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Articles

Book Reviews

Introduction to the Spring 2020 JRL

Robert K. Martin, editor

It is Easter April 2020, and the world is turned upside down. The Covid-19 virus pandemic has brought the world's economy to a stand-still as people around the globe self-isolate in order to slow the virus' spread. Because of prohibitions against congregating in groups larger than ten people, church buildings, seminaries, government offices, and businesses have all closed for weeks. A great many try to work from home. All of a sudden, the status of otherwise invisible, low-paid workers – restaurant personnel, warehouse workers and stock clerks, food suppliers, health-care workers, etc. – come out of the shadows to be rightly deemed by society as essential. Vast numbers of people, however, have found themselves newly unemployed and they struggle mightily to meet their basic needs. Most tragically, hundreds of thousands are gravely ill, and untold multitudes are dying.

To meet the needs of a society in such turmoil, all kinds of non-profit organizations, including religious communities, find themselves simultaneously wrestling with dire financial circumstances just as even more people need the charitable services they provide as well as a hope-filled vision for the future they proclaim.

In such an unprecedented social shut-down, there is no "normal." And because treatments and vaccines for the virus will be slow to market, because the virus is "novel" and extremely contagious, and because the elderly and immune-compromised are at grave risk, it is unlikely that a "new normal" will emerge anytime soon. We cannot rely on past or conventional techniques to address today's unprecedented troubles. With both the problems and solutions squarely positioned in the category of "unknown", the challenges this society faces are the very definition of "adaptive".

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It will be the primary responsibility of leaders in every type of organization and institution – profit, nonprofit, and governmental – to bring people together to meet the adaptive challenges they face. Certainly, there will be some technical fixes that will be helpful, but the current pandemic – along with the crises of ecological degradation, climate change, socio-political polarization, increasing inequality, and so many other major issues we face – pose adaptive challenges unlike anything the world has faced.

To step up to these serious challenges, leadership will need to be extremely imaginative, innovative, principled, and energetic. Moreover, the style and processes of leadership will need to shift dramatically from wielding unilateral power and control to evoking contributions multilaterally across all parts of organizations and from all sectors and levels of society, and especially from those who are most at risk and who are the "least" in society.

The present issue of the Journal of Religious Leadership, in the making for more than a year, seems extraordinarily timely. In these pages are four essays that serendipitously offer methods and practices for adaptive leadership in difficult circumstances.

Zachariah Ellis reframes notions of power and leadership within a paradigm of trinitarian theology. Illustrated by a case study of one congregation's struggle with an unaffordable building, he proposes a model of "shared leadership". Informed primarily by Jurgen Moltmann's trinitarian theology and a rich, sacramental perspective, Ellis describes the specific principles pertaining to and the nature of power of shared leadership. He argues convincingly that ministry is much more faithful and effective when it transcends "heroic" models of solitary leadership to a theologically constituted relational style of leadership that evokes greater creative/innovative participation in the life of God, thereby raising the capacity of congregations – and all organizations – to be faithful and fruitful.

The second article is a little experimental for the JRL. During the 2019 ARL conference in Minneapolis, **Craig Hendrickson** convened a conversation with two local, evangelical pastor/activists to talk about their understandings of power from their respective social placements and institutional roles. It was a wide-ranging

discussion about how the Gospel propels each of them into different but complementary missional approaches. The main thrust of the conversation centered on "White Followership" as an inversion of typical power relations between white and minority persons. This stimulating conversation was transcribed and edited as an article because we thought the content would be important and useful to our readers. The editorial board would appreciate your feedback on the format.

Just at the moment when everyone has turned to online platforms for social engagement, for business, and even for church services, **Ryan Panzer** offers extremely useful and winsome advice on fostering eucharistic community. He argues that church leaders should have been teaching, preaching, and modeling life-giving, sacramental ministry online well before the current pandemic. Pastors tend to steer clear of engaging online communities critically, from a theological and spiritual orientation. But because the various arenas of social media (eg., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, etc.) are notoriously mean-spirited, even dangerous for young and old alike, Panzer encourages pastors to preach, teach, and engage social media sacramentally. He even suggests a few principles for celebrating the Eucharist online, which is quite controversial within some Christian traditions. But his argument for online Eucharist – rightly administered! – is thoughtful and worthy of serious engagement.

Our fourth essay is authored by the submissions editor of the JRL: **Lisa Withrow**. She has recently transitioned into a new career as a Gestalt-style Leadership Coach. Her training and experience as a leadership coach (as well as her many years on the theological faculty and as Academic Dean of a seminary) has led her to new methods for evoking and strengthening greater faithfulness and effectiveness of leaders, especially during liminal times and spaces. Lisa argues for the importance of an inquisitive approach to leadership that draws out persons' best thinking, deepest motivations, and most meaningful engagement when confronting difficult adaptive challenges. She argues that not only is coaching a valuable aid to leaders, leaders can learn methods of

asking evocative questions – repetitively, with a discerning ear, and with gentle responsiveness – for the purpose of co-creating a new, more faithful future.

The JRL editorial board hopes these articles serve our readers well as together we participate in and lead our communities to engage the current context with grace, enthusiasm, and insightful creativity.

Important Notes from the JRL Editorial Board:

One year ago at the 2019 ARL conference, the membership decided to change the publishing format of this and future issues of the JRL. We will continue to print copies of the JRL for libraries and other institutional subscribers. But in order to disseminate the journal in a more timely and accessible manner, issues will be provided electronically for individual subscribers. Each subscriber will receive email notification with links to individual articles and to the issue as a whole, in pdf format available for download. In order to download, you will need to be a member/subscriber of the ARL/JRL and login through your account.

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In closing, I want to say a personal word of gratitude for the tremendous service offered to the JRL by Lisa Withrow as she steps away from the position of Submissions Editor. She has been a wonderful colleague and trusted friend in that role, and I am so very thankful and relieved that she will continue to serve on the editorial board.

A Theology of Power in Shared Leadership Teams

Zachariah C. Ellis

Abstract

Shared leadership is an emerging leadership practice for many congregations. Yet its practice in Christian congregations remains understudied and undertheorized. This essay argues that shared leadership is a practice that corresponds to and facilitates the community's increased participation in the trinitarian life of God through the practice of mutual influence, collective agency, fluid expertise, and growth-in-connection. Thus, shared leadership is a theologically faithful practice for congregations that are seeking new ways of structuring their life together in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Wesleyan Community Church (WCC) was a predominantly white, middle-class congregation of three hundred with a history of schism.[1] In the 1990s, WCC was planted after a contentious split from another church, and the new congregation never figured out how to work well together. Building a church facility had kept them occupied for a while, but now they were five years into an unaffordable mortgage and were not growing at the pace required to fulfill their financial obligations. Out of desperation, they called Eric, a young pastor, full of potential, in hopes that he would be able to bring increased growth to the congregation. Over the next two years, Eric practiced shared leadership with the youth and children's pastors and empowered church members to help lead various ministries. Young families began attending, bringing their enthusiasm into the community. A certain buzz filled the air on

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[1] This case study is based upon a real congregation. All names and identifiers have been changed.

Sundays. Yet some members resisted these changes. They could feel their power slipping away as power became more dispersed throughout the congregation. With a balloon payment on their mortgage looming, the tension in this congregation was rising. Eric knew that they had to undergo drastic adaptive change if WCC was to survive.[2] They needed to become a people who used power as their crucified Christ had. How might Eric help this congregation take the next faithful step?

This scenario is all too common as many congregations in North America are facing dwindling numbers and finances. The experience of loss has forced numerous congregations to change or face the possibility of closing their doors permanently. Change efforts often fail because of power struggles.[3] Many scholars have reimagined what power looks like in the kingdom of God, but this has yet to impact how many congregations structure their life together. Instead, most current pastoral paradigms follow a monarchical model that places the pastor at the center of power and facilitates conditions where power and authority can be misused and abused.[4] Congregations need leadership tools that are theologically faithful and facilitate a more cruciform use of power.[5]

Shared leadership has emerged as a viable leadership practice for many congregations. Shared leadership is a dynamic influence process among persons-in-relation in teams such that leadership roles and influence are distributed among team members to

[2] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1994).
[3] John P. Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail," *Harvard Business Review* 85(1) (January 2007): 96–103; John P. Kotter and Leonard A. Schlesinger, "Choosing Strategies for Change," *Harvard Business Review* 86(7/8) (August 2008): 130–39.
[4] See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973), 17.
[5] Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

accomplish a shared goal.[6] There are four characteristics that shared leadership teams in congregations exhibit to varying degrees. First, team members mutually influence each other to accomplish their shared goals.[7] Second, teams exercise collective agency and take responsibility for decisions as a team.[8] Third, teams practice fluid expertise, moving around the role of primary influencer, depending upon the situation and skill sets within the team.[9] Finally, participants are committed to the growth-in-connection of other team members, recognizing that holiness is something best sought together.[10] Shared leadership teams might be co-pastors sharing the role of lead pastor, pastoral teams who may or may not have more traditional primary spheres of influence, lay-clergy hybrid teams, or entirely lay-led congregations. Although team structures vary widely, these four characteristics are present at different levels in every shared leadership team.

Several sociological trends in the United States over the past fifty years have allowed shared leadership to emerge more frequently and make it a contextually appropriate practice.[11] The first of these interrelated trends is a rising democratization of society and the church with an increased expectation that people will participate in decision-making processes. Coupled with this is a second trend—a democratization of knowledge characterized by a decreased role for the expert, a growing sense that people's perceptions are relative, and

[6] Cf. Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, "All Those Years Ago," in Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership, eds. Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2003), 1; Jinlong Zhu et al., "Shared Leadership: A State-of-the-Art Review and Future Research Agenda," Journal of Organizational Behavior 39 (2018): 836.

[7] Pearce and Conger, "All Those Years Ago," 8–9.

[8] David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen, *Power Up: Transforming Organizations Through Shared Leadership* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), 25ff.

[9] Joyce K. Fletcher and Katrin Käufer, "Shared Leadership: Paradox and Possibility," in *Shared Leadership*, 29.

[10] Fletcher and Kaüfer, 27ff.

[11] Cf. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 13; Lee Beach and Andrew Rutledge, "Flat World, Flat Leadership: The Philosophical and Theological Ideals That Inform a Paradigm for Twenty-First Century Leadership," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 18(1) (Spring 2019): 5–24.

an explosion of internet-based platforms that allow anybody with an internet connection to share their opinion. The third trend is an emerging relational anthropology. Social scientists are increasingly describing how a person is socially embedded, develops an identity in relationship with others, and flourishes most when surrounded by a strong community.[12] Fourth, financial difficulties plague many congregations. With the rise of the "nones" (those who are religiously unaffiliated),[13] shrinking churches,[14] and aging clergy,[15] many congregations are struggling to pay a full-time pastor.[16] Increasingly, congregations are relying upon creative leadership structures that do not rely upon a full-time ordained pastor. The final trend is an increase of knowledge workers. The last several decades have seen a steady decrease in manufacturing positions and a steady increase in the services industry, particularly health care and social assistance.[17] Many congregations have seen shared leadership as a contextually appropriate response to these trends because of the way it allows for increased participation, fosters community, offers a financially viable solution, and aligns with the experiences of the increasing number of knowledge workers.

Before we return to Wesleyan Community Church and how power is manifested in shared leadership, this essay will develop an

[12] See Nancy Ammerman, "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion,* ed. Michele Dillon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 207–224; Darren E. Sherkat, "Religious Socialization: Sources of Influence and Influences of Agency, in Dillon, *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, 151–163; Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, *Relational "(e) Pistemologies"* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

[13] Pew Research Center: Religious and Public Life Forum, "'Nones' on the Rise," October 9, 2012, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/ (accessed August 19, 2019).

[14] Pew Research Center: Religious and Public Life Forum, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," May 12, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/ (accessed August 19, 2019).

[15] Jackson W. Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 71–78.

[16] Robert Wuthnow, *The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woe* (New York: Oxford University, 1997).

[17] Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Largest Industries by State: 1990–2013," The Economics Daily (U.S. Department of Labor, July 28, 2014), https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20140728.htm (accessed August 19, 2019).

ecclesiology that is rooted in our participation in the triune God. I will consider Jürgen Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity and place the perichoretic life of God as our orienting concern.[18] Next, from Robert Muthiah I will borrow six ways that communities of faith can correspond to the life of God. Then, I will describe how shared leadership embodies these guidelines and faithfully corresponds to the life of God. Finally, I will return to WCC to illustrate the realities of power and how it might be used faithfully. Throughout, I will argue that as we participate in the perichoretic life of God, our life together should correspond to and facilitate the community's increased participation in the life of God. Shared leadership is a practice that does this through the mutual influence of team members, collective agency exercised by the team, the practice of fluid expertise, and the growth-in-connection that occurs. Thus, shared leadership is a theologically faithful practice for congregations that are seeking new ways of structuring their life together.

Jürgen Moltmann's Social Doctrine of the Trinity

In The Trinity and the Kingdom, German theologian Jürgen Moltmann begins with God as three, arguing that beginning with God as one—as Western theologians have historically done—consistently leads to either Arianism or Sabellianism (129–150).[19] Instead of beginning with the Father, Moltmann begins with "the history of Jesus, the Son, for he is the revealer of the Trinity" (65). The most important title of Jesus is Son because it is as the Son of the Father that the Son is eternally begotten. It is the Son who is the Incarnate One because the Son "is the Logos through whom the Father creates his world" and "that image of God for which God destines human beings" (117, italics original). The Son alone can invite humanity into his sonship so that all might be children of God and participate in the life of God. Moltmann places the cross at the center of the Trinity: "Before the world was, the sacrifice

[18] I am borrowing the term *orienting concern* from Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 18.
[19] In-text citations in this section refer to Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993).

was already in God. No Trinity is conceivable without the Lamb, without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son. For he is the slaughtered Lamb glorified in eternity" (83). This is the act of the Trinity that provides the fullest revelation of God's essence and the orienting lens through which we must view the history of God.

Next, Moltmann considers the one without origin, the Father of the Son, who eternally begets the Son and eternally breathes out the Spirit. For this reason, it is not the first statement about God in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that provides the essence of the Father's nature—"Father almighty"—but rather the second one—"begotten from the Father before all ages."[20] The Father is indeed the maker of heaven and earth, but it is out of the Father's love for the Son and in the power of the Spirit that the Father creates. Consequently, we can understand love as the essence of the Father, for in love the Father eternally begets the Son and eternally breathes forth the Spirit. And it is in the overflowing love of the Father, Son, and Spirit that the universe is created.

While much of Trinity focuses on the Son and the Father of the Son, the Holy Spirit is just as vital to Moltmann's theology. For Moltmann, "The Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining the bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation" (82). The Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father simultaneously to the Son being eternally begotten by the Father (187). While Moltmann recognizes the ambiguity in the biblical narrative as well as Christian tradition concerning whether the Spirit is a person or an energy, Moltmann insists that we must understand the Spirit as a person with agency. Language is used about the Father or the Son acting through the Spirit, which describes Spirit as energy (114). However, the Spirit also is a subject; as the "glorifying God" and "the unifying God.… The Spirit… is a subject from whose activity the Son and the Father receive their glory and their union" (126). In salvation history, the Spirit's role is vital as the one through whom we become brothers and sisters of the Son and participate in the life of God. It is in the

[20] "Nicene Creed Greek Text with English Translation," earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicene_creed.htm (accessed March 19, 2019).

power of the Spirit that we are caught up in the divine life of God and are "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18).[21]

While Moltmann starts with the Trinity, he still accentuates the oneness of God. Their unity, however, is not found in their shared substance but in their "perichoretic at-oneness":

> By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, that they are one. It is a process of most perfect and intense empathy. Precisely through the personal characteristics that distinguish them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another. In the perichoresis, the very thing that divides them becomes that which binds them together. (157)

Consequently, while God cannot be reduced to one, God also cannot be reduced to three. Understanding God as perichoretic avoids both of these heresies by describing how God's one-ness is possible only because of God's three-ness.[22]

Focusing on the Trinity allows Moltmann the opportunity to reframe the core of God's essence. Instead of insisting on God's immutability and apathy, as many theologians do, Moltmann uses the experience of the Son's utter forsakenness on the cross as the starting point for his theology. On the cross, we see the Son in agony because of his godforsakenness, a Father who is heartbroken at the death of the Son, and the Spirit who is in anguish as God abandons God. The moment of God's fullest revelation of God's essence has the pathos of God at its core. For Moltmann, it is only by focusing on the Trinity that we are able to grasp this truth, for God can only be love if God can suffer. Consequently, if we are to affirm that God is love, then we must start with the triune God.

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[21] All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

[22] See Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53–65; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952).

God's love and pathos guide Moltmann's understanding of salvation as well. For Moltmann, the Trinity's love is so great that it spills over into God's creation, becoming "free and creative.… Creation is a part of the eternal love affair between the Father and the Son…. Creation exists because the eternal love communicates himself creatively to his Other. It exists because the eternal love seeks fellowship and desires response in freedom" (58–59). This love affair continues past the initial point of creation and leads to the Son's godforsakenness so that nobody else would ever have to experience what it means to be forsaken by God. Because of God's love, God is open to the world; because of the cross and resurrection, the Spirit pulls us into participation in the very life of God and grants us fellowship with God.

Coupled with Moltmann's soteriology is a robust eschatology. In order to make space for creation, God had to "concede to his creation the space in which it can exist" (59). Creation was granted freedom in this space to respond to God's love. In the eschaton, when God becomes all in all, humanity will be truly free in its "unhindered participation in the eternal life of the triune God" (222). This is the telos of all creation, the reason that God made the universe. God's ecstatic love longs for that love to be returned. In the eschaton, all of creation will be caught up in "the eternal perichoresis of their love" (177). In this manner, the perichoretic life of the Trinity provides the pattern for the future of the cosmos and the telos for our understanding of salvation.

This brief introduction to Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity has provided a trinitarian foundation upon which to move forward in constructing an ecclesiology. Starting with God's triunity allows us to see how the assertions in 1 John 4 that God is love are possible. God is love because in God's own life, the Father's love for the Son and Spirit, and the Spirit's love for the Father and Son, and the Son's love for the Father and Spirit are at the core of Godself. Out of this overflowing love, the triune God acts perichoretically to create an other who can receive God's love and who can return to participate in God's perichoretic life. The next

section will describe the role that the people who are in Christ play in God's mission of extending the perichoretic fellowship of the triune God to all of creation.

Participation in the Life of God Through Our Baptism

Repeatedly the New Testament uses the phrase "in Christ" to describe Christians. In Romans 6:3, Paul tells us we are "baptized into Christ Jesus." In Galatians 3:28, he reminds his readers that they are "one in Christ Jesus." Again, in 1 Corinthians 1:9, he reminds his readers that they were "called into the fellowship of his Son." This common Pauline phrase explains what it means to participate in Jesus' death and resurrection—we are dead to ourselves and the old way of living in sin and have been "united with [Christ]" in his resurrection (Romans 6:5).

Participation in Christ does not end with the Son. As we are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19), we are baptized into the life of the triune God.[23] The Gospel of John affirms this when Jesus prays that just as he is in the Father and the Father in him, his disciples would be "in us" (John 17:21), as well as by the author of 1 John who reminds readers that "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The Gospel of John also ties baptism of water and of the Spirit together, making it difficult to speak of one without the other (John 3:1–9; cf. Acts 1:5). Consequently, we can say that when we participate in Christ, we participate in the triune God.

Being in Christ is not a static state of being but an eschatological reality that pulls us forward toward increased participation in the life of God. We are already in Christ but are not yet full participants in the life of God. Until that day when the redemption of God is fulfilled, we cannot wholeheartedly participate in the life of the Trinity. Even though we have died to sin and been raised into new life, we continually fall short of God's perfect love. Sin pervades every aspect of our lives, including our relationships and ecclesial structures. All too often, we think we are acting out of love but are only acting

[23] This paragraph draws upon Volf, *After Our Likeness,* 194ff. See also Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 217–21.

out of self-protection. Even the very social structures within which we live are steeped in sinful realities that promote racism, classism, and sexism.[24] History has repeatedly shown that the church can never assume it has arrived but must continually be repenting of its sinfulness and submitting to the Spirit's transformative grace. In the words of Paul in Romans 6:1–2, "should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means!"

Instead, because we have been "baptized into his death," we can "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4). We can trust that the Spirit is continually transforming us (2 Cor. 3:18). God's work in our lives and communities is not yet complete. However, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). To become full participants in the perichoretic life of God is the entire telos of the universe, the reason that God created us. Indeed, this is the missio dei—God pulling all of creation into God's self so that God will be all in all. Until that day, we are already participating in the life of God even as we have not yet experienced God's full salvific vision. We can, by the power of the Spirit, feebly attempt to do life together in ways that correspond to the life of God even as we will always fall short.[25]

Because we participate in Christ, we structure our life together in ways that correspond to the life of God.[26] This is not simply modeling our life after the Trinity; rather it is a recognition that we are called to do life together in ways that live into the eschaton of full participation in the life of God. Thus, if God is perichoretic, then our life together should be characterized by perichoresis; if God is love, then our life together should be characterized by love. This roots our ecclesiology in the life of the triune God, influencing

[24] For a number of essays illustrating this reality written by womanist theologians, see *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering,* ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993).
[25] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2017), 285. Volf, 199.
[26] See Volf, 191–200; Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community,* 278–79.

not only the ways that we interact with each other but also the ways that we build church structures.

With this telos at the forefront, we can consider ways in which the church might correspond to the Triune God. Practical theologian Robert Muthiah considers six compelling ways that the church should correspond to the Trinity: relationality, presence, equality, nondomination, unity, and difference.[27] The church will always fall short of corresponding to God perfectly. As Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes, "the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Spirit is qualitatively different because, as created beings, we can form a unity only in a certain measure."[28] Nonetheless, we can trust that the Spirit will redeem our feeble efforts and work continually to enfold us into the life of God. Below, I will expound upon each of these guidelines before developing a theology of leadership that corresponds to the perichoretic life of God.

First, as the triune God exists in perichoretic relationship, so also the church strives to exist in perichoretic relationship with each other and between communities. Corresponding to God's perichoretic relationality calls us to move away from an understanding of a person as a Cartesian monad and toward an understanding of a person as a person-in-relationship who finds his or her identity in and through relationship.[29] It is what Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas describes as a move from being an individual to being a person, from conforming to the "hypostasis of our biological existence" to participating in the "hypostasis of our ecclesial existence."[30] While we cannot experience a fully perichoretic fellowship with others as God does with Godself, we can experience what Muthiah calls a "mediated indwelling" —"if a person is in the Spirit, and the Spirit

[27] Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2009). See also Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community*, 286–291.
[28] Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community*, 287.
[29] See Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 86–98; Thayer-Bacon.
[30] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1985), 50

is in another person, then a form of person-to-person indwelling does exist."[31] A community that indwells each other in the Spirit will recognize their interdependency and actively work together toward mutual edification.

The second way the church should correspond to the Trinity is presence.[32] In the perichoretic life of God, Father, Son, and Spirit are fully present in and for each other.[33] Furthermore, God is open to the world as the ecstatic love of God overflows into creation and invites creation to participate in the fellowship of God.[34] The triune God is always for the other. If the church is to be a community characterized by "presence-for-the-other," we must move beyond ecclesiocentric models of church that prioritize institutional continuity and orient our life together around what God is doing in our communities.[35] In an age of cultural pluralism, we must be careful of where we draw boundaries and how we exclude others. Traditional ways of doing church in North America have often served to exclude those who are different. New ecclesial structures must be formed that tear down walls and facilitate presence with and for the other in our communities.

Thirdly, the church's relationships should be characterized by equality in correspondence to the equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person of the trinity acts differently in their perichoretic relationship; however, there is no hierarchy among roles even though the Father is the origin of the Spirit and the Son. Similarly, even though each member of the body of Christ has been gifted with different charisms and plays a different role, no charism or role is to be valued above others. The reality of sin and broken relationships make power dynamics and inequalities inevitable, but this is not an excuse for perpetuating hierarchical ecclesial structures. As we participate more fully in the life of God and allow the Spirit

[31] Muthiah, *Priesthood*, 66.
[32] Muthiah, *Priesthood*, 61.
[33] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 126.
[34] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 90.
[35] Cf. Alan Roxburgh, *Structured for Mission: Renewing the Culture of the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2015); Alan Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2011).

to sanctify us more completely, we should expect to move toward more equal and mutually life-giving relationships. The criterion of equality does not rule out the possibility of setting some apart to perform certain functions. However, it does undermine any effort to elevate clergy over laity. Equality in our relationships leads us to prioritize the general calling placed upon every believer in their baptism over the special calling some receive to ordained ministry.

Nondomination is also a characteristic of the church that corresponds to the life of God. Just as the Father, Son, and Spirit do not compel each other to return their love nor perform any action, so also coercion and domination of any form do not belong in the life of the church.[36] Rather, just as love unites the triune God and overflows outward to persuade us to participate in the life of God, so the love that is present in our community must be characterized by persuasion and nondomination. This has special relevance to congregational leadership, which has often abused its authority to coerce persons into promoting the church institution and its clergy rather than the mission of God. Leadership that corresponds to the nondominating love of God will be characterized by the story of Jesus, particularly how he refused to use coercion even when it meant death on a cross.[37]

While Moltmann starts with the Trinity, God's "perichoretic at-oneness" is always in the background.[38] Corresponding to this, believers are drawn into the fellowship of God, filled with God's holy love, and empowered with the freedom to be one in our love for each other in God. This is the telos for which Jesus prays in the High Priestly prayer (John 17:21–23). We must aim toward union in the missio dei even when we might disagree on how to do that

[36] See Moltmann, *Trinity*, 202. There are times when erring church members need to be removed from the community in order to call the member to repentance and to protect others. Cf. Matthew 18:15–20 and 1 Corinthians 5: 9–13. While church discipline has been abused many times, removal from Christian community is not necessarily an act of coercion. The power of church discipline is held by the community and placed upon an individual who has the freedom to either enter into a time of prayer and repentance or to withdraw from that community and continue in his or her ways.

[37] Cf. Gorman.

[38] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 157.

most faithfully and effectively. In correspondence with God's unity, we also must enter into communion with other communities of believers. This will involve active ecumenical work within and outside of one's community as congregations live into that moment of full unity that will be realized only when God is all in all.

Muthiah comes full circle in this discussion by finishing with differentiation. Just as the Father, Son, and Spirit all participate in different ways in God's actions, and just as each has a different relationship with the others, so also in our unity in our one baptism, we maintain our distinct identities.[39] Furthermore, just as these distinctions are vital to maintaining the perichoretic unity of the Trinity, so also are our God-given distinctions vital to our unity.[40] They are not hindrances toward unity but actually what makes true unity in love possible, for love is always love for another. Ecclesial structures must take difference seriously within communities by making space for persons with different charisms, levels of ability, and cultural backgrounds to be welcome. Differences between communities must be respected by others and recognized as valuable contributions to the body of Christ.

Relationality, presence, equality, nondomination, unity, and difference are six important ways that the church corresponds to the triune God. These can be understood as guidelines as we construct new faithful church practices and transform existing ones. Before moving on to look at how shared leadership embodies each of these values, we must develop a theology of shared ministry that corresponds to the perichoretic life of God.

Theology of Ministry

Early in the days of Israel, the Levites were set aside to perform specific religious functions on behalf of Israel. The early church continued this practice of setting aside certain persons through the ministry of the Twelve who were devoted "to prayer and to serving the word" (Acts 6:4). The threefold office of bishop,

[39] Volf, 182ff.

[40] See Dwight J. Zscheile, "The Trinity, Leadership, and Power," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6(2) (Fall 2007): 47.

presbyter, and deacon emerged by the end of the first century and became universal by the end of the second.[41] Over time, church structures became progressively hierarchical as the Western church increasingly emphasized the sacerdotal nature of ordination.[42] In the Protestant Reformation, ordained ministry as rooted in the general baptism of all believers was recovered and used to argue that no ministry structure or ordination status can ever lift us above this one baptism.

Our one baptism, however, does not mean that we all participate in the missio dei in the same way. Rather, we perform different functions according to the "manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). The New Testament contains several different lists of Spirit-given charisms that "are universally distributed among the members of the fellowship" with no suggestion of hierarchy.[43] In 1 Corinthians, Paul is exhorting his readers to use their charisms for the good of the community following "the more excellent way," that is, out of the love of God (1 Cor. 12:31ff.). As Kärkkäinen reminds us, "the gifts are distributed 'just as the Spirit wills' (1 Cor. 12.17)," in all of our diversity.[44] All believers are invited to participate in the missio dei with whatever gifts they have received from the Spirit.

One way that charisms are used to participate in the missio dei is through the priesthood. Ministers are set aside for the specific function of "pointing the congregation to the presence of Christ in our midst… [and] narrating our lives in a manner quite different from that of the world," as Methodist bishop William Willimon writes.[45] While communities of believers have historically authorized pastors to be the primary ones to fulfill this

[41] Roger D. Haight, *Christian Community in History: Historical Ecclesiology*, vol. 1 (New York: Continuum, 2004), 84–85; Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacrament: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 537ff.
[42] Cooke, 555ff.
[43] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue," in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris Green (Boston: Brill, 2016), 18.
[44] Kärkkäinen, "Charismatic Fellowship," 20.
[45] William H. Willimon, *Pastor: Revised Edition: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2016), 86.

function, pastors have never been the only ones in a community that perform this function. As Muthiah puts it, symbolic leadership "is a shared activity, an activity of the priesthood of all believers. It may be the pastor who gives it the most sustained attention and effort, but the interpretive work must be carried out by the whole congregation."[46] This sentiment addresses the many different ways that pastors provide leadership. They never individually perform their office but do so as persons-in-relation within a community. As they exercise symbolic, organizational, political, and relational leadership, their task is to help all believers to use their charisms to more fully participate in the missio dei.[47] Reframing ordained ministry along these guidelines does not eliminate the possibility of a solo pastor under a more traditional model of church leadership. It does, however, compel pastors and other congregational leaders to be the first to practice presence-for-the-other and the last to use coercion and domination.

Shared Leadership in Ministry as a Faithful Practice

Relationality, presence, equality, nondomination, unity, and difference are six important ways in which the church is called to correspond to the life of God as it is called by God to participate in Christ through the power of the Spirit. In what ways does shared leadership in ministry embody these guidelines?

1) **Relationality**: Shared leadership assumes that we are fundamentally persons-in-relation. Growth-in-connection occurs as we encounter God through others and collectively journey toward increased participation in the life of God. The shared leadership team at WCC embodied this by focusing on relationships among the staff and their families, as well as by inviting young

[46] Robert Muthiah, "A Practical Theology of the Royal Priesthood: Trinitarian Ecclesiology, Institutions of Postmodernity, and Congregational Practices in Dialogue" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2005), 222. Cf. Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2013), Part 5.
[47] See Zscheile, 56.

seminary students to join them at leadership meetings. They were committed to being more than just colleagues; they were brothers and sisters in Christ.

2) **Presence**: By emphasizing growth-in-connection, shared leadership prioritizes presence-for-the-other in interactions among team members and with others outside the team. WCC's leadership team consistently advocated for each other before the church board and were committed to the flourishing of their fellow team members. When one of the pastors was undergoing significant personal difficulties that ultimately led to his resignation, the other pastors were by his side to journey with him and his family through the trials.

3) **Equality**: Shared leadership values and makes space for the unique contributions of every team member. By practicing fluid expertise, every participant can contribute with different voices having primary influence depending upon the situation. At WCC, pastors took turns with public duties including preaching and administering the sacraments. They also frequently invited new lay persons into important leadership opportunities.

4) **Nondomination**: Shared leadership expects that each participant influences others. When the team acts, they do so collectively, knowing that they succeed and fail as a team. At WCC, Pastor Eric refused to exploit his authority as lead pastor and instead invited others into leadership. The other pastors shared power within their own ministries so that many congregants considered themselves congregational leaders.

5) **Unity**: Shared leadership teams exercise collective agency toward a shared goal. Even when participants act individually, they do so with the authorization of the team and while being formed by the team because

of their shared commitment to growth-in-connection. Pastors at WCC had agreed-upon processes and primary spheres of influence. They knew that when they acted, they were authorized by the congregation and the shared leadership team. When important decisions needed to be made, such as the decision to sell their building, the pastoral staff included the church board and congregants in the decision-making process.

6) **Difference**: Shared leadership values the different charisms of participants by practicing fluid expertise and expects participants to mutually influence each other. At WCC, pastors deferred to others when a different ministry leader needed to be the primary influencer and consulted with their pastoral team when facing complex situations.

Although our efforts at corresponding to the triune God will always fall short, shared leadership takes seriously who God is and how communities of believers are called to participate in God. Instead of providing a church structure where one individual holds the final voice and is responsible for community life, it involves two or more persons-in-relation who are valued and respected because of their differences, and where they will be encouraged and edified as they grow more faithfully into the likeness of Christ.

The Role of Power in Faith Communities

If the telos of all creation is for God to be all in all, the need for leadership may disappear when we are full participants in the perichoretic life of God. Power dynamics and disparities will be eliminated, for all will be equally empowered to complete the task at hand—giving "praise to our God" (Rev. 19:5). Until that day, however, the people of God are called to participate in God's work of moving creation toward that telos. We need each other to exercise leadership through completing the many details necessary to run an organization, helping us to narrate our lives in light of the story of God, and journeying with us through the good and

bad times. We need each other's influence to help us participate more faithfully in the life of God. Yet, power dynamics are real and heavily influence our life together. Racial, gender, socioeconomic, and ability inequalities hinder a community's faithfulness. Consequently, it is important to understand the ways that power is abused in organizations before exploring how shared leadership facilitates a faithful use of power.

Abuse of power rests upon the assumption of scarcity.[48] When resources are limited, coalitions and individuals must compete to secure resources for themselves and their interests. Power ("the capacity to make things happen") is unequally distributed across society according to who has the most capital, including symbolic, structural, or relational capital, among other forms.[49] Strategies to secure resources will vary depending upon the source(s) and amount of accumulated capital. At WCC, Eric has structural capital but relies primarily upon relational and symbolic capital to bring about change. The old guard still holds relational capital among well-tenured congregants but has lost structural capital as power is diffused throughout the congregation.

Power is not wrong in and of itself. It would be extremely difficult to tell the story of God in the Bible without referencing the incredible power of God. Yet the moment when we see God at God's weakest is simultaneously when we see God at God's most powerful moment. As Moltmann reminded us, the cross is the fullest revelation of God, the moment when we learn the most about God's power. The cross shows us a God who is not powerful

[48] Bolman and Deal, Part Four.

[49] Bolman and Deal, 190. Some have more power than others, but everybody has some capacity to make things happen. Prisoners go on hunger strikes, the marginalized engage in bus boycotts, and the Son, who emptied himself of everything except love, exhausted the powers of evil by submitting to the cross. While recognizing that everybody has some amount of subject-agency, Christians must still heed the call to "claim the margin" and use their resources to participate in the liberating work of God. Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, Ken.: Westminster/ John Knox, 1993), 193. For more on capital, see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, trans. Richard Nice, eds. Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposky (Malden, Mass.: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 82.

enough to do anything but a God who is powerful enough to love infinitely. When all seemed lost, love conquered sin, hate, and death. By this act, the triune God showed us how to use power on behalf of the other. When Christians use power, they do so as participants in the life of God. We have the Spirit of the Risen Christ in our midst and have been gifted with charisms. We should not deny we have power but must constantly aim to use our power in love for the other.

Unfortunately, Christians often live out of the myth of scarcity, using power to protect their own interests instead of in love for the other.[50] We think we are protecting others or the church, but really, we are just protecting ourselves. Prevailing monarchical leadership models have made it too easy for clergy to abuse their power in the name of Jesus. New leadership practices will not rid the church of power inequality or power abuse. However, moving away from monarchical leadership and toward more shared forms of leadership will facilitate participation in the life of God because of the way it corresponds to the life of God.

Each of the four core characteristics (mutual influence, collective agency, fluid expertise, and growth-in-connection) of shared leadership help congregational leaders use power in love for the other because they correspond to the life of God. First, mutual influence among team members provides accountability for the way they use their power. Shared leadership participants expect each other to speak into their lives and identify areas where they might be using power inappropriately. Growth-in-connection follows from this as participants extend grace to others and receive grace through others. In this manner, shared leadership teams can be a place where sanctification takes place and old habits of abusing power are transformed and renewed. Exercising collective agency ensures that power is distributed across the team, preventing one individual from amassing too much power. Finally, fluid expertise facilitates equality by allowing every participant to have the chance

[50] Walter Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity," in *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2000).

to lead and to follow depending upon the situation and who has the necessary knowledge. Together, these four characteristics make it more likely that power will be used on behalf of others and not abused for selfish gain

At WCC, Eric became the center of many longtime parishioners' frustrations. After all, they thought, he was the one who changed things. He was the one who redirected power away from the old guard and started giving it to the newcomers who did not understand how things were supposed to be done. As the balloon payment on their mortgage neared, the church did not know how they were going to pay for it. Some older members had been withholding their tithe as a way to exercise their power, and not enough funds had come in from the newer members. Tension had reached a boiling point. Some of the more tenured members decided to make their last stand and force Eric to resign.

The problem with this plan was the way shared leadership had allowed power to be diffused throughout the congregation. Eric had not hoarded power and thus was in no position to enter into a power struggle. More importantly, he, along with much of the congregation, was committed to shared leadership and the way that this facilitated their increased participation in the life of God. They were committed to living in a community that put others first and saw their differences as vital to their unity. They were uninterested in coercing congregants and sought to find ways for everybody to do life together, even those who struggled to embrace new changes.

Consequently, instead of imposing his will through the use of power, Eric resigned. He knew that as long as he continued to be the focal point, the church would eat itself from the inside as it did when the church divided fifteen years before. Because the congregation had been practicing shared leadership, two staff pastors and several congregants were prepared to call the congregation to do the adaptive work necessary to move forward. They needed to become a community that used power in a manner consistent with the crucified Jesus. Eric did not see this action as being "assassinated," as leadership scholar Ronald Heifetz would put it, but as an opportunity to turn the heat up by allowing the

people with the problem to do the work.[51] He showed the myth of scarcity to be a sham by revealing the abundance of power that had been dispersed throughout the congregation. For three months, they worked together to call out abuses of power, repent of the ways they had promoted division, and identify the work that God was doing in their community.

Finally, they were in a place where they could invite Eric back onto the pastoral team. Some people left the church, unable to share WCC's vision. Others left once the underlying conflict in the church had been exposed. But a committed core allowed the Spirit to transform them into a community that participated ever more faithfully in the life of the triune God. Their use of shared leadership over the past three years had given them a glimpse of how power could be used for the other. In faith, they committed to continue the long adaptive process of becoming a people who were one in their diversity rather than a people founded upon division. Over the next few years, the church went through a painful process during which they sold their property, trimmed their programs, and continued to lose people. However, today, they own a building, are debt free, and have extra space that has been rented out to community partners who share their vision of contributing to the flourishing of their community. Likely, they will never be as large as they once were, but they are convinced that they are more faithfully participating in the perichoretic life of God as a community.

WCC made great strides toward more faithful uses of power, but organizational theorist Joyce Fletcher offers a necessary caution: even so-called post-heroic leadership models, which includes shared leadership, have large hurdles to jump before true equality can be had.[52] Fletcher argues that in the United States, heroic leadership practices are often associated with masculine attributes,

[51] Heifetz, 235–49**.** In other situations, resigning would have a much different meaning and outcome. However, in this case study, the practice of shared leadership allowed Eric to resign and show that he was not the center of power that some thought he was. He chose to show by example how to use power by participating in the story of God rather than to engage in a political struggle.
[52] Joyce K. Fletcher, "The Paradox of Postheroic Leadership: An Essay on Gender, Power, and Transformational Change," *The Leadership Quarterly* 15 (2004): 647–61.

and post-heroic leadership practices are often associated with feminine attributes.[53] Because of this, when men practice post-heroic leadership, it is noticed and comes with the expectation of reciprocation. During times of success, they can share how moving toward a more relational style of leadership helped them overcome adversity.[54] When women practice post-heroic leadership, it is often rendered invisible because they are just being women, for "in Western society women are expected to be the carriers of relational skills and attributes."[55] Fletcher exhorts practitioners of post-heroic leadership to pay attention to the gendered realities of power in their midst and address them frankly. Fletcher's colleagues, Robin Ely and Debra Meyerson, conclude that organizations should not make gender equality the goal so much as the process of transformation itself. Only when organizations make transformation of gendered norms the goal are organizations finally able to take real steps toward gender equality.[56] This resonates with Christian communities that know they will only experience full equality in the eschaton. We, too, must make transformation, increased participation in the life of God, the goal.

Theologian Jacquelyn Grant provides another warning for those who would practice more shared forms of leadership. In her essay "The Sin of Servanthood," she argues that Christian communities need to shift from servant language to discipleship language. Some marginalized communities, particularly African American women and other women of color in the United States, tend to be "more servant than others."[57] Moreover, "servanthood language has, in effect, been one of subordination."[58] Discipleship language, on the

[53] Fletcher, "Paradox," 650–51.
[54] Fletcher, "Paradox," 652–53.
[55] Fletcher, "Paradox," 654. See also Joyce K. Fletcher, *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999).
[56] Robin J. Ely and Debra E. Meyerson, "Theories of Gender in Organizations: A New Approach to Organizational Analysis and Change," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22 (2000): 103–51.
[57] Jacquelyn Grant, "The Sin of Servanthood: And the Deliverance of Discipleship," in *A Troubling in My Soul*, 204.
[58] Grant, 214.

other hand, provides "a more meaningful way of speaking about the life-work of Christians."[59] Like the language of servant, shared leadership can be used to cover racial and gender inequalities without properly addressing the underlying systemic issues. Just as Christian communities call all to be servants while leaving the most menial work to those on the margins, so also shared leadership teams are ever in danger of claiming that all persons on the team are valued while consistently dismissing female voices or voices of people of color. They must make transformation the goal and continually yield themselves to the Spirit in order to allow both women and men in shared leadership teams to become fully who God is calling them to be.

Shared leadership teams should never assume that power inequalities are not growing or that power is not being abused. Rather, they must stay vigilant, trusting that the Spirit will work in their lives to enfold them increasingly into the life of God. With caution and complete reliance upon the Spirit, shared leadership can be a more faithful practice of leadership for congregations that are seeking to participate in the perichoretic life of God.

Conclusion

Our experience with the economy of God is, as Job 26:14 puts it, "indeed but the outskirts of his ways… how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?" Consequently, perichoretic love cannot claim to be the essence of Godself, but it is a helpful metaphor that gives us a glimpse of God's nature. Similarly, Muthiah's six guidelines are helpful but not the last word on ways the church can be structured to allow members to more faithfully participate in the life of God. Rather, they are a contribution offered to help communities of believers move forward in faithfulness. As Paul writes, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face." In faith, we move forward, knowing that one day we "will know fully, even as [we] have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

[59] Grant, 214.

While shared leadership has been an important faithful practice in many congregations, including Wesleyan Community Church, many questions remain. First, few empirical studies have been conducted on shared leadership in congregations.[60] Thus, the assertions in this study about the kind of people and attributes shared leadership cultivates await more thorough empirical confirmation. Second, the defining characteristics of shared leadership need to be compared with the realities of shared leadership teams, refined, and put into conversation with how shared leadership teams understand themselves. Third, further research needs to consider what is shared, who shares it, and how it is shared.[61] Finally, how power is used in shared leadership teams in congregations needs to be compared with how power is used in other forms of leadership. This includes more traditional, hierarchical forms of leadership as well as in the practice of team leadership, which is often similar to shared leadership but still contains a formal, hierarchical leader.

Shared leadership is not a panacea for all congregations. Many congregations will find other leadership practices that are theologically faithful and allow power to be used in ways that facilitate participation in the life of God. Yet for many congregations, practicing shared leadership has allowed them to structure their life together in ways that match their convictions about who God is. Through the way that participants mutually influence each other, exercise collective agency, practice fluid expertise, and nurture growth-in-relationship, shared leadership teams live out

[60] See Lauren D'Innocenzo, John E. Mathieu, and Michael R. Kukenberger, "A Meta-Analysis of Different Forms of Shared Leadership—Team Performance Relations," *Journal of Management* 42(7) (2016): 1964–91; Zhu et al; Nathaniel J. Herbst, "Leader–Leader Exchange in Shared Leadership Teams: An Investigation of Collaborative Harmony Among Co-Leaders in Christian Ministry" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Piedmont International University, 2017); Abigail J. Veliquette, "Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches: A Naturalistic Inquiry" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Colorado State University, 2013); Michael Shane Wood, "The Effects of Shared Leadership on the Stress and Satisfaction Outcomes of Church Management Team Members" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Regent University, 2004).

[61] These questions are drawn from Robert C. Barnett and Nancy K. Weidenfeller, "Shared Leadership and Team Performance," *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 18(3) (2016): 347.

their identity as participants in the life of God. Because of human nature, we will inevitably fall short. Nonetheless, shared leadership is a practice that can help us participate more faithfully in the life of God as we attempt to lean into our baptism.

White Followership as Prophetic Witness: A Conversation on Culturally Constructed Power

Craig Hendrickson, author
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Abstract

In a conversation before the Academy of Religious Leadership, three scholar/practitioners discuss their experience and understanding of power in evangelical prophetic ministry with special attention to the potential of White evangelicals to adopt a pathway of followership to persons and communities of color and women. The dialogue centers around the concept of White Followership as a mode of inverting power relations of white people vis-à-vis minority and marginalized populations. The conversation includes sources of hope and vision for future ministry.

Power. The very sound of the word causes many to cringe. For some in the church, it raises images of pastoral abuse, broken trust, or marginalization of those with voices considered less important. For others, however, the proper use of power is necessary to

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influence God's people toward His preferred future for their faith community. Walt Wright, former executive director and current Senior Fellow at the Max De Pree Center for Leadership, highlights this tension well:

> Power is at the heart of leadership, but power exists only when someone sees in you a reason to accept your influence. At that moment you have the power to influence. But power needs purpose. Power without purpose leaves a wake of debris. Tornados have power, but look what they do. Power needs to be leashed to a purpose.[1]

Power is a part of Christian leadership, whether we like it or not. But how leaders use that power is vital for moving individuals, groups, and organizations toward outcomes that are generative and reflective of God's redemptive agenda in the world. To engage power, then, requires an analysis of who has power and how that power is used. To engage power faithfully as Christian leaders necessarily involves a justice-centered prophetic witness with an acknowledgement of one's identity and social location in the interstices of power. In the United States, white people have overwhelmingly been the recipients and beneficiaries of cultural and systemic forms of power. The exercise of power among and by white people has shaped systems, structures, communities, culture, and definitions of leadership, as well as understandings of Christianity.

During the 2019 annual meeting of the Academy of Religious Leadership, we conducted a public conversation with two evangelical colleagues in the Minneapolis area on the specific ways that dominant, majority-race populations might steward their power in a more responsible and faithful manner with respect to society's marginalized. I, Craig, served as moderator of that conversation. We asked ourselves how we as Christian leaders engage power toward faithful restoration and redemption of power

[1] Walter C. Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 2.

relations instead of perpetuating the marginalization of people and groups. The term *White Followership*[2] was coined by one of these colleagues as a posture of inverting normative power relations of white people vis-à-vis the voices, perspectives, and leadership of the marginalized. White Followership should not be reduced to a static inverse of power that simply recreates a new but equally diseased hierarchy, however. Instead, White Followership acknowledges the current imbalance of power in the United States and suggests that great benefits could result from white leaders yielding normative power to persons of racial/cultural minority status.

Investigating this topic together, we excavate the systemic layers of power while simultaneously unearthing a prophetic posture with which white people can bear witness to an authentically faithful engagement of power dynamics among diverse populations. We have come to understand that engaging systems of power requires the perspectives of people who have been oppressed by dominant systems of power. Minority voices are keenly able to illuminate the organization, operation, production, and elisions within systems. Leaders within organizations are uniquely positioned to shift the locus of power from dominant to subordinate realms in order to foster a more just and equitable exercise of power among the diversity of persons in a community.

Our conversation partners come to us from the metropolitan area of Minneapolis. They were chosen, first, because of their proximity to the conference and because of their long involvement in faith-based justice and advocacy work in the Twin Cities area. Second, and more importantly, they were chosen for the diversity of perspective they would bring to the discussion. One of the panelists, Rev. Rose Lee-Norman, is a white woman serving as an associate pastor at Sanctuary Covenant Church—a large, multiethnic church on the north side of Minneapolis. The other, Dr. Christopher Brooks, is a biracial man serving as the executive

[2] Rose Lee-Norman, "White Followership: Creating a Pathway Toward Black-Centered Leadership and Experience from the Reality of White Hegemony in an Evangelical, Urban, Multiethnic Church," Doctor of Ministry Prospectus, Boston University, unpublished manuscript (2019).

director of Merge, an organization that has helped thousands of immigrants navigate legal and cultural systems in the Twin Cities and throughout the United States. Dr. Brooks also partnered with me, Dr. Craig Hendrickson, a white male and moderator of the discussion, to organize the first Biblical Justice Conference at Moody Bible Institute in the spring of 2019. The following is an edited account of the focus and substance of the conversation.

> *Craig:* "Chris and Rose, could you share a little about yourselves. How have you have been engaging systems of power in your roles, and what led you to the form of ministry you each currently serve in?"
>
> *Rose:* I am honored and grateful to be with you. I serve as an associate pastor at The Sanctuary Covenant Church based in North Minneapolis. We are an urban, multiethnic church founded about sixteen years ago by Efrem Smith. I've been there for nine years.
>
> Before coming to Sanctuary, I received my master's degree from Fuller Seminary and was ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Overall, Sanctuary Covenant Church has been a great place to grow and learn as a leader. I have had various roles and been mentored by amazing leaders who helped me find my voice in leadership. But this topic of engaging systems of power is very important right now for the broader church because it has wielded its power in really toxic ways in the past, and even today. As leaders, as pastors, as professors, or whatever your role might be in the church, we need to examine the use and effects of power. As we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, it's important that we ask "Who is it Good News for?" Who is deemed powerless and needs the power of the Good News?
>
> Thinking about power, my question for us to consider in this conversation is "Who gets to define power?" I ask this question because many of us can look at power in very normative ways, especially when we have privilege in society. When I think of power and how I engage it in various contexts, I consider it in terms of a dichotomy: on the one

hand, a disembodiment of power, and an embodiment of power on the other. As a white person, I understand power in a disembodied way because I am largely unaware of how my whiteness[3] affords me greater power. I assume I have power and take it for granted because I am white. Because of the cultural transparency in my race, I have the ability to ignore or normalize how my power as a white person is exerted in the world. So, there is a disembodiment that I experience because I'm not aware of it. But on the other hand, when I am most aware of my identity as a woman, especially a woman in ministry, I have a keenly embodied sense of what power means because I've felt its absence; I've experienced powerlessness.

Therefore, when I consider how I engage power, I try to keep those two identities in dialogue with each other. When I am aware of my normative white power[4] along with the marginalization of being female, that integration affects my leadership, vocation, and witness in the church.

Chris: My sense of power and of powerlessness really comes from my heritage. My father was a state wrestling champ

[3] Whiteness is an intricate montage of social and cultural meanings constructed over time that elevate "white people over people of color" (Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3(3) (2011): 56), providing us with a location of structural and racial advantage and privilege. It involves the formation and maintenance of an individual and collective consciousness, providing a standpoint from which white people view ourselves, others, and society at large (DiAngelo, 54–70).

[4] White normativity is the thought that whiteness should be understood as the racial norm, or the default culture of American society. Within this construct, white is the race to which people of all other races are compared, essentially considered the "other" alongside the dominant culture (W. Doane, "Rethinking Whiteness Studies," in Whiteout: The Continuing Significance of Racism, eds. A. W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3–18). White normative power, then, refers to the "power constructions that exist to perpetuate a White dominant mindset" within sociocultural and institutional structures (Allison N. Ash, "The Ecology of White Anti-Racism: Administrators and Racial Justice in Christian Higher Education," dissertation submitted to the School of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, Azusa Pacific University, Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education, 2018: 21).

from Iowa. He was a strong, tough guy raised on a farm. His family is full of Marines; his brothers have all done multiple tours of duty. My mom comes from rural Jamaica. She was "discovered" by missionaries and was brought to the United States and attended what used to be a Bible college housed inside the University of Minnesota. My dad was at the university, and my mom was at the Bible college; they met and got married. What I've been tracking during my life, as a biracial, multiethnic guy, is what I call "weaponized Christianity." It is also known as imperialism or colonialism. Basically, it means that we have created Jesus in our own image and used him to conquer others.

This morning I went to my daughter's school and taught her second-grade class about Jamaica. We went into Jamaican history, and I told them how Jamaica was passed from the Spanish to the British, and it became a missionary outpost for Evangelical Christianity. Eventually, Jamaica was given its independence. But even as the country experienced freedom, its cultural and social systems were heavily influenced by colonial evangelicalism. Recently, I was talking to an older, prominent Jamaican who leads a nonprofit that grants microloans. From his perspective as a financial leader, he stated that "As Jamaica became more and more evangelical, it became more and more unjust." It is a painful statement for those of us who consider ourselves evangelical. But in order for the church to be faithful in evangelism, we must de-weaponize Christianity, tell the truth of our ugly history, and open up pathways for racial justice and reconciliation.

Craig: What has helped you engage systems of power in your reflection and action, and how do you see yourself moving forward in this regard?

Rose: As I shared in my opening remarks, having mentors of color has been life-changing for me. Through my time at Sanctuary, all of my supervisors have been African American men; to be under their mentorship has been a rich and

defining experience for me as a white woman. It's helped me view power in a very different way. It's also brought a lot of texture and deeper understanding to what it means to be a disciple of Christ. It's helped me rethink Jesus' first command: "Come follow me." So often white evangelicals, like me, do more dominating and dictating than following and listening. For me, to follow the example of people of color and of marginalized voices has profoundly deepened my understanding of what it means to be a disciple and proclaim Good News.

Craig: Could you elaborate on that? For those of us coming from a Eurocentric background, it might be difficult to understand what it means practically to follow people of color.

Rose: Yes, there are times when we can be so well-intentioned, but we exercise our power in ways that are unhealthy and unhelpful because we take for granted the normative status of our power, over and against the power of those in a minority position. Practically, being mentored by persons of color entails a lot of listening so that I consider more fully what my supervisor is sharing with me, intentionally grapple with different perspectives, and commit to learning new ways of being. It's nothing flashy, but sitting under leaders of color has taught me to listen more deeply, more humbly, and self-reflectively.

Chris: From my perspective as a colleague of color to Pastor Rose, it's been fascinating to watch her development under leaders of color. When Pastor Rose arrived at Sanctuary church, she seemed a little quiet and timid. But now that she's been at the church for several years, she has found her voice and her power. Even though she is small in stature, her voice is like a tsunami!

Likewise, if you are willing to go on the journey of listening to, submitting to, and being led by people of color, it can transform you into a true change agent. There is a lot of talk right now in politics and in the church about allies,

about submitting to mentors who are of different races, ethnicities, and genders. Let their story become your story, since we are all part of the body of Christ. You'll become a significant ally to minority communities.

Rose: I appreciate that Chris brought up the term *ally* because that is a popular term in the vernacular of social justice. We've also used terms like *advocate*. These are helpful terms in engaging power and addressing justice. But if injustices like racism have to do fundamentally with the issue of power, then I believe terms like *ally* and *advocate* don't adequately address power systems and structures. To advocate for someone or a group still implies a power over someone. Being an ally might suggest a more egalitarian posture but does not address power as pointedly as I believe it should in the work toward justice. Right now I am studying at Boston University, pursuing a Doctor of Ministry in Transformational Leadership. My dissertation addresses power dynamics in justice work. Instead of advocate or ally, I'm curious what White Followership might look like. Might that get at a more authentic posture toward justice? If Jesus' first commandment to his disciples was "Come follow me," then white evangelicals—to speak directly to my own community—need to consider how much talking, dominating, and centering we've done instead of listening, yielding, and following. The question my dissertation poses, especially within the evangelical tradition, is "What does White Followership look like?" In this humble journey of submitting myself very intentionally under people of color, it helps me to name it as my white, normative power. There are many times when submission to another is challenging, but it is in that tension where tremendous growth has come for me. I am led to develop this idea of White Followership not just for ourselves as white people, but for the purpose of preparing the way for marginalized voices to lead us in the work of racially oriented justice.

Craig: What are some of the glimmers of hope you have witnessed as you work for justice? What are some of the key practices, strategies, or partnerships that have contributed to progress in this never-ending work of prophetic witness for justice?

Chris: I'm a big fan of unlearning and relearning. The best white followers that I have met, some of them in their eighties and nineties, are currently unlearning. I have a friend in his nineties who is reading everything he can by James Cone, Cornel West, and Soong-Chan Rah. And he just weeps. He can't believe it. And he thinks back to the mission trips he went on; the millions of dollars he's used to fund Christian ministry and mission; and some of the stuff that we as American Christians have exported to other global cultures. While it is sad that it has taken him this long to begin pursuing this understanding, I also find it incredibly hopeful that a ninety-year-old white man is still willing and able to unlearn what he has believed his entire life, and instead relearn what it means to follow Jesus more faithfully under the influence of scholars and authors of color, including me.

Rose: The hope that I have comes from the fact that so many people—especially young people—are engaging in inquisitive conversations like the one we are having now. For example, our youth pastor at Sanctuary is a young woman of color, and she doesn't wait for people to authorize her power or ask permission to lead; she just does. For me and other people my age and older, accepting our authority took us a lot longer. We needed so much mentoring; we needed to be convinced of our power. It's as if we had to have someone give us that power even though we already had it. Many young people don't look for that; they are not waiting for permission. I find that hopeful, and I hope that we listen to them.

Craig: In your work for justice, how have partnerships and

collaborations been important? How have your alliances with other communities and organizations been life-giving and effective?

Rose: From my perspective, in the early years of Sanctuary, we were burned by many of the attempts we made toward collaboration. A church like Sanctuary can give other types of ministry efforts, especially with respect to suburban ministries and organizations, the street credit they need in the inner city. The message was something like this: "If Sanctuary endorses us, then we must be doing something right." In many cases, partnership was in name only. So, we grew suspicious of organizations that asked us to partner with them on collaborative projects.

But to be honest, we at Sanctuary had to be honest about our own ministry because missional outreach can feel very transactional. It can be seductively easy to think that we are in a superior posture to those we serve because "we have something that they need." We decided to re-vision our missional efforts, and we renamed it "neighboring." Our outreach team became a "neighboring team." Words matter, and renaming something changes what that thing is. In this case, our understanding of and engagement with collaboration changed to be better aligned with our vision of racial justice. We stopped trying to replicate what other nonprofits were already doing because doing the exact same thing as other organizations can foster a counterproductive competitiveness rather than partnership and collaboration. We reenvisioned evangelical outreach in terms of collaboration with neighbors. Together, we discern what the assets are in our community and try to understand the type of power that people already have so that we can merge forces rather than continually using each other in ways that are not authentic to the Gospel.

Chris: I agree wholeheartedly with what Pastor Rose said, but I'm going to reshape it just a little bit. Right before joining you for this conversation, I was at a law firm on the

forty-seventh floor in downtown Minneapolis where I—a biracial, multiethnic guy—a Hmong leader, and a white corporate leader are exploring co-founding a bank as a missional endeavor to assist the Hmong community in their rise out of poverty. When many of the Hmong community come over, they are animists. So, there are religious and cultural barriers that keep them from participating fully in economic activities that are taken for granted in many other communities. They need an economic engine that is culturally specific and ethnocentric so that they can build enough economic power to generate wealth and social power in their community. Our small group believes that for any community that ultimately rises up out of poverty, there should be a bank in the center of that rise.

We hope that our efforts become a shining light to other minority communities to develop what will initially appear to be ethnocentric and exclusive economic systems but will eventually lead to a more fair and just economy that allows the Hmong greater economic equality in the Twin Cities. Each of us brings unique value to the table, so we've created a value exchange among us. The magic is in the middle, even though we individually have an indispensable role to play. The partnership we have formed with the Hmong, then, is greater than the sum of the three of us. Theologically, we describe the trinitarian relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as perichoresis in which Each moves in, through, and with the Others in a mutual dance of generative love.

As another tangible example of a perichoretic relationality in this world, I work for an organization called Merge. Merge focuses on the first or second generations of the immigrant community here in the Twin Cities who do not yet know Jesus. We estimate that this community numbers more than nine hundred thousand people and constitutes more than a quarter of our metropolitan area. Merge partners with a church called Eagle Brook Church,

one of the largest churches in America with more than sixty thousand people in attendance on Easter Sunday. Each of their multiple campuses are in white, wealthy suburbs with very similar congregational demographics. They wanted to have some sort of mission in the city, but they recognized that they do not have the subject matter expertise. So, they came to us, and we forged a partnership. They are experts at training pastors to develop a visionary strategic plan for mission.

Eagle Brook has said, "We know what we have to offer, but we know that it is significantly incomplete. And even though we are one of the largest churches in America, we know that when it comes to people of color, we can't get there." The pastors around the table have said, "We know our people. Our part of the value exchange is quite clear. We understand the context, we speak the language, and we don't get offended by the way people smell. We can eat the food. So, we'll take your training, our indigenous subject matter expertise, and we will meet in the middle and make some magic."

We at Merge are learning from their training, but we are chewing the meat and spitting out the bones. We want to reach the lost and grow the church through evangelism and not through cannibalism where Catholics and Lutherans become evangelicals and we call that church growth. With Eagle Brook's help, we are developing a contextualized version of their training for the Hmong community, for the African immigrant community, and maybe down the road for the African American community. As a result of this perichoretic dance among us, I believe we are going to see some high-growth, immigrant-led churches in our metro area in the next few years. This is going to transform the narrative of the church in the Twin Cities-metro area, which has been stalled out for quite a long time. I think the proper contextualized evangelism of our day is that we reallocate resources to indigenous leaders and watch them go.

Craig: These stories are wonderfully inspirational. They give me hope for what collaborative partnerships can be. I wonder what sources of inspiration help you shape your praxis to engage more deeply, to grow spiritually, and to follow the leading of the Spirit.

Rose: Two people in particular have been key in shaping my understanding of power. The first is Howard Thurman. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, he said:

> The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in a mind of the Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus.[5]

Howard Thurman has totally reformed and reshaped my understanding of power. He argued that the church has distorted its God-given power. We, as evangelical white churches, have used it in horrifically oppressive ways. Thurman exhorts us to get back to a more robust and more authentic Gospel because that is ultimately where our true liberating power lies and where the Good News is actually good news again, instead of wielding destructive and enslaving power. Thurman's words echo Jesus' mission as defined in Luke 4:16–19: the good news is good news for the poor. It liberates the oppressed and sets prisoners free. It is spiritual good news that encompasses and transforms social, political, and economic dimensions of life.

The second source of inspiration for me is Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills. In *The Racial Contract*, Mills asserts that those on the bottom of systems of power and

[5] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 166.

oppression are more likely to have an accurate perspective on the workings of those systems than those on the top.[6] This has significantly shaped my thinking around White Followership, following leaders of color, and engaging power faithfully in my vocation. Mills's perspective is referring to "Standpoint Theory," which asks the questions: "Where do you stand in society?" and "Do you understand your place, your role, and the power that you have in society, an organization, or a system?" Within standpoint theory, there is this notion called "epistemic advantage" that considers the place or role we have in society. Mills contends that marginalized people have a better epistemic advantage. They are the ones who are most able to authentically see the whole interworking of systems of power given that they are at the bottom and have to navigate the system for their survival. They have an advantage in the sense that they are better able to authentically understand, perceive, critique, and also transform systems of power that oppress them.

Charles Mills's perspective has helped me understand the importance of listening and following leaders of color. And if I want to address systems of power, especially toxic power, then it will be the marginalized who will best illumine the whole of the system and its effects on various component parts of the system.

Craig: Great. Thank you, Rose. Chris, how about you?

Chris: The nineteenth-century German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, developed a term called *emergent synthesis* that Dr. King referred to in one of his speeches. King said, "Truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emergent synthesis which reconciles the two."[7] So, I am finding my greatest learning and my greatest

[6] Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[7] Clayborne Carson, senior ed., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel*, September 1948–March 1963 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 460.

opportunities to understand what is going on in my world by crashing things into each other that would not otherwise meet. Two of my sources of inspiration are Asian-American Soong-Chan Rah and Native American Mark Charles, both of whom write from their specific cultural and ethnic identity about the capitalistic structures that continue to oppress not only their minority communities but also poor and marginalized communities of all kinds.[8] Hernando de Soto is another of my go-to resources. I always tell people that if I were on a deserted island and I could have one book, I would probably choose the Bible, but if given a second, I would likely choose *The Mystery of Capital.*[9] De Soto says that the world's poor "are not the problem, they are the solution" for the very reason that the poor are in the best position to understand the deleterious effects of capitalism and the flawed view of cultural supremacy of one race over others.

Craig: If you could distill our conversation today down to one or two things that you hope we take from this conversation and potentially do differently, what would that be?

Chris: When I think about power relations in light of racial justice, I am hopeful that there will come a day when the body of Christ leads the conversation on reparations. It's grounded in the biblical passages regarding Jubilee and gleaning laws; we can develop a great theological argument for it. Because the church was co-opted in the original founding of this nation, with the genocide of Native Americans and waves of importations of African American slaves resulting, the church is culpable. I don't expect secular society or our highly partisan government to address

[8] Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2019).
[9] Hernando De Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

this moral imperative. The church is Plan A. There is no Plan B. I believe that with all my heart. So, regarding the reparations road that leads to reconciliation, I'm waiting for church leaders, specifically white church leaders, to say, "We are ready to give up some wealth and power and do whatever it takes for the body of Christ to be what it was always intended to be." That intention is to be a community in which if one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part rejoices, every part rejoices with it.

Rose: We should look at the story of Shiphrah and Puah in Exodus chapter 1. Shiphrah and Puah should be our companions along the way and in the work of understanding of power. They were the midwives who were given a specific command from Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew baby boys. But because of their devotion to God, they were disobedient to the power structure. I think that we should look to Shiphrah and Puah as examples of how we do this work. They understood, with respect to standpoint theory and epistemic advantage, where they were positioned in the Egyptian power structure. And they critiqued it, they disobeyed it, and they subverted it. I would hope that as we go from this point, we would be as devoted to our faith as Shiphrah and Puah were. We would be disobedient to the power structures that perpetuate things that are not of the Gospel. That we would ask ourselves and our communities uncomfortable questions, such as: Are we on the side of Pharaoh? Are we on the side of liberation? Often, we lift up Moses as the great liberator, which of course we should. But it was to Shiphrah and Puah that Moses owes his life; they made the Exodus a possibility.

Conclusion

We began this conversation seeking to explore a complex issue—how those of us belonging to the dominant, majority-race population might steward our power more faithfully. As the conversation progressed, we discovered that adopting a posture

of White Followership could move us toward more faithful and redemptive power relations with people of color. The conversation was challenging, as panelists suggested that current power relations characterized by white normative power need to be redeemed. By listening to and learning from people of color and adopting a posture of humility, we might in fact move toward mutually enriching and generative relationships—relationships that are especially fitting for our increasingly polarized times.

As we reflect on these themes, especially what it means for white people to use power and privilege redemptively and generatively in relationship with people of color, it seems appropriate to reflect on Paul's words to the church in Philippi. As he encourages them to pursue unity and life-giving relationships with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, he exhorts them to follow the example of Christ:

> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6–8, NIV).

Displaying inspirational humility and servanthood, Paul refers to the Incarnation as an example not just for the Philippians to emulate in their relationships with one another, but for those of us who have traditionally wielded more power and influence due to our privileged position in a racialized social context. To learn how to lead redemptively in an increasingly intercultural church and society where the voices of people of color have been consistently marginalized and diminished, white evangelicals also need to emulate the character and actions of Jesus by learning how to give power away to, learn from, and follow our brothers and sisters of color. Doing so provides a prophetic witness to the church and society at large in a way that inverts power dynamics by prioritizing humility, service, and giving

power away. By humbling himself and ceding his divine power by becoming fully human in surrender to the will of his Father, Jesus demonstrates a prophetic pathway forward for white evangelicals—a pathway that must include followership.

Overcoming Digital Division: Digital Sacramentality as a Source of Healing

Ryan Panzer

Abstract

The flattening of our personal identities in cyberspace, otherwise known as "context collapse," is a challenge of online social engagement that God calls church leaders to address. At its best, online technology facilitates connection, collaboration, and care. At its worst, online technology gives rise to vitriol, division, and fear. If church leaders want to show Christians how to be more Christ-like in digital spaces, then church leaders must work to facilitate postures and practices of sacramentality. Through education, practice, and ritual, we can learn to see the whole person on the other side of the screen. Central to these practices is the virtual, communal celebration of the eucharist. If done well, gathering a digital community to celebrate the Lord's Supper affirms the intrinsic, God-given significance of our digital identities and rebinds divided communities.

For years, Snapchat has been among my favorite smartphone apps. Using Snapchat, I can exchange brief videos, mostly of my cat's frenetic escapades, with friends and family, an experience that is made all the more comical by the brevity and lack of long-term accessibility of the videos. (Snapchat deletes all videos and images immediately after viewing.) These features have made Snapchat into one of the Web's most widely used messaging platforms,

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reaching just under eighty percent of American Internet users.[1] Seventy percent of American teenagers send and receive messages with Snapchat.[2] Still, Snapchat is far from a perfect platform. Snapchat's impermanence and lack of supporting context facilitate fun and airy communication while also creating a platform for cyberbullying, aggression, and fighting. Among youth, Snapchat is one of the Internet's three busiest platforms for incidents of cyberbullying, an often-unseen form of marginalization that affects one in every five teenagers.[3]

The way Snapchat is used, for pithy and humorous messaging, and for scorn and mockery, speaks to Martin Luther's suggestion that each of us is simultaneously saint and sinner. Despite the recent flurry of cultural commentary over the extent to which digital platforms are shaping our culture in undesirable ways that we do not fully comprehend, we might say with some objectivity that our digital ecosystem is neither exclusively good nor exclusively bad. Rather, it is a morally neutral environment into which we can bring our best selves and our worst selves. It is an environment in which we can empathetically see those on the other side of the screen as created in the image of God, or we can dismiss those on the other side of the screen as decontextualized and insignificant, reducing their identity to a screen name or an avatar. It is an environment capable of creating the strongest connections and the deepest divisions. This is a challenge to which church leaders in tech-shaped culture should respond. God is calling the church to step into digital spaces, increasingly the domain of dismissiveness if not dehumanization, to demonstrate what it looks like to be more Christ-like. Through proclamation, education, and ritual, church

[1] "Snapchat Statistics and Revenue: Snapchat by the Numbers," Influencer Marketing Hub (April 30, 2019), https://influencermarketinghub.com/snapchat-statistics-revenue/.

[2] Sara Harrison, "Teen Love for Snapchat Is Keeping Snap Afloat," *Wired* (July 23, 2019), https://www.wired.com/story/teen-love-snapchat-keeping-snap-afloat/.

[3] Hillary K. Grigonis, "1 In 5 Teenagers Are Bullied Online, New Cyberbullying Statistics Suggest," *Digital Trends* (July 22, 2017), https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/cyberbullying-statistics-2017-ditch-the-label/.

leaders can foster a sense of online sacramentality, through which we manifest God's love, mercy, and forgiveness in and through digital connection.

The Challenge of Context Collapse

Understanding the call of the religious leader in the digital age necessitates an understanding of context collapse, the phenomenon underscoring many of the communicative challenges within tech-shaped culture. As a problem unique to digital forms of communication, context collapse can be understood in contrast to face-to-face interaction. With in-person communications, we draw on rich contextual cues (body language, tone of voice, and group dynamics, to name a few) in determining how best to communicate. Such contextual cues influence not just our communication but also our interpretation. Although "emotions, attitudes, and feelings" make interpretation more complex,[4] nonverbal factors account for as little as fifty-five percent and as much as ninety-three percent of how we interpret a message.[5] Boundedness and limits are also key to understanding in-person communication. When we communicate person to person, we regularly communicate to a group that is small enough that we can tailor our communication to the norms and expectations of those nearest to us. Thus, face-to-face interactions are modulated by and molded to the unique characteristics of a specific audience.

But digital communications like e-mail lack contextual cues, and in the case of social media, a sense of bounded or limited community. When we post to social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, or send a text-based e-mail, it is not always immediately clear who will read or interpret our messages. Though we might try to empathize with our audience, digital communication precludes

[4] George W. Porter, "Non-Verbal Communications," *Training & Development Journal* 23(7) (1969): 52, https://search-ebscohost-com.luthersem.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=7465450&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[5] Ashley Hamer, "Is Communication Really 80 Percent Nonverbal?", Curiosity.com (November 13, 2017), https://curiosity.com/topics/is-communication-really-80-percent-nonverbal-curiosity/.

a clear awareness of the norms, expectations, and values of those who will view our messages. And as a message recipient, digital communication comes to us devoid of the interpretive cues that are so useful in face-to-face interaction. These are the foundations of context collapse.

According to a 2018 study from *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, "Context collapse occurs when disparate audiences are conjoined into one, creating potentially uncomfortable situations when users broadcast messages to an entire social network with different appropriateness norms across diverse groups."[6] Context collapse is thus a process of reduction, in which digital environments "flatten" multiple distinct identities into an oversimplified form.[7] This flattening is the result of the tension that arises when "multiple social settings come together in the same online space."[8]

Context collapse is a form of mental shortcut. The overwhelming volume of information involved in digital communication, including the vastness of our audience, when combined with the relative lack of contextual cues in digital environments, facilitates rapid, implicit judgments about a situation. The rapidity of these judgments allows us to move quickly through digital spaces, yet it also inhibits our ability to empathize with those on the other side of the screen. While online, it seems that we Tweet first and ask questions never.

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[6] Teresa Gil-Lopez, Cuihua Shen, Grace A. Benefield, Nicholas A. Palomares, Michal Kosinski, and David Stillwell, "One Size Fits All: Context Collapse, Self-Presentation Strategies and Language Styles on Facebook," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23(3) (June 2018): 127–45, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy006.

[7] Jessica Vitak, Cliff Lampe, Rebecca Gray, and Nicole B. Ellisson, "'Why Won't You Be My Facebook Friend?': Strategies for Managing Context Collapse in the Workplace," Paper presented at iConference '12, Toronto, Ontario (2012): 555–557, ACM: New York.

[8] Vanessa P. Dennen and Kerry J. Burner, "Identity, Context Collapse, and Facebook Use in Higher Education: Putting Presence and Privacy at Odds," *Distance Education* 38(2) (2017): 173–92, https://doi:10.1080./01587919.2017.1322453.

With about two hundred Twitter followers, I am unable to consider the appropriate way to interact with each of them every time I post on the micro-blogging platform. And because Twitter is a public, social media platform, I cannot possibly consider who beyond my truncated follower list will view my posts—how they might interpret my thoughts, and how I might be viewed as a result. Without cues like nonverbal communication and tone of voice, context collapse forces us to imagine the motives and intentions of those who post online.[9] Such imagined interpretations, combined with the ease of online anonymity on profiles like YouTube and Twitter, can lead to misunderstanding at best, and shaming, aggression, and ostracism at worst.

To visualize the challenge posed by context collapse, consider a large workplace team working together to write a report. Prior to the digital age, the coworkers met face to face to prepare the report. One coworker, eager to make an impact and excited by the high quality of the second coworker's effort, exclaims, "I need to see more!" A warmly vocalized comment affirms, encourages, and ultimately deepens their collaboration. But in tech-shaped culture, it is likely that this team is collaborating on that same report with an online word-processing document. That same coworker, still impressed by the effort of his or her colleagues, rapidly leaves a text comment: "I need to see more!" The coworkers, unable to hear the tone of voice or view any body language, interprets the comment as critical and even condescending. The team mistakenly decides that their colleague must be rude, dismissive, and maybe even a little arrogant. Their collaboration, and their broader relationship, soon deteriorates.

Although such an example has fairly mundane consequences, context collapse can quickly escalate into a more troubling phenomenon. Digital tools provide unfiltered and anonymized platforms that embolden some to verbalize sentiments that they

[9] Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience," *New Media & Society* 13(1) (February 2011): 114-33, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313.

might never express in face-to-face conversation. Social media's intrinsic lack of accountability leads directly to incidents of trolling. These anonymized trolls are particularly intent on targeting people of color. One study of three hundred forty adolescents of color found that fifty-eight percent had experienced a direct discriminatory incident online over the course of one year.[10] Concerned with the rise of overt racism and hate speech on their platforms, social media companies have recently started to invest millions of dollars in automated content screening, as well as human moderation.[11]

Unfortunately, no technology exists that can save digital platforms from these tendencies toward toxicity. Though technology companies might try, cyber-bullying, dehumanization, and hate speech are sins that cannot be exclusively addressed by technological solutions. Because context collapse is caused by a moral application of technology, it can be only partially addressed by the providers of the technology. Context also must be addressed by the people who use such platforms. As simultaneously sinful and saintly users of digital platforms, we need to relearn to be communal, to be divinely relational, and to be Christ-like. We need religious leaders capable of guiding our communities to bring less of the former and more of the latter identity into online interactions. We need religious leaders who can bridge the divides and rebind what has been separated.

A Time for Rebinding

Religious leaders in tech-shaped culture ought to bridge the cultural divides caused by context collapse. Rebinding our fractured, tech-shaped culture is a pastoral call to which all religious leaders, both lay and ordained, are called.

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[10] Brendesha M. Tynes, "Online Racial Discrimination: A Growing Problem for Adolescents," American Psychological Association, December 2015, https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2015/12/online-racial-discrimination.

[11] Robinson Meyer, "Twitter's Famous Racist Problem: The Social Network Risks Losing the Goodwill It Built up During the Arab Spring," *The Atlantic* (July 21, 2016), https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/07/twitter-swings-the-mighty-ban-hammer/492209/.

This is an especially important task in an increasingly secular age, where religious affiliation and spiritual practice diverge. As a millennial, most of my friends identify as "spiritual, but not religious." However, research has shown that the majority of religious "Nones," a category that describes just under one-third of millennials, pray and read Scripture at the same rate as the religiously affiliated.[12] At times, these friends ask me about the purpose of church attendance or religious affiliation. Why be religious, they ask, when one can pursue the spiritual life on their own terms? Indeed, this is an important question.

When asked such a question, I find myself returning to the idea that religion, and religious leadership, is about rebinding, or the act of bringing together during times of division. The word *religion* has its roots in the Latin *religare*, meaning to "bind fast."[13] An understanding of religion as that which rebinds us to one another and connects us to the divine is particularly appealing in this time of context collapse. Accordingly, such an understanding seems to be growing in popularity. As a small-group guide for youth Confirmation programming, I have observed instructors drawing upon this idea when explaining to an inquisitive youth the value and importance of religion in tech-shaped culture. The youth, accustomed to the challenges of navigating the social media landscape, appear to appreciate such an explanation. While one can pray, read the Bible, and believe in God on one's own, the church offers an opportunity to restore communities in a way that no individual can effect through their own effort, and in a way that no blog post, podcast, or YouTube video can provide.

Religious leaders of tech-shaped culture, both lay and ordained, should sense a pastoral call to extend grace into environments of context collapse. Our shared conviction that we are all created in the image of God should be a more powerful deterrent to unsavory online behavior than any algorithm. Our shared calling to proclaim God's healing and liberating Word ought to nudge us into virtual

[12] Keith R. Anderson, *The Digital Cathedral: Networked Ministry in a Wireless World,* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), xii.
[13] "Religion (n.)." Index, Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed January 6, 2020, https://www.etymonline.com/word/religion.

environments so clearly in need of restoration. Those living in a tech-shaped culture require religious leaders who can exude postures and demonstrate practices of rebinding for the healing of a fractured culture. Three practices that are fundamental to Christian life together will contribute to this rebinding. The first is to preach about how salvation through Jesus Christ should be made manifest in our online life together. The second practice is to educate about how we can be more Christ-like online through empathy and advocacy. The third practice, celebrating the Eucharist in digital contexts, solidifies our understanding that, reconciled to God, we ought to be a reconciling presence in digital spaces.

Rebinding Through Preaching

We no longer "go online." It would instead be more accurate to say that we live online. According to PC Magazine, the average adult now spends an average of just less than six hours each day connected to the Internet, a figure that is likely much higher among younger generations.[14] Despite so much of our life together taking place on digital devices, I have yet to hear a sermon preached on what it means to follow Christ in digital spaces, on how to be Christ-like online, or on what it means to experience the grace of God in virtual contexts. The most consistent message on digital engagement that church leaders deliver is a reminder to silence one's phone (as in an announcement at the start of a music program or even an occasional worship service) or to keep one's phone put away entirely (as in a youth group meeting or Confirmation class).

In many faith traditions, preaching involves the illumination of God at work within contemporary realities. If the preaching in the Christian tradition is to continue to identify the grace of God amidst our life together, our proclamation must speak to where much of those contemporary realities are experienced: in online spaces. Engaging our online life through preaching together begins with hermeneutics. We might not need to change our methods

[14] Rob Marvin, "Tech Addiction by the Numbers: How Much Time We Spend Online," *PC Magazine* (June 11, 2018), https://www.pcmag.com/article/361587/tech-addiction-by-the-numbers-how-much-time-we-spend-online.

of interpretation, but we should consider how our most salient methodologies for interpreting, responding to, and applying the lessons of the Scriptures intersect with the problems of context collapse and the resulting dehumanization of the other.

As a Lutheran, the hermeneutic with which I am most familiar is law and Gospel.[15] With this lens, a preacher explores how a Biblical text speaks a simultaneous word of judgment and salvation. Just as Martin Luther understood us to be saint and sinner simultaneously, he understood Scripture to reveal simultaneously where we need salvation and how God through Christ is doing the work of saving. Applying this hermeneutic to our culture of context collapse, a preacher might speak a word of judgment to our online life together, just as the preacher proclaims a promise of how the grace of Christ can save our fractured communities.

While writing this essay, the Christmas season came and went, and the liturgical calendar turned to Epiphany. As I sat in the pews of a church that utilizes the Revised Common Lectionary, I heard Matthew 2:1–12, the story of Herod and the wise men from the East. I could not help but think about the applicability of this text to our current cultural moment. In this reading, three individuals chose "another road," despite knowing that their decision contradicted the cultural powers of their time. I began to consider who the Herods are in our digital contexts—the alluring forces that, for the sake of their own benefit, scheme against us. Perhaps the Herods in tech-shaped culture could symbolize the addicting applications that promise to connect us, the companies that commodify our attention, while subsequently causing us to speak and act without regard for those on the other side of the screen. While reflecting on the reading, I also wondered what it would mean for us to be wise, to seek another road in the digital community, one that turns away from Herod and leads toward the baby in the manger. In an environment in which messages are flung

[15] Kathryn Kleinhans, , "Lutheranism 101: Culture or Confession?", Living Lutheran, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (July 12, 2018), https://www.livinglutheran.org/2007/05/lutheranism-101/.

across the Web with rapidity and disregard for the neighbor, maybe that proverbial "other road" is about awareness and disciplined action. The awareness comes from the realization that Christ's grace expands even into online spaces. The disciplined action, which comes as a response, is defined by the cultivation of an intentional response, something we achieve by pausing, considering how our messages will be received, empathizing with the way others will interpret our words, or perhaps deciding not to post at all.

Our life together in digital contexts can be engaged no matter one's hermeneutic. Preaching about being Christ-like in digital spaces does not require us to change our lens. It simply asks us to point that lens toward our shared, tech-shaped culture. Because we spend one out of every four hours connected to the Web, perhaps one out of every four sermons might inhabit online space to engage the question of what it means to rebind in a time of digital division. Preachers should name the aspects of tech-shaped culture that force us away from Christ, while proclaiming how the grace of God offers another road for the church to follow. Such preaching will reorient church communities to spread encouragement, to comfort, to critique lovingly, and to empathize with the least and lost while online. But proclamation from the pulpit is merely the first of three methods by which a religious leader might address context collapse. To be more Christ-like online, we need more than sermons—we also need active and constructive learning experiences that move us into concrete practices of empathy and advocacy.

Rebinding Through Education and Faith Formation

It would be ineffective to simply tell Christian communities to be more Christ-like while online or to engage this task exclusively at an intellectual level. Our online life together moves at a rapid velocity that often inhibits conscious reflection. As a result, we must be equipped with the means of being Christ-like in digital spaces. This ought to be a central focus of Christian faith formation efforts. The religious leaders of tech-shaped culture should teach their communities about the realities of context collapse and the problems of dehumanization in cyberspace. This is more than teaching manners or encouraging good behavior online. Education

and faith formation should consistently engage the contradiction between the *imago dei* and the challenge of engaging the whole person on the other side of the screen. With forty-one percent of eight- to twelve-year-olds using a smartphone,[16] as well as eighty percent of seniors ages sixty-five and older,[17] encountering gracefully the whole person on the other side of the screen is a challenge for us all.

The task of the Christian educator is to create an environment in which learners can understand the often subtle, if not invisible, problems of context collapse, and to experiment with the practical ways people can be more Christ-like in digital environments. When we gather for faith formation, we should think of our space as a laboratory for spiritual practice, one that provides more opportunity for active experience than for passive listening. Sunday school, youth groups, Confirmation, and adult education should facilitate reflection on what it means to live with the tension that comes from being created in God's image and inhabiting a digital ecosystem that flattens the richness, complexity, and diversity of that image.

Teaching such a curriculum begins with helping the community to deeply intuit what it means to be created in the beautiful diversity of God's image. The next step is to contrast such an anthropology with prevailing cultural norms, raising awareness of the challenge of living within a culture that seeks to flatten the complexity of our identity. It concludes by coaching Christian communities toward concrete practices for overcoming digital division using empathy, advocacy, and prayer. To move from the theory of context collapse into the practice of empathy and advocacy, religious educators should consider how to raise awareness of the rapidity of our actions in digital spaces, particularly social media platforms. As a

[16] Natasha Pinon, "A Majority of Kids Have Smartphones by Middle School, Study Finds," *Mashable* (October 29, 2019), https://mashable.com/article/teen-smartphone-usage/.
[17] Monica Anderson and Andrew Perrin, "Technology Use Among Seniors," Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (May 17, 2017), https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/05/17/technology-use-among-seniors/.

supporting exercise, the educator could provide three minutes to scroll through a social media feed at a normal pace, counting the number of posts along the way. Next, explain how context collapse derives, in part, from our tendency to move too fast through such environments. Encourage participants to spend three more minutes moving intentionally through their feed, reflecting on each post they encounter with two questions: What is really taking place here? How might I be present as an affirming and supportive resource? Conclude the exercise by providing a few silent moments for participants to pray for the needs of those with whom they have engaged in this exercise. Such an exercise recontextualizes the digital environment and establishes a new pattern that can become integrated and ingrained as habitual.

Another important exercise in this pedagogy is to juxtapose traditional Christian practice with online resources. If we can develop more familiarity with using the Internet to experience and extend the grace of God, we will begin to see the Internet as a vehicle for the extension of grace into the world. As we experience this grace through online resources, we will become naturally more fluent in forgiveness, compassion, and grace to those on the other side of the screen.

To facilitate this fluency, pastors, priests, and lay leaders should be active curators and creators of content that promotes habits of online spiritual practice: prayer and Scripture reading, meditation and devotion, contemplation and reflection.[18] Today's pastor has a responsibility to facilitate these practices through the use of borrowed or original apps, blogs, digital video, online audio, and social media. We should all be critical consumers and creative producers of online content that supports spiritual practice, aware of what such content will move us to do and why the content was produced in the first place. It is possible that some of the best apps, tools, and resources will not come from what are traditionally

[18] A curator is one who intentionally collects, organizes, and shares contextually relevant resources that others have built. These resources are often used for some form of learning or development. This is a contrast to a creator, who designs, develops, and shares resources that he or she has built.

thought of as Christian resources. As an example, I begin each day with "The Daily Calm," a ten-minute meditation on the Calm app. Though the app is a secular resource, I find that ten minutes of meditation provides a seamless transition into some reflective Scripture reading, facilitated by Luther Seminary's daily God Pause e-mail devotional, and prayer.[19] I initiated this daily practice at the recommendation of a fellow seminarian, who begins the day similarly. Thus, at the core of this pedagogy is a resolve to promote habitual spiritual practices that move us into deeper relationality with Christ and with one another.

Rebinding Through Eucharist

If we are to learn to rebind a tech-shaped culture that has fractured under context collapse, we must do more than teach about a problem and recommend resources for spiritual practice. We must especially resolve to do something more significant, given what waits on the other side of this year's calendar. Through online trolling, bullying, and harassment, our digital divisions will only intensify as the fractious 2020 U.S. presidential election continues.[20] Fueled by the flattening of complex identities into oversimplified reductions, figures on both the political left and right will revert to name-calling and labeling. Voices across the political spectrum

[19] I recommend several online resources for spiritual practice. For daily Scripture readings, including brief reflections from Christian leaders around the world, I recommend Luther Seminary's "God Pause" eDevotional, a daily e-mail newsletter. For daily reflections on what it means to live the Christian life in this cultural moment, I recommend Richard Rohr's daily meditation newsletter. For meditation and contemplation, I have yet to find a Christian resource that is as compelling and useful as Calm. Other Christian leaders I know of use the 10% Happier app, co-created by Good Morning America's Dan Harris. Finally, countless blogs and podcasts about faith and spirituality are produced. As a millennial who socializes in largely unchurched circles, I find myself drawn to the work of The Liturgists and Rob Bell's Robcast. But whatever resources one uses, I believe it is incumbent upon today's Christian leader to share those resources with their circles, spreading awareness of their utility in helping us to be more Christ-like while online.

[20] Emma Green, "Make Trolling Great Again," *The Atlantic* (September 14, 2016), https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/make-trolling-great-again/499523/.

will inevitably come to dehumanize those "on the other side" and the issues they stand for—I would know, because I have at times caught myself uncharacteristically Tweeting condescending and aggressive comments around election cycles, contributing to the divisiveness that this essay attempts to remedy. Ironically, most of my Twitter feed is comprised of pastors, church leaders, and seminarians, a group I find to be among the most aggressive and acrimonious on social media come election time.

In this fractious environment, both Christian leaders and disciples can make a decisive statement about the intrinsic value and God-given goodness of our online selves, while engaging that goodness in communal practice. Such an activity could be incarnated through the virtual celebration of the Eucharist.

The Lord's Supper celebrated virtually has recently become a subject of debate in certain Christian communities and has emerged as a novel controversy among some Christian leaders.[21] Some mainline Protestant ministries have decided against the online Eucharist. Epiphany Island, an entirely digital Anglican Cathedral built on the virtual reality platform Second Life, decided in consultation with various bishops that it is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist online because of the lack of something "personal, human, and physical."[22] Some Catholic leaders also have rejected the notion of online communion, noting that online community fails to constitute an embodied environment in which the Lord's Supper can be celebrated.[23] Conversely, other pockets of mainline Protestant ministries,[24] as well as some evangelical Protestant congregations such as Saddleback Church, have created a provision for taking communion online during live-streamed worship services. Saddleback saw an opportunity to augment their online worship experience through online communion as an expression of

[21] Lisa Miller, "Beliefwatch: Communion Online," Newsweek (March 14, 2010), https://www.newsweek.com/beliefwatch-communion-online-91993.
[22] "Sacraments on Epiphany Island," The Anglican Cathedral of Second Life (September 24, 2019), https://slangcath.wordpress.com/the-vision/sacraments-on-epiphany-island/.
[23] Miller, "Beliefwatch."
[24] Miller, "Beliefwatch."

Christ's "new covenant." [25] Still, Saddleback's expression of online communion as practiced is merely an extension of a face-to-face worship service occurring simultaneously, and is not a purely digital celebration of the Eucharist.

Wherever one stands in this debate, all Christian leaders share a belief that the Eucharist holds something of the infinite God in the finitude and limitation of bread and wine. When we, the broken vessels that we are, follow Christ's command to take and eat, we partake in God's boundless and ongoing work of salvation through means that are, as well, both bounded and temporal. As it turns out, these limits are inherent to the ritual. We partake in Christ's testament within a physical space that limits the number of people who can join for the meal. We celebrate the Eucharist at specific times on specific dates, availing the feast to those whose schedules happen to align with our own. On Sunday mornings, some of us receive the gifts of bread and wine after walking up steps, proceeding down aisles, kneeling at railings, and reaching out to take and eat—physical actions that are accessible only to those who are able-bodied to a specific extent. We who are physically, mentally, and spiritually able to be in this one place take the bread, which goes stale, and drink the wine, which goes sour, from plates that crack and chalices that shatter in halls where moths and rust consume. Still, God is present at this table. Despite the limits of this ritual, we receive a blessing that is limitless. And *that* is a crucial message for our achievement-obsessed culture: that God comes to us not because of our merit, but through our very imperfections, that God blesses us not through our strength but through our frailty.

Perhaps we have stopped short of gathering together to digitally celebrate the Eucharist because we imagine a Google Hangout, a Zoom call, or a Facebook Messenger group to be too much of a limitation on the means of grace. It could be that we do not use technology to celebrate the Lord's Supper on Tuesday afternoons

[25] "Take Communion Online with Us," Saddleback Church: Internet Campus (January 24, 2014), https://saddleback.com/archive/blog-internet-campus-2014/01/24/take-communion-online-with-us.

between meetings, or on Saturday mornings after kid's soccer games, because to do so would implicitly diminish some of the prestige and majesty associated with communion. Although the ritual of the Eucharist implies limitation via the elements of bread and wine, computer screens impose another degree of limitation that some are unwilling to consider. Though a digital observation of the Eucharist would open up access to the Lord's Supper to more than those who can gather with us in the limits of our Sunday gatherings, such an observation incorporates limits that appear too overwhelming when coupled with the limits already intrinsic to the celebration. In this sense, limitations associated with digital Eucharist are different in degree but not in kind from the limitations of the in-person ritual.

But the work of rebinding in this cultural environment is not about prestige, and the healing power of the Eucharist is not about majesty. I support online practices—to the extent they are theologically and ecclesiologically well-ordered—of the sacrament because the Lord's Supper reveals the love and mercy of a limitless God to the intrinsically limited communities in which we gather. Virtual forms of togetherness are merely another variant of the many forms of limitation in which we take communion, and virtual forms of togetherness are increasingly normative in this tech-shaped culture.

I concur with Augustine's simple understanding of sacrament: a "visible form of an invisible grace."[26] In contrast to the mystery and magnitude of grace, this ritual will seem simple, limited, and even reductive, whether the ritual is performed online or in person. An entirely virtual celebration of the Eucharist merits consideration because it provides the visible forms, grants a foretaste of the invisible grace, and offers the potential for practices of powerful rebinding. Provided we are gathered in community through a digital tool that facilitates synchronous togetherness, we could celebrate communion on computers.

[26] Edwin Oliver James, "Sacrament," Encyclopedia Britannica, (May 27, 2013), https://www.britannica.com/topic/sacrament.

Celebrating the Feast

Granted that our celebration is well-ordered with the words of institution and access to the proper elements, we could gather electronically to eat and drink. When we begin to do so, we might find that we affirm the fullness with which the image of God graces our online identities in all their complexity. When we begin to do so, we will proclaim that every bit of God's restorative and liberating power extends into cyberspace. So the task of the Christian leader in the digital age might not just be to preach, to teach, and to promote practices that rebind in a time of digital division. The task of such a leader is to bring the means of grace online, so that we may come to be more gracious while online. The result of this will be the reanimation of flattened identities, the rebinding of divided communities, and the healing of a world living online.

What, then, might a virtual celebration of the Eucharist entail? Let us consider four essential elements: those of gathering together, sacred space, elements, and sending forth. The examples discussed below are meant as stimulation of our theologically informed and liturgically attuned creativity, the purpose of which is to practice the communion of the Eucharist as fully as the limitations of the online context allow, acknowledging that all sacramental practices are limited, fallible, and fall far short of God's glory.

> **Gathering.** For some to say that digital Eucharist lacks the necessary element of gathering in community is a dismissal of what it means to gather in a digital age. Our life together has moved into digital spaces, a movement that is supported by rich messaging technologies that allow us to move more of our full selves into the conversation. Gathering together on tools like FaceTime and Zoom is an expression of authentic community, as it creates an opportunity for those who otherwise might not attend a Sunday service. Virtual Eucharist is inclusive of those who are disabled, those who have experienced past trauma in the church, those who work on Sundays, those who are

traveling, and those who simply would like to partake in the meal at different dates and times.

I suggest three principles for gathering together online for the Eucharist. First, embrace the public character of Christian worship by gathering in a publicly accessible and accountable setting. It should be clear when (date/time) a community will observe the Eucharist in a virtual setting, how it will do so (dial-in link), and who can assist should someone have difficulty accessing the gathering. Second, such gatherings should be consistent, at a repeated interval that provides a consistent semblance of Sabbath in the routines of our week. Whether that gathering is a Monday morning at six or a Friday night at midnight is not as important as offering a consistent time that aligns to the rhythms of the community. Third, such gatherings should provide space for shared leadership. While an ordained or synodically authorized minister ought to consecrate the elements, community members ought to partake in the ceremony as they would an in-person worship service. All community members should have the opportunity to participate, offering up readings, prayers, and blessings.

Sacred Space. I recently attended an "eFormation" professional development event with Virginia Theological Seminary. The event included a day's worth of presentations, workshops, and worship, all facilitated via Zoom videoconferencing. At the start of the day, workshop leader Sarah Stonesifer invited all who were gathered to mark their secular learning space (a conference room, a kitchen table, a backyard) as sacred through a brief liturgy and shared prayer. Following the prayer, participants were invited to post a picture to Twitter of their secular space turned to sacred space for learning with the hashtag #sacredspace.

When we celebrate the Eucharist online, we do not need to use sophisticated home altars, but we would do well to recognize the sanctity of the space around us. Digital expressions of the Eucharist should mark the sacredness of the space through simple and inclusive prayer and blessing. When we gather in a video-messaging application to celebrate the Eucharist, we gather around a sacred table that extends through cyberspace, connecting those who have gathered together at that particular moment. Through a brief prayer, the liturgist facilitates the conversion of one's sacred space into the altar, a limited space that is ready to receive the Eucharist. Something even as simple as an invocation to bless the spaces around us, wherever we are gathered, would suffice. Participants could even share where they have joined in the celebration, so as to verbally acknowledge that the communion rail runs through their desk, their dashboard, or their doorstep.

Elements. Though the gathering is virtual, we still take, eat, and drink real bread and real wine. The digital-age minister should see to it that all who are gathered have bread (or wafers) and wine (or grape juice). Churches that celebrate a virtual Eucharist could distribute the elements in the lobby of their church building for home use—similar to the process that ministers use for home communion visits, but perhaps at a broader scale. Those gathered may, of course, provide their own elements. Whether wafers and grape juice are distributed via U.S. Mail or bread and wine are handed out in the church office, it is the task of the religious leader to increase the accessibility of the elements so that all who feel so called may join in the celebration.

Sending Forth. After the presiding minister says the Words of Institution, all eat and drink together. The observation ends with a sending and a blessing, a liturgical reminder that all our spaces are sacred, and

> that God dwells within us despite our limits. And key to the concern of rebinding in a time of context collapse, we are sent with a tangible experience of God's grace in the digital community. We depart having tasted grace and forgiveness online—we go, then, and do likewise.

Conclusion

Religious leaders often lament that digital technologies are weakening our communities, that kids are too addicted to their phones, and that youth would rather experience virtual fun than the joy of face-to-face community. Religious leaders of the digital age would do well to provide experiences of digital Sabbath, in which we can all unplug from the frenetic pace of our online life together.

But the call of today's religious leader is about more than unplugging. This call demands more than simply silencing our devices. In this tech-shaped culture, we all need to learn to be more Christ-like in our online interactions. In this time of context collapse, we need to remember to live into fuller expressions of community, as the concept of community becomes exceedingly integrated with social media and other forms of digital technology. Through preaching about Christ's presence in our online life together; by teaching new, faithful ways to inhabit the digital community; and by administering the Eucharist online, today's digital minister makes disciples of digital nations—and virtual generations.

Fostering Curiosity, Asking Powerful Questions: Lessons of a Leadership Coach

Lisa R. Withrow

As a leadership coach (which often includes life coaching and performance coaching), I often am asked to help people move to the next level in their work or to help people discern next steps in their research, ministry, or life-pursuits. The series of questions I ask is determined by the topic a coachee brings to the table that day or over a period of time. The work is designated by our contract for coaching engagement. Sometimes lifelong themes emerge for conversation; at other times, an immediate dilemma needs to be managed or a problem needs to be resolved in a creative way. Currently, the main issue is survival in the midst of a global pandemic as well as development of new coping mechanisms.

Ultimately, my job is to ask powerful questions to foster curiosity not only in myself about the person with whom I am conversing, but also in the coachee about the topic he or she is exploring. The purpose of the coaching process is to guide the people across the table, on the phone, or through digital space to begin to ask themselves powerful questions. They enter a liminal space of curiosity and experiment as they ask themselves: What would happen if I tried…? How might I find a more meaningful way to…? These leaders are experiencing the cycle of their own development into deeper, more effective ways of relating to others and to their work. The leadership pattern of command-and-control no longer seems appropriate (except during an acute emergency) for their own health or the health of their organization. Rather, powerful questioning becomes a practical and ethical imperative

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for organizations that want to learn and innovate, whether it is religious or secular. By their very nature, learning organizations are agile, adaptable, and often cutting-edge imaginative—perhaps even fun. The same goes for leadership.

The Leadership Dilemma

Leaders in religious organizations often are given a checklist of change processes and told, "If you follow this model, you will turn this place around." Consultants, books, online resources, and academic colleagues devise methods for change and are eager to make their approach generally available for everyone. I have seen dozens of Bible-driven or purpose-driven solutions, marketing schemes, discipleship-building plans with catchy phrases, blueprints for healthy congregations, and a general sense of formulaic responses to a poorly defined malaise in religious communities. Worse, questions driving these methods often point to what a congregation or nonprofit organization "wants" for itself and the world, rather than a transcendent sense of purpose that arises with powerful, open-ended questions, oriented to what religion can do and be to meet the world's troubles and needs. Especially, now in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic as well as in its aftermath, this open approach is essential as we live through highly chaotic change that will leave us in spaces we have never seen before.

My training in the field of leadership coaching (Gestalt stance) addressed my uneasiness with what seems like a constant churning-out of programs by publishing houses and businesses with excellent marketing and generic promises for growth and well-being: "the encouragement industry.". I learned that by asking powerful questions in service of the coachee, whether an individual or a group, I partnered with them to move toward their own actions and plans for change. The premise here is that fostering curiosity and asking powerful questions evokes a new awareness in conversation, and in time, ultimately brings people to access positive change that inherently abides within them. Coaching creates the space to do this work, which is highly contextual and deeply personal for the

people in the coaching engagement. This approach creates a new way forward based on curiosity and experimentation.

Persons who derive their ethic of leadership from a core of curiosity and a life-approach of experimental adventure are the hope of the future for any organization. Curiosity removes the desire for predetermined outcomes, avoids leading questions, and leaves little room for anxiety, unlike prepackaged programs or expert consultants focused on fixing a situation or an organizational system. Leaders who embrace curiosity and a sense of adventure exhibit high levels of observation, commitment to reflection on the nature of progress, understanding of the levels of context, and appreciation for surprise based on a deep-seated learning posture, which they embody in daily interactions. For some, adventurous curiosity occurs naturally. For most, however, it is learned over time, usually acquired through reflection on mistakes or conflicts that have disrupted the typical checklists of good leadership characteristics that leaders often mistakenly substitute for the wisdom that flows from lived experience. For those who lead from a core of curiosity, these mistakes and conflicts have the potential to fuel a desire for retooling. The old ways no longer work when leading people to an emerging future, especially during disruptive times, such as during a pandemic or living through a natural disaster. No longer is high anxiety driving interactions among teammates who are wondering about each other rather than immersing in tasks for the sake of their stakeholders. Leadership in its maturing form manifests itself instead with curiosity as its basis for questions that target development of projects, programs, and paths forward that make a difference beyond the mere success of the organization.

Personal Narrative for Change: Living in Liminal Space

After twenty years of teaching and administrative leadership in the academy, I decided to spend nine months training and becoming certified as a Gestalt Coach with emphasis on leadership. Further certification by the International Coaching Federation required a minimum of one hundred hours of coaching and a

final exam.[1] Why would I spend money I did not have to walk away from the setting that had provided more than one-third of my professional experience? Why would I become a student again, with faculty observing my work and the responsibility to study for exams? Such a path seemed too hard. Yet, a string of disruptions in the realm of academic community finally pushed me so hard that I knew it was time to seek a different path while still incorporating what I had learned over the years. My inner being knew that a change was coming, hence the retooling. At the same time, my mind clung to the status quo, namely for the love of teaching and the security of a regular paycheck. This polarity of interests—a desire for change and adventure opposing the desire to be safe and focus on the things I still could enjoy—held me captive for at least three years. Finally, within the learning process of Gestalt training, I felt enough impetus to "jump off the cliff" of security into the unknown, and I learned how to be a coach for others by being coached myself.

This new and unknown vocational space is liminal for me. In other words, it is a space and time between the past and an emerging future in which I am free to ask myself powerful questions, foster new ways of being a leader in the world, and navigate a way to make a living that relies on my perseverance and resilience. Entering this space is only possible for me with the support of trusted colleagues and friends. In this liminality, the role of powerful questions has provided direction along new and surprising paths.

To describe my journey is to offer one snapshot of a female leadership professor who is deepening the understanding of what leadership could be in terms of a kind of authority that counters the dominant version of leadership studies. To practice a gentle learning posture in a competitive society that rewards leaders who

[1] As I contemplated an approaching vocational change, I studied at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland in 2018–2019. Now I am certified as a Gestalt Coach (GPCC™), a Board Certified Coach from the Center for Credentialing and Education (BCC), and an Associate Certified Coach from the International Coaching Federation (ICF/ACC). In addition, I earned certificates from Cornell University in Executive Leadership, Change Leadership, and High-Performance Leadership in 2018.

are perceived as particularly clear about their authority, expertise, and strong use of power, even when the power must be agile, is almost revolutionary, albeit necessary to change the way we develop people and organizations. I have paid attention to long-term wise men and women who spend their time researching and developing the rise of learning organizations, founded on asking powerful questions.[2]

In a fast-paced, ever-changing world with crisis—currently in the form of pandemic, grief, illness, and trauma ruling our news and our contexts—there are few certainties. Resilience and experimentation are better suited to addressing the chaos we face more and more in a time of global health crisis, environmental crisis, and increasing economic disparity. The characteristics relegated to and admired in many leaders—*in extremis* called command-and-control, which at its worst develops a blame-and-shame ethic—might be useful in emergencies, but these characteristics are much less useful in the highly connected Internet world where rules and decrees are always challenged. Influence and persuasion are the leadership styles that make more impact when little privacy is given to decision-makers behind closed doors. Networks of learning organizations, living in resilient experimentation mode and connecting with each other, are more likely to make a lasting impact on important projects and tasks than people who follow a leader commanding the scene from one perspective with an ego that is motivated to win at all costs , including grave consequences for others.

Here is what I now know: many persons who tire of what society deems *good leadership* are gravitating toward team leadership, collective enterprises, and becoming coaches and mentors. I did so myself by enrolling in the Gestalt coaching program, which fostered in me the desire to live into a learning posture based in curiosity much more deeply than I ever have. A primary way for Gestaltists to live in this curiosity-oriented learning posture, which raises

[2] See thinkers and writers Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Betty Sue Flowers, Margaret Wheatley, and Joseph Jaworski as a few persons working to create and consult with learning organizations.

awareness and subsequently allows change to emerge organically, is to pay attention to a Cycle of Experience. This Cycle is a variation on a theme of cycles of change. However, I will use some aspects of the Cycle of Experience here to discuss how coaching and leadership speak with each other in an ongoing process that fosters powerful questions as a key component for leaders who live in curiosity.[3]

The Cycle of Experience: A Short Description

Cycles of change are not a new invention. They have been described in various iterations of change theory based on myriad contexts and times. However, the significance of change cycles for leaders, as learner-experimenters who live with an internal core of curiosity, is based on the understanding of liminal space necessary for moving forward with integrity and authenticity. Indeed, the cycle of change is not a closed circle. It is iterative along an arc of evolution, in our case, of leaders and organizations. Essential for moving through the cycle of experience along an arc of change are powerful questions. Such questions are the essence of fostering a grounded clarity in the midst of stakeholder and market uncertainties accompanying the fast-paced decision-making required of leaders and in organizations.

Cycles of change and in particular, the Gestalt Cycle of Experience, begin with a state of equilibrium, followed by either a disruption or a raised awareness that the present state of being no longer fosters positive results. This disruption snaps one out of equilibrium into a liminal space. In liminal space, which has a temporal component to it (it begins and it ends), one does not dwell in the immediate past (equilibrium), but neither does one have a clear sense of what is forthcoming. One senses a need for change. A person in flux can choose to respond to this sensation of change in a variety of ways: retrench to attempt to recover past equilibrium, resist response that acknowledges the existence of any change in the

[3] The Cycle of Experience can be found in the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland training manual, 2018, 75–76. Adapted by Juliann Spoth, Ph.D., coaching faculty for the Gestalt Institute. See also www.gestaltcleveland.org, and search for Cycle of Experience.

first place, or begin to foster curiosity by entertaining meaningful questions about this change and what might be evolving from it.

Should one choose to entertain deep questions about a disruption or shift from equilibrium, he or she enters the paradox of liminal freedom and uncertainty about what will arise from mind and body. Someone who contracts with a coach or turns to a colleague to engage these kinds of questions will find that the sensation of change moves to a growing awareness of what is important to examine, and what really matters in life and consequently in one's choices about leadership roles. The kinds of questions that might arise for a coach who is partnering with someone to do this work could sound like this:

What is happening to your body as you talk about this topic?
What meanings arise?
What does that option look like to you?
What happens when you experiment for yourself about that possibility?
What experiments might be worth trying in your workplace or at home?
What do you really want? What don't you want?

The coach invites the coachee to be aware of shifts in her or his body throughout the conversation, focusing on the messaging of the body through its own wisdom about the meaning and impact of new awareness, and ways of attending to it.

Choices occur along the Cycle of Experience. There is a flow to the Cycle, but people dwell in different aspects of it for different lengths of time, sometimes circling back to the previous state before moving on. For our purposes, I will describe a sequence, though it might not be linear for everyone.

One starts in equilibrium, the known way of being or acting. Yet, something is internally dissatisfying about this equilibrium, or a disruption occurs such that the steady state is no longer viable. For example, a conflict, a death, a market shift, a fire, or a change in leadership can lead to disruption, sometimes planned and sometimes surprising. One senses that change needs to happen.

Raising awareness about this sensation often fosters the idea that a shift or reconstruction could and would be positive, especially for persons who have felt stuck in their leadership roles or in their everyday lives. Here, the potential for change, sometimes through "aha" moments, enlivens the conversation. Exploring powerful questions and paying attention to phenomenological responses (responses in the body) leads to pinpointing internal energy about a particular subject or concern. As energy rises with awareness, a person might sense a parallel rising of motivation, mobilizing change. At this point, he or she can choose to sit with the internal energy or move toward formulating a plan for action. The plan might be readily available in one's mind, or it might take time to formulate.

Next comes action. The act of change itself, whether behavioral or by making a decision, fosters a new way forward. This new way may be a small, immediate change such as a decision to eat more blueberries for health reasons, or a large, long-term change such a decision to change careers or move to a different country. The leap is taken, and the change is implemented, either immediately or over time. Once the action is taken, assimilation, or getting used to the new way, also takes time for adapting life to the new path. Finally, when assimilation becomes the new norm, a sense of closure regarding the change sets in; one has arrived! New equilibrium occurs, and one moves out of the liminal and back into settled space.

People are different; they will spend different amounts of time and attention in different areas or stages of the Cycle. The variation of this Cycle is found in the amount of time each person stays in its different stages. For example, I might spend a great deal of time in "awareness-raising" to ponder every angle of every scenario possible before I mobilize energy and move quickly to planning and action. Others might not spend much time thinking through possibilities and move straight to action. Still others might want to stay in the sensation that their previous equilibrium no longer serves them, but they choose not to entertain questions that help them examine possible change closely.

Leading Through the Cycle of Experience with Powerful Questions

At some point, a leader might realize that her performance is not up to par at a certain stage in the organization's life. She does not know how to move forward, but she knows that something must change. By inviting a conversation about this dilemma with a companion or coach who can create a safe-enough space and who asks powerful questions, she finds that she has answers to her problem within her own body of knowledge and raised awareness. The coach helps her draw this awareness into conversation and then invites mobilization and action that the leader herself creates.

Or a leader realizes that he does not have the support of his team or committee. He creates stories in his mind about what is really going on, but he does not have data to verify his suspicions. Is the problem that people are burned out? Are they wary of his leadership style? Is it racism? Ageism? An intersection of both? Has the team become competitive with him and each other rather than collaborative with its eye on a mutual goal? Is one particular person stirring the pot? All these questions contribute to anxiety, but at the same time they are not powerful questions that get at the root of what the leader desires and how he might meet that mutual goal for the sake of the organization.

In each case, diagnosing problems is not the focus of curiosity. Rather, powerful questions stem from curiosity about the leader's sense of self in the present moment, followed by where the leader would like to be or who he or she would like to become. Powerful questions take the conversation to a deeper level. Eventually, through an action taken based on deep knowing fostered by living through the earlier stages of the Cycle of Experience, questions addressed by this leader are inherently manifested at a deeper level as meaningful, powerful change.

Fostering curiosity in the midst of chaotic times can be a difficult task when the propensity is to entrench and protect one's organization, or more personally, philosophy and style of leadership. As disruptions or needs for change occur, a leader

taking a breath to ask questions about the process of change and the capacity to live in liminal space for a time will find that she does not move into reactivity, but rather explores possibilities based on the questions that matter. Leaders cannot do this work alone effectively. Self-questioning has great value, but engaging persons who have the intuitive ability and the trained skill to ask powerful questions about what they are noticing or are curious about in the leader will result in deeper, more meaningful and significant insights and plans.

To create space for this work, the coach and the leader or group will need to attend to parameters and a relational field between or among them that fosters vulnerability and bravery. This space has potential for the leader to entertain deep, powerful questions for the sake of positive change; in such a container, powerful questions have room to do their work.

Powerful questions in the coaching world include attention to the *what* and the *how* foci. The *what* addresses issues of meaning and purpose: What is meaningful about this concern for the leader? What is important about the topic at hand right now? What is happening in the body during this conversation, which yields a clue to the topic's impact on the leader at a deep, perhaps primal level? The *how* questions move the leader to the Cycle: How will the leader move forward? How will the leader deal with resistance internally and/or from others? These questions lead to an exploration of possibilities and a check-in with the body's energy regarding responses to said possibilities.[4] *When* and *where* hone in on specifics of what is happening or can happen. *Why* is a difficult question, whether used in an existential sense or to ascertain a person's motive. Often a *why* question, other than in analysis of experiment, can be received as a judgmental statement rather than a question: "Why did you do that?" sounds very different than "What was important about doing that?" to someone on the receiving end of the question.

[4] My observations here are not a substitute for training in the area of coaching or powerful questioning. The questions are examples of establishing a pause that immerses deeply into the momentum of change, eliciting a more thoughtful and balanced way for moving forward.

These questions are not exclusive to coaches. To be sure, coaches are important for leaders and their teams who are sensing a need for change because they can provide a particular kind of space and confidential exploratory partnership to reveal a positive way forward. However, leaders can ask powerful questions of all who surround them. They also can receive powerful questions from other employees or volunteers. In either case, if leaders adopt a learning posture based in curiosity, are open to experimentation, and can tolerate failures, they will find a way forward that is more effective and powerful than they might have imagined. In fact, those who deliberately surround themselves with people who have learned how to ask powerful questions will meet the emerging future with greater agility and resilience than any other leader can. The culture of the organization will change from formal hierarchy with greater distance among employees to a "flattened" learning culture, where the leader models curiosity and experimentation in conversation with others. The culture itself becomes experimental and reflective, as well as less formally hierarchical, yielding more creativity that is relevant to their own purpose and work.

Taking time to engage powerful questions—the *what* and the *how* primarily—invites deeper individual wisdom as well as collaborative wisdom from one or others who increase awareness and give particular time and attention to concerns at hand. Quaker Clearness Committees[5] have a good sense of the effectiveness of this method; they exist as a communal way of discernment for an individual seeking a way forward. Clearness Committees do their work when called upon by an individual to sit with him or her, perhaps to make a decision to marry, or to change professions, or to solve a dilemma. The Committee sits and listens to the individual, maintaining long silences. When a Committee participant feels moved to ask a deep question for the purpose of discerning clarification, he or she directs the question to the individual. Over

[5] See https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources for clearness committee descriptions and information. See also *Coming to the Light: Cultivating Spiritual Discernment Through the Quaker Clearness Committee* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #446, 2017).

time, the individual begins to see a way forward, which has arisen internally from the powerful questions posed by those surrounding her or him. This space is a container for vulnerability and courage. Perhaps ideas will emerge as experiments to be entertained. Those asking questions do so out of curiosity, thereby initiating a culture of curiosity that incites the imagination about what is possible. Likewise, a companion, coach, or any discernment group must wait in silence after a powerful question is asked, or ask the question iteratively, until the one in discernment, including any leader, has sorted through emotions, phenomenological responses, and all the thoughts that well up in vulnerable space. Awareness rises, and new insights create a path forward.

A religious organization that engages in this work, for example, might be attempting to carve a way forward while living with significant debt. The process described above, with a skilled coach or facilitator, has the potential to yield underlying feelings and hidden thoughts about the situation, and generate a way forward that no one has yet entertained. Whatever the outcome, the inquiry-directed process lowers anxiety and builds consensus, yielding solidarity rather than polarization.

An inquiry-directed approach is especially crucial for churches at this moment and will continue to be essential in the aftermath of pandemic. Church members and constituents must decide in the next six to eighteen months what they will be or become: they can simply live through troubled times and return to the way they have always done things and thereby continue on the path to irrelevance. Or they can engage in a process of learning and discernment that co-creates the church for a new era that emphasizes *communita*s, an egalitarian community of clear purpose that serves constituents deeply and helpfully beyond its boundaries.

Response to Powerful Questions

Space and time relegated to immersing in powerful questioning and reflection are essential to develop a curiosity-based learning posture in a leader. The liminal space involved in this process then can lead to mobilization for change, resulting in designing a plan and leading to subsequent action. An essential aspect for moving from

plan into action, and eventually assimilation, is a structure of support, which includes accountability. A leader will need to identify persons or processes that hold her or him in supportive accountability for the work of change throughout the Cycle of Experience. This container or structure of support also applies to groups, teams, and organizations that participate in the coaching process. Whether working with an individual or a group, the coach bears the responsibility for checking in about the health of the container throughout the coaching engagement (time span for coaching).

Accountability sounds punitive to many of us—you are being watched and evaluated—but in fact, accountability is simply a structure, if used in a healthy way, to keep focus and momentum on track. This healthy accountability fosters responsibility for one's own work and ability to ask for help or accompaniment. Support is the primary focus of accountability. We are used to accountability that comes across as judgment. But encouraging support is a powerful way to companion a leader into the necessary change being called for. In team situations, this kind of accountability also lends itself to buy-in by the parties involved. The coaching questions can be: How will you garner support for your action? How will you hold yourself accountable for what you have named here?

Once change has been implemented, and the leader or organization has assimilated to the change, a new familiarity settles in. Next comes a rest period or a return to equilibrium. However, in our day and age, with the rapid speed of change and the emphasis on agility, rest periods might not last long. The Cycle will be called upon again, and powerful questions become part of an action-reflection-awareness raising cycle employed as part of the life of the leader and her or his organization. Celebration of the work that is being done softens the pace of organizational and leadership evolution, bringing energy and hope rather than anxiety, exhaustion, distraction, and burnout to the process of change.

Coaching Lessons for Leadership and Organizations

My hope is that the resilient person who derives her or his ethic of leadership from a core of curiosity and a life-approach of experimental adventure, even in crisis, will invite a following of

appreciative persons, committed to life-giving work in a world that seems intent on competition and destruction. Greater self-awareness, a rising energy to take action for change that hopes, heals, and is in service to the world, a plan that fits particular ministry contexts, and then living into a new reality all results in living into a new in a new way of engaging the world as religious peoples whose work is to bring love and hope where there is desperation and isolation. Leaders model this way. Groups and organizations learn it and live it. Health and wholeness spreads.

If enough leaders adopt this way of being, without myriad marketed checklists defining how to succeed, then the network of those practicing this hopeful, powerful approach will have potential to heal the world, one community at a time.

Book Review

Like Stepping Into A Canoe:
Nimbleness And The Transition Into Ministry
By: William Kincaid
Eugene, Ore.: Wipf And Stock, 2018
145 Pp. Paperback
978-1-498-29847-6

The metaphor in the title is an apt one. Stepping into an unstable canoe conjures images of an awkward, maybe even comical, transition from the solid ground of seminary to the fluidity of ministry. Kincaid is alerting readers, particularly those about to begin the transition, to have all their senses engaged, to be patient with the process and with themselves, and to take time to reflect along each step of the way. Kincaid writes, "…these pages are devoted to practices that cultivate your emotional and spiritual adjustment to a transition that may take as long as five to seven years" (14).

Under the overarching notion of nimbleness, Kincaid explores five interrelated practices through the transition experience of two clergy, Jennifer and son Noah, who graduated twenty years apart. He acknowledges the difficulty of this transition, stating, "you finish with a new beginning" (23). This, of course, means loss, grief, excitement, and anticipation. Kincaid counsels that this is a time to fully engage the core of your pastoral vocation "while reflecting on your life and work with a seasoned pastor, counselor or coach" (25).

The five practices that Kincaid then explores are curiosity, clarity, agility, proximity, and temerity. In each chapter devoted to one of these practices, he defines the practice, demonstrates how it is engaged, and then points to key opportunities to engage that practice in a ministerial context. Equally important, Kincaid shows how each of the practices mutually reinforces the others. This is the heart and soul of his book. Systems thinkers will relish his approach.

I especially appreciate the tender and tough voice of the experienced pastor/scholar that comes through in a deeply pastoral

and personal way. The reader will feel it as Kincaid switches from first-person singular to second-person singular to first-person plural. In this final voice, he implicates all of us. We each, in our own way, need to stand with those undergoing the challenging work of transitioning into ministry. Kincaid's book is a tool I recommend that we use.

Canoeing is familiar to me, having grown up in the land of ten thousand lakes. Most people canoe in pairs, one person in the bow and another in the stern. Each can help stabilize for the other as one steps into the canoe. William Kincaid is an able canoe partner. His book can have a stabilizing effect for anyone transitioning into ministry. Better yet, encourage those transitioning to read this book in an intergenerational clergy group because ministry remains fluid for a lifetime of adventure.

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Book Review

Mastering Civility: A Manifesto For The Workplace
By: Christine Porath
New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016
230 Pp. Hardcover
ISBN 978-1-4555-6898-7

In the opening pages of Mastering Civility, management professor Christine Porath states her core conviction: "[T]he way people treat one another at work matters" (2, emphasis in original). In this book, Porath aims to convince leaders and organizations that they have much to lose by tolerating incivility. By using extensive data from research studies, examples from varied organizational contexts, and reflections on her experience as a business consultant, Porath makes the case for "creating positive, civil workplaces" that are "good for people, organizations, and society" (3).

Porath organizes Mastering Civility into four main parts. Part I describes incivility and its costs as well as civility and its benefits. Part II invites readers to reflect deeply on their own behavior in the workplace, from interpersonal interactions to digital communication. In Part III, Porath proposes a plan called "Cycle to Civility," which is designed to help organizations improve their workplace culture through four key steps: 1. Recruit; 2. Coach; 3. Score (Assess); and 4. Practice. The final section of the book addresses individuals who are facing incivility in the workplace and offers advice for how to continue to thrive in the midst of difficulty.

Throughout the book, Porath poses a central question to her readers: "Who do you want to be?" Porath argues that "Whether you know it or not, you're answering this question every day through your actions" (3) and "How you treat people means everything" (4). As a result, much of the book focuses on behaviors in the workplace, with a special focus on leaders' conduct. Porath offers myriad examples of incivility (or rudeness, as she sometimes calls it), among them: neglecting to say "please" and "thank you," talking

down to others, using e-mail when face-to-face communication is needed, and taking too much credit for collaborative work.

According to Porath, when leaders engage in these uncivil behaviors, they have a disproportionately negative effect on the morale and functioning of the whole organization. Conversely, leaders who work to improve their own civility set a positive example for others to follow. This is why Porath devotes the longest section of the book (Part II) to guiding readers through a "civility checkup." In this section, Porath asks readers to examine their workplace behaviors through an "incivility test" (51–53), with the goal of identifying areas for improving their influence and effectiveness.

Porath wrote Mastering Civility primarily for leaders of businesses and other secular organizations, but religious leaders also can benefit from this text. The book makes a compelling argument about the negative impact of incivility in the workplace: increased stress on workers (even those who only witness incivility), deleterious health effects, and decreased productivity and creativity. Religious leaders of all types would do well to heed Porath's warnings about incivility and follow the advice she offers: listen well, get coaching and 360 feedback on your own leadership, make time for reflection, learn to read emotions, and practice self-care. These concrete strategies provide a pathway for leaders to develop greater self-awareness, particularly about how others in the workplace experience them.

By focusing so pointedly on specific behaviors, Mastering Civility often gives the impression that if all individuals would simply change their ways, the problem of incivility would be solved. Such an approach misses the larger systemic dynamics that so frequently contribute to toxic organizational cultures. Although Porath includes a helpful chapter on unconscious bias, the book would have benefited from more sustained attention to the roles that racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice play in incivility. For instance, Porath argues that uncivil leaders "have succeeded despite their incivility" (36, emphasis in original). However, Porath does not address how power dynamics make it possible for such leaders (who are disproportionately white and male) to behave

uncivilly without serious consequences. In other words, how likely are women or people of color to "succeed despite their incivility"? This is a question Porath does not engage.

Nor does Porath consider the ways in which definitions of civility are socially and culturally shaped. In chapter six, for example, Porath lists smiling as the "first fundamental" of civility (72). Yet no discussion is provided regarding the gendered expectations around this behavior (e.g., female leaders are often coached to smile more, while men usually are not), or of the different meanings smiling might have depending on one's cultural background. At times, this lack of attention to broader social dynamics makes Porath's advice feel unhelpfully decontextualized. Even so, this book is a powerful reminder to leaders that how we treat people matters—which, in our current political and social climate, is worth remembering.

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Book Review

Canoeing The Mountains: Christian Leadership In Unchartered Territory (Expanded Edition)
By: Tod Bolsinger
Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2018
269 Pp. Hardcover
ISBN 978-0-8308-4147-9

How can you respond as a Christian leader when the ministry field in which you find yourself does not match that for which you were trained? In other words, What if seminary didn't prepare you for what ministry has shifted/is shifting to? Canoeing the Mountains is a response to that question. Tod Bolsinger, Presbyterian pastor turned seminary vice president, writes from his experience of navigating unfamiliar terrain as a Christian leader. The metaphor of canoeing the mountains comes from Lewis and Clark's exploration of the West. Having assumed that the West would be just like the previously explored East, Lewis and Clark needed to adjust on-the-fly to survive in that starkly different environment. Bolsinger believes that with appropriate adjustments, Christian leaders also can survive the new terrain of the twenty-first century, although it is radically different from that of the twentieth century.

Beyond surviving this unexpected landscape, Bolsinger believes that leaders can thrive in ministry. To thrive, though, leaders will need to learn how to lead all over again. Bolsinger defines leadership as "energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world" (42). Because leadership is essential for communities to thrive, Bolsinger drills down on several leadership and leadership-related theories, such as systems theory (including differentiation and sabotage), adaptive leadership, and transformational leadership. Some of the practices that emerge from these deep explorations include remaining calm under pressure (Bolsinger reminds leaders that they are the thermostat,

not simply the thermometer, of an organization), making critical observations, staying relationally connected even in the midst of conflict, and focusing on personal transformation as a necessary component of leadership.

Canoeing the Mountains is commendable for at least two distinct qualities. First, it is well structured. Bolsinger does not allow the material to wane, although it is repetitious, which might frustrate more informed readers. Although readers who are familiar with the material of Edwin Friedman and Ronald Heifetz will find some doubling back throughout the book to be unnecessary, readers who are not familiar with leadership theory and material might appreciate the consistent review.

Second, Bolsinger succeeds at telling stories. For example, Bolsinger uses an historical metaphor successfully and repeatedly—Lewis and Clark's journey into the unexplored territory of the Louisiana Purchase—to describe the current state of many Christian leaders. Bolsinger also uses his experiences in Christian leadership—pastoral ministry, consulting, and education—to illustrate his concepts. The material is presented logically and winsomely.

Those strengths notwithstanding, the book could be improved in two related ways. By performing more qualitative research among those who are not at the center of Christendom, Bolsinger could inform and widen his intended audience. For example, Bolsinger tells the story of Native American Sacagawea, who served as a guide for Lewis and Clark as they explored the West. Because she was familiar with the terrain, Sacagawea was able to navigate the expedition successfully. Bolsinger uses this as a metaphor for how Christian leaders can learn from people who typically have not had power in a Christendom model. According to Bolsinger, "Those who had neither power nor privilege in the Christendom world are the trustworthy guides and necessary leaders when we go off the map" (218). Some interviews and case studies with those who have not been in power yet have shown that effective and practical leadership wisdom in contemporary leadership theory would have strengthened this claim. By hearing stories of others like them—those without power in the Christendom model—some readers

would be better welcomed into the conversation.

Canoeing the Mountains might be considered a pre-adventure consultation. Christian leaders who brave the mountains ahead might find they have canoes instead of climbing gear, but Canoeing the Mountains provides journeying practices, warnings, and a set of expectations for those who will embark on the journey. The book will be well-used in group discussion, and it comes with a valuable and intentional study guide and reading structure for group discussion. It can be used in seminary courses where students can draw on prior or ongoing experience to analyze the material or by two or more Christian leaders in the field of leadership who can more readily apply its insights in the day-to-day of ministry.

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Book Review

Pilgrims And Priests: Christian Mission In A Post-Christan Society

By: Stefan Paas
London: SCM Press, 2019
257 Pp. Paperback
ISBN 978-0-334-05877-9

For those of us (North Americans) seeking to engage thinking outside our context and for all of us seeking to equip students with the requisite theory and skills for an increasingly secularized society, Stefan Paas has given us an important gift. In Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society, he provides historical context, incisive insights, and practical suggestions.

Paas planted a church in a secular setting and is teaching missiology—giving him a dual vantage point on the challenges he addresses in this book. He characterizes his book as a "study in missional spirituality" (xvii), by which he means something deeper than the thin definitions of spirituality that abound. His goal is to provide a "sober, hard look at what it means to live in a secularized age," a narrative "to keep or regain a joyful confidence amid secularization," and a "vision of what it might look like to be a small Christian community in a largely indifferent world—that is God's world nonetheless" (xvii–xviii). Providing careful analysis, hopeful insights, and some signs of the future, this book is helpful for those locating themselves in ministry today, particularly those grappling with secularization.

Recognizing complexities and reductionisms in mission history, Paas recognizes that "Christian theology will have to maintain that there is no turning away from Christianity's missionary nature" (19). He then turns to the present situation in the West, particularly in Europe, noting that "Christian proclamation has become vulnerable" (39).

From his foundation and his descriptive work, Paas offers three

major contributions. First, he provides an overview of six ways that the church has responded to secularization. Second, he provides biblical images to guide us into the future. Finally, he provides some clues about what a small mission congregation might look like.

Paas argues that the church has had six responses to secularization: "the folk church; the Church as a counterculture; church growth; the Church as an agent of cultural transformation; the Church inside out; and the Church as a powerhouse for spiritual warfare" (45). Most (if not all) of us will recognize our own traditions in these and will be helped by the history, analysis, and critique provided. Of particular interest for those of us in North America is the description of the "folk church" (or volkskerk in Dutch). Because this is not our direct history in North America with our official "separation of church and state," it provides important cultural background to what has become "civil religion" in America. The insights here seem crucial to those of us working in mainline churches, who feel cultural displacement acutely and need help understanding it. The other five responses provide similar insights for other ecclesial positions.

Next, Paas shows his skill as a biblical scholar as he works through the meaning of the Old Testament exile and then the New Testament book of 1 Peter. He identifies issues of identity, mission, and witness in exile and discusses how to deal with confusion and loss of power. He describes a spirituality that is "resilient when facing obstruction" (155). Paas lands on the images of pilgrim and priest (hence the title) as metaphors of how the Church can exist in a "contrary joyfulness." For him, these two poles "are indispensable for the missionary identity of small Christian communities in a secular culture" (170). The pilgrim metaphor helps the church focus on our sojourn through this world—not avoiding care about creation and the poor but so that we can lose our dreams of power and control through culture change and church growth. The priest metaphor seeks to shift this biblical image from ideas of merely being oriented to God to moving toward one another and the world. Together, these images provide a powerful vision of loving God, loving others, and loving a complex, messy, interesting

world—all in a noninstrumental way.

Finally, Paas provides some clues to what a church living as a pilgrim and priest looks like—functioning in community (he prefers smaller communities where genuine relationship is possible), doing mission and evangelism in ways that honor human responsibility and God's grace, and living to give glory to God (rather than to obtain human success).

This book can be characterized as a chastened and hopeful ecclesiology. For those of us in North America, it helps to hear from someone who is not native to our polarities and thus can speak broadly without being pigeon-holed. The book provides moments that will help progressive and evangelical readers see themselves more clearly (and possibly, self-critically). It also provides a glimpse of a secularized society that (at least some) American Christians are (or will be) facing.

This is an important book for those us thinking about the future of American Christianity. It offers avenues for research by asking question such as these: How has the volkskerk history affected various denominations? What does it look like to take seriously the strengths and challenges of our own missional histories? Christian unity is addressed: What would it mean, after all the energy toward Christian ecumenism on denominational levels, for Christians to take seriously the other Christian witnesses in their own contexts? And finally, this book offers important insights toward developing hopeful and faithful Christians communities for the present and future.

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Book Review

Small Giants: Companies That Choose To Be Great Instead Of Big
By: Bo Burlingham
New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2016
271 Pp. Paperback
ISBN 978-0-14-310960-0

This book was given to me by a friend who started and has run a local company for more than twenty years. At one point, he faced the question of whether the goal of his company was simply to grow revenue. He chose to answer that that is was not, and then he looked around his community and worked to make his company an entity that works for the common good. Our conversation led me to think about how much popular church leadership literature is driven by large churches (in terms of worship attendance and, yes, revenue). And yet, most pastors and congregations do not fall into this category (nor are they likely to do so). This book offers a fruitful conversation with the business/entrepreneurial world for those of us looking for goals for congregational leadership besides the desire to grow larger.

Bo Burlingham used criteria such as the following to select the fourteen companies he used in his research: whether the company believed it is "still possible for an individual to be acquainted with everyone else in the organization" (xxi); whether the company had "the opportunity to grow much faster"; and whether the company "made a conscious decision not to" (xx). He identifies seven characteristics of these companies—recognizing freedom to choose the type of company being created, resisting pressure from outside forces, developing a deep relationship with their community, growing exceptional relationships with their suppliers and customers, developing workplaces that are "functional societies," and maintaining passion for their subject matter. Burlingham uses the word intimate (xxx) to describe several of these characteristics—

indicating that he is looking for close relationality. I will highlight three of these characteristics in order to make connections to religious leadership.

Each of these companies is "so intimately connected to the place where they are located that it was hard to imagine them being anywhere else" (50). They look for the common good and reflect the culture of their city or area. Some of this is social responsibility, but it is deeper than that. This can be called the "Mona Lisa Principle" because the Mona Lisa would be different if framed, hung, and lit in a different place. In a similar sense, each of these "small giant" companies know and care about their context.

Burlingham also highlights significant relationships between these companies and their customers and suppliers. He notes "extraordinary service and enlightened hospitality" (93) in these companies. This leads to long-term, caring relationships among all involved.

Finally, the workplace itself was considered. These companies have leaders who "were attempting to build a better way of life in their own little corner of the globe. They wanted their businesses to be places where people could lead fulfilling lives" (118).

Bringing a book on business leadership into the sphere of religious leadership requires caution—churches do not have customers and suppliers; this connection can lead to commodification and a view of "the gospel as goods and services," a danger of an instrumental view of church. Acknowledging this risk, the book offers several helpful pointers—the necessity of asking hard questions about who an organization is becoming, the reality of acknowledging and dealing with outside pressures, and the important focus on dealing with and caring about people. In a day when pastors might choose between posting a blog, tweeting about what is going on in the community, or traveling to a denominational meeting—a book like this sounds a call to get out of the office, to walk through the community, and to talk to church members as well as those who have no intention of becoming church members. And this book calls forth pastors and leaders who know their context and care deeply about them.

This book is not likely to go on my required reading list for a general leadership class (it is not broad enough for that), but it will go on the recommended list. It would be helpful for a course focused on congregational leadership or for a student who wants to think deeply about congregational leadership or local theology in the North American setting. I would certainly recommend it to a church board that wanted to read something together and talk about their own sense of purpose for their area. It also opens up some research possibilities about creative organizational structures (chapter six in the book, and not covered in this review). The church can have good conversations about its ecclesiology/organizational structure and the needs of the local context, and this book provides some creative ideas here, too.

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Book Review

Moral Leadership For A Divided Age
By: David P. Gushee And Colin Holtz
Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2018
384 Pp. Hardcover
ISBN 978-158-743357-3

What is moral leadership? Why do we need moral leadership? What impact does moral leadership have? How do we study moral leaders? Who are modern history's moral leaders? Seasoned thinkers and writers David P. Gushee and Colin Holtz pose and answer these questions in the highly praised volume Moral Leadership for a Divided Age. The authors' introduction starts with a gut realization: the serious (or sickening) lack of moral leadership in current society. Leaders "prefer power to purpose, image to character, and accusation to confession . . . Some people reach high leadership positions even though—or because?—their celebrity far outweighs their character. Others become famous based on the ability to attract our attention with constant controversy" (11). This dire situation, the authors realize, has inevitably contributed to severe chasms and violence in human relations in terms of gender, race, culture, nationality, religion, political view, social status, and more. And yet the same situation ironically calls for excellent moral leaders who could lead people in a right direction with "transcendent, uniting ethical values" such as "courage, compassion, truthfulness" and sacrificial resistance (11). The authors list fourteen great moral leaders in recent history—among them William Wilberforce of the eighteenth century, Harriet Tubman of the nineteenth century, and moving to Malala Yousafzai of the twenty-first century. These are people we can call true leaders and who still inspire and transform our moral consciousness. The authors propose to study, or "exegete," them closely with the hopeful end result that we ourselves also might become moral leaders for today's world.

In order to help readers perform their own exegesis process,

Gushee has developed a ten-point method based on his twenty years of teaching about prominent moral leaders. "The goal [of the method] is to go beyond superficial awe and to instead respectfully—but critically—engage a leader's life" (11). Among the ten points, two that sick out are "study a leader's personal background" and "consider criticism, conflict, and failure." These two stages encourage a holistic approach to the life of the given leader to the extent of revealing his or her mistakes and disappointments. In this sense, the book does not idolize the fourteen leaders upon which it reflects, but rather provides a full account of their life stories as human beings (great and also imperfect). The authors then invite readers—fellow flawed human beings—to engage inner, imaginative dialogues with those leaders around moral choices that the leaders made in their own contexts. The authors' empathetic yet analytic storytelling of each moral leader's inspiring life smooths the way for this imaginative conversation to take place and through which the reader's own transformation can be invoked.

Among its many merits, the multireligious dimension of the book is noteworthy (in a sense, the book is an attempt to cure today's religious divide). The fourteen moral leaders come from several different faith traditions, or from no tradition—Islam (Malala Yousafzai), Hinduism (Mohandas Gandhi), Protestantism (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), Catholicism (John Paul II), religious pluralist (Florence Nightingale)—and each leader constructed her or his individual civil convictions based by and large on religious values, as well as a dream (e.g., the dream of Dr. King) for broad society. Thus, indirectly, the authors affirm the power of religion that can grow and inspire individual moral leaders. That positive power and influence, found in most religions, acknowledges each different religion's raison d'être.

Each chapter is structured in the same way and is easy to follow and anticipate: the moral leader's biological time line, introduction, historical context, early and private life, vocation, legacy and criticism, leadership lessons, discussion questions, and further reading. What is generally missing is the moral leader's personal writing or voice (i.e., primary source excerpts). So, if this already excellent publication goes through expansion or a second edition,

an appendix containing short excerpts from the fourteen authors is recommended. For example, a transcript of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech would be a good addition.

This book might serve as a perfect fourteen week-long syllabus on a college or seminary level course on moral leadership. At the least, this volume could serve as a key required reading in any Christian ministry or religious ethics class.

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