FIVE LOAVES FOR FIVE THOUSAND: PRACTICES OF ABUNDANCE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT[1]

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Taking seriously that "creation is infused with the Creator's generosity, and [that] we can find practices, procedures, and institutions that allow that generosity to work,"[2] in this paper I argue that cooperation not competition should be the model religious leaders practice in situations of conflict. Organizational behavior research on conflict is done largely from one of five perspectives: psychodynamic, field theory, game theory, human relations, and inter-group.[3] This research on conflict is particularly keen to address where, when, and why conflict occurs; how individuals and groups work through conflict (constructively and destructively); and what strategies people should take to better manage conflict.

Drawing on two recent contributions on conflict, I propose a theological model for religious leadership and, by means of this new model, I consider the current conflict over the election of Bishop V. Eugene Robinson in the Episcopal Church (U.S.A.). This paper has five sections: (1) a brief introduction to my working definition of conflict; (2) a review of the two theories on conflict (Thomas; Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn), noting points of consonance between them; (3) a theological next step using Walter Brueggemann's article "Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity"[4] and selected

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[2] Walter Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance, and the Myth of Scarcity," *The Christian Century* (March 24-31, 1999): 342-47.

[3] The organizational behavior research focused in the paper comes from human relations and game theory perspectives. For a primer on these different perspectives, see Joseph P. Folger, Marshall S. Poole, and Randall K. Stutman, *Working through Conflict: Strategies for Relationships, Groups, and Organizations,* 3d ed. (New York: Longman, 1997).

[4] Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance," 347.

texts from the Gospel of Matthew, which both offer critique of religious leadership that is captive to the cultural myth of scarcity; (4) an illustration of the model using Robinson's election; and (5) suggested behaviors that promote practices of integration and cooperation.

Defining Conflict

The field of organizational behavior has distinguished two basic locations where conflict occurs: (1) *within* individuals and (2) *between* two (or more) parties.[5] In religious organizations, both of these types of conflict are significant. For example, conflicts *within* and *between* are often occasions for transformation (e.g., the dark night of the soul, a church board's debate about opening the church's gymnasium to house homeless men) and, therefore, are important for the church's fulfillment of its mission. Given that, this paper attends only to the second category, namely, conflict *between* parties (hereafter, conflict).

To date, researchers have not yet reached consensus about a definition of conflict.[6] Linda Putman and Marshall Poole, however, have conducted a meta-analysis on the definitions of conflict and found three general properties: (1) interdependence between the parties, (2) perception by at least one of the parties that there is some degree of opposition or incompatibility among the goals, and (3) some form of interaction.[7] These three general properties form the basis of the working definition of conflict for this paper, a definition aptly articulated by Kenneth Thomas: conflict is "the process that begins when one party perceives that the other has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that he or she cares about."[8] It is important to note that this definition does not place a value judgment on conflict, and

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5   Kenneth W. Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," in *The Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, ed. Marvin D. Dunnette and Leaetta M. Hough (Palo Alto, Calif.: Consulting Psychologist Press, 1992), 652-3.

6   Ibid., 652.

7   Linda Putnam and Marshall Poole, "Conflict and Negotiation," in *Handbook of Organizational Communication: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Fredric M. Jablin, Linda L. Putnam, Karlene H. Roberts, and Lyman W. Porter (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage), 551. (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage), 551.

8   Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 653. Thomas also identifies several basic types of conflicts including disputes over goals, facts, and procedures.

rightly so. Conflict is value neutral; how we handle conflict determines whether it is constructive or destructive.

Before turning to two theories on conflict, it is important to state my assumption about the power differential between parties. While I recognized this as a complex dynamic in all relationships and, particularly, in situations of conflict, I presume here situations in which power is relatively equal between parties. Therefore, I consider interdependence as mutual. Ideally, religious leaders choose to exercise their power in ways that enable mutual interdependence. However, should they choose not to do so, namely, when power is not mutual, they often manipulate the outcome.[9] When this happens, especially when force is also applied and violence erupts, another whole important dimension is added that this paper does not address.

A REVIEW OF TWO THEORIES ON CONFLICT AND THEIR INTERRELATEDNESS

Kenneth W. Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," in *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* edited by M. D. Dunnette & L. M. Hough (Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologist Press, 1992).

Thomas' chapter, an example of human relation's research on conflict, focuses on relationships between parties in group settings. Early in the 1960s, human relations research began to identify "styles" or "strategic intentions" that people regularly engage in to resolve conflict. Robert Blake and Jane Mouton identified five such styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.[10] These five intentions provide the basis for Thomas's work in conflict and negotiation in organizations.

Thomas aims to develop an "overview of the complex

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9   For more on power, see D. J. Brass and M. E. Burkhardt, "Potential Power and Power Use: An Investigation of Structure and Behavior," *Academy of Management Journal* 36 (1993): 441-470, and B. E. Ashforth, "The Experience of Powerlessness in Organizations," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 43 (1989) : 207-242.

10 Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, *The Managerial Grid* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1964). Their work has subsequently been revised and was most recently published as *Managerial Grid: Leadership Styles for Achieving Production through People* (Houston: Elsevier Science & Technology Books, 1994).

fabric of variables involved in conflict."[11] Figure 1 illustrates this "complex fabric" and is used by Thomas to organize his research.[12] "The major parts of this [complex fabric of variables] include (a) the sequence of events in the conflict/negotiation process, (b) structural variables which shape that process, (c) outcomes of the process, and (d) third-party interventions to manage conflict/negotiations."[13]

Figure 1: General Model of Conflict
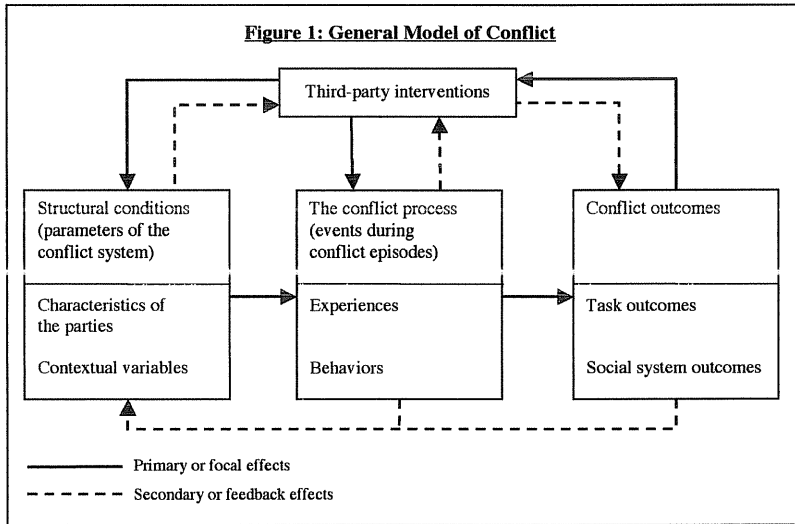
For this paper, I am interested only in the structural variables (b), located in the leftmost box in Figure 1. Using the structural variables (i.e., structural conditions, characteristics of the parties, and contextual variables), Thomas maps a party's conflict management style[14] along two orthogonal dimensions of intent (see Figure 2): assertiveness (our attempt to satisfy our own concerns) and cooperativeness (our attempt to satisfy another's concerns). By mapping a person's level of assertiveness and cooperation, Thomas locates a person's conflict management style.[15]

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[11] Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 651.

[12] Ibid., 655.

[13] Ibid., 651. Given the space limitations of this article, only an overview of (b) the structural variables that shape this process is dealt with here.

[14] In addition to styles, Thomas also uses "strategic intentions." Other researchers use terms such as orientations, approaches, strategies, behaviors, and conflict-handling modes. Within this paper, styles and intentions are used interchangeably.

[15] Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 671.

The following are brief descriptions of the five conflict management styles:

Avoidance is the intersection of unassertive and uncooperative; the person simply withdraws and refuses to deal with the conflict. Someone who is avoiding might be described as indifferent, apathetic, isolated, or evasive. "Basically, one seeks to avoid involving oneself in an issue, allowing events to take their own course without attempting to steer the outcome toward the concern of either party."[16]

Accommodation is unassertive and cooperative; the person's own concerns are secondary to the concerns of the other. A person who accommodates often believes that the relationship is more important than the issue and will therefore concede to the other's wishes. "Depending on the type of concern involved, this intention may represent an attempt to attain the other's goals at the sacrifice of one's own, to support the other's opinion despite one's own reservations, or to forgive the other for a perceived transgression and to allow subsequent ones."[17] This style has been labeled self-sacrificing, weak, and retracting.

Compromise is the intersection of the midpoints of assertiveness and cooperativeness; also called bargaining, or negotiating, it is an "attempt to attain moderate but incomplete satisfaction of both parties' concerns-giving up something but also holding out for something."[18] This style of navigating conflict is so frequently encountered that its impact on human welfare can hardly be underestimated.[19]

Competitive is highly assertive and uncooperative; the competitor disregards the other's concerns. "A competing intention... represents an attempt to prevail or win one's position-to satisfy one's own concerns at the other's expense."[20] As such, this style is the opposite of accommodation. Moreover, it often involves "the use of physical or emotional force"[21] to pressure the other party, and so is referred to also as forcing, win-lose, dominating, and contending.

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[16] Ibid., 669.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Dean G. Pruitt, *Negotiation Behavior* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), xi.

[20] Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 668.

[21] Speed B. Leas, *Discover Your Conflict Management Style* (Washington D.C.: Alban Institute, 1997), 12.

A collaborating style is located at the intersection of high assertiveness and high cooperation; the outcome of collaboration proves, in the end, more desirable to both parties than their initial concerns. "A collaborating intention... represents an attempt to fully satisfy the concerns of the two parties to achieve an integrative settlement....Other terms for this intention are problem solving, synergy, integrating, and confronting (in the sense of confronting the conflict to work it through)."[22]

Collaboration requires that both parties be engaging the conflict in this style, and are willing to devote considerable time to the process, to disclose fully, and to trust the other.[23] Time is needed because both sides must communicate their positions fully and understand the other's position. In contrast to negotiation, in which information is withheld purposely early on, collaboration requires the parties to lay all of their cards on the table, so to speak. Trust is therefore an essential ingredient.

Figure 2: Two-dimensional Taxonomy of Strategic Intentions

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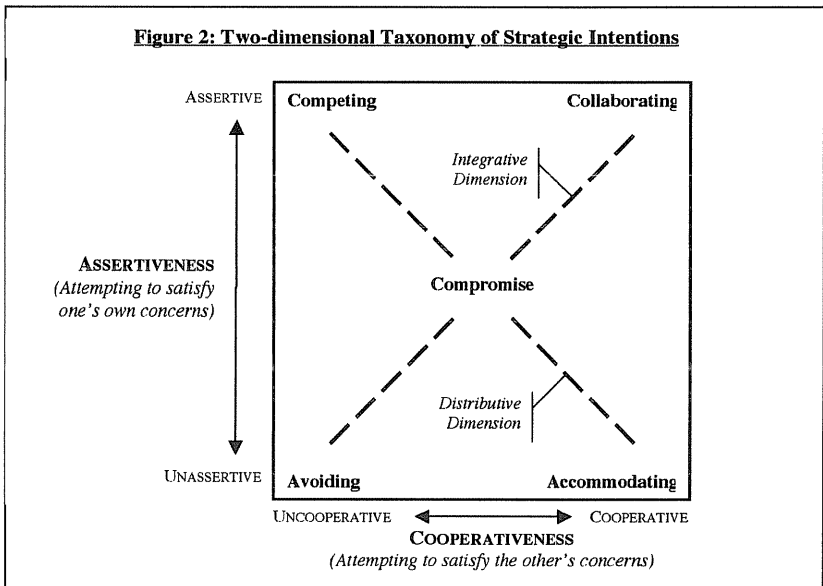
[22] Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 669.
[23] Leas, *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*, 21-3.

Integrative and Distributive Dimensions

Building on the work of Richard Walton and Robert McKersie,[24] Thomas incorporates the dimensions of *distributive* and *integrative*[25] with his Two-Dimensional Taxonomy of Strategic Intentions (see Figure 2). "Roughly speaking, the distributive dimension represents a party's intentions with respect to the proportion of satisfaction going to each party's concern. It is a give-and-take, zero-sum dimension that involves relative shares of the pie."[26] The distributive dimension is exemplified by the perception that there is not enough (e.g., the myth of scarcity). The distributive dimension's vector (which connects the three styles of accommodating, compromising, competing) may represent anything from extreme relinquishment (okay, you can have all the pie), to a compromise about the pie's division (we split the pie), to exclusive consumption (get your hands off my pie).

The distributive dimension is geometrically perpendicular to the integrative dimension. Typical distributive tactics include threats, put-downs, irrelevant arguments, demands, and acts of bullying. In contrast, integrative tactics include acceptance statements, sincere compliments, arguments that support the other party's position, and exploratory problem-solving messages.[27]

Integrative tactics are concerned with the degree of satisfaction the two parties enjoy-in other words, the *size* of the pie. On this vector, avoidance yields a very small pie; compromise, a pie the size of that perceived in the distributive dimension; and collaboration, a large pie (five loaves for five thousand).

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24 Richard E. Walton and Robert B. McKersie, *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations: An Analysis of a Social Interaction System* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

25 For the origins of *integrative,* see Mary Parker Follet, "Constructive Conflict," in *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett,* ed. Henry C. Metcalf and Lyndall F. Urwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1940), 30-49. The term more commonly used is *win-win,* however, given the dilution of *win-win* in the culture and its extensive use in negotiation, integrative is used throughout this paper.

26 Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations," 670.

27 Ibid., 677. See also Linda Putnam and Marshall Poole, "Conflict and Negotiation," 568.

Finally, Thomas's review of related research literature reveals strong empirical evidence to support his taxonomy: "A series of studies using different methodologies has confirmed that individuals use two orthogonal dimensions to differentiate among the five intentions in the taxonomy, and that the relative positioning of the intentions along those two dimensions is basically in accordance with [this orthogonal figure]".[28]

Craig D. Parks, Robert F. Henager, and Shawn D. Scamahorn, "Trust and Reactions to Messages of Intent in Social Dilemmas," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40/1 (1996): 134-51.

This article, which is based on game theory,[29] assumes (1) people are interdependent and (2) conflict involves costs and benefits for participants. Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn explore the relationship between messages of intent and trust. They demonstrate that people with low levels of trust (hereafter low trusters) react to competitive messages by decreasing their level of cooperation but are unaffected by cooperative messages. In contrast, people with high levels of trust (hereafter high trusters) react to cooperative messages by increasing their level of cooperation but are unaffected by competitive messages.

As such, a person's trust level effects his or her expectation of the other's behavior. Low trusters believe that when people express a desire to cooperate, they "are not really interested in cooperation but, rather, are trying to set them up for exploitation."[30] High trusters, on the other hand, "generally believe that cooperation is the best course of action and will continue to cooperate even when the resource is being abused."[31]

To arrive at these conclusions, Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn conducted two studies. In the first, they hypothesized: (1) "when presented with an intention to cooperate, high trusters should feel that their faith in others is

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[28] Ibid., 669.

[29] See Martin Shubik, *Game Theory in the Social Sciences: Concepts and Solutions* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

confirmed [and that] a competitive message should have little effect on cooperation," and that (2) "because low trusters are generally suspicious, a cooperative message should be treated with skepticism. Believing that others are basically out for themselves, low trusters may view a cooperative intent as a trick or as naïve."[32] To test these hypotheses, 111 undergraduates participated in a two-person Prisoner's Dilemma. After determining each student's level of trust, the researchers gave each student (using a reciprocal strategy programmed by the experimenter) one of three written messages (competitive, cooperative, or neutral [the control]) ostensibly from the other "prisoner."[33]

Competitive: "I don't see why anyone would ever choose A. I'm always going to choose B."

Cooperative: "The only way to get a lot of points is for both of us to choose A."

Neutral: "I wonder how many more trials there are?"

What they found was that "stated intentions have a definite effect on subsequent cooperative choice."[34] Consequently, the role of trust is significant for cooperative behavior; high trusters take a cooperative approach to the game and low trusters take a competitive approach.

The results of this first study prompted a second study which considered three hypotheses. First, low trusters can be induced to cooperate if their counterpart states cooperative messages and then adheres to them strictly during the Dilemma. Second, high trusters can be induced to compete if their counterpart sends competitive messages and strictly adheres to them. Third, trustworthiness disappears anytime a counterpart behaves contrary to their stated intent.[35] In this trial, 108 students participated in a two-person Prisoner's Dilemma with the same competition and cooperation messages but without the neutral one. Moreover, an independent variable of consistency (between the message of intent and the actual behavior) was added.

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[32] Ibid., 136-7.
[33] Ibid., 137-8.
[34] Ibid., 142.
[35] Ibid., 143.

The researchers found that when high trusters received a cooperative message, they "substantially increased their own cooperation regardless of the other's person's degree of consistency."[36] Additionally, high trusters do not start competing until they receive five consecutive competitive trials (in other words, they received a return of 1 on the Prison's Dilemma Matrix five times in a row). Low trusters, conversely, <u>decreased</u> their cooperation after receiving a message of competition.

After three trials of unconditional cooperation, a low truster can be successfully encouraged to participate as a cooperator rather than competitor.[37] However, should unconditional cooperation persist, in the fifth unconditional trial competitors "decrease their own cooperation. The likely explanation is that excessive unconditional cooperation arouses exploitation in low trusters."[38] Therefore, Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn recommend following Osgood's communication approach of graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction (GRIT).[39] This approach follows three steps: "stating one's desire to reach agreement, following up with a small conciliatory gesture, and conveying to the opponent that the gesture should not be exploited."[40]

In summary, these studies demonstrate that stated intentions influence future behavior on the part of others: "cooperative messages produce cooperation; competitive messages produce competition. This is further support for the important role communication plays in mixed-motive situations."[41]

POINTS OF CONSONANCE

These two research projects have several points of consonance. First, they both attend to the level and function of trust. The degree to which we trust one another depends on a number of factors: personality predispositions, psychological orientations, reputations and stereotypes, and

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[36] Ibid., 145.

[37] Ibid., 148.

[38] Ibid., 145.

[39] See Charles E. Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1966).

[40] Parks, "Trust and Reactions," 148.

[41] Ibid.

experiences over time.[42] According to Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn, our trust level plays a pivotal role in how we interact with others; we will either compete (low truster) or cooperate (high truster). For Thomas, a certain amount of trust is required for several of the strategic intentions (e.g., compromising), and complete trust is necessary for collaboration.

Second, Thomas's strategic dimensions (distributive and integrative) correlate with Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn's messages of intent (competition and cooperation). What Thomas describes as the style of competing (high assertiveness and low cooperation) is similar to Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn's competitive message of intent: "Try to get more points than the other person(s) on every trial."[43] Competition also forms the basis for the other distributive tactics of compromise and accommodation. Unless both parties function in an altruistic mode (which occurs at a low frequency of 3% for low trusters and 0% for high trusters[44]), then the interaction is competitive. Since distributive tactics are limited by the relative shares of the one pie, those engaged in these strategies are typically competing. Even in its most altruistic forms, accommodation is considered "losing" in the long run if the other party is competitive. Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn demonstrate that excessive unconditional cooperation (e.g., continuous accommodating) "arouses exploitation in low trusters."[45] Said theologically, competitive tactics are fueled by the "myth of scarcity," and integrative tactics model "a liturgy of abundance" (so Brueggemann, see below). Figure 3 visually represents these correlations.

A THEOLOGICAL NEXT STEP

On the basis of biblical narratives concerned with the provision of manna and bread (e.g., Exodus 16; Matthew 16), this section begins with the theological claim of God's sufficiency. Such a claim offers explicit critique of religious

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[42] See Roy J. Lewicki and Carolyn Wiethoff, "Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair," in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice,* ed. Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 91).

[43] Parks, "Trust and Reactions," 141.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 145.

leadership that is captive to the cultural myth of scarcity.[46]

"The Bible starts out with a liturgy of abundance. Genesis 1 is a song of praise for God's generosity... and denies scarcity."[47] Not until Pharaoh comes on the scene in Gen. 47 is the invention of scarcity introduced: "For the first time in the Bible, someone says, 'There's not enough. Let's get everything.'"[48] After this invention of scarcity, "The Book of Exodus records the contest between the liturgy of generosity and the myth of scarcity-a contest that still tears us apart today."[49]

In Egypt, the Hebrews never received bread as a gift; it was always a mechanism of imperial control. Not until the Israelites are in the wilderness do they experience the manna provided by God (Exod. 16). They learn that "the gifts of life are indeed given by a generous God. It's a wonder, it's a miracle, it's an embarrassment, it's irrational, but God's abundance transcends the market economy."[50] God's actions provide alternative systems of generosity that called the Hebrews, and now us, to integration not distribution, to cooperation not competition, to liturgies of abundance not the myth of scarcity, to remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets were gathered and to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

After departing Egypt, it did not take the Hebrews long to start complaining. First they were scared to death and grumbled that Moses had taken them out to the desert to be killed by the advancing Egyptian army. But God saved them at the Red Sea. Then, they got as far as the wilderness of Shur to a place called Marah (meaning bitter), where they complained bitterly about the water's sour taste. But God sweetened the water, and they drank their fill (Exod. 15: 22-25). Two months later, the Hebrews set out from Elim to the wilderness of Sin where they complained about hunger. "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt," they whined, "when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread" (Exod. 16:3) ... "Remember that good time

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[46] See Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance," 342. Note that Brueggemann contends "[t]he conflict between the narratives of abundance and of scarcity is the defining problem confronting us at the turn of the millennium."

[47] Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance," 342.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 343.

[50] Ibid.

we had back in Egypt, when we had everything we needed? But no," they said looking at Moses, "you had to bring us out to this God-forsaken wilderness where there is no bread so that we can die." Then at Rephidim they complained. In short, at every new campsite, the whining continued. "Give us water to drink....Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" (Exod. 17:3). Their memory, to say the least, was selective. They never had it this good in Egypt. There, bread was a reward contingent on their productivity, and it was always received and eaten with fearful anxiety that it might be cut off.

Again and again, though, God hears the complaints of the Hebrews and says,

> I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days. (Exod 16:4-5).

This is God's provision; it is generous beyond human imagination and always sufficient. Yet, as Brueggemann points out, "We never feel that we have enough: we have to have more and more, and this insatiable desire destroys us."[51] At Rephidim, Moses wants to know what to "do with this people" that are about ready to stone him (Exod. 17:5), and what does God "do" with this people? Give them more than they can drink.

At the heart of the Hebrew's wilderness experience is the question, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. 17: 7). Does God provide in sufficient ways or is Pharaoh correct that there is not enough? And it is that question, I contend, that lies behind many situations of conflict. Do we have to fight to get ahead, to advance our agendas, to prove God is on *my* side, or does God really provide for all that *we* need? Brueggemann concludes from Exod. 16 and the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30-44) that God "creates a different kind of present tense for us. We can live according to an ethic whereby we are not driven, controlled, anxious, frantic or greedy, precisely because we are sufficiently at home and at peace to care

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[51] Ibid.

about others as we have been cared for."[52]

When we turn to the New Testament, we find that in the Gospel of Matthew the Pharisees and Sadducees repeatedly demand a sign from heaven to confirm that Jesus is from God. After the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus answers them: "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (Matt. 16:2-4).

Jesus and the disciples then depart, but the disciples forget to bring bread. Jesus exhorts them to "watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees," which they interpret as a warning because they have no bread. "You of little faith," Jesus retorts, "why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" (Matt. 16: 8-12).

In this narrative, the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" may be said to correspond to Brueggemann's myth of scarcity (see Figure 3); that is, it is a yeast that, when mixed, rises into the falsehood that God is not among us, that there is never enough. New Testament scholar Warren Carter writes that in Matt. 16 "Jesus enacts an alternative system marked by compassion, sufficiency, and shared resources. His action imitates God's actions in saving the people from the tyrant Pharaoh and feeding them in the desert."[53]

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 305.

Figure 3

Thomas	Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn	Brueggemann	Gospel of Matthew
Distributive Tactics *Accommodating* *Compromising* *Competing*	Persons with Low Trust Levels *Competitors*	Myth of Scarcity	Yeast of the Sadducees and Pharisees
Integrative Tactics *Avoiding* *Compromising* *Collaborating*	Persons with High Trust Levels *Cooperators*	Liturgy of Abundance	Five Loaves for Five Thousand

In sum, the biblical narratives concerned with the provision of manna and bread point to an alternative way of perceiving the world and, as such, have implications for how we understand and engage in conflict. That is, conflict is no longer understood as a battle for limited resources between two parties, but is reframed in light of a providential God who provides much more than we ever expect. As Brueggemann writes,

> The term 'providence,' as Karl Barth has nicely observed, derives from *pro-video,* to see for, to see before, to 'provide' in prospect all that the world might require for its joyous life and secure well-being. ... [Thus] the world lives, is sustained, and prospers because of God's capacity to *provide* all that is needed."[54]

IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

In this section, I offer a reconception of "integrative tactics" (so Thomas; the lower portion of Figure 3) in light of the Brueggemann and the Matthean materials. I consider each reconceived integrative practice, and offer as an illustration for each of the current conflicts in the Episcopal Church (hereafter ECUSA) over the election of Bishop V. Eugene Robinson. I

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[54] Walter Brueggemann, "Options for Creatureliness: Consumer or Citizen," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 23/1 (June 2001) : 26-27.

offer these illustrations as examples only, recognizing that they neither "solve" nor "resolve" the painful crisis that this denomination and others are experiencing.

In August 2003, the House of Bishops voted to confirm V. Eugene Robinson as the Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire, making him the first openly gay bishop in the Anglican Communion. His confirmation, consecration (November 2003), and investiture (March 2004) have received international attention and sparked a myriad of debates in local congregations and dioceses across the world. There is little question, I wager, that the ECUSA's engagement with the matter exemplifies the three basic properties of conflict discussed above, namely: (1) <u>interdependence</u> between the parties, (2) <u>perception</u> by at least one of the parties that there is some degree of opposition or incompatibility among the goals, and (3) <u>interaction</u>. Given space limitations, I will not address the complex issues and history surrounding the question of electing gay persons to the office of bishop. Instead, I consider ways in which local congregations have engaged and/or are contemplating the conflict. My goal is to offer religious leaders concrete examples of how practicing liturgies of abundance can reframe our ways of engaging in conflict. We know, after all, "in the secret recesses of our hearts is that the story of scarcity is a tale of death. And the people of God counter this tale by witnessing to the manna."[55] In the next section, I will deal with three possible approaches to this conflict: avoidance, compromise, and collaboration.

AVOIDANCE

Avoiding conflict, we are taught, is a mark of poor leadership. Religious leaders are taught to "take on" conflicts as soon as possible or the dissension will fester and inevitably explode. I have taught this myself and tend to believe it in most cases. In light of the research outlined above, however, the practice of avoidance in some conflicts may be a positive way forward. For instance, high trusters (cooperators) should neither accommodate every time (thereby encouraging exploitation) nor compete with the low truster (thereby lending credibility to the myth of scarcity). Following

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[55] Ibid., 344.

Osgood's GRIT model, after three or four repeated attempts to cooperate (i.e., accommodation) with the low truster, a leader should *avoid* the conflict if the low truster has not changed from competition to cooperation. Remember, accommodation is unconditional cooperation, whereby a person completely sets aside her own concerns and agrees to the other's wishes. Avoidance, on the other hand, is the withdrawal of all support for the other's concerns *without* increasing assertiveness for one's concerns. To not withdraw support while lowering the level of cooperation initiates a cycle of competition (see Figure 2).

Bishop Robinson stated in a CBS *"60 Minutes"* interview televised March 7, 2004, "Let's be clear. We've always had gay bishops."[56] The reality of gay bishops within the Anglican Communion indicates that the church has engaged in the integrative practice of avoidance. Said differently, if the Anglican Communion has always had gay bishops and not been openly conflicted about it since Robinson's consecration, then religious leaders practiced some level of avoidance.

There are probably many reasons for this. Perhaps there is a general lack of knowledge on the part of the parishioners and clergy, or an approach of "don't ask, don't tell." Whatever the reasons, avoidance afforded the Anglican Communion space and time with which to tend to other concerns. Indeed, avoidance has enabled the denomination to remain united while allowing parishes, and even dioceses, to preserve their theological convictions.

Avoidance was no longer tenable with Bishop Robinson's election in August 2003. Robinson's openness about his sexual orientation ("We've always had gay bishops. All I'm doing is being honest about it".[57]) effectively ended the avoidance strategy as the way forward. "It's not all going to go back to being nice and pretty again. It's going to be messy for a while."[58]

The Communion can turn either to distributive tactics (such as schism which divides the pie), or it can employ other integrative strategies of compromising or collaboration.

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[56] V. Eugene Robinson, *60 Minutes*, interviewed by Ed Bradley, CBS, 7 March 2004.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

COMPROMISE

On Thomas's taxonomy (Figure 2), compromise is the intersection of the distributive and the integrative dimensions; it is the mid-point of each dimension. So compromise by someone who is operating out of a myth of scarcity may look remarkably similar to compromise by someone who is practicing a liturgy of abundance. The *motivations* of each, however, are divergent. The compromise region on the distributive dimension signals the ratio of pie given and received (with the mid-point representing a 50-50 split). In contrast, that same region on the integrative dimension represents the various sizes of the pie (moving from a small pie through the distributive dimension's "one pie" and beyond as the parties move toward collaboration).

Parks, Henager, and Scamahorn offer another way to look at the difference in the motivations for compromising. The motivation for compromising as a distributive tactic is competition. Competitors, or low trusters, are typically suspicious and skeptical. Believing that people are basically always out for themselves, competitors view integrative tactics as either a clever ploy to trick them or as naiveté. The motivation, though, I am arguing for in religious leaders is cooperation, or generosity, given God's providential sufficiency. This motivation is represented by the integrative dimension's scale of how much pie the context will allow. In other words, religious leaders should strive for as high a level of cooperation as the context permits-if low, than avoidance; if moderate, than compromise; and if high, than collaboration.[59]

One proposal for a way forward in the conflict over V. Eugene Robinson illustrates this difference in motivations. More than a dozen bishops are organizing an alternative network of dioceses and parishes. If the network allows parishes the opportunity to receive care from a bishop who better fits their theological convictions while remaining in the communion, then the proposal may be a compromise motivated by cooperation. At the same time, the network

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[59] If the context of the conflict is determinative of what integrative style should be engaged, then religious leaders should be trained in being "readers of context" and not simply educated in the skills of conflict resolution.

might be the first step toward schism.[60] The difference resides in the bishops' motivation. If the proposal is a tactic for schism, then it is distributive. If the proposal achieves the highest level of cooperation possible while preserving unity, then it is integrative.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration, whereby a leader identifies and takes advantage of opportunities to embody and engender relationships based on availability, trust, and transparency, more strongly witnesses to the reality of manna. As such, of the five tactics identified by Thomas, collaboration best exemplifies a leadership style that trusts in God's providential care. Collaboration explicitly values both parties because it requires that both be engaged fully. This takes seriously the theological conviction that every person is a member of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31), a body in which no member is of lesser import or value; every member manifests gifts of the Spirit. Collaboration always values first and foremost the members-the parties involved in a conflict-over the issue at hand.

An example of collaboration in light of Robinson's election comes from the Church of the Holy Family in Jasper, Georgia. This 200-member church, established in 1987, engaged in a "crucible of care and conversation"[61] about the matter last August instead of its regularly scheduled fall adult educational offerings.

The first Sunday after Robinson's election, Assistant Rector William Harkins preached a sermon that created space for collaboration. He did this by being highly assertive and highly cooperative. He stated his position on the issue and then gave words for how some in the congregation were feeling. He then suggested a plan for how the congregation could engage in the issue together as members of Christ's Body:

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60 Being protestant, I agree with many of the reasons the sixteenth century reform-ers broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Reformation taught the church a terrible lesson, that of schism. We learned well that when we disagree, we walk. But there is still only One Body of Christ and, so, these schisms only function to obscure the unity of Christ's Body.

61 William Harkins, "9 Pentecost/Proper 14/Year B," (sermon preached at Church of the Holy Family, Jasper, Georgia, 10 August 2003).

> I cannot pretend to have a "neutral" position on this matter. To do so would be a disservice both to me and to you. As a leader in this congregation I am called, among other things, to be as transparent as I can about who I am and what I believe. I do have questions about the process by which the decision was made, but I agreed with the decision. I know that many of you did not. Many feel hurt, and angry, and betrayed. Others among us agree with the decision and believe it to be long overdue. I ask that over the next few weeks and months, we abide with one another, listen to one another, and that we covenant that it is more important to be in relationship than to be "right." In order to create a crucible of care and conversation, I am, for now, postponing our Fall Adult Education offerings in the service of an open "forum," until such time as we have reached some measure of reconciliation and/or created additional, intentional structures within which we might seek just that.[62]

Harkins's leadership modeled for the congregation that this issue can no longer be avoided and does not need to become competitive. He did this by disclosing his own perspective while simultaneously advocating for a space to openly discuss the issue within the parish. Interestingly, some of Harkins's colleagues strongly warned against this approach. They thought it would "open Pandora's box" and, in the end, only cause more pain and hurt.

After the service, in the Narthex, Jack charged up to Harkins and angrily proclaimed, "You can remove my name from the list of ushers. My wife and I will not be coming back."[63] Jack's reaction exemplifies the distributive tactic of "competing" (high assertiveness low cooperation) insofar as he aimed to change the rector's behavior by threatening to leave. Others responded differently ("I'm not sure where you are taking us but I appreciate your willingness to be in dialogue" to "Thank you for being courageous").[64] Certainly, the sermon did not "resolve" the issue for the rector and the

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[62] Ibid.

[63] William Harkins, interview by David Forney, 23 March 2004.

[64] Ibid.

parish; nor should it have. The collaborative model invites the full range of responses and possibilities from all members. What Harkins's collaborative style engendered (starting with the sermon) was the initiation of a series of integrative strategies for engaging the conflict in the parish. By maintaining a critical distance and valuing relationships more highly than being "right," Harkins witnessed to the sufficiency of God's grace and, thereby, helped facilitate reconciliation.

The integrative intention for the Church of the Holy Family included a four-week forum. Each session opened with prayer and a reminder that the purpose of gathering was "for people to speak what is on their hearts."[65] The leaders explicitly gave messages of cooperation and articulated their confidence in the parishioners and in God's provision by stating, "We, as the clergy, are here to help structure the time together but not to dictate content."[66]

According to Harkins, the first several weeks were "really, really tough. People were tense, anxious, and scared."[67] Even so, attendance was notably greater than the regular Sunday school class and increased over the four weeks. During the third week, the forum shifted in both the affect of the gathering and the content of discussion. While the change in the group's affect was gradual over the four weeks, the shift in content occurred abruptly when one couple offered a personal narrative.

The couple, both in their early seventies and long-time members of the congregation, shared the story of their relationship with their daughter, a lesbian in a partnered relationship. They described their pain, anger, sadness, fear, and confusion about what to do when they learned about her sexual orientation. They spoke of wanting to "control" the situation and about their difficult struggle to be in a relationship with their daughter. Reflecting on their story, Harkins said that "this disclosive and heartfelt narrative seemed to both shift the tone of the conversation and facilitate a deeper level of transparency and sharing."[68]

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

The couple's story did not resolve the issue for Church of the Holy Family. Rather, it facilitated an integrative way for participants in the forum to engage the issue. "We were hearing one another as children of God, not as persons defined by our sexual orientation or our position *vis-à-vis* these issues."[69] In the end, the four-week forum manifested a liturgy of abundance whereby parishioners of radically different views were enabled to continue carrying out the mission of the church. They were not of one mind about Robinson's election or even completely comfortable with the diversity of perspectives in their own parish. However, through this particular collaborative style of conflict management, they became reconciled to one another, even Jack. With the rector's regular invitations, Jack and Martha attended the forums and continued to help lead worship in their ushering roles and now, after six months since Robinson's election, they continue to be active members of the Church of the Holy Family. In this way, the collaborative style strives to promote right relationships with fellow members of the Body of Christ before being right about the issues that are before us.

SUGGESTED BEHAVIORS

The following are brief suggestions for religious leaders as behaviors that are likely to promote integration and cooperation and, thereby, remembers the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets were gathered.

FROM KENNETH THOMAS, "CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION IN ORGANIZATIONS."

* Show the other that the party's concern is also instrumental to the other.
* Show the other that the party's concern is too important to be compromised (signaling firmness with respect to interests).
* Show the other that an integrative outcome is a logical possibility (through framing of issues).

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[69] Ibid.

[70] For emotional contagion research, see Sigal G. Barsade, "The Ripple Effect: Emotional Contagion and Its Influence on Group Behavior," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 47 (December 2002) : 644-675.

- Show the other that the parties have the skill to find an integrative solution.
- Demonstrate that the party has collaborative intensions.
- Demonstrate that the party is flexible with respect to positions.
- Make collaborative norms salient to the other.
- Insist on fair criteria for deciding among possible solutions.
- Isolate the negotiations from groups that would exert distributive pressure.
- Minimize the negotiations from groups that would exert distributive pressure.
- Minimize use of behaviors or tactics that would produce negative emotions in the other party.
- Provide an emotionally supportive climate and generally build positive affect in other.70
- Shield the other from emotional distractions.
- Influence the church's culture by having: (1) low dogmatism, (2) high self-esteem, (3) an internal locus of control, (4) low fear of conflict, (5) the skills and knowledge to address community needs, and (6) high self monitoring.

FROM PARKS, HENAGER, AND SCAMAHORN, "TRUST AND REACTIONS."

- Reciprocate a cooperative action with a cooperative action.
- Follow **GRIT** (graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction) by:
  (1) state your desire to reach agreement (cooperate),
  (2) follow up this message of intent with small conciliatory gestures (accommodation) up to three times, and
  (3) convey to the other that you will not be exploited and, after three small conciliatory gestures, move to the integrative tactic of avoidance concerning the specific issue.

CONCLUSION

Religious leaders can witness to the sufficiency of God's provision in situations of conflict by practicing integrative strategies of cooperation-avoidance, compromise, and collaboration (for further suggested practices, see the Appendix). As the Body of Christ, we are a people who proclaim five loaves, in the hands of God, prove more than enough to feed five thousand. Sure the math does not compute; regrettably, the idea of dividing a pie with

indeterminable size seems absurd from the perspective of our bottom-line, consumer-oriented culture. But that is part of the scandalous good news: "the power of the future is not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity...; it is in the hands of those who trust God's abundance."[71]

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[71] Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance," 343.

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