
ANTHROPOLOGICAL TELOS AND LEADERSHIP GOALS IN THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Abstract

Constitutive to theological anthropology is the goal of progress. Humanity is destined to develop toward a desired end. Anthropological telos refers to a preferred view of the future. It calls for flexibility as the key Christian leadership principle guiding followers toward relationality as a formative end and resurrection as a final end. The two goals include a developing sanctification in the image of Christ as the regenerative image and a future resurrection as the restorative image. Situational Leadership best achieves these goals by determining a follower's competency and commitment and applying an appropriate leadership style. Leading toward these goals requires a flexible, follower-focused leadership style.

Anthropological Telos and Leadership Goals in Theological Anthropology

The drama of Christian leadership rivals the theatrics and danger of tightrope walking. Achieving success is a balance of extremes. The leader is always asking questions like, Is leadership trait-centered or task-centered? Are leaders born or bred? Is leadership opportunity a matter of character or context? Should leadership be task-focused or follower-focused? Each pole is represented by a stack of leadership models expressing one of these either-or dichotomies. All leadership requires a centering of extremes—a balance of the present reality and the future desired reality. Christian leadership is particularly focused on the hopeful now-then realities and the progress between them. A clear anthropological telos works like a balancing pole in a daredevil leader's hand.

This article will argue that anthropological telos calls for flexibility as the key Christian leadership principle

guiding followers toward relationality as a formative end and resurrection as a final end. Formative anthropological telos is a developing sanctification in the image of Christ as the regenerative image of God. Final anthropological telos is the future resurrection as the restorative image of God. Both goals find expression in Scripture. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29–30). Both goals of anthropological telos are intended by God and expressed in Scripture.

What Is Anthropological Telos?

In *A Theology for Christian Education*, Gregg Allison broadly organizes views of theological anthropology into four categorical proposals. (1) The image of God is man’s substance, that is “beingness.” (2) The image of God is man’s function, something man does rather than what man is. (3) The image of God is man’s relationship to God, to other human beings, and to all creation. (4) The image of God includes human destiny; that is, man’s ultimate goal or purpose is inherent in God’s design. Allison argues that the image of God must be seen holistically rather than piecemeal because “God created us in his image so that we, like a mirror, would reflect him in the world in which we live.”¹ In other words, theological anthropology is centered on the here and now. But what about the eternal state beyond this world in which we live? It is argued in this article that anthropological telos is not only a category of theological anthropology (or one-fourth of what it means to be created in the image of God), but rather anthropological telos is the culmination of substantive, functional, and relational views of the image of God.

¹ Gregg R Allison, “Humanity, Sin, and Christian Education,” in *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2008), 184.

Telos is a preferred view of the future derived from the Greek word *τέλος* meaning “end, goal, or purpose.” The New Testament uses the term *telos* thirty-nine times, signifying an aspect range including God’s purposes (James 5:11), the end of all things (1 Pet. 4:7), the kingdom of God (Luke 1:33), Christ as the end of the law (Rom. 10:4), the end of the age (1 Cor. 10:11), the final judgment of God (2 Cor. 11:15; Phil. 3:19; 1 Thess. 2:6), partnership with Christ (Heb. 3:14), Christian love (1 Tim. 1:5), hope (Heb. 6:11), and salvation (1 Pet. 1:9).

Ultimately, God is the divine telos as all things end just as they began in Him. God created all things, and all humanity will find its end in Him either through justification or judgment. Revelation 21:6 and 22:13 ascribe to God, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” This is the creation and re-creation metanarrative in the Bible reflected in the cycle of birth, life, death, and resurrection.² This is a paradigm for all creation, not just humanity. Romans 8:22 includes all creation, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”

Fundamentally, “The term anthropology and the term anthropological telos refer to how the two fundamental questions, Who or what is a human being? and What is the ultimate goal of human change? are answered, explicitly or implicitly. Theological anthropology has to do with how the same two questions should be interpreted theologically.”³ In order to answer, we must look forward to the formative and final ends of anthropological telos.

Anthropological telos particularizes humanity by its capacity to change. Telos is the goal to which God is changing humanity. This sense of telos is often found in systematic theology. Millard Erickson exemplifies,

² Bard Norheim, “A Grain of Wheat: Toward a Theological Anthropology for Leading Change in Ministry,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 13(1) (2014): 63.

³ Norheim, “A Grain of Wheat,” 62.

“Humans are most fully human when they are active in these relationships and performing this function, fulfilling their telos, God’s purpose for them.”⁴ Wayne Grudem categorizes anthropological telos as a “progressive recovering” of the image of God awaiting a “complete restoration” of the image at Christ’s return.⁵ In both instances, a future completed work is the implicit goal.

Anthropological telos in theological anthropology addresses the “then” and “now” of the creation-recreation metanarrative. The future resurrection is the final “then.” While it is beyond the scope of this article to investigate positions within the monism-dualism debate, resurrection demands that a position be taken on the relationship between a human being’s material and immaterial parts. It is adequate for this discussion on anthropological telos to accept a mediating position like John Cooper’s holistic dualism presented in *Body, Soul, and Everlasting Life*.

My own conclusion is that the truth combines elements of the two extremes—that the Hebrew view of human nature strongly emphasizes living a full and integrated existence before God in this world, but that it unquestionably also includes the belief in continued existence after biological death. If I am correct, then Old Testament anthropology is both holistic and dualistic in senses yet to be explicated.⁶

While science and philosophy settle for functional holism, the “senses yet to be explicated” by Cooper is that theological anthropology requires holistic dualism.⁷

⁴ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1998), 533.

⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 445.

⁶ John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), kindle loc. 600.

⁷ Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, kindle loc. 2584. “Christians who are committed to a holistic dualism because they believe that this is the sort of anthropology entailed by Scripture can work out of their commitment and

Scripture, then, becomes the lens through which humanity can be understood in reality and in ultimate reality, as Christ-likeness in the body and as Christ in the resurrected body. This has individual and organizational implications, as humanity and all creation move toward an ultimate conclusion.

Relationality fits the “now” telos in theological anthropology. LeRon Shults in *Reforming Theological Anthropology* demonstrates the adjustment made in theological anthropology to include human behavior, writing, “The philosophical turn to relationality has shaped not only the way we think about knowing and being, but also our understanding of human acting.”⁸ In a subsequent article, Shults leverages Wolfhart Pannenberg to argue for a refiguring of Logos Christology: “If everything is dissolved into otherness, there is no basis for similarity; the latter is in the same sense required to make sense of the call to become *like* Christ.”⁹ Christian leadership recognizes that this essential form of alterity in theological anthropology leads to flexibility in order to deal with differences among followers with the hope of progressing toward a formative and a final unity and wholeness.¹⁰ Debate in theological anthropology seems to be trending toward an inclusive view of individuals created in God’s image reflected in humanity’s being, acting, and becoming.

In an article dealing with leading congregational

belief as scientists and philosophers with integrity,” kindle loc. 2826.

⁸ F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), kindle loc. 393.

⁹ “The Philosophical Turn to Alterity in Christology and Ethics,” in *Christology and Ethics*, ed. F. LeRon Shults (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 210. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Stanley J. Grenz, *Jesus: God and Man*, trans. D. A. Priebe and L. L. Wilkins (Minneapolis: SCM Press, 2011), 342.

¹⁰ Shults points to three major trajectories in late modern formulations of the doctrine of God including the retrieval of divine infinity, the revival of trinitarian doctrine, and the renewal of eschatological ontology. “The Philosophical Turn,” ed. Shults, 202–206.

change, Bard Norheim points to Wolfhart Pannenberg and Kathryn Tanner to build a case that change requires historicity (as demonstrated in Pannenberg's view of theological anthropology) and plasticity (as demonstrated in Tanner's view of theological anthropology).¹¹ Drawing from Pannenberg, Norheim emphasizes the need to historicize the congregation, showing that "the past, the present, and the future should be involved in a larger, historical, and contextual analysis" without giving into the constraints of nostalgia.¹² Drawing from Tanner, Norheim emphasizes humanity's ability to change, writing, "the reflexive capacities of self-formation mean that human beings can try to reshape themselves in a self-critical fashion, including even desires they cannot help having by nature."¹³ Combining Pannenberg's historicity and Tanner's plasticity creates an expectation that not only is organizational change possible, but also individual change is more than possible. It is inevitable and necessary.

Relationality in Tanner's Plasticity

Kathryn Tanner is an American theologian, the Marquand professor of systematic theology at Yale Divinity School and an adviser to the House of Bishops in the Episcopal Church. From a broad evangelical perspective, she identifies plasticity as the controlling narrative in theological anthropology. *Plasticity* defined is the "susceptibility to being shaped or molded by outside influences."¹⁴ It is the unique human ability to be flexible, adapting to social and environmental changes. Sourced in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, Tanner makes two significant contributions to an understanding of anthropological telos.

The first contribution ties anthropological telos to the

¹¹ Norheim, "A Grain of Wheat," 72.

¹² Norheim, 70.

¹³ Norheim, 71.

¹⁴ Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41.

past. Relationality is rooted in the divine Trinity, specifically expressed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Because plasticity is a key capacity for change, the questions become: Does humanity model developmental progress in some incarnational pattern? How does the Trinity relate to humanity? How are we to participate in the doctrine of perichoresis?¹⁵ The incarnation becomes the public recognition of Christ as God-man, and Christ serves all humanity as the person through whom and by whom humanity will relate to God. Tanner writes:

By becoming incarnate, the second person of the Trinity takes the humanity joined to it into its own relations with Father and Spirit, and therefore in Christ we are shown what the Trinity looks like when it includes the human and what humanity looks like when it is included in the Trinity's own movements—the character of a human life with others when it takes a trinitarian form, as that is displayed in Jesus' own human life.¹⁶

Human relationality is tied to the Trinity in Christ's incarnation only in potential. It is essential to advance through the incarnation to forge human relationality to the Trinity in perpetuity in Christ's resurrection. The incarnation and resurrection emphasize the unified work of the Trinity. They are not mere examples by which humanity shares in trinitarian relationality, but the only means by which humanity relates to God at all. The mission is more encompassing than Tanner describes: "A life empowered by the Spirit in service to the mission of the Father for the world means that Jesus is with and for

¹⁵ Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, kindle loc. 1068. "The point of the doctrine of perichoresis is that in the Trinity, personhood and relation-to-other are not separated as they are in us. The divine persons and the divine relations are mutually constitutive. The event-existence associated with the divine life (y) is one in which there is no tensile anxiety between being a person and being-in-relation," kindle loc. 1070.

¹⁶ "Trinity, Christology, and Community," in *Christology and Ethics*, ed. Kathryn Tanner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 70. Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus Humanity and the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

us, and that we, in turn, are to be with and for one another, in the way that mission specifies.”¹⁷ The incarnation and resurrection of Christ are God’s plan to restore humanity’s relationality to God, lost in the Fall and separated by sin. Christ not only ties theological anthropology to the past, but also to the future, forming an equal hope in the resurrection as in the incarnation.

Tanner’s second contribution ties anthropological telos to the future. *Christ the Key* is sequel to *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*, and in it Tanner argues that the form of Christ is the center of spiritual formation. She calls environmental influences and implications “inputs” that give formative life. Like root structures and photosynthesis, human beings absorb their environment like a plant absorbs light, water, and soil nutrients. “The plant remains what it is, becoming merely a bigger and better version of itself, where there was genuine nourishment for the plant’s good.”¹⁸ Applied to spiritual formation, the goal of anthropological telos is achieved by exposure to the influence of Christ in order to achieve the desired end, as Tanner writes, “When human beings take in God as their proper nourishment, they are reworked according to God’s image, rather than the reverse.”¹⁹ Tanner rightly points out that flourishing in the Christian life occurs in communal relationships. However, what is needed for flourishing communal relationships is a foundational and precedent moment of conversion. There must be a beginning and ending, an incarnation and resurrection, respectively.

The past and future are tied to the likeness of Christ as Tanner writes, “One with Christ, incomprehensible in his divinity, we take on the very incomprehensible of the divine rather than simply running after it, working to reproduce it in human terms.”²⁰ Tanner’s position can be described as a reflexive capacity for self-formation as

¹⁷ Tanner, “Trinity, Christology, and Community,” 73.

¹⁸ Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 42.

¹⁹ Tanner, 43.

²⁰ Tanner, 56.

Norheim summarizes, “Kathryn Tanner makes the Christ-event her crux of arguing that human nature is changeable, as in order to be changed into the divine image through Christ, human beings must have a changeable nature.”²¹ Anthropological telos, tied to the past in the incarnation and to the future in the resurrection, roots all change in Christ.

The goal in presenting relationality in Tanner’s view of plasticity is not to claim theological unity on the matter, but to show a point at which Christian leadership can benefit from an informed theological anthropology. Reaching a desired telos involves streams of influences. Leaders must capitalize on the hopefulness of potential growth and the flexibility to chart where a follower might be on the growth curve.

Resurrection in Pannenberg’s Historicity

Wolfhart Pannenberg, as a German theologian and student of Karl Barth, believed rationality verified all truth claims. His theological contributions extend beyond theological anthropology, which has led John Frame to describe him as “the most impressive individual thinker in Protestant systematic theology.”²² Pannenberg follows a similar line of Trinitarian argumentation as Kathryn Tanner by connecting the image of God to relationality.²³ Two of Pannenberg’s contributions are noteworthy, specifically to the concept of anthropological telos: his view of man’s historicity, the concept of *Geschichtlichkeit* as presented in Pannenberg’s *Anthropologie in Theologischer Perspektive*, and his now-then distinction between exocentricity and exocentric destiny.²⁴

First, historicity is the scientific pursuit of history. It validates truth by reason. As Frame points out, Christian

²¹ Norheim, “A Grain of Wheat,” 71.

²² John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2015), 429.

²³ Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, kindle loc. 1476.

²⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in Theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 472–501.

truth-claims like the resurrection are only accepted by faith. Pannenberg rejected the view of faith and sought to historically validate all Christian truth-claims. Because it cannot be proven rationalistically, Pannenberg comfortably left open-ended gaps in his view of the resurrection.²⁵ His emphasis on historicity allows an individual to see himself or herself in a larger narrative progressing toward a final destination. Kam Wong describes Pannenberg's history as "destiny-centered" and "history-focused," adding, "For Pannenberg, for human beings to be as historical beings is not only the goal, but also the movement of the history that leads to the goal. This movement derives its unity from the future by which it will be completed."²⁶ Historicizing sets humanity in the larger narrative of past, present, and future. Therefore, it should be a key factor in theological anthropology's understanding of the resurrection.

Second, exocentricity and exocentric destiny in Pannenberg's thought create a now-then distinction similar to the distinction between a formative and final anthropological telos. This is foundational to the leadership goals presented in this article. Shults marks the difference: "Pannenberg believes both that we are the image of God (exocentric structure of existence) and that we must anticipate a final consummation in which we will become the image of God (exocentric destiny)."²⁷ By this he uses exocentricity to stand for the constitutive relationality within the human nature that has been broken by sin and exocentric destiny to stand for the anticipation of a final consummation of what mankind was originally created to be.²⁸ Both poles of the now-then aspect combine to form a theological understanding of the image of God.

²⁵ Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 437–439.

²⁶ Kam Ming Wong, *Wolfhart Pannenberg on Human Destiny*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies Series (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 161.

²⁷ Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, kindle loc. 1540.

²⁸ Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, kindle loc. 1503, 1524.

Because Pannenberg borrows the terms *exocentricity* and *exocentric destiny* from philosophical anthropology, his allegiance to rationality is clearly influenced by his goal to historically validate truth-claims. Although his commitment fails to account for the supernatural work of God in the resurrection, it underlines the two goals of anthropological telos.²⁹

Similar to plasticity, the goal in presenting resurrection in Pannenberg's historicity is not to achieve theological uniformity. Rather, it is to acknowledge the larger narrative in which humanity fits. History moves toward an exocentric destiny, and the momentum carries humanity along individually and collectively. Being created in God's image, or what Pannenberg describes as the exocentric structure of existence, anticipates the final consummation. Christian leaders must keep this end goal at the center of leadership. Achievements are not only here and now. The end is an eternal goal.

Anthropological Telos and the Progress of Change

Much of the debate in theological anthropology attempts to reconcile the material and immaterial parts of humanity in materialistic or scientific terms.³⁰ Human beings adapt and change. How can humanity's material and immaterial parts be reconciled? The answer follows the now-then progression of anthropological telos. What is man's formative end in the present life? What is man's final end in the resurrection? Essential to the leadership model encouraged in this article is the principle that the formative end is predicated on the final end. Anthropological telos is a future view of what humanity is becoming, and the "becomingness" is the process of change. Christian leaders must account for the near and the far views. Decision points must be made with the intent of developing the desired future in this life, assured

²⁹ Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 435, 439.

³⁰ See the debate between monism and dualism in Cooper's *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*.

of the ultimate transformation to come.

Norheim applies telos to organizational change rooted in a future view of humanity. He cites Jan-Olav Henriksen to show that change is not only possible in theological anthropology, but it is inherent and ineludible. He writes, "Change is inevitable in the life of the human being, and change and development are important features in the Christian anthropology, as both the future and the surroundings of human beings are filled with the potential for change."³¹ Agreeing with Norheim's thesis, this article addresses how a leader promotes change toward an anthropological telos.

This article will distinguish itself from Norheim's view in two ways. First, it is better to view the future as an anthropological telos, rather than a theological telos of anthropological change because humanity is bound materially and immaterially to the future defined by God.³² Second, anthropological telos does not begin by baptism and cannot be rooted in moral behaviorism.³³ Anthropological telos is a formative and a final change through regeneration and resurrection. Even with these two distinctions, Norheim has provided a helpful frame to understand the goals of anthropological telos and the basis from which to suggest a leadership model to achieve those goals.

Christian leadership shaped by anthropological telos focuses on the individual first and the institution second, giving attention to people before institutions, soul care over organizational structure. The goal is transformation into God's likeness. Naturally individual change leads to institutional change because institutions are nothing more than groups of individuals.

In order to promote desired change, Christian leaders must be flexible, matching their leadership style to the

³¹ Norheim, "A Grain of Wheat," 69. Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Imago Dei: Den Teologiske Konstruksjonen Av Menneskets Identitet* (Oslo, Norway: Gyldendal, Akademisk, 2003), 333, 281.

³² Norheim, 63.

³³ Norheim, 77.

follower's development level and leading him or her toward the goals of anthropological telos. As stated at the outset, change necessary to anthropological telos is the ruling principle by which a leader uses flexibility to guide followers to relationality as a formative end and to resurrection as a final end. The former is a pursuit of Christ-likeness as the renewed image of God, and the latter is the hope of resurrection as the restored image of God.

The Image of God

Because the image of God is the goal in the formative and the final ends of anthropological telos, it must be defined. While defining the image of God extends well beyond the scope of this article, it is necessary to mark the boundaries at which Christian leaders can effectively influence followers toward it. The image of God must include two considerations: (1) an understanding of the image of God rooted in the biblical text, and (2) an understanding of the image of God expressed in the leadership context.

First, humanity was originally created in the image and likeness of God.³⁴ Because human beings were created as either male or female, genders complementarily reflect the image of God.³⁵ The terms *image* and *likeness* in Genesis 1:26 distinguish two features of the image of God. The former is the ontological reality; the latter is the functional reality. The image of God distinguishes humanity from all other created beings.³⁶

The functional reality is humanity's dominion over creation. Peter Gentry in *Kingdom Through Covenant*

³⁴ Genesis 1:26–28; 5:1–3; 9:6.

³⁵ Victor Hamilton correctly points out that the grammatical switch from jussive to cohortative Hebrew verbs in Genesis 1:26 indicates a unique, creative act distinguishable from God's creative work on the preceding five days of creation (Gen. 125). Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1–17* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 134.

³⁶ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 532.

considers mental and spiritual qualities an inadequate interpretation of Genesis 1:26–28. For Gentry, the image of God is for the purpose of kingdom rule, translating Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them rule over...” Dominion delegates God’s authority to humanity as God’s representatives. Dominion is the result of the image as Gentry notes, “The ruling is not the essence of the divine image, but rather a result of being made as the divine image.”³⁷ The functional view does no disservice to other views of the image of God, nor does it contradict them. The image of God is not one aspect of the whole, but rather it is the whole of humanity’s being and function in the created order. Following Gentry’s reasoning, Christian leadership becomes a functional stewardship of the image of God, a dominion of souls, and a stewardship of their teleological destiny.

Second, leadership is an exercise of dominion over God’s most prized creation. Humanity is unique from all other created beings because of God’s image. For example, longing is a unique human desire and expresses a relationship to God as his image bearer. Why does humanity’s heart yearn for justice? It is because humanity is created in God’s image, and that image gives a sense of eternity to the soul.³⁸ Humanity’s eternality and value are stamped in personhood and reflected in relationality, which is why leadership is an important application of theological anthropology. Leaders steward God’s most valuable creation.

The Image of Christ as the Image of God

The Bible points to Jesus Christ as the image of God. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15). The New Testament commands

³⁷ Peter John Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12(1) (2008): 26. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012).

³⁸ Genesis 9:6.

Christians to grow into Christ's image. Romans 8:29 notes the progression: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." To the extent believers conform to the image of Christ, they are progressively restoring the image of God. Although distorted by sin, God's image in man is renewable and will be perfectly restored in the resurrection. The New Testament is full of admonitions for the present conformity to Christ's image.³⁹ Anthony Hoekema writes, "Conformity to the image of the Son—and therefore to the image of God—is described here as the purpose or goal for which God has predestined his chosen people."⁴⁰ Therefore, pointing to the image of Christ as the image of God points to anthropological telos.

The formative and final goals in anthropological telos indicate that individuals can and will change. The process of change is not only visible in the material body, but also notable in the immaterial soul. While the latter begins to flourish, the former begins to fade (2 Cor. 4:16).

The image of God is rooted in creation and restored in re-creation. Humanity was created in the image of God and placed within a context of relationality with God and with itself to live out the implications of the image reflecting Trinitarian relationality.⁴¹ Re-creation comes in part at the moment of regeneration when the Holy Spirit creates new spiritual life within a person, but complete re-creation awaits the resurrection. Between the two

³⁹ 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:9–10; Eph. 4:22–24, 5:1; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Cor. 15:49; and 1 John 3:2

⁴⁰ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 23.

⁴¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 533. "God's creation was for definite purposes. The human was intended to know, love, and obey God, and live in harmony with other humans, as the story of Cain and Abel indicates. The human was certainly placed here on earth to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. But these relationships and this function presuppose something else."

advances a slow, but hopeful, progression where Christian leadership exists.

Leading People Toward an Anthropological Telos

This article has argued that anthropological telos calls for flexibility as the key Christian leadership principle guiding followers toward relationality as a formative end and resurrection as a final end. Christian leaders must model their leadership style with consideration of the human capacity to change and grow. It is a hopeful call to leadership, believing that human beings individually and humanity organizationally can progress to higher degrees of competency and complexity, a progression inherent in being created in God's image. But is there a leadership model that best represents a theological understanding of anthropological telos? How can a leader draw from humanity's constitution and apply it to tangible individual and organizational goals? The answer can be found in a situational model of leadership.⁴²

Situational Leadership asserts that different situations require different leadership styles. A leader must direct a follower in a way most helpful for the follower's competence and commitment.⁴³ It is based on the understanding that followers can and want to develop, but there is no single, best leadership style to encourage development.⁴⁴ Situational Leadership best accounts for individual diversity and uniqueness in concert with the implications of the image of God true of all humanity.⁴⁵

⁴² For the purpose of this article, Situational Leadership will refer to the Situational Leadership II model refined by Ken Blanchard, Ron Hambleton, Drea Zigarmi, and Doug Forsyth in 1985. Kenneth H. Blanchard, "Situational Leadership II: A Dynamic Model for Managers and Subordinates," *Executive Excellence*, January-March (1985).

⁴³ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2012), 101–102.

⁴⁴ Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level: Blanchard on Leadership and Creating High Performing Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: FT Press, 2006), 88

⁴⁵ Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2003), kindle loc. 355, 459, 1289. Christian Smith points out that man is uniquely self-conscious, moral, and personal.

Variables include a spectrum of abilities and motivations. Each mark on the spectrum requires leadership flexibility to adapt, choosing among a directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating leadership style. Blanchard illustrates by using a bicycle analogy. When someone first learns to ride, he or she is an enthusiastic beginner who needs direction. After the first few falls and bruises, the rider becomes a disillusioned learner with shaken confidence who needs coaching. Once a rider grows in ability and confidence, support is needed. When cycling becomes second nature, the rider becomes a self-reliant achiever who only needs permission from a delegator.⁴⁶ Each stage represents a higher progression of leadership. Success is defined by moving followers to the next level, confident that humanity was created for such formation. The overarching goal of Situational Leadership is to develop followers toward higher degrees of competency and commitment.

Effective Situational Leadership adapts to the circumstance, the task, and the follower.⁴⁷ Anthropological telos informs the leader that all three contribute to the formation of the desired end, the progress achievable between regeneration and resurrection.

Three suggested practices can apply the Situational Leadership model to the task of Christian leadership. First, the leader must know the follower well enough to assess his or her ability. Second, the leader must be flexible in choosing a directive or supportive style best suited to the follower. Third, the leader must establish goals lofty enough to inspire life-long spiritual progress and specific enough to motivate real-life productivity.

Know the Follower

Effectiveness depends heavily on the leader's ability to evaluate the situation, the competency and

⁴⁶ Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level*, 90.

⁴⁷ Blanchard, 88, 99.

commitment of the follower, and the goal to be accomplished. Competency is the skill a follower brings to the task, and it can be gained through formal education, job training, and life experience. To discover competency, the leader must evaluate prior performance. Commitment is the follower's motivation for the goal. Commitment is expressed by confidence, interest, and enthusiasm, and it can be evaluated by a question-and-answer interview.⁴⁸

Ironically, the leader must become a learner too, evaluating and reevaluating the "who," the "where," the "what," and the "why." Who is being led? Where are they being led? What are they being led to accomplish? And why are they being led to accomplish it? All goals begin with knowing the follower's present reality and moving him or her forward. Christian leadership is naturally disposed toward the Situational Leadership model because the biblical principles of disciple-making are embedded throughout. Jesus' leadership of the disciples serves as an example. He led them according to their development level. "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word" (John 8:43), and saying, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Jesus' hesitancy was a matter of timing as much as competency, and so it is with Situational Leadership. Moving toward a desired goal requires knowing the progression of steps between the follower and the accomplishment.

Situational Leadership identifies four follower development levels including: (1) an enthusiastic beginner with high commitment and low competence, (2) a disillusioned learner with low commitment and some competence, (3) a capable but cautious performer with variable commitment and high competence, and (4) a self-reliant achiever with high commitment and high competence. Development levels are "the extent to which a person has mastered the skills necessary for the task at

⁴⁸ Northouse, *Leadership*, 99.

hand and has developed a positive attitude toward the task.”⁴⁹ Competency is skill and knowledge. Commitment is willingness. Anthropological telos informs the leader to evaluate the follower based on his or her relationality to God and others. It also informs the leader that the ultimate achievement of the follower’s full potential rests on God to sanctify in this reality and to glorify in the final reality.

Choose the Leadership Style

Situational Leadership encourages four leadership styles, depending on the follower’s development level. (1) A directing style leads the enthusiastic beginner by defining goals, giving clear instructions, and supervising work. (2) A coaching style leads the disillusioned learner by clarifying purpose, directing work, and incorporating the follower’s ideas and suggestions about the task. (3) A supporting leadership style leads the capable but cautious performer by including the follower in decision making and actively listening and facilitating the follower’s effort to accomplish the task. (4) The delegating leadership style leads the self-reliant achiever by setting goals with the follower’s input, turning over all decision-making responsibilities, and providing direction only as needed for accomplishing the task.⁵⁰ Choosing the best style depends on the nature of the task and the needs of the follower.

Anthropological telos motivates the leader to develop the self-direction and self-confidence of the follower. Just as the purpose of Situational Leadership is to accomplish the task and develop the follower, so it can be applied to Christian leadership. Christian leaders care for the task and its completion, but they also care for the followers’

⁴⁹ Kenneth H. Blanchard, Drea Zigarmi, and Robert B. Nelson, “Situational Leadership® After 25 Years: A Retrospective,” *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 1(1) (November 1, 1993): 21–36, 27.

⁵⁰ Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership II*, updated ed. (New York: William Morrow, 2013), 54–61.

spiritual development. The leaders desire to make the followers fruitful and productive in their work and mature them in spiritual Christ-likeness. Character development is as important as task accomplishment.

Flexibility is the leader's ability to use one of four different leadership styles effectively. The style must match the follower's development level with the goal of progressing the follower to a more self-directed competency level and self-confident commitment level. Blanchard communicates the sweet spot in terms of supervision:

Over-supervising or under-supervising—that is, giving people too much or too little direction—has a negative impact on people's development. That's why it's so important to match leadership style to development level. This matching strategy is the essence of Situational Leadership[®], a leadership model originally created by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey at Ohio University in 1968. The revised model, Situational Leadership[®] II, has endured as an effective approach to managing and motivating people because it opens up communication and fosters a partnership between the leader and the people the leader supports and depends on. This model can be summed up by this familiar phrase: Different strokes for different folks.⁵¹

Partnership performance is a relationship between leader and follower in which the leader gains the follower's permission to use a leadership style matching his or her development level. In anthropological telos, this give-and-take is necessary for progress to be made toward a formative anthropological telos.

It must not be overlooked in Christian leadership that both leader and follower are moving toward the same goal. Situational Leadership is intended to be a transformational journey for both. This is the reason why

⁵¹ Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level*, 88.

the Situational Leadership model is an effective model for Christian leadership, and applicable individually as one-on-one discipleship and organizationally as church leadership.

Set the Leadership Goals

Because of the progression of development levels and the dual purpose of task completion and follower growth, Situational Leadership naturally matches Christian leadership informed by anthropological telos. The situation of Situational Leadership corresponds to Pannenberg's historicity, and the development levels correspond to Tanner's plasticity. Effective leadership helps a follower progress through development levels toward greater self-direction.

The Christian leader who strives to use Situational Leadership to achieve practical and spiritual outcomes has two collective goals. The goals reflect the now-then perspective of anthropological telos. The first goal aims to develop the follower into his or her full potential as created in the image of God. This includes personal character, spirituality, and productivity, the process beginning with regeneration. The second goal entrusts the follower to God's ultimate character formation in the resurrection: the restored image of God. This includes eternal perfection of character, spirituality, and productivity. As humanity was originally intended in creation, so humanity will be restored in re-creation. This hope is realized only through the redemptive and resurrection work of Jesus Christ.

First is the goal of productivity. Work reflects humanity's dominion aspect of the image of God. The Christian leader aims to develop the follower's full potential. Situational Leadership acknowledges this goal as advancing from one development level to another.⁵²

⁵² Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Nelson, "Situational Leadership® After 25 Years: A Retrospective," 27. A development level is "the extent to which a person has mastered the skills necessary for the task at hand and has developed a positive attitude toward the task."

Development levels initially serve as the leader's guide to choosing an appropriate leadership style best suited to the encourage productivity. Not only does marking the development level encourage productivity, but it also sets the goal for a higher level of self-direction and productivity.

Christian institutions are not exempt from the demands to produce. Leaders of Christian institutions feel the pressure of producing results. Practically, this goal encourages a follower to produce in every way possible. Spiritually, this goal encourages the biblical task of disciple-making. Discipling is the development process described in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Combining practical and spiritual parts unites the material and immaterial parts of the image of God in humanity. Anthropological telos points to the future capacity that is yet to be fulfilled within God's design.

Second is the goal of perseverance. If telos is the human capacity to change and the goal to which God is changing all humanity, then there is an ultimate, yet unrealized, reality in which the work of God is superseding human effort. Speaking of the tribulations preceding the end of age, Jesus said, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Similarly, Jesus encouraged his disciples to endure persecution with the same eschatological expectation, saying, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:22). There is a final hope of resurrection awaiting those who finish the course entrusted to them by God.

Christian leaders labor with past, present, and future perspectives of potential reality, reality, and ultimate reality. The Apostle Paul's leadership ministry demonstrates this perspective and provides a biblical precedent for all Christian leadership. Wade Berry offers a convincing analysis of the relationship between Paul's

theological anthropology and leadership practice.⁵³ Citing three key Pauline passages, Berry identifies different leadership styles based on Pauline rhetoric found in his letters.⁵⁴ Paul chose to speak (and lead) differently based on the situation and the needs of the follower. Berry writes, “Paul wrote harshly when the community (or members within it) was in danger of losing its identity, and wrote mildly when the community simply needed guidance as to how its identity should dictate its actions in the world or when the community needed reassurance in the face of external or internal pressure.”⁵⁵ For example, Paul instructs the Christians in Thessalonica, “We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). To the Roman Christians he urged, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice” and “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:1, 2). To the Galatian Christians, Paul asks rhetorically, “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3). The Christian leader deals with the present reality of each follower with similar particularity, but the aim remains fixed. Leadership focuses on progressing toward the formative and the final ends in light of anthropological telos. This destiny is as unique as the individual and as common as the image of God in humanity.

Anthropological telos is a preferred view of the future emphasizing humanity’s capacity to change and the goal to which the transformation is progressing. Christian leadership informed by theological anthropology requires flexibility toward the two goals of productivity and

⁵³ Wade Berry, “Paul, People, and Pointing the Way: Exploring the Relationship Between Paul’s Anthropology and His Practice of Leadership,” *Restoration Quarterly* 52(1) (2010): 1–17. Robert D. Dale, *Leading Edge: Leadership Strategies From the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ Wade Berry, “Paul, People, and Pointing the Way,” 11–16. 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Romans 12:1–2, and Galatians 3:1–5.

⁵⁵ Berry, 16.

perseverance, a formative Christ-likeness through relationality and a final Christ-likeness through resurrection.

Situational Leadership is a model of leadership that is dependent on the leader's flexible use of leadership styles based on the situation and the follower's level of competency and commitment. Effective leadership depends on the right combination of directive and supportive help enabling a follower to succeed and to progress to higher levels of self-direction. This model of leadership is not only good management, but also founded on humanity's ability to progress to desired goals. Situational Leadership moves anthropological telos to its practical application. The final end is not of our own creation. The final resurrection work is God's to complete. Christian leaders must keep this end goal at the center of leadership. Achievements are not only in the here and now. The ultimate end is an eternal goal.

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