Leadership and Learning: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Introduction

Christendom can be characterized as a massive learning community within which leadership is a critical element. In such a scenario, "Let this mind be in you" becomes a compelling imperative.

rejected the model. God sent His Son to demonstrate His model in person. Humankind rejected it again. God has once more presented the model, this time through His church. How e ectively has the Christian community presented this model to the world?

Only by learning the model can we demonstrate its e ectiveness. A fundamental aspect of my premise is that we can learn the model only by beholding the Master Archetype and then by practicing the model in our own lives, with the Holy Spirit providing power and guidance.

The leader. Is there any doubt in Christendom about who the ultimate leader is?

Within the Christian worldview, the Original Leader was and is God, Whose description of Himself, beginning with Exodus 3:14, can be paraphrased as "I AM that I AM, and I AM your leader." He amplifies this description in Isaiah 44:6: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God [Leader]."   at statement calls to mind the first commandment of the Decalogue: "   ou shalt have no other gods [leaders] before me" (Exodus 20:3).

The learning connection. Is there a mechanism by which God, our Leader, facilitates learning?

And "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts . . ." (Gal. 4:4–6).

The original leadership model is rejected. When did God cease to be the de facto leader of His people?

Consider Old Testament history as it relates to the setting-aside of God as the Leader. In these words: "   en all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. (I Sam. 8:4 & 5)Substituting the word   for   seems appropriate in view of the fact that the modern con-cept of leader is a more relevant term for the ancient concept of king. By doing so, we can read the text as "now make us a   to   us. . . ."

As Everett Fox (1999) has eloquently explained in his book   , God's organization on Earth—His corporate stockholders, if you please—rejected His leadership. In addition, they rejected the leadership of His appointed emissaries, the judges and the prophets.   ey demanded a leader, in the sense that we are discussing, in order to be like all other nations.

The myth of secular leadership. How does the replacement model hold up against the original?

One of the most compelling descriptions of society's need for leader-ship comes from a treatise by Gemmill and Oakley (1992).   ey aver that what we so glibly refer to as   is actually a cultural myth, devel-oped and supported by social systems to absolve ourselves of responsibil-ity for the larger problems that face us.   e intuitive application of this idea explains why social systems are so eager to make such assertions as, "We need new leadership"—as though a change in the individuals who hold positions of power will " 0 TD9t rder-tst "uw (leE 1 Tf 13stodge us ld Oakleyld positr to as)Tl(1999)

God and He is our Lord and Savior. But He also said that if we want to be great, including being a great leader, we should be servants. I will develop this concept further later in the article. As I will show, being the servant means taking the low position and indenturing ourselves to those whom we serve.

The church and leadership. What is the relationship between God's model of leadership and the church?

e management system that we call   is no more than a typical human organization in God's world. It is blessed, to be sure. But so was the nation of Israel. And by my count, every time a good man became king, he "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (e.g., I Kings 14:22).   at seems to be the theme throughout the history of Israel   it became a kingdom. Although not the theme of this article, it would be interesting to discuss the degree to which the organized church is structured as a kingdom rather than as a "servantdom." Kings can occur at any level. Lord Acton, pre-eminent 19th-century historian, said that "power corrupts [and] absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Acton, 1887).   is is true at all levels. Even a little bit of power has the potential to corrupt.

Servant-leadership Is the Leadership Concept of Choice

 e Christian Leadership Center has produced a unique but biblical model of leadership.   is model is presented here:

> We believe that Christian Leadership is ultimately expressed through the life and words of Jesus as expressed in the Bible. We take the radical view presented in Philippians 2 that Jesus came to this world to demonstrate the character of God. In doing so, He demonstrated the highest form of leadership, the leadership provided by a servant—more to the point, a bondservant, one who presents himself to another in servitude.
>
> erefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort provided by love, any fellowship in the spirit, any a ection or mercy, complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity each of you should in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave1 by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the

point of death-even the death of the cross!" (Philippians 2:1–7,   e NET Bible)

Recent exegetes cite the conditional participle in verse 6, suggesting that a better translation is "precisely because he was God, he became a servant."   us, it is the essential nature of God to be a servant, not an exception to His nature.

We believe that one of the fundamental characteristics of God is to become such a servant. We believe that God, in Christ, demonstrates this aspect of His character in sending Jesus to be our Guide and Model, as well as our Savior.

is concept is expanded by the words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 20:26-28 and Matthew 23:11-12: "It must not be this way among you! Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20: 26–28.   e NET Bible). "   e greatest among you will be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12.
e NET Bible)

Again, the word translated "slave" is more accurately interpreted as a "bondservant," one who, because of personal debt, pledges himself or herself in servitude to another.

Christian leadership is not based in any inherent or acquired authority. Rather, Christian leaders are mere instruments of Christ; what we do we do in His name. (Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:21–23; Matthew 16:18–19; 18:18–20.) What does it mean to act in the name of Christ? Only when we act according to the mind of Christ do we act with His authority; this attitude precludes doing anything merely to enhance our own position or prestige. Christ's Spirit will always be reminding us, "You are a servant of servants; you can do enormous good if you don't care about getting credit for it.' Servant Leadership, as thus described, is not about power or position, although it can be present in one who has power as well as position. Rather, it is about a life modeled after the life of Jesus Christ, Who lived for the express purpose of serving others.

Servant leaders are one with their community.   ey listen, honor, trust, help and encourage others—treating them with dignity and respect.

is model of leadership is a radical one because it represents a dramatic return to what we believe is the original Heaven-defined concept of leadership and a departure from the egocentric concept that seems to pervade current secular thinking. In a world where power and position rule, the idea of Christian leadership, as defined herein, is di   cult to understand and even more di   cult to convey. By the Grace of God, and to His

glory, it is the purpose of the Christian Leadership Center to promote and assist in the development of Christian leadership throughout the world. (Christian Leadership Center, 2003)

It is within this context and the implied definition of leadership that I present thoughts of the role of learning as a critical function of leadership. Obviously, with such a radical concept of leadership as is assumed by this definition, an equally radical idea of learning may also be assumed.

The Role of Learning in Christian Leadership

Classically, learning is defined as a change in behavior. Schunk (1996), for example, defines learning "as a change in the rate, frequency of occurrence, or form of behavior (responding), primarily as a function of environmental factors" (p. 12). Borger and Seaborne (1996) define learning as "any more or less permanent change in behaviour which is the result of experience" (p. 16). And Schuell (1986) defines learning as "an enduring change in behavior, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience" (as cited in Schunk, 1996, p. 2).

For the purpose of this discussion, however, learning is defined in a di erent way—not necessarily in a "new" way, but in a way consistent with the form of leadership being considered. From a Christian perspective, learning can be described in terms of the progression of personal growth suggested by what is often called   .   e expected results of conversion are permanent changes in the behaviors of the convert. Such

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let
> them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,
> and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing
> that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in
> the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (v.
> 26–27 KJV)

From a learning perspective, this setup strongly suggests that God gave
a community of individuals certain responsibilities and that He also
instructed them as to how to fulfill that charge: "And the Lord God took
the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it"
(Gen. 2:15). Subsequently, when humankind lost the original learning
capacity that was present in Eden, God provided a method, the plan of
salvation, as a form of continuing education.   at plan, which represents
the learning ideal, included the social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual
elements of learning that Jesus modeled (Luke 2:52). Indeed, the ultimate
learning objective is stated as "Let this mind be in you, which was also in
Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5, KJV).   e learning injunction that directs us to
this objective—and the process by which we attain it—is further delineated
by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans: "And be not conformed
to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that
ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"
(Rom. 12:2, KJV).

is entire article is cast within the spiritual dimension of learning.
ere is little reason, then, to expand the discussion of the spiritual aspects
of learning other than to note that whereas we can attempt to discuss these
four aspects of learning as discrete entities, to do so would be arbitrary and
artificial.   ey are so intertwined that it is functionally impossible to sepa-
rate them.   erefore, in this discussion we will further examine learning
from the remaining three of these four aspects as though peering through
three facets of a gem—a spiritual gem, which represents each individual
in God's learning community. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of
hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. . . ." (Mal. 3:17, KJV).

The Social Aspect: Community Is Fundamental

From the beginning, the learning context was social—a community.   e
Godhead was a community, consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
(Bilezikian, 1997).   ey act as one to create humankind in their own
image, and they use humankind to extend their community throughout
the world.   e learning first takes place in Eden, where the players are
Adam, Eve, angels, and the Creating Community of God. From a modern

theoretical perspective, this context is referred to as
(Bandura, 1977; 1986), but it also is supported by Lewin's (1951) earlier
theoretical perspective called   . In this case, learning is dependent
upon the relationships that exist between the members of the "field," or
the community.   e Creator Community provided for the ideal learning
conditions to maximize the leadership-development of the members of the
community

What are those conditions? Graham (2001) presents four major cat-
egories of   : they are community, autonomy, identity, and
privacy.   ese categories, which Graham calls the
                    , make us feel valued as human beings. All people, regard-
less of time, place, gender, or culture share them. In this discussion, these
basic conditions of moral well-being also represent conditions for opti-
mal learning, in that each of them represents a perception of well-being.
In fact, the absence of any of them creates a threatening condition. And
"when the brain perceives threat, whether covert or overt, the brain 'down-
shifts'"(Hart, 1983). Not only are these four conditions deduced from
the study of anthropology and analytical philosophy, but they also can be
deduced from the earliest literature of Christendom—even from the initial
chapters of Genesis.

God is   —a trinity (Belzekian, 1997). God created human-
kind to extend His community (Gen, 1:26). From the beginning we have
been invited into this community. Problems occur only when we establish
our own pseudo-communities (I Sam. 8:5-9; Fox, 1999).

From the beginning, there has been   . We have been free to
choose.   ere are, of course, natural laws, which, in turn, implies that there
are consequences. God gave instructions to our first parents, but the choice
to follow those instructions was theirs. God said, "in the day that thou
eatest, thou shalt die"(Gen. 2:17), but the choice to eat or not to eat was
theirs—and it is ours.

As a child of God, created in His image, I have   : "Wherefore,
as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death
passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). In other word,
in Adam I sinned and am lost. But "by the obedience of one shall many be
made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). In other words, in Jesus I am saved (Rom.

e right to   is not just mentioned, it is featured in the story of how, after sinning, our first parents needed to a rm this right. " en the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen. 3:7, NET).

Leadership then can be characterized as encouraging the kind of a community where each member supports the moral well-being of each of his or her fellow members. Leaders work toward the creation of a community of learners who share in the construction of and respect for the social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual well being of all members.

The Cognitive Aspect: Knowledge Is Socially Constructed

A typical discussion of learning focuses on cognitive structures. Such structures as memory, understanding, thinking, and mental processes are important, but remembering that none of them operate in a social vacuum is equally important.   e purpose of cognitive learning is to apply knowledge to real situations, to solve problems, and, within the Christian context, "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

We educational psychologists enjoy studying cognitive structures of learning, but we are often guilty of isolating such learning aspects in ways that make them impractical. However, cognitive structures function best in a social context. Indeed, a person who is isolated socially during critical developmental stages of life experiences several negatives: language is impaired, judgment is impaired, even simple perception may be impaired (Candland, 1995;   ompson & Hickey, 2004).

Learning, then, may consist of information and the understanding of said information, which makes that learning a cognitive experience. But the value of such learning cannot be understood fully outside of a social context, especially when learning is applied to leadership development. One way to demonstrate this value, especially as it involves learning in leadership development, is to provide a perspective that grew out of a serious dinner conversation that I enjoyed with David Penner. Dr. Penner is a co-founder of the graduate program in Leadership at Andrews University. After our dinner conversation, he sent me the following message from his notes:

> e formation of the Leadership program was purposeful and not merely an "accident of personalities." Certainly, meeting as a group brought synergy and new ideas. But the ideas also were based on good research and what other schools were experimenting with at the time.   e members of the team . . .

hierarchical. Learning develops naturally within the individual's response to the unfolding elements of life. And the connection between leadership and learning is intuitive but not often discussed.

Somewhere in history,

of Adult Education and discovered that the professors agree that adult learning is best facilitated when . . .

that walking figures so prominently in the Bible presentation. We could claim that walking was simply the primary means of travel in those days, but to do so would dismiss a number of significant examples in which the walking itself was part of the story, a critical part of the event. Consider, for example, the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaeus.   e story inter- weaves the walking, the talking, and eventually the meal with the message, each aspect being an intermingling of the social, spiritual, physical, and cognitive elements of learning.

An inspiring exercise in Bible study relative to the metaphor of walking is to pick up the concordance and look up   and   . Having done that, reflect on how these two words are used to illustrate the imperceptible connection that exists among the four elements that we are discussing, both in verbal behavior (language) and in physical behavior (exercise). "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). Other versions of this text trans- late the word   as   , as in "For we live by faith, not by sight" (NET) demonstrating the close connection between the metaphor of physically walking and the reality of living. Substituting   for   in the following text reinforces that idea: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another . . ." (I Jn. 1:7).

In Eden, the social learning that included the Creator, the angels, and the first family consisted of the physical dressing and keeping of the Garden. When the first family had to leave Eden, they were given addi- tional physical labor to serve as a supplementary learning strategy and as a safeguard for their souls: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat food" (Gen. 3:19, NET). "Whatsoever they hand findeth to do, to it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10, KJV).

e body is the physical representation of the self. As such, it is just as important as is our mind (cognitive) and soul (spiritual) in the Christian learning community (social).   e apostle Paul makes this point directly by saying, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which

ture and in corporate training. The past decade has seen the development of corporate administrators who are assigned the responsibility to oversee the learning in their organizations. Corporations have even begun to assign the title   , or CLO, to individuals responsible for the learning in their organizations. The professional journal supports their roles by providing technical and motivational material.

According to Senge (1994), a learning-organization is "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (p. 14). This is not to say that the organization itself learns, but that the organization is a dynamic culture that encourages and supports learning. The "learning" part is not an adjective that describes the organization. The "learning" part is a noun—a gerund, to be specific—that forms a compound noun with "organization." In the learning-organization, everyone is included. The learning-organization may consist of a small group of individuals, a corporation, or even an entire country. The learning-organization is dynamic, a living organism in which the learning is ongoing and results in the application of what is learned. As a dynamic function of leadership, the members of the learning-organization spend time on visioning, on brainstorming possibilities, on creating new products, and on evaluating current practices in order to improve the organization.

Is the Christian church a learning-organization? The events recorded the Old Testament illustrate how God's chosen people developed into a learning-organization. These events demonstrate how that organization shaped the nature and culture of a group of individuals into a corporate whole that literally became a nation.

The New Testament seems to present a different concept with regard to God's learning-organization. In the New Testament, the series of various entities that represent God on Earth are replaced by a single entity that returns the system of leadership to what had been planned originally. God's chosen people, the children of Israel, ultimately reject their role as God's appointed learning-model. That was their choice, not God's. A virtual community replaces the literal community. The hierarchical government that had become Palestine is replaced by a loosely organized but highly motivated group of zealots who take the good news to the ends of the world in little more than a generation. This new entity is called the Body of Christ, as described here:

The Body of Christ, like all bodies, is comprised of many parts. There are limbs, organs, and various members that, when left alone, are useless, but when assembled make up the entire body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 describe it like this: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether

Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many."   is means each Christian is an equal part of the body of Christ!

ere is organization to the body of Christ, as described in Ephesians 1:22-23, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

1 Corinthians 12:27-28 also says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in di erent kinds of tongues." Every Christian possesses a gift and is called to use it in service within the body to build up the body of Christ, to strengthen the body and to carry out its purpose within the world. Each member of the body of Christ is also called to serve the church through his or her natural gifts and abilities.

is service is o ered out of devotion to Christ for the sacrifice He made on the cross, providing them with eternal life in heaven.   e diversity of gifts, each supporting the other, makes the body strong. (All About God, 2002)

ere is an obvious di erence between the corpus and the corporate—between the body of Christ, or His church, and the various human organizations intended to assist the members of the body in learning to reflect the character of Jesus. But learning applies from the corpus to the corporate, from the individual organism to the organization.

Human beings originally formed organizations in spite of the fact that God advised against doing so. Ultimately, God's response to that action is te5eidings betyum5mgs Tj 1.7143 -1.6333 TD (gBehol,)Imakesall things unew. . . . I am Alphaand tOmeg

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I   ess. 5:19–21, KJV). **It is clear** that we learn from the "Comforter," Who teaches us all things. It is clear that we learn from the prophets. But it is also clear that we have an active role to play in the study of how all of these truths apply. In the formal, academic world, this practice is called   . I believe that it would be useful to pose researchable questions that could inform us about how well we Christians practice the Christian model of leadership and learning. Here are only a few questions that could be addressed through serious, formal research related to the form of leadership that is most e   ective in the Christian learning-community:

- What are the models of leadership that Christianity presents by example?
- How do Christian communities model Christian leadership?
- What form of community is most conducive to servant-leadership development?
- How do Christian organizations become learning-communities?
- What is the relationship between culture and leadership-development in a Christian community?

According to Brooks & Brooks (1993) "learning is a journey, not a destination" (p. 67). Although there   need to be appropriate structure in any organization for e   ective and e   cient management, there is   for such a structure to convey a hierarchy of learning—or even a hierarchy of knowledge, wisdom, or experience. Everyone contributes from the well of his or her own experience along the way. And if learning is a journey, then so too is leadership.

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