theology being scorned as being ineffective and impractical and, ultimately redundant, so it can be left off the table when considering ethics and the practice of leadership. If ethics could produce a better society than theology, why maintain theology as a discipline? Or, for our context, if leadership can be seen and developed without any real consideration of God, then why bother thinking theologically about the phenomenon of leadership? Leadership and theology, supposedly, simply run in different lanes: Leadership ethics is about getting things done well and right; theology is about believing what is right and true. Both are done in service to the church, culture, or society, it might be supposed, but have relatively little overlap.

I'm putting the situation bluntly to make the point. I know all leaders aren't quite so dismissive of theology. But let me offer two ways that I see leadership ethics happening outside a theological context. First, leadership ethics might be done *philosophically*. With this in mind, I do not mean by leaning on philosoph*ers*, like Levinas or Kant as noted above. Instead, I mean by drawing on wisdom uniquely tailored to leaders and leadership through popular books and coaching. Leadership ethics in this vein might be leadership ethics by moral philosophy (Korac-Kakabadse et al. 2001, 207). Leaders understand the need for wisdom because leaders need to be

able to "mediate abstract principles and the particular demands of real-life situations" (Korac-Kakabadse et al. 2001, 213). Notice that there remains a reasoning process but that it is outside a theological context. This kind of leadership wisdom might even include organizational psychology, communications, social intelligence, and other fine sources. Yet these fields may not provide overarching critiques and claims. After all, the "demands of real-life situations" for leadership are demands that require action! *Ultimately, what works is what will be attractive*. The effective leader simply is the wise leader. Thus, while we may not learn leadership ethics from the effective leader, the ethics of the effective leader will be reproduced in the students who deploy her methods.

Second, we might consider leadership ethics through science. Here's an example that works hard to combine theological value with outcomes from social science. Louise Kretzschmar, a professor of theological ethics trained in Christian religion and theology, grounded leadership ethics in character and virtue. She writes, from a Christian perspective, "Moral leadership is as essential now to the wellbeing of society as it has ever been" (2007, 18). For Kretzschmar, moral leadership is leadership that promotes *what is good*. Kretzschmar did not ground ethics in community values, however, because she was not naïve to the difference of morality in various cultures. Instead, she grounded evaluation of the leader *against the leader's own moral framework* (2007). So, there is a clear understanding that good is rooted in a context; it is not a claim strictly from *reason*. Moral leaders are those who promote what *they believe* to be good. So, the moral leader is the leader with personal integrity and congruity between action and belief. This is an important move because theology is potentially given a voice in the discussion inasmuch as leaders are shaped theologically and ought to act consistently with their theology.[4] However, Kretzschmar's methodology of developing moral leadership relied on the Hofstede Index, which measures sensitivities and traits from a variety of cultures, and she then affirmed the agreement of desirable leadership traits across cultures. Certainly, this is an understandable emphasis when seeking cooperative leadership across a variety of cultures. Efforts to find common ground are vital and important. Yet, this methodology is not grounded theologically in any one tradition or considered from a theological tradition of evaluation. In other words, what is the ground on

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[4]I think this is a helpful move and I offered this as a service to leadership studies in the Introduction.

which cross-cultural agreement is validated? What happens when a culture changes or a new culture is introduced that disagrees with other cultures? This is leadership ethics from sociology.

Sociology is not the only scientific entrée into ethics that might be used. Leaders might learn about good leadership through anthropology and how what it means to be a human being, through psychology and motivation and thought patterns, through biology and the physical makeup of another person. Now, none of these fields is to be rejected. What is to be challenged is the belief that these approaches are fundamentally different from theology when it comes to discerning ethics. Theologian Vinoth Ramachandra (2008) notes one of the ways we can get confused. We can lump some fields of inquiry as "science," often in order to hold these aloft as neutral, objective, and grounded in research. (For our purposes I am including both natural and social sciences.) Think scientific method where there is "observation, theory formation, laboratory experimentation" (171). This kind of knowledge is held in high regard—a true knowledge because it is not strictly *opinion*. (Notice how this continues the work of the Enlightenment when people wanted an ethics that was not conventional or arbitrary!)

Scientific knowledge is privileged because it is solid, objectively true, and trustworthy. But when sociology (and other scientific approaches) is given primacy of place in knowledge, as when pointing to shared values across different cultures, and offered as evidence for the rightness of certain actions, then we have a problem because this kind of scientific methodology assumes a Kantian philosophy that God and, therefore, theology are outside the categories of the observable world and unable to contribute to knowledge (Milbank 1990). Thus, an ethics grounded in sociology is necessarily atheistic; it is a social theory without God. This is why Brown, Trevino, and Harrison's (2005) definition of ethical leadership, introduced and critiqued last chapter, is so important. It creates the measurement tool to measure ethics in leadership without theological consideration of right and wrong. *But*, as we saw, the ethical leadership scale purported certain values, certain ways of being that were *right* or *better* than others. Thus, any ethic developed from such science described above is not neutral; ethics from science are still laden with values and reflect certain *ideologies*. Thus, while these values and ideologies must not be explicitly theological, they ultimately compete with theological claims—claims to fairness, justice, right, and so on. In other words, when science moves into value claims, then there is more than sociology happening. Whereas Kant

wanted an ethic that could be built strictly on reason, future efforts had the same desire for objective knowledge, but changed the structure, marshaling evidence, and argumentation from scientific methods. Ethics still was not strictly autonomous. It simply shifted fields to provide knowledge of ethics from theology to a science. Therefore, because science, when delving into values, remains grounded in a worldview, *ethics* remained arbitrary and conventional. Now, this doesn't mean that science or moral wisdom is to be rejected. It only means that we must not use "science" to develop ethics as though these ethics are supposedly neutral.

Now I want to introduce an important distinction. Science is not strictly an atheistic approach. Science can also mean "an inquiry that is rigorous, methodological, and open to argument" (Ramachandra 2008, 171). *Theology* is this kind of science that is methodological and open to argument. When theology is seen as this kind of science, then we see that not all beliefs about God are equal because not all ways of knowing God share the same depth and rigor and some beliefs about God within a person's set of beliefs might be contradictory. For example, a person who simply believes everything they feel about God to be true might not be as reliable a source as someone who has thought about what it means for God to be a personal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient spirit. Or a person who thinks that God desires their happiness and as a result that God affirms all their desires might quickly come to see the contradiction of these desires, since the person might desire to harm themselves which would not lead to any serious kind of happiness.

Pointing out the ideological commitments of values rooted in various scientific inquiries is not to limit the fields that might inform our ethics; it is to be honest that our ethics are never grounded on pure objectivity. They are always wrapped up in a kind of theology or ideology that must be analyzed, critiqued, and argued, otherwise there are unchallenged conclusions from uncritiqued frameworks.

Putting Theology and Ethics Back Together

In the above section, I've argued that leadership ethics just can't get away from theology (or an ideology). So, how might we understand the relationship between ethics and theology? How might we do the hard work of bringing truth about God into appropriate act, attitude, and aim of the leader?

Perhaps reconnecting ethics and theology starts with a counterexample, a real-life theologian who was a leader or a leader who was intentionally theo-logical. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor, theologian, seminary professor, and founder of the confessing church in Nazi Germany. He was active in the resistance movement until his arrest and imprisonment in 1943 and execution in 1945, just a month before the fall of Nazi Germany. In the late 1930s, Bonhoeffer (1954) penned a short book titled *Life Together*—a simple, yet theologically deep account of the church's shared life together. The book gave reasons for actions and even prescribed certain daily rhythms and routines for work, prayer, readings, and even singing in unison or in harmony.

Bonhoeffer claims that the ecclesiology in *Life Together*, at times mundane and yet consistently rich, is based on a community of fellowship of Christians from his understanding of justification: "[T]he community of Christians springs solely from the Biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christian for one another" (1954, 25). For Bonhoeffer, the way of living together, an ethic of Christian life, was rooted and connected with one's understanding of God's saving activity, specifically the doctrine of justification. Bonhoeffer writes, happily, "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer" (19).

Perhaps most exemplary of Bonhoeffer's example is his enduring legacy. Bonhoeffer failed to achieve all of what he could have achieved had he stayed alive. Before returning to the resistance efforts in Germany, Bonhoeffer was safely in the United States and could have remained, but didn't. The irony of Bonhoeffer's life is that his leadership was extended and secured *precisely because he wasn't pragmatic*. Or, we might say, his pragmatics ran into theological limits. As a martyr, Bonhoeffer's leadership extended beyond what he did, but also *because* of what he didn't do for theological reasons. With such a powerful personal counterexample in place, let's consider how ethics and theology fit together.

First, ethics and theology may be joined in *an act of faith*. To do something by faith means to ask, given the theological beliefs already held, what ethics emerge? For Bonhoeffer, the truth of justification led to the shared life of Christians. Theologian Dan Migliore (2014), in his oft-used and revised introduction to Christian theology, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, writes that "[t]he gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims God's gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, freedom, and new life. But the gift

of God enables and commands our free, glad, and courageous discipleship. Theology and ethics are thus conjoined" (15). Consider another faith-based description of ethics: "Christian theology is reflecting on and articulating the God-centered life and beliefs that Christians share as followers of Jesus Christ, and it is done in order that God may be glorified in all Christians are *and do*" (Grenz and Olson 1996, 49, italics added). The work and nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ not only invite reflection, but also demand human response. If one holds to a Christian doctrine of God, then ethics necessarily follow.

Joining ethics and theology as an act of faith does not mean ethics are irrational, as though faith and reason were enemies. It means that leadership ethics flow from a previously established belief in the overarching story of God and God's work in the world. It means seeking ethical conclusions from the science of theology, holding them open for debate, argument, and critique, and then submitting to them if they truly follow from the faith. Leadership ethics flow from faith that is already held. The question is not whether this will happen, but how effectively it does happen. So we might as well be intentional about it!

Why might Christians be determined to recover this theological approach to ethics and ethical leadership? Because ethical leadership is lacking a solid foundation and conceptual clarity. While efforts to clarify and strengthen ethical leadership emerge from philosophy and sociology, the danger is that without regard for the inherent values of ethical suggestions for leadership from these efforts there may be an uncritical acceptance of pragmatism and various ideologies. This is especially the case when leadership efforts are encouraged to effect change and the problems needing to be faced do not stop presenting themselves. Yet the danger is significant: Monahan (2012) and Knights and O'Leary (2006) both argued that the Enlightenment has created a self-focused culture that fosters preoccupation with self in leadership—even narcissism. Without proper ethical consideration, leadership efforts may only perpetuate problems or leave unaddressed some challenges that lie beneath the surface.

Let me take this deeper. Moral and political theologian Oliver O'Donovan (2013), who we engaged above, describes ethics as a struggle for the "soul of the city," a struggle between "statistics" (by which O'Donovan means sociology and a postpositivist approach to ethics) and "dogmatics" (specific church teaching) (viii). O'Donovan sees how effectiveness, getting things done, is not simply a value but a worldview

that will claim the city's soul. We might say that pragmatism can be a kind of nonreligious dogma in battle with what the church proclaims as religious truth.

In this gap between statistics and dogmatics, O'Donovan squarely places *Christian ethics.* His approach highlights the second way we can join theology and ethics. While Hauerwas (2001) began with the faithful people questioning what *Christians* ought to do, O'Donovan pushes deeper. It is not only *Christians*, but also *people* who ask what is expected of them by God and what they should do (2013). Note that these are not *pragmatic* questions—What is effective? But these do remain *practical* questions—What is to be done in light of God? This is not only about simply asking, "How can we get the job done more efficiently?", but also about "What jobs ought to be done?" If there is to be help for people in the midst of asking these questions from a community that has considered the questions previously (the church!), there must be such a thing as Christian ethics. This is a kind of phenomenological approach to theology and ethics.[5]

The very fact that we ask questions about what we should do pushes us in the direction of theology—that there is a moral framework to the universe that lies beyond the natural world. Ethics lead to theological questions and O'Donovan joins them up by having a theology prepared to answer the questions that are already informed by the very act of asking the ethical questions. If the first connection of ethics and theology was the outflow of ethics from theology, this connection is about to what theology do our ethics lead. Individuals and communities ask questions of purpose and responsibility, and simply by asking one's purpose reveals the individual and the broader community something about the world (O'Donovan 2013, ix). Christians expect these existential questions because God is active and theology provides the rationale for Christians to enter the field of ethics from their own vantage point. O'Donovan describes these two branches of theology as "mutually complementary: Doctrine completes Ethics by speaking of an end of God's works; Ethics completes Doctrine by offering it an understanding of itself as a practice of praise" (2013, 6).

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[5] James K.A. Smith uses the same term in his notes on O'Donovan's book, *Self, World, and Time*. Accessed September 10, 2017. http://forsclavigera.blogspot.com/2013/11/whither-oliver-odonovan.html.

A theology of leadership, because it is interested in God and right activity with a purpose, then, comes at the subject of right leadership from two sides: effectiveness and faithfulness. We might say that leadership ethics are about *effective* faithfulness to the work of God, recognizing that not all faithful actions will be effective. At times, effectiveness takes a backseat to faithfulness, taking action (or none) and simply entrusting the results to God. This is the outcome seen in Bonhoeffer's martyrdom. Martyrdom is not a strategy, but the recognition that no strategy for effective action remains that is faithful to God's work. This is why Christian faith recognizes as leaders so many who have not been effective or who stopped being effective at certain points.

CONCLUSION

Let's bring it back to Elizabeth and Henry McCord. What should they say to their children? Elizabeth had volleyed the question back to Henry: Is misleading our children OK to the religion professor? Henry's answer is telling: "Well, if it means we don't terrify our kids, then I'm happy to be off the clock." I take Henry to mean that as a religion professor, he might have trouble with misleading his children, but as a Dad maintaining peace in the home was the more desirable effect—and Dad trumps Professor. While I like the show, I think this is a disintegrated life. I wonder, however, if people who love and want to lead well for God take similar steps: While I've never heard anyone say, "If it means getting things done for God, then I'm happy to be off the clock as a theologian," I think the great temptation of the passionate practitioner is for the Leader to trump the Theologian.

With all this in mind, it should be clear that a theology of leadership is not strictly an academic exercise. The overarching commitment is to God and if God is a God on mission, then God is concerned about getting things done. So, a theology of leadership will involve right activity in light of God's work and the life of Christ. If God had not acted first, then we would not consider what our right activity is in light of God. God's act of self-revealing is necessary to start our reflection on who we are to be and how we ought to act as leaders—our theology of leadership. While there are several ways to engage this kind of theology, I propose we take the route of biblical theology. In this direction, we now turn.

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CHAPTER 4

Biblical Theology

Introduction

When I was a teenager, it didn't really matter. I played sports, often poorly, and my teammates knew my religious commitments. They didn't care. We were friends. It wasn't that my beliefs didn't matter to them, but there was enough camaraderie to enjoy playing the game together and to share mutual respect. When I became an adult and played sports in different towns, I tried to keep my pastoral profession under wraps while I was beginning to know my teammates. Why? Because when people found out I was a pastor, it always led to a certain measure of discomfort. Before they knew me as a person, an image was formed in the mind about who I was going to be. I wondered if teammates thought that stuffed under the hockey socks and shoulder pads in my hockey bag was a Bible I was just waiting to bring out.

By now you've taken the time to join me in this conversation. You know my commitment to leadership and thinking about the ethics of leadership and you know about my commitment to theology. Well, now I'm risking it. It's time to bring out the Bible.

The Bible, Ethical Formation, and Leadership Studies

The Bible has been used to understand moral obligations, commandments, personal and social values, and the nature and formation of human character for generations (Cosgrove 2011). This is important

to note because, as seen in the review on ethical leadership, appeals to common knowledge are prevalent in ethical thinking, but the use of the Bible in ethics does not always appeal to common knowledge or common values. Instead, the Bible might be used to challenge common knowledge and errant, though common, values.

Here are three examples of using the Bible in leadership and leadership ethics. First, *the Bible has been used to confirm or critique leadership conclusions*. So, one explores the Bible, searching its content in light of organizational leadership theory and thought to see where the Bible might affirm (or critique) these principles. This is not *starting* with the Bible to build a leadership theory or thought, but confirming that the leadership theory or thought is sound and helpful because it is also found in the Bible—perhaps on a second look.[1]

Second, *the Bible has been analyzed from leadership perspectives*. In this case, leadership studies provide the perspective one deploys to read the Bible. This is different from the first use mentioned because the Bible isn't confirming or critiquing theory. Instead, leadership theory is showing what the text is saying or what the text is doing—perhaps even unaware.[2] It is like shining the light of new knowledge from leadership into the dark corners of the Bible, perhaps seeing something fresh with this new light.

Third, *the Bible's teaching has been applied using organizational and leadership theory*. While readers of the Bible might think of applying the Bible to different areas of life, in this case the Bible isn't applied to leadership, but leadership and/or organizational theory and thought helps to apply the Bible's teaching.[3] Leadership scholar Michael Mahan (2012) makes this argument by distinguishing first-order theology from second-order theology. First-order theology seeks to discover what the Bible (and other authoritative theological sources) teaches on a certain subject.

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[1] Longbotham and Gutierrez (2007) argue that Scripture can "validat[e] effective organizational principles" (99–100). Rather than going to the biblical text to find and/or developing a principle, Longbotham and Gutierrez described this methodology as looking "through the lens backwards" (100).

[2] Faulhaber (2007) used transformational leadership as the lens by which to understand 1 Peter. This use of the Bible didn't assume that 1 Peter was confirming or critiquing this leadership theory, but analyzed 1 Peter with the traits of transformational leadership in mind.

[3] Mahan (2012) argued that organizational theory can help to develop the *application* of Christian teaching (or doctrine).

Second-order theology seeks to develop and apply first-order theology in new contexts and to use Christian doctrine to shed light on different areas. Here's an example. The Bible's teaching on the church is *ecclesiology*. This single word comes from two words and breaks quite simply into two parts around these words: *ecclesia* (church) and *logos* (word, study). So, ecclesiology is the study of the church. Mahan suggested that "[o]rganizational leadership is a behavioral science that may illuminate ecclesiology by focusing our attention on issues of second-order ecclesiology that are not often considered in first-order ecclesiology" (2012, 76). For example, while first-order theology would analyze the church and develop coherent thought from several inputs, second-order theology could take various insights from, say, organizational leadership research, to consider things like task-relationship dynamics or models and theories of power. The Bible provides the bigger picture and then organizational leadership provides more applicable details.

Each of these three examples has potential value. Christian leaders will certainly want to submit their actions and assumptions to the Bible and will not to spurn any potential applicable insights and resources along the way. But these intentions do not mean that leaders become naïve to think that they do not analyze the Bible in light of their interests. So, there remains an implicit theology or ideology even when applying biblical teaching or doing biblical research. This means that we have to be aware that we read the Bible with our own interests in mind. We might be so quick to apply biblical doctrine that we don't take the Bible as seriously as we should and draw conclusions that we don't allow the Bible to challenge.

I want to use each of these approaches while minimizing their risks. So, I want to:

- submit leadership conclusions to the Bible, without ignoring that leadership conclusions (including my own) are already theological;
- analyze the Bible for leadership insight without assuming that it is always interested in answering my questions;
- apply biblical teaching as a leader, without forgetting that the Bible contains a variety of voices and perspectives on a number of subjects.

Yet even though people may agree that the Bible is a source for ethical knowledge, there is disagreement as to how the Bible is to be studied and understood. For example, the church fathers and early Reformers

emphasized the character and spiritual formation of the interpreter to access the Bible rightly. One did not access the Bible rightly without the right character and posture. On the other hand, the character of the interpreter was not as important as the proper method of interpretation for Enlightenment scholars.[4] More recently, emphasis has been made not simply on the appropriate method or the character of the interpreter, but on the dynamic between interpreter and interpretation. There is not simply a reader and a text, but a relationship between reader and text. Because "Christian ethics is a constructive discipline that must constantly evolve to grapple with new issues and to rethink old issues under changed conditions" (Cosgrove 2011, 21) the reader/interpreter is becoming tasked with discovering a moral meaning in the text, depending on the moral questions being brought to the biblical text (Cosgrove 2011, 24).

Joel Green provides a helpful spatial metaphor when relating to the Bible. Green says that there is a world *behind* the biblical text, *in* the biblical text, and *in front* of the biblical text (2007, 106ff).[5] The Bible has an aim—its writers wrote for a purpose. We might say that this is the message *in* the text. But, of course, the Bible was written in multiple languages, none of them English, from complex cultures, and at different times in history. The Bible is embedded in culture and history, much of which its authors took for granted, but that we do not. This is the world *behind* the biblical text. And here we are thousands of years later talking about leadership and extending the overarching narrative of Scripture into contemporary questions of leadership. This is a world *in front* of the text.

These worlds behind, in, and in front of the text can be overwhelming. We might wonder where is the meaning of the text? Is it behind (what the culture reveals), in (what the text wants to say), or in front (what we intend it to mean) of the text? Or does this mean that the Bible is without any kind of determinable meaning? Is the Bible simply a wax nose for what we want it to mean in ethical formation and leadership studies? That these different spaces exist does not mean that there is *no* meaning in the text. Neither does it mean that there are *so many meanings* that there might as well be none. So, how should we read the Bible?

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[4] For a brief overview, see Cosgrove (2011).

[5] Joel Green uses the spatial imagery of behind, in, in front of the text in *Seized by Truth*. The image is not unique to Green, but I find his description simple and clear.

Theologian Kevin Vanhoozer (1998) says that we should find the meaning of the text in the author's intention: What the author intended the text to say is what the text means. However, is it not clear that a text may be comprised of more meaning than an author intended? Just as authors reveal messages in texts, so do texts reveal aspects of culture and life to which the author may be blind. This is not to dismiss what the author intended but to realize that texts reveal more than authors realize and may be analyzed beyond the author's intended meaning. Authors may not be aware of the various contexts they assume, including their own complex intentions, so readers have more tools at their disposal than the author.

While this complexity can be overwhelming, it can also help us to be humble as we read ancient texts and see what we might find in them. We cannot ignore any of the text's worlds—in, behind, or in front. They all exist and form how we read. Contemporary readers should be humble when they realize the cost, sacrifice, and intent of ancient writers and editors to provide testimony and teaching, which they surely intended to have a specific meaning. And contemporary readers should also be humble in what they read because the reader may see the reader's self in the reader's analysis (Thiselton 1992). So, what a text means includes its own context and purpose, but also our faithful application.

Whatever else we might think about reading the Bible now, we must realize that there is a depth to the text's meaning. New Testament scholar Grant Osborne (1991) provided the metaphor of a spiral to convey this reality. Texts can contain meaning but also allow for ongoing dialogue between the text and the interpreter. I like this metaphor, not least because I have young children and people love to give Slinkies and Slinky-like toys to them. Because they are fiercely guarded possessions and without comment on the quality of the product, these toys last about 2 minutes and 37 seconds in our house. Why? Because they are grabbed, pulled, twisted, and finally wrenched out of an eager new set of hands shortly after the toy's first run down a flight of stairs. And once twisted, pulled, and wrung from smaller hands, they just don't look like they did at the start. Neither do they act like they did just a few moments earlier. Keep this image in mind with Osborne's metaphor. Just like a Slinky remains a Slinky as long as it retains its shape, but becomes a bent and twisted piece of trash when its shape is marred, so does a spiral only remain a spiral if it remains relatively *tight*. Once a spiral diverges uncontrollably in an increasingly malformed shape, it ceases to be a spiral. Texts can be so pulled, yanked back and forth from

interested readers, that they can lose all shape and bear little resemblance to what was once a carefully crafted object. Osborne's metaphor can affirm that there is a meaning to a text while also noting that there is a depth that may be betrayed by simplistic, superficial readings. Thus, while interpreters may pursue the interpretation of a text differently, the ascertained meaning of the text ought not to be *radically* disconnected from other interpretations. Not all interpretations are equal or ought to be valued simply because someone *believes* (or *feels*) this is what a text means. That interpreters may use a variety of lenses for analysis which allow for various interpretations does not mean that there is *no* meaning to a text whatsoever. Not all interpretations are equally valid. Texts have faithful ranges of interpretation and different analytical approaches may provide a fuller understanding of a text.

Let's think about this relationship between text and reader as a conversation. Because texts provide worldview, language, and perspective, interpreters can both analyze a text for its content and for its revealing of other texts.[6] This interaction forms dialogue between text and reader. At one time, the text is invited to speak; at another it is forced to listen to other texts. A conversation with a text may include its own voice, the words of others who precede the text, and the words of others who respond to the text (Gowler 2010).

By now it should be clear that this does not mean that a text does not have a meaning tied to the author's intent. To silence the voice of the text's author as if the text is no longer in relationship with its author is not a dialogue. The text's meaning is discerned, in part, as it is welcomed to the dialogue and its overt voice consistently heard. A text is not brought to a conversation to be *told* what it means but for the reader to *hear* what it means and what it has meant to others, while providing a greater stereo sound with other contemporary voices and questions in the mix.

For our purposes, we want to listen to the text and then weave it into the leadership conversation, including contemporary questions and challenges; we want to hear its voice and use it as a conversation partner in studying ethical leadership. So, there remains a stable meaning of the text—an actual theology that might be developed with confidence and applied faithfully to the contemporary issue of leadership, which may be outside its initial consideration.

[6]See Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (2009) for a deeper yet introductory discussion.

I trust it is clear that using the Bible for ethical leadership does *not* simply mean finding an example in the Bible to which one may point as the precedent for action, tempting though this might be! A quick Amazon.com search will reveal many books written on the historical figure Nehemiah and leadership lessons that can be gleaned from his life. Nehemiah was a governor of the region of Judah while it was under Persian reign during the fifth century BCE. The biblical book of Nehemiah tells the story of his utter shame and devastating sorrow at the state of Jerusalem. He visits this beloved city and finds it without pride or protection because its wall lies in ruins. Nehemiah, through political savvy and internal strength of heroic measure, rebuilds the wall. Undoubtedly leadership lessons can be learned, and a leadership philosophy is discernible through the text, but I don't want a leadership philosophy developed and applied strictly from the book of Nehemiah. Why? Well, because Nehemiah is willing to curse people under his charge and pull out their hair (Nehemiah 13:25)! Can much be learned from Nehemiah? Certainly! Is there a simple one-to-one application from this biblical text to twenty-first century leadership? Nope! Thus, I submit that using the Bible for ethical leadership means *extending the story of Scripture into current questions of leadership and leadership ethics.*

Please take a second look at the previous sentence. I made a change that can't be ignored. I started by saying the "Bible" and then I used the word "Scripture." The Bible refers to a collection of writings. Some Bibles are different than others, although when I use the term, I mean the 66 books of the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books) that is used by the Protestant Church. (I am using the word 'book,' but some writings are collections of poems, letters, history, etc.) *Scripture*, on the other hand, means *sacred writings*. I believe that the Bible is Scripture, but you can still recognize the Bible as a collection of writings without believing it is Scripture. I highlight this change and define these words because confessing that the Bible tells an overarching story is already an act of faith and I do not want to smuggle in my confession under cover. So, while I will use the Bible as Scripture—holy writings with an overarching story—I recognize that not every reader will share that same belief. Yet the conclusions drawn in section two are still presented to be critiqued and analyzed and may be accepted or rejected by people who share or do not share my belief that the Bible is Scripture. In other words, I recognize my own role in interpretation and so the conclusions drawn are not beyond critique simply because they are drawn from Scripture. My theology for leadership is developed as a person

submitted to the Bible and is then held open for review for all readers. This is why I make the appeal to Scripture as an act of faith. One need not read the Bible as having a unified message, but all are invited to see its contents as unified around its subject—God. Thus, the unity of Scripture is not necessarily found in its internal ethical agreement but, theologically considered, in its overarching author—God. It is God who determines our ethics as we engage the Scriptures passed down to us.

Yet, I must point out that submitting to the formation of Scripture is not simply a product of personal desire. It is reasonable to submit to Scripture because of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Theologian Karl Barth said, "The freely acting God Himself and alone is the truth of revelation" and Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God (1961, 15). Now, one might charge me with circular reasoning at this point: "You believe in Jesus because the Bible teaches you about him and now you're saying you believe in the Bible because you believe in Jesus. Well, where does it start?" My response is that I don't believe in Jesus simply because of the Bible, although that is partially true, but *because of people who have been formed by the Bible*. In other words, I haven't simply seen Jesus in the pages of the text, but in the various communities who have held and practiced and preached this text and worshiped the God whom it describes. Of course, I have learned about Jesus from the Bible, as well, which was written by people who were formed by Jesus, too. And the Bible has been studied scientifically (think of the definition from last chapter—subject to critique, judgment, analysis, etc.) in its content, transmission, and manuscript evidence. This is why I want to learn from the Bible, practice it rightly, and attempt to teach its contents in ways that are winsome and effective for the formation of "conduct and character and community" of Jesus (Verhey 2011, 11).

This theological affirmation on the unity of Scripture because of the truth of God provides a key lens in the use of Scripture for ethical purposes. For example, Jewish or Greek ethics could be assumed or used in a specific letter of the New Testament but are subsequently chastened in light of the life and message of Jesus. The only way a Christian can understand Scripture is with Jesus at the center.[7] Once again, this is not to limit how the Bible might be read, but to be clear that I am at least partially aware of how I read it. As Joel Green says, "We come

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[7] Scot McKnight (2016), writes, "one cannot read the OT in a Christian way without knowing the resolution in the NT."

[to the Bible] not so much to retrieve facts or to gain information, but to be formed. The Bible's authority rests, ultimately, in its disclosure of this divine purpose" (Green 2007, 173).

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

So, I submit to the Bible as an act of faith, believing it to be Scripture—containing the unified message of God and the rule for ethical formation and in this way the Bible is authoritative. I let you know this so that you can be part of this conversation even while you might not yet have the same belief. But I expect you have a question: What does authority mean? Let's delve deeper into what it means for the Bible to be authoritative.

Let me start by saying what I do not mean.[8] First, the Bible is not authoritative because it has supernatural origins. The Bible was not crafted by divine dictation. While I believe that the Bible is inspired by God—it would not have been written without God's direction—and that God has faithfully communicated through the Bible the truth of salvation, neither can nor need we ignore human participation in its writing. Different authors bring their own perspectives to earlier Scripture, world history, and the events they are describing, as biblical theology reminds us. Second, the Bible is not authoritative strictly as an historical source. This does not mean that where Scripture aims to write history that it is to be dismissed, but that the biblical writers communicate and aim to communicate more than "just what happened." Third, the Bible is not authoritative as a classic religious text (Migliore 2014, 51). The Bible is not authoritative simply as a collection of impressive texts that ought to be revered and appreciated as classic literature, concerned as they are with the religious life of religious people from the ancient past. The Bible continues to influence, form, and guide. We do not simply learn from it, but submit to it. I allow Scripture to challenge and change me in ways that I do not allow Shakespeare to challenge and change me. Finally, the Bible is not a "private devotional text" (Migliore 2014, 52). The Bible is not simply authoritative to our personal meaning, personal use, and personal salvation, but also for whole communities of people and for the entire world (Migliore 2014, 52).

[8] The following four clarifications draw heavily upon Dan Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, but I extend, modify, and diverge from his thinking at various points (2014, 49–52).

To be in authority means to be able to demand obedience, give orders, and make decisions. Authority exists when a person might scream, "You're not the boss of me!" but hear, and recognize, "Actually, yes, I am" in response. Oliver O'Donovan describes authority as that which provides the "immediate and sufficient ground for acting" (1994, 122). So, the boss can give direction and expect to be obeyed and, within certain parameters, employees are expected to follow through on the boss' orders without any other reason except *she's the boss*. This is to be in authority.

Let's take this further. What I have been suggesting is that we are all under a kind of theological or ideological authority. It is not whether there is a theology at work, but what theology. Likewise, it is not whether there is an authority in play, but what kind or which authority. So, authority is a practical reality. It explains how the world works and functions. We all submit to a kind of authority (or several different authorities) rather than determining the rightness of our own actions in every moment. Thus, there is no pure act of the human being, only actions that emerge from a dynamic and complex interaction of agents and authorities found in the created world. What are these authorities that authorize our action and elicit our response? Oliver O'Donovan offers four mediators of authority:

1. Beauty: Think of being taken by music, a sunset, or a baby, and the immediate prompt to dance, paint, or love.
2. Age: When an older person speaks, we are inclined to pay attention for no other reason than they are older and have experience that we simply do not have. The content of their wisdom might match that of a younger person, but the older has authority the younger does not.
3. Community: While the western world champions individualism, much of the world recognizes the authority of community. "Everybody's doing it" is so often terrible logic to the rightness of an act, yet the fact that we are familiar with the logic shows that community is a powerful force in eliciting action.
4. Strength: This includes a variety of natural strengths, like when the strongest child in the classroom is deemed its leader or the bravest is looked upon to set direction.

These authorities are found throughout the created order (1994, 124). In addition to these examples of mediated authority, O'Donovan includes

the authority of *truth*. The authority of truth leads to O'Donovan's appeal to Scripture, which provides a comprehensive moral viewpoint because its faithfully revealed subject is God (1994, 200). For any consideration of Christian leadership, there must be an appeal to Scripture; and because it describes the actual moral order, it is not simply binding on the Christian but on all others. Now, of course, this conviction may not be shared by all persons as I've noted above and can be found in the leadership literature (Rost 1993), but it does provide rationale for the Christian to engage in leadership studies and why Scripture is an appropriate source and norm for ethical leadership from a Christian point of view. In a Christian consideration of ethical leadership, Scripture provides an authority for ethical action as it reveals the narrative of God's work and desired direction of God's creation. The narrative of God as found in Scripture, then, is a guide for leadership and ethics—in virtue (who we are to be), activity or duty (what we are to do), and end or goal (what ought to be our aim). Of course, this is a claim of faith—it cannot be proven that the Bible is Holy Writ—but it is an act that submits to scientific inquiry as defined last chapter: it is arrived at because it is studied methodically, subjects itself to inquiry, and is open to argument.

So, what does it mean for the *Bible* to be an authority? By authority of the Bible I mean that the Bible is able to form the faithful community of Jesus Christ. What it teaches is what this community should value and hold. Yet the Bible is only this authority as it forms its readers into the image of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the authority of the Christian life and so Scripture is authoritative as it witnesses to *him* and forms us in *his* image. "To speak of the authority of the Bible rightly is to speak of its power by God's Spirit to help create, nourish, and reform this new life in relationship with God and with others" (Migliore 2014, 52).[9]

Once again, I might be charged with arguing in a circle. But it is better to call what I am doing as *describing* rather than *arguing*. I am not starting with a foolproof, bulletproof, airtight, commonly held truth (or set of truths) on which to build everything else. Instead, I am describing what it means to be caught in the power of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus breathed on his disciples (John 20:22), and who uses the Scripture to form an influencing community. So, the Bible is authoritative as an act of faith, an implication of belonging to the community formed by Jesus.

[9] For more on the authority of Scripture, see Wright (2005).

The Bible is authoritative as it becomes Scripture. If Christians want to think about leadership, they have to go to this authority.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES

So, using the Bible for ethical formation means submitting to the Bible as Scripture and extending its story into current questions of leadership and leadership ethics. Because we are extending beyond the narrative of Scripture itself, we are doing *theological* work, forming a *theology* from Scripture that informs contemporary leadership questions.[10] So, our theology of leadership, presented in section two, is not strictly biblical, but *theological*. At the same time, this theology is limited in scope, focusing mainly on Scripture. It is not a theology that surpasses Scripture, but takes its trajectory from Scripture. Theologian Karl Barth points in the direction we have in mind: "[D]ogmatics does not ask what the apostles and prophets said but what we must say on the basis of the apostles and prophets" (Barth 1961, 16). So, to accomplish our desire to form ethics of leadership and leadership theology, I propose that we use *biblical theology*.[11]

What is biblical theology? Obviously as theology it seeks to study God and the work of God, but how does biblical theology relate to the Bible? Old Testament scholar James Barr (1924–2006) took biblical theology to mean a theology that was limited to the Bible: "'biblical theology' has clarity only when it is understood to mean theology as it existed or was thought or believed within the time, languages, and culture of the Bible itself" (Barr 1999, 4). Obviously, this is different from the way I'm using the term because I want biblical theology *not* to be limited to the Bible itself, but to provide a way of extending its thought so that perspectives on contemporary questions, such as leadership, may be developed. However, Barr's definition provides a certain level of humility to my

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[10]This is the methodology of Oliver O'Donovan as Craig G. Bartholomew (2002) writes, "Scripture undergirds and informs all of O'Donovan's work. However, his ethic is not only biblical but also *theological*; it recognizes the need for concepts and models to mediate between Scripture and ethical issues...." (20).

[11]What O'Donovan provided is a theological rationale to consider Scripture as the source of the moral duty as it witnesses to a unified ethic under the reign of Christ (1994, 20). We have leaned mightily on O'Donovan's method of biblical theology and a unified ethic from Scripture. While "O'Donovan has little discussion of the discipline of biblical theology, ... clearly his analysis of the unity of Scripture is along these lines" (Bartholomew 2002, 36).

proposal. Suppose a friend and I have a disagreement about Scripture. It might be tempting for me to claim that *my* theology is biblical while *theirs* is not. Barr's definition is helpful to recognize that within the Bible there might be several theolog*ies*. What I am after is seeing the overarching narrative that unfolds in a consistent way.

Another definition of biblical theology that is more in line with how I'm using the term comes from James Hamilton. Hamilton also uses the term to focus on the Bible, specifically "the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors" (2014, 15). The authors of the Bible did not simply develop a unique theology each time they wrote; they reflected on previous writings (some of which would be included in the Bible), world history, and the events they communicated, as well (Hamilton 2014, 15–16). Yet within these reflections, the biblical writers noticed patterns of action and event. We might say these patterns became *typical*—what "happened in the past, we begin to expect that this is the *type* of thing God will do in the future" (Hamilton 2014, 44). In addition to typology—the logic and study of these typical events or acts—the Bible also has symbols. "Biblical symbols are given to us to shape our understanding of how we are to live. Jesus is our paradigm, our pattern, our example. The symbols summarize and interpret the story, and they inform who we are in the story and how we are to enact our role in the outworking of its plot" (Hamilton 2014, 90). Notice the final part of the previous sentence: we have a role! We are part of the unfolding narrative of the Bible! We are forming the world in front of the text. Leaders might say that we are defining reality.

Here is one final definition of biblical theology. Biblical theology answers the question, "What understanding of God and the world and life emerges from these two Testaments?" (Goldingay 2016, 13). Naturally, an understanding of *life* includes the questions we might have and our pressing questions, including leadership questions. I want to tease out an answer (or several answers) for an understanding of leadership that accords with an understanding of God and the world from the Bible. Now we are seeing the potential benefit of biblical theology, because the Bible wasn't simply written to describe a theology to which its readers might remain neutral and the Bible is not simply given to objective readers to be mined for a theology. It is written to *convince*. Specifically, it is written to *form* its readers—and it will form readers who present situations and questions that the biblical writers didn't experience or even anticipate.

CONCLUSION

There. I brought out the Bible. It's on the conversation table, although we haven't really cracked it open, yet. I've just told you why it's there and what it might do. I want to use the Bible to form a biblical theology that will form our thoughts of leadership and ethical leadership. I have said that this method of engaging the biblical text helps us to draw faithfully upon its teaching in order to extend its narrative into contemporary issues of leadership and ethical leadership. We can use the Bible together as we analyze this world in front of the text.

As one who has been formed by the Bible as Scripture and by the community of Christ that it has formed, I aim to continue the Bible's own purpose to convince you. I hope that the stories I develop and pictures I draw from Scripture in the remaining chapters of this book might be part of a conversation that sparks your own reflections and activity around organizational structure and systems, the rights of persons, appropriate activities of followers, and that your good leadership might reflect valid, humble leadership that is drawn from Scripture (Perry 2010). I hope you will see that theology is not stodgy, boring, and useless. As Peter Leithart said, "biblical theology is supposed to be practical."[12] And I hope will soon see that biblical theology of leadership will be no different.

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CHAPTER 5

Creation: Human Beings and Leadership

CHASING SUCCESS

"It's important that you do what you're good at to be successful" (Maxwell 2013). The problem is that some people are just naturally good at a lot of things and some people seem to be good at very little. Some people can dance, sing, act, play baseball, and then grill a perfect steak. Others can only watch *American Idol* and pound back ballpark hot dogs. So, I have mixed feelings to the opening line. On the one hand, I want to offer it to anyone I am responsible to lead and influence because it assumes—I think rightly—that everyone is good at *something*. I like telling people that they have something to contribute and I like helping them find that niche.

My frustration, on the other hand, is that *success* is such a squishy term, behaving like silly putty in the hands of whoever uses it. What's success? Success to whom? When success is completely subjective, completely up to the individual or community, there are no standards of success. Anyone can define it. Anything goes for success. It might be defined by the community or by the individual. If by the individual, then the community doesn't matter in the definition of success. I can be a success even if nobody else agrees. I am my own measure of success, without responsibility to anyone but myself. Subjective success also means that whatever one is good at is validated if it makes him or her a success in other people's eyes. Even if the individual doesn't agree, the

community can demand ongoing performance in order for the individual to be deemed a success. If enough people think you're successful, then the way you got there is not really that important—and it might even be celebrated.

Did you know that Joey Chestnut ate 72 hot dogs in 10 minutes to win *Nathan's Famous* Hot Dog Eating Contest in 2016? Subjective success means that pounding back ballpark franks can become a *worthy* and commendable skill. Chestnut is so skilled at the challenge that he no longer manages construction sites (his previous career), but eats professionally (Nathan's Famous 2016). If Joey Chestnut can be deemed a success because he can eat 72 hot dogs at a pace better than 10 seconds each, then, not intending to take anything away from Mr. Chestnut, perhaps we need a new measure of success. Of course, not everyone agrees that Mr. Chestnut is a success or that consuming the same number of hot dogs in 10 minutes that many people consume in ten years is a *good* act. So, simply modify the formula. Is making money something one should aim to be good at? *Making* money is something to be good at if *having* money is deemed being successful. Is having and displaying an attractive personality and maintaining a fit body something one should be good at? It is if having multiple sexual encounters during any season of life is deemed being successful.

Of course, having an attractive personality, maintaining a fit body, making money and other things deemed good might be pursued differently. A person might be winsome in order to argue on behalf of the oppressed; a person might maintain physical fitness to rescue stray cats caught in trees; a person might grow in financial skill and business acumen to establish scholarships for deserving students. Inevitably, if you are a person who is interested in leadership, then you hold a definition of *success* and have given time and effort at being good at those things that will make you a success. *What you do is aimed at leading towards who you want to be.*[1]

Being a success, then, is deeply connected with who you are to be. Of course, how you answer the identity question is rooted in your family,

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[1] This claim could be considered in its own right, and has been, from the time of Aristotle and more recently with Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) *After Virtue*, Stanley Hauerwas (1991) *Community of Character*, and James K.A. Smith (2016) *You are What You Love*.

connected to your culture, and formed by your time. But let's flip our perspective. Instead of getting at the answer of who are you are to be by looking at you and your context, let's try to look at humanity as a whole. After all, if there's an answer to who you are to be that is not subjective—up to your own determination or that of your community—then there's an answer to who humans are supposed to be.

Being Human

So, what does it mean to be human? Perhaps asking the question is already part of the answer. Does any other animal ponder what it means to be…*it*? Of course not—at least, not to nearly the same extent human beings do. Humans wrestle with the question—individually and in groups. The question is consistently being answered from social imagination with intended (or unintended) heroes. Here's a sampling of answers currently offered by the Western world's popular culture.

First, human beings are beings that attempt to avoid work and/or responsibility at all costs. Perhaps fictional television character George Costanza of *Seinfeld* comes to mind. In the finale of Season 8, Costanza is all set to enjoy a severance package from the New York Yankees. The parting payment will afford George an entire summer without work and responsibility. But just before the "Summer of George" is about to start, Costanza suffers an accident and his opportunity to live carefree is lost. But George was not the only character whose pursuit of carefree freedom defined *Seinfeld*. The whole show celebrated individualism, narcissistic independence, and a life of relational loopholes. Living without responsibility—the life of the lottery winner, the sufficiently retired, or the independently wealthy. Is this being human?

Second, the human being is presented as a diligent worker. Picture J. Howard Miller's iconic bandana'd female with rolled-up sleeves, flexing her biceps—biceps sufficient for whatever task she might face. The 1942 poster of Rosie the Riveter attempted to boost worker morale during World War II for Westinghouse Electric. It's noteworthy that I had the *image* in mind before I knew her name. The slogan "We can do it!" emerges in a speech bubble over Rosie's head, though her mouth remains closed with pursed, fiercely determined lips. Unstoppable in work and production, strength upon strength to accomplish whatever task may present itself to us. Is this being human?

Third, we might think of human beings as competing beings. Picture Lebron James, a man with a massive male body yet graceful athletic motion, exerting his will over his opponent on the basketball court. Think of Muhammad Ali knocking his boxing glove triumphantly on his powerful arm while standing over the defeated Sonny Liston, taunting, "Get up and fight, sucker!" (Sports Illustrated 1965). Skilled, strong, and fast like an athlete, in perpetual competition against other humans, built by the challenge and thrill of victory. Is this being human?

Fourth, human beings have remarkable self-determination and autonomy. Determining what it means to be a human being might be the meaning of being human! Bruce Jenner displayed part of the freedom afforded the wealthy in the gender transition from Bruce to Caitlyn Jenner. The transition was considered so remarkable that Jenner was awarded the Arthur Ashe Courage Award from ABC TV productions (the ESPY) and was named runner-up in Time magazine's person of the year in 2015. Regardless of one's opinion on transgender issues, the transition and its celebration exemplifies the picture of human beings as beings with unparalleled self-determination and self-transformation. Being self-determining beings: Is this being human?

Finally, the recent spate of superhero movies and TV shows highlights another pop culture image of the human being: the superhero with alter ego. Whether Bruce Wayne (Batman), Peter Parker (Spiderman), or Matt Murdock (Daredevil), these heroes go to lengths to hide their identity with masks and suits, a hiding that facilitates and validates their work for justice. More recently, the CW Network's hit show *Arrow* has delved deeply into the ethics of wearing a mask to let loose one's buried identity, telling the story of lead character Oliver Queen who wears a mask in order to control the violent, disturbed (and disturbing) character within; a character who doesn't pursue his own personal gain, but who seeks the salvation of his beloved home, Star City. Repressing and controlling one's true self—a self only to be let loose from time to time—for the good of others. Is this being human?

Perhaps each of these pictures bears some truth. Human beings do enjoy and may thrive for a time in luxury and rest, yet human beings are workers and achieve great things in the midst of competition. Leadership theory captures this dynamic tension with Theory X and Theory Y, conflicting pictures of human beings. While Theory X says that people are lazy, needing oversight to get things done, and respond only to guided authority, Theory Y says that people are interested in work and contain

strong self-will to do great things; that people want responsibility and possess ingenuity, insight, and creativity.[2] We also see that human beings are remarkably self-determined, considering options, planning courses of action, and subsequently changing our minds. Because we can see examples of each of these pictures of being human, doesn't our experience reveal a depth to human beings—even contradictory pictures of workers and resters, determined and self-determining, using power for the sake of others and for personal gain, driven by self-desire and a desire to serve? We can sense and see conflict within our very selves, not to mention among other people.

So, what does it mean to be human? Bearing in mind that ideology is always wrapped up in our answers, this chapter aims to ask the question of being human from a theological perspective using biblical theology as our guide and seeking to apply our insights to leadership. My thesis is simple: God made human beings to be leading beings; beings that go first, bear responsibility, strategize with others, and coordinate others for the accomplishment of certain goals. Human beings do not exercise these roles of their own desire, but by virtue of God's design. This picture of being human emerges from a biblical theology of creation, including the nature of the created world and what it means to be made in the image of God. I will begin by looking through the creation accounts of the Bible and drawing theological implications from them and then applying these thoughts for leadership around three themes: Leadership *as* human beings; leadership *of* human beings; and leadership *with* human beings.

Let's Start at the Very Beginning

The biblical book of Genesis has two creation narratives, Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Genesis 2:4–2:25 (although this second narrative continues beyond an account of creation and into the saga of human beings and the rest of the creation). The first creation account starts with the Spirit hovering over the waters of the earth, which is formless and empty (Gen. 1:1). Yet the story quickly unfolds with God, first, *forming* space on days one through three and then *filling* this space on days four through six. So,

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[2]For a thorough and traditional exploration, see Douglas MacGregor (1960) *The Human Side of Enterprise*. For a brief overview, NetMBA (2010–2012) http://www.netmba.com/mgmt/ob/motivation/mcgregor/.

in the first three days there is separation of light from darkness, sky from water, and fruit-bearing land from sea, while in the second set of three days there is the creation of sun, moon, and stars to govern the day and night, birds and fish to fill the sky and sea, and living creatures to fill the land. Far from being formless and empty, God's creation is now ordered and filled.

At this point in the story, we are introduced to human beings: made by God in God's image as male and female and given authority to rule over the fish, the birds, and the ground creatures (Gen. 1:26–28). The initial pair is ordered to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and sub-due it. Placed where they are in the narrative, human beings occupy the *pinnacle* of creation. While God formed and filled space and deemed the results "good" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 24), God sees that the completed project, *with human beings as its crowning achievement*, is "very good" (v. 31).

Genesis 2:4–25, on the other hand, tells a different creation story.[3] Likely the earlier of the two stories, it provides a dramatic and extended narrative compared to the first.[4] Whereas Genesis 1 has a finality to it, Genesis 2 continues into subsequent chapters. Rather than building the creation narrative to the creation of humanity at its pinnacle (as does Genesis 1), Genesis 2 *starts* with *only* the man (Gen. 2:7) who is *formed* from the earth, with the woman later being *formed* from the man (Gen. 2:21–22).[5]

Clearly, we have two different stories with different purposes. The first story gives order and structure, while the second gives drama and plot. Both, however, dictate directions for human beings. Between the formation of the man and the woman in Genesis 2, the man is given a role: he is placed in the Garden of Eden to "work it and take care of it" (v. 15). This pair of words is very important because it is the same word pair used to describe the work of priests in the tabernacle in Number 3:7–8 and

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[3] To show that a complementing theology is at work in the text, Genesis 2 uses different words for God compared to Genesis 1. Whereas in Genesis 1 the word *elohim* was used for God, in Genesis 2 it is *Yahweh elohim*.

[4] Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden*, describes Genesis 2's creation account likely as "ancient, ancient material, that had been treasured for generations prior to its incorporation into the book we now know as Genesis" (2008, 94).

[5] For a helpful chart on these and other differences between creation accounts, see Richter, *Epic of Eden* (2008, 94).

elsewhere (Beale 2004, 81). Yet shortly after this task, God determines that the man should have a helper. Contrary to Genesis 1's affirmation of the goodness of creation and Genesis 2's affirmation of the goodness of the gold (2:12) and trees (2:9), God determines that it is *not good* for the man to be alone (2:18). Immediately following this decree, God creates the other land animals—livestock, birds, and beasts. Just like the man, they are formed out of the ground (v. 19), and because they are formed from similar stuff, they are the immediate potential suitors to partner with the man. However, after God brings the animals to the man to be named, none is found to be a suitable helper (v. 20b). So, God will create something new! This is the context for the creation of the woman: the man is found without helper, without one like him. Notice that there is no hierarchy between the man and the woman in either creation account. In the first account, male and female are created together. In the second account, the woman is created when the man finds no suitable helper after naming the animals (Gen. 2:20), the implication being that she is a suitable helper that is *like* him. She is crafted and formed out of the man not to serve him, but to *serve alongside him*—performing the activities of life that were not possible from the animals (Migliore 2014, 151).

We might see the word helper in a diminutive sense—like when a child is their parent's helper in a project. Do you remember being a helper as a child? I loved helping my Dad mow the lawn, weed the garden, do puzzles, and stack wood—at least for a little bit. I would inevitably get bored with whatever project was on the day's agenda and be off to do my own thing after a few minutes. My parents still tell the story of the time that I awoke from an afternoon nap to discover the tragedy that our backyard shack had been painted without me. An overly active, aimless "helper" was not much of a help at all. This is not what Genesis has in mind. The woman is described as an *ezer*, the same word repeatedly used to describe who God is to Israel and to those in need (see, for example, Deut. 33:29; Ps. 33:20; 115:9, 10, 11). Far from being a kind of sidekick or lesser of the two, the woman is a helper, a great relational gift from God.

So, the creation stories of man and woman is not one of domination, but of relationship. For this reason, there is no shame between the man and woman though they are naked (Gen. 2:25). Thus, *relationship* forms the context of human roles: male and female are created together as God's image to rule over creation together; the man and woman are suitable helpers for one another to work and take care of the Garden; the land will support the human beings in their life and flourishing.

Relationship was assumed in the first creation account. Human beings are created male and female and they are given the ruling mandate together. There is a deep connection between being made in God's image, being made together, and ruling. Humankind is created in God's image, male and female, *so that they* may rule (Gen. 1:26). Further, the relationship of male and female in humankind is connected with ruling the earth: they may rule the earth by being fruitful and multiplying (Gen. 1:28). Human beings are tasked with dominion, a task that might only be accomplished through their being fruitful and multiplying (Beale 2004, 84).

Image of God

Expanding the Garden of Eden was part of the function of being made in God's image. This illustration helps to capture what it means to be made in God's image. Suppose you were a kind of royalty in the ancient near east, ruling over a city. Cities were meant to be places that produced crops, people, and riches. To expand your empire, you might need to conquer another city. The point of conquering another city was not simply to decimate it, but to bring it under your rule. Conquering a city would involve bringing it to a place of submission, but eventually, you would want to rebuild this city—not so that it could rebel against you from a fresh position of strength, but so that it could produce crops, people, precious stones, and other goods to strengthen your empire. After conquering the city, you might need to hang around for a while, making sure any potential threats were removed or assimilated to your culture. (The Bible gives examples of how this happened in other ways. The biblical book of Daniel tells a story where the best and brightest upstarts of the Jewish people were exported to be properly assimilated to their new Babylonian culture. The Babylonian political authorities knew that rebellious threats could be minimized by reeducating and assimilating young leaders, but why not strengthen their own leadership pipeline at the same time!) After a while, you would set up your own leadership that was loyal to you. And then you would return to your initial city to make sure that in the vacuum of your absence, no delusions of grandeur captured rambunctious royal-wannabes' imaginations. You wanted multiple cities producing at their peak! But in your absence in the city recently conquered, you would leave behind a very special monument. A monument that would remind the people that while you were away, you had not

given up your authority. In case anyone wondered who was in charge, they need only look to that monument or statue and be reminded of who truly ruled. And that statue was called an *image*. When God creates humankind in his image and gives them to rule, it's like God is saying to the whole creation: "Even though it might feel like I'm absent, you need only look to my image to be reminded who is in charge. I'm still reigning and ruling, and humankind is tasked to carry out this role by my authority."[6]

Reigning and ruling to reflect God! There is no loftier understanding of being human! Truly, humankind is placed at the pinnacle of creation, tasked to guard and keep creation and to expand its blessings so that God's glory might be extended. So, whatever else it might mean, *being a human means being a leader of all creation*. But before we delve further into the leadership implications, there is another context of creation to highlight.

The Garden of Eden

Genesis 1–2 are not strictly concerned with human beings and their role as leaders in creation. Human beings are placed in the Garden of Eden—a place where humankind could thrive. It is tempting to see the Garden of Eden as the place where human beings were to stay, however, this is not the case. The Garden of Eden was a sacred place.[7] Just as Adam's role reflected a priestly role (guard and keeping, tending and caring), so does God's presence walking in the Garden (Gen. 3:8) reflect his walking presence in the tabernacle among his people (Lev. 26:11–12). Eden, just like the tabernacle, is sacred as God walks in it. Cherubim guarded the Garden of Eden, just like statues of cherubim guarded the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle (Exod. 25:18–22) and the temple (1 Kings 8:6–7). The sanctity of Eden might tempt us to see it as a place of beauty where people were meant to stay. But temples in the ancient near east were not

[6]Walter Brueggemann has a delightful commentary on Genesis as part of the *Interpretation* series. For more on humankind as God's image, see Brueggemann, *Genesis* (1986, 32). I have drawn on Brueggemann for this paragraph.

[7]See Beale (2004), Chapter 2, especially pages 66–80 for the following material with greater depth and analysis. For more on the missional nature of the Garden of Eden in a more popular book, see G.K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (2014).

meant to be static. They were meant to expand. Eden is no different. *Eden was not meant to be a place where humankind stayed, but a prototype of what they were to make when they expanded from Eden.* Eden was to be expanded as humankind was fruitful and multiplied. In other words, the sacred space where God placed humankind was not to be the paradise they stayed, but the example to which they would look for their work. It was not the archetype; it was the perfect prototype.

So, human beings are leaders in creation, presented with a place of beauty to expand into the world the glory of God as God's representatives. Wow! That's a mouthful! Let's do some work to keep this connected with ethical leadership.

Human Beings and Ethical Leadership

Creation theology founds ethical leadership and validates it as a human vocation for two reasons: first, because humans are *created* and, second, because of *where* humans have been created. Let's start by looking at the context of creation and its meaning for ethical leadership and then move into examining leadership implications for human beings.

Leadership makes sense and can be judged because creation is ordered. Without order, leadership would be chaotic, moving in any which direction, spurred only by opportunity and power. What was leadership for one would be treason to another. But in light of creation, with the task of exemplifying God for the creation, there truly is a right and wrong when it comes to leading. We might still disagree, but our actions—our attempts at leading—are justified.

But creation is not simply ordered in terms of space and structure, but in terms of time. Creation was not a chaotic progression of events and good things in any kind of time, but in an intentional, timely fashion. God unfolds creative physical accomplishments within its temporal order. The world is not simply a moral order, but a morally ordered *story*. Creation does not extend into an undetermined future, but into a "bounded future" (O'Donovan 1994, 188). Leaders take heart that where they start is never too late. Leaders also take note that leadership is not simply in any direction. Leadership must move in the good trajectory of creation—in the right direction. In other words, success is not simply bound to culture, but bound up in the creation of God, the unfolding of God's good creation in time and leadership acts are good by virtue of being connected to God's intent for creation. To be fruitful and multiply

was to accomplish the mission of extending the beauty of Eden, and can only be done in time. So, when leaders sense that something must be done, that action must be taken, they are encountering potentially new situations with new opportunities for action, but they are still caught up in the unfolding work of God. Leadership acts are coherent only if there is an order and direction to creation.[8]

Human beings are tasked not only to lead by building and making, but with the moral life, as well. Given the ordered context of creation, the world is morally ordered, with moral beings at the pinnacle. In other words, human beings are placed atop a morally structured and ordered world to lead it morally and can do so by growing in virtue (O'Donovan 1994, 183). Thus, leadership is not simply leadership, but is always *ethical* leadership. And to live out the human life ethically means to *lead* in creation. We might say that ethical leadership is redundant.

Let's put these two insights together. Leadership makes sense only because there is order to creation—that creation moves in a direction. And part of the world's order is moral order. So, all human activity is meant to be ethical leadership and human beings can be these leaders as they grow in virtue. Though faced with challenges that require leadership to confront and address, to solve and repair, human beings are not faced with brand new situations, but with unfolding contexts of the moral order of the world. So, while concerned with effective treatment of problems and challenges, human beings must develop an approach beyond simple pragmatism and the values of a community they inherit. Addressing a problem without regard to the moral order of the world will only perpetuate the problem.

Let me give a simplistic example. At times my children get at odds with one another—a problem. I can "solve" their problem by removing whatever it is they are fighting about. "No ice cream for either of you!" But the problem of immaturity without practical skill for working out conflict remains. The presenting issue is removed (the ice cream), but another is lurking just around the couch on the living room floor. Instead, I must attend to the moral order of the world for shared leadership and mutual flourishing (as much as 1-, 4-, and 6-year-olds can understand, of course—which is often more than I expect!).

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[8] This leads to the Christian understanding of eschatology, which we will explore in Chapter 7.

So, leadership is a coherent kind of act that takes moral form. Leadership is always of an ethical nature and it is ethical to lead. These two insights from biblical theology of creation, beg to be made more concrete and applicable. To do so, I want to look at leadership and human beings from three angles: leadership as human beings, leadership with human beings, and leadership of human beings.

Leadership *as* Human Beings

In contrast to the popular images we used to introduce this chapter, I have suggested that human beings are moral leaders of the creation. I said that this involves being God's representatives who *image* God so that God's seeming absence does not negatively impact God's creation. Just like the city-state ruler would set up an image in a city he ruled but did not inhabit to keep rebellion from springing up, so has God set his image as humankind in creation. What is so fascinating about the biblical story is that rather than quelling rebellion, God's image became the rebels! We will look more at this as we look at Jesus as a leader, but first, let's dive deeper into human beings as leaders.

Human beings lead in all kinds of ways. We lead in different fields and with different styles. Some people lead with encouragement, others with reward, and others by threat. Some people lead teams, some lead families, and there is a growing understanding that people even lead themselves. I want to frame what it means to lead as a human being in three ways, all grounded in the biblical text introduced above. Human beings lead as royalty, priests, and prophets. These three don't have hard divisions; there is overlap. Yet each role is found in the creation stories and helps to describe leadership that is truly human.

Human Beings Lead as Royalty

We already saw how being made in the image of God is a kind of royal status. Human beings reflect the ruler of the universe through their exercise of godly authority—expressing wisdom and justice.[9] Human leadership is for the flourishing of all of creation. Far from the thought that human dominion is to "rape" the earth, human leadership is to see the

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[9] N.T. Wright says, "[T]he royal vocation [of humanity] means reflecting God's wisdom and justice into the world," *The Day the Revolution Began* (2016, 79).

earth's beauty and order extended.[10] A being made in God's image must also have the perspective of God that creation is good. That which is good is not to be raped, but stewarded, enjoyed, and protected.[11] The corruption of some monarchies and tyrannical rulers, clearly displayed through various media of the twenty-first century, may make some uncomfortable with the language of royalty and human leadership. Indeed, all too often news media tell us the stories of leaders who rape, abuse, and enslave their people.[12] But such leadership is what makes the point all the more important: It is *not* leadership, at all. It is corrupt. Just as corrupt love is not love, neither is corrupt leadership actually leadership. Corrupt leadership is tyranny. This is why it is so important to reclaim a foundation of good leadership![13]

Human Beings Lead as Priests

We also saw how human beings lead as priests in guarding and keeping the Garden. Since the Garden was a sacred space, Adam and Eve were to serve in it. Yet, as already discussed, not just to serve in the Garden, but to extend the Garden. The priestly role of the initial couple was to extend the sanctity of Eden so that all of creation bore witness and participated in the worship of God. As Eden was extended, its work was to point back to God. Here are two implications of priestly leadership.

First, human leadership is not for the leader's own glory, but defers praise. Even if leaders aren't theists, the principle has borne out: good leaders are humble leaders.[14] This deferral of praise remedies when leaders might start to take self-credit, put oneself beyond critique, or be tempted to get things done the quick and easy way.

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[10]Though not a position defended by scholars, it can be a position held by political commentators and used to direct environmental policy. For example, Ann Coulter writes in an article from 2000, that human beings, by God's directive, "rape the planet" (October 12).

[11]Dan Migliore writes that the task of having dominion is "to guardianship and responsible stewardship. To be a steward is to be a partner with God in caring for the world God has created" (2014, 152).

[12]In contrast to the healthy leadership of humanity, "sin…takes the form of domination and servility, self-exaltation and self-destruction" (Migliore 2014, 156).

[13]For more of a response, see N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (2016, 79–80).

[14]See James Collins, *Good to Great* (2001), and level five leaders. Level five leaders blend strength in will and humility in character.

Starting my pastoral career, I was initially surprised at how easy it was for me to set aside the priestly role in leadership to get things done. As a spiritual leader, I was tempted not to be a priest! Yet one question has consistently stuck with me: "How is my leadership fitting people for heaven?"[15] Heaven, in Christian theology, is the space of God's rule and reign. So, Christians pray that God's Kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven. Where God's rule and reign is established, there is praise because God is so good. This is why heaven is often regarded as a place of worship. It is not because people *must* worship; if this was the case, we might wonder if we would get bored. Far from it! Heaven is regarded as a place of worship because God's good reign is so strong that we *cannot but* worship! We will not be forced to worship, but we will desire nothing else. It is an internal drive rather than an external force. Human beings as priestly leaders are working to fit the creation for the worship of God.

Second, as priests, human beings may lead in remedying suffering.[16] It might be supposed that suffering only emerges later in the creation narrative, however, "creaturely existence" involves "challenge, risk, and growth" which may involve suffering and pain (Migliore 2014, 107). To wish to avoid suffering is to wish to avoid creation (Migliore 2014, 123). The context of leadership is already the context of suffering. Leadership doesn't just expand Eden, but in so doing it works to meet the challenges of finitude wisely. "If a danger is evident, we are not to plunge headlong into it; if remedies for suffering are available, we are not to neglect them" (Migliore 2014, 126). Human leadership is priestly leadership and priests are intended for healing and remedying the suffering of creation and in creation.

This raises an important distinction between royal leadership and priestly leadership that can be illustrated using the phrase "to make the world a better place." Priestly leadership aims, in part, to ease suffering in the world. Easing suffering is a worthy goal, yet it may not actually make the world a better place. The conditions that allowed for suffering might yet exist. What makes the world a better place is royal leadership that helps

[15] I don't know the exact context, but it was attributed to Pastor Steve DeNeff, Pastor of College Wesleyan Church, and an excellent preacher and highly regarded pastor in The Wesleyan Church.

[16] In a brief email devotional, Bishop Robert Barron lists healer as the first of three roles of the priest, followed by fighter and evangelizer, "Feasts of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael," September 29, 2017. Barron is not speaking of priests in the context of the Old Testament, but Roman Catholic priests of today. The triad of royal (fighter), priest (healer), and prophet (evangelizer) remains, however.

to make something of the world. To make the world a better place you have to make better things of the world, such as institutions and systems. Royal leadership is crafting the goods of the world to make the world better.[17] It is the extending of Eden. Yet making things of the world takes time, the time during which suffering might be eased.

There doesn't need to be a hard distinction between royal and priestly leadership, of course. Just as we saw that ethical leadership blended teleology and duty, so can ethical leadership blend royal and priestly models. So, why raise the distinction? First, we should not invalidate either kinds of leadership. Alleviating suffering as priests and making something good of the world to make the world a better place as royals are both valid expressions that might overlap from time to time. But, second, ethical leadership necessarily involves wisdom. Sometimes priestly leadership that alleviates suffering can prolong systemic suffering by leaving long-term challenges unaddressed.[18] Ethical leadership involves wisdom to know when to lean more heavily into one model or the other for leadership.

Human Beings Lead as Prophets

Finally, human leadership is prophetic leadership. Just like royal language can be lost by its corruption, so can prophetic leadership be misguided with some contemporary examples. Some of what passes for prophetic leadership is simply someone powering up and being offensive with words or confronting those who disagree with them about significant issues in ways that rally their own support. Social media has given many would-be prophets platforms without accountability. But prophetic leadership is much more theologically rooted. Prophetic leadership is speaking the words of God, which almost inevitably involved alienation for the prophet from their people throughout the Bible.[19]

Prophetic leadership in the creation is meant to repeat and reinforce what God said. So, when God says that it is not good for the man to be alone and responds by creating the woman, Adam takes a prophetic role

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[17] For more on making good of the world, see Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (2013).

[18] Oliver O'Donovan uses the example of easing suffering by providing homeless shelters without addressing economic injustices in the online lecture, "Utility, Prudence, and Care" (2013).

[19] Biblical examples abound, including prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Elijah, and others.

and says of her, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!" (Gen 2:23). What God has created, Adam has affirmed by his word. Yet the prophetic role fails—along with the priestly and royal roles—in what Genesis describes in the conflict between the initial couple and the serpent (Gen. 3). In that story, the serpent plays the false prophet, the false leader, questioning and lying about what God has said (Gen. 3:1); the woman plays the misguided prophet, leading in the wrong direction, misquoting, and adding to what God has said (compare Gen. 3:3 with Gen. 2:16–17), and the man plays the silent prophet, giving up his leadership role by not correcting or speaking what is true (Gen. 3:6, where Adam fails to guard and keep the Garden).

So, what does it mean for human beings to lead as prophets? First, it means that humans lead in the pursuit of truth. Discovery and articulation of truth about the world in science, research, and counsel is human leadership. The truth of God's world was started by the word of God and as human words correspond to those creating words in various fields with insight and discovery, humans are leading as prophets, proclaiming to the rest of creation the truth about itself and what God has made it to be.

That humans lead as prophets means that human leadership is limited. Human words can do things: We command, promise, request, and take other actions with words. Yet many words are backed by physical force or threat of physical force. Words reveal both human strength and human limitation. When force backs words, it is a tense combination of human beings as rational animals and human beings as brute animals. Leadership ceases to be *true*, *fully* human leadership when it leans in the direction of force through violent words or extends into violent enforcement of words. This is not to say that violent words or physical force might not be appropriate acts at times, but they are acts that reveal, again, the rebellion of the world rather than the good leadership role humans are meant to exhibit throughout creation. Interestingly, overcoming both the action and the effect of violent words and violence is often done through *appropriate verbalization* of the event. We are healed when we are able to give words to those moments when words were weaponized and aimed to hurt us and when violence was used against us.[20]

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[20] For a psychological theology of listening that indicates the power of listening to help humanize the other, see Frank Lake, *Clinical Theology*, vols. 1 and 2, especially pages 66–100 (2005). For a connection between listening, healing, and words, see my "Listening, Narrative, and Atonement" (2008).

Leadership is an authorized act; it is part of being human. Humans are not enslaving beings, but royal, prophetic, and priestly beings, authorized to lead but not to dominate (Doukhan 2014). The narrative that leads to authorizing human leadership is vital. A narrative that values and validates force will always, in one way or another, rely on force. As authority uses force, however, it moves away from leadership and into less human activity.

Perhaps a simple illustration will help make the point. I was enjoying grown-up time with a fellow Dad of toddlers and preschoolers who were occupied upstairs, when an eruption of noise threatened our relaxation. Instantly, the oldest child, a seven-year-old with a sense of responsibility, appeared, awaiting orders. He was sent to summon the children for supper, but with specific guidelines. My friend called after his dispatched son, "Use my authority and not your force!" Precisely. There was more than one way to get younger children down for the meal: one would be the image of the Dad, the other not so much.

What does this realization do to your understanding of leadership? What leadership role models, formed in the context of violence and violent words, have you seen held up? What Commanders-in-Chief have we observed who reveal not truly human leadership, but imitation leadership that reveals the rebellion of God's image?

Yet there is another important reminder when human leadership is prophetic leadership. If human beings are creatures, then human beings are limited. While human beings are the *pinnacle* of creation, they are not the *conclusion* of creation. Instead, creation comes to its conclusion in rest (Migliore 2014, 116). Thus, human leadership's limitation need not lead to *frustration*, but to rest. That they may run into the limits of our words, leaders can take solace knowing that these limitations do not threaten the world. When humans meet their limit in leading, they may experience the limit as rest.[21]

We have seen that being human means being a leader and we have looked at human leaders as royalty, priests, and prophets. Now let's turn our attention to the relationships previously emphasized.

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[21] For more on how limits are gifts, see Pete Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*, Chapter 8 (2013). More on this will be said in Chapter 5 in light of martyrdom and the death of Jesus.

LEADERSHIP *WITH* HUMAN BEINGS

Being made in God's image means reflecting God. But when Christians talk about God, we are not talking about a solitary being, but a triune being. This teaching and understanding of God, that God is three persons in one being, is called the doctrine of the Trinity. A Christian understanding of being made in God's image cannot ignore the doctrine of the Trinity. At times, it is easy to think of this doctrine as the solution to a conundrum, but it is more accurately understood as the naming of a mystery. The doctrine of the Trinity expresses *that* God is a Triune being but not does explain *how* God is a Triune being. While Christians do not pretend to understand God, Christians do believe that God can be named and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the name of this Triune God.[22] And as we might expect, since God's own self is relational, then beings made in God's image are relational, as well. Thus, leadership is not strictly a solitary effort. *Human leadership is shared leadership.*

Truly human leadership depends on *and* invests in others.[23] Three examples from leadership and social psychology bear this out. The Golem effect shows that lower expectations create lower performance; conversely, the Rosenthal effect shows that higher expectations create higher performance. Finally, the Hawthorne effect shows that human beings modify their behavior when they know they are being observed. Humans quit, strive, and change because of the expectations and presence of key relationships.

How important for relationships between men and women that human leadership is shared leadership! After all, the first woman in

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[22] I appreciate the help of my colleague Dr. John Drury on this previous paragraph in our discussions on the doctrine of the Trinity. It should be noted that language is culturally oriented and that God has revealed Godself in cultures. We need neither defend the language God has used to reveal Godself, nor deny that it emerges from specific cultures. Instead, this language ought to give guides and helps to know how new language from different cultures may contribute to knowing God without denying God's initial revelation.

[23] Dan Migliore writes, "It expresses self-transcending life in relationship with others—with the 'wholly other' we call God, and with all those different 'others' who need our help and whose help we also need in order to be human creatures God intends us to be" (2014, 145). I have leaned heavily on this quotation, but modified it for leadership context.

leadership was, well, the first woman. A brief recap will help make the point: In Genesis 1, the man and woman are given the mandate to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it. The mandate is framed as being made in God's image—to be God's royal representatives; to treat the creation as it was made—good. In Genesis 2:15, the man is called to work Eden and take care of it. This is priestly language because priests were to do the *work* of the tabernacle and to *take care* of its furnishings (Numbers 3:7–8). The man is a priest who is to tend and care for creation *and* a benevolent king who is to rule over the creation. Yet as we saw in Genesis 2's creation account, the man has no helper. The man encounters all other created animals, showing his authority over them by naming them (Gen. 2:19), but in this orientation, no suitable helper is found. Suitable helper for what? *Working and caring* (Gen. 2:15)! Being the prime minister of creation! The man has no helper in the priestly-royal role! The man has no leadership partner until the woman is created and together they are meant to lead all of creation. Ruling and subduing as leaders is connected with being fruitful and multiplying as the marriage covenant is established (Gen. 2:23–25). The woman's role as helper—suitable helper, unique partner in the mission— is one of leading the whole creation. She, too, is a leader in these tasks.

This does not mean that marriage is necessary for shared leadership. The prototypical couple needs to be fruitful and multiply because in the narrative there are only two of them. But just as the image of God was extended to every person, so does shared leadership extend to every person—male and female. Male and female together created in God's image and together leading the creation. Human leadership is shared leadership.

That leadership is shared reveals the horrific breakdown of the male–female relationship in Genesis 3, where the man and the woman do not faithfully fulfill their role to care for or guard the Garden. The intruding serpent sullies the place, speaks falsely, and is allowed to disorder the creation. The first man and woman failed as prophets, priests, *and* royals! While the narrative unfolds initially with the woman in view, we are carefully let into the fact that the man has been present as well, as the reader's view slowly spans outward until we are told that he is with her (3:6). The line is not to defend the man, but to indict him as a silent participant—ignoring his prophetic leadership. In their disobedience,

eating what God had said not to eat, there is a sudden growth of knowl-
edge, but there is also a subsequent shame as the man and woman realize
they both are naked (v. 7).

We won't go into detail in the full breakdown of the initial harmony
of creation, but one item must be noted for our purposes: As a result of
this disobedience against God, God declares pain and disharmony in two
key relationships. The woman will have pain in childbearing (3:16a) and
her husband will rule over her (3:16b). What does it mean for the man
to rule over the woman? By now it's clear that ruling is a key function in
Genesis. There are three ruling descriptions in Genesis. I've included the
Hebrew words to show the distinction.

- First, the greater light governs (*memshaleh*) the day and the lesser
  light governs (*memshaleh*) the night (Genesis 1:16). This is the only
  place this word is used in Genesis.
- Second, human beings will rule (*radah*) over creation (Genesis
  1:26, 28). This is the only place this word is used in Genesis.
- Third, the greater light and the lesser light also govern (*mashal*)
  the day and night (Genesis 1:18). Genesis also uses this word to
  describe how Cain, the first murderer of the Bible, must *master* his
  desires (4:7), how servants (including Joseph) *rule* over households
  (Gen. 24:2; 45:8), how Joseph's brothers *worried* he would *govern*
  them (Gen. 37:8), and how Joseph *ruled* over Egypt (45:26). While
  not uniformly negative, *mashal* is predominantly used to display
  inequality and is connected with mastery.

Can you guess which word Genesis uses to describe the man's rule over
the woman? *Mashal* (Gen. 3:16). This is not a healthy rule, but *a rift*—
inequality where there was meant to be equality; disharmony where there
was originally harmony. The leadership that the man will give to the
woman is not for mutual flourishing, but is now hierarchical and poten-
tially violent. It does not take long for this kind of false leadership to
take effect. Whereas earlier in the narrative, the man had named (*kara*)
the animals (Gen. 2:20), now the man *names* (*kara*) the woman (Gen.
3:20). When the man had spoken over the woman before, it was a pas-
sive voice and the name matched his own: She shall be called "woman"
(*ishshah*) for she was taken from "man" (*ish*) (Gen. 2:23). But now the
man *names* her. She is *Eve* and she will become mother of all the living.
Do you recall the pain of childbirth mentioned above? It's like the man

is uncaring in the pain she will bear in this role. In the ancient near east, power was linked with a man's virility and children. The man says that the woman will be mother of all the living; in other words, she will bear his offspring—seemingly without regard that it will be painful. This is who she is, says the man. Whereas humanity was meant to glorify God, the man says that the woman will now glorify him. Unfortunately, we still see this breakdown of male–female and this horrific dominion across many cultures. May its prominence not indicate its goodness! Far from it. Remember, human leadership is relational, shared leadership and where there is human domination over other human beings, it is not true leadership, but less-than-human activity!

Shared leadership and mutual human flourishing go hand in hand. Human beings serve God by leading as human beings, so human flourishing is not in competition with God, but under his provision.[24] As humans thrive in their role, God is not threatened or diminished; instead, God is glorified. Yet notice the implication: If God is glorified as humans thrive, then human efforts in leadership ought to lead to greater *human* thriving, as well! Leadership is intended for the mutual flourishing of human beings. Leadership scholar Peter Senge saw this kind of mutuality in leadership and flourishing when he realized that teams are the "fundamental learning unit in modern organizations notion" (Senge 2006, 10). Human beings learn together, flourish together, and lead together![25]

Leadership *of* Human Beings

This insight—that shared leadership facilitates mutual human flourishing—leads to the final section. Human beings are leading beings who lead as royals, priests, and prophets, and human leadership is shared leadership. But what about leading other people? How does a biblical theology form this most pressing, practical expression of leadership?

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[24] Robert Barron calls this "non-competitive transcendence" in his e-book *How to Discern God's Will for Your Life* (2016, 15).

[25] David Gortner writes, "Effective leaders encourage and cultivate creativity in others, setting it within a wider scope of the trajectory where an organization will focus its energy" (2009, 135). Because leadership has limits, not all activities that might be good human activities can be led by every leader. Organizations have limits, too. Organizations and their leaders need to have humility in finding what role they can play that pursues the common good while partnering with other organizations with complementary roles.

First, a theology of leadership formed from creation reminds us that human beings are *authorized* to lead. It's a good thing to want to lead other people—when leadership is properly understood. It means that you want to live into being human and to help other people live into their responsibility as well! You are authorized to lead, to help extend the beauty and glory of God. Within this authority, human beings are authorized to empower others.

When I say humans are authorized to lead, I also mean that they have skills, insights, knowledge, and other resources to pass on and to see developed in others. We lead and exercise authority over others to see them properly developed, trained, and taught. "How different orders and commands are when they are from one who seeks not to deny our person but to enhance it" (Allen 1998). Even in situations where leaders and followers have differing values, leadership of human beings is founded on seeing them as potential leaders (Reave 2005, 673).

Second, we need to broaden our leadership perspectives. Too often we limit leadership to this final category, seeking tips and tricks to being more productive, getting more followers, and managing our direct reports more effectively. But human leadership is not strictly of other humans; it is leadership of all creation, stewarding creation and representing the benevolent Creator God in creation. So, while a human may not be skilled at teaching or managing other humans—good though that may be!—he or she may still act in genuinely human, leading ways when stewarding and caring for an animal or plant or resources used to further the extension of God's glory. The benefit of human beings being leadership beings is not strictly within the human community, but the whole of all creation. Human beings ought not to privilege the ability to lead other human beings as the prime kind of leadership, but must validate all activity that facilitates the flourishing of creation for the glory of God as leadership.[26]

[26] Understanding human beings as leaders of creation deals a significant blow to any movement toward eugenics or assisted suicide. But some might respond by saying, "What of those incapacitated to lead? Those who are unable even to care for a plant or animal and who lack the potential to develop the ability?" Remember that human beings are relational beings and that relationship is reciprocal. By treating other human beings with dignity and honor, there is a maintenance and expansion of the human community—both for the caring and the cared for. Indeed, the human without guile to use and manipulate another human might be *more* human, though less outwardly capable of management or project productivity than the one gifted and skilled to lead other human beings.

Conclusion

Leading other humans is about raising up leaders. But let's not be naïve. I want to raise my daughter and sons to be royals, priests, and prophets, but I have become so keenly aware that leadership, even of children, is not one way. I could never believe that my children have not influenced me. They have been leading beings since the moment they were born. Let me give you an example. Every professional field or job comes with its busy season. One of the busiest seasons in church is Easter. There are multiple services, productions, sermons, dinners, and family visits, and while people don't usually get married at Easter, some always manage to die, quite inconveniently, about that time. It's busy. And once it's over, it's like a weight is lifted off the minister's shoulders.

Well, a few years ago I had just awakened and was settling into my morning routine just one week after Easter when I heard, "Mommy? Why is there water in the basement?" It was my then four-year-old daughter calling from the bottom of the stairs having just stepped into a puddle. I leapt to my feet and rushed down the stairs ignoring my wife's attempt to soothe me: "It's likely just a spill."

A spill it was not. It was anywhere between two and four inches of water creeping in from the room's exterior walls. If you've ever lived in a high-water table area, it was something you dreaded: sump pump failure. Through the night, the pump had failed and water had slowly leaked into the house, wrecking our family's main living space. That was about 6:30 a.m. I didn't rest until about 8:30 p.m.

But back to my children. After calling upstairs, wondering about the presence of water, my daughter had disappeared. Normally one to be at the center of the action, it was strange, but I was too busy bailing water to bat-an-eye at her absence. Until she appeared. And I couldn't help but laugh. The tension of the moment was as high as ever, but a pebble of perspective rippled the water's surface. While I was getting the water out, she had been getting her swimsuit on. Do you know what that's called? *Imagination*. And she was *good at it*. I saw a flooded basement; she saw a swimming pool. One of us needed to bail water and another needed to enjoy the excitement. We were both leading—and leading each other.

Let's go back to the triad of royal, priest, and prophet to wrap up this section. Human beings lead other human beings as royals: we set up order and efficiency to provide freedom for humans to flourish in their

role. *And* we also lead human beings to *become* royals—that they would see themselves and thrive in this role. Human beings lead other human beings as priests: we point to the sacred, heal, and guide worship. *And* we also lead human beings to *become* priests—that they would see themselves and thrive in this role. Finally, human beings lead other human beings as prophets: we speak true words, inspire and challenge with words, and accept our limits. *And* we also lead human beings to become prophets.

Leading other humans must be about helping them to flourish in the many ways that a human being can lead all of creation. Recall the opening line to the chapter: That you need to find what you're good at to be a success. I hope this chapter has inspired you and filled you with hope and meaning that what you're good at contributes to mutual human flourishing as leaders. And I hope that if you thought you were good at eating hot dogs, that you've been sparked to do something more meaningful!

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CHAPTER 6

Cross and Christ: Faithfulness and Effectiveness in Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps it was upon entering a room and sizing up the scholarly credentials of those convened; or taking stage on a panel and seeing that your steeple size or campus count dwarfed that of the other pastors; or settling into a conflict in the physical presence of a person whom you had only known at a distance or online; or figuring your salary scaled that of a college rival ten years after graduation… and you breathed a sigh of relief or puffed out your chest. As the emerging victor, you knew you could more than hold your own in the present company. Not only could you hold your own, but you could also sway the room, carry the opinion, and dictate the terms. In that room, on that stage, in that conversation, you were a *somebody*. Maybe even *the* Somebody.

Ethical leadership clearly doesn't have this kind of narcissistic self-absorption. Neither does it entertain its flipside—failure by self-obsessed critique and insecurity. Focus on being *the* Somebody or undo concern with being *a* somebody keeps us from our leadership best, both in character and effect. We are not leaders of sufficient character when we are obsessed with ourselves. On the other hand, we may self-sabotage the best of our imagination and plans when we grasp for more self-importance.

Yet even Jesus' closely called group of twelve suffered such competitive corrosion. In the Gospel of Mark (10:35–45), two of Jesus' closest

allies approach him with this *somebody* uncertainty. They are James and John and they are used to being somebodies—they are part of a successful family business that has hired men (Mark 1:20); they are the sons of Zebedee; they are the Sons of Thunder! (Mark 3:17). They are two of the three (including Peter) who seem to form in inner circle with Jesus, seeing things the other disciples do not: a little girl raised from the dead (Mark 5:37–43) and Jesus transfigured (Mark 9:2–13). James and John are somebodies in this first-century movement.

Yet James and John are not content. They want more. Seeing their movement headed to Jerusalem to bring it under Jesus' rule, they want to be at Jesus' side when he comes into this reign. And they go about this little request in secret. Reaching above your social status was certainly taboo in the ancient near east because if you were ascending, then someone else was descending; if you went up, someone else went down.[1] So James and John gone about getting their way quietly. Perhaps we might hear their request for prominence (Mark 10:37) as something like this: "Jesus—let us be #1 and #2 in your kingdom. We don't mind who is who—I'm cool if he's #1 and I'm #2; he's cool if I'm #1 and he's #2…just do that for us." Despite their stealth, these struggling, aspiring somebodies get caught by their colleagues. And when the others find out, they are indignant. Allow me a moment of confession: I would have been indignant, too. I would have been frustrated at someone putting herself ahead and seeking a prime position; getting the inside track; secretly launching his aspirations. I hate being beaten to the punch, missing an opportunity, being caught unprepared. I would have been uppity because I want to be a *somebody*, too.

Don't miss the full danger of this exchange—this grasp for *somebodyness* by James and John and the subsequent indignation of their banded brothers. Mark's name for this indignant group lets us know the disharmony James and John have introduced. They are not simply the *others* or the *rest* of the apostles. They are *the ten*.

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[1] This concept is known as "limited good." Bruce Malina's classic text, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, does a fine job of spelling out these implications. Limited good is the notion that all goods, even intangible goods, that are desirable, such as wealth, friendship, honor, security, and influence are limited and cannot be increased. "Hence any apparent relative improvement in someone's position with respect to any good in life is viewed as a threat to the entire community" (2001, 89).

This is an important designation. In Mark 3, Jesus calls to himself a crowd and designates *twelve* apostles. Nine times throughout Mark's Gospel they are called *the Twelve* (Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10; 14:17; 14:20; 14:43)—a specific group with a purpose from Jesus. But not here. The others find out about James and John's request and suddenly they have become *the ten*. They'll show James and John. "If you attempt to separate out from the group, then we'll separate you out! We'll make sure you know just how separate you are! If *you* want an identity outside of us, then *you'll* have an identity outside of *us*." They used to be the Twelve; now they are the two and the ten. But in the face of this conflict, Jesus takes a moment to teach his followers about leadership and greatness.

To begin this teachable moment, Jesus *called* them together (Mark 10:42). Don't rush past the word "called." It's the same word Mark uses to describe Jesus *calling* the twelve to himself near the start of his ministry (Mark 3:13). This would be a call, first, of relationship and, second of empowerment for amazing work. But another person in Mark's Gospel is said to call another to himself: Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect of Judea from 26–36 CE who would oversee Jesus' trial and execution. He, too, *calls* a person to himself. After Jesus has been crucified, Mark's Gospel says that Pilate, surprised to hear that Jesus had already died, *called* the centurion who oversaw the execution of Jesus to himself (Mark 15:44). How different are these callings! Whereas Jesus called to himself those he wanted, Pilate called the centurion to himself to see if his orders had been carried out. Whereas Jesus called to himself for relationship and empowerment, Pilate called to himself to express his rule and confirm his own power.

Which brings us back to Jesus calling the Twelve to himself to teach them. Two have sought out greatness, positions of honor, in secret from the group, and the rest have responded with frustration at missing their chance. This is not the way it is supposed to be, so Jesus sets a contrast: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 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" (Mark 10:42–45). Whereas Mark's Gospel makes an implicit distinction between Jesus and Pilate by how they call or summon others to themselves, here Jesus makes the distinction explicit: Leadership is not about lording it over; it is about serving. This very

contrast is at the heart of Jesus' teaching about his leadership, which the Twelve should emulate. Even on the surface, this is jarring, but what lies beneath is what forms our theology for ethical leadership because couched in Jesus' words is a contrast that ethical leaders must internalize.

So, what is this crucial insight? We could cut right to the chase, but the scenic route is necessary to grasp the full depth of Jesus' insight for ethical leadership. And the scenic route answers another question that you might be having: "Why does a first century leader of a small group get to speak into twenty first century ethics?"

Jesus: Image of God, Model Leader, Objective Reality

In Chapter 4, I laid out that we are building a theology for ethical leadership from Scripture, understanding Scripture with Jesus at the center. I now want to deepen why Jesus gets to play a central role in developing a theology for ethical leadership.

Some might wonder why I didn't start section two with Jesus. Well, in some ways I did. We spent quite a bit of time exploring what it means to be the image of God and the outflow of that theology for ethical leadership. Right near its beginning, God's law, famously known as the Ten Commandments, says not to make a sacred or graven image or bow down to it (Exodus 20:4–5). The reason for this is clear: God has already made his image—and it is humanity! If humans make a graven image, they will be lowering what it means to be human, forging a model that is necessarily lower than the true God. In so doing, humans will be debased. It makes sense, then, that much of what is often called the Old Testament has a negative view of images of God or images of gods. These false images are to be destroyed, cast down, and rejected. With this in mind, perhaps an ethics for leadership would tend to steer clear of discussing the image of God. However, Jesus changes all of that.

The New Testament, no less concerned with not setting idols in the place of God, resets a vision of God's image: Jesus. Here are angles to this truth:

1. Jesus is the image of God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15). Jesus is the true image of God and occupies a place of authority and honor in creation. To be the firstborn of all creation does not mean that Jesus is a creature, but describes the place of honor he holds in creation, just as a firstborn son occupied

     a place of honor and responsibility in the Ancient Near East family system.[2]

2. Jesus is the image of God, the light of the knowledge of God's glory (2 Corinthians 4:4–6). Jesus, according to the New Testament, shows us the glory of God.
3. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's being (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus reveals to us who God is—not a kind of copy or duplicate, but the exact representation of God.[3]

The image of God is so clear in Jesus and the identity of Jesus with God is so full that Jesus says, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9) and "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).[4] To see Jesus is to see the invisible God. But how does this relate to humanity being in the image of God? The promise of God to those who love God is to conform them to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Notice the dual picture that is put in the person of Jesus: He is both truly divine and perfectly human. When you look at Jesus, you see true humanity; when you look at Jesus, you see true divinity. Jesus opens up the way for us to analyze and see the glory of humanity made in God's image. So, when we delve into biblical theology and examine the image of God in Genesis, we are already doing so because of Jesus—his life and ministry. Jesus is the perfect human and thus the example of leadership.

    In being the image of God, Jesus occupies the three roles described in last chapter: He is the true prophet, the true priest, and the true King—the true royal. Where humanity has missed their roles, Jesus occupies them perfectly. As priest, Jesus perfectly obeys God and through his obedience brings life and forgiveness to the world; as prophet, Jesus teaches and directs and calls out the violence that can rule human life; as King,

[2] The discussion around whether or not Jesus is a creature is captured by the early church considering and rejecting Arianism, a view that the Son of God, who would take on flesh in Jesus, came into existence. The view, put forth by a bishop named Arius, is summed in a catchphrase: "There was when he was not." The early church rejected this teaching at the council of Nicea (325 CE).

[3] Jesus is not a representative alongside other representatives. He is not only godly or godlike; he is God. So, when confessing Jesus as a representative, we are saying that what happens to Jesus, happens to God and what Jesus does, God does. There is a particularity to Jesus' representation: "The representative *alone* constitutes the presence of the represented" (O'Donovan 1999, 125).

[4] The implications of these teachings get fleshed out in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Jesus shows leadership by protecting and calling for obedience to his lordship (Migliore 2014, 277). His lordship is ownership of his followers—of course, an ownership of a unique kind (Allen 1998)—a leadership that will be spelled out later on as an ethical leadership. There are two complementary implications: First, that Jesus sets a model for us to follow; second, that Jesus *is* the ethical reality in whom we have been called to participate. Let's delve into both of these thoughts.

First, Jesus is a model for our leadership. Because Jesus is the true human and humans are meant to be leaders, Jesus is the model of leadership. The apostle Paul famously described the countercultural attitude of Jesus by quoting a hymn that was present in the early church, saying that our attitude should match that of Jesus, who took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5–11). This early hymn describes the story of Jesus, forsaking his divine rights in heaven to come to earth and take the form of a human being—even a slave (Witherington 1998, 80). In so doing, Jesus resets what Adam did not do (Dunn 1989, 119–120). Whereas for Adam, there was a grasping after being like God—an ethical breach of his leadership role—for Jesus there is not.[5] The attitude of Christ reflects the direction for our leadership: Because he is the true model, exemplifying true humanity, he is our model for leadership, even in the face of countercultural values (Bekker 2006). Jesus is not simply a good person whose actions ought to be considered. In Jesus, humanity is transformed; we might say that in Jesus, humanity is properly humanized for leadership (Niewold 2007, 123–124).[6]

Second, Jesus is the reality of God in which humanity is found; he is not only the model human being in the context of creation, but he is also the context in which all of creation is found. Jesus is not simply the model of being human, but the revelation of God. As we discussed earlier, theology is about everything because everything is in God. God is the source and sustainer of everything that is and God is in Christ.

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[5]I have referenced two scholars who do not see eye-to-eye about the preexistence of Jesus in this passage. (Preexistence means the existence of God the Son before taking on flesh in Jesus of Nazareth.) However, I think that these two thoughts are compatible—that Jesus was preexistent and that Jesus corrected Adam's wrong, which is a wrong typical for every human.

[6]Niewold's study expands why Christological anthropology is a basis for understanding leadership. In my opinion, Niewold gets at why theology properly critiques different leadership models, even ones that might reflect certain Christian values such as servant leadership, when theology does not play a sufficiently strong and formative role.

This is the paradox of Incarnation, the teaching that God took on flesh in Jesus Christ: The uncontainable God became contained in the world without ceasing to contain the world. Christ is not simply a faithful expression of a life for God's will at a certain time, but faithful expression at all times is found by accessing the reality of Christ. God's story of the world is understood with Jesus at the center and Jesus' moral life and teaching reveal the objective reality of God. An objective reality—a creation that is known and understood by God—is a necessary context for ethical leadership. Without a context, there is nothing ahead—no future to move into and there is no judgment for what is right or ethical. For the Christian, this objective reality is found in Jesus (O'Donovan 1994), which validates the possibility of ethical living within God's creation (Holmes 2007).[7] Ethical leadership is leadership activity in line with the life and teaching of Jesus and in line with the faithful narrative horizon of his life and teaching.[8] In other words, Christ forms the reality in which we are trying to live; he forms our ethics.[9]

Now, none of this may resonate with you, but it reveals *why* a theology of ethical leadership is grounded on Jesus. Which brings us back to the end of last section and Jesus' teachable moment with his potentially splintered group of disciples.

Suffering Servant and Son of Man

Jesus calls his disciples back together and contrasts their way of living and leading from the world's way of living and leading. They are not to live like the leaders around them; they are to live like Jesus. And then Jesus gives them a powerful, potent expression of his identity and mission:

[7] O'Donovan (1994) delves deeply into both objective and subjective reality. It is not that we sense reality detached from contexts; there is a subjective reality, as well. O'Donovan goes to great lengths to point out how in Christ the objective and the subjective reality meet so that we might be humble in subjective reality and our understanding of objective reality, but not deny that there is truth and reality.

[8] We will explore this notion more fully when we consider eschatology in Chapter 7.

[9] O'Donovan (2014) writes, "Following is an idea with more than one sense: it means following *with*, adhering to the master and being in his company, and also following *after*, coming later, carrying on the work of teaching where it has been left off, extending his wisdom into the mission of a school. To follow 'after' Christ is to be conformed in love to the moment of resolution that occurred in his death, to carry forward in our living the imprint of the living-to-die that he lived" (118–119).

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Couched within this bombshell are two roles that come from the Old Testament: Son of Man and Suffering Servant. The Son of Man is a majestic figure from Daniel 7, a picture of one who receives glory, power, honor, and authority from God. Daniel contains a specific kind of literature called apocalyptic (the word itself means uncovering). It is a style that is often used when writing to people who are suffering to give them a picture of reality as it truly is, though it may not appear so on the surface.[10] For the book of Daniel, the surface level of the world appears bleak; there is oppression and injustice. The prophet Daniel, whose life and visions form most of the content of the book, has a vision at night and he sees terrible beasts, symbolic of political reigns, cruel and violent. They are oppressive and reign with impunity. Rather than bearing the image of God in leadership, they image beasts—violent and forceful without reason. Yet in contrast to these gross and false displays of political leadership is one like a "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:13)—a truly human ruler who is given glory, power, and authority and who will reign and rule in the presence of God. The Son of Man properly images God by bearing human features in contrast to the beastly reigns. The title Son of Man is Jesus' most common self-designation and one that he validates through miraculous healing (e.g., Mark 2:1–12; 2:23–3:6).

No wonder James and John were lining up to secure prominent positions! This Son of Man, exercising authority and displaying power, is coming to reign! Yet, Jesus does not press more deeply into this title at this point in his teaching. Instead, he uses descriptive language: The Son of Man came to serve and give his life as a ransom. The title associated with this self-description of giving his life as ransom for many would have been well known to the disciples even though Jesus doesn't use the title specifically. Here Jesus is referring to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13–53:12. Far from one who is seen in majesty and power, the servant is one who is scorned and rejected, made nothing. He is one who will bear the sin of the many (Isaiah 53:12). While the picture of the servant starts with exaltation, it is a strange kind of exaltation: a despising, rejecting, marring kind of exaltation; an exaltation of infamy and disgust. In this lesson on leadership from his own person, Jesus blends

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[10]For more on apocalyptic as a genre, see James J. Collins "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14, (1979, 1–20).

a picture of power and glory with a picture of rejection and suffering. Jesus *is* this paradoxical combination of power and authority with vulnerability, of ruling and reigning with suffering.[11] And Jesus says that this is the way his followers will lead.

Jesus as King—but What Kind?

Before analyzing this paradoxical blend to see its potential insights for ethical leadership, we need to make one more significant observation. The New Testament, specifically the Gospel of John, does not reject this paradox or shy from its tension. Instead, it keeps it front and center. This tension is the identity of Jesus, yielding to one side or the other would have led Jesus down a very different kind of road. On the one hand, if Jesus had rejected all power, there would have been no miracles—no displays of power to reveal and describe the Kingdom of God coming through him: no healing of the lame and sick, freeing of possessed, miraculous feeding of the hungry, or raising of the dead. Without these displays of power, Jesus might have been a great guy, but not one who commanded followers. He would have been a fairly ineffective therapist. On the other hand, if Jesus rejected vulnerability and weakness, then the kind of kingdom that came through him would have been radically different. He would have been a tyrant.

Let's look at the tyrannical option by examining two moments of temptation in Jesus' life, starting with Matthew 4. Jesus has been led by the Spirit into the wilderness (4:1)—a place of isolation and weakness. If the Garden of Eden was green with life, the wilderness is gray and ashy. If the Garden of Eden was ordered for the glory of God, the wilderness is chaotic. If the Garden of Eden was fruitful, the wilderness is barren.

The barrenness of the desert matters because Jesus does not identify with suffering in a shallow way, but through full immersion. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he is hungry. At this moment, temptations from the devil come his way. The first temptation is to remake the wilderness: turn stones to bread. And how? By his word. He is tempted to be the selfish prophet. But Jesus does not unmake the wilderness (Matthew 4:4)—he identifies with its suffering; he has been *led* to this place. The second temptation changes the scene to a more priestly context. He is now at the highest point of the temple, urged to test God's

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[11] Andy Crouch uses the same language of authority and vulnerability in *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk, and True Flourishing* (2016).

faithfulness. If Jesus wishes to live by the word of God, which he quoted to overcome the first temptation, then he should put God's word to the test. "See if God will save you!", he is urged. Again, Jesus rejects the temptation (Matthew 4:7). Finally, Jesus is taken to a high mountain and shown "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" (Matt. 4:8). This is a key moment in the temptation. The scene is similar to the ending of Matthew's gospel (Matt. 28:16–20): Jesus is on a mountain and a worldwide vision is set before him. In the temptation, the devil offers the kingdoms of the world. In the Gospel's conclusion, Jesus affirms that he has been given all authority—not only the authority of the world, which the devil offered him, but also the authority of heaven, as well. Jesus rejected the devil's temptation, by contrasting the temptations of the devil with the true worship and service of God. Rather than taking the devil's bait, Jesus says that he is to "[w]orship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Matt. 4:10).

So, what about the devil's temptation would pit Jesus against God? Couldn't Jesus have done great things with the kingdoms of the world under his authority? Why not simply cut to the chase, take the kingdoms, and usher in God's reign? Matthew's Gospel answers these questions for us. Just after one of Jesus' closest friends, Peter, confessed that Jesus is the King (or Christ, Matt. 16:16), Jesus explained to his disciples that he would go to Jerusalem and there be killed. Naturally, Peter objects! But not just an objection, a rebuke! "Never, Lord!… This shall never happen to you!" Jesus' response gets at the root of the answer: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me" (Matt. 16:22–23). Notice what Jesus calls Peter: Satan. This is the same name Jesus uses when he rejects the temptation for the kingdoms of the world and their splendor: "Away from me, Satan!" (Matt. 4:10). What is the connection between these temptations? Both Peter and the devil affirm that Jesus *can be King but without dying on a cross*. If Jesus were to be king without the cross, he could have had the splendor of the world, but what a different kind of kingdom it would have been. Far from the Kingdom of God, it would have been a kingdom of the devil.

Let's look at this same temptation from another angle. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' temptation gets much less attention—at least at first glance. The broad strokes are the same as Matthew's temptation, being led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days and being attended by angels, but the details are lacking. We are simply told that Jesus is being tempted by Satan (Mark 1:13). New Testament scholar David

Smith points out one difference: Unlike Matthew and Luke telling us of Jesus' at least temporary victory over temptation, Mark only tells us of the conflict. No victor is announced; the battle is ongoing (Smith 2007, 57). Just like Matthew, Mark also tells of Jesus' prediction of his death, Peter's rebuke, and Jesus' subsequent rebuke of Peter, using the exact same phrase, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33). But in spite of these similarities, there is a key difference between the stories when Jesus enters Jerusalem—a difference that builds on the ongoing temptation of Jesus through Mark.

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is often called the "Triumphal Entry." If you have been at a church service the Sunday before Easter, you might have witnessed it enacted: children waving plastic palm branches, a bleached-white-robed Jesus figure demurely saluting the congregation with ancient Queen-Elizabeth-like hand gestures, and perhaps even a donkey securely handled by someone familiar to beasts of burden, kept at sufficient distance from any person who might be able even to sniff something unpleasant off its hide. This kind of sanitized story does a disservice to our biblical imaginations and, therefore, our theology. But a careful read of Mark's Gospel reopens the mind's eye. So what's the difference between the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark at the triumphal entry? Whereas Matthew tells of the triumphal entry including Jesus' actions in the temple, Mark does not. Instead, Mark places these temple actions on the next day. But why? Why this kind of structure for Mark? The answer is a bit long, but revealing.

All the way through Mark, Jesus has been building his movement—and carefully. Silencing demons, moving in mainly less populated areas, performing miracles strategically, and drawing around him the Twelve—a close-knit group of followers who have finally come to realize Jesus as King in Peter's confession. With his momentum appropriately built, Jesus begins making his way to Jerusalem. And the crowds start going with them; at first afraid (Mark 10:32), but then gaining in boldness and numbers (Mark 10:46), picking up a blind man whose vision was just restored (Mark 10:52). The crowd's expectations at what would happen in Jerusalem is growing all the while.

The triumphal entry finally brings to a head these expectations. After all, the timing is right. It is Passover and the Jewish people are headed to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of God's miraculous deliverance of the people of Israel from under another violent empire in Egypt centuries before. Passover is a time that these people could remember moments

of the past when they could be proud, yet it remains a political hotbed, even more so in Jesus' time, because the Jewish people are still under the rule of the Romans.

Before entering the city, Jesus sends disciples ahead to obtain a colt. Most likely a prearranged signal with politically subversive followers of Jesus located in Bethany, this story of the colt is a symbol of Jesus riding into Jerusalem as a King (Bauckham 2006, 188). Jesus' code phrase given to the disciples, "The Lord needs it and will send it back shortly" (Mark 11:3) is evidence that Jesus is claiming—simply by virtue of his status and authority—what he needs. After all, he is the Lord!

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem is magnificent with greetings from people who want to mark this event with a coronation (Mark 11:8). The ancients didn't spread cloaks and branches in the street for anyone; they did that for a king. (For example, see the story of Jehu in 2 Kings 9:1–13.) Do you sense this entry into Jerusalem beginning to reach a political fever pitch? People—both ahead of the procession to alert the masses and behind the procession to call more into their number—are *shouting* "Hosanna!" (Mark 11:9a). If we have been thinking of this as the church parade described above—nice, tame, controlled—we're missing the point. "Hosanna" is not the equivalent of waving to people from floats; it is not Santa Claus', "Ho! Ho! Ho!" at the end of the parade. Hosanna is a desperate cry of, "God, save us!", but one that comes with a timetable, and is best translated, "Save us, now!"

This initial shout is followed up with another loaded slogan: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9b). It sounds flowery, but it's fierce. "Blessed is he who comes" is a phrase of welcome, but the next words that show the danger of the whole event: "in the name of the Lord!" This is a phrase from Psalm 118, invoking the personal name of Israel's God. This is a rally-the-troops-around-the-leader kind of phrase, with more and more shouting. We get the feeling that this entry is moving from a band, to a crowd, to a mob.

"Welcome is the coming kingdom of our father David!" (Mark 11:10).[12] You can sense the heartbeat made audible: "No more Romans, no more crucifixions, no more crooks!" And to finish it off, an imploring: "Save us now, in the name of heaven!" The mob is shouting, screaming, moving, expressing their anticipation, and getting ready for

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[12] In Scripture, David is a model king (though not without faults), described as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

a fight. This is not *West Side Story* with slick hair and snapping fingers; this is people getting out the daggers, wrapping their wrists and knuckles, grabbing something sharp and hard, and making their way into the street. Can you feel the tension rising?

In the face of this mounting pressure, what is Jesus going to do? At first, Jesus does exactly what would have been expected. He does what Judas Maccabeus, another conquering king, did. He goes to the temple. Just 200 years before Jesus, Judas Maccabeus overcame the foreign rulers who were occupying Jerusalem and he restored the temple. Can you feel the story unfolding? Jesus has entered the city with triumph, riding on a colt, war shouts around him, a mob moving behind him as he goes to the temple, just as another conquering King did.

And just when things reach this feverish moment, Jesus leaves. The expectations of an entire nation, of its tradition, and story, and timing are all thrust upon his shoulders—and Jesus turns and leaves the city. Now you get a sense of the bewilderment of the crowd—of their disappointment, perhaps embarrassment; their jadedness, brokenness, anger, and despairing confusion. Readers get a sense as to why this same mob condemns Jesus to death, moving from admiration to hatred in just a week's time: Their expectations and reality have grown so distant that their frustration leads them to work with the Romans in crucifixion. Jesus is not the leader they were wanting.[13]

So why this difference between Matthew and Mark? Why does Matthew describe Jesus judging the temple at this point in the story, while Mark delays the temple judgment to the next day? Because the tension, for Mark, is not in the temple; it is in Jesus' heart and mind. Imagine what is going through Jesus' mind the split second before he chooses to turn and leave the city. Satan's ongoing temptation from the desert is now at its peak. There in the wilderness the devil had said to Jesus, "I can give you the kingdoms of the world," but here, in the temple, that moment is right at Jesus' fingertips. With a motion of his hand, a shout of his voice, or an approving nod, the mob would have rushed the temple and mayhem would have ensued. *Right now, the devil's temptation to reign and rule the cities of the world is a real possibility!*

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[13]Ronald Heifetz ([1994](#)) discusses how leaders who avoid maintaining equilibrium might be brought down—even by assassination—as kinds of scapegoats. Jesus certainly does bear the weight of the community in this moment, but it seems that the situation is beyond maintaining equilibrium; instead, the people want action and change.

But it would be a devil-like rule and Jesus would be a satanic sovereign. In his mind, faced with this leadership, I'm sure, Jesus pictured dead bodies lying in the temple and strewn throughout the city; the smell of blood and the odor of death hovering in the air like fog; clumps of hair and lost teeth scattered through the streets; crimson-red stains on rocks, doors, gates, and houses; market stands and goods flung about and crushed beneath stomping boots and running feet. Could Jesus hear mothers weeping over dead sons and daughters crying out for their missing dads? Could he see the raging, chaotic thrill of victory flashing in the eyes of people who have just killed for the first time, adrenaline searing their consciences as it courses in their blood? Jesus could reign and this would be the reality.

But Jesus turns and charts a new path. *He leads his people out of the city*. Jesus sees all the violence—the blood, the hair pulled out, the weeping mother, the broken and knocked out teeth, the torn flesh, the smell of death—and decides to take all of that on *himself*. And that's exactly what he did when he was crucified not even a week later. The first step out of the temple on Palm Sunday was a definitive step toward the cross on Friday. Jesus' leadership saved the lives of his followers that day by offering his life in their place.

The Leadership of the Cross

Jesus has perfectly blended vulnerability and power. Was there a greater power displayed than refusing the temptation of Satan to reign with violence and save his own life? Was a greater vulnerability shown than accepting a capital death as an apparent piddling rebel and pitiful revolutionary? Vulnerability and power are joined in Jesus' words, from John's Gospel, when he told the kind of death he would die and its effect: "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32).

The leadership of Jesus—the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant, the triumphant King who leaves when rule is at hand—is the leadership of the cross. The cross was not an unfortunate side effect to Jesus' life; it was a perfect display of leadership.[14] And it is precisely John's Gospel

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[14]Oliver O'Donovan writes, "Physical and mental resources are reduced to nothing, yet Jesus' death is accepted by God as the culmination of his life's service," *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology* (2014, 173).

that reminds us that crucifixion cannot be grasped without resurrection. Reflecting on Jesus as a leader, then, gives strong evidence to the resurrection and cannot be done without it. The New Testament does not paint the crucifixion as some nasty bit of business that marred Jesus' otherwise admirable life. No, the New Testament writers put it at the center, as we've seen evidenced with the Gospels above. But this centrality is not simply sentimental, a kind of swooning, "Look at how far he was willing to go to show his love for us!" No, Jesus' death remains central and even a place of discerning Jesus' will and observing Jesus' *authority*. So, the writers use Jesus' own words as conditions for what it means to follow him: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; I am quoting Mark, while the other synoptic gospels have slight variations for their own purposes). This is important because a condition may only be meaningfully given from a position of power. Without power, the one who makes the condition is bluffing or manipulating. A dead Jesus' words would much more naturally (and effectively) have been appealed to with *sentiment*, a kind of urging by the disciples, not with the authority from the person of Jesus. For this reason, the writers see themselves in the place of followers of a risen Jesus, not apologists for a dead man's admirable teachings.

In other words, if Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead, we likely wouldn't be reading about him—and I certainly wouldn't be taking his life and action as models of leadership. I would be more than likely using his life as an example of how not to stay alive.[15] Without resurrection, the cross might have been leadership, but it was failed leadership. It was a lesson of what *not* to do. But because of the theological context of the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus becomes much more than an example. We described this above by saying Jesus sets objective reality. He sets the context to understand ethics because all of human life is found in him. Theologian Dan Migliore says it like this: "In the resurrection of the crucified, God has spoken a mighty and irrevocable yes to Jesus and in him to all the world, altering the human situation once and for all" (Migliore 2014, 200). Again, if resurrection is true—a truth on which the earliest followers of Jesus staked their lives even to the point of death—then not only is theology welcome in discerning ethical leadership, it is

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[15] Again, see Ronald Heifetz (1994) on the ethics of staying alive as the leader (Section IV).

necessary. Leadership makes sense given there is a reality into which people may lead and an overarching understanding in which leadership may be marked as ethical or not. Leadership is made possible by this eschatological event of resurrection.[16] Resurrection establishes that there is a future of purpose and faithful activity in its emergence. Leadership activities are judged and given meaning by resurrection. So, with this biblical theology in mind, let's proceed to insights for ethical leadership.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Ethical Leadership Values Narratives Before Changing Them

As we saw above, Jesus did not shy from suffering. He invested himself in the narrative experience of his people. By this, I mean that Jesus' life and experience are only understood in light of the narrative in which he grew up and learned. Of course, this would be the story of the people of Israel. So, for example, when Jesus is in the wilderness for forty days, it is an experience to be understood as his forefathers were in the wilderness for forty years in the Exodus. Narratives can also be personal experience and expressions. Leaders can grow as they not only identify with other narratives, but also by "constructing, developing, and revising their lifestories" (Shamir and Eilam 2005, 396). Jesus does both: He identifies with the broader narrative of Israel and develops his own narrative and invites others to follow him in it. The way of the cross is brand new to the leader of the Israelite nation.[17] This is why Peter's objection makes so much sense. But in order for Jesus to display true leadership, true humanity, then a new story must be forged. To do so, he takes one narrative to its end in the cross and launches a new one in the resurrection. Yet the distinction between cross and resurrection cannot be overemphasized; they are deeply connected. This is not a *radically* new story—a new story from its root—but it is a significant twist in the previous one.

Let's make this a little more practical. Ethical leaders, when encountering a narrative that has run its course in a business or other leadership

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[16] Eschatology has to do with one's understanding of the *end*—as was introduced in the Introduction.

[17] See Roy A. Harrisville (2006), *Fracture: The Cross as Irreconcilable in the Language and Thought of the Biblical Writers*. Rutledge writes, "To put it in the bluntest possible terms, *no one* expected a crucified Messiah" (2015, 90).

context, cannot simply forge a new narrative without considering the existing narrative context. Not only might this be unwise, but it would also be unethical. There is appropriate place for honoring the past, identifying with the suffering and understandings of people who still inhabit the narrative or understanding of the previous context. These narratives may remain connected in terms of vocation—the calling of the family, business, church, etc., that is being led. So, in leading an organization or institution, if the vocation of the body remains the same, the narratives may remain connected, even if turns, radical turns, are taken within it. The instantiation of the mission might change periodically in order to maintain the vocation over time (Smith 2017, Chapters 2–3). If the mission of the organization or other context for leadership is to stay the same, at times the narrative has to take a new direction.

A leader can identify with the previous narrative by allowing herself to experience the lure and import of the previous narrative. Recall that Jesus experienced temptation in the wilderness. Jesus allowed himself to be tempted in it. Part of the leader's role in change is to grasp the pull, the strength of the previous narrative, even while they set a new course. It is worth noting that in Jesus' rebuke of Peter, he calls him back into line. "Get behind me, Satan!" is not simply a dismissal of Peter, but a call to get back in place, to get following Jesus again (Smith 2007, 163). Leaders don't forsake leadership when identifying and empathizing with previous narratives.

Here's a personal example. It is tempting to describe it as trivial because other stories could more seriously capture the point, but to do so would be to gut the point of identifying with and sensing the existential weight of identifying with narratives.

"Why did we stop baptizing people inside the church?" The question caught me a bit off guard. I thought things were wrapping up at this visit to a kind couple's home, but the query showed that we were ramping up again. I stammered through an answer of enjoying outdoor venues at the church and being in the community for the public to see—true and correct and honest answers—but was not getting any traction. My rationale wasn't assuaging his sensitivities. He helped me out: "Do you know how we got our baptistery?" I confessed I didn't and he unfolded a preexistent narrative. He had significantly contributed to the baptistery not only building it, but also by saving scraps of fiberglass from competed projects

at his work. Every time a person got baptized, his craftsmanship was on display and renewed as an act of worship. Of course, this wasn't a sufficient reason not to move baptisms; moving them fit with the mission of the church in the time. But if I had known the story, I could have sensed its appeal not to take the turn we had and spoken to that change. I could have led more ethically by inhabiting that story; fortunately, the kind gentleman allowed me to inhabit it with him on the far side of change.

I once had a professor say to me, "Never take something away from someone without giving them something stronger in return." Fifteen years have passed and I've not forgotten the axiom. I've shared it repeatedly. I hope I've practiced it. Inhabiting people's narratives for a time allows leaders to understand the strengths and weaknesses these narratives hold. Jesus' leadership inhabits a story, pursues it to its end and then starts a new story in resurrection that draws followers into a new story that gives authority. Leaders must also find ways to inhabit stories of followers and institutions so as to know their strengths and weaknesses in order to give something stronger. Take time to listen to stakeholders whose narrative is changing. Find the lure of the existing narrative to know what people are missing and losing by change—even necessary change.

Ethical Leadership Embraces Power and Vulnerability for the Good of Followers

Power is a tough word and concept. People can bristle at its very mention, acutely aware of its abuse—perhaps even by personal experience, both suffered and performed. Yet the biblical theology we've examined does not allow for a simple dismissal of power. Creation itself is an incredible act of power by God. Again, by creating beings in God's image, God has invested humans with power. Further, Jesus does not reject power. He used power in various ways, such as performing miracles, giving authoritative teaching, and making commands. As seen above, Jesus even claims for himself the title "Son of Man," a title of power and honor.

Another display of power is by Jesus' call to the disciples. Yet, as we saw above, this use of power was an expression of value in the followers and then empowering of the followers. Unlike the summons of Pilate, Jesus' power is not for his benefit and gain, but for the mutual joy of relationship and benefit of his followers. Jesus' use of power multiplied

power—giving strength to the healed and raised. It is tempting to think of power in terms of *sums.* By this I mean, we can think of shared power as *zero-sum* where if we are against each other, then our power cancels out or if we both have power in harmony, then we can add them together to make a bigger sum. I think it is wiser to think of power as a product—the result of multiplication. So, when we combine power, we are not simply adding to one another, but multiplying power to come up with something beyond the sum.

This is especially true where people or teams must share power. Let me give an example from academic settings. Often, academic settings have three governing entities—the President, the Board, and the Faculty. We ought not to think of these three entities bringing power together to form a sum because if this is the case, then if one of the entities has no power, the other entities are unaffected. Suppose the President has 5 units of power, the Board has 4 units of power, and the faculty has 3 units of power. *Added up*, they form 12 power units. If one of them has no power, then the sum is smaller, but power is still present. However, because all three rely so heavily on each other, they impact one another deeply. If these units of power are multiplied, then together they can form *60 units of power*. However, if any of them *has no power, then the product is 0.* If a President, Board, or Faculty has no power, then it is not just a minimized impact; over time, it will be a complete undoing of the institution.[18] Ethical leadership recognizes this importance of sharing power and the high stakes that come along with it.

Jesus' story not only affirms power, but it is also an important check on the use of power. The cross itself is not an act of power, but a refusal to act with power when power cannot be used faithfully.[19] We might say that the cross is an act of leadership when no other acts of leadership are possible. Consider this in terms of the prophet, priest, royal triad of being human. At the cross, no prophetic words remain which can be faithfully discharged. At the cross, no royal protection or action is available that will not abuse others. Yet at the cross, Jesus maintains his priestly

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[18] See Smith (2017), Chapter 4, for the genesis of this example.

[19] Andy Crouch (2008), writes, "The strangest and most wonderful paradox of the biblical story is that its most consequential moment is not an action but a passion—not a doing but a suffering" (142).

role by offering himself as a sacrifice.[20] Leaders do not disavow power completely, but recognize that they may be faced with certain situations where the use of power will not correct or facilitate change, but can only lead to more horrific complexity. In those situations, leaders must consider the sacrificial benefit of not using power and suffering their own consequences. Leaders do not use power indiscriminately, but only when it can be used faithfully.

Here, I hasten not to sentimentalize the rejection of power at these times, for it does not promise good news for all followers. Indeed, some followers, even innocent followers with little agency of their own, will suffer when their leaders do not use power—*even in situations when their leaders ought not to use power*. In this case, we may understand why the Suffering Servant is a leader who is reviled. Giving up power when it cannot be used appropriately will have consequences for others, even innocents. Followers may be angry and revolt against a leader who refuses to use power for ethical reasons though there is subsequent harm to followers.[21]

A second check on the use of power is not to unnecessarily lionize the suffering of others. While there might be such a thing as righteous suffering and suffering for a righteous cause, ethical leaders will be slow, painfully slow, to validate suffering indirectly caused by their leadership if the leader is fortunate to avoid it personally. Ethical leadership should

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[20] The theology of Jesus as a sacrifice is complex and specific and cannot be discussed here, except to say that Jesus as priest and sacrifice is clearly evident in Hebrews 7:27–28; 10:5–10. The metaphor of sacrifice also fits with the Suffering Servant role from Isaiah 52:13–53:12, which we discussed above.

[21] The ethical use of power is a monograph on its own because the considerations are so diverse. The ethical implications of not using power are necessary to consider beyond simple deontological ethics. The ethics of using power for the good of followers though understanding the consequences of its use for others is not a new discussion. It delves deeply into political agency and political theology. The introductory chapter of Paul Ramsey's, *The Just War*, aptly titled, "The Uses of Power," is a helpful starting point for the careful and interested reader. For a more explicitly political theology, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*. O'Donovan also has an article exploring Ramsey in conversation with Karl Barth: "Karl Barth and Paul Ramsey's Use of Power," from *Bonds of Imperfection*. In the face of complexity, it can be noted that Ramsey believed that the use of power could be an appropriate political act of Christian love, though a contemporary reader might be skeptical to the bounds of political power and its desire to be rooted in Christian love.

be intent on solidarity with those who are suffering.[22] While Jesus does warn of suffering that will follow his leadership, Jesus' rejection of power is precisely to keep there from being a perpetuating of undue suffering. His refusal of power at the cross keeps there from being a demonic kingdom under his reign. Jesus' embrace of vulnerability is the result of this principled choice, not the validation of all suffering, but a willingness to undergo necessary suffering before his followers will suffer. Leaders embrace vulnerability not as a means to keep the vulnerable in suffering, but as a way to avoid perpetuating suffering by their use of power. This sets an example of the proper use of power and chastening use of power for Jesus' followers.[23]

At this point, I introduce another reason leaders should use power: because of resurrection. The cross is not an act of power, but a refusal to act with power when power cannot be used faithfully. Yet the cross cannot be separated from the resurrection, which is a display of power as the one who refused to use power is vindicated. H. Richard Niebuhr writes, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the establishment of Jesus Christ in power, is at one and the same time the demonstration of the power of goodness and the goodness of power" (as quoted in Schmiechen 2005, 267). Power is not completely rejected, but *certain uses* of power are divested. A way to consider whether power is being used beneficially is if it is producing more power—whether it is multiplying other people's power. For example, a teacher who invests his power in students who are capable of learning by teaching, correcting, offering critical and supportive feedback—will undoubtedly multiply the power of the room. However, not all students are able to learn in all disciplines, nor are all students willing to learn from all teachers. Not all students should be authorized with graduation if they are incapable of using the power of knowledge they are given through instruction. In these cases,

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[22] Dan Migliore (2014) writes, "Solidarity with victims and costly ministry to the wounded and the dying are primary forms of Christian witness in the midst of shattering events" (141).

[23] Russell Huizing (2011), "Since Jesus Himself came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45), it is the same for his followers. It is perhaps here that a clear distinction can be made between general leadership theories and a theological leadership…. Though Jesus is certainly imbued with both power and greatness—as are also, by extension, all those who are in Jesus—it is not for the purpose of power and greatness that He came. Thus, any leadership theory that has as its outcome power and greatness is necessarily going to be at odds with the purposes of Jesus" (64).

power might still be used faithfully by the teacher to control a class or deny students opportunity for the students power to deny the class's ability to learn. The classroom example displays how one person, refusing to use their power for God, changes the product of the room—perhaps bringing the power of the room to zero.

Christian theology reflects on this investment of power with the idea of *kenosis*. Kenosis is the Greek word used to describe how Jesus empties himself. It comes from the poem I introduced above from Philippians 2. In the use of power for the sake of others, there is a kind of emptying oneself, where one is made vulnerable—at least potentially. As I use my power to teach my children emotional intelligence and skills of logic, I open myself to being shown the error of my ways and logic *by them*—which happens more than I care to admit. Teachers who invest with knowledge might raise students who are better thinkers and researchers, though they would not have become so without their teachers. This use of power and potential humbling are not in contrast, but may be mutually informed expressions of love.[24]

As leaders use power and empty themselves, this does not do away with authority structures or hierarchy. Instead, it forms a people who can inhabit power structures and hierarchies appropriately. Without power structures and kinds of hierarchy, there is no established teacher or established parent who can give command and offer authoritative feedback. Yet ethical leadership remembers that Jesus did not use his power and authority for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the world. Notice the paradox: Jesus goes "the way of suffering, alienation, and death for the salvation of the world" (Migliore 2014, 84), *and* he calls us to follow. His authority is used for his followers' benefit and also used to give his followers commands. He is not on the same level as they are; he is ahead, but emptying himself. This is a kind of rolling hierarchy—not a structure that is built and defended at all costs, but one that is ongoing. Jesus empties himself for the salvation of the world, entrusting himself to God on the cross, and then receives power, once again, in resurrection. As leaders invest in others and empty themselves of power for others, they are forming power in others and creating moments for followers to shine and thrive. These same followers are then given the opportunity to do the same for their followers. As this authority is taken up, invested, and rolled on, power is

[24]Shaw (2006) writes, "So easily we forget the shocking fact that God did not merely model fiat power; he also modeled self-giving and humiliating love" (124).

not lost, but multiplied. Followers are able to honor their leaders *and* as leaders to invest in new followers. We might say that a leader who is able to invest their power in others, taking on the vulnerability that comes with this investment and emptying, who then sees the follower follow the leader's example of investing in others and emptying is the leader who sees their *image* get formed in another. Now, I am using this word *image* carefully because of its theology. Leaders, once they see their leadership validated by the emulation of followers have the choice to store up this glory for themselves wrongly or to reinvest and continue emptying with greater effect.[25]

Ethical Leadership Privileges Faithfulness over Effectiveness in Freedom

I have argued that the cross is not an act of power, but an act when power may not be used effectively. Yet, I have said that this extreme vulnerability remains an act of leadership when no other faithful leadership act is possible. It is an act of leadership because the cross is inseparable from the resurrection. This means that ethical leadership will privilege faithfulness over effectiveness, but that faithfulness and effectiveness need not be in competition. Faithful leaders may remain effective leaders. Of course, what counts as *faithful* is contextual and even complex. This contextuality is part of why I urged theology to be part of the leadership studies. We might say that ethical leaders must hope for effectiveness, but are mandated to remain faithful.

[25]The appropriate enacting of this kind of this powered-emptied-empowered-emptied cycle is deeply Trinitarian. Jesus emptied himself on our behalf and took on our image. Yet in so doing, he lived our image faithfully. Therefore, God exalted him (Philippians 2:9). In this exaltation, Jesus is not in competition with God, but God is glorified (Philippians 2:11). Because of this deferral, as followers of Jesus are remade, they might be recognized, but it is Jesus who is glorified, exalted by the Father, who in turn is glorified by Jesus. As leaders invest in followers for the followers' benefit and the followers do the same for others, leaders can intentionally defer praise to the one who emptied themselves for their leadership development and so this deferral is ever being passed on without stopping. In Christian theology, Christ's followers continue reflecting the glory of Christ, who, in turn, defers to the Father, who, in turn, returns it to the Son who continues to invest in his followers by his Spirit. It is a continuous cycle of deferral so that God is seen as the source and end of glory.

Dermot Power (1998) discusses a way of seeing God's eternal relations as kenotic—that within Godself the three persons are continually pouring themselves into the others so that no violence or lack is ever found within God, nor is God ever diminished (37–39).

We ought not to characterize this kind of leadership as one that is limiting or bound. Ethical leaders are not ones *bound* to faithfulness, a vulnerability that might refuse to act with power when power cannot be used faithfully. Instead, a theology of ethical leadership marks this kind of leadership with *freedom*. Leaders are free to be ethical leaders.

I arrive at this conclusion in two ways. First, leaders are free not to be effective if it means being unfaithful because this is Jesus' model. Rather than be bound to the narrative of Pilate, the one who has power to set Jesus free but who succumbs to the pressure of the mob (Luke 23: 1–25), Jesus undertakes the action of the powerlessness of the cross freely. He is not caught up in the narrative of the world, but has lived his own narrative freely, operating according to a different set of values and way of being.

Second, leaders are free not to be effective because before his resurrection, Jesus descended into hell and emerged the other side.[26] Christians confess in the Apostles' Creed that in the space between his death and resurrection, Jesus descended into hell. Again, we must check our pop-culture formed theological imaginations. Descending into hell is not an appearance at some kind of sleezy party that we think actually might be a bit more fun than the alternative, where a pitchforked, pointy-horned, red-tailed goblin is actually the Partymaster. No, when Jesus refuses to use power, he is acted upon with demonic power. Paradoxically, his life is both freely given and evilly taken. On the cross, Jesus is overcome by the enemy of God—Death.[27] Jesus entered a place of impossibility: a place where *God* had been defeated. When Jesus descended into hell, he descended into hopelessness, helplessness, darkness. Jesus' descent into hell is the full expression of kenosis—emptying (Rutledge 2015, 407). It is a place where he is completely dependent on God to do something for him. And God did. God raised Jesus from the

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[26]After completing this chapter, I encountered Andy Crouch's (2016) thoughts around the same theme. His book provides another angle to consider descending into hell as an act of leadership.

[27]Fleming Rutledge (2015) writes, "In the New Testament, Death has become a hostile Power; therefore, to die is…experienced as *condemnation and defeat at the hands of God's Enemy*" (405, italics in original).

dead. Rather than being a point of defeat, because of the resurrection the cross became a place of victory![28]

Resurrection from the dead and a full descent into hell means that leaders in the wake of Jesus are just as dependent on God to do something new if they are not able to be effective and remain faithful. Leaders are free to be ineffective because Jesus has gone to the dead and emerged.

Leaders are free to be faithful because Jesus exemplified freedom not to be corrupted by false narratives. Leaders are free to be faithful because Jesus has been raised from the dead, seeing the depth of evil and depravity and yet coming through the other side by God's power. Ethical leadership itself is the gift that leaders might enjoy and see passed on. Freedom for ethical leadership itself is the good to be passed on to followers because it is the good given by Jesus, which was not available before, the goodness of which is assured by his resurrection. Ethical leaders seek for their followers to enjoy this freedom that has been afforded in Jesus.[29]

CONCLUSION

The paradoxical blend of power and vulnerability put together in Jesus ought to drive us back to reconsidering leadership. He is a model like no other and yet he is the model we were made to be. The pinnacle of his leadership emerged not as he used power for the benefit of followers, though he did in his life, but as he refused to act with power, when his own life was in the balance. In this moment, when Jesus was faced

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[28] Exactly how this comes to be is a mystery captured only by images and metaphors that run under the banner of "atonement theology." We cannot delve into the subject here, but Rutledge, for the brave reader, provides a lengthy if readable approach to the topic.

[29] Ethical leadership is the "for" which meaningful freedom requires. Freedom is not simply freedom *from*, but freedom *for* some kind of good. As leaders participate in the narrative of Jesus won by his death and resurrection, they exemplify the *for* for which they are free. The narrative itself is a good—one that opens into more good, but proper human participation in the narrative of Jesus as leaders is already a freedom *for*. O'Donovan writes, "[F]reedom could only be evoked by a comprehensible good. Freedom requires goals; it needs to fulfill itself in and through fulfilling them. But to be equipped with material goals, it requires also a formal goal, which is its own vocation. To be 'free for' any thing is to be 'satisfied in' that thing, which implies a measure that can correlate the agent-self with its goals" (2014, 60).

with the devil's charges to reign without dying, Jesus refused to lead in ungodly ways. Instead, Jesus led the way into an unexpected narrative by an unexpected means and gave us ethical leadership and the freedom to lead ethically. I hope you are seeing Jesus in a new light or that your understanding of Jesus is flooding you with leadership anticipation and hope.

Perhaps you are given new lenses and new ways of seeing what is going on around you, hearing stories and experiences with fresh ears. Jesus can do that for leaders. He can remake leadership, casting it in new light. He can remake how you see others, casting them in new light. You see, how you see depends on your point of view. In a stunning accomplishment of irony, the Gospel of John reveals to us the true identity of Jesus through the words of Pilate (John 19:1–5). Pilate, eager to appease the mob who wants Jesus crucified but caught by his own conviction that Jesus has done nothing wrong, has Jesus flogged and beaten. Perhaps in an effort to save his life by destroying Jesus' social credibility, Pilate produces the bloodied Jesus, clothed in a purple robe, mocking Jesus' claims to royalty. Faced with such pathetic pageantry, Pilate perhaps hopes the crowd will dwindle, its anger dissipating by the dismal display. You can hear the scorn on his lips as he announces Jesus to the crowd: "Here is the man!" (John 19:5). How true are his words. While Pilate only sees a powerless pissant, readers and hearers of John's Gospel know he has said more than he intends: "Truly, here is the man—the *true* man" (Wright 2004, 116–120).

It matters that we hear these words with depth, see this man in truth, and be formed by his leadership if we are going to be leaders with good vision in our own cultures. We now turn to the final two chapters to explore these issues, first addressing eschatology (our understanding of where the world is going) and then leadership in light of culture.

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CHAPTER 7

Climax: Eschatology and the Aim of Leadership

Getting Kicked in the Stomach

Late afternoons—really *early evenings* during the winter months—are prime time for pond hockey for middle-school students in rural Québec. While zipping around a pond providentially formed by fall's rain and found in a nearby field, we still paid attention to the darkening sky. The horizon captured a blink of attention not because we needed to get home and not because dangers lurked in the dark, but for something far more sinister.

While the game's pressure made it feel like National Hockey League quality, the ice on which we played was actually quite fragile around the edges. Removing your cramped skates and donning dry boots at game's end was a sheer delight, but one quickly lost if you took a wrong step, plunging your previously dry, warm boot through the thin ice at the edge of the pond and ending up with what we called a *soaker*—a foot completely drenched, stinging with cold. We paid attention to the dwindling light to take the right steps. But that boot, quickly freezing into a solid, also provided a threatening weapon against jeering friends. Getting kicked in the gut hurts; it hurts worse with a frozen boot.

Have you ever been kicked in the gut with a frozen boot? Taken a soccer ball to the stomach? Been sucker punched in the solar plexus? Any of the above can take the wind from your lungs and leave you gasping for just a bit of air. Every leader has had a frozen-boot-kick equivalent at

some point: the loss, even betrayal, of a key team member; the unnecessary fallout of a misunderstanding; the flop of a new product; the flight of expected funding left you without leadership wind. Even though the temperature and terrain of Jerusalem differ radically from the fields of rural Québec, Jesus knows what it is like to get kicked in the stomach with a frozen boot.

Here's the story. Jesus has entered Jerusalem, an event we looked at last chapter as the triumphal entry. Having just cleared the temple and set in motion his trial and execution, Jesus confronts challengers all the way to his death, including the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a Jewish sect of financial and cultural elite during the second temple period; they did not believe in the resurrection.[1] During this final week of Jesus' life, the Sadducees confronted Jesus with a conundrum. They pointed out the requirement of the Law of Moses that if a man dies and leaves a widow without children, that the deceased's brother should marry the widow (Mark 12:19). The Sadducees then spin a plausible, though highly improbable scenario of a man and his six brothers dying before producing a child to the same woman who eventually dies. Then they pose the confounding question: Whose wife will the woman be at the resurrection? (Mark 12:23).

At first glance, the story seems a theological head-scratcher—a pain in the neck, but hardly a kick to the gut. But the logic is as sinister as it is clever; we call it a *reductio ad absurdum*—a line of thinking that shows the falsity of a belief because it leads to absurdity. What do the Sadducees think is absurd? Resurrection. *All* these brothers can't be married to the woman in the resurrection, so resurrection makes no sense—that's their point.

Why does it matter? Why might Jesus care if the Sadducees believe in resurrection or not? Jesus has made his way to Jerusalem, claiming along the way that he will be killed and then raised from the dead (Mark 8:31; 9:9; 9:31; 10:34) and now in Jerusalem he has put in motion an unstoppable movement that will culminate in his death. *By pointing out the absurdity of resurrection, the Sadducees aim a frozen-boot-kick right to Jesus' stomach.* They are saying, "Jesus, you are going to die and *stay dead*. Jesus, your life is a failure and will count for *nothing*."

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[1] Ancient historian Josephus in his writings, *Antiquities of the Jews,* says the following of the Sadducees: that they deny fate (13.5.9) and that they influence the wealthy but not the wider population (13.10.6).

Leadership and the Future

Experienced leaders know these swift and deliberate kicks, challenges to their vision and leadership efforts.

"That will never happen."

"You're wasting your time—and other people's money."

"Pie in the sky! Dream on!"

Those are only the sanitized phrases that can be printed.

While perhaps not with the same severity and contempt of the Sadducees, people can direct discouraging words, even attacking words—frozen-boot-kicks—to a leader's gut, intentionally and unintentionally threatening deep feelings of potential failure in the leader.

Failure is a true possibility because every act of leadership is a risk because leadership aims at goals and projects that are *not yet certainties*. And leadership is always about the future—crafting and creating a better context and situation than what is present reality.[2] The problem is that no leader can tell the future; no leader can turn risks into certainties without taking the risk. Every act of leadership risks failure. If you want to kick a leader in the gut, then question, mock, and all-but-disprove the future she believes is coming to be. Jesus could not lead through the cross without risking that resurrection was not true. So, why did he remain faithful to his mission? *Because of his eschatology.*

[2] I direct courageous and determined readers to C. Otto Scharmer's (2009) massive text, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*. Scharmer's conviction is that the best leaders do not simply learn from the past, but from the future. There is a future which desires to emerge; this is our "highest future possibility" (5). Scharmer's theory is grounded in extensive qualitative research, utilizing phenomenological study, interview dialogue, and collaborative action research. Through the process of research, Scharmer discovered a means of accessing the emerging future, which he calls "Theory U," a process of downloading information, suspending judgment, seeing freshly, sensing the field's nature, connecting with one's self and work, then crystallizing the emerging vision, creating its initial prototype, and then performing the vision to achieve its results (2009, 45). This process then repeats itself as the emerging future continues to become clearer and intersects with the leader. The key aspect of the U is the bottom portion, where there is an intersection of the present moment and the emerging future called "presencing." Presencing means to "connect with the Source of the highest future possibility and to bring it into the now" (2009, 163). Readers will pick up Scharmer's spiritual, though not Christian, language, helping to affirm that leaders have eschatologies—even if they are not rooted in a confession of faith.

Eschatology and Leadership

So, what *is* eschatology and what does it have to do with ethical leadership? Eschatology is the theological study of the end and final things, such as death, heaven, hell, and final judgment. Tempting as it is to prognosticate about the end of the world—testing out dates against contemporary events read back into the Bible (or mocking those who do), I want to go another direction. For leadership, eschatology is not so much about the *when* of the future; instead, it is about *the what*.

We can think about eschatology by putting it in the language of stories—that is, where is the story of this world headed? How is this drama unfolding? If the story of the world is two acts and we're in act one, what does the next act include? Famed twentieth-century Christian apologist C.S. Lewis ([1997](#)) famously combined these images of the end of a story and the end of the world: "I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on the stage the play is over" (54). Eschatology is our theological study of the end—reflecting on what it means for the author, God, to step onto the stage. But no author invests in a story without a purpose, so we can also think about eschatology in the language of leadership: What is God's vision for the world? Eschatology is discerning God's final vision for God's good creation.

At first, this might seem a strange location for this chapter. Why not finish with a chapter on eschatology? Simply, eschatology is not so far removed from every day leadership as we might think. Aspects of my day are formed because of what I think will happen or what I think won't happen at some point in the future. I pay my mortgage not only to stay in my house in the near future, but also because I have a vision of being debt-free. I think that being debt-free will come to be, so I am working toward it now. (I even allow myself to imagine what having that amount of disposable cash might mean every month!). On the other hand, when I down a bowl of ice cream with chocolate chips and peanuts, it might just be connected to the fact that I doubt tipping the scale at a more optimal weight truly is in my future. I don't think that will come to be, so I don't prepare for it.

But we don't just act in the present based on what we think *will* be the case, but also on what we think *ought* to be the case. So, when I grab a piece of fruit instead of peanut butter cups, it's because a healthier body *ought* to be in my future. It's right and better to have a healthy future, so fruit

I shall eat, even though a one-time banana-for-Butterfinger swap won't make *that* much immediate difference. (Perhaps leaders with better knowledge of health might beg to differ!)

Another example: When was the last time you gave to the charity of your choice purely out of delight and desire—not obligation? You certainly didn't give money to the organization because they have *already* solved the problem they exist to address, or even because you can imagine a not-too-distant (or even distant) future where the problem no longer actually exists. Instead, you likely gave because you have a sense that a future without the problem is the *right* future. The funds, though limited, ultimately serve to participate in something *right*—pointing to a future that *ought* to be. Though some of these examples matter more to eschatology than others—it seems that God's vision to have a world without childhood poverty is more meaningful than me improving my Dad bod—you can see how our vision of the future, our eschatology, influences our present actions.

But we don't simply participate in activities because of the future. Instead, leaders attempt to *influence* and *create* the future. Leadership thrives on vision. Leaders get visions—mental pictures of the way things can and ought to be—and then work to get other people on board, set up workable systems to ease stress and leverage talent, and celebrate moments of clarity and accomplishment. Vision is a picture of a preferred future. Without vision, leadership withers and influence wanes. If there is no preferred future, then what is the point of leadership? We might even say that if there is no preferred future, then leadership is simply abusive—exerting influence and power to maintain the leader's current standing. Thus, leadership is especially influenced by eschatology because leadership thrives on vision.

So far we have said that leadership is about the future—about what *is* coming to be and what *ought* to be—and that eschatology is a study of such things from a theological point of view. Now, it might be fairly easy to see why eschatology matters for *religious* leadership because one's theological vision fuels their leadership. But remember: We have argued that everything is theological. So, all leaders, if they have any sense of vision, have an eschatology—a vision of the world's purpose and desired future. This leads to a second dynamic between eschatology and leadership. Not only does our eschatology form our leadership, but our leadership *reveals* our eschatology. Our leadership aims and actions reveal what truly is our vision of what is coming to be and what ought to come to be.

Why might this insight matter? The late business theorist Chris Argyris ([1991](#)) shows us why with his difference between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Suppose every person has a theory that governs their life—all their decisions, desires, purposes, and so on. An espoused theory is what a person *thinks* governs her life, whereas a theory-in-use is what *actually* governs her life. So, Argyris says that if you ask a person to describe the rules by which they live their lives (espoused theory) and also watch the rules that govern their actual actions (theory-in-use), then you will note inconsistencies. There is a difference between a person's espoused theory and their theory-in-use.

Here are a couple of examples. Suppose a company or organization prides itself on innovation. What truly reveals whether or not this is true is the amount and complexity of steps needed to move from concept to production. Companies who actually value innovation have systems and processes that are smooth, streamlined, and clear that *promote* creativity rather than slow it down. Companies that don't value creativity have stricter processes and more steps from idea to production. Now, of course, you cannot compare values across fields—so what it means to be an innovative pharmaceutical development company will be different from what it means to be an innovative flower shop. The point is, a company that *thinks* they value innovation but puts more emphasis on the rigor of the process is a company with a discrepancy between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Now, this doesn't mean that having strict and stifling processes is *wrong*. Some companies need to value process more than creativity. (I don't really want to take medication that hasn't undergone strict processes of analysis and testing.) What's important to note is that the way things actually run *reveals* the true values.

Here's another example. Sometimes politicians say they value transparency and accountability—and they might even think they do—but their speeches are couched in a careful language with meticulously crafted sentences and precisely worded claims that can be defended in a variety of ways. The espoused theory (transparency and accountability) is contradicted with the theory-in-use (precision and being defensible). Again, this might not mean that being cautious with words is *wrong*, but that the actual action reveals the theory-in-use, contradicting the espoused theory.

Let's bring this back to leadership and eschatology. I said earlier that leadership reveals our eschatology. Let's call this eschatology-in-use. But an eschatology-in-use might not be the same as an espoused eschatology.

In other words, while leaders have things they believe about the future that they think influence their leadership (espoused eschatology), their leadership actions and aims will reveal the actual values about the future by which they operate (eschatology-in-use).

I recall one time that an eschatology-in-use was clearly articulated that differed from an espoused eschatology. A leadership group was deciding whether or not to increase debt load to acquire property, when one of the men spoke up, "I believe that when Jesus returns, we should be owing as much money as possible!"[3] While I didn't have the categories of eschatology-in-use and espoused eschatology, I knew something was off. On the one hand, it is right to repay our debts; when we borrow money but don't intend to repay, it's fraud. But this opinion was saying we should aim at a future where we don't need to pay back our financial debts. There was a difference between the espoused eschatology (financial justice and equality) and the eschatology-in-use (leverage other people's money through debt for our benefit).

Why does this matter? Because discrepancies between espoused theory and theory-in-use *keep leaders from being effective* (Argyris 1991). If your espoused theory is different from your theory-in-use, then you will get stuck. If there is a difference in your organization, followers, team, or staff between *why they think* they do what they do and *why they actually* do what they do, then there will be frustration, lack of alignment, and friction. Worse, you or your organization may participate in what Argyris calls "defensive reasoning," explaining and validating the lack of change in current reality. So, the company that says they value innovation but imposes burdensome boundaries on creativity will defend and explain the lack of innovation, thereby staying unproductive.

So, eschatology matters to leadership for two reasons. First, because eschatology forms the vision of what we believe is coming to be and what we believe ought to come to be. And, second, because our actions truly reveal what we believe is coming and what we believe is right in coming—even if it is different from what we *think* or *say* is coming to be and what we say or think ought to come to be. Without an accurate eschatology, we will be misguided and unjust; without a consciously held eschatology, we will be ineffective.

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[3] The phrase "when Jesus returns" is an eschatological claim that often includes a bodily, visible return of Jesus which signals the end of the world as we know it, an ushering in of God's final kingdom.

"Wait a minute," you might be thinking. "God's vision of the world is surely larger than my own! Does this mean that my espoused eschatology is different from my eschatology-in-use?" No. Think of your vision of the future as a horizon—one that stretches the full panoramic of your field of vision. The horizon is the future you see coming and what you believe ought to be coming. Well, if you've ever gone for a long enough walk, then even though you hit the horizon you saw earlier, you still don't occupy its full stretch but only one specific location. While you *saw* a whole horizon earlier, you can *occupy* only one point. This means that what matters is moving toward the right horizon, being contented with the limited effect we may have in bringing it about.

Only God can bring the whole horizon of the future and we can occupy specific points in it. We will address this further below under the ethics of leadership. The point is not to attain the whole future we might envision, but to have the right vision for the future. Leaders often understand that an initial vision gets refined and adapted as it gets closer to reality, yet we must start with playful orderings of the future that remain intentional and serious work.[4]

You might have another objection: "Wait *another* minute! Doesn't this talk about the future limit exactly what *counts* as leadership as we pursue the horizon of the future? What good does my leadership make if it is for today's project or next year's budget? Doesn't such a big view of the future swallow up these shorter, nearer projects?" There is certainly a tension between leadership that has ultimate ends and leadership that has more time-limited ends. Or, leadership that aims at something of eternal significance and something that is of significance in the near future. But we need not get frustrated or discouraged.

First, leadership toward the eschatological horizon is a journey.[5] While our leadership reveals the end we have in mind and the end we have in

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[4]O'Donovan (2014) writes, "The future, because it is indeterminate, is a beckoning space into which our imagination quite naturally expands. There are a thousand futures which imagination can conjure up, and though they can sometimes be alarming, they can also be delightful to play with" (146).

[5]I am intentionally using the language of Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (2009). She writes, "Inherent in the word 'leadership' is the metaphor of travel or intentional and directed movement. We may then be attentive to those aspects of gathering and cultivating a community that are directed toward what is not yet, of 'leading' a community toward a yet

mind helps to form our leadership, we cannot make the journey all at once. In fact, Christian theology, which we will say more about below, says that the horizon can only be brought by God. While we cannot achieve the horizon or arrive at it on our own, we can make progress toward the horizon. Leadership can be thought of as crafting signposts along the way—markers that point us in the right direction along the journey, and building outposts—places that faithfully mark the horizon that is coming but that do not yet entail the full horizon. So, a leader might work to develop a media group that tells the stories of racial injustice, the unborn, or the debilitating effects of poverty. These stories are told with an eschatology of equality, peace, and abundance. These stories are pointers in the right direction. Leaders might also be convinced of the vision these stories tell and work to develop organizations or to refine organizational systems to reduce racial tension, facilitate adoption, and enable living wages for more workers. These would not be the horizon of the future itself, but would be places of meaningful and symbolic work.

Second, I hasten to add, this language of *journey* cannot be romanticized with some gushy slop like, "Life is about the journey, not the destination."[6] While a slick slogan, it is also a false dichotomy. My wife and I joke that whereas my family of origins started vacation when we arrived at the destination, her family of origins started vacation when they left the house. We have found that enjoyable journeys and valuable destinations are not mutually exclusive. With good leadership, the most meaningful journeys have meaningful destinations, otherwise it is not a journey but a meandering; you need to be going *somewhere*. Likewise, good destinations lose some of their luster if the journey is

unrealized horizon. In all of the texts of the New Testament, an eschatological horizon is apparent, although in many different ways and variously held in tension with concern for the present. Such interest in 'what is about to be' as the horizon of faithful living underscores our attention to the future as a dimension of leadership" (34).

[6]While the book is a classic and brilliant, Senge's (2006) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* comes close to saying this very thing: "In building a learning organization there is no ultimate destination or end state, only a lifelong journey" (xviii). It should be noted that the line above is in the introduction to the revised edition. I take Senge to go against his claim just a few pages later when he writes, "If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create" (9). If the picture of the future can be created, then it has a kind of completion—a kind of destination to it.

an afterthought. Without attention to the journey, the destination is denigrated. While the full destination of eschatology is beyond the leader's ability to bring to reality, meaningful journeys spent painting signs and building outposts along the way are not.

But all of this talk about the future and its importance to shape our leadership and what we actually think about the future revealed in our leadership itself is hollow if it is not grounded in reality. To put it back to the Sadducees' challenge of Jesus, if the future a leader is describing is absurd, then why follow? Leadership expert Max DePree (1989) says that leadership is about defining reality. If the future being defined isn't a coming reality—at some point—then there really isn't leadership. It is either ineffective leadership or it is misguided leadership. So, how do I get to talk about eschatology and leadership? Not from speaking about eschatology generically, but about Christian eschatology in particular.

CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

So, what makes eschatology *Christian*?[7] Or, how does the Christian faith help us to think about the future? In a word, *resurrection*. Christian eschatology does not only claim that the future is at some point yet to be revealed, but that God's good future has come toward the present in the resurrection of Jesus! The resurrection of Jesus—the validation of one unjustly sentenced to death—is the evidence that the future that *is* coming to be has *already* come to be and that the future that is coming to be is the future that *ought* to come to be. The resurrection is the present reality of justice for Jesus that reveals a future full-scale justice for the world. So, Christian eschatology for leadership springs from the resurrection of Jesus.[8] But what kind of resurrection was it? Indeed, what does resurrection mean? After all, the word isn't heard every day.

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[7] In what follows, it should be clear that I am not unfolding a comprehensive Christian eschatology. Instead, I am developing a theology for ethical leadership from the foundations of Christian eschatology. Rather than laying a foundation on which I will build an entire eschatological house, I am trying to develop secure footing and then spring in the direction of leadership.

[8] Oliver O'Donovan (1994) describes the foundation of ethical reflection that the resurrection affords. The resurrection of Jesus, as it opens the way for the resurrection of humanity, is the initial act of God in the new reality of the redemption of Christ. Because of the incarnation of Jesus, the resurrection of this same fully human Jesus is the redemption of humanity.

Let's start our talk about resurrection with someone coming back from death's door. I could hardly believe the story. Before my time on staff as one of its pastors, my employing church had a remarkable event during one of their productions. While waiting for the event to begin, an audience member suffered a heart attack that left him needing immediate medical attention. Fortunately, the right personnel and equipment were close enough to save his life. Their heroic efforts actually brought him back from flat-lining with the help of a defibrillator. Where did this event take place? You guessed it: A church production of the Easter story. Local headlines ran, "Resurrection at Easter Play." But was it really? No—and the distinction matters. It wasn't a resurrection; it was resuscitation. The person was brought back from imminent death, but he would die again. Jesus' resurrection was not resuscitation. It was a resurrection: he was brought from death to a life from which he would never die.

Such alarming, unique claims—a man to be raised from the dead never to die again—are tough to imagine. As a result, the claim might be softened, the meaning of resurrection altered. Perhaps the earliest followers' *memories* of Jesus were raised, never to die out. After all, Jesus remains famous worldwide and the world's largest religion bears his name. But Jesus' resurrection was not a flighty kind of resurrection—a kind that says

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The resurrection of the fullness of God and the fullness of humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (affirmed by the incarnation) is the drawing of humanity into the life of God, overcoming death. As the resurrection is the conquest of death, and thereby draws humanity into its reality, it remakes the human race into the image of the risen Christ. This is the objective reality of Christ. However, the ethical reflector is not encompassed totally in this reality in the present and so finds their own context as separate from the objective reality in Christ. O'Donovan calls these subjective realit*ies*. O'Donovan's argument, however, is that the totality of the redemption of the world in the action of God in Christ is so overarching that all subjective realities are ultimately drawn into the objective reality of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit in the eschaton. Indeed, along with Werpehowski (2007), so does O'Donovan (1994) affirm that there is ultimately *one* reality. As the ethical reflector engages the objective reality of Christ established in the resurrection from within their own subjective realities, there is proper moral discernment of the given situation *and* a concrete expression is provided given the location of the reflector.

Because the action is grounded in the reality of the resurrected Christ, we can consider it an authorized act. To the extent that the moral action is in accordance with the objective reality of Christ, so is it an authorized act because the objective reality is the reality of God (O'Donovan 1994). One can see, then, the necessity of the priority of theological reflection as it is the resurrection itself that creates this new reality, which forms the authorizing base and ground of moral reflection for right action. Without theological reflection one is left without a base for ethical reflection and, subsequently, for ethical reflection on leadership.

his spirit lived on while his body decayed. What kind of justice would that be? And let us not forget how the disciples used his words as authoritative commands rather than sentimentalized sayings. So, what kind of resurrection did Jesus experience? A bodily resurrection from the dead—a touch my body (John 20:27), let's eat breakfast (John 21:12), feel my breath (John 20:22) kind of bodily resurrection.[9]

N.T. Wright has argued thoroughly and widely for a bodily resurrection of Jesus. According to Wright (2003), resurrection did not mean the continued life of Jesus' spirit, either as a pseudo-reality separate from his body or as a figure in the minds of his disciples as they warmly pondered his teachings that continued to impact their lives. By and large, to Jews (the Sadducees being a notable exception) during the time known as Second Temple Judaism (the context of Jesus' own life and ministry), resurrection was always *bodily resurrection* (181). A combination of the tradition of the empty tomb, the post-crucifixion appearances of Jesus to many different people, and the birth of the early church on the confession of "Jesus is Lord," affirm the bodily nature of the resurrection (Wright 2005).

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[9]The arguments for and against bodily resurrection are important. N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg (2000) spell out versions of bodily and non-bodily resurrection in *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions.* Craffert (2008) argues that we can answer whether or not Jesus rose from the dead in bodily form by answering "Yes" *and* "No." The answer, he argues, depends on one's culturally sensitive viewpoint. The experience of the resurrected Jesus was not *objectively* real but it was *culturally* real. Craffert argues that the belief and cultural system created a neurologically real seeing of Jesus for those who believed. The experience, for Craffert, is grounded as an alternate state of consciousness event: real for some; not real, in a different way, for others. The split experiences do not reflect a bifurcated answer to the question, "Did Jesus rise from the dead?" Instead, they reveal two realities. So, Yes! Jesus was raised from the dead bodily in a cultural reality. But, No, Jesus was not raised bodily in the objective reality of time and space. The meaningfulness of Jesus' resurrection is not to be found as a miraculous event, but in the experience of "otherness and the seriousness of human expressions of meaning" (151). Here Craffert offers a not-so-subtle jab at orthodox scholarship: "While miraculous events satisfy the appetite of orthodox scholarship, a culture-sensitive approach is satisfied by dialogue and understanding" (151). Of course, Craffert's readers might wonder if Craffert's own critical work is grounded in his own cultural reality, as opposed to the objective reality from which he describes all cultures so as to have something meaningful and contributing to say.

Against Craffert (2008), the traditional framing of the debate is most appropriate. That is, there are two approaches to the resurrection: Either Jesus did or did not rise bodily from the dead. Bodies are objective realities in all cultures; they are real. If there is not a bodily resurrection, then there is not an objective resurrection. If there is another type of resurrection, say, a spiritual resurrection, then there might be considered a subjective experience of Jesus, but not an objective resurrection. These are the lines of argument and debate must take place within them.

Further, the life of the disciples—as that of followers—is evidence to the resurrection. The disciples did not reminisce about Jesus; *they followed him!*

RESURRECTION ESCHATOLOGY, LEADERSHIP, AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

So, what does Christian eschatology built on the resurrection of Jesus say about leadership and what we might call ethical leadership? Conscientious, ethical leaders at some point need to ask pointed questions of themselves concerning the futures they are envisioning. Questions like:

- *In the face of uncertainty, is it ethical to use my power to influence people to take risks?* After all, with enough passion and drive, someone will follow your lead. What do you owe to them in the face of uncertain future?
- *Should I not lead toward aims that are more likely to succeed and carry less risk?* For every focused leadership project, another is left undone. We cannot do everything and leading by strategic action into an uncertain future means not leading in other directions. When we try to bring one future to reality, we leave another, at least for the time being, as potential. To focus on one "what will be," we let other things remain "what might have been." Some risks might have greater reward, but they also come with less guarantees. Is it ethical to lead in a direction that risks complete failure when a surer but smaller amount of good could be accomplished in another way?
- *What is the blend of confidence, humility, certainty, expectation, flexibility?* In other words, how do I maintain a sense of confidence and even ego and drive and yet not become blind and self-obsessed? If you ever step into the leadership field without a sense of self and ego, then you won't stay there. You will get pushed out. Nobody follows a leader who does not believe in herself as a leader. But given that the future is a place of uncertainty from our perspective, how do we maintain self-confidence and humility?[10]

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[10]Earlier we used the language of horizon to describe the future. Ramachandra (2008) also uses the language of horizon and combines it with this affirmation of humility: "The eschatological horizon should also keep Christians from presumption: we do not yet know which particular aspects of any cultural or religious tradition, including our own, will contribute to the heavenly polis and which will be judged" (147).

- *Is it ethical to lead organizations or communities toward futures that will negatively impact some current followers?* Leadership involves actions that leaders wish they didn't need to take. At first glance, that seems like a contradicted life—a pursuing of ends by unethical means. It doesn't have to be. While some leaders may like terminating employees, and enjoy the power that comes with holding other people's professional fates in their hands, I am sure the majority do not. Sometimes the way forward for an organization is the removal of people who do not contribute or contribute insufficiently to the mission.

I'm sure you've had these questions and more. Leading rightly and with good character is difficult. In competitive fields, every angle for leadership advantage attracts us: Stretch the truth, exhibit just a little more confidence, manage the message, dismantle the competitor's reputation. Before eschatology might get into the details of leadership ethics, it first *validates* the asking of questions.[11] Leadership is chastened, critiqued in light of the expected and anticipated future, and will ultimately be validated on how it aligns with the emerging future.

Let's start these thoughts by going back to Jesus and his death. In John's Gospel, the plot to kill Jesus ramps up after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–44). Two of Jesus' most emotional experiences in John's Gospel come in this story. First, Jesus weeps after seeing where Lazarus has been laid (v. 35) and, second, Jesus is moved upon coming to the tomb (v. 38).

While it is easy to think of Jesus empathizing with Lazarus' sisters and sorrowing at the death of his friend, we might also read these as expressions of Jesus' own turmoil at what he is about to do, for Jesus knows that his raising of Lazarus will lead to his own death. Whereas in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke it is Jesus' clearing of the temple that is the final straw for those who would seek to take his life, in John's Gospel it is the raising of Lazarus. When Jesus weeps and is moved, it is

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[11]Britton (2009) writes, "Theologically based leadership is fundamentally a form of questioning, derived from the pattern of asking questions that is at the heart of the divine-human interaction" (95). Our continued sensing and feeling our way into the future of God is marked by asking questions not just of the future, but of God. Eschatology invites our questions and our questions are ones that seek answers, but we remain humble in our answers, even while leading with conviction in directions formed by answers that have resonated with us.

his expression of sorrow and anguish that his actions to raise Lazarus will lead to Jesus' own death (Dongell 1997, 144–145).

So, the religious leaders start their plot against Jesus, fearing that if he continues his ministry that their temple and nation will be overrun by the Roman rulers (John 11:48). At this point, Caiaphas, the High Priest, speaks up saying that it is better if one man dies than for the nation to perish. In other words, it's better if Jesus dies than if his movement leads to all their deaths; Caiaphas is more confident in the ability of the Roman soldiers to destroy a nation than he is in the ability of Jesus to raise the dead. Notice the irony of Caiaphas' statement: In the name of *life*, Caiaphas wants the man who can raise the dead put to death. We might say it like this: Caiaphas' eschatology formed his ethics and led to his unethical leadership.

But Caiaphas' hunch was at least partially right: Jesus' movement would implicate his followers who would be threatened with death. By the time the Sadducees tried to devastate Jesus, his followers' fates were implicated in his leadership. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus told those who would follow him to Jerusalem that they were to carry their own crosses (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27). In other words, they must be prepared to die. While John's Gospel does not use the same phrase of carrying a cross, it does carry the same danger of following Jesus. Thomas encourages the other disciples that they should go with Jesus to the town of Bethany—just a couple of miles from Jerusalem and where Lazarus will be raised—even if it means they will die with Jesus (John 11:16). Jesus' predictions of his own death didn't merely impact him, but also others who had come with him to Jerusalem. Their fate was in the balance, too. The ethics of how and where he led was formed by Jesus' eschatology.

But Jesus and Caiaphas couldn't *both* be right ethically speaking. If Jesus was right in raising Lazarus, then Caiaphas was wrong in plotting Jesus' death. And if Jesus was wrong in his leadership, then he was at least partially responsible for those who would die in his movement. One's eschatology led to a pragmatic sacrificial death aimed at saving a nation; the other's eschatology led to a sacrificial death aimed at saving the world, but costing the lives of his followers. So, what decides between Caiaphas and Jesus? Eschatology—the logic of the future.

Yet the future simply is not clear. It remains cloudy. So overdeveloping eschatology to the point of specific dates and salient details does not always lend itself to ethical living. The fact that I have developed a

basic eschatology simply on resurrection is already a sign that the future is strange to us.[12] Witnesses of the resurrected Jesus did not always recognize him, including Mary Magdalene (John 20:10–18) and two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)!

The Apostle Paul seems to sense this tension between using resurrection as a signpost to the future to help form our ethics and that the future remains unclear. Just two chapters before his stunning and powerful teaching on resurrection and argument for its truth from the coherence of the Christian life (1 Cor. 15:12–19) and the experience of Jesus by some followers (1 Cor. 15:5–8), Paul writes of our limited present knowledge: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Yet immediately following, he offers these words: "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). While this future remains cloudy and our frameworks of understanding reality are limited, we may still offer some ethical guidance from eschatology to the leadership energy that burns within from these three categories, though in the order of faith, love, and hope.[13]

Faith and Ethical Leadership

Let's start with faith. Ethical leadership is formed by faith. Starting with faith is not to say that faith is the ground of reality. It is not. Faith, however, is the starting point for our engagement with reality (O'Donovan 2013, 106). We do not have a sense of self and agency—the importance of our leadership actions—without faith. So, perhaps we should start by

[12]While he was speaking of St. Augustine's pattern of loving, O'Donovan's (2014) words might pertain to our whole consideration of ethics from the future: "Though the pattern invites elaboration, we are not to forget that such thinking is exploratory, and that beyond that elemental framework we have no privilege of holding this or that scientific or metaphysical construction of the world to be irreplaceable" (112). That resurrection is a defensible event in the past does not mean that it has become common in the present. As it is unique in the past but points to the future, resurrection reminds us that our firmly footed spring remains a leap of faith in the future that, from our perspective, is not yet.

[13]O'Donovan (2013) has a lengthy and helpful discussion of the order of this triad, which is more famously faith, hope, and love but more commonly faith, love, and hope (97–103). The order and coherence does matter for purposes of ethical thinking and leadership, which I hope will be evident in what follows in the main text.

pointing out that resurrection eschatology *confirms* that there is such a thing as ethical leadership, and invites us to reflect on the nature of the world (love) and to participate in its unfolding (hope).[14] Faith means that as readers of the Gospel story, we can make a judgment between the leadership of Caiaphas and Jesus. Faith means that we affirm that there *is* an order and future that sets our aims and actions.

Faith is the starting position, a position that believes *leadership is validated because there is a meaningful future*.[15] Without faith, we have no framework for leadership action. Without faith, there is no question of *what* we should pursue because there is not even a coherent place from which to ask *why*. We start with faith because we simply live like our agency matters and our actions influence the future. While our stories might be different from where we start by faith, eschatology reminds us that we are both starting with presuppositions about the future—no doubt with good reason for our presuppositions, but not definitive proof.

My faith story for ethical leadership comes from the resurrection of Jesus. Resurrection eschatology is a paradoxical story of creation being brought to nil in Jesus' death and then restored to eternal life. This is a story of "a world that God made good brought to nothing by sin and death; a world brought to nothing redeemed and restored by God's renewing love" (O'Donovan 2017, 113). God's resurrection of Jesus, the pinnacle leader, is God's yes to Jesus and as a result to all humankind and to the rest of creation, which humankind leads.[16]

One of the strengths of leadership from resurrection eschatology is the coherence of the story from creation to eschatology. In the chapter on creation, we saw that order emerged from the creative work of God. Creation implies order—an unfolding purpose and narrative. A created order was foundational to make sense of leadership. The death of

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[14] O'Donovan (2014) writes, "The Gospel offers a central and normative focus of joy, the resurrection of Christ, which becomes a torch to illuminate the goods of the world, a vantage point from which we can explore, discover, and appreciate all other objects of joy. And when false imaginations of the world are overcome from this vantage point, the world that God made is made new for us, and offers itself to new adventures of love and knowledge" (112).

[15] Jürgen Moltmann (1993), writes that Christian faith "strains after the future" (19).

[16] "In the resurrection of the crucified, God has spoken a mighty and irrevocable yes to Jesus and in him to all the world, altering the human situation once and for all" (Migliore 2014, 200).

Jesus, however, threatened the order—as the true human was crucified. But resurrection assures us that there is a meaningful future—there are meaningful projects to accomplish and events to plan and books to write and sermons to preach and meetings to run and films to produce and parenting roles to perform! If our understanding of creation affirmed that God was telling a good story in the world, resurrection eschatology says that the story hasn't been forgotten! The story is still being told!

Bishop Robert Barron summarizes well: "Those who hold to the resurrection of the body are those who are most effective at working for justice and peace in this world. … [I]f you believe in the resurrection of the body, then everything in this world is destined for redemption" (Daily Gospel Reflection, email to author, November 25, 2017). The apostle Paul described this kind of work as building on the foundation of Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11). If anyone builds on this foundation, the worker's efforts *will be shown* (1 Cor. 3:13) for what it is. Paul's point is that the emerging future reveals and gives meaning to the nature of our leadership efforts.[17]

So, faith is our starting point, a kind of footing in the story we hold of the future we seek that presumes a good future. Ethical leadership must start with this premise—that there *is* such a thing as ethical leadership, and then does the hard work of knowing the story, the faith, from which the leader is springing. Some story of the future is drawing you ahead with meaning and purpose. What is it? What is your story?

Why does it matter? Because a leader who acknowledges the *faith* of their leadership is the leader who grounds conviction and validation in something that does not allow for *certainty*. Leaders must aim only for confidence. Without acknowledging faith's footing and its intended future, leaders step with too much certainty—and can use ends to justify means. In my own leadership development, I was warned that I should become less certain and more confident. Leadership can be confident with faith, but must not be certain. Certainty toward uncertain futures will cause leaders to overstep, to use what should be enjoyed and empowered, and to protect what should be changed. Ethical leadership is leadership that may be bold but must remain humble and even self-critical.

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[17] O'Donovan (2014) writes, "For Ethics the important thing is that a coherent future is, implicitly if not explicitly, essential to coherent action. We need a future to which the future of our action is open, a future that will not simply swallow the action up as if it had never been" (150).

Because leadership is given meaning and purpose by the future that marks the present, leadership must not be strictly pragmatic. Leaders do not aim to "get the job done" whatever the cost or in whatever way presents itself. Leadership is a specific kind of way of living in the world that is headed toward God. Since God has raised Jesus and accepted Jesus into God's life, Jesus is the first human being into God and leads his followers in, as well (Aitken 2009, 34).[18] Because Jesus is raised, true leadership is marked by justice, freedom, love—the attributes of the Triune God.[19]

Leaders: as tempting as it is to achieve ends regardless of means—even through dishonesty, deception, abusive power, arrogance—this is not the future and not true leadership. Any leadership work that is performed that is not in line with the aims of Jesus might succeed in the short term, but will ultimately be done away with in the true future of Jesus. We are called to be people of faith—which also includes being leaders who hold the anticipated future *in good faith*—with a trustworthiness and loyalty to an ethics that might not yield desires in the moment.

When validation is held with an open hand, then we may pay attention to personal conviction and follower support. In our earlier discussion of theological anthropology, we saw how ethical leadership is shared leadership. Faith allows for shared leadership because it affirms the agency both of the self and of the other. Both have responsibility and potential to contribute to the unfolding future. Thus, faith springs to our next virtue for ethical leadership: love.

Love and Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership presupposes faith and calls leaders to unpack the faith they are deploying, the future they are envisioning. But leadership does not stop there. Ethical leadership is formed by love. Love is our appropriate orientation to a world that is created good by God and given in love by God. But love is not simply generic—a kind of orientation to impersonal objects. Love is most appropriately aimed at *persons*,

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[18] The view that God has brought Jesus into God's life is included in the Christian teaching of the ascension, which includes Jesus' enthronement over all of creation and also Jesus' hiddenness and safety within God.

[19] Migliore (2014) uses these words to describe the community that would follow Jesus (257).

first to God and then to neighbor, and also to ourselves.[20] Love is our "participation in a community" (O'Donovan 2013, 99).

Ethical leadership is founded on and presumes a good future, so ethical leadership starts with a faith that it matters *that* you lead and *where* you lead. Ethical leadership then pursues *love* in community so that it matters *how* you lead. Ethical leadership is not only about the *destination* toward which you lead, *but how you lead along the way.* Leadership is never strictly a practical effect—a kind of, "It's just leadership; it's not personal" equivalent to the dismissive, "It's just business" cliché.

Earlier I used the example of how my wife and I try to vacation—attending both to destination and journey. Faith reveals our destination while love forms our way of journeying. We enjoy cooperating with others, even if their short- or long-term destinations are different from ours, because we are made to love.[21] Or, perhaps I should say that without seeking cooperation with others that an eschatology is ultimately revealed as impersonal or adversarial. Our faith-seen destinations implicate our present life of seeking. So, faith and love should always be seen as allies.

See how this makes leadership a necessarily ethical set of behaviors, attitudes, ends, and processes? Leadership is not to be desired in its own right, as though people who command influence and achieve change or build systems and structures are to be emulated necessarily, as though these leaders are successful simply by virtue of their level of influence, regardless of how they use their influence, what change they oversee, and what structures get built. No. Leadership in the wrong direction is either not leadership at all or it is pseudo-leadership. We might go so far to say that effective leadership in the wrong direction is leadership of the worst kind. The moral quality of leadership is not simply about effectiveness or character, but direction. The worst leaders may be both competent and effective; however, they are the worst leaders because they have gone in the wrong direction (Kretzschmar 2007, 20). If the future is one of

[20]The order of loves is an important discussion in Christian history. Augustine's order, which influences me, of love God, neighbor, self, and world, is a fine example of appropriate orders of love. See O'Donovan (2013) for further consideration of Augustine and the order of loves (93). There becomes further delineation of order of neighbor, as well.

[21]O'Donovan (2014) writes, "Cooperation itself is a goal, which explains how we find satisfaction in cooperating even with those whose immediate goals are different from our own. Individual freedom shrinks if it lacks the capacity to imagine itself as part of a wider common agency. It must look for the Kingdom of God" (60).

resurrection, then leadership without love, without seeking the best of community and engaging with followers with this in mind, is either misguided and needs to be corrected; wrong and needs to be corrected; or manipulative and will be found out.

But as soon as I write that leadership is about love, I hurry to urge that this does not degenerate into some kind of quippy slogan without content.[22] One of the most prominent leaders of the Methodist movement was the Anglican Priest John Wesley (1703–1791). Wesley, known for this theology of love, often arguing that love could be made complete in human beings in this life so that they may be always motivated by love, was intent not to divorce theology from ethics, as we worried about earlier. Wesley writes that love is "all the commandments in one" (Wesley 1733).

Wesley was not unique in this description of love and the commandments, but also followed the Apostle Paul, who wrote that all the commandments are summed up in the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9). Elsewhere Paul will write that the law, all the commandments, are *fulfilled* in the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:14) O'Donovan (2014) points out the joining of two images here: a mathematical one and an historical one: love is the sum of the law and the end, the point to which the law progresses (199–200).

This matters for leadership because these are pictures—summing up and the end of a story—that don't lend themselves to oversimplification. Leadership does not *boil down* to love. It is not *reduced* to love. No, leadership *aims* at love; all of it put together is love. Let me try an illustration. When my wife makes a sauce, it involves *boiling*. Into the pot go tomatoes or apples and the combination of heat, liquid, and time refashions the fruit into another (delicious) form. We cannot *boil* leadership down like we reduce ingredients in a sauce. To do so is to oversimplify leadership. Leadership is not reduced, it is added to; it keeps its aim as love. A resurrection eschatology is formed by the resurrection of Jesus who is raised from the dead and vindicated in love by God. In other words, while we can simplify the aim of leadership as love, we ought not to think knowledge of love is simple. The very ethical questions we started this section with reveal its complexity. Yet complexity does not excuse us from thinking, practicing, and aiming at love—so that our leadership is summed up in love.

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[22] The next three paragraphs are developed from a blog I wrote and previously published here (Perry 2015).

Ethical leadership as love does reject the self or deny the self. Love does not simply serve the other as their leader, but calls the best from the follower—and not only for their own sake, but for the sake of the mission or community. We do not simply lead to serve others, but we lead so that others may lead well—becoming what they ought to be. We saw in the chapter on creation that leadership includes drawing others up into leadership and likewise leading others in love means drawing them into their full agency of leadership for the sake of the community.[23]

We see the connection between faith and love in these terms of agency: just as faith founds my sense of agency and affirms that leadership matters, so does love orient me to the other person as one whose agency is real and whose leadership matters. Ethical leadership is thus a leadership that is relationally connected but differentiated. The leader is distinct from other persons, not for the leader's own validation, but for the enablement of the other becoming their best.[24] Love differentiates without ostracizing. The opposite of love, what we might call sin, removes the tension of differentiation in leadership: The leader becomes one who dominates the follower or who simply gives oneself to the follower's whims and wishes.[25]

Here we might look once again to Jesus, who embodies this kind of love through differentiation. Jesus is subject neither to the wishes and whims of the crowd upon his triumphal entry at Jerusalem, nor to the

[23]O'Donovan (2017) writes, "Love is not 'self-forgetfulness,' as was cried up by the moralists of a century ago, for self-recollection is indispensable to agency, and so to self-restraint, too. But together with our agency we may hold in view the coagency of those who live and act alongside us, and as we learn to recognize the role our acts may have in cooperating with theirs, we find our occasions of action situated within the wider scope of a common action. To act that another may act well: that is to seek an end which carries the assurance of God's Kingdom within it" (5).

[24]In the 1990 edition of *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge has a fascinating line on love: love is committing oneself to "another's completion, to another being all that she or he can *and wants to* be" (285, italics mine). Yet I simply *cannot* find this line in the 2006 edition. If a keen-eyed reader has found it, I would be delighted to hear from you. I am trying to use something close to Senge's language and concept of love, but without getting rid of the community. Community is a gift of God before it is an agreement of humans. Humans that agree to join up to help one another achieve their own desires as individuals are not strictly in a community. Community presupposes something beyond the convenience of others; a purpose for the community that comes from without, not strictly from within.

[25]Migliore's (2014) reflection on sin easily translates into dynamics of leadership: "sin… takes the form of domination and servility, self-exaltation and self-destruction" (156).

mob's tyranny in their demand for his life. He is not undone as a leader by the pressures of either. Instead, he exhibits perfect love through the final actions of his life, displaying power by leaving the city and refusing to display power when it could not be done as an act of love. Ethical leaders are bound to their communities because of love, but their leadership is neither confirmed by the crowd's adulation nor condemned by the mob's tyranny.

Let me complicate matters just a bit more because it speaks to the complexity of ethical leadership: Leaders do well to remember the gift of community so that leaders are not subject to their own desires and impulses, whims and wishes. The community is a gift of accountability, given in love in the good creation. Ethical leadership is a leadership of love—an orientation to seeing the other flourish without assuming that knowledge of that flourishing can be reduced and oversimplified; it is also an acceptance of the gift of community as one that potentially changes and chastens the leader's own goals and drives.

Just as the future is murky though affirmed by faith, so can relationships be murky, though oriented in love. Even in this murkiness, sometimes we know ethical leadership when we see it; we sense ethical leadership that is aiming at love even when we disagree with the actions being taken and, as such, can at least affirm aspects of the actions. But this side of the established and coming future, acts of love remain gestures to what is coming. Because our orientation is based in love, we can interpret these "self-giving actions not so much as examples of individual human moral choices, but as signposts toward God's coming new world, known to us by revelation and promise" (Rutledge 2015, 357). Our leadership, founded on faith, centered and oriented in love, is able to recognize these signposts, and also remain hopeful in them, the final aspect of ethical leadership.

Hope and Ethical Leadership

All leadership is a kind of hope—a movement toward what is not certain, but that one day may be reality. If faith is our footing and love is our orientation to the community, hope is the leader's posture to the future. Hope is the leader's attitude—a positive disposition—at this point in time to the reality of a time that is coming.

I should distinguish at this point between two kinds of coming reality. Eschatology is about that reality that we believe will be coming regardless of our actions. It is the future that will not be denied.

Yet between now and then are contingent futures—futures that may or may not be, depending on our actions. Our hope for the unstoppable future gives hope for the contingent future that we believe honors the oncoming future.

Leadership necessarily hopes because leadership is oriented to the future—the future reality of a project, a person's character, or whatever else is the aim of the leader. Yet a theology of resurrection does not leave hope as something neutral; it is a *necessity*. Hope is not optional; it is the mark of resurrection theology within the leader. This hope is a posture to the future, not an emotion or disposition. Right at the start of the book, I said that I wanted theology to get leaders up in the morning. We might not *feel* hopeful but we can *exhibit* hope as leaders by pursuing projects from the footing of faith and the orientation of love.

Hope is that which strikes deeply in the leader to work toward the reality that ought to be. German theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1993) says that "[t]hose who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it" (21). Hope is the affirmation that the dissatisfaction, even righteous anger, that we have in present is not permanent. A hope in a kind of future creates an ethical imperative to move in that direction—even if only in symbolic and limited ways.

When leaders allow hope to well up within them, they sense the drive of hope and the misery of hope. Hope can lead to misery because a pursued future means that the leader can never remain comfortable in the present. So, Moltmann finishes the quote above with these words: "Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present" (21). Yet hope can also lead to a healthy creative drive. Founded on faith, hope pushes us over the brink, beyond fear, drawing leaders into risk.[26] A future is going to emerge—we might as well risk forming it because our hope might actually yield the results leaders think are right and just.

A selfish hope is not a hope oriented toward the community with love. A vision for the good of community doesn't simply see community in the present, but the community that is emerging, even while tied to the present community. Leaders are in community not only with present community, but also the community of the emerging future.

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[26]Moltmann (1993) says that creative action springs from hope (35).

Hope postures leaders toward the future, illuminating from the present the future that is emerging and driving the leader toward it.[27]

Yet, as we saw above with love, hope does not exclude the self. Faith assumes the self's agency; love does not deny the self's value, but invites the values of other selves; and hope does not exclude the self from that which is hoped for. The bounty of hope is that it neither *stops* at the self and that it may *include* the self.[28] It may include the self because hope points beyond itself. Even though Paul affirmed that hope *remains*, he said that it is surpassed by love. Hope may include the self because it looks beyond hope itself to love—community, the flourishing of people together, where one's blessing feeds into the other's blessings, as well.[29]

Thus, Christians point out those who have had an orientation to the future—people of hope—as leaders. Consider Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century. Athanasius championed the belief that the God's Word (the Logos), the Son of God, is divine and not created.

[27] Remember that this discussion of hope is in the context of eschatology, specifically a resurrection eschatology. Moltmann writes, "Theological concepts do not give a fixed form to reality, but they are expanded by hope and anticipate future being. They do not limp after reality and gaze on it…but they illuminate reality by displaying its future. Their knowledge is grounded not in the will to dominate, but in love to the future of things" (36).

[28] Mendonca and Kanungo (2007) argue extensively for a kind of altruism in ethical leadership (see especially Chapter 4). Ciulla (2005) points out various weaknesses of altruism, including how it may lead to harm, not lead to a greater amount of happiness, and could be construed to cause violence. Mendonca and Kanungo's discussion avoids simplistic uses of altruism, where the concern for the other's well-being is always in place. Mendonca draw a distinction between what they call mutual altruism where the benefit for the other (altruism) is combined with helping the self (mutual altruism) or at cost to the self (moral altruism) (24). An altruism that seeks the benefit of the other may still be an altruism that comes at benefit to me or at less cost. For example, suppose my wife wants a sweater. The same sweater is available at Good Clothing Store for $50 and it is on sale at Better Clothing Store for $30. Is my action more altruistic if I have a greater cost? Suppose my wife's happiness at receiving the sweater is increased by my saving of $20 because she takes joy in a bargain. Would my action be *more* altruistic with the greater cost even if it brought about less benefit to my wife? Or, perhaps I find Best Clothing Store, which matches competitor's pricing *and* has a buy one sweater, get another sweater free sale. So, I purchase myself a sweater for $30 and get the same $30 sweater for my wife. In this case, her gift had no cost to me, yet might bring her even more happiness because it is the best deal of all. Likewise for hope: we can pursue situations that maximize the benefit for others without undo cost to ourselves without in any way limiting the benefit others would experience if our hope comes to be.

[29] So, O'Donovan (2017) concludes his ethics as theology series with love. He writes, "An Ethics concluded in hope would be apophatic, gesturing towards a goal of which it could not speak" (3).

Arius, Athanasius' chief opponent, had contended that the Logos was created. For Athanasius, this was not theological minutiae, but the heart of Jesus' true reign in the world. A contemporary summary of one of Athanasius' famous sayings captures the high stakes of the nature of Jesus: "The Son of God became human so that humans might become God." If Jesus is anything less than God, believed Athanasius, then the destiny of human beings is drastically changed. And for this leadership, Athanasius was exiled *five times*. Is leadership determined by the leader's own perspective? No. That perspective is much too short. Hope extends perspective.

A resurrection eschatology of hope also affirms the leadership of those who saw fit to become martyrs. Those who were intent on being effective are still affirmed precisely as leaders when they saw a time that they could no longer produce an effect faithfully, and so gave their lives. One of the earliest martyrs of the Christian faith was St. Polycarp (69–c. 156).[30] Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna. This means he was the overseer of a religious territory located in modern day Turkey. As a leader in the early church, of course, Polycarp cared about being effective. We can draw one example of his leadership influence from Irenaeus (c. 115 or c. 130–c. 202), who would come to be a bishop in what is now Lyon, France. Irenaeus learned the tradition of the faith from Polycarp and committed it to memory, observing not only his teaching, but life and conduct, as well (Bauckham 2006, 281, 295). As a bishop, Polycarp was intent not just on teaching the faith, but on teaching *in a memorable way*. Of course, learning in the ancient world was deeply connected to memorization and so Polycarp's and Irenaeus' learning are conditioned for memory, but it bears noting that Polycarp was effective in his culture. Yet in spite of being effective and rising in leadership role, Polycarp was also willing to give his life, refusing to surrender his faith even in old age.

Notice that hope is not limited merely to something beyond, but quickly hits our practical reason of leadership. If leadership is meaningful and we are oriented to the future by hope, then, of course, we should aim to be effective leaders! We should hope and work so that our present efforts yield desired results. Hope sustains our efforts; it does not necessarily defer effectiveness. The very fact that we honor those who would give up power when it could not be used faithfully is evidence that

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[30]The dating of Polycarp's death is disputed, with Eusebius differing from other ancient sources.

we should use power to be effective when it can be used faithfully. We should care about results, outcomes, accomplishments, and effectiveness. But we should also expand our perspective. The results of our leadership may not be ours to see; they may come in ways that we cannot tell and at times we do not live to see. Athanasius and Polycarp surely couldn't foresee being ongoing leaders in various traditions of the Christian faith almost 2000 years after their deaths, but yet they continue to influence in thought and deed.

Notice how Christian eschatology both *rejects* pragmatism and *affirms* effectiveness! There is a good future, so of course being effective matters! And the future is *good*, so of course how you go about leading in the present matters.

Finally, hope affirms humility. The willingness of leaders to die and be exiled reveals a humility that is hard to comprehend. That kind of leader is the one who sees himself as nonessential. That the future they anticipate ultimately will not be brought through their efforts. Hope places confidence beyond the leader's own skills and power.

Hope is not in the leader, but in God. We can say it like this: resurrection depends on God. While Christ merits his resurrection—it was the affirmation of justice in the life of one killed unjustly—we do not merit our own. We participate in the future by leading in the present by God's grace. "The resurrection of Jesus from the dead authorizes hope, validates promise, points to the future of God's kingdom. That does not mean it sets a trend which history will always thereafter follow…. [F]uture history is not a joined-up narrative, and the revelation of the kingdom is not the culmination of a process we can hustle along its way" (O'Donovan 2014, 161).[31]

Hope keeps leaders ethical because it keeps leaders limited. Because the future leaders *can* bring is qualitatively different than the future leaders *long* to bring, leaders will be chastened in their means of obtaining certain futures.[32] Resurrection opens up my faith and strengthens my faith that

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[31] "The church anticipates and serves the coming reign of God but does not fully realize it" (Migliore 2014, 263).

[32] "[I]n the struggle for justice, equality, and human rights, Christians will always insist on 'more'—on a different, greater future than what is ever achievable by human effort and ingenuity, a hope beyond hope. Utopian hope finds in humanity itself the resources and capacities to remove all suffering, established universal justice, and complete history. A Christian theology of hope, by contrast, knows that the fulfillment we seek is an incalculable gift of God" (Migliore 2014, 359).

there is a real future—a future in which we may participate and even work to bring about through leadership!—but that I will ultimately inherit.

This final distinction between the future I can work toward and the future that is coming without my work is the difference between eschatology and apocalyptic.[33] Eschatology forms the aim and action of leadership; apocalyptic points to what God and God alone can do "to defeat the powers of sin and death in the world and to bring God's purposes to completion not only for select individuals but for all people and the entire cosmos" (Migliore 2014, 351). The apocalyptic work of God was started in the ministry of Jesus, his death, and resurrection, and it will be finalized in God's kingdom coming at Jesus' return. Leaders participate in that future, but never by forcing it or bringing it. Our accomplishments are validated, surpassed, and then perfected in God's final work.

Conclusion

Leaders need guts. Leaders need courage. Standing face to face with people who mocked his hope and jeered his impending death, Jesus was not shaken. Why? Because of his eschatology.

I conclude with a more recent example, an example of hope springing from and to a leader's eschatology. I earlier mentioned Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor from Germany who was arrested and confined to a concentration camp and eventually executed. Yet in spite of the end of his life, Bonhoeffer continued to write. During his time in prison, letters were smuggled from Bonhoeffer to students and friends. After his death, some were published under the title *Letters and Papers from Prison*. His words here point to the life of leadership formed by his eschatology:

> Certainly, there is a stupid, cowardly optimism that must be frowned upon.
> But no one ought to despise optimism as the will for the future, however
> many times it is mistaken. It is the health of life that the ill dare not infect.
> There are people who think it frivolous and Christians who think it impious to hope for a better future on earth and to prepare for it. They believe
> in chaos, disorder, and catastrophe, perceiving it in what is happening

[33] I am leaning on Rutledge (2015) here: "The words 'eschatology' and 'apocalyptic,' though future-oriented, are not interchangeable. The key apocalyptic idea...is *the sovereign intervention of God*, with a corresponding displacement of the capacity of human beings to bring that intervention about" (222).

now. They withdraw in resignation or pious flight from the world, from the responsibility for ongoing life, for building anew, for the coming generations. It may be that the day of judgment will dawn tomorrow; only then and no earlier will we readily lay down our work for a better future. (Bonhoeffer 2015, 18)

So, what eschatology is your leadership revealing? What hope do you have for a future? How is love forming the route you're taking? Does your eschatology cause you to be reinvested in a person, process, or plan? Does it allow you to move along in hope that the future that ought to come to be will come to be even if you are not able to bring it in the moment? In the blend of humility and responsibility that eschatology forms, continue to work until the day when all work will be revealed for its worth.

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Culture: Contexts of Ethical Leadership

Introduction

I was trapped. Not literally and I don't mean to make light of actual injustice, but it was still a rather uncomfortable situation. As an intern, I had been assigned some kind of research project—no doubt an essential part of an essential project so essential that only an *intern* could get the job done—and subsequently found myself in a cramped, forgotten room of my workplace looking through cassette tapes (cassette tapes!) for a specific leadership teaching. Like I said, essential.

But into that little, forgotten room popped a good-natured talkative fellow simply looking for conversation. Harried as I was by the importance of my mission, I knew I had no time to waste on chitchat. I tried to remove myself politely, but my interlocutor was having none of it. In fact, he heightened the stakes. He was, in the unforgettable and stunningly clear vocabulary of Jerry Seinfeld, "a bit of a close-talker." I was nose to nose with a conversationalist, unable to excuse myself. I could feel his breath. Like I said, trapped.

This kind of distance—a too-close-for-comfortable-conversation-distance—opens ways for us to think about culture and leadership. To get there, let's start with another breathing story. John 20:19–23 describes Jesus appearing to his disciples, though the doors are locked, after his resurrection. (Apparently resurrection bodies aren't denied by locked doors.) Upon appearing to his disciples and pronouncing "Peace!" over

them, Jesus sends his disciples out. Not just out of the room, but of the city and away from their nation! In the book of Acts, Jesus describes what this sending means: his followers will be his witnesses (the Greek word is the word *martys*, which would lead to the English word *martyr*) and they will go to Jerusalem, the regions of Judea and Samaria, and then beyond their regions into the whole world (Acts 1:8).

But this sending will be preceded by a truly essential event. Acts 2 describes the event vividly as Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, where the universality of the story of Jesus is symbolized by the fact that devout Jews from many nations (Acts 2:5) hear and understand preaching in their own languages. John describes the event in a much different way—perhaps going into some details that would have otherwise been lost. Before Jesus sends out the disciples in John 20, he *breathes* on them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

The act of breathing the Holy Spirit would remind John's readers of Genesis 2, where God breathed into the man the breath/spirit of life (Gen. 2:7). (It is not just the human beings who have the breath of life, but animals, as well [Gen. 7:15].) In breathing on the disciples, Jesus is empowering them and remaking them with his Spirit, just as at Pentecost the Holy Spirit of God comes in power. The witness of Jesus was for all cultures and was empowered by the breath of Jesus. The news that Jesus is for all cultures and the power to witness him are both accomplished by the Holy Spirit, the breath of Jesus. The breath of Jesus, the Spirit of God, reminds us that "God is not only *over* us and *for* us but also at work *in* us and in all creation" (Migliore 2014, 232).

Have you ever stopped to think about your breathing? Possibly not, unless there was a problem, but certainly not very often. We don't think about our breathing nearly as often as we breathe. We breathe—thank God—without thinking about it. It just happens. In a similar way, we do not always think about our culture. We move around in a culture without thinking about it, too. Just like we don't notice the air being sucked into and expelled from our lungs approximately 20 times a minute, neither do we notice the cultural air we breathe, the way of living we've grown accustomed to.

Back to my being trapped story. Feeling this conversationalist's breath was too much. I couldn't excuse myself from the chat; what was I to do? I gambled that even though the fellow had invaded *mine*, that he still had *his own* personal space. I took a risk. If he was coming into my space, I was going into his. I went in closer. It worked! He backed up, the conversation ended quickly, and I was on my way.

Without stopping breathing, I want us to pay attention to our breath. I want us to *lean in* to the cultures we inhabit, and I want us to seek to sense the breath of God in them. This is what our final chapter on ethical leadership is about: sensing the Spirit of God in our cultural air while feeling the breath of Jesus that sends leaders out, in order to form a theology of ethical leadership.

Let's recap where we've been: We started out by seeing how creation is good and ordered, so there is such a thing as ethics and that within this order human beings are called to lead. We followed this by pointing to Jesus, the Incarnate God, as the perfect revelation of God and the true model of a human being. We saw how Jesus, even in his death, is leading and that Jesus' resurrection is an affirmation that a just future is coming. Building on this foundation, we saw how our eschatology forms our leadership and how our leadership reveals our eschatology. Ethical leadership is participating in the coming future and anticipating the coming future by our signs; ethical leadership is about moving the present toward that coming future in ways that point to the future and model it now.

Here's where I'm driving in this chapter: From this theology, I want to argue that all cultures are part of the good creation and so will bear marks of order and ethics that can be discerned and affirmed. Second, it follows that a truly good and just future will impact *all* cultures—both in affirming and chastening ways, and that since no culture is already perfected that there is an invitation to lead in all cultures. Because cultures are good and have an emerging good future, leadership toward this good future is authorized in all cultures. And this kind of leadership, formed and inhabiting cultures, will still be formed by Jesus and the future marked by his resurrection. Maybe I can sum it up like this—and we'll look more in depth at this below—leaders will not be *strangers in* their cultures, but they must be *strange to* their cultures. To flesh out what this means, we will conclude the chapter by looking through Paul's formation of ethical leadership in Timothy from his letter known as 1 Timothy and the potential of ethical political leadership in the book of Revelation, both of which consider the role of the church in their real-time cultures.

Culture, the Good Creation, and the Coming Future

What is culture? Here I want to build on the ideas we started in the chapter on creation. Humans were commissioned to go into the world, bearing the image of God, extending the goodness of Eden into the

rest of creation. Humans were created to be makers. Speaking in the broadest way possible, "culture is what [humans] make of the world" (Crouch 2008, 23).

Becoming aware of our cultures is important because we are shaped by our cultures. We learn to live, think, and behave bodily through the forms of life our cultures provide. Speaking with famed sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in mind, Scharen (2015) writes that people are "shaped by a particular 'field,' by which [Bourdieu] means the concrete social context of our life" (15). This means that culture does not simply exist in its most complex forms of cities, nation-states, and bodies of literature, but also in friendships, families, neighborhoods, schools, and small organizations. So, I am using the concept to describe all contexts that are sufficiently formed to provide mutual understanding and action. I suggest reflecting for a moment on the various cultures in which you live—family, workplace, nation, etc.—and keeping these mental images in mind when we discuss leadership in culture below. The concepts become much more concrete and actionable when I think about applying leadership attitudes and actions in my family than simply in 'culture,' yet 'culture' keeps us from limiting our perspective on where leadership is needed.

I am writing this while there is no electricity in my home. It went off at some point in the night and hasn't been restored as of 8:29 a.m. Doing without electricity gives a taste of our enculturation. Frankly, I am used to steady and reliable electricity. I have raised my children to be accustomed to steady and reliable electricity. When my four-year-old son awoke to use the toilet—without needing to go outside, an aspect of culture for which I'm grateful!—he was delayed about 15 seconds simply trying to turn on the light. It was *foreign* to him not to have the light switch create an immediate, soft glow to facilitate his use of the facilities. Without the electricity, our morning routine was off—work delays, flashlights hauled out, Playdough spread out on the table to help pass the time. (Don't even get me started on how we survived breakfast.) Yet even in this disrupted state, I continue to write on my computer, enabled by a battery system that I couldn't replicate even with the help of YouTube. Culture enables our actions, often without even our basic understanding, and without aspects of our culture, life feels, well, *weird*.

But culture is not just something that we inhabit; it is something that inhabits us. "Our bodies learn the world into which we are born and we have the world within us" (Scharen 2015, 24). This dynamic of bodies

in the world and world in the body fits with the teaching of creation—as good and very good—that we explored. Human beings are not good beings who are made bad by bad cultures. Neither are cultures pristine developments except for a few bad people. Recall that the initial story of sin entering the world was mashed up in relationships. Human beings and cultures are part of the good creation that is gone wrong. People, good but marred, make cultures that are good but marred; cultures, good but marred, form people who are good but marred. We should expect this complexity from the fact that I don't really know how a car works, how my computer functions, or how my office keeps from caving in. I don't understand huge chunks of what makes up my culture—even though it forms the life that flows through my bones—yet I do know about some things and how to do some good things that contribute to the cultures of my home, my work, my extended family, and my church.

Culture is made possible by sharing. Again, if this gets a bit abstract, just put it in the context of one of your cultures. What do you share with your family? Perhaps the necessities of life, ancestry, a home, or stories from your upbringing. Without sharing, there is no culture. Or, to use another term with a bit more technical feel, cultures are formed by communication (which comes from the Latin word that means to make common). An organization without structured and intentional communication will have problems in its culture.[1]

Culture extends even, well, to the dirt we walk on. Culture is, in part, the *place* we live. "[Geographic] spaces mediat[e] a possibility for human community, community elevating dead space into the character and distinctiveness of place. A place is precisely a setting where a communication of some kind takes form" (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 2004, 304).[2] Learning to share a place and then to respect other's space in this place is vital for culture to thrive.

With all this in mind, reflect for a moment with me. When have you *not* been part of a culture? Never. We have always been wrapped up in

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[1] In popular leadership literature, Patrick Lencioni is unparalleled in his ability to describe the importance of communication in entertaining ways. Especially recommended are *Death by Meeting* (2004) and *The Advantage* (2012).

[2] Private ownership is already a kind of fiction—a very useful one—but not one that can be completely enforced. "A landowner can exclude the public from his land, but cannot... exclude his land from the public. His field is everyone else's scenery; his factory is everyone else's civic building" (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 2004, 305).

cultures of various sorts. This constant enculturation means that whether with viruses or blessings, humans share with others. And for the most part, this is good! We might even see that part of creation's goodness is that it is from the start a context of sharing. We might even say that human beings emerge from the sharing of bodies and are meant to be raised in the sharing of lives. Human life itself is meant to spring from faithful and focused sharing.

For the child who has done precisely nothing before coming into existence—in other words, all children—life is a *gift*. Likewise, when we realize that we have always been in cultures—we have always had the context of living and being given room to live—we see that culture is a *gift*. Of course, we are not delving into the obligation of gifts or the complexity of gifts and we shouldn't pretend that all parts of a culture are gifts, but culture as a gift helps us to see that culture, as it is meant to be, is good.

And gifts are not meant to be held dispassionately. I don't give my children gifts for them to sit and ponder the mysteries of the gift. *Some* analysis is good and can enhance the meaning of the gift, but gifts are meant to be used, enjoyed, shared, and played with! Likewise, culture is not something simply to be analyzed, but to be enjoyed. And when good culture is truly shared, we see the blessing of community: "God's gift is not society to be observed, but community in which to participate" (O'Donovan 2014, 62).

I hope it is clear that when we see culture as gift we can see culture as part of God's good creation. Because culture started with God and God's sharing, all cultures are part of the good creation and so will bear marks of its order and ethics. In a theological framework, we have already illustrated this truth: Jesus' witnesses would spread out from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth, making "all places…equally consecrated as places of worship" (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 2004, 302). All places are to be told about Jesus to be reminded of their sanctity and participation in the work of God.

Now I do not mean to say that all cultures are equally good or that every part of a culture is good. Some families have less unnecessary stress than others. Some wonderful companies still have ungodly power dynamics. Some cultures perform female genital mutilation. But I do mean to say that we can look for signs of the good in all complex cultures. We can find true and beautiful values in many cultures by asking what values are held, supported, and reinforced that *are worthy*

of these efforts. Where did these true values come from? What good *stuff* has been made in a culture and for a culture? And in cultures where we cannot find redeeming values, then they are the exception that proves the rule; the family home without love and sacrificial parenting is a scandal because of what home culture is meant to be.

Let's complicate cultural matters a little bit. Even the good stuff a culture produces can bring negative impacts. The computer I'm using to write and the vast amount of information it makes instantly available across the world wide web also makes possible the stealing of identity. And identity theft is not a joke, Jim. The previous sentence, a line from one of my favorite TV shows, *The Office*, shows how cultural goods like TV programs form our ways of thinking and entertain us, but can often do so with hurtful stereotypes and cheap laughs. (Although I think *The Office* handled identity theft in a pretty funny way!) Have you ever noticed how some movies and TV shows "don't play" as well after a decade or two?[3] "To the Moon, Alice!", a comedic line from *The Honeymooners* just doesn't produce laughs in the wake of revelations of domestic violence. Our cultures do not simply give us a context for action—a place to do good work of a certain kind—but they reveal our imperfections. The fact that we want to create goods that are *better* than previous generations—my "Smart TV" is way better than my previous boring-old *flat screen*—shows that our cultures have not yet arrived. (The fact that I used a "smart TV" as an illustration of a cultural good might also reflect a kind of cultural yearning, as well!)

What does this complication mean? What does it mean that our cultures—even at their best—want to be improved and increased and that our cultures reveal our shortcomings? It means that our cultures long for resurrection justice. Our families, our businesses, our entertainment systems all long for a good and just future.

In their most complex form, cultures struggle to survive, to hold on. Yet the very act of holding on means that something in the culture is dying, is changing. Just as we saw in the resurrection of Jesus—the bodily resurrection of a specific man—so do we long in resurrection: the affirmation and enlivening of that which is of God in our cultures. We want what we do to matter. We want what we are part of to count. Just as the resurrection of Jesus was not simply a kind of

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[3] I believe I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Patrick Eby and his wife Ruth for this phrase.

ongoing life of Jesus in the memory of his followers, neither do cultures have a sense of surviving strictly by memory, being passed and modified from one generation to the next. We want our cultural work to have justice and affirmation that is more robust, more solid than that.

Last chapter, I noted the concept of apocalyptic—the work of God and God alone to deal with evil. We might say that our cultures long for eschatological apocalypses: where the good of our cultures will be taken up into God and the bad of our cultures will be removed and done away with for good. This is an eschatological and apocalyptic longing because we simply cannot disentangle cultural good from cultural bad.

This apocalyptic longing does not do away with leadership. Our cultures long for leadership. families long for stability; organizations long for systems that leverage talent; companies long for healthy workplace community; cities long for effective management. Our cultures long for leadership because we sense that our cultures are marked for eternity even if the complexity of our cultures cannot be solved with human leadership.

Consider the counselor who specializes in victims of sexual abuse: Could his cultural work have sense and meaning without the devastation of rape, exploitation, and injustice? No. It is part of the cultural reality to which he belongs. God, and God alone, is able to disentangle such cultural knots. God, and God alone, is able to reveal the truth, beauty, and goodness of our work and leadership. Or, to borrow from Paul's language, God's day will reveal the quality of our work—whether precious or worthless, costly or cheap (1 Cor. 3:10–15). Our cultures long for royals who will build, prophets who will tell the truth of reality, and priests who will heal, even if nothing built will last on its own, and truth is challenged, and healing is followed by fresh wounds. An early Christian leader, Paul of Tarsus, might have said that our cultures long to be set free from the bondage that leads to decay (Romans 8:21).

This kind of longing revealed in the building, speaking, healing leadership across cultures and within even the smallest of cultures shows the width of the resurrection promise. Resurrection justice can't simply go deep; it must also go wide. We want resurrection justice to go deep—dividing the good and bad right down to the very bottom of culture. That is, there must be resurrection justice in all cultures. If the resurrection of Jesus is as comprehensive as we argued—both in terms of its fullness in the man Jesus himself and its implication for all of reality— then there are implications for *all* cultures. A justice that leaves some bad mixed in with the good is not fully justice; likewise, a justice that

leaves some cultures unattended is not fully justice. A truly just and good future impacts *all* of *every* culture.

This longing for cultural perfection and completion is captured in the biblical book of Revelation. In its description of the new heavens and new earth, John the Seer (the author of Revelation) describes the kings of the earth streaming into the city of God, bringing their splendor— their unique and glorified cultural glory (Rev. 21:23–24). The coming future anticipates a true cultural sharing—a kind of culture that neither does away with our present cultural distinctives nor overemphasizes them, bringing about factions. This kind is, finally, a divine kind of sharing and communication (O'Donovan 1999, 155).

The biblical picture of human beings as royals ought to expand just who is bringing this cultural glory. The kings of the earth, from the creation narrative, are the full scope of humankind, not just a few. Branson and Martinez (2011) write, "When we assume that social arrangements are determined by others—that structures, resources, and even imagination are beyond our influence—we have lost our vocation as humans" (36). We inherit and we form and we contribute. We are all called to be leaders, yearning to build for the future in our own cultures, facilitating the work of others to do so and to call out their best, too.

This eschatological mutuality—royalty of the earth sharing the splendor of their cultures in one city—reminds us that leadership is a neighborly kind of activity, aiming to create context for neighbors to be the best neighbor they can be. Human leadership—which, as we explored in the chapter on creation, is leadership *as* humans, *with* humans, and *of* humans—presumes a good culture, which presumes a *we* and a *potential present goodness*. Without a *we*, there is no leadership, only existence of the self. And without a present goodness to be shared with the neighbor, there is no meaningful leadership. Yet because culture is good for us, there is meaningful value, and potential both for self and neighbor to be mutually influencing each other because they are of the same kind and share the same community.

Yet while this neighborly activity begins with those closest to us, it is ever extending. When we realize that families are neighbors to families and businesses have partners, we know that nations are meant to be neighbors to nations. Cultures always have neighbors. This coming reality of neighboring—all in one city—forms how we think about cultures in the present. Our cultures are seen as good and claiming our allegiance, but we also honor the allegiance that other cultures claim.

Here's an example. Bosses know that employees can be loyal to the company and yet have families who also claim their allegiance. Families know that Dads and Moms have allegiances to work cultures that often get prime hours of the day. Churches claim allegiances of formal and informal members that ask people to give up hours of time for service in the church that would otherwise be leisure time. We learn to navigate these various cultural allegiances to survive and thrive.

But the eschatological picture of justice claiming the glory of culture cuts through the complexity. Speaking of the passage from Revelation 21:3, referenced above, Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf (1996) writes, "There is a reality that is more important than the culture to which we belong. It is God and the new world that God is creating, a world in which people from every nation and every tribe, with their cultural goods, will gather around the triune God, a world in which every tear will be wiped away and 'pain will be no more'" (50–51).

But what does this mean, culturally speaking? Does it mean that those who give allegiance to God develop a new culture? What are the implications for ethical leadership? The answer is somewhat complex, but it unfolds nicely if we go back to Jesus.

Jesus? Doesn't all this talk of culture move us beyond Jesus? It might be clear how we *start* with Jesus to move into culture, since he sent his followers to all places and it might be clear why we *end* with Jesus since the resurrection calls us forward. But why do we look to Jesus now, in the midst of considering our own cultures—removed from him by millennia and, possibly, continents?

First, we look to Jesus for ethical leadership in all cultures because all cultures are created through Jesus. I won't flesh this out again because we spent time doing so in the chapter on Jesus, but I will simply point out Paul's affirmation of this creation through Jesus, God's Son, in the letter to the Colossians: all things were created through him, whether visible or invisible, even thrones, rulers, and authorities (Colossians 1:16). We must remember that this was not a kind of cosmic Jesus, an idea or principle, but the same one who was crucified: in Christ, all humanity achieves unity because they are made through him and for him and this is the same Christ who was falsely put to death (Volf 1996, 47). Jesus inhabits not just the story of Israel, but the story of the creation in his crucifixion.

Second, we look to Jesus for ethical leadership in all cultures because he is the firstborn from among the dead (Colossians 1:18)—the one whom God vindicated by his resurrection from the dead, the very

same resurrection in which we seek to participate (Philippians 3:8–10). Missiologist Andrew Walls describes it like this: "Each culture has its ultimate, and Christ is the ultimate in everyone's vocabulary" (Andrew Walls, quoted in Raschke 2008, 74).

So, ethical leadership can be present in all cultures because they are part of good creation and ethical leadership is authorized in all cultures because they will all be transformed—what is good will be perfected and what it is not will be removed—by God in the coming future. These two affirmations suggest that Jesus remains the model for ethical leadership in all cultures. Where we get to, we must keep him in mind.

Jesus remains the model of ethical leadership because of his allegiance to God in the midst of culture. Like all leaders, Jesus was embedded in culture. He knew the complications of being allied with multiple cultures, yet his leadership was marked by allegiance to God.[4] As we saw in our chapter on Jesus, the cross was Jesus' faithfulness to God's mission that left him alienated from his people. Jesus entrusted himself completely to God and was vindicated by God rather than his culture(s). Leadership remains ethical leadership when it is in service to God, in pursuit of God's coming future.

Pursuit of God's coming future always involves a tension with our cultures because what will be is not what is yet. Recall that our cultures long for leadership, yet they also react against leadership because leadership necessitates change, work, disequilibrium. Leadership is a challenge to the good already present in cultures, a signal to a coming future that is good, but *strange*. Jesus was at home in his culture(s)—he was born into a culture like every child—yet he was strange to them because of his allegiance to God.

Why does this make Jesus an example for ethical leadership across all cultures? Because ethical leaders will need to embody the same tension: ethical leaders will need to exhibit allegiance to God before any other cultural reality.

But what does this mean? Miroslav Volf (1996) points a way forward. In his dense exploration of identity and culture, Volf explores the classic biblical story of God's call to Abram to leave his own culture and to go to another (Genesis 12:1). We "leave" cultures, but we cannot completely "depart" from them (Volf 1996, 38–50). As I described above, we

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[4] See, e.g., Mark 3:20–35 and Luke 2:41–52.

can *leave* our cultures—we can quit a job, move out of a house, change countries—but we can never completely depart cultures because *we carry our culture within us*. Wherever we go, we take culture with us. In fact, we take *multiple* cultures. Yet leaders do not simply accept the cultures they inherit. Because cultures crave leadership, they long for resurrection and ethical leaders cannot abide this longing without acting. Leaders are compelled to act, as we saw last chapter, by their hope.

Thus, leaders inhabit this kind of tension. An allegiance to God creates tension with other allegiances.[5] To put it in leadership framework, a pursuit of the future involves a tension with the present.[6] Ethical leadership will be properly oriented and an orientation to the future means that leaders will be *strange to* cultures but not *strangers in* cultures. That is, ethical leaders, being marked by Jesus, participate in and model for cultures a coming future that is different from the present culture, while their actions are still embedded in their cultures.

So, Jesus remains necessary to consider ethical leadership in all cultures because of his model of strangeness but not a stranger, but also because Jesus does more than call us to align with God. Jesus does not simply call us to allegiance with God; Jesus calls us to allegiance with *himself*. He does not simply direct others to God; he calls people to himself. If you want to be aligned with God, you must be in allegiance with Jesus.[7]

We can now answer the question posed a few paragraphs above: What does it mean that there is a culture that is more important than my own? Does it mean that those who give allegiance to God develop a new culture? What are the implications for ethical leadership? Let's start with the middle question, before going to implications for ethical leadership:

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[5] Ramachandra ([2008](#)) writes, "But every personal religious conversion implies also a reorientation of political loyalties" (63). We will explore this more fully below under the church.

[6] While I am keeping this in the framework of Jesus, I am leaning explicitly on Volf's ([1996](#)) differentiation. He writes, "The children of Abraham are not strangers pure and simple, however. Their 'strangeness' results not from the negative act of cutting all ties, but from the positive act of giving allegiance to God and God's promises future" (53).

[7] Space precludes a full unpacking of this theology, but a start might be to see the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son in Matthew 11, followed up with Jesus' promise of rest for the weary (Matthew 11:28–30), which is reminiscent of Isaiah 40:29–31 and the work of God.

Does allegiance with Jesus mean being part of a new culture? Yes, but don't rush to conclusions too quickly.

So, yes, allegiance to Jesus means being part of a new culture. Recall some of the ways we described culture: what we make of the world, sharing, a place, a gift, a context of living. Allegiance with Jesus resulted in various crafts (including written letters and gospels and oral poems, songs, and stories), kinds of sharing (including meals and money), places of meeting (homes), and rules for living in relationship. The New Testament is a collection of writings the early church used and distributed to various locations and read publicly in worship gatherings in homes. This *culture* was defined as being the 'church.' It's easy to hear the word church in a spiritual context or perhaps as a physical structure where religious services are held, but in the context of the earliest Christians, it simply meant public assembly, specifically meaning the governing bodies of Greek cities which were open to the public's males (Ruden 2010, 77–78). The church of Jesus, however, was a kind of assembly for those in allegiance to Jesus—whether male or female, Greek or without earthly citizenship, free person or slave.

But remember that we started our reflections on culture with Jesus' *sending* his people into all of the world and with the story of Pentecost where people from many cultures heard and understood the preaching of Jesus in their own languages. So, whatever culture an allegiance to Jesus makes, it does not create a culture that denies or completely destroys other cultures. So, what is the Christian culture like when placed against other cultures?[8] Against my initial "Yes" answer to the question that allegiance to Jesus makes a culture and means being part of a new culture, let's remember that everyone who comes to Jesus is already part of several cultures that they *cannot* completely depart from because cultures are in our bones, *nor should they* completely depart because cultures bear

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[8] Space precludes a considerable discussion of this topic now, but I suggest the following to get a sense of what some mean by culture and how Christians engage with it. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (2008), Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (1989), James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (2009). The preceding is quite limited—and limited culturally in that I haven't explored multiple cultures. Because "culture" is better understood as "cultures," then you will want to be sensitive to your own cultures and others to get a varied sense of how different cultures understand the dynamic between culture and Christian faith in their culture.

marks of ethics and order. Obviously this gets very complicated, very quickly because deciding exactly what counts as good and bad in culture is never simple.[9] Cultures are complicated gifts.

So far I've said that allegiance to Jesus makes its own culture in the church *and* that this culture of the church is made up of people who bring their own cultures that are part of God's good creation. Let me try to clarify this tension and maybe even ease it a little bit. Theologian Carl Raschke (2008) says that "Christianity has no culture itself but belongs to all cultures" (66). While I don't agree with the first part of the sentence, I agree with the second. Here we can answer the question posed above: What is the Christian culture like when placed against other cultures? Allegiance to Jesus produces a kind of culture that can make its way into every culture. Culture formed by allegiance to Jesus is like a yeast that works its way through the dough of all other cultures to make other cultures what they are meant to be.[10]

The church, the Christian culture, is therefore an *eschatological sign*.[11] Every local church is a sign to all the cultures it connects to and in which it is placed, pointing out what is good, what is bad, and supporting what is incomplete but will be perfected in the coming future. This kind of role can be seen in an example from the Old Testament in the tribe of Levi. The Levites, descendants of Levi who was Jacob's third son, were set aside to work on behalf of God (Deuteronomy 10:8). The tribe of Levi received no inherited land on which to live, whereas the other tribes of Israel did. Instead, the Levites lived in various cities and were supported by others in their locations for the religious work they did (Joshua 13:14; Deuteronomy 18:1–8). The Levites were a culture to themselves spread into the culture of Israel. Likewise, the church is an eschatological sign of the future Kingdom of God: challenging its time and place. The local church is that culture that is working within other cultures, not strictly unto itself, toward a good future that is coming; it is being in front of a world that is passing away and being perfected, not in the sense of rejecting other cultures, but anticipating their full renewal.

[9]For a very helpful discussion of religious faith and culture that pushes beyond the sketch I can offer here, see Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (2007), especially Chapter 8, "Ecclesiology: Followers of Jesus in Islamic Mosques."

[10]To put this in ecclesiological language—the language of the church: "[M]odels of the church must not be dictated by cultural reality, but they must be voiced and practiced in ways that take careful account of the particular time and circumstance into which God's people are called" (Brueggemann 1991, 128).

[11]Oliver O'Donovan uses the phrase "eschatological sign" of the tribe of Levi (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 2004, 309), which I will develop below.

The Christian culture is both distinct from and related to every culture in which it finds itself. Allegiance to Jesus is both nonnegotiable *and* flexible, grasping the *good* of every culture it encounters, rejecting the *bad* of every culture, and building up the incomplete.[12] See how this follows from our previous chapters? The goodness of creation affirms all cultures, the resurrection of Jesus impacts all cultures, all cultures have eschatological longings. The church—those with allegiance to God, united one to another in this new culture—is given to the world to help draw it into this story.[13] The church is meant to be a gift to the world, because it is "[f]ounded on God's disclosure of himself to mankind," and the church is therefore "committed to a comprehensive account of, and pursuit of, the human good, not just on its own behalf, but on behalf of the human race as a whole" (O'Donovan 2007, 181). And yet the grandness of this vision cannot overwhelm the necessities of life, sharing in food, in story, and bearing one another's pains in life, and celebrating one another's joys.[14]

So, an ethical leadership is a leadership that has its ethics remade by Jesus, in line with the future Jesus is bringing, affirming the goodness

[12] "To talk of the provisionality of the church, therefore, does not suggest that its faith is relativistic, but rather that its faith is large enough to be made relevant to any time and place" (Britton 2009, 100). Britton goes on to describe the importance of asking questions. One of the best roles that allegiance to God can take is asking gentle, but informed questions of cultures. Leadership involves asking questions, not from ignorance, but in humility, seeking the others answer genuinely, but critically. I quickly follow up with an affirmation of Christian leadership: The "significance of Christian leadership is that it contains enough truth to make it relevant in any context and yet enough flexibility to use the inherent truths to build upon any context" (Huizing 2011, 69).

[13] Beeley (2009) points out how the church can make sense of its more explicitly religious and saving work: "The divine economy includes all of God's dealings with creation, including the world of creation, redemption, and consummation. It is not, therefore, merely an economy of salvation, even if our present condition requires salvation in order to experience the fullness of our creation and final knowledge of God" (Beeley 2009, 20, n. 19). The liturgy of the church is meant to orient the church to God in order to see the world and God's work in the world rightly in that local church's place: "True theological leadership…involves a disciplined and thoughtful reflectivity about how we are to minister God's word and sacraments in the unique particularities of each time and place" (Beeley and Britton 2009, 7).

[14] This is why the local church is so important, because it gives real people outside our limited and immediate culture(s), like family and work, to serve and by whom to be served in what Scharen (2015) calls the "daily realities of the actual church in the real world in all its beauty and brokenness" (14).

and potential of all cultures—the contexts of our leadership. That's a mouth full. But in order to keep it from being too abstract, I'll ask a few simple questions: What does your family need that is good? What does your town or city call out for that is coming in the good future? What is the potential of your workplace for a good that will last? If you are a follower of Jesus, then what is the life of your local church missing? Do not ignore the cultures in which you live and carry in your body; ethical leadership is investing and enhancing the wider cultural economies of all that God is doing by caring for the sick, launching a new product, creating a home, making meals, selling vehicles affordably, building fair business, tweaking systems to enhance productivity, being honest and courageous in meetings, and maybe even taking a break from Twitter.

People who do that are leaders. And they intrigue their cultures. This is what I mean by *strange* but not *strangers*. Ethical leadership is being at home in our cultures, but answering the call of the future that sees all cultures perfected.[15]

To wrap things up and give some more pointed instructions for ethical leadership, I want to show you how two early church writings did just what I tried to describe—take the good of their cultures, consider it in light of Jesus, and give instructions to their leaders.

Cultural Goods Affirmed and Applied for Ethical Leadership[16]

1 Timothy and Church Leadership in Ephesus

The first example I want to give is a letter to a pastor that is now known as "1 Timothy."[17] There are debates about who wrote the letter, but for our purposes I will still refer to the author as Paul.[18] The letter was

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[15] Volf (1996) writes, "But the solution for being a stranger in a wrong way is not full naturalization, but being a stranger in the right way" (39–40).

[16] The following material on 1 Timothy is taken from my dissertation, available online at https://search.proquest.com/docview/1757729770.

[17] Unless otherwise noted, all references in this section are to 1 Timothy.

[18] Some scholarship over the last two hundred years, following New Testament scholar F.C. Baur, has emphasized that 1 Timothy was not written by Paul, as traditionally believed, and instead was a second-century forgery, pointing to a change in vocabulary and

written to Timothy (1:1) who was pastoring the church in Ephesus (1:3), concerning the proper maintenance of congregational life, putting the right people in leadership positions, fighting false teaching, and maintaining good conscience (Marshall 2005), to protect the church's public witness (Downs 2011) and to provide stability to this congregation (Witherington 2006).

Paul's letter addresses issues into the nitty gritty of various cultures. He is concerned with clothing, money, drunkenness, and violence as reflections of important values that help to keep the church from "settl[ing] into the world" (de Villiers 2006, 358). Paul is concerned that this culture of the church will maintain its distinction for the service of the wider culture—for whom he considers the church a teacher (2:1–7). As Timothy is faced with these challenges in Ephesus, Paul's letter is an instruction to Timothy, his leadership, the leadership of the church ("deacons" and "overseers") and the life of the church (Hoehl 2011), with implications for the whole life, not just a narrow sliver (Johnson 2001). So, Paul is concerned with the church culture and is writing in the wider Graeco-Roman culture, and has an interest in stability of the church in the culture of Ephesus. You can sense the blending of cultures already at work in leadership development!

Let's start by seeing Paul's instructions to three kinds of leadership in the church

1. Paul gives instructions to the overseers of the church (3:1–7).[19] The qualifications for the overseer read more like character requirements than performance descriptions (Horrell 1997; Witherington 2006) and include being temperate, self-controlled, respectable,

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style and the developed church organization, among other reasons. Others have suggested that Paul's use of a secretary, the function of a co-sender, and the presence of non-Pauline quotations in Paul's letters may all change this perspective (Ellis 1993). I.H. Marshall (2005) noted, although did not argue, that a colleague of Paul's, shortly after Paul's death, could have been the author of these letters, carrying on the teaching of Paul faithfully. Regardless of author, the message of 1 Timothy may be examined for the purposes of extending the nature of ethical leadership.

[19]Overseer is also translated bishop, elder, supervisor, superintendent, and administrator (Fitzmeyer 2004; Johnson 2001; Wall and Steele 2012).

hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, nonviolent, gentle, peaceful, and not a lover of money.[20]

2. Paul gives instructions to the deacons (3:8–13).[21] Deacons are to be temperate, respectable, sincere, neither drunkards nor gossips, honest in financial dealings, and capable of managing their family. They must hold to the truth they have received, even through testing.[22] The close connection between these leaders, shaped as they are with ethical imperatives and capabilities, shows that character to a person (Young 1994) and cooperation as a team will be important (Wall and Steele 2012).

3. Paul gives final instructions to Timothy that he would be a good minister (*kalos diakonos*) (4:16), the spiritual leader of the church in Paul's place (Fitzmeyer 2004). Presumably, Timothy's own expectations for character would include those given to the deacons and overseers, as well. Yet beyond these character qualifications, Timothy was to teach what Paul taught Timothy and to continue to grow through proper instruction. For Timothy to live out his calling to lead, he would need to exhibit godliness (*eusebeia*) (4:7), including modeling for the church proper speech, manners, love, faith, and purity (4:12), while practicing

[20] I have left off the marital requirements because these requirements are not necessarily for all times and places and are for the context of the church, which I want to broaden. My own opinion is that this requirement for marriage lends to the kind of person the leader is meant to be and not a requirement for all persons at all times. For an approach to this text and the Bible as a whole, see Schenck (2016). I also want to point out that women and men had similar expectations for moral propriety in this letter (compare 2:9, 15 for women with 3:2 for men). I also want to note that the word translated "authority," when Paul disallows women having authority over a man (2:12), is used only *once* in the New Testament (Davis 2009), whereas it is used elsewhere in nonbiblical literature both contemporary with and prior to 1 Timothy. In this literature, *authenteo* had such meanings as "to domineer," "to murder," or "to commit a crime." Only through later generations after the biblical text was written "did the meaning 'to exercise authority' come to predominate" (Davis 2009, 5) the meaning of the word. It is also important to note that had Paul had ecclesial authority in mind, other words were available, such as *proestemi* (to govern or administer [Johnson 2001]; Davis 2009). Instead, Paul used a word with negative sense in the outside world.

[21] Deacon is also translated as servant (Wall and Steele 2012) and helper (Johnson 2001).

[22] Wall and Steele (2012) describe these leaders as having "moral integrity…as the complement of orthodox commitment" (109). There is a connection between their belief of the news of Jesus and their obedience to Jesus' teaching and its implications (Saarinen 2008; Stott 1998; Young 1994).

public Scripture reading, preaching, and teaching. Notice the combination of Timothy's personal virtue and public worship. Paul is teaching Timothy how to form a culture of the church, even if Paul is absent (Saarinen 2008, 83).

So, Paul has instructions for overseers, deacons, and Timothy himself. They are to protect, stabilize, and form the culture of the church. But the qualifications are not completely foreign to the readers. They are not invented simply by Paul. Paul's qualities emerge from the cultures of which he is a part.[23] First, two authors from the same time frame as Paul have similar requirements for leaders. Paul's elements of stability in family, including care of children is similar to Epictetus (c. 55–135 AD), a Greek philosopher, who also discusses the importance of marriage, children, and caring for parents positively when addressing the administrator of the city (*Discourses* 3:7). Second, Paul's qualities of temperance, self-restraint, and freedom from a love of money are affirmed by Onasander, a Greek philosopher of the first-century AD, in his instructions on the choice of military leaders. Onasander wants military leaders to be temperate, skilled in speech, of good reputation, and that their children are capable of showing respect (*The General* 1.1–17).

Paul's requirements of leaders also match people who came before him. Paul's requirement that leaders be able to manage their own homes is shared by Isocrates (c. 436–388 BC), an ancient Greek rhetorician, who wrote in the document *To Demonicus* that when listening to advice, pay attention to how the advisor has managed his own affairs (n.d., 35). Finally, Cicero (106–43 BC) in *De Officiis* noted that those in community leadership must acquire gain only by honest means and yet remain generous and of good will (Wall and Steele 2012, 105). This is similar to Paul's exhortation that leaders not be lovers of money.

Do you see what Paul did? He crafted leadership requirements that were familiar to the surrounding cultures of home and military, and applied them to the church. He took what was good in surrounding cultures and used it to develop leadership in the culture of the church. The roles of overseers and deacons were familiar in both households and to public organizations or associations. "Typically the head of such an

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[23] I direct interested readers to the various commentaries that I have referenced in this chapter for these ancient sources that follow. While I have confirmed the connections in English translations, these insights emerge from and are reaffirmed by various commentaries cited throughout this section.

organization…was also head of a family household" (Wall and Steele 2012, 102, n. 62). So, the church is headed like an organization that often had heads of homes.

Look even closer at Paul's description of this community under the overseers' and deacons' care: They are God's household, the church, the pillar and foundation of the truth, which are three descriptions with cultural implications. Household, pillar, and foundation were all connected to the pagan temples that would have been seen by Timothy and his community in the city of Ephesus (Wall and Steele 2012, 113). See what Paul is doing? Setting up a culture that is counter to aspects of the culture of the city, but ultimately for the city's good! Paul has described a church, a culture, that is strange but not a stranger to the Ephesians. He has described leaders as strange but not strangers of a community that is strange but not strangers to its wider community.

While the church is the pillar of the truth in 1 Timothy, Paul uses the phrase to describe Peter (Cephas), James, and John, as well (Galatians 2:9). Paul sees these pillars of the truth as leaders of the church and the church, as pillar and foundation of the truth, as leaders of the wider culture. Paul's leadership philosophy fits well with how human beings are to have shared leadership. Church leaders leading the church for the church to lead the wider culture for the wider culture to take its place as leaders in the world. Humans leading humans is meant for all humans to lead alongside each other under Jesus. This is why deacon is used not only of leaders, but as people doing the ministry of Jesus in reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) and of other believers (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Let's focus in on Timothy. Paul says that Timothy is to train himself for godliness (4:7), for godliness is of value to all things—note this— both things present *and things to come* (4:8). Timothy's leadership is to be marked by training for a life that is valuable to the present and marked for the future. This training for godliness is in contrast to physical training. While it is easy to take physical training simply as exercise, it likely has a connection to the Roman culture Paul is writing in. Physical training had a connection in preparing for war and the gymnasium, several of which have been excavated in Ephesus, was where wrestling, boxing, and running was practiced (Spencer 2013, 108–110). Spencer even speculates that Timothy's Greek father (Acts 16:3) may have taken Timothy to these gymnasiums as a child (110). But Timothy is not primarily to train in this way, but for godliness—"a way to live, dedicating oneself to please God in one's words and actions" (Spencer 2013, 110). It is for

God and God's hope that Timothy is to strive and labor (4:10). Strive, *agonizomai*, can also be translated as "fight" (Spencer 2013, 111)—even more reminiscent of training for military purposes! We might hear Paul as saying, "Timothy, your training in potential service to Rome is only of some value, but training for godliness is the most important. *That* is why we fight." Do you see how Timothy is meant to be strange but not a stranger in his leadership of the church for the wider culture?

Paul's instruction for ethical leadership was for the church to be a witness to its community, as a kind of temple strange compared to the other temples, but not strangers to the whole culture, and Timothy was to be a leader training for godliness, strange to those training for war, but not a stranger to the culture in which he was placed. Ethical leadership emerged from the cultures around Paul but were brought into the culture of Jesus for its effective advancement and leadership. What Paul saw as being effective from the good cultures around him was deployed for the culture of Jesus. This familiarity to the wider culture would serve to help the church tangibly express and communicate its benefit for the wider cultures.

Revelation and Political Leadership

Last section we saw how what is good from culture could be taken and given to the church for its leadership to be even more effective in its service. Ethical leadership was about taking what was good from the culture for, in 1 Timothy's example, church leadership. Paul used ancient and contemporary examples of character for leaders to form church leaders. He also encouraged Timothy's training for godliness as surpassing training for physical strength, perhaps even preparation for war.

This background helps give us similar principles at work in how Revelation critiques its wider culture for leadership, but also paints a picture of its potential good. If 1 Timothy was fairly positive about the good its culture provided for ethical leadership for the culture of the church, Revelation is more subdued in its potential for leadership outside the church, what we might call *political* leadership.[24]

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[24]The following is slightly modified from "Politics from the Underside: Christians in the Political Realm in Revelation" (2006). For more on Revelation as politics, see also Aaron Perry (2007), "On Enduring Political Authority: Comparing Oliver O'Donovan and the Book of Revelation."

A letter written to various local communities (Rev. 1:4), some of whom were suffering at the hands of unjust leaders, Revelation has been called the "most powerful piece of political resistance literature from the period of the early [Roman] Empire" (Bauckham 1993, 38). The author of Revelation, simply "John" (Rev. 1:4), encourages the recipients to be prophetic witnesses against the Roman empire, not because of persecution, but because of the Roman system of power (Bauckham 1993, 38).

John's picture of the Christian role in politics is mainly "anti-political." The judgment of the seals (6:1–8:1) reads as a progression of the human propensity to conquer. First, there is a rider who is bent on conquest. The second rider is given a large sword and he takes peace from the earth. The third rider holds scales, a picture that reflects the economic impact of war: basic necessities like wheat and barley become scarce and other commodities (oil and wine) must be protected.

The fifth seal, the martyrs, seems out of place. How does the story of conquest and war continue to unfold with the martyrs? But as we progress, the sixth seal shines back a light. The apocalyptic language in the sixth seal signals the downfall of empire and government (Caird 1966, 88–92). Looking backward, then, at the fifth seal and hearing the prayers of the martyrs for vindication, it makes sense that the sixth seal holds God's response to these prayers. God, and God alone, could address the evil leadership that the seal describes.

Now we see John's story of political leadership unfold clearly. In light of the cycle of conquest and war, the Christian prophetic witness is to condemn the vicious cycle of war and conquest, though this witness will end in the martyrdom of the church at the hands of the victorious warrior. In response to this injustice, however, God brings the downfall of the empire in the sixth seal in response to the martyrs' cry for vindication (6:10).

John reveals the prophetic role of the church in a more narrative manner in chapter 11. Here John describes the church (two lampstands in Revelation 11:4 are connected with the church as lampstands in Revelation 1:20) as two witnesses who prophesy for a period of persecution—1260 days. Their words have the power of the greatest prophets in Jewish history: they can shut up the sky like Elijah, and command water to turn to blood like Moses (11:6), but they have superseded these prophets, as they can also "strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want" (11:5–6). When the church has finished their prophetic witness, however, the beast from the Abyss attacks, overpowers, and kills them and they lie dead in the streets of those places which typify hard-heartedness

and injustice: Rome—"the great city" and Jerusalem (where their Lord was crucified) which are called Egypt and Sodom (11:8). The earth's inhabitants celebrate with gifts because the church, as a prophet, has tormented the earth (11:10). However, after three and a half days, the church is vindicated, raised from the dead, and ascends in a moment similar to that of their Christ (11:12). Again, God vindicates the martyrs with the destruction of the city with, like the sixth seal, an earthquake (11:13).

These two heavily symbolic pictures tell us of the prophetic leadership role the church plays in unjust society. Those in allegiance to Jesus must, just like Jesus, continue to speak the truth. Recall our language of being strange but not strangers. The church, those in allegiance with Jesus, are prophets and are therefore strange to their cultures. Prophets are often isolated people, not catering to a base of support outside their culture, but calling any who would hear the prophet to join the prophet. Just as Jesus performed prophetic witness, bearing witness with his word until even there could be no faithful word that is spoken, the responsibility of prophetic witness puts the church in a leadership position where John can hardly imagine anything other than martyrdom at the hands of authority.[25]

But is this political opposition culturally formed? Are Christians *always* against political power and authority? Looking solely at the beastly images of political power, so starkly presented throughout Revelation, it is easy to answer "Yes." However, a close reading of the text suggests otherwise. The imagination conversion that Revelation seeks for its readers is "not merely *from* the political, but *for* the political, too" (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 2004, 30).

So, how does John purge the Christian imagination for politics? Can John imagine a time of *converted* politics, a time where the political realm is not beyond the pale? While the answer is not a resounding yes, I offer a tentative affirmative.

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[25] "The faith of the New Testament acknowledges not the revolutionary *but the martyr* who recognizes both the authority of the state and also its limits. His resistance consists in doing everything that serves to promote law and an ordered life in society, even when this means obeying authorities who are indifferent or hostile to his faith; but he will not obey when he is commanded to do evil, that is, to oppose the will of God. His is not the resistance of active force, but the resistance of the one who is willing to suffer for the will of God" (Benedict XVI 2006, 21).

Throughout Revelation, John presents a beast of the sea as a parody of Jesus. First, the beast has a fatal wound that is healed (13:12), whereas Jesus is a Lamb looking as if he had been slain (5:6). Second, the worshipers of this beast ask, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?" (Revelation 13:4). Their hope is that he can break the cycle of war and destruction that we saw in the seals above. There is a hope that the beast can break open the seals, whereas the Lamb, and only the Lamb as John's weeping in heaven confirms, is worthy to break the seals (5:4–5). Third, this parody is drawn to a head in that, in his attempt to display full authority, the beast wears ten crowns (*diadema*) (Rev. 13:1), while later in Revelation it is Jesus, the rider who is called Faithful and True, who wears many crowns (*diadema*) (Rev. 19:11–12). The only other use of *diadema* in Revelation is to say that the dragon who resembles the beast with ten horns, wears seven crowns (*diadema*). The beast's parody comes to an end, however, when the beast attempts to make war against Jesus (the Rider) (Rev. 19:19) and the beast is *simply captured*. No war takes place (19:20–21). It is the Lamb, not the beast, against whom no one can make war!

Why this extended discussion of headwear? *Because of the contrast John creates with it.* Look again at John's description of the *first rider* in the seals. First, this horse is white (6:2), like Jesus' horse (19:11), whereas the next three riders have fiery red, black, and pale-death horses. Second, the rider is one who conquers or overcomes (6:2), as is Jesus (3:21). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the first rider is given a crown, but it is not a *diadema*. Instead, the first rider is given a *stephanos*, which is also worn by Christ when he reaps the crop of faithful believers (14:14), by those who are faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10), by the twenty-four elders in heaven (4:4) who offer these crowns in worship to God (4:10), and by the woman of heaven (12:1) who gives birth to the true ruler.[26] Yet the rider is not Christ: he carries a bow (6:2), whereas Christ has the sword of his mouth (19:21); the first rider is bent on conquest (6:2), whereas Christ has *already conquered* (3:21); last, the first rider is always followed by the warring rider, whereas, as we saw, no one can make war against Jesus.

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[26] John also says that the destroying locusts wear *stephanoi* (9:7). Here, John has linked the locusts with a later portrait of Jesus in order to contrast them: First, Jesus, "one like a son of man," wears a *stephanos* of gold when reaping his harvest (14:14) while the locusts wear "something like *stephanoi* of gold" (emphasis added). Second, consider the nature of the pictures. In one picture, there is a reaper of harvest, while in the other there are destroyers of crops. John's purpose here is contrast, not comparison.

All of this suggests that the first rider who conquers, this kind of leader, is not evil or a parody of Jesus. Had John wanted to show the rider in contrast to the Lamb, he could have given him the *diadema* as he did for the dragon and the beast. Rather than a parody of Jesus, the first rider points to Jesus.

This leads me to conclude that John can imagine a Christian political leader. He can imagine a conquering rider who resembles Christ and does not trade his *stephanos* for *diadema*. Put into our context, John can imagine a political, ethical leader of power, but this leader must never consider themselves in the same line of Jesus and must always and only be a pointer to Jesus. This leader should be careful not to be transformed into the warring rider, who thinks they can become the one who makes war stop. Here I think of Jesus who waged war against the enemy, using power until it could no longer be used faithfully.[27] It may be the Christian who can best embody faithful living in the political realm because John's apocalypse has opened his/her eyes to the true King and to the potential downfalls of beastly reign. However, the seals always alert us to the cycle of violence that no earthly politics can stop. Therefore, Christians must always be aware that they will, inevitably, return to the prophetic witness.

One way to think about the nature of political leadership is that it is always penultimate leadership—temporary, secular leadership that is in service to other kinds of leadership.[28] Political leadership is in service of the cultures whose leadership is eschatological. Political leadership survives on divisions that will be done away with in God's coming future, yet it may still be marked as ethical leadership in the now. As a result, political leadership should not be overemphasized, but always seen as service, facilitating the leadership work within cultures that will last and be brought into the kingdom. Once political leadership is considered the most important leadership, the ultimate leadership by affording political leadership too much responsibility—the responsibility to keep safe at all cost (to end war!)—then citizens tempt

[27] The Christian development of what has been called "Just War Theory" is a practical application of this tension—using power in search of peace in ways that are faithful.

[28] Ramachandra (2008) writes, "The opposite of secular is not the spiritual or the sacred, but the eternal. The *saeculum* denotes the temporal order that, while incapable of itself to deliver the kingdom of God, is hallowed by creation and incarnation, and called to anticipate God's reign in the ordering of human life. It represents a realm in which submission to human authorities, even those that do not explicitly acknowledge the sovereignty of God, is valid but always conditional" (63).

political leaders to make of the good world not something good or to protect in the good world what they have found or inherited worth protecting, but to make of the world something eternal. But this simply isn't the realm of political leadership. We only make something that will last when it is on the foundation of Christ. Political leadership always aims to be placeholder, an act that is intentionally temporary because of that which is coming. It may be faithful when it recognizes itself as penultimate.

Conclusion

Look at the cultures around you. Your work, your family, your friends, your city, or town, your school. What do these cultures need? What eschatological desires can you sense? What is good and orderly in them that can be strengthened or modeled? How can you use power faithfully? Are there situations where you need to suffer sacrificially when power can no longer be used faithfully? Where do your cultures give practical insight to ethical leadership? Where do they need to be infused with the culture of Jesus?

Our cultures matter. At the council of Chalcedon in 451, church leaders emphasized this importance of our local cultures and being connected to a place. They denied ordination for any person not connected with a local place.

> Neither presbyter, deacon, nor any of the ecclesiastical order shall be ordained at large, nor unless the person ordained is particularly appointed to a church in a city or village, or to a martyry, or to a monastery. And if any have been ordained without a charge, the holy Synod decrees, to the reproach of the ordainer, that such an ordination shall be inoperative, and that such shall nowhere be suffered to officiate. (Marsh 1999–2010)

In other words, there is no such thing as a leader *at large*, a leader without a context.

Let me conclude with a final encouragement. Learn to see the beauty—both present and lying just beneath the surface—of your cultures and exhibit the beauty of ethical leadership in your cultures. Do not underestimate the importance of beauty. When truth is not pursued and has very little ethical purchase, aesthetic appeal may be the strongest display of ethical leadership.[29]

[29] See Carl R. Trueman (2016) for a winsome description of aesthetics and argument, from where I am drawing part of this final reflection.

I am not speaking of superficial beauty, but eschatological beauty.[30] I said before that leadership thrives on vision. Sometimes leaders catch a vision and sometimes a vision catches a leader. Before I can start leading in a direction or build an eschatological outpost, I need to see its logic. I need to know the *why*. But I can only craft this *why*—this logical end— because I have seen the vision of God's kingdom. Rather, I shouldn't say that I have seen this vision; no, this vision has captured me. The beauty of God's kingdom compels me to make sense of the eschatological out- posts stirring in my leadership mind and how they are emerging in my various cultures.

People are moved not just by cognition, but by senses. Beauty calls us into the future. And beauty is found everywhere in this good creation. Vision is communicated by beauty in our actions, our buildings, and our organizational structures.[31] But be careful what counts as beauty. Beauty is grounded in God. What strikes the ethical leader as beautiful may appear ugly to culture; and what strikes a culture as beautiful may appear to be opulence to the ethical leader. Leaders, not simply "strange but not strangers," can see beauty in all their cultures, and lead others to see and lead in similar light.

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[30]This isn't to deny that outward appearance influences whom we see as potential lead- ers. Malcolm Gladwell (2005), in typical entertaining fashion, tells the story of President Warren Harding who had a presidential look, but ultimately did not have a highly regarded period of service before dying in office.

[31]See *The Aesthetics of Organization*, edited by Stephen Linstead and Heather Höpfl, especially Chapter 1. Gordon T. Smith (2017) puts beauty in his chapter on creating space (169–170), which reminds readers that everything communicates—the good creation can be enhanced from within to point to the perfecting future coming from God.

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