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BRIAN RUFFNER & RUSSELL L. HUIZING

A TRINITARIAN LEADERSHIP MODEL: INSIGHTS FROM THE APOSTLE PETER

Abstract: The integration of biblical principles with leadership theory has proven a monumental undertaking. Can such principles actually guide Christian leaders even though they are sometimes in tension with current concepts of leadership? It might seem like a difficult balance to achieve. However, by delving into Peter's basic and presuppositional commitments, a clear picture of biblical leadership emerged. Using 1 Peter 5 as the investigative platform, thorough analysis revealed a Trinitarian belief structure underpinning Peter's concept of leadership. Significantly, the transition from simple fisherman to apostle demonstrated a radical transformation in both thought and application of leadership principles. Ultimately, a precise understanding of God's eternal character forms the bridge between theology and leadership theory, offering a glimpse of Trinitarian leadership as a paradigm for future study.

Keywords: *Trinitarian theology of leadership, leadership theory and practice, incarnational model of leading, character development, worldview analysis*

Introduction

What does Christian leadership look like? Imagine a Christian leader who is able to move forward in the midst of formidable risk; not because he ignores the hazards facing him, but because he is able to assess these hazards and act wisely. Just as important, picture this Christian leader as someone who can pragmatically provide direction and guidance that manages competing alliances. Naturally, such a leader considers the future impact that team members will have on outcomes. He recognizes the world as it is, maneuvers between diverse groups of relationships, and has an eye for the future of individuals and the organization. Would this not be the type of leader that we want

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heading our churches and faith-based organizations? For that matter, would not any organization—Christian or otherwise—benefit from this approach of leadership?

Yes, indeed—until we place these scenarios into their actual contexts. Without question, risk assessment is a valuable leadership asset. However, when the apostle Peter attempted to walk on water, his prudence nearly drowned him. Most leadership models today encourage pragmatic planning in the midst of contentious groups. However, when Peter conscientiously attempted to deter Christ from His fateful confrontation with the religious and political authorities in Jerusalem, his initiative was met with stern rejection and was labeled a satanic attack. Of no less concern, understanding how team members contribute to outcomes remains a vital dimension of leadership, and yet when Peter questioned the future role of the disciple whom Jesus loved, he was admonished to keep his inquisitiveness in check.

Has the integration of these principles into Christian leadership, then, been carried out in vain? Of course not. All truth originates with God and to the extent that leadership principles reflect God's inherent qualities, those same principles can be considered helpful to Christian or secular leaders. However, that very axiom suggests there is something prior—a presupposition. Contemporary leadership presupposes that understanding effective leadership requires the study of the behavior, skills, and traits of leaders and/or followers. This path of study has left the field with a plethora of leadership options but no agreed upon definition of the very topic that is being studied (Northouse, 2013; Yukl, 2006).

Peter instead points us to a different source of leadership knowledge—specifically, a presuppositional knowledge of God. As Peter journeyed from his early disciple experiences to the places commemorated in his first epistle, he directly encountered the enormity and magnificence of the Trinitarian God. The Almighty Father that Peter was already familiar with through Judaism (Isa. 63:16) revealed Himself through the resurrected Jesus Christ (Mark 16:7), and indwelt him through the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:4). These dramatic confrontations with the Triune God, which reverberate throughout the theology of his first epistle, transformed Peter's presuppositions regarding God's fundamental character and nature.

In the midst of Peter's passionate epistolary message addressing various ecclesial concerns, he established a quintessential model for defining Christian leadership. Specifically, the final chapter of Peter's first epistle offers the capstone to his message (Jobes, 2005; Thompson, 1994), in which he delivered instructions regarding leadership to the various constituents within the Christian community of Asia Minor. Close scrutiny of this passage through the

lens of socio-rhetorical interpretation (Robbins, 1996) reveals that Peter's basic presuppositions about God informed and shaped his understanding of what leadership is and how to lead. Because of its unique hermeneutical approach, Robbins' interpretive framework allows the reader to analyze an author's ideology by focusing on the layers of latent literary "texture" (p. 2), which expose the underlying fabric of thought implicit in the writing. This fabric includes Peter's worldview, affiliations and seminal experiences which shaped his commitments in such a way that they became markers of a Trinitarian theology.

In a similar vein, Ayers (2006) proposed an initial triadic approach to the theology of leadership. Applying this structure to Peter's ideology, what follows seeks to extend Ayers' model by establishing an incarnational theology of leadership based on Trinitarian assumptions. Leadership, from a biblical perspective, involves a realization that the very essence of God's being creates the rationale for all human behavior and enterprises (Beeley & Britton, 2009; Frame, 2000; Van Til, 1955). For this reason, examining God's eternal nature represents the starting point for all endeavors attempting to explain human behavior or institutions.

Peter's approach to leadership was shaped by his understanding of God. By uniting these interpretive and theological frameworks together, 1 Peter 5 revealed a Trinitarian presupposition as the central concern that formed Peter's theological construct of leadership. His Trinitarian ideology seems to have established the foundation upon which he built his entire leadership ethos and formulated his instructions to the Christians of Asia Minor. Consequently, as we will show in this work, Peter points the study of leadership to the character and nature of God as the very essence and definition of leadership itself. With this realization, Christians occupy the unique position to more fully apprehend the fundamental nature of leadership and its application.

Listening to the Text

One important part of listening well to someone is asking good questions. In this study we used three questions from Robbins' (1996) model of socio-rhetorical analysis which are especially pertinent to understanding Peter's worldview, affiliations, and seminal experiences. First, the *question of worldview* seeks to understand the essential nature of existence from the author's point of view. For instance, how authors answer the question of whether the universe was designed, the result of happenstance, or somehow the combination of both significantly affects their view of how the world operates. Second, the *question of affiliation* seeks to understand the community the author resides within. Inclusion within a particular community affects one's perspective of his own role and the roles of others. If I am Ghanaian, I will likely adopt the values of

Ghana and view others outside the Ghanaian community from that perspective. Finally, the question of *seminal experience* shapes the vision of what an ideal future holds in store. In this way, the tight interweaving of a particular outlook and sense of belonging combined with the lessons of experience coalesce to form a message that transcends the bounds of time. Approaching the text of 1 Peter 5 with these questions assists in understanding the presuppositions which Peter held.

While we are separated by the centuries, contemporary Christians face many of the same struggles that Peter was addressing: Christians are different from those around them because they seek to emulate and worship alone the Trinitarian God revealed in Jesus. Those differences lead to behavior and responses that bring upon believers cultural shame, trials and suffering; those community pressures require believers to respond to a “hostile, suspicious society” while strengthening relations within the body of believers (DeSilva, 2004, pp. 847-858). Of course, while these grand themes of Christian living can be identified in Peter’s writing, more difficult are their application in day to day living. Being a Christian family, a Christian neighbor, a Christian politician, a Christian worker, a Christian entertainer, a Christian religious leader—essentially a Christian in culture—requires that these themes address the unique expressions of Christianity in culture. This article seeks to apply these themes from Peter to the field of leadership, recommending a uniquely Christian approach to being a leader.

A Matter of Worldview

As might be expected from his Jewish background, Peter exhibited a worldview that expected divine participation in human affairs, providential relief from present suffering, and a hope of future salvation (vv. 6–7, 10). While the recipients of Peter’s letter might have temporarily experienced exile-like suffering, Peter was confident that “the God of all grace . . . will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (v. 10, ESV; Blum, 1981; Davids, 1990; Jobs, 2005; Kistemaker, 1996). Despite his own dire circumstances while awaiting what would be his own execution in Rome, Peter remained assured of God’s ability and desire to protect His people; not, however, before a commensurate amount of suffering had concluded. For Peter, the normal Christian life included suffering, which made it essential to learn to depend on God (vv. 6, 10). Marshall (1991) says that the Christian life reflects a “curious blend of trust in God and resolute action based upon it” (p. 167). It is within this paradox that Peter’s understanding of God was forged.

At the same time, Peter’s argument reflected a revolutionary character as well. As much as Peter expected God to intervene on behalf of His people, he

fully expected a radical change that would utterly displace the current evil world (Ladd, 1993). Peter's anticipation of "the glory that is going to be revealed . . . when the chief Shepherd appears" (vv. 1, 4, ESV) revealed the understanding that God had yet to fully consummate the work He began at Creation (Davids, 1990; Grudem, 2009; Jobes, 2005; Kistemaker, 1996). In the present, the Christian's primary enemy, the Devil, sought to prevent followers from achieving this outcome (v. 8). Only at some future time would Christians "receive the unfading crown of glory" (v. 4, ESV). In the meantime, there existed urgency for Christians to remain vigilant and persevere in the face of tremendous persecution.

In the end, Peter's message reflected a hopeful yet pragmatic worldview that allowed him to courageously approach the situation and genuinely engage with the Christian community. Peter understood the risks surrounding him and other believers. It was the roaring lion (v. 8) that sought to dislodge Peter's gaze from a singular focus on Christ, much like the waves had done earlier in his life. Although he fully expected God to intervene on Christians' behalf, he also understood that suffering, to varying degrees, remains a certainty in this life. Even if God did not intervene in the immediate moment, eventually He would act decisively and conclusively to redeem the Creation as His holy character demands. For Peter, such steadfast belief in the faithful character of God (v. 12) allowed him to lead with an understated and enduring confidence that galvanized the Christian community.

A Sense of Belonging

Peter's affiliation with several different groups presents another critical consideration of his understanding of the Trinitarian God. Peter was a Christian writing to other Christians—this is obvious. However, his frequent allusions in chapter 5 to the Old Testament (vv. 3, 5, 7–8) indicate that he clearly affiliated himself with historical Judaism (Guthrie, 1990; Laniak, 2006). Yet, his understanding that Christ represented the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures (vv. 1, 4, 10, 14) set him apart from the larger Jewish community. Indeed, the insistence that Christ was the Messiah created much controversy between followers of Christ and the Jewish religious establishment (cf. Acts 2, 4). Therefore, while Peter shared a common religious ancestry with the Jewish people, his worship of Christ put him at odds with that very same community.

At the same time, the basic Hebrew theological conviction regarding the oneness of God put the Christian community of Asia Minor at odds with the resident population. Given the pagan influence that dominated the ancient Near East, much of the hostility endured by the Christians in Asia Minor occurred as a result of religious bigotry (DeSilva, 2004). The belief in one God

as opposed to a pantheon of gods, which included the emperor, placed Christians in conflict to the majority populace and imperial power (DeSilva, 2004; Wright, 2013).

For this reason, Peter's writings displayed a factional quality that recognized the acute differences between Christians and everyone else. Concerns regarding loyalty to the state as well as the perceived ignorance of monotheistic belief saturated the antagonistic reaction of local residents against Christians. Peter's rhetoric countered this mentality and, remaining consistent with his understanding of God, he insisted that Christians confront matters of honor with humility and grace (vv. 5–6), echoing Christ's comments to John and James many years earlier (cf. Matt. 20:25–28). Uncharacteristic of Greco-Roman society, which was preoccupied with the acquisition of honor, Christian demeanor offered a humble response to criticism (DeSilva, 2004).

In this way, Peter stood paradoxically between two home worlds, belonging to neither Rome nor Jerusalem. As DeSilva (2004) notes correctly, much of the persecution the Christian community faced was due to an inherent animosity of religious practices in conflict with those of Greco-Roman society. Peter's command in the first chapter to "be holy" (v. 16, NIV) represented a severe separation from conventional ideology of the time. Even within Judaism, the obsession with power and honor captivated the members of society (cf. Matt. 20:21–24), affording little distinction from the practices of Hellenistic society (DeSilva, 2004; Robbins, 1996). Christians, on the other hand, were to behave differently, pursuing noticeably different objectives. Indeed, Peter's journey had taken him far from rather adolescent notions on the extent of God's sovereignty that had viewed Jesus' death as antithetical to the role of a King.

Learning From Experience

Conspicuously, Peter's initial remark in chapter 5 immediately confronted a particularly critical past event—Peter counted himself "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (v. 1). Although it is not clear as to whether Peter meant to restrict this to the crucifixion event or rather intended this comment more generally (Davids, 1990; Jobes, 2005), Christ's sufferings, and His behavior modeled after that suffering, represented a pivotal series of events which were etched in Peter's memory (Hiebert, 1982; Kistemaker, 1996). Thus, Christ's sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection crystallized Peter's understanding of Christian behavior and his faith that God ultimately restores His people.

With Christ's example at the forefront of this thought, Peter juxtaposed a clear distinction between two specific groups within the community. Peter addressed the elders first, extolling them to watch over the members of the church (vv. 1–3). Notably, he referred to himself as a fellow elder (v. 1) rather

than imposing his apostolic authority, placing himself as an equal to others (Blum, 1981; Elliott, 2001; Hiebert, 1982). Peter addressed a group of chief representatives who, due to their cultural function and Christian maturity, served as role models and *de facto* leaders of the community (Davids, 1990; Elliott, 2001; Hiebert, 1982; Marshall, 1991; Shero, 2014). Unlike Greco-Roman society, which was bent on achievement and the acquisition of honor, Christian leaders were to serve as a result of reflecting Christ's character with genuine willingness (v. 2), moderation (v. 2), and proper application of power (v. 3).

Peter continued by addressing the younger men (v. 5), establishing a non-authoritarian leadership structure. A natural reading favors the interpretation of all those who would, in due time, become elders themselves; however, the comment could also be extended to all other members of the church as well (Grudem, 2009). Once more, against the Greco-Roman cultural milieu of honor and power, Peter exhorted the young men to show deference to their cultural and, more importantly, spiritual elders. Consequently, within the Kingdom of God, humility, as opposed to hubris, aligns relationships both vertically and horizontally (vv. 5–6).

Ultimately, whether speaking to the elders or younger men, the shadow of the cross and Christ's sacrificial actions from the past undergirded and reinforced Peter's understanding of how leadership would operate in the future reality of the church. Thus, whether being forced to go where he did not want to go (John 21:18) or remaining until Christ's return (21:22), Peter had learned that the secret to Kingdom leadership lies primarily in developing the divine character within rather than obsessing over outward prestige and honor.

Hearing Peter

Peter's instructions to the beleaguered community in Asia Minor left little doubt as to where he stood. Again and again, his personal trust in God's faithfulness, in light of Christian suffering, surfaced as he articulated his vision of Christian leadership. Peter's commitment to and understanding of leadership grounded itself in the very character of God—a character that is Trinitarian in nature. While Peter did not explicitly mention all the members of the Trinity within chapter 5, the residual effects remained evident in his rhetoric (Kistemaker, 1996; Ladd, 1974). Undoubtedly, the definitive concept of the Trinity as it is known in contemporary theology had not been developed at the time that Peter wrote. Still, chapter 5 recapitulates Peter's opening statements in the first chapter, forming rhetorical bookends for the entire letter. Within his initial exhortation, Peter clearly mentions all three members of the Trinity by name (1:2; Thompson, 1994), and Trinitarian references permeate the text in the verses and chapters that follow (Blum, 1981; Kistemaker, 1996). By the final

chapter, the Trinitarian concept had been well established and seems presupposed in all that Peter presented.

Thus, Peter's foundational commitment rested in his knowledge of God's essential nature as three persons in one being. His understanding of God as Father resulted in reminding believers throughout chapter 5 of God's sovereign will, holiness, grace, power, and the ushering in, as well as the final consummation, of the end of days. His recognition that God had come in the person of Jesus Christ points to the reality of the Trinity. Christ's sacrificial atonement (1:2) places Him in a position of authority previously reserved for God alone. This incarnational element of the Trinity reappears once again in 1:21 where trust in God and Christ are considered equivalent expressions of faith. Likewise, Peter's recognition that the Spirit confirmed the promises of the Old Testament prophets and vindicated Christ's suffering (1:11–12) formed the basis of his call to holy living (vv. 13–16). These themes of Father, Son, and Spirit—explicitly and implicitly—continue throughout 1 Peter.

In summary, an analysis of 1 Peter 5 reveals a fundamental commitment to the most basic truth of Christianity—the Trinity. It is this foundational commitment that Peter applies throughout the entire epistle to the practice of Christian living in various contexts (e.g., respect for human authorities [2:13–17]; slaves/masters [2:18–25]; wives/husbands [3:1–7]), focusing in the final chapter specifically on leadership within the church itself. In the final analysis, Peter's message represented a Trinitarian theology of leadership which provides a framework from which to apply the practice of leadership even in the contemporary context.

A Theology of Leadership

Nevertheless, uniting theology and leadership demands more than mere literary analysis. For his part, Ayers (2006) proposes an initial triadic construct to the theology of leadership in which he seeks to marry philosophical and theological language as a bridge between Christian and secular perspectives. This construct includes the nature of God's eternal and infinite being (ontological), the divine methods that God uses (methodological), and the purposes of God (teleological). Ayers concludes that these dimensions can be used to describe who leaders are at their very core, how they approach leadership, and fundamentally why they lead. Ayers concerned himself with the need for such common language as a result of a "moral and spiritual void" (p. 7) that exists in the study and practice of leadership. He theorizes that theology could, perhaps, provide the necessary moral and spiritual substance required to fill this void.

Recent research focusing on ethical leadership has suggested that a moral vacuum exists within the practice of leadership and that the development of

ethical practices and behaviors is urgently required (Levin & Boaks, 2013; Thornton, 2009). However, as Ayers (2006) notes, a plethora of potential antidotes for such an ailment have been suggested—but there has been a struggle to determine ethical standards or behaviors that often lead to ethical relativism (Minkes, Small & Chatterjee, 1999; Tartell, 2011; Thornton, 2009). Could the “*a priori* nature of the leader” (Ayers, p. 11) be helpful in establishing the foundation for ethical leadership?

Interestingly, Peter goes a step further in his letter. Understanding who a leader is begins with reflection on the *a priori* nature of God. Only after God’s nature has been ascertained can application to human leadership be made. Thus, it is not enough to appropriate theological language to describe leadership; rather, theological language must establish that the study of leadership has the very same presuppositional foundation, namely God (Beeley & Britton, 2009). God’s nature becomes, then, the foundation of leadership to which all definitions can be anchored. One deficiency of modern leadership theory and language is that it can leave leaders bereft, not just of theological language but of a basic realization that God, not man, is the foundation and central focus of leadership.

Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Leadership

Having established the philosophical connection between theology and leadership, our focus now may shift to presenting a reformulated theology of leadership from a Christian perspective. Using Ayers’ (2006) triadic construct as a starting point, a Trinitarian theology of leadership offers a more robust account of biblical leadership. Ontologically speaking, a Trinitarian approach acknowledges that God exists as a plurality of one (Bavinck, 2003; Berkhof, 1996). The members of the Trinity co-exist in such a fashion that none forfeit their individuality, yet each is so intimately involved in the others that no separation exists (Bavinck; Zscheile, 2007). This is the quintessential relationship where the members are indivisibly united without diminishing one another’s individuality (coinherence). The action of one affects the others and vice versa. Insight into this relationship reveals the epitome of organizational dynamics. Each member of the Trinity contributes His unique blend of skills and experience so that the whole can function effectively (Horsthius, 2011), yet none are considered more vital than or subservient to the others. The same is true of leaders and followers. Each fulfills a required function within the organization, yet neither assumes superiority over the other (Covrig, 2010; Tucker, 2006).

Peter understood this well. His admonition that the elders serve, not out of obligation, greed or ambition, but rather willingly, simply for the sake of the sheep (5:2–3), reflected the ontological principle of Trinitarian leadership.

Likewise, the younger members were to recognize the elder's valuable contribution without attempting to usurp or undermine their authority (vv. 5–6). Each served in humble recognition of what the other had to offer. Trinitarian leadership assumes humility in deference to the other members of the community.

The implications from a methodological perspective flow logically from the ontological perspective. The relationship enjoyed within the Trinity reflects mutual cooperation and reciprocation. Each member relishes the opportunity to serve the others and, likewise, finds fulfillment and enjoyment in the others' activities (Bavinck, 2003; Zscheile, 2007). More than just assisting or supporting other members, the methodological principle of Trinitarian leadership extolls a participative cooperation (Horsthius, 2011) that removes all personal pride from the equation. This realization allowed Peter to disregard Greco-Roman notions of honor and shame and call for mutual submission between the elders and younger members of the Christian community in Asia Minor as well as with the outside population.

The Trinitarian character of leadership can also be seen in teleology, the study of divine goals or purposes and, theologically speaking, the reason for existence. Creation evidences design and therefore implies a designer (Frame, 1994; Sproul, Gerstner, & Lindsley, 1984). Simply stated, God creates. The relationship enjoyed within the Trinity is so intimately filled with love that it overflows into creative activity (Bavinck, 2003). Consequently, the crowning masterpiece of this creation—humanity—mirrors the divine image (cf. Psalm 8). A Trinitarian perspective focuses leadership on developing the personhood of individuals and fulfilling the image of God within each individual and culture. Zscheile (2007) refers to what he calls “irreducible otherness” (p. 53), meaning that which makes each person unique. In other words, a primary goal of leadership is to maximize what the individual or culture has to offer both to God and the human community. Peter's acknowledgment of this principle permitted him to address his fellow elders without arrogance or pride that might easily beset a man in his position (5:1). Rather, his focus concerned developing those in his care to their ultimate potential (vv. 4, 10).

At the same time, the teleology of leadership is wrapped in another characteristic of God—sovereignty. Leadership theory and practice has been preoccupied with how to account for as well as ensure effectiveness (Northouse, 2013). Still, human beings are creatures subject to God's sovereign will and purpose. Trinitarian leadership mitigates against this tension. It understands that while leadership (or, more generally, human responsibility) values and honors attempts to maximize human potential, ultimately, the results are left to God. This perspective also guards against humiliation and despair when desired results are not achieved. Peter's recognition of this very basic truth allowed

him to hold and offer hope in the midst of suffering, even his own. Human action or the lack thereof is not necessarily the catalyst for suffering (cf. John 9:3). Rather, God allows suffering both as a means for humanity to recognize the need for rescue from a broken world and as a means of instigating the transformation into the image of Christ. In all of this, God's grace abounds. Peter's basic presuppositional commitments provided the assurance that this was indeed a reality.

Making Theory Visible

A final element of a Trinitarian theology of leadership, going beyond Ayers' (2006) triadic taxonomy, is that of incarnationality. Theological reflection on leadership must include acknowledgement of the Incarnation (Cafferky, 2011; Lingenfelter, 2008; McKenna, 2013; Patterson, 2014; Zscheile, 2007). There exists no other more concrete, definitive or authoritative statement demonstrating divine leadership. That God would forsake His heavenly abode and divine status in order to take the flesh of humanity (cf. Phil. 2:6–11) served as the ultimate paradigm of leadership. Paradoxical to modern leadership theory, which purports to understand what makes leaders effective, biblical leadership emerges from weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10) and is demonstrated in serving those we often call followers.

Chaleff (2003) proposes that followership and leadership are mutually balanced as they orbit in unison around a common purpose. Rarely are the common purposes exactly identical. However, to the extent that they are similar, the common goal keeps both leader and follower in orbit and accomplishes the goals of the positions they have mutually agreed to fulfill (Kellerman, 2008). When that goal is the incarnated revelation of the person and nature of the Trinity, then a strong orbit can be established to accomplish the common goal.

In other words, a Trinitarian leadership theory cannot simply be a theory—it must be practical. Did Peter—after he experienced God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—exhibit this style of leadership in practical experience? Indeed, the events of Acts 6 clearly demonstrate that he did. Ecclesial and faith-based organizational leaders will resonate with the all-too familiar story. Complaints arise regarding certain constituents who feel slighted, causing divisions that could easily derail the mission and purpose of the fledgling group by distracting leaders and/or sowing the seeds of devastating conflict. Anyone in a leadership role for any length of time has dealt with similar situations.

Leaders who are guided by a Trinitarian understanding of the being of God (ontology) recognize both the unique individuality and the necessary involvement of all members within the relationship without assuming superiority over the others. This is, in fact, exactly what the events of Acts 6 reflect. The apos-

ties—obviously, inclusive of Peter—recognized their unique role in prayer, preaching, and the ministry of the Word. Yet, there is no sense within the passage that they intended to create a role inferior to their own. Instead, it constituted a vital role necessary within the context of fulfilling the Great Commission (6:7).

In this context we see leaders pursuing participative cooperation, which reflects what would be expected in a Trinitarian leadership paradigm. This was evident in the selection of the seven. Rather than the apostles making an autocratic selection of individuals, they relied upon “the full number of disciples” to select those who would care for both Hebrews and Hellenists (v. 2). “What they said pleased the whole gathering” (v. 4). Those selected by the gathering were then brought before the apostles—Peter was one of them—“and they prayed and laid their hands on them” (v. 6).

Finally, leadership teleology, reflecting a Trinitarian teleology, develops personhood by fulfilling the image of God within each individual. The Jewish apostles did not consider the Hebrew widows more important than the Hellenists. Nor did the Hellenist seven (note their Greek names), given the results of their work, appear to place more emphasis on the Hellenist widows. On the contrary, the very fact that the apostles established a means to care for both groups equitably echoes the very heart of Trinitarian teleology. Additionally, all of the groups within this narrative—apostles, the seven, and the gathering of disciples—all in their own unique manner fulfilled their calling. In the ministry of the apostles, the service of the deacons, and the unity of the gathering, the image of God radiated forth as a testament of Trinitarian leadership.

Conclusion

Does this then necessarily mean a limited audience of applicability for this model of leadership? The answer to that is both yes and no. On the one hand, the ability to live out the Christian life is not simply a matter of living in a moral manner. Rather, the Christian life is lived as one submits through faith to the reign of Christ as God for transformation into His image, displaying His character. This is a work that only God can accomplish by the grace of the Father, through the person of the Son, and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, Trinitarian leadership is narrowed in applicability to those who are in Christ.

However, the model is not limited simply to ecclesial or intra-Christian cultural contexts. Believers following a Trinitarian model of leadership will seek to highlight the manner in which the image of God is displayed in people and the organizations that they represent. Thus, whenever a godly exhibition of

authority, humility, servanthood, justice, mercy, transformation, unity, love, and/or grace occurs (and the list extends to all of God's attributes), God's image is also displayed. Within this environment, Trinitarian leaders enact the characteristics offered in this model and invite others to fulfill their God-ordained purpose, ultimately revealing the divine character.

Whenever and wherever God's image shines less brilliantly, Trinitarian leaders stand as a testimony of what could and should be. This allows much future study into the manner in which Trinitarian leadership supports, critiques, and refines contemporary leadership theories. Thus, while followers of Jesus are uniquely equipped by God to fulfill this manner of leadership and followership, its effects extend far beyond the edges of the community of God's people, spreading the goodness of God out into the world, reminiscent of the original cultural mandate.

Ultimately, though, the model is dependent on a more basic presupposition: leadership can only be explained to the extent that the character of God is understood. While the image of God is not utterly effaced from mankind and thus human beings can contribute positively to an understanding of true leadership, presuming that a study of humanity alone will lead to the ultimate definition of leadership is a fool's journey. Humanity is not *a priori*—God is *a priori* and as such His character is the presupposition that underlies all true leadership understanding. While the infinite nature of God tends to suggest an endless depth of study, the value of the study will not lie simply in effective leadership, but rather in a deeper knowledge of God.

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