THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP IN POST-COVID-19 AFRICA

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EDITORS
PHILIP LA G DU TOIT
ALFRED R BRUNSDON

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Research justification

This publication advances theological perspectives on the re-imagination of leadership within a post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) African context. Since the effects of COVID-19 are felt on various levels of society, which includes the believing community, a need was identified to provide guidance to leaders on various levels. However, the need for moral, ethical leadership in Africa could be identified even before the pandemic. In many respects, COVID-19 merely enhanced the inherent leadership crisis in Africa. While there are existing publications on the theological understanding of leadership, this book specifically focuses on addressing leadership in this unique time and space. The book consists of eleven chapters, in which the first five chapters provide bibliological perspectives on leadership (one from the Old Testament and four from the New Testament). Chapters 6 and 7 offer practical theological perspectives, Chapters 8 and 9 missiological perspectives and Chapter 10 an ethical perspective. Chapter 11 consists of a summative reflection and synthesis of the various contributions.

Contributions in this book are based on original research, each from the field of expertise of each researcher. While the bibliological perspectives provide detail on the character and foundation of biblical leadership, the practical theological and missiological contributions mostly address the desired outcomes of moral and ethical leadership. An ethical perspective on leadership further argues the ethical and moral underpinnings of virtuous leadership. The main thesis of the book is that leadership in Africa should be selfless, just and fair, based on Jesus' example, flowing from a conversion experience and animated by the indwelling Christ, leading to spiritual maturity and, eventually, hope, transformation and emotional restoration.

Methodologically, the work can be described as multidisciplinary, drawing from a combination of methods, including literature studies, socio-economic analysis, exegesis and practical theological, missional and ethical approaches. The last chapter provides a summative reflection and synthesis of the desired profile and biblical-theological foundations of the leadership that is sought after.

No empirical research was conducted, and it does not pose ethical risks. The book is written by scholars for scholars. The target audience is peers and researchers.

All chapters are original investigations with original results and were cleared of possible plagiarism by iThenticate.

Philip La G du Toit, Department of New Testament, Unit for Reformed Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa.

Alfred R Brunsdon, Department of Practical Theology, Unit for Reformed Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa.

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Abbreviations and acronyms, figures and tables appearing in the text and notes

List of abbreviations and acronyms

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ABC	attendance-building and cash
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIR	African indigenous religions
BA	Bachelor of Arts; bachelor's degree
BD	Bachelor of Divinity
CHE	Christian higher education
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
DD	Doctor of Divinity
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
ESV	English Standard Version
ETF	Evangelical Theology Faculty
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ILSE	Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics
IRC	International Research Consortium
KPMG	Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler
LEAN	local ecumenical action networks
LXX	Septuagint
MA	Master of Arts; master's degree
MFA	Master of Fine Arts
MTD	moralistic therapeutic deism
NIV	New International Version
NRF	National Research Foundation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NWU	North-West University
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy; doctoral degree

PU   Potchefstroom University

SACC   South African Council of Churches

SMS   short message service

ThD   Doctor of Theology

UN   United Nations

VAT   value-added tax

VUCA   volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous

WHO   World Health Organization

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Notes on contributors

Albert J Coetsee
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa
Email: albert.coetsee@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5549-2474

Albert J Coetsee is an associate professor in Old Testament at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom campus, South Africa (RSA). His research interests include the book of Deuteronomy (its theology and the theme of God's uniqueness) and the book of Hebrews (especially the influence and effect of the book of Deuteronomy in Hebrews). He is the author and co-author of 24 articles and book chapters and the co-editor of five scholarly books. His additional research interest is biblical hermeneutics.

Alfred R Brunsdon
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa
Email: alfred.brunsdon@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1509-4770

Alfred R Brunsdon is a professor in Practical Theology at the Faculty of Theology of NWU, Mahikeng campus, RSA. His areas of interest include the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care in the African context. He has a keen interest in theological higher education in the African context in light of the decolonisation discourse. Brunsdon was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Excellence Award by NWU during 2018 in recognition of his contribution to teaching and learning in the open-distance environment, where he developed modules in pastoral care and homiletics. He currently serves as faculty coordinator for teaching and learning in the Faculty of Theology. He is a National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated researcher. Brunsdon is married to Rev. Elizabeth Brunsdon, has two adult sons and resides in the town of Lichtenburg in the North West province of South Africa.

Christopher Magezi
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa
Email: 24794376@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6097-4788

Zimbabwe-born Christopher Magezi is currently a senior lecturer in Missiology at the Faculty of Theology, NWU, Mahikeng campus, RSA. He completed his Bachelor of Theology (BTh) in 2012 at George Whitefield Theological College in Cape Town, RSA. He also completed his Honours

(Hons) degree in Theology in 2013 and MA in Systematic Theology in 2015 with NWU. Subsequently, he obtained his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Practical Theology in 2018 with the same institution (NWU), with the focus of his thesis being on theological understandings of migration and its implications for church ministry. It employed a biblical redemptive historical approach to analyse the biblical text and its relevance to the impact of migration on the church. The study is located within a systematic theological reflection, with an intentional gospel ministry application in contemporary urban ministry and intercultural experience, as well as human co-existence in the global ministry context, with particular focus on South Africa. Since 2016, he has published more than 30 articles and book chapters in accredited academic journals and published books.

Elma Cornelius

Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Vanderbijlpark, South Africa
Email: elma.cornelius@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5420-0647

Elma Cornelius is an associate professor in New Testament Studies in the Faculty of Theology, Vanderbijlpark campus, NWU, RSA. She has a PhD in Religious Studies from Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Before Stellenbosch, she earned her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Greek from the Potchefstroom University (PU) for Christian Higher Education (CHE). From 1993 to 2003, she taught Greek at the PU for CHE, from 1998 as head of the Greek subject group. In 2002, she became an associate professor in the Faculty of Theology at the PU for CHE. From 2004 to 2018, she taught New Testament part-time in the NWU Faculty of Humanities on the Vanderbijlpark campus, RSA. Since 2019, she has taught New Testament full-time in the Faculty of Theology of the NWU. She has supervised four Master of Arts (MA) candidates and co-supervised one MA and one PhD candidate. She has published 35 articles in national journals and two chapters in books. Cornelius's focus in her current research is the interpretation of the Pauline Letters for the healing of society.

Francois P Viljoen

Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa
Email: viljoen.francois@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8251-4539

Francois P Viljoen is a professor of the New Testament at NWU in Potchefstroom, South Africa. He holds a Doctor of Theology (ThD) degree from the former PU for CHE, now known as NWU (South Africa) and a PhD from the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. His research

focuses on the synoptic gospels, hermeneutics and narrative criticism, with most of his publications in Matthean studies; Viljoen is also the author of more than 80 scholarly articles in accredited journals and several chapters in scholarly books. His monographs include *The Torah in Matthew* (LIT Verlag Munster, 2018) and *Matthew's portraits of Jesus* and *Studies in Matthew*. He is the co-editor of four volumes in the 'Reformed Theology in Africa Series': *Biblical Theology of life in the Old Testament* and *Biblical Theology of life in the New Testament* (AOSIS Books, 2021), as well as *Biblical Theology of prayer in the Old Testament and Biblical Theology of prayer in the New Testament* (AOSIS Books, 2023). Viljoen is recognised as an established NRF C-rated South African researcher.

Frederick Marais
Department of Practical Theology,
Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa
Email: jfm@sun.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3478-9359

Frederick Marais is the director for theological training for the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, RSA. He is an ordained pastor of the DRC and served in two congregations, Somerset East and Studentekerk (Stellenbosch). He then served as a consultant for the congregations of the DRC in the Western Cape Synod of the DRC for 17 years. In that period, he was involved in the South African Partnership for Missional Churches, and he is a founding member of the International Research Consortium (IRC), an international research consortium for missional theology and ecclesiology. His research focus is on congregational studies from a missional perspective, communal discernment, formational discipleship and missional spirituality. He is a keen pilgrim and is the founder of the South African Pilgrimage of Hope. Marais is married to Anita, and they have two daughters, Anika and Janneke, and one grandson, Henry.

Jacobus Kok[a,b]
[a]Department of New Testament Studies,
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven,
Leuven, Belgium
[b]Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa
Email: kobus.kok@etf.edu
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1538-3089

Jacobus (Kobus) Kok is the head of department and professor of New Testament Studies at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven in Belgium. He is also the co-director of the Research Centre for Early Christianity at Evangelical Theology Faculty (ETF), Leuven. Kok also serves as a research associate at the University of the Free State in South Africa.

He specialises in social-scientific criticism of the New Testament and focuses his attention on the dynamics of identity and boundaries in the New Testament and earliest Christianity. Kok wrote and edited several volumes on the topics of identity and boundaries, for instance *Sensitivity to outsiders* (Mohr Siebeck, 2014), *Insiders versus outsiders* (Gorgias, 2014), *Drawing and transcending boundaries* (LIT Verlag, 2019). Together with S van den Heuvel, Kok edited the book *Leading in a VUCA world: Integrating leadership, spirituality and discernment* (2019). He is currently writing a social identity commentary on Ephesians, commissioned by Bloomsbury, the 'Contributions to Management Sciences Series' (Springer Switzerland, 2019).

Manitza Kotzé
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa
Email: manitza.kotze@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3120-2807

Manitza Kotzé is an associate professor at the Faculty of Theology at the NWU, South Africa, where she teaches Dogmatics and Christian Ethics. Within the faculty, she is affiliated with the Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society. She obtained her PhD in Bioethics and Systematic Theology from Stellenbosch University, RSA. After a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of the Western Cape, she was appointed at the NWU. Her research focuses on the interplay between doctrine and bioethics, in particular questions raised by biotechnology, including assisted reproductive technologies and human biotechnological enhancement. She responds to these questions by drawing on systematic theology and Christian doctrines and confession, also often within the field of public theology.

Nelus Niemandt[a,b]
[a]Huguenot College, Wellington, South Africa
[b]Department of Practical Theology and Mission Studies,
Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: niemandtn@hugenote.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8178-5393

Nelus (CJP) Niemandt studied Theology at the University of Pretoria and obtained the following qualifications: Bachelor of Arts (BA) (1978), Bachelor of Divinity (BD) in Theology (*cum laude*) (1981), postgraduate diploma in Theology (*cum laude*) (1982) and a Doctorate in Theology (DD) (1997) with a dissertation on Ethics and Multiculturality. Currently, he is the rector and Chief Executive Officer of Huguenot College, a private tertiary educational

institution in South Africa. Previously, he was a pastor in the DRC and served for thirteen years at the University of Pretoria, RSA, eventually as head of department and professor in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. He is a professor emeritus in Missiology and a research associate of the Faculty of Theology and Religion. He has been a visiting academic and scholar at world-renowned universities, including Princeton Theological Seminary, the University of Edinburgh and Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands). He is a well-published academic author with more than 80 publications, and he is an NRF-rated researcher in South Africa. Niemandt has also presented more than 100 papers at national and international conferences. Additionally, he has supervised more than 80 postgraduate researchers, including nearly 30 PhDs. He serves on the editorial boards of various academic journals. He is a well-known church leader in South Africa and served as moderator of the Highveld Synod of the DRC, as well as two terms as moderator of the National Synod of the DRC. He served on the National Religious Leaders forum and was patron of the South African Church Leaders Indaba. He has carried out research on leadership and published a monograph on missional leadership.

Philip La G du Toit

Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa
Email: philip.dutoit@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7353-9176

Philip La G du Toit is an associate professor in the New Testament at the Faculty of Theology, NWU, RSA. He holds a PhD in New Testament (Stellenbosch University, RSA) as well as MAs in New Testament and Greek, both with distinction. Apart from New Testament, he also lectures on Greek. His main area of research is Pauline theology, focusing on Paul's conception of Israel. Other main interests that cohere with the latter are Second Temple Judaism, identity, baptism, flesh and Spirit, the Mosaic Law, Christian Zionism, the Radical New Perspective on Paul, Messianic Judaism and eschatology. Du Toit is an NRF-rated researcher and has published a monograph, titled *God's saved Israel: Reading Romans 11:26 and Galatians 6:16 in terms of the new identity in Christ and the Spirit* (Pickwick Publications, 2019), as well as various other national and international publications. He is a member of local and international academic associations and has presented many academic papers at local and international conferences. Du Toit serves as subject chair of New Testament and subgroup leader for African Spirituality and Leadership at NWU. He is also the book review editor of *Neotestamentica*.

Rudy A Denton
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa
Email: rudy.denton@nwu.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7271-4825

Rudy A Denton is a researcher in Practical Theology at the Faculty of Theology of NWU, RSA, and a reverend of the NRC student congregation in Potchefstroom, RSA. His research interests include pastoral studies, focusing on forgiveness and Christian psychology from a Reformed perspective. His research responsibilities also include the supervision of postgraduate students. He has published several articles in accredited journals, presented academic papers at local and international conferences and contributed chapters to collective works. He is the secretary of the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa and a member of local and international academic associations. Denton is currently the chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Theology, NWU, RSA.

Leadership principles from Deuteronomy for the post-COVID-19 church

Albert J Coetsee
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa

■ Abstract

The post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) church is in need of good spiritual leadership to navigate its course in unique and uncertain times. The church's departure point of the Bible as God's unique revelation leads to its conviction that the type of spiritual leadership needed should be biblically modelled. This chapter investigates the book of Deuteronomy – especially passages that refer to leadership roles or activities – to deduce the principles that these leaders were to follow or embody. These principles are then 'translated' into general maxims that can be followed by post-COVID-19 church leaders in their respective ministries. The primary leaders and leadership roles investigated from Deuteronomy are the following individuals and groups: Moses, Joshua, tribal leaders, judges and officials, the king, priests, prophets and elders.

■ Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the church found itself in a time of crisis, in need of strong and sound spiritual leadership.[1] While most COVID-19-related restrictions on national and international levels have been lifted, the long-term effects of the pandemic on the church are still visible (Magezi 2022, pp. 1–11). The post-COVID-19 church is still in need of good spiritual leadership to navigate its course in these unique and uncertain times.

The church views the Bible as God's unique revelation to mankind. This point of departure leads to its conviction that the type of spiritual leadership needed in and for the church should be biblically modelled. Churches with the conviction that Scripture is God's inspired and authoritative Word (cf. Coetsee & Goede 2022, p. 20) are convinced that Scripture can and should be approached to deduce leadership principles and, subsequently, that these principles can and should be applied in the modern context.

While many biblical books touch on matters related to leadership and provide ample ground for reflection on principles of spiritual leadership, this chapter limits itself to the investigation of the book of Deuteronomy.[2] The two main reasons are:

- Deuteronomy was written to the people of God at a definite crossroads in life, in need of sound spiritual leadership – not totally unlike the modern post-COVID-19 context. In Deuteronomy, the people are on the brink of entering the promised land and are exhorted by Moses to renew their covenant of fidelity to YHWH (Coetsee 2019, pp. 103–104).
- Deuteronomy contains explicit references to leaders and their appointment, as well as the principles these leaders were to follow or embody. The very first chapter of Deuteronomy refers to Moses instructing the people to appoint tribal leaders (Dt 1:9–18); various passages touch on the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua (e.g. Dt 1:34–40; 3:18–29; 31:1–8, 14–29; 32:44–47; 34:1–12); and the specific legislation of Deuteronomy 12–26 has a whole section on the civil and religious administration in Israel (Dt 16:18–18:22).

The primary aim of this chapter is to investigate relevant passages from Deuteronomy that refer to leadership roles or activities and to deduce the principles that these leaders were to follow or embody. The secondary aim

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1. The term 'spiritual leadership' can be used in various ways (cf. Ball 2022, pp. 6–8). In this chapter, the term is used in a general way to refer to leadership within the church that is biblically motivated, modelled and modulated.

2. For a study of Deuteronomy's concepts of leadership, see Ebach (2018, pp. 159–177). The approach and purpose of her informative study differs from the current investigation.

is to 'translate' these principles into general maxims that can be followed by post-COVID-19 church leaders in their respective ministries.

The chapter starts by identifying passages from Deuteronomy that refer to leadership, categorising them, discussing their content and deducing the leadership principles these passages refer to. These passages are investigated within their respective canonical contexts, and accordingly, the aim of the investigation is not source-critical in nature. Having deduced these principles, the chapter then turns to 'translating' these principles into general maxims that can be followed by post-COVID-19 church leaders.

■ Leadership roles and activities in Deuteronomy

The primary leaders and leadership roles that can be identified from Deuteronomy are the following individuals and groups: Moses, Joshua, tribal leaders, judges and officials, the king, priests, prophets and elders. In a sense, the only real 'leader' in Deuteronomy is the Lord (Ebach 2018, p. 161). This will be seen throughout the discussion that follows. The current investigation limits itself to investigating the principles that human leaders were to follow or embody.

■ Moses

Unlike many of the other leadership roles discussed in the book, Deuteronomy does not contain a separate section on Moses as leader or the qualities he was to embody.[3] The reason for this is that the book of Deuteronomy, in essence, consists of speeches by Moses to the people of Israel on the brink of the promised land; he speaks throughout the book. That being said, for the purposes of the current investigation, it is of cardinal importance to deduce the leadership principles Moses followed or embodied, as Moses is without a doubt the first leader that comes to mind when thinking about leadership in the book of Deuteronomy (Ebach 2018, p. 160).

Focusing solely on sentences where Moses is the explicit subject, it is striking to note that in virtually all the occurrences, Moses acts in relation to the words of God.[4] Moses speaks the words of God to the people (Dt 1:1, 3; 4:45; 5:1; 27:11; 29:2; 31:1), he sets it before them (Dt 4:44), he explains it to them (Dt 1:5), he exhorts them to obey it (Dt 27:1, 9;[5] 33:4) and he writes

3. For studies on Moses' leadership, see Olson (2007, pp. 51–61) and, especially, Wildavsky (2005).

4. Some of the exceptions are Deuteronomy 4:41, 46; 33:1; 34:1, 5.

5. In Deuteronomy 27:1, Moses exhorts the people to obedience together with the elders, and in Deuteronomy 27:9, together with the Levitical priests. See the sections on 'Priests' and 'Elders' below for more detail.

it down (Dt 31:9; 31:24). This Moses could do because the Lord spoke to him (cf. Dt 31:14ff.; 32:48). Upon the Lord's instruction, Moses even writes a song about who the Lord is and Israel's covenant obligations toward him, and he teaches the song to Israel (Dt 31:22, 30; 32:44, 45). Moses' failure to enter the promised land is a stark reminder that in spite of his leadership position, he too had to be obedient to the words of the Lord (Dt 1:37; 3:26–27; cf. Olson 2007, p. 58).[6]

In addition to this primary leadership role of Moses, he exhorts other leaders in Israel to specific conduct near the end of the book: he exhorts Joshua to be strong in guiding the people into the promised land (Dt 31:7), and he exhorts the priests to read the law to the people every seven years (Dt 31:10) and to place the Book of the Law beside the Ark of the Covenant (Dt 31:25).

Consequently, Moses' primary leadership role in Deuteronomy is firstly to speak the words of God to the people and, secondly, to exhort other leaders to fulfil their respective tasks.

■ Joshua

In the book of Deuteronomy, Joshua is announced and appointed as the successor of Moses; he is the one who will lead the people into the promised land (cf. Dt 1:38; 3:28; 31:3, 7, 14, 23). What is repeated most often in these passages is that Joshua had to be encouraged and strengthened for his task.[7] The Lord instructs Moses explicitly to encourage him (Dt 1:38; 3:28; 31:7), and in the final occurrence, the Lord charges Joshua to be strong and bold (Dt 31:23).[8] The stock phrases used in these passages are typically viewed as 'formulas of encouragement' (Tigay 1996, p. 20; cf. Brueggemann 2001, p. 71), which Weinfeld (1991, p. 192) views as 'characteristic of the Deuteronomic literature' (cf. Jos 1:6–7, 9, 18; 10:25).

From this, it is possible to deduce, firstly that Joshua had to be encouraged because of the magnitude of the task, specifically that of war and conquest (cf. Weinfeld 1991, p. 151), and secondly, that he had to internalise the encouragement given by trusting in the Lord. In order to aid him in this act of trusting the Lord, Joshua is given the assurance that the

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6. Ebach (2018, p. 163) indicates that 'Moses' role as leader is transferred to the Mosaic Torah after his death'. Although further discussion of the Mosaic Torah as 'leader' falls outside the scope of the current investigation, it is important to once again note the close relationship between Moses and the words of God.

7. Wright (1996, p. 295) correctly indicates that the 'commissioning and encouragement of Joshua is given great emphasis by sheer repetition'.

8. This is, incidentally, the first time the Lord speaks directly to Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. A *Qal* or *Pi'el* imperative form of 'be strong' [חָזַק] is found in all the passages referred to above. This is accompanied by the *Qal* imperative אֱמָץ (from אָמַץ) in Deuteronomy 31:7, 23.

Lord will fight for his people as he did in the past (Dt 3:22),[9] and the Lord himself assures him at the tent of meeting that he will be with him (Dt 31:23; cf. Jos 1:5; 3:7).

Deuteronomy contains two additional references to Joshua's conduct and person that indicate the leadership role that he had or was to have in the future:

• Alongside Moses, Joshua taught the people the words of the Song of Moses (Dt 32:44), indicating that Joshua had a (small) teaching function.
• After the death of Moses, Joshua is described as being 'full of the spirit of wisdom' [מָלֵא רוּחַ חָכְמָה] (Dt 34:9), that is, endowed with the divine gift of wisdom to govern Israel justly during the conquest and occupation of the promised land (Block 2012, p. 810; Merrill 1994, p. 455). The passage refers to a past event where Moses laid his hands on Joshua (recorded in Nm 27:22–23), namely a rite of investiture which symbolises transference of authority (Christensen 2002, p. 872; McConville 2002, p. 477). In reaction, the people obeyed Joshua as their new leader.

In sum, the primary spiritual leadership principle that Joshua had to embody was to trust the Lord.

■ Tribal leaders

Deuteronomy 1:9–18 refers to the appointment of tribal leaders. The background of the passage seems to be Exodus 18:13–27 (and Nm 11:11–17),[10] where, after the exodus from Egypt, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visits him at Sinai and gives him counsel to appoint leaders to aid him in his judgement of the people. In Deuteronomy 1:9–18, Moses seems to summarise and expand Exodus 18:13–27 by stating that 'at that time' he indicated to the people that he was unable to bear them by himself, as the Lord had multiplied them to the point of being as numerous as the stars of heaven. He therefore called the people to choose 'for your tribes' individuals to function as leaders.

At first glance, it is not clear how many groups of leaders Moses is referring to in Deuteronomy 1:9–18. The passage refers to individuals who are appointed as 'heads' [רָאשִׁים] (Dt 1:13, 15), but at the same time it speaks about 'commanders' [שָׂרִים] (Dt 1:15), 'officials' [שֹׁטְרִים] (Dt 1:15) and 'judges' [שֹׁפְטִים] (Dt 1:16).[11] Despite these differing descriptions, it seems best to view

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9. The Lord fighting for his people is viewed by various scholars as a reference to the Lord as divine warrior (cf. Block 2012, p. 104; Christensen 2001, p. 61). While Joshua will lead Israel in conquering the nations, God himself will do the fighting (Christensen 2002, p. 769).

10. For a discussion of the differences between and the harmonisation of Exodus 18:13–27, Numbers 11:11–17 and Deuteronomy 1:9–18, see Weinfeld (1991, pp. 139–140) and Tigay (1996, pp. 422–423). Part of the scholarly debate surrounds the sequence of events, specifically in relation to Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai.

11. This conundrum can also be seen in Exodus 18:13–27.

the passage as referring to the appointment of one group of leaders ('heads'), with the designations 'commanders', 'officials' and 'judges' indicating their respective functions (cf. Block 2012, p. 64).

This can be explained in the following way: the emphasis of the passage falls on the appointment of 'heads' for the tribes of Israel (Dt 1:13). In line with the practice in ancient societies of integrating leadership roles, these 'heads' had both military and judicial responsibilities (cf. Christensen 2001, p. 22; Craigie 1976, pp. 96, 98; Merrill 1994, p. 70; Tigay 1996, p. 11). This is indicated by the dual designation found in Deuteronomy 1:15, which states that Moses took the 'heads' of the tribes and installed them as 'commanders' (of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens; a military designation)[12] and 'officials' (a judicial designation, probably referring to individuals who assisted the judges in secretarial work and other executive functions; cf. Weinfeld 1991, p. 138; Wright 1996, p. 27). The juxtaposition of Verses 15 and 16 suggests that some of these 'heads' functioned as 'judges'.

As the primary category of leadership referred to in the passage is that of 'heads' for the tribes, the description of these individuals as 'tribal leaders' is fitting. For the sake of the current investigation, it is important to note the characteristics these tribal leaders were to embody:

- **'Be wise, intelligent and experienced' (Dt 1:13, 15):** The tribal leaders had to be wise [חָכָם] and intelligent [בִּין] in the administration of affairs, and experienced (from the verb יָדַע), that is, familiar with their duties and known for executing them well (Dt 1:13). Craigie (1976, p. 97) fittingly states that 'they were to have the benefit of acquired knowledge (wisdom), and the ability of discernment, together with the knowledge that can come only with experience'. The need for wisdom and experience is emphasised by means of repetition (Dt 1:15).
- **Render fair judgement (Dt 1:16–17):** The tribal leaders who were to serve as 'judges' are instructed to judge 'righteously' [צֶדֶק], that is, fairly according to a set standard, which in Deuteronomy would refer to God's laws (cf. Coetsee 2021, pp. 6, 8). They were to render fair judgement in all cases, whether the parties involved were citizens or resident aliens (cf. Coetsee 2020, p. 35). In addition, the judges are called to be 'impartial' ('you should not regard faces' [לֹא־תַכִּירוּ פָנִים]) in their judgement, hearing both small and great alike, and they should not be 'intimidated' by (or 'afraid of'; from גּוּר) anyone ('by the face of anyone' [מִפְּנֵי־אִישׁ]), 'for the judgement is God's'. The latter suggests that the judges carried out their duties with the mandate and authority of God as his representatives

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12. While the function of the tribal leaders as military leaders is not in the foreground in this passage, it is suggested by the history within the text (that is, shortly after the exodus from Egypt, en route to the promised land) and the broader context of Deuteronomy, which refers to the victory over King Sihon (Dt 2:26–37) and King Og (Dt 3:1–22) and the imminent conquest of the promised land.

(Tigay 1996, p. 13) while also realising (or being reminded) that they are held accountable by God for the judgement they render. Rendering fair judgement also entailed referring especially difficult cases to Moses, which Block (2012, p. 65) views as the officials' recognition of their own limitations.

Consequently, the qualifications of the tribal leaders in Deuteronomy 1:9–18 are intellectual and judicial in nature,[13] with the emphasis falling on judging according to a set standard, namely God's law.

■ Judges and officials

Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 forms a unit within the specific legislation of Deuteronomy (Dt 12–26), describing civil and religious administration in Israel. As such, it is of crucial importance for the current investigation.

The unit discusses four 'types' of leadership in Israel and the responsibilities of each (cf. Brueggemann 2001, p. 178): judges and officials (Dt 16:18–17:13), the king (Dt 17:14–20), priests (Dt 18:1–8) and prophets (Dt 18:9–22). In the first passage, Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint judges and officials throughout their towns when they enter the promised land (Dt 16:18–20),[14] prohibits unacceptable religious practices and gives instructions regarding the prosecution of idolaters (Dt 16:21–17:7), and describes what should be done if local judges cannot render judgement because a case is too difficult to decide (Dt 17:8–13). The first and third paragraphs need further discussion for the sake of the current investigation.

The primary exhortation of Deuteronomy 16:18–20 is found in Verse 18, which exhorts Israel upon entering the promised land to appoint 'judges' [שֹׁפְטִים] and 'officials' [שֹׁטְרִים]. The former were individuals appointed (likely from and by the elders of a city; cf. Christensen 2001, p. 363; Wright 1996, p. 204) to pronounce judgement for the people, while the latter likely refers to the assisting officials of the judges who fulfilled secretarial functions (Weinfeld 1977, p. 83; cf. Coetsee 2021, p. 4; Rofé 2001, p. 97; see the previous section on 'Tribal leaders').[15] Various scholars argue that Deuteronomy 16:18–20 reconstitutes or modifies the appointment of tribal

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13. In Exodus 18:21 the emphasis falls on the moral qualities of the judges. McConville (2002, p. 65) correctly warns against overdrawing the contrast between 'intellectual' and 'religious-moral qualities', as '[t]he wisdom advocated in Deuteronomy is closely related to the laws and teaching of God'.

14. For a detailed discussion of Deuteronomy 16:18–20, see Coetsee (2021, pp. 1–11).

15. The Hebrew phrase 'judges and officials' [שֹׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים] can be interpreted as a hendiadys, referring to 'judging officials' (Block 2012, p. 402; Merrill 1994, p. 258; Rofé 2001, pp. 98–99; cf. Frymer-Kenski 2003, p. 988). The fact that some passages in Deuteronomy refer to officials without any mention of the judges (Dt 20:5, 8, 9; 29:10; 31:28), support the interpretation that Deuteronomy 16:18 refers to two separate entities working closely together.

leaders referred to in Deuteronomy 1:9–18 for its application in a new context, namely premonarchic Israel in the promised land (cf. Christensen 2001, p. 361; Lundbom 2013, p. 520; Merrill 1994, p. 257; Morrow 1995, p. 170). The description that Israel should appoint these judges and officials 'for your tribes' [לִשְׁבָטֶיךָ] and 'in all your gates' ([בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ]; that is, 'towns') indicates that the passage refers to local judges and officials in local courts (Christensen 2001, p. 362). The provision of a judiciary throughout the land is a unique contribution of Deuteronomy (McConville 2002, pp. 282–283).

The passage names several practices that these judges and officials were and were not to follow:

- **Judge with just judgement (Dt 16:18):** Literally, the judges were 'to judge the people with righteous judgement' [וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צֶדֶק]. Within the current context, this most probably refers to judgement that is fair (cf. Wright 1996, p. 204) and based upon the 'covenantal standards as outlined in the Torah' (Block 2012, p. 403).
- **Do not distort justice, show partiality or accept bribes (Dt 16:19):** Three explicit examples are given of what the judges and officials were not to do. Literally, they should not 'turn judgement', that is, pervert justice; 'regard faces', which refers to judgement influenced by someone's status or appearance; or 'take a gift', namely accept a bribe and become biased. Put together, they should – as Deuteronomy 16:18 explicitly states – judge with just judgement in all circumstances.
- **Be (and act) wise(ly) (Dt 16:19):** This is implied in Deuteronomy 16:19's statement that 'a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise' [יְעַוֵּר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים]. I take the 'wise' as a reference to the judges and officials, who had to have intellectual and practical wisdom to render just decisions (cf. Dt 1:13–15).
- **Pursue justice, and only justice (Dt 16:20):** By means of repetition and inverted word order, Verse 20 emphasises that the judges and officials were exclusively to pursue justice. They, as well as the people as a whole,[16] had to promote 'righteousness' [צֶדֶק] as defined by the Torah.

Although local judges often judged cases on their own (cf. Dt 25:1–2), several passages in Deuteronomy indicate that the judges were sometimes to work together with the Levitical priests (and sometimes the elders; cf. Dt 21:2), with the latter aiding them in judgement (Dt 17:9, 12; 19:17; 21:5). Deuteronomy 17:8 and 10 state that the judgement of the priests was to take place at 'the place that the Lord will choose' (Dt 17:8, 10), namely the centralised sanctuary. This distinction between judges and the Levitical priests, as well as the locality of their services, point to two co-existing and complementary judicial systems: the lower courts dispersed throughout the land where the judges rendered judgement, and a higher court at the sanctuary where difficult

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16. The second-person singular employed in Deuteronomy 16:20 suggests that all the people of Israel – and not just the judges and officials – were to pursue justice (cf. Coetsee 2021, p. 3).

cases were heard. The latter (often referred to as the central court or tribunal) functioned as a court of referral (not a court of appeal), to which difficult cases were referred that could not be resolved at a local level (Lohfink 1993, p. 340; O'Brien 2008, p. 165; Tigay 1996, p. 163; Wright 1996, p. 206).

The judgements rendered by the judges and Levitical priests were to be obeyed by the people of Israel (Dt 17:10–13), as the former had authority based on the fact that they were appointed by God through his people for the specific task of rendering judgement.

In addition to the above, Deuteronomy 20:5–9 indicates that the officials together with the priests were to encourage the people of Israel not to be afraid of their (mightier) enemies when engaging them in battle. They were even to send away those who were disheartened (Dt 20:8), encouraging the people to trust in the Lord.

Taking all of the above into account, the primary leadership principle deduced from passages referring to the judges and officials is that they were to be faithful ministers of justice, judging the people fairly and wisely in all circumstances, according to the Torah.

■ The king

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 gives a description of the prerequisites and expected conduct of Israel's king. The passage starts by envisioning the people of Israel in the promised land expressing the wish to set a king over them (Dt 17:14). On this follows the positive answer that they may indeed set a king over them,[17] but subject to two conditions: the king should be chosen by the Lord their God, and the king should be an Israelite, not a foreigner (Dt 17:15). Regarding the former, Deuteronomy does not explicitly state how the Lord will choose the king. Presumably, as was the practice in the books of Samuel and Kings, a prophet anointed a king as the Lord's chosen representative (cf. Tigay 1996, p. 166). The condition that the king should be an Israelite aims to ensure that the king will be familiar with the content of the covenant and be committed to it (Brueggemann 2001, p. 184). A foreign king could easily introduce idolatry (Tigay 1996, p. 167; Wright 1996, p. 209), which Deuteronomy constantly warns against.[18]

The remainder of the passage refers to the expected conduct of Israel's kings by first stating what they were not to do (Dt 17:16–17), followed by what they were to do (Dt 17:18–20):

17. Scholars refer to Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as a form of 'permissive legislation' (cf. Craigie 1976, p. 253; Wright 1996, p. 208).

18. Nicholson (2006, pp. 46–61) argues that the prohibition against a foreign king should be understood against the background of the neo-Assyrian hegemony over Israel and Judah and, among others, its religious consequences. He interprets the warning against a foreign king as a reference to the king of Assyria.

- **Do not acquire many horses, wives or riches (Dt 17:16–17):** The king is prohibited from accumulating objects that might seduce him to think that he is self-sufficient and does not need the Lord (cf. Tigay 1996, p. 168). This includes horses for cavalry and chariots (military power)[19] and excessive silver and gold (economic power).[20] The king is also prohibited from acquiring many wives, as many (foreign) wives might draw his focus away from his responsibilities and from serving the Lord ('turn his heart away' [יָסוּר לְבָבוֹ]. A large harem in the ancient Near East (ANE) was viewed as a symbol of prestige and status, and was used to cement political networks (political might; cf. Block 2005, p. 268; Brueggemann 2001, p. 185; Tigay 1996, p. 167). In sum, the king of Israel was not to put his trust in military, political or economic power (cf. Christensen 2001, p. 384; McConville 2002, p. 294).[21]
- **Write a copy of the law, read it and observe it (Dt 17:18–20):** Once the king is enthroned, he is instructed to write a copy of the law in a book or scroll [סֵפֶר] in the presence of the Levitical priests (Dt 17:18). While some translations may give the impression that the king should have a copy written for him (cf. NRSV), the Hebrew suggests that the king had to write a copy of the law with his own hand (cf. ESV). The practice seems to be aimed at cognitive retention and personal commitment to the contents of the law, as copying the law was viewed as a sacred act (Block 2005, p. 272). The king's copy of the law was to remain with him,[22] and he was to read it his entire lifespan (cf. Coetsee 2019, p. 117) so that he may fear the Lord, diligently observe all his laws (Dt 17:19) and ensure that he did not exalt himself above his fellow Israelites. Doing this would result in a long reign (Dt 17:20).[23]

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19. Deuteronomy 17:16 explicitly prohibits the king from causing the people to return to Egypt to acquire 'many horses', and this is motivated by a reference to the Lord's past prohibition of returning 'that way'. While there is no biblical record of the warning not to return to Egypt, most scholars agree that Deuteronomy suggests that such a return would reverse the exodus and in effect annul the people's redemption (Block 2005, p. 267, 2012, p. 418; Brueggemann 2001, pp. 184–185).

20. Several scholars argue that such wealth could only be acquired by imposing heavy taxes on the people (cf. Block 2005, p. 268; Brueggemann 2001, p. 185; Tigay 1996, p. 168).

21. Some scholars view Deuteronomy 17:16–17 as a critique of the Solomonic kingship (cf. Frymer-Kenski 2003, p. 981). For a discussion of Deuteronomy 17:16–17 within its possible social contexts of ancient agrarian monarchies and empires, see Dutcher-Walls (2002, pp. 601–616).

22. How it was physically possible for the king to carry a copy of the law with him is a matter of debate. For some discussion, see Tigay (1996, p. 168). Scholars are divided on what 'this law' would entail. Some take it to refer to Deuteronomy 17:14–17, Deuteronomy 17:14–20, Deuteronomy 12–26, Deuteronomy 5:1–21, Deuteronomy 4:44–28:68, the whole of Deuteronomy or the Covenant Code of Exodus 20:22–23:19 (cf. Block 2005, p. 269; Craigie 1976, p. 256; Frymer-Kenski 2003, p. 981; Merrill 1994, p. 266).

23. There are a few other references to 'kings' in Deuteronomy, but in most cases the reference is not to Israel's king (the exception is Dt 28:36) or the principles the king was to follow or embody.

What is striking about Deuteronomy's legislation regarding the king is the limitations it places on the king. Deuteronomy restricts his powers (McConville 2002, pp. 283–284; Tigay 1996, p. 166), and unlike other texts regarding ANE kings, does not refer to the king as the Son of God (Vogt 2006, p. 217).

The primary principle of spiritual leadership that can be deduced from this passage is that the king had to subject himself to God's laws and rule according to them. Kingship in Israel had to be 'Torah-based' (Brueggemann 2001, p. 184), and the law was 'to permeate the king's behavior in every sphere' (Wright 1996, p. 209). The primacy of God's words – especially internalising God's words to the extent that they determine the king's conduct and reign – is in the foreground.

■ Priests

Unlike what may be expected from its place within the larger Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22, Deuteronomy 18:1–8 does not give an overview of the tasks or responsibilities of the priests. Rather, the passage describes the provisions that were to be made for the priests and Levites.[24] The passage consists of three parts: it starts by stating that the whole tribe of Levi will have no allotment or inheritance (that is, landed property) and that they may eat the sacrifices that are the Lord's portion (Dt 18: 1–2); next, a description follows of the portions of the offerings from the people that are due to the priests (Dt 18:3–5); the passage ends by stating that any Levite may minister at the place (sanctuary) that the Lord will choose and that he should be supported like the rest who minister there (Dt 18:6–8; Tigay 1996, p. 169). The focus of the passage 'is less on the functions of priests than on the Israelites' disposition toward and treatment of them' (Block 2012, p. 426). From the description of the portions of sacrifices that the priests were to receive, the principle can be deduced that the priests were dependent on the Lord for their sustenance.

Reviewing the various passages in Deuteronomy that refer to the priests, it seems that they had diverse responsibilities:[25]

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24. Part of the scholarly debate surrounding Deuteronomy is the book's view of the relationship between the priests and Levites, specifically whether all Levites are viewed as priests. For some discussion, see Craigie (1976, p. 258). He interprets Deuteronomy 18:1–2 as referring to all Levites, Deuteronomy 18:3–5 as referring to Levitical priests and Deuteronomy 18:6–8 as referring to Levites who would not normally function as priests.

25. Strikingly, Deuteronomy does not emphasise the cultic function of the priest (cf. Ebach 2018, p. 172).

- They were to judge certain judicial cases alongside the elders and judges.[26] This included cases of false witnesses (Dt 19:17) and unsolved murders (Dt 21:5).[27]
- They had to encourage the people ('volunteer militia' according to Lundbom [2013, p. 583]) before engaging in battle not to fear but to trust in the Lord (Dt 20:2).[28] The implication is that Moses' task of encouraging the people to trust in the Lord will in the future be the responsibility of the priests (Block 2012, p. 470).
- They were to minister to God and to bless the people in his name (Dt 21:5).
- They had certain responsibilities related to checking for leprosy and directing the people in what they were to do about it (Dt 24:8).[29]
- They received the offerings of first fruits that the people brought to God at the sanctuary during the annual pilgrimage festivals (Dt 26:3–4). By receiving the offerings, the priest symbolically indicated that the Lord accepted the worshipper's gifts (Block 2012, p. 601).[30]
- They reminded the people alongside Moses that they are the Lord's people at the covenant ceremony in Moab (Dt 27:9) – thereby renewing their status as God's people (cf. Craigie 1976, p. 329) – and exhorted them to obey him.
- They (together with the elders) were given the law that Moses wrote down and were instructed to read it to the people every seven years at the Feast of Booths (Dt 31:9; see the later section titled 'Elders').

Deducing a single principle (that is, the greatest common denominator) from all the responsibilities of the priests in Deuteronomy, is not easy. Perhaps the general category of the priests as 'mediators between God

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26. For more discussion in this regard, see the previous section titled 'Judges and officials'.

27. Various scholars point out that the exact role of the priests in the ceremony is uncertain (cf. Christensen 2001, p. 457; McConville 2002, p. 329). It seems that the passage views the unsolved murder as a judicial and sacerdotal issue, and therefore the priests are included (Block 2012, p. 491). Wright (1996, p. 232) correctly states that 'the involvement of elders, judges, and priests shows how seriously the matter is to be taken'.

28. Scholars point out that this is the language of 'holy war', indicating that the war belongs to the Lord (cf. Christensen 2001, p. 438; Wright 1996, p. 228).

29. Deuteronomy 24:8 is the only mention of leprosy in Deuteronomy. Extensive regulations are found in Leviticus 13–14. Scholars point out that Deuteronomy 24:8 probably does not refer to leprosy proper as known today but rather any kind of infectious skin problem (Wright 1996, p. 257), and that the main concern is not medical but cultic (Brueggemann 2001, p. 237). McConville (2002, p. 361) argues that the real interest of the passage is not leprosy in the first place but the 'need for Israelites to obey the decision of the central court'.

30. Some scholars interpret 'priest' in Deuteronomy 26:3–4 as a reference to the 'high priest' (e.g. Block 2012, p. 600), but together with Lundbom (2013, p. 724) I view the term as collective.

and his people' would do the most justice to Deuteronomy as a whole. The priests mediated God's words to the people in judicial cases and cases of leprosy, before warfare, through blessing and by means of teaching, and they ministered to God by accepting certain offerings from the people.

■ Prophets

Deuteronomy 18:9–22 describes the function and purpose of prophets in Israel. The passage starts by prohibiting Israel from following the abominable practices of the nations in the promised land, especially practices related to divination and fortune-telling (Dt 18:9–14). This is not how the Lord would speak to his people or how his people were to enquire of him. Rather, the Lord would speak to his people by means of a prophet (Dt 18:15–22). The people are given the assurance that prophecy will continue after Moses' death (Craigie 1976, p. 262).

Deuteronomy 18:15–18 indicates that the Lord will 'raise up' (hiphil of קוּם; Dt 18:15, 18) a prophet for Israel who will be 'like Moses'. While the text refers to 'prophet' in the singular, most scholars take the term in a collective sense: the Lord will continually raise up prophets for Israel in the future as he sees fit (Block 2012, p. 439; Craigie 1976, p. 262; Leuchter 2018, p. 365; Tigay 1996, p. 175). The indication that the prophet will be 'like Moses' refers to his role as messenger of God (Christensen 2001, p. 409; cf. Dt 34:10). This is supported by the reference to Israel's fear at Mount Horeb (that if they heard the voice of the Lord again, they would die), and the Lord's approval of their request (Dt 18:16–17). Implied in this allusion is the people's request that Moses should act as their mediator by speaking the words of God to them (cf. Dt 5:22–27).

The heart of these verses is the indication that the Lord will 'put' [נָתַן] his words in the mouth of the prophet and that his primary task is to 'speak' [דָּבַר] to the people of Israel everything that the Lord commands (Dt 18:18). Verses 15 and 18 indicate that God takes the initiative in raising up prophets and puts his words in their mouths (Wright 1996, p. 217; cf. Block 2012, p. 439). Consequently, the prophet's word is the Lord's word; he is the Lord's messenger, spokesman and agent.

Because the prophets spoke to the people everything the Lord commanded, they had divine authority. Israel had the mandate to 'heed' [שָׁמַע] the prophets (Dt 18:15). This is reaffirmed by the warning of the Lord that anyone who does not heed the words of the prophet will be held accountable by the Lord himself (Dt 18:19). Obeying a prophet can therefore be viewed as 'an expression of loyalty to God' (Tigay 1996, p. 172).

As a prophet could abuse his authority, the Lord warns a so-called prophet who spoke in the name of other gods or presumed to speak a word

in his name without being so commanded that he would die (Dt 18:20). He would be put to death (Brueggemann 2001, p. 195). Israel could recognise whether a prophet spoke in the name of the Lord by testing whether the thing the prophet spoke about took place or was proven to be true (Dt 18:21–22). Under no circumstances, however, were Israel to heed prophets who enticed the people to follow and serve other gods, even if the sign or wonder came to pass (Dt 13:1–5).

Based on the authoritative status of the prophet, Tigay (1996, p. 172) argues that the prophet is the most important and authoritative leader according to Deuteronomy, even higher than the king.

The primary principle of spiritual leadership deduced from this passage is that the prophets had to speak to the people everything the Lord commanded them – and, we can add, only that. They were and had to act as the Lord's messengers and spokesmen. As such, they also played a political role (as is seen in the rest of the Old Testament) by monitoring Israel's fulfilment of their covenant obligations to God (Tigay 1996, p. 176).

■ Elders

Deuteronomy does not contain any references to the appointment of elders. That being said, a number of passages refer to the existence of elders within Israel (cf. Dt 5:23; 29:10; 31:28) and especially their function in certain judicial matters:[31]

- If someone intentionally killed a fellow Israelite and fled to a city of refuge, the elders of the killer's city of origin had to send to take the murderer from the city of refuge and to hand him over to the avenger of blood (Dt 19:12).
- In case of an unsolved murder, the elders and judges of the nearest town had to perform certain rituals with the Levitical priests for the removal of bloodguilt, pronouncing their innocence (Dt 21:1–9).
- Parents of a rebellious son who continually did not heed discipline should bring him to the elders of his town and pronounce his rebellion to the elders, after which the men of the town had to stone him to death (Dt 21:18–21).
- Cases where a man accused his recently married wife of the absence of evidence of virginity were to be brought by her parents to the elders of a city. If it was found that the man's accusation was false, the elders punished and fined him (Dt 22:13–19).

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31. Ebach (2018, pp. 160, 174) concludes that except for the king, all descriptions of Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic leaders have juridical roles.

- If the brother of a deceased, childless man refused to engage in a levirate marriage with his brother's wife to father a child for the deceased man, the widow had to bring the case to the elders of a town, after which certain procedures followed (Dt 25:5–10).

Although Deuteronomy does not state it explicitly, it can be deduced that the basis for the elders' judgement in judicial matters would have been the same as the judges and officials, namely the Torah.

In addition to their function in judicial matters, the elders also seem to have had a teaching function. Deuteronomy 27's description of the ceremonies that had to take place on Mount Ebal upon Israel's arrival in the land starts by indicating that Moses *and* the elders of Israel exhorted the people to keep the commandments Moses taught them (Dt 27:1). This is the only instance in Deuteronomy where the elders join Moses in instructing the people. Craigie (1976, p. 327) indicates that the wording here is appropriate, because Moses would not be present at the ceremony of covenant renewal on Mount Ebal, and the responsibility would therefore fall on the elders to ensure that the ceremony was carried out. After Moses' death, the Levitical priests and elders would have the responsibility to preserve and administer the law (Tigay 1996, p. 247; Wright 1996, p. 275). Linking on to this, after writing down the law, Moses is said to have entrusted it to the joint care of the Levitical priests and all the elders of Israel, instructing them to read the law in the hearing of all Israel every seventh year (Dt 31:9). The passage seems to refer to a 'bifurcation of roles after Moses' death' (Block 2012, p. 725), with the priests acting as religious leaders and the elders as civil leaders (Tigay 1996, p. 295; Wright 1996, p. 295). The elders' responsibility was to implement the law and to ensure that the people lived according to it (Craigie 1976, p. 371; McConville 2002, p. 439). In the Song of Moses, the elders are said to be able to inform the people of Israel of 'the days of old' (Dt 32:7).

It seems like the practice of patriarchal times to deal with judicial matters within the family structure, with elders as the heads of families and tribes (cf. Rofé 2001, p. 95), continued during Israel's years in Egypt and afterwards (Coetsee 2021, p. 3). Despite the appointment of civil and religious authorities legislated in Deuteronomy, elders in Israel always were and remained as a component of the leadership within Israel (Frymer-Kenski 2003, p. 988; McConville 2002, p. 287). The appointment of tribal leaders, judges and priests did not replace the elder-based judiciary; both had a function within Israel's dual but complementary judicial system (Block 2012, p. 402). The difficulty of the case under investigation determined who were consulted: the elders decided simple and clear matters of the family or community, while judges were responsible for complex cases (cf. Dt 17:8).

In summary, the elders were to judge the people according to God's law, and were to instruct the people about God's law, specifically the obedience required from them.

◼ Maxims based on leadership principles from Deuteronomy for church leaders in the post-COVID-19 context

Having deduced the principles that leaders in Deuteronomy were to follow or embody, the chapter can now turn to its secondary aim: to 'translate' these principles into general maxims that post-COVID-19 church leaders can follow in their respective ministries.

◼ Can it be done?

Before attempting this, however, the question can be asked: Is it legitimate to 'translate' leadership principles from Deuteronomy into maxims for church leaders in the post-COVID-19 context? Can leadership principles from Deuteronomy be applied in the modern context? Should it be done?

Along with other scholars, I would argue for a definite 'yes'. Approaching the question from a biblical hermeneutical point of view, Scripture is and remains the valid and binding Word of God (Coetsee & Goede 2022, pp. 20, 37). It can and should be applied in the modern context (cf. Kaiser 2007, pp. 83–93; Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 2017, pp. 602–636). Moreover, Deuteronomy itself envisions a reordering of leadership roles in Israel: judges and officials will replace the tribal leaders; a higher court will be instituted at the sanctuary; a king will be appointed. In other words, Deuteronomy applies certain biblical principles (e.g. related to jurisdiction, governance, religion and the cult) in a new context.[32] Following the example of Deuteronomy, the principles contained in Deuteronomy can be applied in the modern context.

In order to do this, certain caveats and hermeneutical implications should be kept in mind:

• The first is the realisation that this investigation only covers one biblical book, namely Deuteronomy. It is, consequently, by no means comprehensive. In order to discuss principles for biblically-modelled leadership based on Scripture as a whole, additional investigation is required.

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32. Scholars who investigate the composition of and possible redactional stages in Deuteronomy indicate that the different stages of the book would have served contemporary concerns. See, for example, Stenschke's (2021, p. 4) discussion of Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

- The second is the hermeneutical caveat against exemplarism. Too easily, biblical persons or events can be taken as examples merely to replicate, which may inevitably lead to an incorrect or simplistic application of Scripture. In my view, this is the greatest danger of the current investigation. In order to overcome this, the investigation above attempted to determine the *principles* of leadership related to the various leadership roles in Deuteronomy. Applying these principles, rather than merely 'copying and pasting' the leadership practices in and from Deuteronomy, may ensure that some of the dangers of exemplarism are avoided. In addition, in order to stick to the application of principles and in order to provide room for the application of these principles in different cultures and contexts, the maxims that are formulated should be general in nature and not too specific.
- Closely related to the previous is the possibility of transferring nontransferable elements of an ancient text in the modern context. Every biblical action or statement is not necessarily transferable, and it does not necessarily have a modern-day equivalent. Hermeneutically speaking, some aspects of the text are descriptive, not prescriptive (Coetsee & Goede 2022, p. 28); the text may explain what happened or was done in a certain context at a certain point in time rather than indicating what should be done in all times. In my view, the following matters from the passages in Deuteronomy investigated above will qualify as elements that should not necessarily be transferred to the modern context: to write down the Word of God (Dt 31:9; 31:24), including the Song of Moses (Dt 31:22); to have the Lord speaking directly to you, as he did with Moses (Dt 31:14ff; 32:48); to appoint a king who is chosen by God, presumably by a prophet (Dt 17:15); to have a king who is not a foreigner (Dt 17:15); to be responsible to check for leprosy (Dt 24:8); to encourage people to trust in the Lord before a battle (Dt 20:2); to read the law of God to the people every seven years at a festival (Dt 31:9); to lay hands on Joshua in a rite of investiture (Dt 34:9).[33] While I would argue that certain elements of these practices can be applied in the modern context (see below), in my view the details of these practices are very specific and limited to the ancient context.
- Finally, it should be kept in mind that Deuteronomy sketches the ideal situation in contrast to reality (Coetsee 2021, p. 9). Just like the ancient addressees of Deuteronomy, we too need to hear the ideal situation in order to know what we should strive for, while acknowledging that life is complex and the perfect embodiment of all the principles discussed above is beyond human ability.

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33. Christensen (2002, pp. 872–873) argues similarly, stating that with the transference of authority from Moses to Joshua there is no reference to 'apostolic authority', as Joshua does not appoint a successor. He is also the only one on whom hands are laid.

Keeping these caveats and implications in mind, the following is an overview of how leadership principles from Deuteronomy can be translated into general maxims that can be followed by post-COVID-19 church leaders in their respective ministries. In order to make these maxims reader-friendly, they are categorised, and the bulk are formulated in the form of imperatives.

■ Maxims for church leaders in the post-COVID-19 context

☐ In relation to the Lord

In his or her relationship with the Lord, a church leader should:

- be obedient to the words of God yourself (cf. Dt 1:37; 3:26–27), and submit yourself to it (cf. Dt 17:18–20)
- be encouraged in the calling the Lord gives you, and internalise the encouragement by trusting in the Lord (cf. Dt 1:38; 3:22, 28; 31:7, 23)
- guard against letting your focus be drawn away from serving the Lord by anything (cf. Dt 17:16–17)
- be wary of becoming self-sufficient, but be dependent on the Lord (cf. Dt 17:16–17) – also for your sustenance (cf. Dt 18:1–8)
- have your own copy of God's Word, read it frequently, observe it and minister according to it (cf. Dt 17:18–20)[34]
- let God's Word determine your conduct and ministry (cf. Dt 17:18–20).

☐ In relation to church members

Firstly, the primary mandate of church leaders, according to Deuteronomy, is related to the ministry of God's words. A church leader should speak the words of God to God's people (cf. Dt 1:1, 3; 4:45; 5:1; 27:11; 29:2; 31:1), teach it to them (cf. Dt 27:1; 31:9, 22, 30; 32:7, 44–45), explain it to them (cf. Dt 1:5) and exhort them to obey it (cf. Dt 27:1, 9; 33:4). A church leader should speak all the words of God (Dt 18:18), and only those words, knowing that the Lord will judge those who do not speak in his name (Dt 18:20). By speaking and teaching God's words, church leaders act as God's messengers and spokesmen, and they speak and teach with divine authority (cf. Dt 18:18). All things considered, the emphasis of a church leader's ministry should fall on ministering the words of God.[35]

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34. For some suggestions on the application of Deuteronomy 17:14–17 in the modern (African) context, see Kehinde (2012, pp. 63–70).

35. Although the aim of the investigation has not been to determine principles church members should embody, Deuteronomy indicates that church members must heed and obey what their church leaders say to them from the Word of God (cf. Dt 18:15, 19), as they are appointed by God through his people for their specific tasks (cf. Dt 17:10–13).

Secondly, Deuteronomy suggests that church leaders should act as mediators between God and his people by indicating *how* and *what* they should minister:

- Be wise and intelligent in the administration of affairs, being familiar with your duties and executing them well (cf. Dt 1:13, 15; 16:19).
- If involved in judicial matters, render fair and wise judgement in all cases by judging righteously according to God's Word (cf. among others, Dt 1:16–17; 16:18–20), knowing that the judgement is God's (cf. Dt 1:17).
- Monitor the church's fulfilment of their covenant obedience to God (cf. Dt 18:18–19).
- Encourage the people in difficult times not to be afraid but to trust in the Lord (cf. Dt 20:1–9).
- Bless the people in God's name (cf. Dt 21:5).
- Receive the offerings that church members bring for God (cf. Dt 26:3–4).

☐ In relation to other church leaders

In their relationship with other church leaders, a church leader should exhort other church leaders to fulfil the work they are called to do (cf. Dt 31:7, 10, 25).

■ Conclusion

This chapter investigated relevant passages from Deuteronomy that refer to leadership roles or activities, deduced the principles that these leaders were to follow or embody and 'translated' these principles into general maxims that can be followed by post-COVID-19 church leaders in their ministries.

Following these maxims will not ensure an effortless or carefree ministry. The post-COVID-19 church will continue to experience various challenges because of the global pandemic. Following these maxims, however, will ensure that the leadership of the church is biblically motivated, modelled and modulated, providing the church with leadership that is strong and sound – that is, rooted in the inspired, authoritative and always relevant Word of God.

Bloated self-interest or humble Christian leadership: Reflections from Matthew 23:3–12

Francois P Viljoen
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

■ Abstract[36]

Jesus in Matthew 23:3–7 depicts the teachers of the law and Pharisees, Jewish leaders of his time, as people who do things because of self-interest. Jesus criticises their overall pretentious and insincere conduct. Within their honour and shame society, they say the one but do the other. They make life for their subordinates unbearable (Mt 23:4) while they selfishly seek honour from the community. Jesus furthermore provides specific examples of what they do (Mt 23:5–7):

• They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.

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36. This chapter represents a substantially reworking of Viljoen (2018).

- They love the places of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues.
- They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have people call them 'Rabbi'.

In contrast to the vanity of these Jewish leaders, Jesus proceeds to set out the behaviour required of his followers (Mt 23:8–12). Jesus emphasises humility and equality of 'all', who should be submissive to 'one', namely to himself with his teaching authority. His community members should not strive to be called καθηγηταί [instructors] as they have but one καθηγητὴς [instructor] (Mt 23:10), who is Christ. He is their καθηγητὴς with ultimate authority.

This chapter sketches the South African landscape and its need of responsible leadership. Considering this landscape, a semantical investigation of Matthew 23:3–12 is offered within its textual and societal context. Based on this investigation some theological reflection is done on what Jesus in this passage teaches about leadership. It is assumed that such reflection can provide helpful guidelines for leadership in post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) South Africa.

◼ Introduction

South African society faces several challenges. It ranks disturbingly high on the global list of most corrupt nations in the world. Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) has ranked South Africa as the 70th most corrupt country from a list of 180 countries.[37]

Worsening this scene is the unemployment rate in South Africa. This rate is disturbingly high. South Africa's unemployment rate stood at 33.9% in the second quarter of 2022. The expanded definition of unemployment, including people who have stopped looking for work, stood at 44.1%. The youth unemployment rate, measuring job-seekers between fifteen and 24 years old, stood at 61.4%.[38]

The situation is worsened by worldwide economic factors. Economies around the world have been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis and, shortly thereafter, by the invasion of Russia into Ukraine. Governments are struggling to create economic stability and to develop strategies to overcome political instability. The global manufacturing capacity is hindered, while governments are burdened with large fiscal obligations. As a relatively small player in the worldwide economic field, South African

37. See https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/zaf.

38. See https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate.

society is greatly delivered to bigger powers. Despite numerous summits and all kinds of policy responses, South Africa cannot escape all these challenges and needs to deal with intense financial strains in a country in which a huge part of the population lives in extreme poverty. Nearby 50% of South Africans rely on social grants.[39]

Unfortunately, South African society is burdened with cheap opportunism by leaders who exploit this situation for their own political gain. Populism is a reality, and numerous South African voters are persuaded by unrealistic populist appeals (Nkrumah 2021, pp. 117–140). Other than this, South Africa is in dire need of wise and responsible leadership. Increased pressure rests on public leadership to deliver effective and efficient services. This requires responsibility, a greater awareness of accountability and good governance in public service delivery. It speaks for itself that this leadership should be guided by the best interest of the public. Public institutions should be responsive to society's needs and meaningfully utilise scarce resources. Public leaders should take responsible decisions and actions to provide sustainable and quality services.

These crises cannot be addressed without a thoughtful ethical focus. Ethical leadership is of paramount importance.[40] Regrettably, it is shown in South Africa that limited resources in numerous cases are misused for personal and selfish gain, even by some of its leaders. In the absence of ethical leadership adhering to acceptable standards, the credibility of public institutions is eroded. As experience has shown, this often leads to instability and violent conflict in societies.

The aim of this chapter is to accentuate the importance of sustainable, ethical leadership in these circumstances. This is essential to avoid the aggravation of problems associated with what too often appears to be a lack of ethical leadership in the South African public sector. To reach this aim, this chapter draws some guidelines for leadership based on Jesus' critique in Matthew 23 on the presumptuous leadership of Jewish leaders in contrast to his instruction of what he requires from his disciples.

The chapter firstly provides a general reflection on the purpose of leadership. This is followed by a close reading of Jesus' warnings and teachings in Matthew 23:3–12. Guiding attitudes that Jesus proposes in this passage are subsequently read within the wider context of the First Gospel. Based on this investigation, a theological reflection follows on what wise and ethical leadership should entail.

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39. See https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/nearly-50-of-south-africans-rely-on-social-grants-sassa-still-committed-to-reduce-poverty-20220504.

40. See details of discourse on the pandemic and ethical leadership in Dorasamy (2010).

However, it should be kept in mind that Matthew is a religious text that is addressed to the religious leadership of a certain period and community. Obviously, Jesus in Matthew 23 addresses a specific audience and a specific issue. His critique is directed towards specific Jewish leadership. This critique expresses Jesus' critique of these leaders during his earthly ministry [*Sitz im Leben Jesu*], but it also reflects the strenuous relation between Matthew's community and the Jewish leaders when this gospel was written [*Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche*].[41] These aspects call for responsible hermeneusis. Matthew is, in the first place, directed towards faith communities at a certain time in its critique and teaching. Therefore, no simplistic, one-to-one, biblicistic application of the warnings and teaching to public leadership in South Africa today should be made.

■ Purpose of public leadership

The existence of any institution is directly linked to its purpose (Du Toit & Van der Waldt 1999, p. 299). The purpose of public services is to provide general and specific services to improve the general welfare of society. They are responsible for providing services that the public cannot provide in an individual capacity.

Section 195(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (1996, pp. 20–21) states that public administration must be accountable; respond to peoples' needs; promote effective, economic and efficient use of resources; maintain a high standard of professional ethics; and provide services fairly and equitably.

The task of public leaders is, therefore, to develop and implement policy in the interest of the common good of society. The interest of the public should be the driving force for public leaders. Public institutions must be responsive to society's needs and meaningfully utilise limited resources to address their needs.

The crises, as mentioned before, intensify this responsibility. It is imperative to ensure that the crises do not negatively impact ethical leadership, which is challenging enough in the public sector even when there are no crises (Clapper 1999, p. 137).

Van der Waldt (2004, p. 14) identifies four basic elements of good governance, namely participation, predictability, transparency and accountability. In the absence of accountability and transparency, leaders and public institutions could easily place their own interests above those of

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41. This scene expresses an aspect of struggle of the Matthean community to form their own identity while separating from the dominant Jewish leadership in their society.

the citizens. Functional public service and leadership must counter self-interest. Unfortunately, South Africa fares poorly on openness and transparency in tackling unethical conduct and leadership in the public sector (The World Bank 2010, p. vii).

Despite a wide range of laws and regulations behind the South African ethical management system, corruption and unethical leadership occur far too often. The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State, better known as the Zondo Commission, has revealed extremely disturbing evidence in this regard. From these reports, it seems that unethical leadership has, in many cases, prompted accumulating unethical processes. The more unethical a system has been, the more it has produced a downward spiral of malpractices. It is evident that unethical conduct by officials on lower levels is easily justified by the misconduct of leadership on higher levels.

A further challenge for South Africa can be labelled as 'quiet corruption'. 'Quiet corruption' implies that service providers fall short in delivering what is expected from them. Public servants neglect their duties to provide public services or goods while bending the rules for their own private interests. Poor service delivery is a direct consequence of 'quiet corruption'. It seems that a go-slow attitude of performing duties has become quite common in public service delivery. This is worsened by the lack of personal accountability. Poor performance and not being fearful of being demoted or expelled have often become a way of working life.[42]

Furthermore, it appears that procedures for acting against poor performance and unethical conduct are too complex. Uncertainty in the legislative environment and a general lack of knowledge of regulations on disciplinary action often lead to a failure to rectify the problems.

■ Jesus' criticism and teaching on leadership

In order to address these crises, to a certain extent, this chapter intends to provide a biblical perspective from Matthew 23 on public leadership.

Jesus' criticism on the pretentious Jewish leadership[43] and what he requires of his followers instead form part of the last of Matthew's five

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42. See https://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/dont-let-corruption-sa-become-institutionalised.

43. This passage must be read within its sociohistorical world. The terrible history of anti-Semitism within Christian societies exemplifies the misapplication of passages like this (Clarke 2003, p. 184).

great discourses in the gospel.[44] The symmetry between the first and last discourses is well-known. While the first great discourse opens with nine blessings [μακάριοι οἱ] followed by 'be glad and rejoice' (Mt 5:3–12), the last discourse contains a series of seven woes [οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν] (Mt 23:13–32).[45]

While conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is prominent throughout Matthew's plot,[46] the conflict intensifies dramatically in the final discourse (Keener 1999, p. 536; Repschinski 2000).[47]

The intensity of the controversy in Matthew is significant in comparison with that in Mark. Matthew developed a prolonged polemic of 39 verses based on the mere three verses in Mark (Table 2.1) (Viljoen 2018, p. 3).

Jesus' criticism of the hypocritical Jewish leadership and what he requires instead falls in the first of three sections of Matthew 23. In each of these sections, he addresses a different audience (Osborne 2010, p. 832):

- In the first place, he warns the crowds and the disciples against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (Mt 23:1–12).
- He then addresses the teachers of the law and the Pharisees directly in his criticism (Mt 23:13–36).
- Finally, he addresses Jerusalem with sorrow, lamenting its imminent judgement (Mt 23:37–39).

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44. The five great discourses in the gospel are: the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7), the missionary charge (Mt 10:5–42), the parables discourse (Mt 13:3–52), instructions to the community (Mt 18:3–35) and the woes and eschatological discourse (Mt 23–25) (Riesner 1978, pp. 177–178). Combrink (1983, pp. 1–90) identifies a chiastic structure between these discourses: the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7) is parallel to the woes and the eschatological discourse (Mt 23–25). The missionary charge (Mt 10) is parallel to the community discourse (Mt 18). The parables discourse (Mt 13) is framed by the aforementioned parallels. The woes and eschatological discourse (Mt 23–25) approximately balances the first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7) (Keener 1999, p. 535; Osborne 2010, p. 831; Viviano 1990, p. 9).

45. Both teachings are associated with a mountain, and Jesus takes the seated position of a teacher (Mt 5:2 and 24:3) (Gundry 1994, p. 453; Osborne 2010, p. 831). Jesus went up the mountain to teach the law (Sermon on the Mount) and to expose hypocritical practices of Jewish leaders on the Mount of Olives (Mt 23–25).

46. Kingsbury (1995, p. 169) argues that the religious leaders were more central to Matthew's plot than the disciples, as the conflict between them and Jesus forms the focus of the plot. Keener (2002, p. 103) agrees and assumes the reason to be that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees formed the main Jewish opposition that the Matthean community faced.

47. Luz (1968, p. 96) remarks: 'With its woes and its unjust wholesale judgement about scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 23 is the unloveliest chapter in the gospel'. Viviano (1990, p. 3) agrees, and Carter (2000, p. 66) describes it as 'the bleakest spot' in this gospel. Esler (2015, pp. 39–59) opines that this passage is the product of the evangelist and not of the historical Jesus, as he regards the polemic as untypical of the historical Jesus. Kümmel (1967, pp. 146–147) remarks that the zealous polemic in Matthew 23 distorts the reality and spirit of Jesus.

TABLE 2.1: Matthew's elaboration on Mark's polemic.

Mark 12:38–40	Matthew 23:1–39
As he taught, Jesus said, (Mk 12:38a)	Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: (Mt 23:1)
'Watch out for the teachers of the law (Mk 12:38b).	'So, you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach (Mt 23:3).
They like to walk around in flowing robes (Mk 12:38c)	Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long (Mt 23:5);
and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces (Mk 12:38d),	they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called "Rabbi" by others (Mt 23:7);
and have the most important seats in the synagogues (Mk 12:39a)	they love the most important seats in the synagogues (Mt 23:6b)[a];
and the places of honour at banquets (Mk 12:39b).	the place of honour at banquets (Mt 23:6a).'
They devour widows' houses (Mk 12:40a)	-
and for a show make lengthy prayers (Mk 12:40b).	Cf. Matthew 23:5
These men will be punished most severely (Mk 12:40c).'	Series of seven 'Woe to you …' pronouncements (Mt 23:13–14, 15, 16–22, 23–24, 25–26, 27–28, 29–32)
	'You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?' (Mt 23:33)

[a]In Luke's version, this accusation of the Jewish leaders forms part of his 'woe sayings': 'Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces' (Lk 11:43).

The section is concluded with the pronouncement of a painful judgement of the temple (Mt 24:1–2).[48]

In his criticism of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1–12, Jesus addresses the crowds who have heard how these Jewish religious leaders had challenged Jesus. Time and again he has refuted these challenges and emerged as the wise and superior teacher (Mt 22:22, 33, 34, 46).[49]

Jesus begins by telling the crowds what the teachers of the law and the Pharisees do (Mt 23:1–7) and then instructs his disciples regarding what to do instead (Mt 23:8–12). In doing so, he contrasts the self-interest, pride and hypocrisy of the religious leaders with the humility and servanthood required from his followers (Osborne 2010, p. 833).

48. Newport (1995, pp. 76–79) proposes that the source for Matthew 23 is a pre-70 CE Jewish-Christian tract. He opines that Matthew 23:2–31 exhibits an *intra muros* setting, while Matthew wrote from an *extra muros* position. The passage therefore reflects customs and practices of first-century Jews, which indicates an intra-Jewish debate.

49. In honour and shame societies, as in New Testament times, it was a common phenomenon to challenge the honour of an opponent and to respond with an equal challenge in return (De Silva 2004, pp. 128–130; Witherington 2013, p. 47). Such a challenge had to be played in public to be effective in gaining honour or imposing shame. In the Matthean text the religious leaders' public challenges of Jesus' authority to teach (Mt 21:23–22:46) are balanced by Jesus' public response with his pronouncements of judgement on the Pharisees and Jerusalem (Mt 23:1–24:2).

◼ Jesus' criticism on the hypocritical conduct and self-interest of the Jewish leaders (Mt 23:1–7)

The criticism of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees is twofold (Davies & Allison 2004b, p. 264; Talbert 2010, p. 256). In the first place, he describes their hypocritical teaching and conduct (Mt 23:2–4) and proceeds by depicting their desire for public acclaim (Mt 23:5–7) (Viljoen 2018, p. 4). Such pretentious conduct was typical of the ancient Mediterranean world, as the desire for public acclaim was deeply engrained in the ancient Greco-Roman psyche (Simmons 2008, p. 276). The achieving and experiencing of honour were typical phenomena and desires for people of the time (Williams 2021, p. 2).

It is noteworthy that Jesus states that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees are sitting on Moses' seat [ἐπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας ἐκάθισαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι]. This statement metaphorically refers to their teaching authority.[50] They controlled access to the Torah scrolls and were the ones to read and interpret them for the crowds (Osborne 2010, p. 835; Powell 1995, pp. 419–435). This put them in powerful social and religious positions. The Pharisees presumed to be Moses' successors and therefore authoritative interpreters of the Torah (Davies & Allison 2004, p. 268; Gundry 1994, p. 454; Keener 2002, p. 103; Mason 1990, pp. 363–381; Viviano 1990, p. 11).[51] Jesus' remark should be read against the previous challenges these leaders had put to him in an attempt to expose what they considered his lack of authority to teach (Mt 21:23–22:46) (Viljoen 2018, pp. 1–8).

In an ironic manner, Jesus tells the crowds to obey what the teachers of the law and the Pharisees say [πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν ὑμῖν ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε] (Mt 23:3a)[52]. However, in parallel form, as demonstrated in Figure 2.1, Jesus immediately warns his audience not to do what they do [κατὰ δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν μὴ ποιεῖτε, λέγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν] (Mt 23:3b). The paradox is clear. They do not practise what they say (O'Grady 2007, p. 180). The words κατὰ δέ emphasise the paradox and irony.

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50. Not all Pharisees were authoritative teachers of the law. Matthew frequently lumps them together. It seems that in Matthew's experience they formed a unified Jewish front of confrontation (Davies & Allison 2004, p. 267).

51. Josephus mentioned that the general populace regarded the Pharisees as the most skilful in interpreting the Jewish laws (*Ant*. 17:41; *Jewish Wars* 1.110; 2.162; *Life* 191). However, he lamented this fact, as he accused them of not always doing this with pure motives (Talbert 2010, p. 257).

52. This command of Jesus echoes the wording of Deuteronomy 17:11, where Moses instructs the Jewish people to adhere to the legal rulings of the priests or the judges of their generations (Rabbinowitz 2003, p. 432).

Positive teaching:

πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν **εἴπωσιν** ὑμῖν

ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε,

Negative conduct:

κατὰ δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν μὴ ποιεῖτε,

λέγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν.
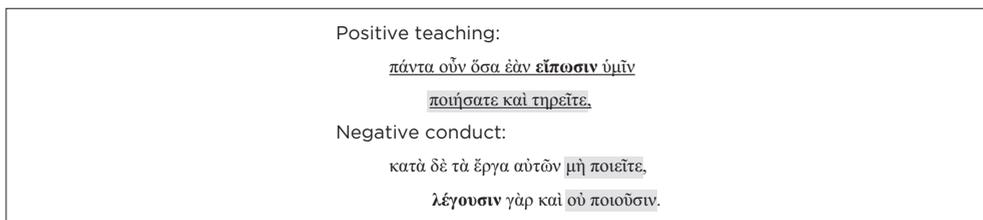
FIGURE 2.1: Inconsistency between the words and actions of the Jewish leaders.

They underline the lack of consistency between their words and actions (Gundry 1994, p. 454).[53]

This parallel echoes the son in the parable of the two sons who said he would go and work in his father's vineyard but did not do so (Mt 21:28–32). In a similar manner, the Jewish leaders claim to be reliable teachers of the Torah, but their conduct reveals the opposite (Clarke 2003, p. 184).

This strand of thought continues when Jesus criticises the teachers of the law and the Pharisees for compiling multiple obligations to the law with their *halakha* (Mt 23:4). These obligations are extremely difficult to bear, and ironically, they do not adhere to these obligations themselves: 'They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them' [δεσμεύουσιν δὲ φορτία βαρέα καὶ ἐπιτιθέασιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, αὐτοὶ δὲ τῷ δακτύλῳ αὐτῶν οὐ θέλουσιν κινῆσαι αὐτά]. The word δέ emphasises the contrast. The image Jesus employs implies a heavy and burdensome yoke[54] being laid on the shoulders of the people whom they teach. This imagery recalls the light yoke of Jesus in Matthew 11:30 in contrast to the heavy burden of the *halakha* of the Jewish teachers (Esler 2015, p. 44; Gundry 1994, p. 455). They have converted the Torah into a crushing and unbearable burden.

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53. Gundry (1994, p. 455) opines that as long as the teachers of the law are reading the written Torah (not their interpretive *halakha*), the disciples must obey them. However, they must not follow their conduct, as their conduct does not correlate with their reading. Powell (1995, pp. 431–433) offers a similar argument. He argues that when Jesus refers to the leaders when they speak [εἴπωσιν and λέγουσιν], he refers to their reading of the Torah only. However, when Jesus speaks of what they do [ποιοῦσιν], he critiques their skewed understanding of the Torah in their *halakha*.

54. In the Old Testament, 'yoke' is often used as a symbol for foreign and harsh rule (e.g. Gn 27:40; 1 Ki 12:4–14). The release of the foreign yoke implies freedom and forgiveness (Is 9:3; 10:27). During the Second Temple period, the term 'yoke' was commonly used for the instruction of the Torah (e.g. 2 En 34:1–2; 2 Apoc. Bar 4:13; cf. Ac 15:10 and Gl 5:1; cf. Deines 2008, p. 67; Hagner 1993, p. 324; Oliver 2013, p. 85). In Sirach 6:18–31 and 51:23–27 the terms 'wisdom', 'law' and 'yoke' are linked together. The yoke of wisdom is the instruction of the law.

In Matthew 23:5–7, Jesus describes the self-centred conduct of the Jewish leaders. They are not interested in serving others but are only concerned with boosting their own image. While they make no effort to help others, they presume to be very pious. Jesus begins with a general accusation and then substantiates this with three examples, as demonstrated in Table 2.2.

The general accusation echoes Jesus' warning in the Sermon on the Mount not to make a show of one's piety (righteousness) (Mt 6:1–4).[55] The phrase πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι implies that they have made a theatrical display of their 'pious' deeds. The first-century Roman-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, also accuses the Pharisees of taking too much pride in themselves (*Ant.* 17.41). Similarly, the Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 22b (*c.* 450–*c.* 550 CE) talks about 'The Plagues of the Pharisees' in the rubric 'There are seven types of Pharisees'. One of the types is depicted as people who perform religious duties with unworthy and pretentious motives (Talbert 2010, p. 257). It seems that this kind of conduct was common in the ancient Mediterranean society, where one's position depended on the level of honour and shame one encountered (De Silva 2004, p. 125; Keener 2002, p. 104). Jesus radically rejects the theatrical display of pious deeds as mode of conduct to gather public acclaim.

TABLE 2.2: General accusation substantiated with examples.

General accusation	
πάντα δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ποιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις	Everything they do is done for people to see:
Example 1	
πλατύνουσι γὰρ τὰ φυλακτήρια αὐτῶν καὶ μεγαλύνουσι τὰ κράσπεδα,	They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;
Example 2a&b	
φιλοῦσι δὲ	they love
1. *τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν* ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις	• *the place of honour* at banquets
2. καὶ *τὰς πρωτοκαθεδρίας* ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς	• and *the most important seats* in the synagogues;
Example 3a&b	
1. καὶ *τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς* ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς	• and *to be greeted* with respect in the marketplaces
2. καὶ *καλεῖσθαι* ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· Ῥαββί.	• and *to be called* 'Rabbi' by others.

55. Matthew 6:1–4: 'Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them […] do not announce it with trumpets […] to be honoured by men […]'. Jesus identifies the acts of righteousness as helping the needy, praying and fasting. While these acts were required from pious Jews, Jesus critiques the way these deeds were done.

Jesus illustrates this general accusation with three examples (Mt 23:5–7):

- They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.
- They love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats[56] in the synagogues.
- They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi'.

These examples exemplify typical features of the honour and shame society they lived in. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003) remark:

> Honor determines dress, mannerisms, gestures, vocation, posture, who can eat with whom, who sits at what places at a meal, who can open a conversation, who has the right to speak, and who is accorded an audience. (p. 370)[57]

With the first example, Jesus criticises the Pharisees' ostentatious piety. Although the law prescribed Israelites to wear phylacteries to signal their observance of the Torah (Dt 6:8; 11:18 and Ex 13:9, 16), Jesus criticises the Pharisees for enlarging their prayer boxes or wearing them beyond the times of prayer (Bruner 2007, p. 435). In addition, they lengthened their tassels.[58] Clothing would signal one's role and status in society (Neyrey 1998, pp. 62–63). Milgrom (1983) remarks that:

> [T]he more important the individual, the more elaborate and the more ornate was the embroidery on the hem of his or her outer robe. The tassel must be understood as an extension of such a hem. (p. 61)

The second example speaks of their love for seats of honour. The repetition of πρωτο- (first seats at banquets and first seats in the synagogue) is significant.[59] Jesus criticises their desire to be first in order of honour.

The third example speaks of their love to be greeted with honour. In ancient Near Eastern societies, the length and care of greetings would correlate with the honour and status of the one who is greeted (Bruner 2007, p. 436). It seems that the Pharisees and teachers of the law

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56. The seat of honour in the synagogue could refer to the seat of Moses (Mt 23:2) (Viviano 1990, p. 11). These seats were on a platform facing the congregation (Bruner 2007, p. 435).

57. Neyrey (2004, pp. 262–268) mentions nine ways honour was attained and experienced in the ancient world: (1) by birth, family connections or endowment by a person of honour; (2) by war, athletics, drama, poetry, benefactions or virtue; (3) by displaying skill and winning in challenge and riposte encounters; (4) honour within one's blood family; (5) a good name; (6) wealth displayed by clothing, elegant dinners and villas; (7) bodily posture such as bowing before a superior; (8) acknowledgement by crowns, speeches and benefits; and (9) gender, where male persons were the rulers in public.

58. The issue is not that they wore phylacteries and tassels, but that they enlarged them. Jesus himself wore tassels (see Mt 9:20 and 14:36). The school of Shammai made their tassels longer than the school of Hillel did (Bruner 2007, p. 435).

59. Regrettably, even Jesus' disciples would repeatedly seek seats of honour (Mt 18:1–5; 19:27; 20:20–28).

enjoyed high esteem in Israel, so they expected to be greeted with extra respect.

In Matthew 23:1–7, Jesus sternly warns his audience against such showiness and pretension. On the one hand, he accuses the Jewish leaders of saying the one but doing the other. He bemoans the inconsistency between their words and deeds. This is worsened by their *halakhic* extensions of the Torah, which were extremely difficult to adhere to. What made this even more annoying was that the leaders did not adhere to these obligations themselves and failed to help those in need. Instead, they were concerned about personal honour and public recognition.

■ Jesus' teaching on proper conduct (Mt 23:8–12)

In contrast to Jesus' accusation of the vanity of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the previous passage, Jesus proceeds by explaining what he regards as proper behaviour that he requires from his disciples (Mt 23:8–12, see Table 2.3). This contrast is emphasised by the opening words, 'but you' [ὑμεῖς δὲ]. This instruction seems to be a small community rule on humility (Davies & Allison 2004, p. 265) and was probably based on a traditional *kleine Gemeinderegel* (Wiefel 1998, p. 397).

The introductory phrase ὑμεῖς δέ [but you] emphasises the contrast between the conduct of the Jewish leaders and what Jesus expects of his disciples. Furthermore, the contrast between εἷς [one] and πάντες [all] is striking. The opening positions of ὑμεῖς [you], εἷς [one] and πάντες [all] in the subsequent sentences are similarly emphatic. Jesus emphasises that they are 'all' equal, while they are subject to 'one'. From the wider context, it is clear that the 'one' refers to Jesus, the one who has the ultimate authority (Gundry 1994, p. 457). He holds the position of ὁ διδάσκαλος [the teacher] among them.

TABLE 2.3: Values Jesus requires of his followers.

ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ κληθῆτε Ῥαββεί **εἷς γάρ** ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ διδάσκαλος, πάντες δὲ ὑμεῖς ἀδελφοί ἐστε.	***But you*** *are not to be called* 'Rabbi', **for** you have **one** Teacher, and you are all brothers.
καὶ πατέρα μὴ καλέσητε ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς·**εἷς γάρ** ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ Πατὴρ ὁ οὐράνιος.	And *do not call* anyone on Earth 'father', **for** you have **one** Father, and he is in heaven.
μηδὲ κληθῆτε καθηγηταί, **ὅτι** καθηγητὴς ὑμῶν ἐστιν **εἷς** ὁ Χριστός.	Nor *are you to be called* instructors, **for** you have one Instructor, the Messiah.
ὁ δὲ **μείζων** ὑμῶν ἔσται ὑμῶν **διάκονος**.	The **greatest** among you will be your **servant**.
Ὅστις δὲ ὑψώσει ἑαυτὸν *ταπεινωθήσεται*, καὶ ὅστις *ταπεινώσει* ἑαυτὸν *ὑψωθήσεται*.	For those who exalt themselves *will be humbled*, and those who **humble** themselves **will be exalted**.

The disciples are warned not to seek honorary titles, such as 'rabbi',[60] 'father' or 'instructor'. All three of these titles signify superior ranking among inferiors (Keener 2002, p. 104).

Firstly, Jesus denounces self-acclaimed teaching positions. The injunction in Verse 8 not to be called Ῥαββεί [rabbi] follows directly after the accusation of the teachers of the law and Pharisees who desired to be called 'rabbis'. This title would imply an authoritative teaching position. Jesus reminds them that they are all equal ἀδελφοί [brothers].

Secondly, Jesus develops this argument by also denouncing the endeavour to be called Πατὴρ [father]. Such a title implies spiritual superiority. The disciples have but one Father, the one in heaven. If God is their Father, Jesus' disciples are equal, although highly privileged to form part of God's household.

Jesus thirdly states that his followers should not strive to be called καθηγηταί [instructors]. They have only one καθηγητής [instructor], who is Christ. Matthew's use of καθηγητής is noteworthy (Esler 2015, p. 49). These two appearances of the word are unique to the New Testament and do not occur in the Septuagint, although it probably echoes Isaiah 54:13: 'All your children will be taught by the Lord'. France (2007, p. 864) and Viviano (1990, p. 12) demonstrate that this word is used for teachers of superior intellectual and spiritual position. A καθηγητής [instructor] was regarded as of a higher rank than an ordinary διδάσκαλος [teacher]. With his final commission in Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus instructs the eleven to teach his commandments, strongly emphasising that he is their καθηγητής [instructor] with ultimate authority.

Jesus furthermore tells his disciples that status should be replaced by service (Mt 23:11). They must not strive to be the greatest in status but to be the greatest in serving others.

He concludes his instruction with the warning: 'For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself, will be exalted' (Mt 23:12). He redefines what constitutes respect and whose acknowledgement really counts (Neyrey 1998, p. 165). His use of the passive voice implies that God will either disapprove of or acknowledge their conduct (Bruner 2007, p. 441; Gundry 1994, p. 459).

In his address to the crowds and his disciples, Jesus challenges the presumptuous teachings, positions and conduct of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Alternatively, he teaches values to his followers.

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60. It seems that 'rabbi' became an honorific title, although probably only in the Jamnian period, sometime in the late first century (*c.* 70–90 CE) (Davies & Allison 2004b, p. 275). This accusation probably mirrors that of Matthew's community, where scribes and Pharisees longed for flattery in hierarchical terms.

■ Woes against the bad leaders (Mt 23:13–36)

In the second part of Matthew 23, Jesus addresses the teachers of the law and Pharisees directly (Mt 23:13–36). He does not spare them in his pronouncement of a series of seven 'woe-sayings'[61] [οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν]. These pronouncements stand in stern contrast to the blessings [μακάριοι] directed towards his disciples [οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ] in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3–12).

This contrast bears a resemblance to the contrast found in the recital of the Levitical elders in Deuteronomy 27–28. Moses and the Levitical elders had to warn Israel to obey God's commands and declarations: 'Cursed is anyone who […]' (Dt 27:15–26). In contrast to these curses, blessings are pronounced for those who obey the commands of the Lord: 'if you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today […]' (Dt 28:1). The result of obedience would be 'you will be blessed […]' (Dt 28:3–14). The opposite is also pronounced: 'if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you […]' (Dt 28:15). This warning is emphasised by the Levites' repetitive recital of 'you will be cursed […]' (Dt 28:16–68) (Keener 2002, p. 104).

The woe-sayings in Matthew 23 consist of two parts. In the first part, the wrongs of the addressees are stated (Mt 23:13–31), followed by the judgements at the end of the address (Mt 23:32–39) (Bruner 2007, p. 442).

In six of the sayings, Jesus charges the Jewish leaders with being hypocrites [ὑποκριταί] (Mt 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27 and 29), and three times in the third saying of being blind guides [ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοί] (Mt 23:16). He repeats this charge in the fourth (Mt 23:24) and fifth saying (Mt 23:26).[62]

In several cases in Matthew, Jesus calls the teachers of the law and Pharisees hypocrites (Mt 6:2, 16; 15:7; 23:13, 15, 25, 29). As in Matthew 15:14, Jesus also labels the teachers of the law and Pharisees blind guides [ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοί]. Jesus blames them for being unable to discern between what is important and unimportant (cf. Mt 23:17,[63] 19[64]) (Bruner 2007, p. 446) as they mislead their followers (Mt 23:24) (Powell 1995, p. 432).

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61. Compare Isaiah 5:8–23 and Luke 11:42–52, each with its series of six woe sayings.

62. The accusations in the Matthean version are much sharper and more extensive than in Luke.

63. Matthew 23:17: 'You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?'

64. Matthew 23:19: 'You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?'

TABLE 2.4: Woes for wrong teaching and conduct.

Woes for wrong teachings	Woes for wrong conduct
Shutting the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces (Mt 23:13)[a]	Meticulous tithing while being merciless (Mt 23:23–24)[b]
Proselyting using false teaching (Mt 23:15)	Ritual cleanness yet unclean hearts (Mt 23:25–26)
False teachings on swearing (Mt 23:22)	External self-righteousness yet with wicked interior (Mt 23:27–28)

[a]The Lukan parallel reads: 'you have taken away the key to knowledge' (Lk 11:52).
[b]The Lukan parallel woes the neglect of justice and the love of God (Lk 11:42).

As part of each woe saying, Jesus expresses the particular wrongs of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (see Table 2.4). The first three woe-sayings focus on the false teaching of the leaders (Mt 23:13–22), the next three mainly on their false practice (Mt 23:23–28), while the last saying critiques their false security, as if they were not guilty of killing the prophets (Mt 23:29–36) (Bruner 2007, p. 442).

This series of woe-sayings extends Jesus' dismay of pretentious and misleading leadership.

◼ Humility and leadership in the broader Matthean context

The warnings and instructions in Matthew 23 on humility and styles of leadership remind the reader of Jesus' words in two previous passages.

In Matthew 18:1–4,[65] Jesus emphasises the importance of humility. He takes the insignificance of a child as an example. This must have come as a shock, as using children as examples or models to be imitated is not found in Jewish texts (Davies & Allison 2004a, p. 759). A little child did not enjoy any rights or special privileges (Clarke 2003, p. 153). The point Jesus makes is that those who humble themselves in this world are regarded as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew 20:25–28,[66] Jesus rejects the request of the mother of James and John to offer them seats on his right and left hand and refers to what rulers of the earth do. He reminds them that the rulers of the earth tend not to act to the benefit of their clients. Jesus' addressees would inevitably have thought of the Roman rulers. The attitudes of these rulers stand in sharp contrast to the depiction of Jesus in Matthew. Jesus' instruction to

65. Matthew 18:1–4: 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? [...] Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven'.

66. Matthew 20:25–28: '[...] whoever wants to become great among you, must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first 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 ransom to many'.

be a servant and an enslaved person would have sounded ignoble to Greek ears, because servants and enslaved people had no rights or existence of their own but solely existed for the benefit of others (Davies & Allison 2004b, p. 93). In contrast to the rulers of the world, Jesus refers to the Son of Man, the true king whose aim is solely to benefit his subjects. He speaks of himself. He who has all authority in Heaven and on Earth is the ultimate example of the first who is willing to be the last. Throughout this narrative, Jesus acts as the benefactor of those in need. He acts to the benefit of many by giving his life.[67] He acts as servant of others. He is their ultimate benefactor, not served by them. For Matthew, such a person should be considered as honourable and worthy of praise (Neyrey 1998, p. 125).

■ Conclusion

It must be emphasised that Matthew 23 is, in the first place, a religious text that serves as a critique of a specific group of Jewish religious leaders at a certain time in a certain community. Besides the report in the text of the critique and advice given by Jesus during his earthly ministry, this passage also reflects something of the strenuous relation between Matthew's community and the Jewish leaders in the time and situation in which this gospel was written. Therefore, it calls for caution to avoid a simplistic application of this passage to leadership in a very different society.

A second implication is that this passage speaks to a religious society. On the one hand, it critiques malpractices that manifested in religious communities, but on the other hand, it provides positive instructions of what is required for a healthy religious society.

Furthermore, it must be recognised that the Matthean text originated in a community in the process of defining their own identity. In such a process, special emphasis is put on how one's own community differs from the one from which one is separating. This probably contributes towards sharp lines being drawn between 'them' and 'us'. This consideration should caution the reader not to see the critique solely as a problem of the others, but also to prompt introspection of such negative traits in one's own community. The critique and advice should therefore, in the first place, be applied at home, in the church and in religious leadership.

The passage exposes a series of malpractices committed by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees:

• They would criticise others and tramp on them in order to boost their own image.

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67. With the final supper, Jesus explains the meaning of the cup 'this is my blood [...] which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28).

- They would say the right things but, ironically, do the wrong things. A paradoxical separation would exist between what they taught and how they lived.
- They would pile up unbearable regulations but fail to assist those who struggled to adhere to all these.
- They would act hypocritically in making a show of their deeds of piety. While Matthew 23 specifically mentions their making a show of prayer, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount also warned against making a show of helping others and fasting.
- They would strive to enjoy privileged positions in religious and societal spaces.
- They would enjoy gathering honour and respect from people around them.
- They would strive to carry important titles.
- They would have a lack of insight and discretion, and they would mislead their followers to the detriment of these people.
- They would fail to recognise their own inadequacies and failures, while easily criticising others.

The critique boils down to their self-centred attitudes and striving for privileged positions. They neglected the fact that leadership means service to the benefit of their followers.

In contrast to the exposure of these wrongs, Jesus teaches his disciples how they should live instead:

- They should avoid the temptation of seeking honourable titles.
- They should realise that they are all equal before God, who is their Father.
- They need to obey Jesus, their ultimate instructor. They have but one master, to whom they all are accountable.
- They should serve others, for this ensures the greatest reward.
- In all, they should humble themselves.

These warnings and instructions speak to the major social and spiritual disease through the ages of trying to be great. The gospel sharply combats the desire for self-acclaim, especially if this is done under the pretence of being especially pious.

These warnings and instructions are confirmed in the wider textual context of Matthew 23. Jesus does the unprecedented, using the humility of the little child as an example to be imitated. Furthermore, he presents the ignoble service of an enslaved person as an example to follow, in contrast to the exploiting styles of rulers of the world.

Although this passage is, in the first place, directed towards religious communities, its principles are applicable to leaders in general. The basic

principle for all leaders is to set aside self-interest. Self-interest easily leads towards misuse of public property, bribery, nepotism, corruption, conflict of interest, ineffectiveness and inefficiency. Such unethical conduct attracts investors seeking to make quick profits through dubious ventures. This results in a loss of confidence in public institutions, the undermining of the rule of law, security of property and the legitimacy of government.

Service delivery largely depends on altruistic leadership based on concerns for the broader welfare of the public. Public interest, rather than self-interest, should be the driving force of public leaders. Tremendous pressure rests on public services to use limited resources to serve the overwhelming public needs. This should counter opportunists who pursue self-interest.

Public leaders must make concerted efforts to show their commitment to do what is right. Ethical leadership should form the cornerstone for the provision of essential services. Ethics must be made as visible as possible. Public leaders need to walk their ethical talk by personally demonstrating their commitment thereto.

Although numerous measures do exist to regulate ethical leadership in the public sector, South Africa still ranks high on the global list of most corrupt nations in the world. The implementation of core values for ethical leadership is urgently needed. It must be recognised that legislation and regulations alone are not sufficient to sustain ethical behaviour. Commitment arising from one's own personal value system is pivotal for ethical public leadership.

Paul as leader in the New Testament: How to avoid the 'power paradox'

Elma Cornelius
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

■ Abstract

Since the beginning of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, South Africa has received a 'double blow' of 'corruption and the coronavirus'. The purchasing and supplying of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers were overpriced, with substandard products and poor services. Tenders were given to those connected to the government and the ruling party. These examples of corruption are all due to the misuse of power by people in leadership positions. What causes leaders in positions of power to abuse their power is called the 'power paradox' – the tendency of leaders to become vulnerable to impulsive, self-serving actions and empathy deficits once they gain power. The focus of this chapter is to research the role modelling of leadership by Paul, as described in Acts and from what is presented in Paul's writings about his own leadership. The questions to be answered are: what causes leaders in positions of power to abuse their power, and how can the power paradox be avoided, as demonstrated by the apostle Paul? This chapter concludes that Saul, as a

Pharisee, abused his power on occasion, while Paul, as an apostle, is an example of how leadership can be transformed – all as a consequence of a total surrender to God. That is why Paul is an example for those in leadership positions.

■ Introduction

Since the beginning of the pandemic, South Africa received a 'double blow' of 'corruption and the coronavirus' (Muvunyi 2020). South Africans not only had to face infections and high mortality rates but also poverty, malnutrition, retrenchments, insufficient health care facilities and lockdown forcing businesses to close. However, the virus situation also contributed to corruption in the country. Muvunyi (2020) reports immense corruption around the purchasing and supplying of personal protective equipment for health care workers – the 'overpricing, substandard products and services, and giving tenders to those connected to the government and the ruling party'. He also refers to food parcel corruption and leaders (spokesperson of the president Khusela Diko and Gauteng provincial Minister of Health Bandile Masuku) being investigated for corruption. Oduor (2021) says various African countries have reported the same kind of corruption – the Malawian labour minister spending COVID-19 funds for his own use, Kenyan corruption around medical tenders, the Nigerian federal health ministry spending US\$96,000 on 1,808 face masks and the Ugandan ambassador's plan with staff members to share COVID-19 funds. These examples of corruption are all results of the misuse of power by people in leadership positions.

What causes leaders in power positions to abuse their power? According to Keltner (2007, p. 7), that 'something' that causes leaders in power positions to abuse their power is called the 'power paradox'. Elsewhere I explain the power paradox as the way in which humans gain power and the capacity for influence and show empathy, collaboration, open-mindedness, fairness and generosity (Cornelius 2020, p. 92). However, once they gain power, those very practices vanish, leaving them vulnerable to impulsive, self-serving actions and empathy deficits that set their fall in motion. It makes one think of Lincoln's words: 'if you want to know a person or test their character, grant them some power'. One's handling of power reveals their character. Because of this tendency to abuse power (the power paradox), which seems inevitable for many leaders, corruption threatens societies all over the world. This situation asks for a rethinking of leadership in this post-pandemic era.

Leinwand, Mani and Sheppard (2021) explain that the world has grown more digital and complex, the range of decisions to be made by leaders has broadened, and there is also the need for strategic thinking to be

carefully executed, the need to upskill and engage employees and the need for expansion of decision-making criteria. They are of the opinion that 'to succeed in this new era of value creation, leaders need new skills and capabilities' – they need to 'be proficient across a wide set of characteristics rather than relying solely on their areas of strengths'. Leinwand et al. (2021) interview leaders and conclude that the new leader needs to be able to 'translate strategy into specific executional steps', and they need to be *humble heroes with integrity*.

Uddin (2021) accentuates the need for post-COVID-19 leaders to embrace a more trusting, flexible and supportive approach in order to address hybrid issues. Chamorro-Premuzic (2021) says that after COVID-19, charismatic, confident and authentic leaders mean nothing if they are not smart, curious, humble, kind, resilient and honest. Nastasi (2020) mentions the challenge of remote leadership arising from COVID-19 and stresses the fact that leaders now need to act with respect and empathy, be open to changes and be willing to adapt.

The apostle Paul has never written a journal article or book on the subject of leadership. However, scholars have written much on Paul's guidelines for effective leadership. Clarke (2008), for example, writes on 'a Pauline theology of church leadership' by reconstructing it from Paul's writings to different individuals and communities. The focus in this article is, however, on how Paul can be used as a role model for modern post-pandemic leaders in how to avoid the power paradox and the tendency to abuse power once they are in positions of power.

In the New Testament, Paul features as a leader during his time as an apostle, which is evident in the Pauline Letters and narrated in Acts 9:19b–Acts 28. One should, however, not forget about his role as a religious leader as a Pharisee, mentioned in Galatians 1:13–14; Philippians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 15:9; and Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3; 9:3; 22:3–5, 19–20 and 26:10–11.

In this chapter, current scholarly opinions about Paul as a leader will first be considered, and relevant passages from Acts and the Pauline Letters will be interpreted in order to offer Paul as an example of how to avoid the power paradox. The questions to be answered are: What is that 'something' that causes leaders in power positions to abuse their power? And how can the power paradox be avoided, as demonstrated by the apostle Paul?

The particular passages will be interpreted by using a multidisciplinary approach. Where necessary, the sociohistorical background will be taken into consideration. As Acts is a narrative and the Pauline documents are letters, narratology and epistolography will assist the interpretation. Word studies and an interpretation of the use of stylistic figures will be done where applicable. Insights from psychology on the topic of power abuse and change will also play a role.

■ Saul's leadership as a Pharisee

In the narrative of Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7:54–8:1a, the author of Acts for the first time introduces Saul (his Hebrew name, later known by his Roman name 'Paul' – see Ac 13:9), who is the 'hero of the second half of Acts', by mentioning that Saul 'accompanied the executioners', that he watched attentively, supported, agreed and shared in the persecution of Christians (Bock 2007, p. 314; Schnabel 2016, p. 392). Schnabel (2016, p. 394) points to Acts 8:3, showing us that Saul became 'actively and vigorously involved in attempts to suppress the followers of Jesus' – he *destroyed* the church [ἐλυμαίνετο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν], *entering* one house after another [κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους εἰσπορευόμενος[68]] where the believers met, *dragging* out men and women [σύρων[69] τε ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας] and he *put them into prison* [παρεδίδου[70] εἰς φυλακήν].

Being brought up in a Jewish family, Saul was 'educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law' (Ac 22:3). Later in his life, he testified about his upbringing in Philippians 3:5 – 'circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew of Hebrews'. Paul claims to be a Pharisee in Philippians 3:5, and we read in Acts 22:3 and Galatians 1:14 how he was 'zealous for God'. In Acts 26:5, we are told how Paul admits that he was a Pharisee 'conforming to the strictest sect' of the Jewish religion. In Saul's mind, he was 'faultless in terms of legalistic righteousness', and according to him, he 'persecuted the church out of zeal' (Fernando 1998, p. 231).

Who were the Pharisees? The Pharisees made up the largest of the Jewish religious sect groups (Gundry 2012, p. 86). Ferguson (1987, p. 406) defines them as 'a political party who sought to impose their interpretation of the law on the nation'. Their political power was limited, and they focused more on influencing the nation on a local level (Ferguson 1987, p. 407). They felt that the Torah was open to any competent person to interpret and gave divine authority to the interpretation and application of the law (Ferguson 1987, p. 407). Purity, ceremonial cleansing, proper preparation of food, careful observance of the agricultural laws, meticulous tithing, observance of the Sabbath and dietary restrictions were important to them (Ferguson 1987, p. 408; Gundry 2012, pp. 86–87).

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68. The verb is in the present participle, indicating that his entering houses was a continuous act. Schnabel (2016, p. 394) refers to the 'persistent nature' of Saul's acts.

69. The verb is in the present participle, indicating that his dragging out men and women was a continuous act. Schnabel (2016, p. 394) refers to the 'persistent nature' of Saul's acts.

70. The imperfect tense suggests an ongoing activity (see Schnabel 2016, p. 395).

As a Pharisee, Saul had power in the Jewish society as 'average Jews admired' them 'as paragons of virtue'. as 'the mainstays of Judaism' (Gundry 2012, p. 87). The Pharisees were considered by fellow Jewish people as 'the most accurate interpreters of the laws' (Gundry 2012, p. 86). This means that Saul, as a Pharisee, had religious power to teach and guide the people. As the Pharisees 'scrupulously observed the rabbinic and Mosaic laws' (Gundry 2012, p. 86), one can understand that the Jewish people were defenceless when certain interpretations of the laws were forced down on them. Jesus did not hesitate to give his opinion on these Pharisees' interpretations of the laws and on their self-righteousness.

Ferguson (1987, p. 408) reminds us that Jesus also accepted the authority of the Torah, like the Pharisees, and that he had many friendly contacts with Pharisees; however, they had their differences, as they clashed over the Pharisees' artificiality of laws (Gundry 2012, p. 87). In Matthew 23:3, Jesus made a statement that the Pharisees did not practise what they preached. He called them 'hypocrites' (Mt 23:13), 'blind guides' (Mt 23:16), 'blind fools' (Mt 23:17), 'snakes' and a 'brood of vipers' (Mt 23:33). Jesus blamed them for following the finer points of the laws but failing on the more important matters of the law (Mt 23:13–39) – justice, mercy and faithfulness (Mt 23:23). In Matthew 23:5–7, Jesus accused them of attempting to impress people. The Pharisees were under the impression that they gained righteousness through obedience to the law, but they ended up in self-righteousness. The Pharisees were influential in the Jewish community, but underneath the pretence of being righteous on account of being strict keepers of the law, they hid their self-righteousness, self-indulgence and ungodly thoughts and feelings.

In the time when Paul was a religious leader among the Pharisees (then known as Saul), he went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believed – even when Stephen was martyred, he was present, gave his approval and guarded the clothes of those who were killing him (Ac 22:19–20). In Galatians 1:13 and 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul admits that he intensely persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it, and in 1 Timothy 1:13, he admits that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man. Saul describes himself in his speech before the Sanhedrin as 'zealous for God' [ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τοῦ Θεοῦ] in Acts 22:3. Louw and Nida (1988, p. 298) explain this virtue as being committed and enthusiastic to something. Arnold (2016, p. 223) interprets this commitment as Saul's 'willingness to use violence to defend the Torah'. In Acts 22:4–5, it is reported how Paul persecuted the believers to their death; he arrested both men and women and even obtained letters from the high priest and the council to take these people to Jerusalem to be punished.

In Acts 26:10–11, we read how Paul put them all in prison on the authority of the chief priests, and when they were put to death, Paul cast his vote against them. In Paul's obsession, he even went to foreign cities to persecute believers. He chased, persecuted, tortured, imprisoned and killed many Christians without any mercy – like a ruthless predator. In Acts 26:11, it is reported how Paul admitted that he persecuted Christians, being exceedingly mad against them [ἐμμαινόμενος]. Bock (2007, p. 716) writes that Paul details his persecution in this verse with much more intensity than he did as reported in Acts 22, and Bock translates the participle as 'he raged in anger'.

However, a more serious act of power abuse by Saul was his taking of power into his own hands to arrest people, let them be imprisoned, beat and stoned and put them to death if they failed to be obedient to the Pharisees' interpretations of the laws. Saul himself served in his belief that he knew what the laws expected from the Jewish people and that he was superior in this regard. As the Jewish people trusted him as a Pharisee, he expected them to obey and not challenge him – he thus abused his position of trust. Not only did he expect people to trust his interpretation of the laws, but he also took power into his own hands to harm people. Fernando (1998, p. 462) refers to Saul as 'one of the major leaders in the campaign against Christianity'.

It almost seems as if Saul needed this power position to help him find some worth in life. In his role as a religious leader, his power was evident in his control of people. This brought him to a point where he abused his power as a religious leader among the Jewish people. As a psychologist, Keltner (2016a, p. 100) claims that one's experience of power has the tendency to 'destroy the skills that gained one's power in the first place'. He explains this by saying that power makes one feel less dependent on others, and so the focus shifts away from the needs of others to one's own goals and desires – resulting in self-gratifying and greedy actions, in being rude and offensive (Keltner 2016a, pp. 110–101). Paul studied the Scriptures and became a member of the Pharisees, interpreting the law for believers. Like other Pharisees, his interpretation of Scripture was forced down on believers and self-righteousness grew on him. The gospels testify to the Pharisees testing and trying to trick Jesus so that Jesus accused them of hypocrisy – they were strict keepers of the law, but they were stricter on others than they were on themselves. The Pharisees had a power play on with Jesus. They lost focus on the God of the Scriptures, as well as on others, only caring for their reputation and status. As a Pharisee, Saul could not avoid the power paradox – he could not avoid abusing his power.

The question is, how does the leadership of the apostle Paul compare to this?

■ Paul's leadership as an apostle

Paul, a Christian apostle and follower of Jesus, one of the most influential figures in the Apostolic age, founder of churches and author of several letters in the New Testament, is described by MacArthur (2004, p. 5) as a natural leader, a man of great influence, one whose 'leadership rose to the occasion in every conceivable situation'.

MacArthur (2004, pp. 3–57) studies Paul as leader in Acts 27, and he discusses Paul's characteristics as a leader in a situation where Paul was a prisoner – trustworthy,[71] taking the initiative and using good judgement,[72] taking courage, speaking with authority, strengthening others, optimistic and enthusiastic, taking charge in crises, able to influence, never compromising, focusing on objectives instead of obstacles, empowering by example and being decisive and determined.[73] These are characteristics of Paul, as identified by MacArthur, while Paul was *not* in a leadership position.

MacArthur (2004, pp. 61–142) also identifies Paul's characteristics of leadership in the way he handled the situation with the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians. In this case, Paul was indeed in a leadership position; however, his leadership was under suspicion. Paul wrote this painful letter, *inter alia*, to defend his apostleship (Guthrie 2015, p. 20). At one point in Corinth, the Jewish communities in the synagogue opposed Paul (Ac 18:6). Later, they tried to convince the Roman proconsul to imprison Paul (Ac 18:12–13). MacArthur (2004, pp. 65–68) shows how, after Paul left Corinth, the church developed serious problems, and he explores how Paul wrote to them to try to help solve the problems. He refers to 1 Corinthians 9:1–8, communicating that Paul's authority was questioned. By the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, false teachers raised questions about Paul's credentials as an apostle and began to attack his teaching (2 Cor 11:13). MacArthur's analysis of his leadership in 2 Corinthians thus shows how Paul reacts as a leader when his power is under suspicion – being devoted and loyal to his people;[74] showing empathy;[75] keeping a clear conscience;[76] being reliable, definite

71. MacArthur (2004, pp. 3–13) shows how Paul earned the trust of the centurion so that he was allowed to, while in custody, visit his friends (reported in Ac 27:3).

72. MacArthur (2004, pp. 15–30) refers to Paul (who was a prisoner on a ship on his way to Rome) advising and warning the powerful men on the ship in the storm (Ac 27:9–10).

73. MacArthur (2004, pp. 45–57) refers to Acts 27:27–44, telling us how Paul took charge and saved the people on the ship.

74. MacArthur (2004, p. 71) shows how Paul remained faithful to this 'troublesome church'.

75. Although Paul 'had been wronged by the Corinthians', he 'remained empathetic toward them' (MacArthur 2004, pp. 72–73).

76. MacArthur (2004, p. 78) says Paul defends himself by referring to his conscience in 2 Corinthians 1:13.

and decisive; knowing when to change his mind;[77] not abusing power; never giving up; being sure of his calling; knowing his own limitations; and being resilient, passionate, courageous and discerning.

Various scholars discuss the apostle Paul's exemplary leadership as evident in his letters: 'servant leadership' (Howell 2003, pp. 280–282), 'shared leadership' (Atherton 2014, pp. 52–71), his 'empowering' of other leaders (Purvis 2010, pp. 101–228), 'transformational' leadership (McCrea 2007) and his taking care of the poor (Verbrugge 1988).

Paul proves himself to be dedicated and courageous in spite of being kidnapped (Ac 21:27), imprisoned (Ac 16:23–24; Ac 21–28; 2 Tm 2:8–9), threatened (Ac 22:22; 27:42), arrested (Ac 21:33; 22:24; 22:31; 23:35; 28:16), accused (Ac 21:34; 22:30; 24:1–2; 25:2; 28:4), interrogated (Ac 25:24–27), ridiculed (Ac 26:24), shipwrecked (Ac 27:41), ignored (Ac 27:11) and bitten by a viper (Ac 28:3). He shows respect for others in spite of how they treated him (e.g. Ac 21:30–22:21; Ac 26:2–29) and a concern for the well-being of others (e.g. Ac 28:8–10; Ac 20:9–12).

In Paul's letters, one finds situations in which some people were negative about Paul as an evangelist. The question is whether these situations show any signs of Paul abusing his power. MacArthur (2004, p. 83) identifies a situation where Paul could have abused his power as the religious leader of the Corinthians. He says that although Paul could go to the Corinthians 'with a rod' (1 Cor 4:21), he 'preferred to see if he could correct them by letter first'. Doohan (1983, p. 135) says Paul showed in the Corinthian correspondence that when his authority was undermined, he had the 'strength, character and resilience to contend with criticism and misunderstanding'. De Vos (1997, p. 220) points out Paul's use of 'covert allusion' (by making use of hyperbole, irony and metaphor) in 1 Corinthians 1–4 when he rebukes members of the elite in order to soften his criticism and to not offend them.

Guthrie (2015, p. 16) explains how in the Greco-Roman world, different factors contributed to a person's status in society and how 'power' was a person's 'ability to achieve certain goals in society'. In the Corinthian correspondence, however, Paul never forced his power on people but, in contrast, 'always emphasized God's power' (2 Cor 4:7; 6:7; 12:9; 13:4). Crafton (1991, pp. 59–60) shows how Paul makes use of 'an unusual rhetorical strategy' to deal with the conflict. 'Rather than arguing on their turf', Crafton (1991, p. 60) says, Paul invites the readers to his, leading them into his own world of understanding, 'demonstrating its truth and superiority' and urging them to 'accept it as their own'. He calls it Paul's strategy of 'agency-orientation', which means that Paul 'diverts attention away from

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77. See 2 Corinthians 1:23 (MacArthur 2004, p. 83).

himself toward God who is acting through him' (Crafton 1991, p. 61). Paul shows that God is in the power position, determining the 'parameters, scope, purpose, and the means' of his ministry.

One of the Corinthian accusations against Paul was that he refused their financial support. Crafton (1991, p. 56) explains that the Corinthians 'were offended by Paul's decision' and that they took it as an 'insult'. As Paul did accept financial support from other churches, Paul's moral character was even called more into scrutiny. When Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:8 that he robbed [ἐσύλησα] other churches by receiving support from them, could this perhaps be an indicator of Paul's power abuse with finances? The verb συλάω is only used this one time in the New Testament. Louw and Nida (1988, p. 584) explain this verb as meaning 'to take by force that which belongs to someone else'. Paul's statement on how he 'robbed' other churches in order to work among the Corinthians is, however, figuratively used by Paul to communicate that he accepted financial support from other churches (see Louw & Nida 1988, p. 584). Guthrie (2015, p. 521) says one should rather see it as Paul depending on patrons from other churches as he was 'drawing on' the resources of the other churches, that Paul 'requisitioned the resources of' other churches in Macedonia (2 Cor 11:9) in order to serve the Corinthians. Harris (2008) is of the opinion that it was Paul's policy only to accept support from 'distant fellow believers' (2 Cor 11:8–9; Phlp 4:16) or 'as he was leaving a region' (Rm 15:24; 1 Cor 16:6; 2 Cor 1:16). These supporters were known as 'patrons' in ancient Greco-Roman societies where the client was dependent on his patron. One can imagine how the wealthy Corinthians wanted to be Paul's patrons, as that would add to their status; however, as a servant of God, Paul wanted to be their patron, 'representing his true patron', namely Christ (Hafemann 2000, p. 18d). For Gundry (2015, p. 521), 2 Corinthians 11:7 is a sign of a humble man who rejected remuneration from the 'wealthy and socially well-situated elite in Corinth' (Guthrie 2015, p. 521). This is thus no evidence of power abuse by Paul.

Although Paul's pride and authority were at stake among the Corinthians, he succeeded in staying calm. The only effect of his emotions can be seen in his breaking away from the conventions of letter-writing. Where a thanksgiving would normally be part of Paul's letter-openings, he replaces it in the Corinthian correspondence with praise to God and by giving comfort (1 Cor 1:3–11). This variation in the style of the letter-opening is in line with Paul's rhetorical purpose to not resort to force, anger and domination but rather to repair the relationship between himself and his readers in order to serve them as an apostle of God. By praising God in the letter-opening of 2 Corinthians, Paul takes the focus back to God.

We see the same situation with Paul as a leader of the Galatians. In Galatians 3:1, Paul expresses his frustration when he says 'you foolish

Galatians'. He also asks a rhetorical question: 'who has bewitched you?', figuratively referring to 'his opponents perverting and confusing the teaching of the gospel' (Harrison, Hagner & Rapa 2008). Paul is angry because some missionaries came to Galatia to correct Paul's preaching, and this letter to the Galatians is a response to this challenge (Moo 2013, pp. 20–21). As in the case in 2 Corinthians, the style of the letter-opening is affected again, as Paul leaves out the thanksgiving and instead immediately moves on to the core of his letter. Doohan (1983, pp. 87–88) argues that when Paul's authority and his interpretation of the gospel were threatened among the Galatians, he initially responded with anger and confrontation, but moved on with a 'strong theological and ethical response'. One can thus not pinpoint an occasion where Paul, as an apostle, abused his power as it is reported in the New Testament.

■ Comparison between Saul the Pharisaic leader and Paul the apostle

Table 3.1 presents a comparison between two leadership positions of the same person, previously called Saul and later known as Paul:

The table clearly shows the differences in leadership of Saul and Paul. Paul as an apostle shows that leaders can avoid the power paradox. The question is: How was Paul's leadership transformed?

■ How Paul changed in order not to abuse power

Grassi (1987, p. 68) says Paul's secret to success was his conversion experience when he changed his life dominated by the Torah and duties to a new, passionate, Christ-centric life. He refers to Paul's metamorphosis

TABLE 3.1: A comparison between two leadership positions of the same person, previously called Saul and later known as Paul.

Characteristics of Saul the Pharisee's leadership	Characteristics of Paul the apostle's leadership
Religious power as Pharisee	Religious power as an apostle
Commits to the Torah	Commits to God
Controls own life and lives of others	Is controlled by God
In favour of violence	Works for peace
No mercy for others	Compassionate and loving
Cares for own status and reputation	Strives to serve God
Self-righteous	Humble in service of God
Steals lives and power from people	Positively benefits people's lives
Destroys the community	Builds the community
Causes hardship	Endures hardship
Power is to control others	Power is to control oneself under the authority of God

Source: Author's own work.

and identification with Christ. Perhaps it is more on point to say that the change in Paul's life and leadership was his surrender to God's intervention in his life.

After his conversion on his way to Damascus (told in Ac 9:1–19 and retold by Paul in Ac 22:6–21 and Ac 26:12–18), Paul disappeared from the scene of the Pharisees and took on a new role as a follower of Jesus. The question is: What made this change for Paul?

Saul had an encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus. Schnabel (2016, p. 438) refers to the *conversion narrative* and the *commissioning narrative* in Acts 9, and he makes us aware of the 'extensive direct speech' in this narrative, in which Saul utters the minimum words and remains passive in the narrative. Saul's conversion happens when Jesus takes power into his hands, when Jesus speaks, gives commands and calls Saul to follow him. Saul is commanded by Jesus to go to the city and informed with the words 'you will be told what you must do' (Ac 9:6b). When Saul is addressed by Jesus, according to Acts 9:5, Saul responds with 'Who are you, Lord?' Fernando (1998, p. 235) says that with these words, Saul acknowledges the presence and power of God. This is a clear picture of God intervening and taking power out of Saul's hands. Bock (2012, p. 84) says God 'is directing and guiding the events'. Fernando (1998, p. 231) says this conversion of Saul was a 'total conversion of his will, intellect and emotions', dictating his 'subsequent life and activity'. Fernando (1998, p. 235) raises a very important fact – that Saul's conversion was not only about a *decision* he took or a *commitment* he made, but it was mainly about a total *surrender* of his life!

It is only after Saul's conversion that, as Paul, he is in a power position again. Schnabel (2016, p. 439) refers to Paul's preaching and his increase in strength again, demonstrating the reality of his conversion and faith in Christ. It seems as if Saul the Pharisee talked *about* God, while he was silenced on his way to Damascus by Jesus in the end, to *see and experience* God in Jesus, and this changed everything for Paul as leader. Elsewhere, I call this spiritual intelligence – to realise that there is a power bigger than oneself, namely God (Cornelius 2019, p. 6). This spiritual intelligence erases power abuse as one realises that all power is in the hands of God and that one is only serving this God. In opposition to Saul's obsession with the law, Paul admits in Galatians 3:11–14 that 'no one who relies on the law is justified', and that 'Christ redeemed us from the law'. Fernando (1998, p. 231) refers to Saul as 'spiritually blinded by wrong convictions', and in his encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus, he becomes physically blind while spiritually he sees the light. Doohan (1983, p. 39) says that when Paul undergoes religious conversion, his religious convictions redirect his life – one can say it also redirects his leadership. Doohan shows in the Thessalonian correspondence how Paul's perception of his apostolic role is closely

associated with 'his vision of God's activity in him' (Doohan 1983, p. 73). When Paul discusses his ministry in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 2, he explains that his apostolic role is to please God (1 Th 2:4). In Romans 8:1–17, Paul explains what a life through the Spirit entails. Doohan (1983:158) says Paul shows here that 'to be in Christ is a unique mode of existence'. Following God gives believers a source outside of themselves to direct them (Doohan 1983, p. 159).

Although Paul, as an evangelist after his conversion, was often in situations where power abuse could be an option, he never aimed at controlling behaviour again; he never allowed himself to be motivated again by personal gain, personal gratification, self-righteousness or the enjoyment of exercising power and control. Clarke (2008, p. 125) says that Paul's authority and power 'lay beyond himself', as he always acknowledged a higher authority. In the letter-openings of his letters, Paul refers to himself as an apostle or servant of Jesus Christ; he considers himself to be sent from God (2 Cor 2:17) and claims that his instructions came from Christ (1 Th 4:2).

MacArthur (2004, pp. 96–100) argues that Paul was sure of his calling as an apostle. In 2 Corinthians 3:4, Paul defends himself by referring to the source of his certainty. He was certain of his calling. MacArthur (2004, p. 97) says Paul 'never wavered in his confidence that God had called him to be an apostle'. Although he was a persecutor (Ac 9:13), although he was 'a latecomer to faith in Christ', although he was 'not worthy to be called an apostle' (1 Cor 15:9), he was called by God.

MacArthur (2004, pp. 100–103) also discusses Paul being humble and knowing his limitations. He points to 2 Corinthians 3:5, where Paul admits that he was not adequate for the apostolic office in and of himself, and to 1 Corinthians 15:1, where Paul does not think he is intrinsically adequate for the task to which God has called him (MacArthur 2004, p. 101). MacArthur (2004, p. 102) writes that Paul had a great mind, he had good training and he did use it, but he had no confidence in human wisdom, while relying not on his abilities but on God empowering him (1 Cor 2:1–5).

Chen (2020, p. 11) considers Paul to be a 'transformational leader'. Chen (2020, p. 18) refers to a definition given by Burns (1978, p. 20), namely that it is 'a process where leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation'. He also relies in his argument on Nouwen's (1989) opinion that Christian leadership is not a leadership of power and control but of powerlessness and humility (Chen 2020, p. 11). Chen interprets the letter to the Philippians and focuses on Chapter 1, which shows him that Paul was willing to be led. After his conversion, Paul had a new life transformed in Christ (Chen 2020, p. 12).

Keltner (2016a, p. 101) explains that having power makes leaders less dependent upon others and moves their focus to their own goals and desires, resulting in 'empathy deficits', 'diminished moral sentiments', 'self-serving impulsivity', 'incivility and disrespect'. For these leaders to avoid the power paradox, they need to reach a point of spiritual intelligence where they acknowledge God as the ultimate power and trust him for guidance in life. This makes it possible to experience a total rewiring of one's mind, in order for behaviour to change. Shapiro (2020, p. 29) explains how change and transformation become possible when one integrates new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving as one lays down new pathways in one's brain and lets these pathways express themselves in one's thoughts, words and actions.

Paul is an example for modern leaders of how leadership can be transformed as a consequence of a commitment to God. Paul's mind was rewired the moment his path crossed with God. His purpose in life, his behaviour, words and deeds changed once his mind was set on God and God's plan for him.

■ Conclusion

Had Paul ever been in a situation where he abused power? Yes, as a Pharisee. Could Paul succeed in transforming his leadership? Yes, when he heard God's voice in an intervention, when he responded, submitted himself, committed to and surrendered to God. In our modern societies, we need powerful political leaders with godly characters to defeat evil and restore order. The role model to be followed by these modern leaders is Paul.

Clarke (2008, pp. 173–182) discusses 'imitation' as a key tool to Pauline leadership, as Paul urges his readers in different letters to follow his example (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phlp 3:17; 2 Th 3:7; Gl 4:12). Paul provides us with an example of how leaders in our modern societies can overcome the power paradox.

Our leaders need to look out for the opportunities where God intervenes in their lives and make the decision to listen, to commit, to submit to him and surrender their lives and power and control! We need leaders who are spiritually intelligent, who acknowledge the existence of a powerful God bigger than ourselves, who surrender and commit to him and follow him in leadership.

Chapter 4

Christ-centred leadership in the Pauline Letters

Philip La G du Toit
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa

■ Abstract

Christ's headship and lordship are prominent themes in Paul's letters. This chapter explores the way in which leadership within the Christian community functions within a church structure of which Christ is the head. Paul's perception of leadership flows forth from a high Christology in which even the highest positions of responsibility in the church remain subordinate to the pre-eminence of Christ in all things. Christ-centred leadership does not merely involve the adoption of certain attitudes or even certain models of leadership but forms part of the core structure of the way in which Christians ought to relate to one another. Leadership in the Pauline Letters is not to be understood in terms of different levels of worth or even influence. Rather, leadership is characterised by mutual submission, respect and servanthood that is animated by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. A better understanding of Christ-centred leadership is aimed at bringing a needed correction to the way in which leadership is often perceived in a post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Africa, both in ecclesial and sociopolitical environments.

◼ Introduction

Little proof is needed that leadership on the African continent is in a crisis. According to Adhiambo (2012, pp. 157–158), the fact that Africa is behind in development can be directly related to 'leadership-orientated problems', which involve poor leadership, bad governance and the unfair distribution of resources in which a minority have privileged access to these resources. This tendency has arguably deepened in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Adhiambo explains that governance is often tainted by favouritism, nepotism, tribalism and other forms of corruption, which in turn lead to poor infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, poor sanitation and poor service delivery. In Kenya, for example, leaders have elevated themselves to such an extent that they perceive themselves as kings and chieftains (Adhiambo 2012, p. 162). In South Africa, service delivery protests are the order of the day (Dames 2017, p. 2). In countering these leadership-orientated problems, Adhiambo (2012) suggests a model of servant leadership in which Christ serves as the model for leadership, characterised by listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, refraining from the use of political power, conceptualisation, foresight and stewardship (cf. Dames 2017). In following Botman (2000, pp. 208–209), Dames (2017, pp. 4–5) argues for a theoretical framework of Christopraxis, in which there is a historical concretisation between God's actions and human actions, especially from the perspective of the poor. Christopraxis involves the 'ontological union with the Trinity embodied and recounted in and through the lives of leaders'. The question, however, is *how* such an ideal of godly, service-orientated leadership can be achieved. In other words, what needs to happen in the lives of people in order to attain this kind of leadership? Or, how does good leadership become a reality in people's lives and not stay a theoretical ideal? In an attempt to answer this question, in this chapter, the theological dynamics of leadership will be examined as put forth in the Pauline corpus. Although the disputed Pauline Letters will be included here (Eph; Col; 2 Th; 1–2 Tm; Tt), the main focus will be on the undisputed letters (Rm; 1–2 Cor; Gl; Phlp; 1 Th; Phlm).[78]

In Pauline scholarship, the theme of leadership has often come to the fore. Traditionally, most studies on leadership have followed a phenomenological approach in that the phenomenon of leadership

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78. Lately, there has been a resurgence in viewing the disputed letters as authentic. See, for example, McKnight (2018), Beale (2019), Wright and Bird (2019) on Colossians; Baugh (2016), Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles (2016), Bock (2019), Wright and Bird (2019) on Ephesians; Schogren (2012), Weima (2014), Köstenberger and colleagues (2016), and Wright and Bird (2019) on 2 Thessalonians; and Towner (2006), Köstenberger (2017) and Yarbrough (2018) on the Pastoral Letters.

within the Pauline churches was the topic of research. The main question in this regard was whether leadership was charismatic and thus based on the gifts of certain individuals or whether leadership was based on the organisational structure in the early church (Du Plooy 2005). While the dominant view in scholarship initially was that leadership was charismatic and only later evolved into specific offices, it shifted towards accentuating the institutionalised character of leadership (see Sindo 2018, p. 7). It must be noted, though, that much of the latter tendency results from a need to legitimise denominational practices (Burtchaell 1992, pp. 1–2).

In terms of Pauline scholarship on leadership, Barentsen (2011, pp. 30–31) identifies the need to bring sociological as well as theological or ideological factors into the understanding of leadership in Paul. In his study, Barentsen does not so much focus on the theology behind leadership but utilises social identity theory in order to understand the phenomenon of leadership in the Pauline corpus. In another study, Clarke (2008, p. 187) – although titling his work, *A Pauline theology of church leadership* – does not so much focus on the theology behind leadership but works on a historical critical level, in which he discusses the 'nature, dynamics, goals and structures of Pauline leadership'. On South African soil, Button (2014, p. 3; [*emphasis in the original*]) moves more in the direction of identifying 'the *theological* aspects of Pauline leadership'. However, Button's main focus is not to identify the theological principles behind the *concept* or *idea* of leadership in the Pauline corpus but rather to identify the influence of the gospel in the *phenomenon* of leadership in the Pauline churches. In another recent South African study, Sindo (2018) argues for the close relationship between identity formation and leadership in the Pauline churches, focusing on how the 'in Christ' formula in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is used to shape group identity, of which Paul himself would be a group prototype.

In this chapter, the focus will be on trying to understand Paul's theology behind the concept or idea of leadership. Rather than trying to theologically explain the phenomenon of leadership in the early Pauline churches, the aim will be to identify the theological underpinnings of the way in which Paul perceived leadership. This will be done along four focal points: (1) Christ as the leader of the church and leaders who closely follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1–3; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:15–22; Gl 2:19–20; Phlp 1:21; 3:4–8); (2) the nature of Christ's leadership (Phlp 2:6–11; 1 Tm 2:5–6); (3) the nature of human leadership in following Christ (Phlp 1:29; 2:3–5, 17; 3:17; 2 Cor 11–13; 13:5; Eph 5:23–25; Col 3:17–19); and (4) the attitude behind the spiritual gifts as equipment for leadership (Rm 12:1–3, 9–11; 1 Cor 12:12–13, 22–25).

Christ as the leader of the church and leaders who closely follow Christ

The idea that Christ is the 'head' [κεφαλή] of the *ekklesia* is a well-known Pauline idea, which corresponds to similar references in the ancient world.[79] According to 1 Corinthians 11:1–3, Paul urges the congregants to become imitators [μιμηταί] of himself as he is of Christ, which certainly implies that Christ's example must be followed (Fee 2014, p. 540). According to Gardner (2018, p. 472), Paul's exhortation to imitate himself is 'a call to humility and to humiliation and obedience even to death'. Gardner connects Paul's words here to Philippians 2:4–8, which involves self-emptying and taking on the form of a servant. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul specifically expresses his wish that the congregants should understand that the 'head' of every man is Christ, that the head of woman is man[80] and that the head of Christ is God. Thiselton (2000, p. 812) interprets κεφαλή as denoting pre-eminence when used in reference to Christ or God and 'foremost' in reference to man. For Fee (2014, pp. 555–557), κεφαλή denotes source, arguing that Paul wants to convey man as the source of woman in terms of creation and God as the source of Christ in respect of incarnation. He thus does not see the respective headship of man and Christ as hierarchical but as relational. But, as Schreiner (2018a, p. 222) points out, in this context, a man can hardly be seen as the physical source of a woman. Rather, the idea of authority seems to be present in this text (cf. also Bauer et al. 2021, p. 480; Gardner 2018, p. 483; Louw & Nida 1988, p. 739). Schreiner (2018a, pp. 223–224) argues that although there is a cultural aspect to Paul's statements in Verse 3, especially in terms of the social realities of honour and shame, they cannot be reduced to a social dimension either. The idea that God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of the man and man is the head of the woman implies that the 'relationship between men and women' is 'analogous in some sense to God's relationship to Christ' (Schreiner 2018a, p. 224), which implies that women's 'dignity, value and worth' are not called into question (Schreiner 2018a, p. 228). As Gardner (2018, p. 484) points out, it is rather that 'roles of leadership' and 'voluntary submission' are at stake here. Yet the way in which one has to hermeneutically account for Paul's portrayal of authority here, and thus how one can translate it for today's context, remains a complex matter. My main aim is not to go into the discussion of gender roles here but rather to better understand the headship of Christ

79. For example, in *Orphic Fragment* 21a, Zeus is called the 'head' [κεφαλή] on which all things are dependent, and a reference to Zeus as the 'beginning' [ἀρχή] is present in some manuscripts of the fragment (see Pao 2012, p. 99).

80. Thiselton (2000, p. 822) notes that most commentators agree that Paul's reference to ἀνήρ and γυνή is in the context of gender relations in general and thus to men and women, rather than to husbands and wives (cf. Schreiner 2018a, p. 225).

over the *ekklesia* and the way in which the *ekklesia* should follow Christ. The important point here is that, according to Paul, human leadership should operate from a position of *subordination to Christ* and *reflect the relationship* of the *ekklesia* to Christ as well as Christ's relationship to the Father.

In Ephesians 1:20–23, Christ is pictured as seated on God's right hand after being raised from the dead (v. 20), acquiring a position 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come' (v. 21). All things have been put under his feet, and he is the 'head over all things', including the *ekklesia* (v. 22), which is 'his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all' (New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]). Apart from the allusion to Psalm 110:1–2 in Verse 20, which is about the Messiah's reign (Baugh 2016, p. 124; Hoehner 2002, pp. 280–282; cf. Arnold 2010, p. 111), in Verse 22 there is an allusion to Psalm 8:6, which is about 'humankind's placement over the first creation' (Baugh 2016, p. 128). In this passage, Christ is thus portrayed as head over both the old and the new creation (Baugh 2016, pp. 128–129). Moreover, Thielman (2010, p. 109) points out that, on the basis of the allusion to Psalm 8, a link between divine and human rulership is established. One could thus infer that the human responsibility to rule over creation has been encapsulated and incorporated in Christ as the 'last Adam' (1 Cor 15:45) and, by extension, that human leadership cannot be envisioned apart from Christ's reign over creation, especially because of the notion that believers are presented as being 'in Christ' (e.g. Eph 1:3; 2:6).

Similar ideas are found in 1 Colossians 1:15–22, of which Verses 15–20 probably form part of an early Christian hymn (e.g. Moo 2008, pp. 115–137; Pao 2012, pp. 89–93). In Verses 15–16, Christ is portrayed as the 'firstborn' [πρωτότοκος] of all creation and that 'in' or 'by' him [ἐν αὐτῷ][81] all things were created, including thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities, which probably point to spiritual beings (Moo 2008, p. 122) or powers (Pao 2012, p. 97). The reference to Christ as the 'firstborn' of creation (v. 15) can be understood as the firstborn of a new humanity in which he is to be glorified as exalted Lord (Bauer et al. 2021, p. 793) or as a metaphorical expression for Christ's supremacy over creation (McKnight 2018, p. 149; Moo 2008, p. 120).[82] The latter interpretation seems more likely in view of the reference in Verse 16 to Christ's supreme position in creation (Moo 2008, p. 120; cf. Beale 2019, pp. 87–91; Pao 2012, p. 100). Foster (2016, p. 187) argues that

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81. Both readings are possible here (Campbell 2013, p. 11; Harris 2010, p. 40).

82. This idea is clear from passages in the Old Testament that refer to Israel as 'firstborn' (e.g. Ex 4:22) or from the reference to a future Davidic king (Ps 89:27), speaking of 'the figurative status of preeminence' (McKnight 2018, p. 149; see also Beale 2019, p. 87).

the reference to thrones (v. 16) points to 'beings that occupy cosmic thrones', whether hostile or benevolent, and thus refers to 'the most powerful forces imaginable'. By implication, all forms of leadership are ultimately under Christ's authority.

According to Colossians 1:16, 'all things were created through/by [διά] him and for [εἰς] him'. Verse 17 states that Christ is before all things and that all things hold together in him. In Verse 18, Christ is pictured as the 'head of the body, the church' and being the firstborn from the dead, being 'pre-eminent' (πρωτεύω) in everything. The reference to Christ as the 'head of the body' (v. 18) indicates that he is 'the governing member' of the body, the *ekklesia* (Moo 2018, p. 128), which is universal rather than local (Beale 2019, p. 103; Foster 2016, p. 193). Christ's headship here clearly points to his 'position of authority and power' in creation and the church (Pao 2012, p. 99). McKnight (2018, p. 155) argues that Christ's headship involves both Christ's superiority and his priority in/over all things. In other words, in Verses 15–18, Christ's lordship over all things is established (Moo 2008, p. 134) and he is thus pictured as pre-eminent in respect of both the old and the new creation (Moo 2008, p. 128). Significantly, McKnight (2018, p. 159) draws a connection between Christ's pre-eminence [πρωτεύω] (v. 18) here and in Philippians 2:6–11, in which Christ is presented as being given the name above every other name and that he is Lord over all. On the basis of Christ's pre-eminence, Christ is also portrayed as having the power 'to initiate […] a new creation', which is the *ekklesia* (Moo 2008, p. 138; cf. Beale 2018, p. 104). Consequently, believers have been reconciled in Christ's 'body of flesh' [σώματι τῆς σαρκός] by his death to be presented as blameless and above reproach (v. 22). Human leadership could thus not be imagined apart from the supremacy and pre-eminence of Christ over all things.

In respect of Paul's perception of his own leadership, although he saw himself as an apostle (Rm 1:5; 1 Cor 9:2), he viewed his life and ministry as being under the direct control of Christ himself. Apart from the fact that Paul saw his apostleship as a gift from Christ (Rm 1:5), according to Galatians 2:19–20, he perceived himself to be crucified with Christ and thus to have died so that it is no longer he who lives but Christ who lives in him. This statement signifies both a radical change of identity (Du Toit 2019, p. 129; Hays 2002, p. 244) and a life that does not emanate from his own interests and desires (cf. Keener 2019, p. 196; Oakes 2015, p. 94) but from Christ who lives in him and through him. According to Ryken (2005), it is as if Paul is saying:

> The world no longer revolves around me. I am no longer dominated by thoughts of my own pleasure and prestige. If I have a life at all, it is only the life that Christ lives in me. (p. 75)

For Ryken (2005, p. 75), this notion is indeed 'antithetical to our contemporary culture'. This is possible only because of the cross and resurrection of Christ (cf. Moo 2013, p. 171). The new life in Christ is thus *eschatological life* (Silva 2001, p. 175) and *resurrection life* (Keener 2019, p. 195), based on the new creation in Christ (DeSilva 2018, p. 249) and *animated by Christ himself* (v. 20; cf. 2 Cor 4:10–11). A similar idea is found in Philippians 1:21, in which Paul states that for him 'to live is Christ and to die is gain' [τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος]. According to Thompson (2016, p. 44), Christ became 'the orientation point' of Paul's life. For Fee (1995, pp. 141), Christ 'became the singular pursuit of life'. But Hansen (2009, p. 82) probably best encapsulates the essence of Paul's statement here by arguing that Paul's 'claim here is that every aspect of his present, bodily, earthly existence is completely permeated by Christ'. Christ is thus both the focus and source from which life emanates.

In Philippians 3:4–8, Paul describes his former credentials, such as being a member of the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, being a Hebrew of Hebrews and having a Pharisaic outlook on the law as all in the realm of 'flesh' [σάρξ]. Keown (2017b, pp. 116, 118) interprets σάρξ here as Paul's own abilities and achievements. In this text, Paul denounces his old identity (Du Toit 2019, pp. 144–147; Hansen 2009, p. 22) and considers it as a 'loss' [ζημία] (vv. 7, 8) and as rubbish [σκύβαλον] (v. 8) in order to gain Christ. Gaining Christ involves obtaining intimate, personal knowledge of Christ himself (cf. Keown 2017b, p. 148) and Christ becoming everything to Paul. In other words, he describes these credentials, which include positions of leadership, as fleshly or as unspiritual and, by implication, as not being constitutive of his new identity in Christ. Paul's new identities as Christian and apostle are solely determined by Christ.

■ The nature of Christ's leadership

In the Pauline corpus, the nature of Christ's leadership is hardly better described than by Philippians 2:6–11. Historically, this passage was widely regarded as a hymn that Paul adopted for his own purposes, but it is increasingly interpreted as being composed by Paul himself (Halloway 2017, p. 115). Here, Christ is pictured as, despite being in the 'form' (μορφή, v. 6) of God, not counting his equality (ἴσος, v. 6) with God as something to be 'exploited' (Keown 2017a, p. 383) or to 'lay claim on' (Hellerman 2015, p. 112; ἁρπαγμός, v. 6). Instead, he 'emptied himself' (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, v. 7) and took on the form of a 'slave' (δοῦλος, v. 7), being born in human likeness. Being in human form, 'he humbled himself' (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, v. 8) and became obedient to the point of death on the cross.

Paul is the only New Testament writer who uses the verb κενόω [to empty] (v. 7).[83] It implies that Christ was in a state of 'total self-abandonment' and 'self-giving' (Keown 2017a, p. 403), to the point of becoming a slave. Although there were enslaved people who had a decent life in the ancient world, they were considered to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Thompson 2016, p. 71). Christ's death can be considered as a 'slavelike death' (Halloway 2017, p. 123). Keown (2017a) further explains that Jesus' self-emptying implies that he:

> [D]id not exert his power as humanity might expect, caught up as it is and was in expectations of politics, might, and force [...] Jesus demonstrated his power in apparent powerlessness by the supreme power of the universe, love [...] Jesus' example here is the supreme demonstration of not living according to selfish ambition and vain conceit, but of putting the needs of others ahead of oneself (cf. 2:3). Paul wants this Christ-pattern to be paradigmatic to the Philippians, who are becoming fractious as they seek status and honor. (pp. 404, 407)

Significantly, it is *because of* [διό] (v. 9) these self-emptying and humbling actions that God exalted Jesus and bestowed on him the name that is above every other name (v. 9), to which every knee should bow, including all people and spiritual authorities, confessing him as Lord (vv. 10–11). Whether Christ's exaltation must be interpreted as a reward for his humbling actions or as a vindication of his victory on the cross (Fee 1995, p. 220) is not that crucial here. More importantly, one could conclude that Jesus' exaltation in a position of supreme leadership and honour ironically *flows from* and *is characterised by* self-emptying, humiliation, servanthood and obedience. In light of Paul's references to considering others higher than oneself (v. 3) and that believers should have the same attitude as Christ (v. 5), Philippians 2:6–11 is not a mere description of Christ's attitude underlying his position of leadership, but it is also provided as *an example of the way in which people should perceive and implement leadership*. Hellerman (2005, p. 148) argues that in this passage, Jesus is portrayed as:

> [U]tilizing power and status in a manner diametrically opposed to the practices of the Roman rulers familiar to the readers [...] Roman emperors and [...] the elite in the colony of Philippi, were known for grasping at honors though self-assertion. (p. 148)

This picture of Christ's leadership and acquisition of honour is also very different from the way in which a position of leadership is perceived and implemented in today's world, especially in Africa.

Similar to Philippians 2:6–11, in 1 Timothy 2:5–6, 'the man Jesus Christ' is presented as a mediator 'who gave himself as a ransom for all' [ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων] (cf. Mk 10:45). Jesus' humanity is stressed

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83. Commentators have speculated on what exactly Christ was emptying himself of, but as Fee (1995, p. 210; [*emphasis in the original*]) points out, Christ 'did not empty himself *of* anything; he simply "emptied *himself*"'.

here, not to sacrifice anything of his divine status but to picture his 'complete participation in humanity in order to accomplish the work of mediation' (Towner 2006, p. 185). In Jesus' act of 'self-giving' (Yarbrough 2018, p. 156), he brought 'redemption, deliverance or release' to people, which can be associated with the idea of Jesus being a 'ransom' [ἀντίλυτρον], a term that only occurs here in the New Testament (Yarbrough 2018, p. 155; cf. Köstenberger 2017, p. 103). Apart from the self-giving way in which Jesus utilised his position, it is significant that all people are included in Jesus' ransoming act. This idea was very different from the way in which the participation of God's people was perceived in certain forms of Second Temple Judaism, in which one had to be born into the chosen people (Witherington 2006, p. 216). In other words, Jesus' ransoming act was not exclusive in that it was directed to a privileged few, but it was inclusive in that it was universally directed to all people.

■ The nature of human leadership in following Christ

In Philippians 1:29–30, Paul writes that it has been granted to the congregants that they should not only believe in Christ but also suffer for his sake, which he compares to his own conflicts. Apart from suffering in prison in Rome when writing the prison letters, Philippians included, in 2 Corinthians 1:8–11, Paul elaborates on the affliction that he and his coworkers endured in Asia, even to the point of despairing at life itself. Yet God delivered them. It is significant that 2 Corinthians is the same letter in which Paul defends his position of leadership as an apostle (especially 2 Cor 10–11). Paul also mentions his suffering under persecution elsewhere (1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 4:9; 11:23–27; Gl 5:11). Bird and Gupta (2020, p. 63) rightly point out that Paul's 'remarks here are part and parcel of Paul's theology of the church in the world, strenuous discipleship, and suffering in faith'. As Keown (2017a, p. 319) indicates, God's faithful people have always been persecuted. Yet this is especially true of godly leaders, of which Paul was one. One could thus infer that Paul saw suffering for the sake of Christ as something that not only the church members should endure but also as an intrinsic part of being in a position of leadership in the church.

According to Philippians 2:3–5, Paul admonishes the believers to do nothing from 'selfish ambition or conceit' [ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν], but in 'humility' [ταπεινοφροσύνῃ] they must 'regard' [ἡγέομαι] others as 'being better' (cf. NRSV; Bauer et al. 2021, p. 919) or 'being more significant' (cf. ESV) than themselves [ὑπερέχω] (v. 3). Bird and Gupta (2020, p. 69) argue that the term κενοδοξία 'carries the sense of seeking fame for fame's sake'. It involves 'this elusive quest for fame that has no real substance and leaves the pursuer with nothing but more enemies'. The word ἡγέομαι

[regard] can also mean to 'be in a supervisory capacity', to 'lead' or to 'guide' (Bauer et al. 2021, p. 383). Although the word is used a bit differently in this context, Reumann (2008, p. 308) argues that in this context, '[i]t hints at issues of leadership and politeia in the house churches' (cf. Keown 2017a, p. 346). According to Bauer and colleagues (2021, p. 919), in certain contexts, ὑπερέχω [to be better than] can point to 'be in a controlling position', to 'have power over' or to have 'authority' over someone else (see Rm 13:1). The language that is used here is thus in the sphere of acquiring honour (Keown 2017a, pp. 343–346), which is also associated with positions of leadership (Fee 1995, p. 189). Keown (2017a, p. 346) states that in Paul's use of two terms that 'can refer to leadership here', Paul uses them 'to challenge their thinking, especially the leaders'.

Paul continues that people should not look to their own interests but the interests of others (v. 4), and that the same 'mind' (NRSV) or 'attitude' [φρονέω] (Bauer et al. 2021, p. 948) should be in believers that is in Christ (v. 5). It is important to notice here that these qualities are motivated by Christ's example of self-emptying and humiliation in which he obtained the position of supreme leadership, which was already discussed (Phlp 2:6–11). It could thus be concluded that Christ's act of leadership, in which he emptied himself for the sake of others, should *set the example* not only for *authentic Christian living* but for *authentic leadership*.

In the letter to the Philippians, Paul's perception of a leader's attitude can further be derived from his statement in Philippians 2:17 that he pours himself out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of their faith and Philippians 3:17, in which Paul urges the congregants to imitate him. In respect of Philippians 2:17, the most likely interpretation is that Paul uses the image of the drink offering figuratively to describe his 'current suffering and potential martyrdom in Rome, which culminates his sacrificial service', with overtones of the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross by pouring out his blood for others (Keown 2017a, p. 503; cf. Fee 1995, pp. 252–253; Silva 2005, pp. 129–130). Paul's urge for others to imitate him (Phlp 3:17) is in the context of having the true humbling and self-emptying qualities that is derived from Christ's example (cf. Fee 1995, p. 365; Keown 2017b, p. 239).

In 2 Corinthians 11–12, Paul defends his apostleship amidst the so-called 'super-apostles' [ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων] (2 Cor 11:5). He ironically asks the question whether he committed a sin in humbling himself so that the Corinthians might be exalted or elevated (2 Cor 11:7). Paul specifically targets these apostles who boasted in their pedigree (2 Cor 11:21–23), after which he elaborates on his own sufferings and martyrdom for the sake of Christ (2 Cor 11:23–29). Of course, Paul would have answered the rhetorical question in 2 Corinthians 11:7 negatively (Guthrie 2015, p. 519; Harris 2005, p. 754). According to Harris (2005, p. 754), Paul's humbling of himself

involved his renouncing of his apostolic right to support (1 Cor 9:6, 11–12a, 14), his support for himself by manual labour (Ac 20:34; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8; 1 Cor 4:12) and his contentment with a Spartan lifestyle (Phlp 4:11–12; cf. Martin 2014, pp. 529–530). The Corinthians' elevation does not point to social elevation or material prosperity or even enhanced honour but to 'their being lifted up from the futility of their pre-Christian existence' (Harris 2005, p. 755; cf. Collins 2013, p. 217). In 2 Corinthians 11:30, Paul states that if he must boast, he will boast in things that show his weakness, which specifically follows his account of the toils and hardships that he endured as an apostle (2 Cor 11:23b–27). For Harris (2005, p. 817), boasting in his weakness 'amounts to "boasting in the Lord"'. Martin (2014, p. 572) notices that in Paul's statement, there is a deep irony in that Paul 'parades the very evidence his opponents would ridicule'. Paul's statement is thus countercultural, in that his opponents would boast in their strengths and pedigree; arguably, even some in the Corinthian congregation would do the same, as can be derived from the way in which they handled the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12–14).

In 2 Corinthians 12:1–9, Paul elaborates on his so-called 'thorn in the flesh' (v. 7), ending with the statement: 'Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong' (v. 10, NRSV). In 2 Corinthians 13:4a, there is a reference to Christ who was 'crucified in weakness' but who now lives 'by the power of God'. Paul then motivates as follows (2 Cor 13):

> [F]or we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! (vv. 4b–5; NRSV)

According to Barnett (1997, p. 605), Paul here conveys the idea that Christ's sufferings are reflected in Paul's apostolic suffering (2 Cor 1:8–11; 4:7–12; 6:3–10; 11:23–33; 12:9–10), which includes his weakness of the thorn in the flesh, for which he was brought 'down to earth' (2 Cor 12:7–9). Yet Paul now lives with Christ to the benefit of the Corinthians. Similarly, Harris (2005, p. 917) argues that 'Christ's career is the pattern for his [Paul's] own ministry'. Martin (2014, p. 673) rightly observes that for Paul, the cross is not 'simply a past happening; it is caught up in Christ's present, risen life, where he remains as the crucified one, as the crucified Jesus is now the risen Lord'. Paul thus counters a *theologia gloriae* with a theology of the cross, which also permeates his perception of leadership. It is important to note here that Christ is not merely put forth as an example to follow, but that Christ is pictured as being 'in' believers (2 Cor 13:5), which means that a Christoform and cruciform lifestyle emanates from the indwelling presence of Christ himself. A similar idea is found in 2 Corinthians 4:10–11, in which Paul writes

about the death of Jesus that is carried in the body through hardships and persecution. Yet this metaphorical carrying of Jesus' death in the mortal body enables *Christ's life to be manifested* in and through it.

Within the so-called household codes of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1, the idea of mutual submission is presented as a prominent principle that underlies the structure of authority in the church. According to Ephesians 5:21, congregants should submit to one another in the fear of Christ [Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ]. The word φόβος is the same word that is used in the Pentateuch (LXX) for the fear of the Lord (e.g. Dt 6:2). Baugh (2016, pp. 460–461) connects this principle with that of Philippians 2:3–4, in which believers should consider others higher than themselves. Believers' conduct must be driven not by drawing attention to themselves but by the fear of Christ, which implies humility (cf. Hoehner 2002, p. 717). As believers should submit to one another, leaders are included by implication amongst those who should lead by serving others (cf. Arnold 2010, p. 356). According to Verses 24–25, the submission of wives to their husbands is based on the church's submission to Christ, whereas husbands' love for their wives is based on Christ's love for the church in which 'he gave himself up for her' [ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς]. The man's leadership should thus be that of self-sacrifice (Baugh 2016, p. 484). Thielman (2010) argues that:

> [*A*]lthough the head of the household retains his position of authority, his use of that authority is tempered by an attitude of service to those over whom he has been placed. (p. 373)[84]

For Thielman (2010, p. 382), the husband's love must include 'the sacrifice of his own social prestige and well-being, indeed his life, for the sake of his wife'. One could argue that leadership here involves leading *by an example of self-sacrifice*. A true leader should thus set the example of *how* to lead a self-sacrificial life.

The household codes in Colossians 3 are preceded by the admonition to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through him (v. 17). In Verses 18–19, wives are asked to be subject to their husbands, 'as is fitting in the Lord' [ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ], and husbands are reprimanded to love their wives and not be harsh with them. McKnight (2018) explains that 'to be fitting' [ἀνήκω]:

> [*M*]eans Christoformity; the submission of 3:18 is an instance of cruciform living, not of absorbing the Roman way of life. Wives serve husbands and husbands sacrifice themselves for their wives because that is what love means. Superiority, power, and status have all been eradicated in Christoformity. (p. 344)

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84. Hoehner (2002, p. 740) points out that the man's authority implies 'positional power' and not 'qualitative superiority', for the sake of harmony.

In the same vein, McKnight defines that concept of submission [ὑποτάσσω] in both Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1 as having 'nothing to do with ontological status or inferiority–superiority or hierarchy but with a Christoform life expressed in the relationship of Christian wives and husbands'. Moreover, husbands' love [ἀγαπάω] (v. 18) for their wives can be described as being committed to help their wives to grow and flourish into Christlikeness and thus not as making demands, as overpowering or as violating the integrity of the wife (McKnight 2018, pp. 349–350; cf. Beale 2019, p. 318). As Moo (2008, p. 303) argues, love here denotes a 'kind of sacrificial, self-giving love whose model is Christ himself' (cf. Pao 2012, p. 268). It can thus be concluded that an attitude of self-sacrifice and submission to the authority of Christ lies at the heart of positions of leadership as put forth in these household codes.

■ The attitude behind the spiritual gifts as equipment for leadership

The two main chapters in which Paul mentions the various spiritual gifts are Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1–9, which are normally associated with positions of leadership. It is noteworthy that to lead [προΐστημι] is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12:8. Yet both of these lists of gifts are embedded within admonitions about the underlying attitudes that should accompany these gifts. Romans 12 is introduced by urging believers to present their bodies as holy and living sacrifices unto God and not to conform to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (vv. 1–2). In Verse 3, Paul commands them not to think more highly about themselves than they ought to think. After mentioning the various gifts in Verses 6–8, he reverts back to the underlying attitude of love that must be present in the congregation. This love must be genuine [ἀνυπόκριτος] (v. 9). In Verse 10, Paul repeats the principle of love, adding that congregants should 'outdo one another in showing honour' [τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι] (NRSV; ESV). Verses 11 to 21 continue with further practical admonitions that display the underlying attitude of love that should be present in the believing community, including positions of leadership by implication. While most commentators stress that the presentation of the body (v. 1) implies the whole person (e.g. Moo 2018, p. 769; Schreiner 2018b, p. 626; Thielman 2018, p. 568), in light of the reference to the conformity to this world (v. 2), the focus seems to lie on believers' bodily existence in this world, in which they are exposed to bodily needs and desires (cf. Wright 2002, p. 704). The renewal of the mind (v. 2) must be interpreted eschatologically, implying that people should think as 'age-to-come people rather than present-age people' (Wright 2013, p. 567; cf. Longenecker 2016, pp. 822–923). In respect of not thinking more highly of oneself than one

ought to (v. 3), Schreiner (2018b, p. 633) rightly remarks that 'Paul here undercuts the quest for honor and status, which was endemic in the Roman world'. A comparable situation arguably presents itself in the African context of leadership today. Moo (2018, p. 796) argues that the bestowal of honour on one another (v. 10) should include to 'praise one another's accomplishments'. The way in which Paul presents the underlying attitude of leadership is thus not self-centred but entails a focus on others.

Immediately after mentioning the various gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1–9, Paul writes:

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (vv. 12–13)

Similar to Galatians 3:27, within the new identity in Christ, Paul here eradicates the fundamental distinctions between different ethnic groups (Fee 2014, p. 672; Thiselton 2000, pp. 997–998). All people are considered to be on the same level. In Paul's body metaphor, in which he accentuates the importance of each member (1 Cor 12:14–31), leaders are included by implication. There is thus a sense in which all people with gifts contribute and lead in the area(s) of their gift(s). It is noteworthy in this regard that the character of the whole body is 'Christocentric and Christomorphic', derived through the Christ's Spirit and not through human initiative (Thiselton 2000, p. 1001). In 1 Corinthians 12:22–25, Paul argues that weaker members of the body are indispensable and that those members who are thought to be less honourable should be clothed with greater honour, or less respectable members should be treated with greater respect so that everybody should receive the same care. That means that all congregants, including leaders by implication, are of equal value (cf. Garland 2003, p. 596). In Garland's (2003, p. 596) words, the church should be 'countercultural and bestow the greatest honor on those who seem to be negligible'.

■ Conclusion

Paul's perception of leadership is deeply rooted within a theology of the cross and a theology in which Christ is pre-eminent. Leadership is thus both cruciform and Christoform. In Paul, leadership roles are not presented as separated or elevated from the rest of the body of believers but as an extension of the functioning of the body, in which all members, including leaders, are considered to be of equal value, although their functions, roles and responsibilities differ based on the various gifts bestowed on them (1 Cor 12; Rm 12). All positions of leadership are directly under the headship of Christ. The character of leadership is based on Christ's self-sacrificial

and self-emptying love on the cross, through which he obtained the name above all other names and thus a supreme position of authority over all of creation (Phlp 2:6–11; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:15–22; 1 Tm 2:5–6). Jesus' example of true leadership, characterised by submission, servanthood and self-sacrifice, should be followed (Rm 12:1–3, 9–11; 1 Cor 12:22–25; Eph 5:23–25; Col 3:17–19). Yet the key to attaining such a quality of leadership does not lie in a moralistic demand to replicate Jesus' behaviour but rather starts with the death of the 'self' – one's own interests and desires – and *emanates from the indwelling presence of Christ himself* through his Spirit (Gl 2:20; 1 Cor 12:12–13; 2 Cor 4:10–11; 11–13). Leaders should thus not only submit under Christ's lordship and remain Christ-centred when leading, but leaders should also die in their own efforts and interests and surrender to Christ themselves, to let *his* life flow in and through the leaders, which implies an intimate relationship with Christ (Phlp 3:8) and a life that is defined by Christ (Phlp 1:21). This can only be attained in the realm of the new creation, in which Christ himself, as head not only of the body of believers but as the head of the whole cosmos, remains the supreme authority and leads in and through leaders whom he enables and empowers through the bestowal of his gifts.

The various gifts do not place certain individuals in positions of greater value or importance but in different roles and functions so that all members of the body are equally important for the body to function. In view of Paul's *cosmic* portrayal of Christ's leadership (Phlp 2:6–11; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:15–22), his perception of Christ's pre-eminence in leadership is not only confined to the believing community but ought to permeate all of humankind, although this will only be fully realised at the eschaton. Yet leaders should already live eschatologically, under Christ's ultimate leadership. From a Pauline perspective, the key to the solution for the leadership crisis in Africa thus lies within leaders who come to the fore who do not only follow Christ's example of self-sacrificial and self-emptying love but are *animated and empowered by the indwelling presence of Christ himself*. In Pauline terms, this is the only way in which countercultural leadership ideals can be achieved, for if leaders do not lead under Christ's lordship and under his lifegiving power, leadership will always tend to be self-centred.

Hope and bridge-building leadership in a post-COVID-19 context: Insights from 1 Peter

Jacobus Kok[a,b]

[a]Department of New Testament Studies,
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven,
Leuven, Belgium

[b]Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa

■ Abstract

In this chapter, the author reflects on the concept of hope and bridge-building leadership in a post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) context, characterised by several predicaments, such as potential war in Europe; energy and financial crises; and rising populism and political movements to the right. The author uses a transdisciplinary approach, drawing from the fields of theology and economics and using the research of economist Lans Bovenberg to establish the challenges faced in contemporary society, specifically, the conundrum of the *Homo economicus*, driven by selfish interest and greed. The author also examines, by means of an exegetical analysis of 1 Peter, how early Christians reacted to crisis and conflict and how their leaders created narratives of belonging to transform spirals of

conflict into spirals of hope amidst suffering. The author of this chapter then uses this to reflect on how Christ-followers in positions of leadership should approach the conundrum of the *Homo economicus* in challenging times to contribute to a more sustainable future.

∎ Introduction

In this chapter, I want to reflect on hope and bridge-building leadership in a post-COVID-19 context characterised by several predicaments. Currently, we face a potential war in Europe as Vladimir Putin continues to assault Ukraine. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced and fled to Europe during the last few months. Europe is facing an energy and financial crisis, and inflation sees rising levels that were last seen in the years of the Great Depression, posing the potential for another global conflict. There is also a growing populism and a political move to the right. This was most recently (at the end of 2022) seen in the election of the right-wing political leader Giorgia Meloni of Italy. Leaders are called to embark in their respective fields to work towards global peace and a sustainable future in which the downward spiral of conflict is transformed into an upward spiral of hope. This chapter is an effort to contribute to this goal. The chapter has in view a transdisciplinary discussion between theology and economics. My main conversation partner will be the economist Lans Bovenberg (2018). The aim and purpose of this chapter is to take the insights of Bovenberg related to the breaking of negative spirals of conflict and despair further, as well as to illustrate how 1 Peter encourages believers to break negative spirals and create positive spirals of hope, love and resilience in contexts of conflict and suffering.

I am guided in our analytical approach from the perspective of critical correlation between past and present experiences, inspired by the insights of Edward Schillebeeckx (1983). This approach, which I will describe below, demands an exegesis of the present as well as the exegesis of the past and constructing similar contrast experiences in both domains, which could serve as a basis to conduct an analogical comparison between past and present experiences. Thus, in our analyses and 'exegesis' of the present, I will draw on the research of the well-known economist Lans Bovenberg (2018, pp. 21–48) to establish the challenges within our contemporary context related to the conundrum of the *Homo economicus* driven by selfish interest, greed and a-moral competition and lack of inherent other-regard, which in times of crisis and conflict often leads to an intensification of the latter, leading to a vicious spiral of fear, blame, greed, alienation and lack of hope. This will be contrasted with how early Christians reacted to crisis and conflict and how the leaders of these communities created narratives of belonging,

transforming spirals of conflict into spirals of hope amidst suffering. Thus, the purpose is to reflect on the critical correlation between past and present experiences, that is, to reflect on how the conundrum of the *Homo economicus* should be approached by Christ-followers in positions of leadership in challenging times.

■ Methodology: Making use of the method of critical correlation

Biblical exegesis and biblical hermeneutics can be defined as the art of interpretation of the Bible and the implications of it for our own context in the present. Over the centuries, interpreters of the Bible have developed approaches to study the text of the Bible in trying to unravel the original message for the first readers. But because Christian Scripture plays a formative role in the identity and ethos of contemporary Christians, the question is how to apply biblical principles in a context far removed in time, space, culture and religion from the original context in which it was produced. This is indeed no simple endeavour and needs a sophisticated approach.

In his own exegetical model, the late Andrie du Toit (ed. 2009), a leading South African New Testament scholar of his generation, proposes a model for biblical exegesis that played a significant role in the training of several generations of New Testament scholars in South Africa. In his own development, he was influenced by German and Swiss *Evangelisch Theologisch*[85] scholarship, especially in Basel, where he conducted his doctoral work. The model has three phases and twelve steps, which begin with demarcation of a passage, textual criticism and so on, and end with 'application'.

These steps would be recognised by all biblical scholars as the state-of-the-art approach to exegesis in Reformed [*Evangelische Theologische*] circles, especially in South Africa. One of the reasons is that Du Toit and his team of leading New Testament scholars at that time produced a series of New Testament handbooks for theological training. The last volume that appeared was the book *Focusing on the message* (ed. Du Toit 2009), in which several scholars contributed chapters on different exegetical methods. After the chapters on the discipline of hermeneutics, written by

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85. The term *Evangelisch Theologisch* is normally used in German faculties where there are typically an *Evangelische Fakultät* for Protestant education and a *Katholische Fakultät* for Catholic Churches. See in this regard, for instance, the University of Bonn and the University of Münster in Germany as examples. The term *Evangelisch* is not to be translated as 'evangelical'. The term 'evangelical' in English carries with it the connotation of North American evangelicalism, which is not the same. *Evangelisch* in German is closer in meaning to what South Africans would understand as Protestant theology more broadly.

Bernard Lategan (2009), Du Toit (2009) provides his chapter with the model of exegesis. This model has been used for several decades in South Africa. However, there is one step in the Du Toit model which needs a revision. His final step entails reflection on applying the text for today. Inherent in this model is the belief that once the Bible is exegeted, one can simply apply the principles thereof. Richard Hays (1996) once described this as a typical evangelical approach: 'The Bible says it, and therefore I do it'. It is usually also an approach that is *ipso facto* made possible because of a very high view of the authority of Scripture, typical of evangelical approaches. In my own development as a scholar over the last three decades, I was, of course, a product of my own sociocultural context, in which this was the model we had been trained with. But over the years, in the process of a second doctorate, of which the research was mainly conducted in the Netherlands and Germany, I was challenged by Catholic scholars to reflect critically on the South African approach via the insights of the Catholic scholar Edward Schillebeeckx. I will next provide a very short overview of this approach to help the reader understand the dynamics thereof and how this has influenced the methodological approach of this chapter.

By means of the metaphor of a bridge to be built between past and present, Schillebeeckx was concerned with the process of strong foundations on both sides of the bridge. We need to study critically, with all the applicable tools and state of the art, the biblical text against the background of the *Umwelt* in which it was produced. Having done so does not mean one can start building the bridge over the large cliff of time and culture. A simple application of it today, or a 're-actualisation' of the biblical tradition, is a step too fast. Another step is necessary. Just as we thoroughly prepared, examined and built the structure of the bridge on the one side of the cliff or river of time and culture, we need to also do so for the present context. This demands an 'exegesis' of the contemporary context by means of appropriate theoretical lenses. This would then lead to a 'critically reflexive self-consciousness' approach to Christian praxis (Schillebeeckx [1972] 1974, p. 205, cited in Boeve 2010, p. 15). Once the foundations of the bridge on both sides of the river or cliff have been thoroughly prepared, examined and constructed, one needs to establish why and to what extent it is possible to relate these two experiences to one another. To use a simple example, one cannot simply take a contemporary crisis like climate change and open the Bible randomly and simply exegete that and apply that to the contemporary crisis. Another step is involved, namely to identify which ancient context in Scripture is most appropriate as a contrast experience to serve as the analogical partner for critical correlation with the present. So, for Schillebeeckx, this comes down to a *correlation between similar life experiences*. But the

term *critical* in correlation is important here. *Critical* means that one is not uncritically reading Scripture. Responsible exegetes also must be critical about the way in which the authors of the Bible have approached certain issues. If we are honest, even those who hold to a high view of the authority of Scripture do so in a critically selective manner. For instance, problematic texts from the Old Testament, in which the annihilation of another cultural group is called for or the stoning of a person caught in adultery, are in fact not taken to be applicable anymore. Similarly, such a person would not accept Paul's view on slavery and the manner in which Paul sustained and even endorsed the ancient discourse of slavery. Such a person would intuitively know that in the ancient context, slavery was the norm, and that was the context in which Paul also functioned as a child of his day and age. In fact, such an interpreter is busy in the act of critical correlation, reflecting critically on the manner in which biblical authors interpreted their world and contextualised the message of Christ in subsequent generations.

Schillebeecx does the same, but he takes it a bit further and delves deeper, asking critical questions about the implicit needs that the ancient authors of the Bible wanted to address amidst the contrast experiences of crisis and conflict they were facing. Schillebeeckx would argue that perhaps Paul was not correct in his approach. Who says that he was correct? Those with a very high view of the authority of Scripture would be confronted by this statement or idea of Schillebeeckx. But Schillebeeckx wants the interpreter to pause and ask critically, with a set of sophisticated theoretical tools, what the implied questions and implied answers in the contrast experiences of the past were really like, and whether the answers of the biblical authors were appropriate at all. This is indeed a very challenging question that, at the end, leads to a much more robust and responsible process of critical correlation. Anyone doubting whether such an approach is important should simply be reminded of the absolute devastation that was brought about when South African New Testament scholars like EP Groenewald used the Bible to theologically justify apartheid or when scholars like Gerhard Kittel in Germany did the same to justify Nazi ideology.[86] Or, more recently, in the post-COVID-19 context, when the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church declared in 2022 that the sins of Russian soldiers will be completely forgiven when they die on the battlefield in Ukraine.

Now, most of the time, the biblical scholar would be emotionally invested in the Bible and hold to a high view of Scripture. However, this does not

86. See Kok (2022) for a discussion of biblical scholars like EP Groenewald and Gerhard Kittel and their respective roles in justifying apartheid and Nazi ideology.

mean that one is not critical towards Scripture or the way that the church has interpreted Scripture in the past and the present. Critical solidarity means that one stands in solidarity with the church tradition one is embedded within, but one does so critically as a leader and scholar standing within that tradition, with all the interpretative tools one has to one's disposal in a given situation.

In my own interpretative methodology, I am inclined to agree with the approach of the Yale school, inspired by scholars like Richard Hays and others like Hauerwas, who argue from Scripture, from a postliberal perspective, that Christianity is rooted in a narrative frame which is especially accessible in the context of the church. Udo Schnelle (2009, p. 25), in his *Theology of the New Testament*, correctly points out that past events are always re-presented by any interpreter from a specific angle and cast into a narrative frame. Such an act of *re-presenting* events gives them a particular meaning that they did not have before they were interpreted and re-presented within a given frame. The task of the biblical interpreter is twofold: On the one hand, one must critically reflect on the manner in which the New Testament message was represented by a particular biblical author within a narrative frame. Even behind an indicative statement like 'Jesus is Life', there is a narrative. The indicative statement can only make sense if the full story is told. The act of telling this story is only possible when done in view of the full extent of the Christ event, which of course has its roots in the narrative of the Old Testament. So any effort to explain the meaning of a Christian text must always be done in a pictorial manner; that is, the whole picture is explained in relation to all the objects within the whole frame of the picture. Once this is done, only then can one begin to articulate in narrative form the contemporary contrast experience. As a third step, one needs to critically correlate these two narrative frames and envision ways in which the relevance of the biblical text for the contemporary context can be sketched.

Schillebeeckx, as a Catholic scholar, argues the same. He places a high value on the critical correlation between his Catholic tradition and the contemporary context. What he searches for are what he calls analogous *contrast experiences*, which are shared between the past and the present experiences. For instance, a context of Christians amidst crisis, dislocation and persecution is an example of a contrast experience that might at a given time be shared between a biblical experience and a contemporary experience. Moreover, it is often exactly in these contrast experiences where we seek God's answers to our questions. Schillebeeckx points out that it is most often in such situations of dislocation and conflict that believers engage most deeply in creating narratives filled with meaning, becoming aware of how the liberating God wants believers to live in a

manner in which life possibilities are opened up. Schillebeeckx, as referred to by Schreiter (1984),[87] is of the opinion that:

> [7]he experience of suffering in the sense of a contrast experience or critical negativity creates a bridge toward a possible praxis, which wishes to remove both the suffering and its causes. (p. 55)

Said differently, it is arguable that by its very nature, the dynamics of a negative contrast experience of suffering serve as the breeding ground for the possibility of an alternative future with better life possibilities. So, one could argue that it is the negative contrast experiences, as such, that open up the possibility for an alternative future filled with hope. Perhaps this is also what Käsemann meant with the well-known dictum in our field that the 'apocalyptic is the mother of all Christian theology' (see Van Aarde 2002, p. 118). It is the crisis and pain and dislocation – the suffering – that give birth to hope. Without hope, people would disintegrate into despair and hopelessness and into a negative spiral of meaninglessness and destructiveness. The opportunity presented within a negative contrast experience is that it gives birth to hope and expects the opposite of the destruction of the contrast experience and propels one towards the appeal to the *humanum*: in the contrast experiences of sickness, invasion, war and dislocation, we appeal to the *humanum* of healing, restoration, reconciliation and peace.

The challenge, then, is how to critically correlate past and present experiences such that we make use of the opportunity to construct reality from a Christian narrative framework, that is, how the Scriptures' dealings with a particular contrast experience can inspire us to construct meaning in a new way, formed by scriptural values. From this perspective, implied questions and answers between past and present contrast experiences are critically correlated with each other, such that a form of continuity between Christian experiences and symbols (symbols like the cross, resurrection, dying like a seed, new life, etc.) of the past is created in our process of 're-translation' of the message for contemporary readers.

The only way that Christianity can speak to culture is if it takes the actual questions of contemporary culture seriously. For that reason, theologians must engage in interdisciplinary endeavours in an effort to understand what Paul Tillich described as questions of 'ultimate concern', not only of contemporary audiences in a given context but also those of the biblical authors. In our day and age, it is the philosophers, artists, psychologists, sociologists and others, as well as the creative writers, artists, musicians and others who express their ultimate concerns.

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87. Schreiter (ed. 1984, p. 55), in *The Schillebeeckx reader*, Kok (2016, pp. 26–40) discusses how negative contrast experiences and the suffering they bring are the point where hope is yearned for.

In this chapter, I will turn my attention to the work of Lans Bovenberg (2018), an influential economist in Europe. As his work is read, I will ask what his insights reveal to us about the contrast experience and what implicit questions and answers he provides as an economist. After an analysis of his work, I will turn to studying 1 Peter as a contrast experience representative of the biblical world of the past and again approach the text with the question of what implicit questions and answers it provides for its contrast expression.

■ Lans Bovenberg and the conundrum of the *Homo economicus*

In the process of research on leadership in a post-COVID-19 world, I encountered the work of Lans Bovenberg. He is a well-known international scholar in economics and worked for the International Monetary Fund and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. In the past, Bovenberg also served as the deputy director of the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis and is currently a professor of Economics at the Tilburg University and a recent winner of the prestigious Spinoza Prize. He plays a leading role in the curriculum design of economics in the Netherlands and influences economic policy, international macro-economics, labour economics and much more. For that reason, he is considered to be an important voice with whom to dialogue in reflecting on the fundamental problems and challenges of the *Homo economicus*. It is even more appropriate to dialogue with him as he recently (Bovenberg 2018) published, shortly before COVID-19, a chapter on 'Economics as a discipline of hope' in which he conducted an interdisciplinary study between economics and theology, trying to answer implied questions and needs from the perspective of the lacunae within economics with the implicit answers provided by Christian Scriptures. These kinds of endeavours are much appreciated, but at the same time, it is very clear that Bovenberg lacks the exegetical and hermeneutical ability to do justice to the world behind the text, the world within the text and the world in front of the text, which reveals his lack of training in theology. This chapter would like to build on the work of Bovenberg (2018) but supplement it with our own expertise in theology and biblical studies.

Lans Bovenberg was invited to contribute a chapter in the book *Driven by hope: Economics and theology in dialogue*, which became the sixth volume in Peeters' series, 'Christian Ethical Expectations in Leadership and Social Ethics', an initiative of the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics (ILSE). As mentioned, Bovenberg's own contribution was entitled 'Economics as a discipline of hope'. In his chapter, he argues in favour of the need that exists to reform education in economics, a task that is also assigned to him in the Netherlands especially. One of the primary goals of this reformation is to

reframe economics within a stronger relation view, in contrast to the super-individualist and competitive *Homo economicus*. Bovenberg aims to construct an alternative relational 'macronarrative' of hope for economics that is inspired by the Christian gospel. Generally, economics is interested in transforming conflicts that result from competition and distribution of scarce and limited resources by means of mutual collaboration for the common good. From this perspective, he wants economics to contribute in ways that break the spiral of conflict and turn it into a spiral of hope and human flourishing by means of win-win collaboration. This is the aim and vision of Bovenberg's project. But such a lofty aim and vision is born from the context of the devastating consequences of the contrast experience of its opposite.

In his paper, Bovenberg describes economists as also making use of interpretative models, which are abstract conceptualisations that function as cognitive maps of orientation. But such abstraction into models of a vast amount of detail *ipso facto* entails that one must leave out a large amount of detail in order to get to a rather simplified model that could be tested empirically. The outdated map in economics education is driven by the 'autonomous *Homo economicus*', who is a rational individual who determines their own destiny, needs and desires and who is essentially 'self-interested' and 'a-moral' (Bovenberg 2018, p. 25). The principle is that the *Homo economicus* '[...] value[s] only their own welfare and do[es] not *intrinsically* care about justice, morality or relationships. Relationships are only instruments for raising welfare and are not valued for their own sake' (Bovenberg 2018, p. 25).

The *Homo economicus* is most at home with the governance model of competitive markets. The main motivation of the *Homo economicus* is money, and the whole governance model is based on the assumption that trust in money will determine proper behaviour and motivation. Bovenberg observes that over several decades, if the metaphor of a time-lapse camera may be used, certain patterns emerge. He noticed that those who mainly rely on the *Homo economicus* model of the rational, a-moral individuals in economics education produce suspicious and self-centred students who are '[...] egoistic, cynical, and fearful [...]' (Bovenberg 2018). Bovenberg (2018) remarks:

> Students learn that in order to conform to others, they should be suspicious and self-centred [... *T*]he assumption that people are motivated only by selfishness results in fear of greed, makes people afraid to commit, and this leads people to look after only their own interests. Hence, the model of the *Homo economicus* can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. (p. 26)

He rightly observes that this is a recipe for a general lack of hope and a lack of trust, leading to what he describes as an emotional 'climate crisis' in the Western world, fuelled further by a growing movement towards the political right, growing populism, a spirit of fear and a general feeling of

despair and hopelessness. This is the conundrum and impasse of the *Homo economicus* model of the West.[88] The advantage of the *Homo economicus* is its disillusionment and realistic approach to life, expecting to be let down by others and get hurt in the process.[89]

In the experience of Bovenberg, this model of the *Homo economicus* leads to a negative spiral of fear, greed, lack of trust and a turn to selfish self-interest and alienation as a self-fulfilling prophecy. This experience then leads to 'angry condemnation' and general distrust, as well as a lack of focus on win-win solutions for the sake of the common good. Naturally, then, this existential orientation leads to despair and drives out any vitality for a positive sense of hope. Schematically, this can be expressed as shown in Figure 5.1.
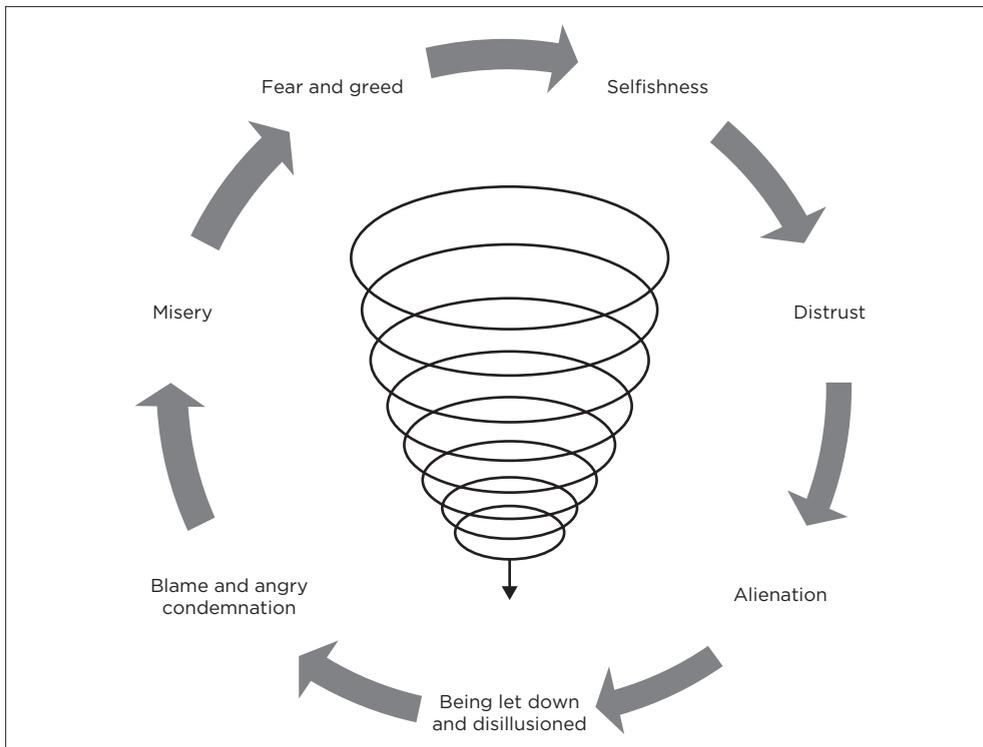
Source: Author's own work.

FIGURE 5.1: Negative spiral of the *Homo economicus*.[90]

88. See in this regard also the work of Samuel Bowles (2016) on the moral economy and why good incentives should not be a substitute for good and moral citizens.

89. See the work of Luigino Bruni (2012), in which he discusses the wound and the blessing in economics, relationships and happiness.

90. The copyright of this figure is that of J Kok, but the conceptual information is that of L Bovenberg (2018), as already discussed.

It is within the context of this negative contrast experience in the negative spiral related to the *Homo economicus* that Bovenberg endeavours to argue that the Christian faith provides the antidote to the crisis. Unfortunately, Bovenberg does not do justice to the complexity involved in biblical exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, not even to mention more complex and sophisticated approaches like critical correlations between past and present experiences. He quotes random biblical texts completely out of micro-, meso- and macro context and makes himself guilty not only of anachronism and ethnocentrism but of etic eisegesis, and he does not illustrate any sensitivity to reading the biblical text against its original sociocultural and historical context. This comes down to an uncritical fundamentalist reading of Scripture applied to contemporary challenges, which I argued earlier is a shortcoming in many uncritical approaches in the application of the Bible. In his discussion of the biblical texts, he references no rigorous academic theological sources (except for one or two).

I will next attempt to fill the gap that Bovenberg left by trying to come as close as possible to his own cognitive maps that he sees as a solution for the conundrum of the *Homo economicus*. I wholeheartedly support his effort to engage Christian Scripture and would like to support his vision for collaboration across the disciplines. I will try to flesh out in more detail the notions that he alludes to in his own approach to further strengthen and support his claims related to theological insights. He makes the statement, based on Luke 23:34, that 'Christ's non-conformist, vulnerable behaviour stops the vicious cycle of disconnection and death' (Bovenberg 2018, p. 35). His main thesis is that Jesus Christ projected his hope unto God, and at the cross prayed on behalf of his persecutors, asking God to forgive them. For Bovenberg, this shows him that Jesus modelled an ethos of seeing potential and worth even in wicked people and trusting God as Father to bring out this potential in people, leading out of a spiral of meaninglessness and despair and into meaningfulness. This is the opposite of blame and shame and breaks the cycle of violence. He postulates that this is only made possible based on a relational view of humanity, which is based on trust in God and viewing people as created in the *imago Dei*. Essentially, this *ipso facto* demands a relational anthropology (Bovenberg 2018, pp. 28–30) in which Christian hope drives people to break the negative cycle of the *Homo economicus* and create an upward cycle that consists of trust, confidence and love. He refers to the 'virtuous dance' of 'appreciation, joy, and trust', which essentially reinforces itself in a self-fulfilling prophecy within a 'virtuous cycle of the divine household' (Bovenberg 2018, p. 32). He argues that Christian hope provides people with enhanced vision, and they become like people standing on a mountain, leading to a broader perspective. This view gives them a sense of confidence

and hope beyond the crisis of the here and now. Bovenberg (2018, p. 37) expresses the point strongly when he writes that such a view of hope 'heals their eyes'.

Schematically, Bovenberg's theology can be expressed as shown in Figure 5.2.
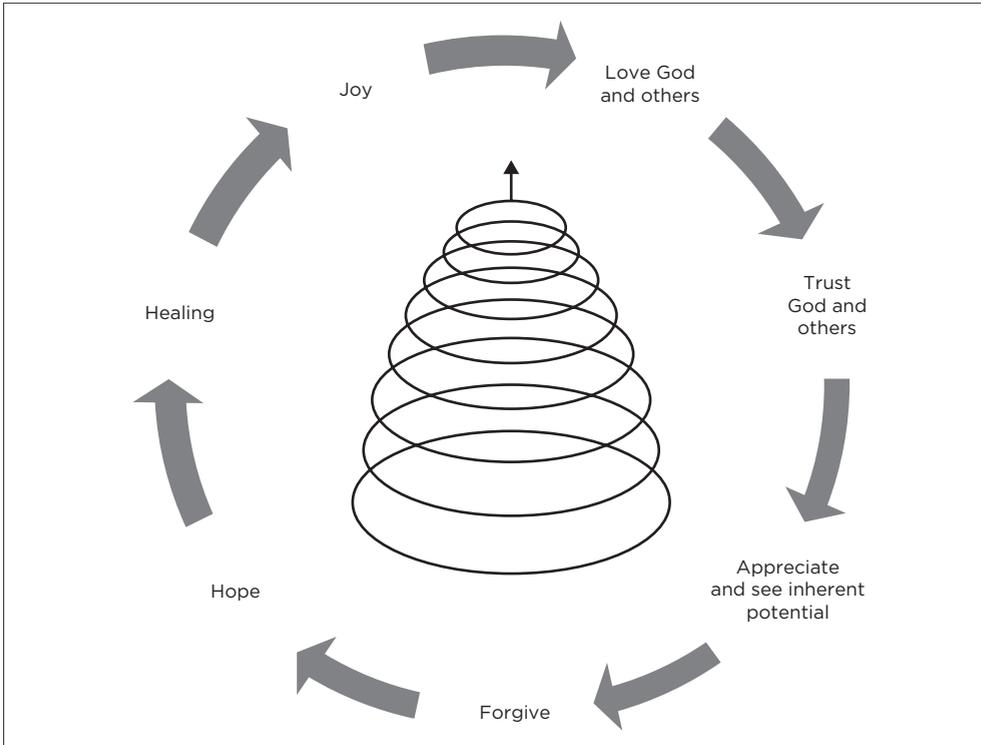
FIGURE 5.2: Positive spiral of the person inspired by the Christian faith.[91]

In my opinion, Bovenberg's own approach should be supplemented, and I will aim to do so in the following section from my own disciplinary perspective as biblical scholar.

■ 1 Peter: Hope amidst suffering

1 Peter is, *par excellence*, a New Testament letter that wants to provide hope and new identity for believers amidst the contrast experience of alienation and persecution (see e.g. Powell 2009, p. 481).

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91. The copyright of this figure is that of J Kok, but the conceptual information is that of L Bovenberg (2018), as already discussed. In his own model, he accentuates *trust*, *appreciation* and *joy*, and for that reason I have made the font bold and underlined.

The opening salutation of the letter immediately sets the scene by describing the readers as παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς [aliens in the diaspora]. The letter claims[92] to be written from Babylon (Rome, see 1 Pt 5:13) by Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ [Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] (1 Pt 1:1a), who at the time of writing presents himself as an elder and group prototype (1 Pt 5:1). The letter is handed to the congregations by Silvanus (1 Pt 5:12). The author writes to those who find themselves in a situation of dispersion, alienation, persecution, social ostracism and rejection, dislocation and fear in Asia Minor (1 Pt 1:1, 4:16). It was most probably written to function as a circular letter to be taken from community to community in Asia Minor. It is uncertain whether it is possible to say that Christians were persecuted by the Roman authorities in a systematic fashion during this time. Scholars are divided on the issue, but all agree that there is ample evidence that Christ-followers experienced social ostracism during this period in history. Scholars who study the New Testament from a social-scientific perspective, like Crook (ed. 2020) and DeSilva (2022), argue convincingly that ancient people lived in a group-oriented or dyadic sociocultural context where honour and shame were fundamental values of that paternalistic society, where it was expected that people conform to the values of society and submit to the authority of the *paterfamilias*. Converting to the Christ-following movement entailed that believers could no longer participate in the socioreligious environment in which they originally found themselves. In the ancient world, religion was deeply integrated in every aspect of society. Archaeological evidence from Pompeii reveals that houses had little temples in the central place within the house and that the household gods were honoured not only in the temple but also in the house itself (Longenecker 2020, pp. 39–51, 81, esp. 212–222). The ancient world was permeated by religion in every aspect. Converting to the Christ-following movement entailed a new identity and a new ethos that, by implication, created distance from their previous pagan ways. In 1 Peter, we see this clearly when the author of the letter writes to the believers and reminds them of their former pagan ways.

This leads to them being slandered and abused, being called κακοποιῶν [evildoers]. The text makes clear, if one follows the early textual witnesses like Papyrus 72 and the Codex Sinaiticus, that they are maligned because

92. Most scholars are of the opinion that this letter dates from a later period in history after the deaths of Peter and Paul. There are several reasons for this, of which the high-level Greek is one example, where doubt exists about whether a fisherman like Peter would have been able to write it; another issue is signs of institutionalism which are reminiscent of later periods in history. For critical discussions in this regard, see the commentaries on 1 Peter, of which Jobes (2005) is one who provides an overview of the debate. See in this regard also Powell (2018, p. 483) and the introduction section in Michaels (1988). Powell correctly argues that if 1 Peter is pseudonymous, then it makes sense that it was written around 89 AD, which was the period when Domitian explicitly began to aggressively show hostility against Christians.

they bear the name of Christ (1 Pt 4:14–16). The latest coherence-based genealogical method's choice (see N.A. [Nestle-Amand] 28) to go back to the reading of the *textus receptus* does not exclude suffering amidst the context of bearing the name Christian or being followers of Christ. Powell (2018, p. 488) is correct that what was at stake in that context was their honour. Following Jesus directly led to them being shamed, which is a form of social death in such dyadic societies in which honour and shame were pivotal social values. The act of being labelled with the negative term 'Christian' was 'more than mere annoyance: these Christians have experienced a loss of status and social reputation' and would have been experienced as a real existential 'fiery ordeal' (1 Pt 4:12), leading to social ostracism and dislocation and the suffering that this entailed in such group-oriented societies (Powell 2018, p. 488). From this perspective, it makes sense why the opening words of the letter clearly started with addressing these believers with a sensitivity to their existential crisis and the fear (1 Pt 3:1) amidst suffering (1 Pt 4:16) they experienced within the context of identity dislocation, which the author of 1 Peter will address in the rest of the letter. The implicit questions that the author of 1 Peter is trying to address revolve around dislocated identity, and he starts his letter in the first verse with a powerful metaphor related to alienation and will use the rest of the letter to create a new sense of identity. Believers are presented as having turned to the living and true God, away from idols, but now they are experiencing marginalisation and a sense of identity crisis in a group-oriented world and have become aliens in a form of dispersion, having lost their identity. In the ancient reciprocal Mediterranean context, it was believed that evil should be repaid with evil and what was done to one person should be done back to others. This fuelled the spiral of violence. Implicit in this is the question of how to live *as Christians* who follow Christ. Repay evil with evil, or break the spiral of violence with love and forgiveness? This is exactly what the author of 1 Peter wants to address, and he provides concrete answers to their implied questions deriving from the existential contrast experience they are experiencing.

New Testament scholars studying 1 Peter from the perspective of social identity theory have illustrated how 1 Peter's opening words start with a sense of loss of identity, alienation and not belonging (see Still & Webb 2014, pp. 455–472). They show how 1 Peter deliberately addresses this need by providing a cluster of metaphors to instil a new sense of identity. Drawing on the sociocognitive metaphor research of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), in combination with insights from social identity theory (Still & Webb 2014), scholars point out that 1 Peter makes use of several metaphors that belong to the domain of family metaphors to create a new sense of identity and belonging between believers.[93] In a recent study, Kok (2023) illustrated the

93. For a good discussion of how ancient Mediterranean families functioned, and the manner in which early Christians used family metaphors to create social reality, see Moxnes (ed. 1997).

following cluster of family metaphors being used by 1 Peter to make it clear that believers are taken up into the new family of God. Firstly, a clear contrast is being created between the past and present (see Figure 5.3).

Secondly, the author of 1 Peter goes to great lengths to illustrate that believers in Christ have been taken up in the new family of God. In Figure 5.4, the reader can clearly see several metaphors being used by Paul, in which one simply cannot deny that he draws from the source domain of family relations to explain the target domain of the new dispensation that came about when believers came to faith. In this regard, we can agree with Bovenberg that early Christians went to great lengths to recast the meaning of the Christian faith within *relational terms*, and they used the most intimate metaphor they could, namely that of a family. Within a family, there is care, trust and mutual love. It is the wish of a parent to see the potential of a child come to fruition, and for that reason, the author of 1 Peter sees the inherent potential of believers by accentuating that they have the possibility to grow and mature in the faith, especially amidst their contrast experience of persecution (see Figure 5.4).

Reciprocity, care and love stand firm within this metaphor, in which believers are presented as brothers and sisters (1 Pt 5:9, 12, 13), sharing in God's love and in mutual love for each other (1 Pt 1:22; 5:1–5). They all share in the common good of an inheritance (1 Pt 1:18), and they will be nurtured by God, just as a mother nurtures her beloved child. Inherently within the deep structure therein, one finds the notion of protection and care. For that reason, they are called upon to follow the example of their Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed those who persecuted him.

In 1 Peter 3:8, the author urges the readers by means of a series of adjectives to be single-minded [ὁμόφρονες], sympathetic [συμπαθεῖς], loving and appreciating of each other [φιλάδελφοι], tender-hearted [εὔσπλαγχνοι] and humble [ταπεινόφρονες]. The ethos just expressed is, in the immediate microcontext of the text, contrasted with its opposite.
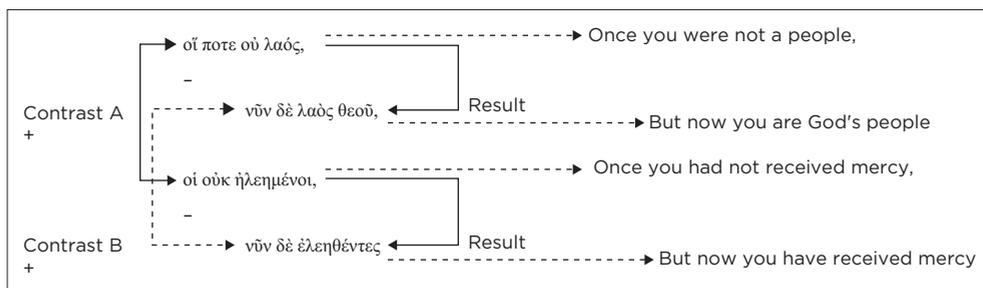
Source: Kok (2023, p. 119).
FIGURE 5.3: Former and new identity.
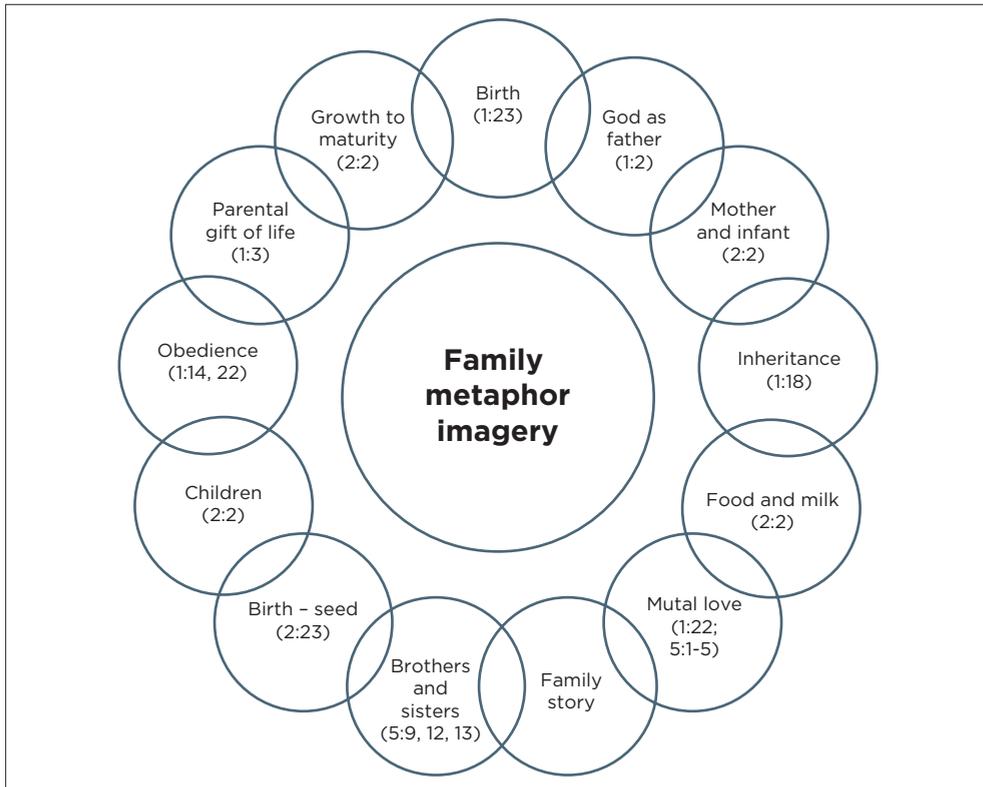
FIGURE 5.4: Family metaphor imagery.

In 1 Peter 3:8–22, the author discusses how Christians should show brotherly love and how to show patience amidst persecution and suffering. As I have mentioned, the ancient Mediterranean world was characterised by reciprocity, where evil was repaid with evil. Remarkable then is how 1 Peter 3:9 explicitly contrasts the good and restorative relational ethos of Verse 8 with advice on how to avoid the negative spiral of conflict. He states how believers should treat one another and even those who persecute them (see Figure 5.5).

Clearly visible is the breaking of the spiral of violence by not repaying evil with evil but giving blessing, based on their identity in Christ, with an eye on a reward from God in the future. Von Siebenthal (2019, p. 397) argues that in this letter, the participial is often used with imperative force (e.g. also in 1 Pt 2:12; adjectives are often also used thus in 1 Pt 2:18; 3:1, 7, 9, 15). 1 Peter encourages believers, with imperative force, to bless others and keep their tongue from evil and their lips from speech that is deceitful. This comes down to truth, a very important value of the earliest Christians,

"μὴ ἀποδιδόντες κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ	Do not repay evil with evil	Avoid
ἢ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας,	Or insult with insult	Avoid
τοὐναντίον δὲ	On the contrary	Contrast
εὐλογοῦντες,	Bless/wish well	Pursue
ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε,	Because you were chosen	Reason
ἵνα εὐλογίαν κληρονομήσητε."	So that you may inherit a blessing	Purpose

Source: Author's own work.
FIGURE 5.5: 1 Peter 3:9.

which Bovenberg rightly also identifies as a prerequisite of trust. Believers are encouraged to turn from evil towards that which is good and to actively seek and pursue peace (1 Pt 3:11). The author of 1 Peter 3 asks his readers: 'Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?' This comes down to what Miroslav Volf calls an attractional 'soft difference'.[94] The author of 1 Peter acknowledges that even if believers might suffer for doing that which is good and right, they are in fact not shamed but blessed (1 Pt 3:13), and for that reason they should not fear or be frightened but rather honour Christ as their Lord (1 Pt 3:15). He encourages believers to always have an answer ready at hand when the occasion comes to witness to the hope they have, and do so in *gentleness and respect* (1 Pt 3:15), keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against their good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of the slander they make themselves guilty of (1 Pt 3:16). Lastly, 1 Peter ends Chapter 3 with the reminder that this identity-ethos of believers is to be built on the example of the group prototype, Jesus Christ, who also suffered for sins although he himself was righteous for the purpose of bringing believers to God and to true insight (1 Pt 3:17–18).

1 Peter was especially concerned with the character and virtue of believers based on their identity, especially amidst negative contrast experiences. In another striking metaphor, 1 Peter explains that difficult circumstances are like the refining process of gold. In 1 Peter 1, he says (in the New International Version [NIV]) that:

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, (5) who through faith are

94. See Miroslav Volf's (1994) excellent paper entitled 'Soft difference', in which he argues that the pastoral leader of 1 Peter motivated followers of Christ to not retract in isolation from the world but to let their difference be soft and even attractive (see e.g. 1 Pt 3:1ff).

> shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (7) These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (8) Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, (9) for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (vv. 3–7)

This section reminds one of the observation of Bovenberg that the basis of hope is trust and that believers stand on a mountain, seeing things from above, from God's perspective. Pastoral leaders like the author of 1 Peter did the same. He showed believers a picture of the past and also of the future and from God's perspective. That links to Bovenberg's metaphor of the view from the mountain. Believers know that God is their protector who shields them and their heavenly inheritance (1 Pt 3:5). That future also functions as a point of orientation, pulling them into God's desired future, a grand narrative of which they already know the outcome. Peter also wants believers to be taken up in the larger story, seeing earthly suffering and conflict as something that ultimately could be transformed by God into refined spiritual gold. The focus of believers should be on God's future, on God's vindication. This should lead to love towards God and fellow believers and, above all, to inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Pt 3:8). Again, this reminds one of the triad of Christian virtues that Bovenberg points out, namely joy, trust and appreciating God and others. Instead of blaming and shaming others, the Christ-followers are called to break such spirals of violence and alienation by blessing others. Their suffering is redefined in such a way that the metaphor of refinement becomes a positive metaphor of spiritual growth and maturity, leading to resilience. It is also directly on the level of the same verse connected to an ethos that motivates believers to not fall into the negative spiral of fear, blame, misery, greed and alienation, but rather towards an upward spiral of praise, glory, honour, love, humility (1 Pt 3:8), inexpressible and glorious joy and hope. In 1 Peter 3:8, the author urges the readers by means of a series of adjectives to be single-minded [ὁμόφρονες], sympathetic [συμπαθεῖς], loving and appreciating each other [φιλάδελφοι], tender-hearted [εὔσπλαγχνοι] and humble [ταπεινόφρονες].

■ Conclusion

We live in a post-COVID-19 context with radical new challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic entailed a global crisis, and shortly after (in 2022), Russian president Vladimir Putin started the war with Ukraine, which led to millions of people being displaced and to an energy crisis in Europe. Currently, Europe is experiencing levels of rising inflation that have not

been seen since the years of the Great Depression around the Second World War. The potential for global conflict is at its highest point in several decades. To be expected, one observes a growing populism and political move to the far right. Most recently, this was seen in the general elections in Italy, where Giorgia Meloni, of the far-right Brothers of Italy Party, won the election. The BBC reported on 26 September 2022 that if Meloni won, it would be the 'most right-wing government since World War Two'.[95] This is a significant and alarming change. Italy is Europe's third-largest economy. It is in such a context where all should focus on a sustainable future that is inclusive and do so in a way that trust is not lost, and conflict is avoided. For that reason, we need strong reconciling leadership. Lans Bovenberg is one such person who is strategically positioned in his own field of economics to make a difference, not only in economic policy but also in the training of the next generation of economists. We welcome transdisciplinary projects that aim to work towards the common good, sustainability and peace. I agree with Bovenberg (2018, p. 41) that what we need to strive for is justice and ethics, creating the balance of a win-win situation, which is, in fact, at the very 'heart of justice: giving all people their rightful, fair share'. Bovenberg sees in the golden rule of Jesus Christ, expressed in Matthew 7:12, that all believers are encouraged to 'do to others what you would have them do to you, because this sums up the Law and the Prophets' (my translation from original Greek). In this chapter, I have investigated 1 Peter from an exegetical perspective and aimed to show how 1 Peter contextualised the core of the message of Jesus for his audience several decades after the death of Jesus Christ. I aimed to illustrate that justice should be done to the biblical text by means of exegetical analyses and by means of the method of critical correlation between past and present experiences. I also aimed to illustrate in this chapter how the intuition of Bovenberg was correct, but how a more detailed exegesis can be done to illustrate how 1 Peter steered his audience away from negative downward spirals into despair, choosing instead to propel his audience into an upward spiral of hope, love and resilience by building bridges to outsiders in contexts of suffering.

95. See in this regard the article written by Paul Kirby (2022).

Re-imagining leadership in a post-COVID-19 *glocal* village to provide spiritual healing and pastoral care

Rudy A Denton
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa

■ Abstract

This chapter explores a re-imagining of leadership in the face of challenging post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) realities to provide an appropriate spiritual healing and pastoral care process. The point of departure in this chapter will be from scriptural and academic literature to propose a practice of healing and care despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society. The chapter will delve into normative indicators to equip Christian leaders to address the impact of COVID-19 on a micro level in communities and on a macro level within larger systems in a *glocal* village (local and global). Post-COVID-19 realities call for initiatives and cooperative determination by leaders to be visionary role-players in conveying a practice of healing and care in a radically altered *glocal* village.

Presenting a spiritual healing and pastoral care process should bring hope where there is ineptitude and a need for direction and strong leadership. Post-COVID-19 Christian leaders can fulfil the task of developing strong leadership through healing and care in a *glocal* village. Within the African context, leaders should use their unique position in church and society to enhance the well-being of others, especially those who have been severely affected by the pandemic. Servanthood, compassion and humanity should guide Christian leaders as the moral guideline in interpersonal relationships in a *glocal* village. An appropriate re-imagining of selfless leadership should lead to healing and care in the church's ministries in Africa, particularly in South Africa.

■ Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on humanity, creating a new *glocal* (local and global) reality that requires different measures and interventions to deal with the effects of the crisis. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic opened a vital dialogue about how best to face and address long-term challenges arising from a devastating virus. Given efforts made to save lives from COVID-19 and the distress people faced during the pandemic, the issues concerning post-COVID-19 realities are pushed into the spotlight and to the forefront of people's minds to maintain resilience. Post-COVID-19 changes call for a review of priorities in life, the needs of society and what the future holds for people in the world. It calls for initiatives and cooperative determination by churches and church leaders to be visionary role-players in conveying a practice of healing and care in a radically altered *glocal* village.

Within the African context, leaders should use their unique position in the church and society to enhance the well-being of others, especially those who have been adversely affected by the pandemic (cf. Knoetze 2022, p. 5). The COVID-19 pandemic transformed how we think about the world and our societies. Diverse cultural and social environments in an unpredictable 'glocalising' world make it necessary to review fundamental action-guiding principles that reflect on post-COVID-19 realities and practices around the globe and the appeal for a practice of healing and care despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society. According to Blatter (2013) in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'glocalisation', as a linguistic hybrid of *globalisation* and *localisation*, is about combining both 'universalising and particularising tendencies in contemporary social, political, and economic systems'. Blatter (2013) highlights 'glocalisation' along the following outline:

> Glocalization indicates that the growing importance of continental and global levels is occurring together with the increasing salience of local and regional levels. Tendencies toward homogeneity and centralisation appear alongside tendencies toward heterogeneity and decentralisation. But the notion of glocalisation entails an even more radical change in perspective: it points to the interconnectedness of the global and local levels. (p. 1)

There can be little doubt that societies perceive the world at this moment in time as a *glocal* village transformed and regrouped into a rapid diffusion of social structuralism and modified systems around the globe. Because of globalisation and the spread of the pandemic, post-COVID-19 realities have been created through the experience of changed conditions in the world as a *glocal* village and the restructuring of local spaces and identities. The COVID-19 pandemic has *glocally* interrupted and affected established structures of governments, communities, churches and church ministries. Issues of self-isolation, quarantine, social distancing and lockdown restrictions directly influenced religious expression (Kruger 2022, p. 1). During the COVID-19 pandemic, rules 'required that people keep their distance from each other; isolate themselves and avoid social interactions' (Lekoa & Ntuli 2021, p. 1). Magezi and Magezi (2022, p. 1) emphasise that COVID-19 'has negatively affected the church in various ways, including worship, fellowship, finance, interrelationships, mission, evangelism, outreach, finance and pastoral ministry plus various other ministries and programmes'.

This chapter aims to provide a normative guide to churches and church leaders to be visionary role-players in conveying a practice of healing and care in a post-COVID-19 *glocal* village. Re-imagining leadership initiatives and cooperative determination should bring hope where there is ineptitude and a need for direction and strong leadership. The chapter will employ a scriptural and academic literature study to accomplish this objective. An appropriate re-imagining of leadership should provide a normative guide to determine particular strategies and actions or practices of leading change in a post-COVID-19 *glocal* village (cf. Osmer 2008, p. 176). Within an African context, with a specific focus and perspective from a post-COVID-19 South Africa, church leaders should develop their unique leadership in the church and society to promote the well-being of others, despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 world.

■ Repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 crisis had profound implications for all who suffered the loss of lives and livelihoods during this segment of their lives. Verster (2021, p. 2) elucidates that 'COVID-19 is a dreadful disease that led to millions of

deaths, massive financial loss, and other community challenges'. Moreover, there is no hesitation in admitting that the COVID-19 pandemic has also directly affected the mental health of communities and their leaders (Lekoa & Ntuli 2021, p. 1; Oberholzer 2022, p. 2). The COVID-19 pandemic has put extraordinary pressure on people's lives by filling the world with confusion, chaos, chronic stress and fear (Le Roux et al. 2022, p. 2). Giannopoulou et al. (2021, p. 5) and Kruger (2021, p. 3) mention that the development of COVID-19 post-traumatic stress syndrome, as one of the pandemic's results, will be a reality with us for years to come. The COVID-19 crisis has undeniably disrupted, unsettled and changed the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial world of human lives (cf. Johnston et al. 2022, p. 21; Kamal et al. 2021, p. 4; Le Roux et al. 2022, p. 2; Ngcobo & Mashau 2022, p. 1). Henderson (2021, p. 9) states that 'the effects of the virus touch every sphere and strata of human community and productivity'. At the onset of the news about the virus, which was confirmed as a pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the devastating impact on humanity and the lasting effect on faith communities will be felt in communities long after COVID-19 (cf. Da Silva 2020, p. 2; Taylor et al. 2020, p. 17).

Building a resilient future and recovering from COVID-19 became more challenging as the world was hit by humanitarian insecurity worldwide (see Douglas et al. 2020, pp. 223–225). People, particularly the poor and vulnerable, have been forced to flee and seek refuge because of disaster, conflict and war. In addition, the spectre of supply shortages, higher energy prices and higher costs for food and vital commodities loom large worldwide. With the contemporary post-COVID-19 humanitarian insecurity in the world, there is also a constant call for more inclusiveness of people on the margins of society. The COVID-19 crisis opened up discussions concerning the problem of social and cultural inequality. Inequalities between sociodemographic communities and groups, such as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity, still exacerbate differences in the socio-economic status of people. The marginalisation of people and those adversely affected by post-COVID-19 realities continue to form widespread barriers to inclusion and participation in society. Madonsela (2020b) emphasises that:

> [*T*]here is no gainsaying the fact that the COVID-19 regulatory approach taken to date has saved lives. Yet the paucity of an impact consciousness has likely exacerbated poverty, inequality, mental health challenges, family dysfunctionality and societal vulnerabilities. (p. 2)

Belonging to the changed post-COVID-19 society without realising the widespread impact of the virus increases the challenges of surviving the escalating realities of social changes, psychological effects and distress worldwide.

■ Patterns of post-COVID-19 encounters

The social changes and psychological effects of COVID-19 are with humanity all over the world. Post-COVID-19 realities restructured societies from survival and crisis management to recovery and particular actions. However, the rapid spread of COVID-19 infections, which brought about social changes, lockdowns and restrictions on church services and activities, has reduced the opportunity for churches and church leaders to play a prominent role in preparing and developing strong leadership for challenging post-COVID-19 realities.

To equip Christian leaders to address the impact of post-COVID-19 realities on a micro level in communities and on a macro level within larger systems in a *glocal* village, strong leadership remains essential to provide healing and care to people affected by the pandemic. Society, as a social system, pursues a community based on social interaction and democratic governance, which integrates social justice and human rights (cf. Madonsela 2020b, p. 1). In terms of the Constitution of South Africa, as a democratic state (Constitutional Assembly 1996; Republic of South Africa [RSA] 2012), human dignity, equality and human rights advancement are supposed to be respected, promoted and protected. In protecting the rights of all people, emphasis is placed on the protection of vulnerable groups, who are the most exposed to injustice and prejudice (Dube 2020a, p. 3). In light of Sections 9 and 10 (RSA 2012), the Constitution reads:

Section 9: Equality

(1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

(2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

(4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection 3. National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

(5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection 3 is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

Section 10: Human dignity

Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. (pp. 5–6)

A visualised transformed South African society should bring about *ubuntu*, social reconstruction, reconciliation and overcoming past injustices (Dube 2020a, p. 3; Venter 2018, p. 151). Mashau and Kgatle (2019, p. 5) state that *ubuntu*, as a theological concept, 'holds humanity accountable to one another, while honouring the biblical command to love one's neighbour as oneself'. Doing what is unbiased, just and nondiscriminatory in a constitutional democracy, Section 27, in particular, pledges the right of access to health care (RSA 2012):

> Section 27: Health care, food, water and social security
>
> (1)   Everyone has the right to have access to:
>
> > (a) health care services, including reproductive health care;
> >
> > (b) sufficient food and water; and
> >
> > (c) social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance.
>
> (2)   The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.
>
> (3)   No one may be refused emergency medical treatment. (p. 11)

However, the pandemic has exposed age-old structural weaknesses in South Africa that have progressively worsened. The COVID-19 crisis has made a challenging state of affairs worse and revealed profound social injustices, conceptual deficiencies and structural inadequacies (Serfontein 2021, p. 1). According to the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (RSA 2020):

> Corruption has had a profoundly negative impact on the ability and capability of the state to deliver. It has reached alarming proportions, and emboldened acts of corruption over time have eroded public trust in the ability and capability of the state to deliver services to South Africans. (p. 30)

Addressing the impact of post-COVID-19 constraints will require a range of reforms and selfless leadership to create a more resilient and inclusive society. During the signing of the Constitution in 1996, Nelson Mandela stated (see Madonsela 2020a):

> In centuries of struggle against racial domination. South Africans of all colours and backgrounds pledged loyalty to a country which belongs to all who live in it [...]. Out of such experience was born an understanding that there could be no lasting peace, no lasting security, no prosperity in this land, unless all enjoyed freedom and justice as equals. (p. 17)

Despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society, the problems of inadequate service delivery, crime, corruption, social and cultural inequality, injustice and prejudice continue to be a daily reality that increases the vulnerability of the population living in a *glocal* village within local spaces

and identities. In this context, a practice of healing and care, despite the adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society, should be located and embedded in selfless leaders who take the lead in social interaction and compassion for vulnerable, marginalised, exploited and abused people.

◼ How should we respond to re-imagining leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa?

The COVID-19 pandemic required a contextually relevant re-imagining of leadership to care for one another and meet the needs of the church and communities. Hove (2022, p. 4) emphasises that 'the church has the mandate to provide pastoral presence to proclaim the gospel and provided care and healing to those who are suffering due to the effects of COVID-19'. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is associated with adverse uncertainties and considerable interpersonal loneliness, including social and spiritual loneliness, when social contact decreases, an appropriate re-imagining of selfless and compassionate leadership should lead to healing and care in the *glocal* world.

The pandemic offered churches and church leaders opportunities to reach out to vulnerable people in *glocally* interrupted and affected communities (Kruger 2022, p. 5; Serfontein 2021, p. 6). A general and theoretical way of elucidating networks of social interaction and compassion is to construct strong leadership. With the spiritual formation of Christian leadership, the issue of morality revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic showed that life should be lived in line with the guiding principles of living a morally responsible life. De Villiers (2020, p. 1) emphasises that 'the aftermath of the pandemic underlines the importance, even indispensability, of living a morally responsible life'. Morality deals with a normative orientation to human conduct, whether part of a religion or a philosophy of life. Nicolaides (2014) emphasises the differences between morality and the philosophy of ethics, where morality paves the way for ethics and ethical codes:

> Whereas morality is primarily concerned with norms, values and beliefs that are embedded in social processes which define right and wrong for any individual or a community, ethics is concerned with the study of moral issues and the application of reason to elucidate specific rules and principles to determine what is right or wrong for any given situation. (p. 1)

To act in acceptable conduct and with fundamental principles emerges when people decide on specific actions to live a morally responsible and accountable life (cf. Bayertz 2004, p. 27). However, De Villiers (2020) emphasises that:

> Where in pre-modern societies, one dominant set of moral values mostly provided moral orientation to everyone, modern contemporary societies are, for the most part, characterised by a bewildering pluralisation of moral values. (p. 4)

The pluralisation of ethical views in a *glocal* world has an individualising effect on people, where individuals gradually adopt diversified moral values, viewpoints, lifestyles and actions in society (cf. De Villiers 2020, p. 5).

To equip Christian leaders to address post-COVID-19 realities in Africa should entail 'using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations and contexts and creating ethical norms to guide our responses as well as to learn from "good practice"' (Osmer 2008, p. 4). Theological concepts, ethical norms and 'good practice' should direct a practical theological interpretation of re-imagining leadership in the face of challenging post-COVID-19 realities. Spiritual and practical discernment, to determine normative indicators for leaders in the church and society and to re-imagine leadership, involves actively seeking God's guidance in particular episodes, situations and contexts (Osmer 2008, p. 138). Therefore, to equip Christian leaders to address the repercussions and impact of post-COVID-19 realities, I would argue that Jesus' ministry sets a normative example of social interaction, selfless leadership and compassion. Pakpahan et al. (2022, p. 4) highlight that Jesus is an 'ideal and perfect teacher or role model in teaching'. The healing of people suffering from dreadful skin diseases in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke can serve as normative indicators for leaders in the church and society to re-imagine moral leadership values and live morally responsible lives.

◼ Jesus' ministry to suffering people

For this chapter's intended purpose, Jesus' response to people suffering from a dreadful skin disease was selected because it deals with social interaction, leadership and compassion as theological and socioreligious concepts. Jesus' healing of people suffering from dreadful skin diseases is described twice during Jesus' ministry. The first event in which a man is healed appears in the three parallel accounts in Matthew 8:1–4, Mark 1:40–45 and Luke 5:12–16. The second event involves the ten men in Luke 17:11–19.

It is feasible to identify valuable depictions of social interaction and compassion as part of a spiritual healing and pastoral care process to develop strong leadership in a radically altered *glocal* village with challenging post-COVID-19 realities. A sociological approach to the texts (Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–16; Lk 17:11–19) examines the social context and determines what social impact Jesus' ministry would have had in society at the time (cf. Theissen 1983, p. 208). Although it seems that Jesus is violating the purity laws, the healing miracles demonstrate Jesus' healing power. Through his healing power, the meaning of life has been restored for vulnerable people, who should no longer be categorised, isolated and

marginalised through strict societal regulations by which they are excluded and avoided. As Viljoen (2014) stated:

> A healed person can again fully participate in societal activities. Healing therefore is culturally constructed. In this regard, one has to consider the difference between disease and illness. A disease causes sickness and is a pathological issue. Sickness exists irrespective of whether a culture recognises it or not. Sickness is caused by viruses and germs. Illness, on the other hand, refers to misfortunes in well-being beyond a pathological state. An ill person is a socially disvalued person. Restoring meaning of life for an ill person implies healing. The leper who approached Jesus had a disease that resulted in illness. He suffered a condition that was socially unacceptable. He was devalued and unwelcome in society. He was regarded as unclean and unholy. He had to live outside the community, as he could pollute the people of the community. The threat he posed for the community needed to be demonstrated and declared by his appearance and shouting (Lv 13:45). When Jesus healed him, he restored the leper's social stance and gave him new meaning in life. (p. 5)

The texts (Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–16; Lk 17:11–19) present a complex understanding of disease, sickness and illness during ancient Greco-Roman times. It reflects a discourse on the narratives about healing people with a disease that resulted in socially unacceptable illness, who were shunned by their socioreligious establishment and considered unclean. The healing miracles form a prominent and integral part of the gospels and refer to Jesus' ministry and teachings by establishing the connection between healing and salvation. In Jesus' healing miracles, it is not about the miracles as such, but about the salvation that is revealed through them (Ridderbos 1972, p. 78). Schweizer (1995, pp. 67, 69) emphasises that Jesus' healing miracles must be subordinated to his teaching. The healing miracles confirmed the authoritative proclamation of Jesus and revealed the power of God. Therefore, the relationship between faith and the healing miracles is vital to understanding Jesus' social interaction, leadership and compassion.

The healing miracles reflect the gospels' message and are closely linked to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God. The narratives embody faith in Jesus' healing power and authority as a proclaimer of the kingdom of God. Jesus' preaching, parables, deeds and ministry contribute to introducing the mystery of the kingdom of God (Van Wyk & Viljoen 2009, p. 882). It announces a new era in which the kingdom of God is near, confirms Jesus' teaching about God's divine revelation, and reveals Jesus as the Son of God (Van Wyk & Viljoen 2009, p. 884). Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and salvation for the poor, despised, sinners and those who suffer. Viljoen (2014, p. 5) emphasises that 'instead of warning Jesus of his uncleanness, the leper makes a statement of faith and begs for healing'. In his ministry, Jesus became the patron for outsiders and extended justice to the exploited. Van Eck (2013) continues:

> Jesus, as God's agent and patron of his kingdom, immediately after his pronouncement of the dawn of this new reality, starts his mission by making the kingdom visible. God's kingdom is a kingdom directed at outsiders with a patron that, in his patronage, cushions the vagaries of social inferiors (outsiders or marginalised) by endowing those who are loyal to his kingdom with the overarching quality of kinship. (p. 8)

Because of this patronage of justice, the Jewish authorities wanted to silence Jesus at the time because Jesus' teachings and healing miracles offered a key to his followers to identify him as fulfilling the messianic expectations in the Old Testament and representing the eternal Son of God, who acts with divine authority (cf. Rose 2001, pp. 277–278; Van Eck 2013, p. 7). Even with the socioreligious discomfort of the first recipients of the gospel, God's revelation achieves its purpose when faith is established through Jesus' ministry and the message of compassion is conveyed to people shunned by their society.

■ Jesus expressed social interaction and compassion

As already stated, a sociological approach to the texts in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke adds value to the investigation of the healing miracles by exploring their social context and describing their impact at the time (cf. Van Wyk & Viljoen 2009, p. 885). During ancient Greco-Roman times, people were often labelled as contagious and consequently rejected and avoided for fear of spreading diseases, sicknesses and illnesses that were uncontainable. Viljoen (2014, p. 4) states that the Hebrew Bible prescribes purification rites in Leviticus 17–26 for 'a broad spectrum of impurities: from those that are harmless and last for one day only, up to those that are extremely severe'.

Commonly, during biblical times, people used allusive terms to describe and explain disease, sickness and illness. For example, people suffering from visible skin infections that triggered 'repulsive scaly and flaky conditions that affected people, clothing and houses' (Viljoen 2014, p. 4) were generally perceived as lepers (cf. Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–16; Lk 17:11–19). In addition, a social stigma was attached to leprosy [*tsara'at*], and it was regarded as uncleanness and an impurity according to Jewish purity laws (Lv 13–14; Nm 5:2) (Viljoen 2014, p. 4).

People diagnosed with leprosy had to be quarantined outside the community, and they also had to warn others not to approach them (Lv 13:45). Dube (2020b, p. 4) describes how the gospel narratives defined the demarcated practices within the Jewish health care system in which 'people with leprosy, the demon-possessed and those considered ritually unclean were left outside the village or city walls, or outside the domestic space

(see Mk 1:21ff., 5:1ff., 6:25ff.)'. Based on a socioreligious perspective, Viljoen (2014, p. 4) and Dube (2020b, p. 4) also emphasise that the custom at the time was to interpret bad health from a spiritual worldview, which signifies God's punishment and judgement for bad behaviour (cf. Nm 12:10–15; 2 Ki 5; 2 Chr 26:16–21). However, as Viljoen (2014, p. 6) pointed out, Jesus as Healer 'has come to save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21)'.

The healing of people with leprosy follows a series of narratives about people considered unclean and shunned by society and the religious establishment. In contrast with the Jewish culture, health care system and quarantine practices, Jesus healed the unclean people suffering from the dreadful skin disease (Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–16; Lk 17:11–19). Jesus talked to them, touched them and embraced the 'infectious, contaminated or ritually unclean' people with his act of compassion. Jesus' touching of the leper in Matthew 8:3 has particular significance; the phrase ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα highlights that Jesus 'stretched out his hand to the leper and touched him'. Jesus' concerned response reveals his mercy, love and care for people in need. Still, Jesus was accused of transgressing purity regulations, welcoming people whom the Jewish worldview had labelled infectious, contagious and unclean back into the religious Jewish community. In his teachings, Jesus emphasises that he did not come to abolish the law (Mt 5:17–19) but to reveal an alternative interpretation of the purity laws prescribed in the Hebrew Bible (see Viljoen 2014, p. 2).

■ Christian leaders as visionary role-players

The COVID-19 pandemic not only struck the world with disruption, challenges and fear but it also provided churches and church leaders with opportunities to fulfil their mission to carry out Jesus' command to go out into the world, preaching the gospel to all humankind and do the work he has given us to do (Mk 16:14–18). Mawerenga and Knoetze (2022) explain that Jesus' command [*missio Dei*] means:

> [*T*]o be the good news and not just to share it, to express God's grace and love to the hurting world as followers of Jesus Christ, and to shine God's light into the world's darkness. (p. 6)

Re-imagining selfless leadership and humanity in the face of challenging post-COVID-19 realities should lead to the determination to offer healing and care to the *glocal* world.

Post-COVID-19 realities call for churches and church leaders to be visionary role-players in conveying healing and care in an altered *glocal* village through social interaction and compassion networks. Christian leadership should always imitate Jesus. In the healing miracles, Jesus is

typified and identified as the ultimate example or paradigm for his followers to follow. Addo and Dube (2020) emphasise that:

> Jesus lived out a leadership which exuded confidence to his associates and followers, hence achieving legitimacy of leadership and leadership credibility not by means of law but by means of interactional results. (p. 6)

Jesus' response to people in need reveals the re-imagining of leadership values and the responsibility of the church's role in the post-COVID-19 *glocal* village to bring hope and fulfil the task of spiritual healing and pastoral care through developing strong leadership in social interaction and compassion. Addo and Dube (2020, p. 1) emphasise that Jesus Christ expressed his social compassion and leadership in everyday life by visibly conveying and demonstrating it through interaction with people to meet their need for healing and care.

■ An alternative interpretation of moral leadership

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted many assumptions about the long-held self-centred attitudes, values and beliefs of people in society. The alternative interpretation of leadership that Jesus demonstrated was aimed at transforming the moral value systems and thought patterns. In so doing, Jesus inspired social transformation through interaction and compassion for all people in society. Mwambazambi and Banza (2014, p. 2) label a transformational leader as an individual 'who understands his or her moral responsibility as that of contributing to the transformation and enhancement of individuals and communities or organisations for a higher communal good'. Jesus expanded mutual boundaries for the purpose of the common good that serves the kingdom of God and 'challenged traditional and long-held societal views with new insights' (Addo & Dube 2020, p. 6).

Jesus transformed the long-held self-centred attitudes, values and beliefs of people in society into altruistic, self-sacrificing attitudes, values and beliefs. Addo and Dube (2020, p. 6) point out that Jesus 'personally reached out and welcomed those ostracised by traditions, suffered social systems alienation, traditional leadership rejection as well as organisational culture estrangement'. Transformational leadership is selfless and presents moral guidance to moral-ethical problems. It develops moral values and ethical guidance for essential leadership development in communities. Recovering the well-being of others, especially those adversely affected by the pandemic, should be guided by Christian leaders as moral agents of servanthood, driven by transforming the moral value systems and thought patterns of interpersonal relationships and compassion for people in need.

■ Selfless leadership, servanthood and humanity

Christian leaders should be servant leaders, with the foundational understanding of leadership based on Luke 22:26: 'the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves'. Kabongo (2020, p. 1) states that churches and church leaders could put a limit on the foundational understanding of leadership when self-centred attitudes contribute to the lack of servanthood and humanity in the church and society. However, Jesus demonstrated self-sacrificing leadership through social interaction and compassion for ordinary people on the fringes of society and actively engaged with socio-religious issues arising in his immediate surroundings (cf. Mawerenga & Knoetze 2022, p. 4). In his selfless leadership, servanthood and humanity, Jesus reformed negative social trends regarding discriminatory prejudices and stereotypes in the community and pronounced healing and care in relationships with people in need. His strong leadership qualities and servanthood, of moving among ordinary people in society and meeting everyone in their distress, positioned him as a selfless leader 'who is no respecter of status or class' (Addo & Dube 2020, p. 6).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an intense re-evaluation of leadership and servanthood in faith communities (cf. Hove 2022, p. 3). Christian leaders should find significance in selfless leadership and servanthood to shepherd God's people. Selfless leadership and servanthood are related to discipleship and require that followers of Jesus should follow in his footsteps. Caring for God's people is exemplified by Jesus, who provides food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger, clothing to the naked, healing to the sick and release to the captives (Mt 25:35–40). Viljoen (2014, p. 6) pointed out that 'pure hearts should mark the identity of Jesus' disciples (cf. Mt 23:25–26)'. As disciples of Jesus, leaders who want to be visionary role-players in conveying a practice of healing and care must build their interaction and compassion for people on internal moral principles and conviction to discipleship. Therefore, re-imagining selfless leadership and servanthood is a calling to discipleship to follow in Jesus' footsteps [*imitatio Christi*] and a command with commitment. Van Wyk and Viljoen (2009, p. 886) emphasise that the call 'to follow Jesus, who teaches, preaches and works miracles as Saviour, is open to anyone who believes; however, it includes self-denial, sacrifice, and willing and humble service'.

■ Moral agents of compassion and motivational leadership

Christian leaders are strategically placed individuals who can enhance the significance of social interaction and compassion in responding to

post-COVID-19 realities. Christian leaders should motivate and inspire those around them to take on the moral responsibilities of leadership. Despite the discomfort Jesus experienced from the Jewish leaders, Jesus' compassionate leadership proceeded into motivational leadership. Jesus taught his followers compassion by preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and applauded them for their social interaction and compassionate care for vulnerable and marginalised people in their community (cf. Addo & Dube 2020, p. 6). Through his social interaction and compassion for people, Jesus reached the unreached on the fringes of society. Accordingly, leaders can take a motivational leading role in encouraging church members to engage in social interaction and compassion for people in their community. Mwambazambi and Banza (2014, p. 6) pointed out that 'through their own ethical being, moral living, positive social attitudes and behaviours, church leaders can contribute greatly to the transformation of others'.

In reflecting on moral values and guidance, church leaders, as moral agents of servanthood and compassion, should offer a Christian ethical reflection to re-imagine leadership, spiritual healing and pastoral care to people in need and promote justice and peace in society. However, to provide moral-ethical guidance, church leaders must overcome the ineffectiveness of giving direction on burning ethical issues in a broader post-COVID-19 *glocal* village. In the development of solid leadership, leaders should be driven by moral leadership values and live a morally responsible life in their social interaction and compassion to people in need, realising that 'patronage received must become patronage extended; being part of Jesus' mission implies partaking in Jesus' mission' (Van Eck 2013, p. 9).

■ The practice of healing and care

Regardless of the challenges presented by post-COVID-19 realities, churches and church leaders should open up spaces to creatively revising leadership to provide healing and care to people adversely affected by the pandemic. Post-COVID-19 realities challenge Christian leaders to build relationships and trust through social interaction and compassionate care for vulnerable, marginalised, exploited and abused people in their community. Taylor et al. (2020, p. 9) and Kruger (2021, p. 3) indicate that people in the *post-pandemic world* are characterised by an underlying nervousness of trusting people for fear of being exploited, concern about being infected and the ongoing unease that an unfamiliar person might be contagious. The challenges to establishing interpersonal relationships and trust in a post-COVID-19 society require that leaders reach out to people in their radically altered *glocal* village to restructure their local spaces and identity. Knoetze (2022) makes a clear case when he says that leaders should be equipped with the following skills:

[*N*]*etworking* – build relationships and trust; *coalition building* – address community needs identified by the people; *action-reflection-action* – use a dynamic continuous learning process to understand and address the current context, being aware of what worked or did not work in the past; *leadership empowerment* – as local leaders emerge and gain respect, they need to be empowered through training; *birth of community* – when issues are addressed successfully, it builds trust and a sense of community emerges. (p. 5)

Despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society, the appeal for healing and care should actively engage Christian leaders in creating and maintaining a sense of social interaction and compassion. In addition, to re-imagine strong leadership, Christian leaders should be prepared for their healing and caring ministry in an altered *glocal* village by exploring normative indicators to determine particular strategies and actions or practices for leading change. Christian leaders should:

• actively seek God's guidance in a post-COVID-19 society
• develop strong leadership as disciples who follow in Jesus' footsteps
• be visionary role-players who convey a practice of healing and care in addressing the impact of post-COVID-19 realities on a micro level in local communities and a macro level within larger systems in a *glocal* village
• create new practices of servanthood, selfless leadership, compassion and humanity as the moral guideline in interpersonal relationships to meet the challenges of a post-COVID-19 society
• initiate social transformation to restore Christian moral value systems and thought patterns
• transform long-held societal self-centred attitudes, values and beliefs of people in society to altruistic self-sacrificing attitudes, values and beliefs
• mirror moral norms, values and beliefs and Christian ethical guidance and live morally responsible lives
• reach the unreached on the fringes of society by identifying valuable networks and taking the lead in social interaction and compassion for vulnerable, marginalised, exploited and abused people
• create, enhance and maintain the well-being of others in a more resilient and inclusive society, especially those severely affected by the pandemic
• engage with people in society and meet everyone in their distress by reaching out and welcoming people on the fringes of society
• promote justice and peace in the world as a *glocal* village.

■ Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has left the world with a crisis that calls into question the return to normality of life as it was before. The COVID-19 crisis has shaken the *glocal* world with far-reaching repercussions and highlighted

the need to restructure human lives that continue to suffer in the face of challenging post-COVID-19 realities. The 'new normal' for South Africa invites churches and church leaders to re-imagine alternative systems with (1) selfless leaders committed to respecting the dignity of all, (2) a society where people at least have access to enough resources to meet their basic needs and (3) a society characterised by justice and fairness (see Serfontein 2021, p. 5). This chapter provided a stimulus for future research in the Church at a time controlled by the awareness of the challenges in the world to equip Christian leaders as followers of Jesus Christ to address the impact of post-COVID-19 realities on a micro level in communities and on a macro level within larger systems in a *glocal* village.

Post-COVID-19 Christian leaders can fulfil the task of developing a spiritual healing and pastoral care process through their leadership and bring hope where there is ineptitude and a need for direction. By grasping the opportunity, Christian leaders can guide vulnerable people to healing and care in a radically altered post-COVID-19 *glocal* village. In this context, the spiritual formation of Christian leadership and conveying a practice of healing and care, despite adverse uncertainties in a post-COVID-19 society, should be located and embedded in social interaction linked by networks of social compassion as an indispensable daily phenomenon in everyday living. Moreover, when spiritual healing and pastoral care focus on God's kingdom, direction and leadership are inordinately vital to appropriately re-imagining leadership in the face of challenging post-COVID-19 realities.

In conclusion, Christian leaders should be visionary role-players in conveying a practice of healing and care by developing their unique leadership in the church and society to enhance the well-being of others, especially those severely affected by the pandemic. Servanthood should guide Christian leaders as the moral guideline in social interaction networks and compassion in a *glocal* village. An appropriate re-imagining of leadership should provide Christian leaders with normative indicators to determine particular strategies and actions or practices of leading change to discern God's presence and his actions amongst them. For that reason, Christian leaders should be equipped to always strive for social interaction, compassion and the practice of healing and care to follow the example of Jesus Christ. In addition, they should be prepared to deal with challenging realities and events that could unexpectedly overwhelm the world. Finally, the awareness of the indispensability of post-COVID-19 Christian leadership should allow the church to re-imagine theological perspectives on leadership, spiritual healing and pastoral care to Africa's people in a radically altered post-COVID-19 *glocal* village.

Healing nostalgia among congregational leaders in post-COVID-19 Africa

Alfred R Brunsdon
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the
South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa

◼ Abstract

This chapter engages congregational leadership in post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Africa from a pastoral perspective. It investigates the notion of nostalgia as a hermeneutical lens that can assist leaders in articulating their true feelings about the post-COVID-19 era: Are they longing for the past to return, or are they ready to embrace the new era by providing meaningful leadership? As a theoretical background, the African church and context are discussed, as well as the impact COVID-19 had on congregations and its leadership. In light of the idea that going forward requires discernment, the constructs of restorative and reflective nostalgia are further investigated. The chapter argues that reflective nostalgia conversations can serve as catalysts for congregational leaders, not only to heal possible nostalgia but also to initiate purposeful planning for the post-COVID-19 journey that awaits the church.

■ Introduction

Congregational leadership is visualised in this chapter as a specific expression of leadership that is operative in local faith communities that permeate the African landscape. It includes functionaries such as pastors, elders and deacons, as well as any other individuals who lead congregations in areas of youth, welfare and other branches of ministry. A more functional definition may simply say that congregational leadership refers to pastors and nonclergy leaders (cf. Ngaruirya 2019, pp. 31–32) who are responsible for the vision and functioning of local congregations.

The chapter departs from the premise that the post-COVID-19 era calls for a deliberate reorientation by leadership to foster appropriate vision and functioning in the post-pandemic era. It argues that leaders run the risk of becoming stuck in the longing to return to pre-pandemic expressions of congregational life, while post-pandemic congregational life may require different approaches altogether. In light of this, the notion of nostalgia (longing), which includes the ideas of restorative and reflective nostalgia, will be explored. It is suggested that nostalgia can function as a hermeneutical lens leaders can use to evaluate their own position and whether or not they are orientated towards the post-COVID-19 future, providing appropriate leadership in current faith communities.

While the chapter ensues from a pastoral stance, in so far as it is concerned with the pastoral well-being and effectiveness of congregational leaders, it will also draw on bodies of COVID-19 and nostalgia research, leaning towards an interdisciplinary approach that is mindful of the African context in particular.

The chapter will unfold in three major sections. Firstly, it will provide a general overview of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact and some of the consequences and challenges for the church and its leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa. Secondly, the notion of nostalgia will be discussed within the framework of serving as a hermeneutical lens for congregational leadership in probing their own positionality going forward. Thirdly, the chapter will attempt to merge the findings of the first and second sections into a praxeology of how nostalgia can be addressed among congregational leaders in post-COVID-19 Africa through reflective nostalgia conversations.

■ COVID-19 and the African church

Research for this chapter was conducted post-COVID-19. In South Africa, where I am situated, the national state of disaster was lifted on 05 April 2022, followed by the abandonment of all social distancing measures, the compulsory wearing of facemasks and sanitising prescriptions.

This signalled a return to social freedom that was abruptly ended with legislative measures aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 since March 2020. Although congregations enjoyed limited degrees of social freedom during the pandemic, the notorious ban on larger social gatherings also finally ended early in 2022. For congregations, this meant that ecclesial practices could return fully to pre-COVID-19 standards.

The ability to forget hardships by focusing on the present has, since the hard lockdown, put some mental distance between the initial trauma of the pandemic and rekindled freedom. However, experiences that emanated from the early-, mid- and late-COVID-19 periods attest to a time that was testing for faith communities and their leadership.

A rather overwhelming corpus of research was produced by major disciplines during the pandemic. Understandably, the most marked increase in research output was in the field of medicine (cf. Harper et al. 2020, p. 715), as medical researchers frantically joined the search for answers to challenges posed by the coronavirus. The humanities and social sciences also contributed fervently to research in order to gain insight into human and social behaviour during the pandemic (Green & Cladi 2020, p. 1) that could shed light on the management of human behaviour during this time.

Theologians furthermore responded actively by documenting and researching the effects and challenges of the pandemic as it unfolded from many perspectives, such as ecclesiology, pastoral care, homiletics and liturgy (cf. Pityana 2020; Steyn & Wepener 2021; Thesnaar 2021; Wepener & Cilliers 2021). Notably, Old and New Testament scholars, such as Walter Brueggemann (2020) and Tom Wright (2020), contributed to the area of meaning-making (interpretation) and theological responses to the pandemic.

Consequently, it falls beyond the scope of this chapter to repeat or attempt to summarise the unique contributions made to the topic thus far. Instead, this contribution seeks to ponder thematically some of the challenges the pandemic brought for the African church in particular and deliberate on the implications of these for its leadership post-COVID-19.

■ The African church in context

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to reflect on leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa without sparing some thought for the African context as a host for the Christian church.

As Africa is often regarded as the cradle of humankind, it was inhabited by subscribers to African indigenous religions (AIR) before the dawn of Christianity that was signalled by Pentecost (Adamo 2011, p. 3; Oden 2007, p. 16).

According to Paas (2016, p. 292), Egypt and North Africa were the earliest Christian regions in Africa. The Council of Carthage, in 258 AD, became the first recorded council where bishops from different provinces gathered, paying testimony to a notable Christian presence and an organised Christian church in North Africa at the time (Francois 2008, p. 8).

Van der Merwe (2016) suggests that Christianity in Africa unfolded in five epochs. The 'Apostolic Fathers epoch' (Van der Merwe 2016, p. 562) denotes the Christianisation of Africa by the missions of the apostles. This new faith would flourish for six centuries until the second epoch, the '[i]ntermediate Islamic epoch', during which the further expansion of Christianity was temporarily halted as a result of the Arab invasion of North Africa in 640 AD (Van der Merwe 2016, p. 562). The '[m]issionary epoch' was introduced in the wake of Portuguese seafarers scouting the African coast, accompanied by Roman Catholic priests who spread the gospel where these ships laid anchor. Although these early missionary attempts did not bear much fruit, missionary campaigns grew alongside European colonisation of the African continent, reaching their height in the 19th century (Van der Merwe 2016, p. 562). The fourth epoch, namely the '[c]hurch foundation epoch', represents an important period in African church history as it records the emergence of the African-initiated churches, which directly emanated from a growing dissatisfaction with white dominance in African churches and which ultimately led to African leaders taking charge of African churches during the latter part of the 20th century (Van der Merwe 2016, p. 562). During this period, classic Pentecostalism took Africa by storm, as well as neo-Pentecostal churches, while mainline churches also carried on, attempting to curb the loss of members to African-initiated churches and charismatic movements. In Van der Merwe's (2016, p. 567) opinion, the colonial period from 1880 to 1960 can hence be regarded as the greatest foundation of African churches, in which a significant portion of infrastructure was established. The fifth and last epoch, 'Africanising Christianity' (Van der Merwe 2016, p. 567), ensued during the postcolonial era and was intent on establishing a distinctive identity which could be recognised as Africa's unique contribution to global Christianity.

To better understand African churches in general, some insight into the African context itself is needed. The so-called African context is, however, a challenging notion. Focusing on the geographic space of what we call the African continent, we are challenged by at least the following variables. Ethnically, the continent is home to many different groups. Spiritually, it is home to as many variants of spirituality and religion. Culturally, it is utterly complex. Through the ever-growing dilemma of human displacement and so-called human flow, all of these variables become more eminent

(cf. Brunsdon 2022). A homogenous view and understanding of the African context is thus not viable.

In light of this, Louw (2008) suggests that the African context can also be regarded as a philosophical concept. From this vantage point, the African context denotes the 'unique contribution of the rich diversity of modes of being in Africa to a global world' (Louw 2008, p. 147). Louw also suggests that the African context can be seen as a spiritual category, denoting 'a unique approach to life that differs from the analytical approach emanating from Western thinking and Hellenism' (Louw 2008, p. 147).

This is, however, not to say that the African context is nondescript or that there are no communal characteristics and features that are typically African. Africa is, for example, characterised by enduring challenges like political instability, the search for identity, poverty, corruption, human displacement, pandemics of different nature (other than COVID-19), lack of safety and a host of other realities (cf. Seleti 2005).

Hence, it is contended here that the African context should be regarded as a multilayered reality that is mindful of the unique philosophical, spiritual and spatial characteristics the continent and Africans here and elsewhere display. Moreover, expressions of African Christianity that reside within this context are connected by a mutual-like culture and life philosophy that was shaped through millennia that enables Africans to contend with and make meaning of life as it unfolds.

Most significantly, though, is how Christianity in Africa is a 'received' religion that originally came to Africans who were born into an indigenous belief system and rich culture that remained cosmologically connected. In light of this, Gatu (2006) reminds us that African Christians are 'joyfully Christian and truly African'. This resulted in a church that holds culture, community and connection to previous generations in high regard, qualities that find expression in its rich worship liturgies and congregational life. According to Emmanuel Lartey (2013, p. 25), the African Christian heritage can be summarised in its seven 'seminal characteristics':

• sacredness of all life
• plurality within the spiritual and divine realm
• mystical connectivity through communal ritual
• desire for cosmic harmony
• creativity and adaptability
• affirmation of life
• pragmatic spirituality.

These characteristics translate into a unique expression of Christianity that constitutes African Christian churches in the general sense of the word.

At the same time, this unique identity also requires ministries and leadership that are best suited to its context. Moreover, it determines the way in which the church responds to the challenges of life, its experiences and its resilience in the face of existential adversities.

The unique features of the African church should, however, not be viewed as characteristics that separate Afro-Christian churches from the other Christian faith communities. All Christian faith communities, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, have much in common that characterises and binds them together as apostolic churches. Therefore, much of the Christian experience remains universal and opens the door to sharing experiences and learning from each other while, simultaneously, context and culture call for recognition that faith experiences are uniquely tinted by the historical background, context and cultural belief systems of faith communities.

■ Congregational life and the pandemic

When reflecting on congregational leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa, it is also important to recall some of the direct challenges created by the pandemic in order to ponder the way forward.

It goes without saying that the loss of life and prevailing health issues presented the ultimate price society and faith communities had to pay as a result of the pandemic. It further goes without saying that the resultant social distancing legislation had profound implications for the essence of the church, which is at its heart a community that revolves around the *communio sanctorum* (cf. Brunsdon 2021).

From an African perspective, I, however, want to argue that these issues cannot merely be contemplated at face value and from a generic or universal position, but rather they beg for understanding against the background of life in pre-COVID-19 Africa, rendering the experience of the pandemic in developing countries qualitatively different from that of developed countries. This means that on certain levels, Africans may have experienced the consequences of the pandemic differently from people in other parts of the world.

A few of these instances follow. For the African continent, COVID-19 was yet *another* pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, Africa was already plagued with the likes of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), cholera, Ebola, tuberculosis, malaria, yellow fever and measles, to name a few (cf. Dirk 2021; Echenberg 2011; Mubiala 2022), thus adding further to the array of life-threatening illnesses and loss of lives and creating further challenges.

Another instance relates to the impact of pandemics on poverty-stricken communities. Poverty is a historic feature of Africa, and the continent is often perceived as the global benchmark for the meaning of poverty. Therefore, most conceptualisations of poverty in Africa are qualified in terms of its persistent nature (cf. Barret, Carter & Little 2013). When the pandemic struck, it had a severe impact on poor households, as found in informal settlements and regions with large numbers of displaced people. Apart from not being able to absorb the loss of income generated by informal work – social distancing and sanitation measures simply made no sense, as they could not be adhered to because of the density of the population in squatter camps.

The pandemic is also said to have worsened poverty levels further and weakened chances of economic growth. In this regard, Aikins and McLachlan (2022, p. 1) from the Institute for Security Studies reported that the pandemic caused at least 30 million more Africans to fall prey to extreme poverty, making the United Nations' (UN) first sustainable development goal (SDG 1) to eradicate poverty for 97% of the African population by 2030 not attainable.

For faith communities, the biggest unique challenge lay, arguably, in the disruption of their socially orientated church life and communal rituals related to important life events. One tangible example one can note is the pivotal position of funeral rituals in African communities. In a poignant reflection on the death of her niece during the pandemic and number restrictions, Penxa-Matholeni (2021) says:

> The difficulty of losing her was compounded by how her death and burial played out. The significance of these gatherings is that they help preserve the sense of community and normality for those left behind. (p. 136)

Number restrictions brought radical changes to how these funerals would usually be conducted, leading to 'further brokenness' (Penxa-Matholeni 2021, p. 138).

The question emanating from these unique experiences of COVID-19 is how it impacted congregational leadership during this time.

The pandemic and congregational leadership

Arguably, the single biggest change brought about by the pandemic, and which ignited all subsequent changes, was social distancing. As these measures gradually spread across the globe, congregational leaders experienced sudden and radical changes within congregations that impacted both their physical and spiritual roles. Nonclergy leadership figures, such as elders, deacons and youth leaders, were simply cut off

from all physical contact with members with whom they used to visit or commune on Sundays. Those with access to communication platforms such as short message services (SMS, or texting) and WhatsApp reverted to the formation of groups for sending messages to members as a means of establishing and maintaining contact. It is, however, noted by Magezi (2022, p. 7) that the 'digital divide in Africa' has made accessibility to social platforms and media a challenge to many, thus excluding those with no access to smartphones and Internet connectivity. Pastors also experienced the termination of physical contact in the form of not being able to meet churchgoers in large groups during public worship on Sundays, as well as small-group gatherings during the week.

A retrospective investigation of reports from different African countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa, unveiled the following thematic impacts on congregational leadership.

☐ Changes in traditional roles of pastors

In African societies such as Ghana, pastors are actively involved in the daily lives of congregation members (Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto & Affram 2019). Linking onto the notion that the African worldview is holistic, maintaining close ties between the physical and spiritual (Thabede 2008, p. 234), it is not uncommon that spiritual leaders are held in high esteem by congregants and reliant upon their guidance and leadership. In Zimbabwe, churches and their leaders are revered for occupying a 'central space' in society, often taking the lead and showing direction during times of social uncertainty (cf. Mahiya & Murisi 2022, p. 3). Social distancing legislation, however, seriously impaired accessibility of pastors as well as congregation members, as public worship was prohibited and house and hospital visitations suspended. Apart from this, pastors became preoccupied with finding ways of establishing social media networks for keeping contact with congregation members and finding solutions for distributing sermons (Chukwuma 2021, p. 3).

As initial social distancing measures were prolonged, many of the traditional roles and identities held by pastors were transferred to other role-players, such as immediate family members or heads of households. Pillay (2020, p. 272), therefore, contends that the pandemic reminded us that 'faith survives without pastors, priests and bishops'.

Traditional views of leadership were thus inadvertently challenged by the pandemic, forcing pastors temporarily into a digital identity and requiring them to adapt to new and uncertain roles. This ultimately led to pastors feeling 'helpless and powerless' (Ngema, Buthelezi & Mncube 2021, p. 7) in relation to their traditional leadership roles.

☐ Changes in member participation

Although digital platforms globally provided a lifeline to the church during the pandemic, the church in Africa experienced a particular downside. Apart from the prevalent digital divide in Africa mentioned previously, the cost of data in countries like Zimbabwe was simply too high for many, thereby excluding them from the digital ministry of churches (Mahiya & Murisi 2022, p. 13). As the pandemic became prolonged, more members, as well as pastors, had to choose between paying for essential goods, such as food for their families, or data to stay connected to the faith community.

In tandem with systemic poverty in most African countries, the matter of inclusivity in digital approaches to congregational life thus presented a serious conundrum for congregational leadership.

☐ Financial uncertainties and sustainability of ministries

Directly related to the previous argument is that the financial security of many African congregations and pastors was seriously compromised by dwindling member participation. As African churches are mostly dependent on the collection of tithes and offerings during public worship, the suspension of services and the poor attendance during periods where governments allowed limited-number public gatherings had serious financial implications for many African congregations in general and pastors in particular (Chukwuma 2021, p. 4).

This precarious position of pastors is explained by Mahiya and Marusi (2022):

> The lockdown was said to have put pressure on some of the pastors who had been full-time in the ministry not engaging in any economic activity. Such pastors were sustained by ministry work that they had been doing through the offerings and the tithes from the church. These church offerings had significantly diminished during the lockdown period a situation which that pastor had to look for alternative ways of putting food on the table. This further took away the pastor's focus from ministering or helping the congregants. (pp. 10–11)

Eventually, many pastors found themselves in financial limbo as a result of the pandemic. As Chukwuma (2021, p. 5) reports, from a Nigerian perspective, many congregations were financially incapacitated, leaving them unable to provide for pastors whose only source of income was reliant on ministry.

In light of the aforesaid, it seems safe to argue that African congregations and congregational leadership were affected in unique ways by the pandemic.

Apart from the obvious and unavoidable challenges it presented, it also imposed levels of uncertainty which are foreign to current generations of believers. This uncertainty was not only vested in the repeated resurgence of the virus but also in the fact that many of the things we took for granted pre-COVID-19 have since become challenges.

Yet many claim that the ensuing post-COVID-19 era needs to be embraced, as the pandemic in fact presented the church with a 'Kairos moment' (Pillay 2020, p. 273) and an 'opportunity to reimagine' (Brunsdon 2021, p. 1) expressions of being the body of Christ in the world. This will, however, require congregational leaders who are purposefully committed to leading their flocks through the unknown post-COVID-19 landscape. Arthur (2022, p. 15) hence argues that one of the most important principles of post-COVID-19 leadership development relates to 'how the church trains its leaders to deal with unpredictable issues'.

A prerequisite for such leadership is discernment about where congregational leaders find themselves spiritually, mentally and in terms of commitment in the aftermath of the pandemic, on the verge of a new era in which the pandemic has seemingly subsided. According to De Villiers (2013, p. 133), discernment is 'undertaken when groups and societies have to reflect on the divine will in times of transition and change'. The starting point of discernment is knowledge of the self, being articulate about our own positionality, preferences and biases. Walker (2020, p. 4) reminds us that the importance of knowledge of the self as point of departure for discernment was apparent in the thinking of Augustine and also found in the opening words of Calvin's *Institutes*, when he underlines the value of the knowledge of God as well as the knowledge of self. Hence, it can be argued that meaningful discernment starts with looking inward via a process of self-reflection.

The pandemic truly presented a time of 'transition and change' (cf. De Villiers 2013) which begs for discernment going forward but is especially necessary in light of the notion that leaders and congregations have failed to actively contemplate ways of going forward post-COVID-19 and are instead nostalgically longing to 'regain homeostasis' (Brunsdon 2021, p. 1). It is further necessary in light of the suggestion that the 'attractional model' (in which Pentecostal Africans, for example, flocked to megachurch buildings) might be over and that the church must seriously consider 'that some people are going to feel reluctant to come to brick-and-mortar church buildings' (Arthur 2022, p. 8).

In the next section of the chapter, the notion of nostalgia will be investigated as a hermeneutical lens for use by congregational leaders for this important task of discernment.

■ Nostalgia

The notion of nostalgia needs theoretical clarification in order to be applied as a hermeneutical lens during the process of discernment where future congregational leadership is pondered.

In the general sense of the word, the online *Collins Dictionary* (n.d.) describes nostalgia as 'an affectionate feeling you have for the past, especially for a particularly happy time'. Nostalgia thus relates to the emotions we nurture about positive times gone by, anecdotally known as the 'good times'.

In medical terms, the concept developed significance when it became apparent that individuals can become psychologically and physically unwell when the longing for the past cannot be satisfied. According to Boym (2007, p. 8), Johannes Hofer was the first to use the term in a medical framework. As far back as 1688, it was used to describe symptoms of homesickness among Swiss soldiers who were fighting abroad. In medical terms, it was seen as a curable disease.

Sekides et al. (2008, p. 304) relate the concept to Greek mythology, where it was used to describe Odysseus' longing for home during the Trojan War. Derived from the two Greek words *nostos* [return home] and *algos* [longing, pain, ache], it denotes the acute emotional pain of someone longing for their past (Boym 2007, p. 7).

Since then, the concept has found a wide application in different academic disciplines, including psychology and practical theology (Brunsdon 2019; Holtzhausen 2018; Müller 2015), mainly based on the further distinctions Svetlana Boym (2007, p. 13) makes within the main idea of nostalgia, namely restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia occurs when one longs for the past in such a way that one becomes intent on emotionally restoring what one considers the happier past. Boym (2007, p. 12) calls this a 'transhistorical reconstruction' of the perceived happier past. Reflective nostalgia refers to a more realistic reflection on the past while being honest about the possibility of restoring it. This process usually includes making peace 'with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude' and serves as a catalyst for a realistic approach to and planning for the future (Boym 2007, p. 15).

Following these explanations, the hermeneutical value of nostalgia as part of the process of discernment should be evident, as nostalgia can be helpful when we reflect on the past with a view towards the future. For congregational leadership, nostalgia can have much value in determining the real hopes and visions pastors and nonclergy leadership harbour. It can be helpful in revealing post-COVID-19 motives that determine

whether leaders get 'stuck in the past' or move forward in creative and dynamic ways.

Relating to this, the idea of 'the great reset' emerged among economists and other world leaders in the wake of the pandemic and the World Economic Forum's so-called 'reset report' as an urgent reminder that COVID-19 called all spheres of society to reflect deeply when heading into the post-COVID-19 era (cf. Labonté 2022). Judging by what has emerged from post-COVID-19 research about churches so far, waiting for the church to return to its pre-COVID-19 state does not seem an option at all. Titles such as 'Church interrupted? Or church reset?' (Siakes 2021) and 'Reconfiguration and adaptation of a church in times of COVID-19 pandemic' (Mahiya & Murisi 2022) carry in themselves the imperative to not get caught up in a debilitating longing for the past (reconstructive nostalgia) but to actively engage the future, mindful of the past (reflective nostalgia).

■ Reflective nostalgia conversations

The proposal of this chapter is that congregational leadership should actively engage in reflective nostalgia conversations to set the process of discernment in motion with a view towards mindful planning and the enhancement of leadership aimed at flourishing post-COVID-19 congregations. In realising reflective nostalgia conversations, I argue that the following markers can stimulate such dialogue.

Firstly, initiating the process is based on the question of whether the congregational leadership of a particular congregation in fact engaged in deliberate post-COVID-19 planning. Mindful of the multilayered interpretations of the term 'post-COVID-19', the term is used here as a recognition of the pre- and post-COVID-19 dimensions of current history. 'Post-COVID-19' in no way suggests that the pandemic will not resurge, but it underscores the assumption that neither the world nor the church will return to a state where reality is perceived and experienced in the same way as before the pandemic struck. The many losses the world suffered in terms of loved ones, time and assets are proof that the world has changed permanently and that we are called to plan anew for the future.

Secondly, reflective nostalgia conversations have real dialogue in mind. Congregational leadership must thus converse, irrespective of the form or location or even the number of conversations. While such dialogue should typically start among leaders, this is not to say that it should end there, as the process may be most meaningful when done in an inclusive way by engaging whole congregations.

Thirdly, and in terms of the agenda of reflective nostalgia conversations, it is all about *reflection* in order to determine the expectations of leaders for the future based on how they think about the past so that leaders can move themselves and congregations forward. I imagine that leading questions will revolve around at least the following:

- What do we treasure about the pre-COVID-19 era?
- What (and who) have we lost during COVID-19?
- What (and who) have we gained as a result of COVID-19?
- What are our expectations and dreams post-COVID-19?
- What do we need to do to attain our post-COVID-19 expectations and dreams?

As these are the very baseline questions, congregational leaders must formulate the questions that will resonate best with their unique contexts. What is apparent from these baseline questions is that they are aimed at invoking memories about the past; articulating present lived experiences; verbalising hopes and aspirations; and formulating tangible visions and plans for the future.

While responses to the first three questions will be informed by the unique narratives of local leadership and congregations, responses to the fourth and fifth questions should be co-informed by Scripture and narratives that ensued from the global church. In fact, theological discernment only becomes theological where the light of Scripture is shone, where we look to the rest of Christ's body and tradition to inform us and prayerfully seek God's guidance.

Finally, the outcome of reflective nostalgia conversations is to help faith communities answer the pivotal question of whether they are waiting for things to return to how they were or whether they have accepted that COVID-19 changed our realities, thereby taking ownership of it. Maybe this outcome can best be formulated as a question: '[a]s we were or seeking what we ought to be?' (cf. Brunsdon 2021).

It should be clear, then, that the outcome of reflective nostalgia conversations is to be sought in an active and mindful engagement with what COVID-19 imposed on faith communities and how we should respond to it.

There is, however, also an underlying benefit in the process itself, namely healing of the losses, wounds and uncertainty the pandemic has dealt the church, as reflective nostalgia conversations carry a pastoral dimension in themselves. Relating to the title of this chapter, it can thus be said that the process of having reflective nostalgia conversations itself can 'heal' the debilitating workings of restorative nostalgia, as reflective nostalgia conversations are inherently a healing process.

■ Conclusion

This chapter focused on healing nostalgia among congregational leaders in post-COVID-19 Africa. It unfolded by providing historical and cultural insights into the African church before discussing some of the consequences of COVID-19 for African churches in particular. It was shown that the African church is indeed a unique faith community and that its cultural orientation and beliefs codetermined how the impact of the pandemic was experienced in congregational life.

As the chapter had a specific focus on congregational leaders, some of the effects COVID-19 had on them were articulated. It indicated that congregational leaders, especially, suffered consequences in terms of traditional leadership roles, a dramatic drop in membership participation and personal financial pressure.

It was further argued that irrespective of the pandemic's dire consequences, the post-COVID-19 era should still be approached as a Kairos moment and an opportunity to re-imagine the pre-COVID-19 church. Re-imagination, however, requires careful discernment in finding meaningful ways of going forward. As evidence exists that some faith communities became stuck in a nostalgic longing for the past, hoping that realities would return to pre-pandemic circumstances, the final section of the chapter investigated the notion of nostalgia as a hermeneutical lens for congregational leadership in probing their own positionality going forward. In the process, the constructs of restorative and reflective nostalgia were presented, where restorative nostalgia is indicative of a transhistorical reconstruction of the past, while reflective nostalgia is about acceptance of the past that enables planning for and commitment to the future.

The chapter finally attempted to merge the findings of the first and second sections into a praxeology of how nostalgia can be addressed among congregational leaders in post-COVID-19 Africa through reflective nostalgia conversations. It provided baseline questions that can be employed in a reflective nostalgia conversation agenda. It also reminded readers that the healing of nostalgia is embedded in the reflective nostalgia conversation, thereby encouraging congregational leadership to engage in the healing of restorative nostalgia.

Uncertainty as certainty in a COVID-19 complex world: Reflections on leading congregations for effective missional praxis

Christopher Magezi
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa

■ Abstract

The unprecedented coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-induced changes are gradually subjecting the world to states of uncertainty, confusion and hesitancy to plan concretely. Even church leaders, who are supposed to guide people to live purposeful and focused lives, have not been spared. At stake is the question of effective church missional praxis (holistic or integrated missional praxis) within the uncertain, complex world that is unfolding in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In responding to the aforementioned situation, this chapter advances Louw's complexity theory, which posits that the world is not linear, as COVID-19 has taught us. In order to develop ministry interventions that respond to uncertainties that plagued

church ministries during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter provides a biblical–theological foundation status of evil events, which is critical in formulating some ministry interventions to the proposed issue. Owing to the notion that the self-existent and self-derived God is the Creator and sustainer of the world and all its visible and invisible things, this chapter presents God as the primary causal agent of the evil events that occur in the world. It is further posited that, in order to accomplish his purposes and plans in the world, God executes these events through various moral secondary agents such as human beings, Satan and his associates, as well as some natural processes. The chapter concludes by drawing some ministry interventions ensuing from the proposed doctrine that was formulated in this chapter.

■ Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has put countries, businesses, institutions and churches across the globe in states of uncertainty that make long-term planning complex. I am conscious that uncertainty can mean many things in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. Uncertainty can be viewed in terms of 'defining the diseases, making a diagnosis, selecting a procedure, observing outcomes, [and] assessing probabilities' (Koffman et al. 2020). This is because (Koffman et al. 2020):

> COVID-19 has rapidly become a disease associated with unbridled uncertainty with its aetiology and management, for the healthcare systems and health professionals who provide care, and among its ultimate victims, patients and their families. (p. 211)

However, in this chapter, I argue that the uncertainty that the world has been subjected to by COVID-19 makes it difficult for churches to plan for their ministerial praxis. However, in saying this, I am aware that it is not only the church whose long-term ministry plans were adversely affected. If this is granted, it is important to briefly highlight how the pandemic has negatively affected the long-term plans of other sectors. Here, the accounting firm Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) conducted empirical research aimed at supporting the planning required for businesses during COVID-19 pandemic. The study revealed the challenges experienced by businesses in setting long-term plans in the backdrop of COVID-19 related uncertainties. This challenge is apparent in the following key findings of the KPMG (n.d.) research:

> The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and the wider geopolitical environment requires businesses to implement stress testing and scenario planning for a range of scenarios and outcomes. (n.p.)

Further, Gopal (n.d.) advises that COVID-19 subjected the health system, the economy and people's savings to the biggest global uncertainty, and

business leaders must address these immediate, complex concerns. However, the complexities come with plans to address these immediate needs in a long-term span, and they do not need to be detailed as the situation keeps on changing. Instead, there should be minimum preliminary guidelines to address the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The corollary to the foregoing discussion is that COVID-19 has taught us that long-term plans do not have absolute certainty and changes should always be anticipated. For example, when positive COVID-19 cases spiked, some nations were placed on various alert levels, with Level 5 being the highest in South Africa. Alert Level 5 was the most stringent form of restriction, which entailed a hard lockdown. Although the alert levels were continually reviewed and adjusted, some institutions, including companies and churches, had to close down or reduce capacity in order to curb the spread of the virus. Thus, Koffman et al. (2020) rightly argue that:

> [*U*]ncertainty is not a simple or easily defined concept and situations of uncertainty often result from several interrelated factors. It has been characterised as an inadequate understanding, a sense of incomplete, ambiguous, or unreliable information, and conflicting alternatives. (p. 211)

Thus, it can be posited that there were many interrelated factors and forms of uncertainty, some of which are indicated above, that made it difficult for one to plan properly during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In my view, this exemplifies ongoing changes because the pandemic now constitutes a kind of certainty, in which it is now known that what seems consistent is susceptible to change.

Stated otherwise, this uncertainty causes anxiety, confusion and lack of concrete planning, especially on the part of church leaders, who are supposed to guide people to live purposeful and focused lives. How, then, can one lead a congregation to have effective ministerial praxis in this complex situation? This situation is intensified when one considers that COVID-19 has affected every person and institution to the extent that, in South Africa and beyond, the churches that used to rely on donor funding have had to cease many of their programmes as their funders were also economically and financially affected by the pandemic (cf. Boorstein 2020; Burger 2020; Msibi 2020; Verasamy 2020). Even churches that solely rely on tithes and offerings to pay bills and run programmes were immensely affected, as some of their members lost their jobs or had their salaries adjusted, as companies were preoccupied with reducing expenses in the period of low production resulting from the lockdowns (Boorstein 2020; Burger 2020; Msibi 2020; Verasamy 2020).

The concern that arises here is how church leaders can lead effective ministries during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. At stake is the question of effective church ministerial praxis within an uncertain,

complex world caused by COVID-19. In this situation, it is critical to discern Christian doctrinal foundations that can inform ministerial practices in times of uncertainty. It is also important to determine some of the implications for ministerial praxis or designs that emerge from those doctrinal foundations. With this in mind, the next section will discuss the complexity theory, which debunks the notion of a linear world, which the outbreak of COVID-19 has made manifest. The mainstay of this chapter is the prolonged discussion of the theology of evil events that will seek to account for events such as COVID-19, which the church should always put into perspective when planning ministries because such events are susceptible to happening unexpectedly. This preceding notion will operate as a challenge for the church to 'develop practical solutions that can be harnessed now, not to "outsmart" uncertainty, but to acknowledge its presence and, where possible, to work more effectively and efficiently alongside' COVID-19 uncertainties (Koffman et al. 2020, p. 211). This is inherent in the underlying notion that the church should continue with its various ministries in an effective manner despite the uncertainties posed by unforeseen adverse events.

Next, the chapter will focus on developing or identifying some ministry interventions that will be guided by the formulated biblical-theological foundational status of evil events that befall humankind. This entails drawing some church ministry interventions within the context of uncertain and complex situations (such as the one created by COVID-19) from the theology of evil events that will be developed in this chapter.

■ Complexity theory – the world is not linear because of evil

Louw (2016, pp. 1–19), who is one of the most influential practical theologians of our time, argues that the issue of theory formation in practical theology should not be understood within the paradigm of linear thinking. Theory formation thinking in many instances of pastoral care and counselling, which is a sub-branch of practical theology, is underlined by linear thinking, which premises one to move from Point A to Point B by means of logical reasoning so as to make coherent decisions to handle life (Louw 2016, pp. 1–19). In Louw's (2016, p. 1) view, 'behind this schema of thinking is the presupposition that life problems should and indeed could be solved in a rational way'. Louw (2016, p. 1) further explains that this kind of reasoning is interlinked with the cause-and-effect approach to life events, which tends to provide instant simplistic answers 'to the very complex notion of meaning in suffering'. In Louw's (2016) understanding, this approach in pastoral care and counselling is insufficient, as this statement substantiates:

> It is argued that a causative approach of rationalistic explanation and positivistic clarity (the attempt to give a logical answer and establish a direct connection between the will of God and the phenomenon of undeserved suffering) is insufficient to really comfort people in order to hope and to address the human quest for meaning. (p. 1)

In saying this, Louw (2016, pp. 1, 8ff.) is moving towards proposing a new approach to pastoral care and counselling that is undergirded by what he calls the notion of complexity in theory formation and the philosophical construct of 'chaosmos'. These twin notions, as proposed by Louw (2016, p. 1), are important in understanding the 'interplay between the God factor and the complexity of human suffering in a pastoral hermeneutics' in order to deal with 'chaosmos and complexity in theory formation for a theology of caregiving in suffering'. The notion of complexity in theory formation argues that the world is not linear; rather, it is nonlinear. That is, one cannot have in-depth meaning in the sufferings of people by employing a linear approach, especially if we consider the existential challenges such as sickness, isolation of sick people from their loved ones, loss of jobs and the deaths of breadwinners within families that were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I concur with Louw (2016) that life is both complex and zigzag, so theologians should always strive to factor in many theological aspects that can provide meaning among people who are suffering in life, so that they can cope and find hope in God in the midst of their sufferings (cf. Louw 2016, p. 1). Such a doctrinal-theological foundational basis can link the love and will of God in the context of uncertainty and sufferings that were brought about by evil events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, so as to find meaning and purpose in people's suffering (Louw 2016). In his own words, Louw (2016) puts it this way:

> In the pastoral ministry, for example in hospital chaplaincy, caregivers are often challenged by the theodicy question, namely the attempt to link the will and love of God to the notions of evil and the factuality of destruction, loss, and suffering. How can a God of love allow the suffering of human beings (providence and the permissive will of God)? (pp. 1–2)

Likewise, in his wider conversation wherein he establishes that polytheistic religion makes it easier for one to explain the causal agents of evil events than monotheism does, Spangenberg (2013, n.p.) poses similar questions to the ones advanced above by Louw (2016, pp. 1–2). In Spangenberg's (2013) words:

> Unlike monotheism, polytheism makes it easier for believers to explain and cope with disasters. In a strictly monotheistic religion, only one god can be blamed and this often creates cognitive dissonance in believers' minds: Is God benevolent or malevolent? (n.p.)

In support of Spangenberg, Laato and De Moore (2003, p. viii) argue that, with regard to the problem of *evil events* in the world, many people are

inclined to believe in a polytheistic religion because it makes it easier to account for the occurrences of calamities, droughts, pandemics, floods and illnesses that befall humanity, without labelling the Supreme Being (God the Creator) as malevolent (Spangenberg et al. 2003). It is important to note that there are various forms of polytheism; that is, there are some who believe in gods of creation, water, the sun and various other elements, as Assmann (2004, pp. 17–31) explains in his article titled 'Monotheism and polytheism'. However, the kind of polytheism that is referred to in this chapter is dualistic in nature. It holds that the all-powerful Supreme Being (God the Creator) created the world and everything in it, but he is not directly involved in its affairs because he is believed to be too powerful to have direct contact with his creation (cf. Assmann 2004, pp. 17–31; Laato & De Moore 2003, p. viii).

God associates himself with the world he created through lesser agents, such as the lesser divinities and ancestors that are venerated in traditional African and other related religions (cf. Lugira, 2009; Magezi & Magezi 2017; Mbiti 1989; Nurnberger 2007; Turaki 2006; Westerlund 2006, p. 36). Nurnberger (2007, p. 75) affirms that in traditional African religion, God is 'the ultimate peak of the pyramid, but he is too remote and inaccessible to play a role in practical life'. Turaki (2006), who agrees with Nurnberger's assertion, further observes that most Africans believe that:

> [...] most of the things humans needs and requests fall within the sphere of the authority of lesser spiritual beings, there is no need to go to God or bother him unless the lesser beings prove inadequate when it comes to providing powers, needs, purposes and security. (p. 57)

In view of the question about who causes the evil events that befall humanity, many adherents of traditional African religion believe that because God does not have direct involvement with the world he created, it follows that he cannot be viewed as the causal agent of any worldly misfortunes (Turaki 2006).

Nonetheless, although polytheistic religions blame the lower-ranked divinities or gods (instead of God, the Creator) for the evil events that happen in the world, I argue that it also confirms Louw's (2016) complexity theory that the world is not linear because of evil events that happen in the world. If this is granted, Christians should not adopt a linear approach to life's events because such an approach causes one to give simplistic, instant answers that do not provide meaning in life to those who are suffering. Instead, one should have an integrated vision of life that places God and other opposing forces in the world in the right understanding so that pandemics such as COVID-19 can be holistically understood within God's schemes, purposes and plans in the world. It is clear that the existence of evil forces that cause calamities and sufferings in people's

lives is indisputable. The power and influence of these evil forces are to be properly understood so that church leaders can always be alerted to plan their church ministries and continue to execute them in the context of uncertainty. Undeniably, the many and different calamities and sufferings that people experience in the world tend to compel people to characterise God as either benevolent or malevolent, and this threatens their sense of God's love and care for humanity and, consequently, his (God's) sovereignty (cf. Harold 2018, pp. 707–718; Magezi 2020, p. 66; Tavard 2003). In support of this, Harold (2018) argues from the perspective of God's sovereignty and asserts that:

> If God orders and overrules all things, and God is love, how are we to understand so much disorder, suffering, and evil? And how should we relate divine governance to our scientific way of thinking? (p. 6)

Linking this to our topic of uncertainty as certainty in a COVID-19 complex world and reflections on leading congregations for effective ministerial praxis, I argue that a thorough articulation of the theology of evil events in the world is vital in informing ministerial practices in times of uncertainties caused by calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that the next discussion on the theology of evil events that befall humankind will be done with the view of developing some ministry interventions within the context of uncertainties and complex situations caused by COVID-19.

◼ The biblical-theological foundational status of the doctrine of evil events

◼ Defining evil

Emerging from the discussion above is that the world is not linear because there are causal agents of the evil events that transpire in the world, although different religions differ on who causes them. Before explaining the causal agents of the evil things that take place in the cosmos, it is important to first have an in-depth understanding of the term 'evil'.

Calder (2022) proposes a helpful conceptualisation of evil in two concepts, namely 'a broad concept and a narrow concept'. In reference to the broad concept of evil, Calder (2022) advises that this conception 'picks out any bad state of affairs, wrongful action, or character flaw' and then proceeded to categorise evil in a broader sense as 'natural evil and moral evil'. Calder's (2022) definition of evil is compelling because it states that there are other natural evils, such as tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes and even toothaches, that are not considered moral evils or that are not caused by the wrong 'intentions or negligence of moral

agents' such as human beings (Calder 2022). Instead, they are caused by natural processes. Calder (2022, n.p.) exemplifies moral evil as committing murder and telling lies, which are caused by moral agents such as human beings and even Satan and his associates, as shown in some incidents in Scripture.

The definition proffered by Calder (2022) above has done two important things. Firstly, it defined what evil is; secondly, in doing so, it also attempted to indicate the causal agents of the evil events that occur in the world. He indicates that other evil events are caused by natural disasters, moral agents like human beings and supernatural forces, such as Satan and his associates.

■ Embedding evil events within the doctrine of God's sovereignty

Linking up the aforementioned definition of evil with theology that upholds God as the self-existing one, who is an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good Creator of the world and all its visible and invisible things, Calder (2022) poses the following vital statement that:

> The problem of evil is the problem of accounting for evil in a world created by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God. (n.p.)

In responding to this concern, Cheung (2014, p. 4) explains in detail why Christians are not comfortable with blaming God for the evil things that happen in the world. Cheung (2014, p. 4) notes that the reason for this hesitancy is that Christians struggle to comprehend how a holy, good and righteous God is capable of causing evil events, as this is incompatible with his character, so they try to solve the dilemma by giving humanity some power of 'self-determination'. In criticising the notion of self-determination as an attempt to distance God from evil events, Bridges (1988, p. 69), Clarkson (1984, pp. 40–41), Tada (1987, p. 1), Hafemann (2000, p. 74) and MacArthur (2008, 2017, p. 69) advance that we should not speak of humanity's freedom to the point of limiting God's sovereignty. Bridges (1988, p. 29) further explains that people have a tendency to limit the sovereignty of God because they think that God should act in a certain way. So when God decides to act contrary to the way they think, then people conclude that God cannot act that way, as he is not responsible for the evil events that occur in the world (Bridges 1988). In accord with Bridges (1988), Hafemann (2000, p. 74) urges Christians to 'resist limiting God's sovereignty in the face of suffering', which also applies to the manner in which we comprehend the causal agent of the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

In view of the aforementioned discussion, I argue that it is important to understand the doctrine of God's sovereignty, as it will play a significant role in this chapter. In my view, the doctrine of God's sovereignty is inherent within his *aseity*, a word of Latin origin which portrays God as the self-existent, uncaused cause and self-derived deity who created the world and everything in it from nothing (cf. Badorf 2016; MacArthur 2017, p. 69). As Hebrews 1:3 attests, this God continues to uphold and sustain the universe by his power (cf. Heb 1:3). Here, I am aware that one can mistakenly think that Hebrews 1:3 is speaking about Jesus Christ, not God. This would be a huge mistake because, from the evangelical doctrine of the Trinity, there is only one God with three distinct Persons, who are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and they can neither be portioned, separated nor divided because, by nature, God is a spiritual or incorporeal being (cf. Torrance 1996, p. 15).

Now, if the words of Hebrews 1:3 are ascribed to Jesus Christ, who is fully God, as is the case in my view, then people should be conscious that the self-existent and self-derived God is the one who created the world, as Colossians 1:16 attests. In this way, people should be challenged to understand that God rules his universe according to his pleasure and sovereign will and that nothing happens in the world that he has neither intended nor decreed (Bridges 1988, p. 36). In applying this to our current discussion, Clarkson's (1984, pp. 40–41) conception is that the sovereignty of God can also mean that the evil events that happen in the world are not accidental. That is to say, humankind can perceive these evil events as the work of the evil '[…] that […] is held firmly within the mighty hand of our sovereign God […] All evil is subject to Him, and evil cannot touch His children unless He permits it' (Clarkson 1984, pp. 40–41). Tada (1987, p. 1) concurs with Clarkson's (1984, pp. 40–41) notion of the sovereignty of God by indicating that nothing takes God by surprise in this universe because everything that happens is uniquely ordained by him.

Given this conceptualisation of the doctrine of God's sovereignty in relation to evil events that inflict serious suffering on people, I propose that an overview examination of God as the causal agent of these events should be scrutinised from Scripture. In doing this, I will pay close attention to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and his holy character that does not allow him to associate with evil. This entails keeping systematic theology in mind when discussing the causal agent of evil events from Scripture. It is important to note that, owing to the doctrine of God's sovereignty that I succinctly sketched in this section, the forthcoming section categorises God as the primary causal agent of the evil events that he executes through various secondary agents, such as human beings, Satan and his associates, as well as the mysteries of the natural processes. Inherent in this conception

is that because God is holy, he does not have direct involvement in the evil events of the world that people experience. Instead, he indirectly causes them through these secondary agents, which shall be further discussed in the ensuing subsections.

■ God as the primary causation of evil events

In his book that presents God as the author of sin, Cheung (2005, p. 4) argues that it does not matter if God *is* the author of sin or *not* because '[…] there is no biblical or rational problem with him being the author of sin'. This argument is inherent within the doctrine of creation in which God, the sovereign Creator with his *aseity* as the self-derived, self-existent and uncaused one, created the perfect world with all the invisible and visible things, including human beings and angels (cf. Barrdof 2016; MacArthur 2017, p. 69). Here, Macleod (1998, p. 229) and Torrance (2008, p. 92) helpfully observe that Adam was blameless before the fall in Genesis 3, and this is termed Adam's *pre-fallen* nature, which represented all humanity, and it was as sinless as the vicarious human nature that Christ assumed in the incarnational mystery.

Macleod (1998) and Torrance's (2008) understanding regarding the impeccancy of Adam's human nature before the fall is scripturally rooted in the fact that after God had created Adam and given him the authority to subdue the earth as the steward of his (God's) creation (Gn 1:28), God himself acknowledged that what he had just created was good (Gn 1:30b). The turning point of God's creation, from being blameless or sinless to being bad or sinful, is encountered in the fall narrative of Genesis 3. This clearly indicates that Adam, the representative of all humanity, was created sinless but with the capacity to sin. He fell into sin, as presented in Genesis 3, after being tempted by the Devil, who appeared in the form of a serpent, and this subjected the entire creation, including nature and everything else, to judgement (cf. Rm 8:19–20).

At this juncture, it is of utmost significance to assert that although God created Adam and Eve in his image, which is a sinless or blameless state, they had the capacity to sin because they were endowed with free will. I concur with O'Mathúna (2018, p. 32) that, from a Christian premise, God created Adam and Eve and, consequently, their descendants with authentic moral freedom or free will because he is personal and seeks to establish loving personal relationships with humankind. This entails granting freedom to the people with whom he wants to interact (O'Mathúna 2018, p. 32). Thus, I agree with O'Mathúna's (2018) argument that:

> […] for relationships to exhibit attributes like trust, love, faith, etc., they must be entered into without compulsion. A robot can be programmed to always obey

its owner, but then the relationship between the two would not be personal. […] Love requires freedom. […] Freedom risks pain, and hence a child can reject his parents, a spouse can be unfaithful, or a parent can be abusive. These risks are necessary in a world where freedom, love and personal relationships exist. (pp. 32–33)

Further, the Devil was also originally created as sinless, but he later on sinned because of arrogance or pride. In his book titled *God's Devil: The incredible story of how Satan's rebellion serves God's purposes*, Lutzer (2015, p. 30) notes that the wider context of Ezekiel 28:11–19 indicates that Lucifer, who is also known to Christians as Satan or the Devil, was created sinless or blameless (Ezk 28:15), but because of pride, he rebelled against God, his Creator. In Ezekiel 28:13, Satan is presented as the apex of God's creation, whose presence brought glory and honour to God (Lutzer 2015, pp. 30–31). Significantly, Ezekiel 28:14 portrays Satan as an anointed member of the cherubim, which denotes his priestly and cherubic role of leading the worship of heaven (Lutzer 2015, pp. 30–31). This explanation is authenticated by the axiom of 'your sanctuaries' in Ezekiel 19:18, which is orientated to the adoration and worship of God. In the wider context of Ezekiel 19:11–19, Lucifer's role was to lead the lesser angels in worshipping God, so he was much closer to God than any other angels (Lutzer 2015). In other words, the worship of the lower-ranked angels was channelled to God through Lucifer.

At this juncture, I cannot enter into a debate of whether Lucifer's sphere was the earth or heaven or stipulate the duration for which Lucifer enjoyed his priestly role as the mediator of the lower angels' worship to God (Lutzer 2015, p. 32). However, from the wider context of Ezekiel 28, Lucifer became arrogant and began to withhold some of the lesser angels' worship that was due to God (Lutzer 2015). In Ezekiel 28:16–17, the pride of the city of Tyre is paralleled with the pride of Lucifer (Lutzer 2015). That is, the citizens of Tyre were proud of its successful trade industry in the same way that Lucifer became inordinately self-absorbed in his assigned responsibilities as the administrator of God's affairs (Lutzer 2015).

Now, with regard to the fall of Adam and Lucifer, I argue that the interconnection between the doctrine of God's sovereignty and foreknowledge aligns with Cheung's (2014, p. 5) assertion that God is consequently the author of sin and evil in the world. This is because the self-existent Christian God is all-powerful and all-knowing, from which it follows that he created Satan, Adam and Eve with the complete knowledge that they were going to fail (Shockley 2008, p. 1; cf. Bellshaw n.d., pp. 24ff.). This is embedded in the understanding of the foreknowledge of God to imply that he does not only know half of the future: he knew the whole future of Adam and his descendants before the foundation of the world,

as the Creator (cf. Shockley 2008, p. 1). That is, the sovereign and foreknowing God knows everything in entirety, including the fact that Adam and Eve were going to sin. God also foreknew what he was going to do to bring back humankind (referring to the elect that God chose before the foundation of the world [cf. Eph 1:4]) to eternal fellowship with himself (God) through the saving work of his Son, Jesus Christ.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Lutzer's (2015, p. 16) attempt to establish the relationship between God and Satan is of utmost significance. He argues that, just like human beings, Satan cannot do anything that is outside or independent of God's control (Lutzer 2015, p. 16). This means that God does not only get involved in what the Devil does in the universe the moment we appeal for his intervention. Here, I am in concurrence with Lutzer (2015, p. 16) that the scriptural assertion of Satan as the god of this cosmos (cf. 2 Cor 4:4) should not make one think that he has room to make his own independent decisions, such as inflicting havoc wherever and whenever he wishes. In this way, one should therefore understand that neither human beings nor Satan are free to do as they please (either good or bad) without the permission of the all-powerful and all-knowing God.

Having established this, I should clarify that the evil events that occur in the world do not contradict the holiness of God (cf. Cheung 2014, p. 5). This is because, although he is the primary cause of evil events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, he is not directly involved in it, thus absolving him from being an evildoer or a sinner (Cheung 2014). He uses secondary agents, such as human beings, Satan and his associates, as well as natural processes, to cause evil events in the world so as to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world. But this does not distance God as the causal agent of these evil events. Cheung (2014) corroborates this by affirming that to say God uses secondary agents to cause evil events in the world is not akin to distancing him from evil, and neither does it contradict his holy character because:

> [...] for to 'author' the sin implies far more control over the sinner and the sin than to merely tempt. Whereas the Devil (or a person's lust) may be the tempter, and the person might be the sinner, it is God who directly and completely controls both the tempter and the sinner, and the relationship between them. (p. 5)

Without going into a detailed historical background of Isaiah 45:7, one can clearly note that the Scripture does not give us room to defend 'human standards of fairness and righteousness', because it solely serves to satisfy 'human intuition' (Cheung 2014, p. 6). Here, the point in Isaiah 45:7 is that God affirms himself as the only self-existent and self-derived God, who causes both prosperity and disasters or evil (cf. Cheung 2014,

p. 6; Motyer 1993, p. 359; Shockley 2008, pp. 1–2; Webb 1996, p. 181). This means that God is the doer of good and evil things because there is no other god who is capable of doing so. However, he executes these things through secondary agents, as the ensuing subsection shall extensively establish (Cheung 2014; Motyer 1993, p. 359; Shockley 2008, pp. 1–2; Webb 1996, p. 181).

The problem is that human beings always want to talk back to God or ask why he allows secondary moral agents, such as human beings and Satan and his associates, to cause evil events that bring discomfort, hate, sickness and even death to both good and bad people (cf. Cheung 2014, p. 7). Together with Cheung (2014, pp. 7–8), we argue that, although Romans 9:19–21 (cf. Jr 18:1ff., which advances a similar argument) deals with the sovereignty of God in choosing whomever he pleases for eternal salvation (election) and eternal punishment (reprobation) in hell, it is also ostensible that, in this section, Paul warns human beings not to question how God runs his affairs in this universe (and everything from it) that he derived from himself as the Creator. In the proposed passage of Romans 9:19–21, God is the potter (Creator), and we are the clay in the hands of the potter. So, just like the potter, God does what he pleases with his entire creation, because the world and all its invisible and visible things owe their existence to God.

Stated otherwise, it is the self-derived and self-existent God who brings the world into existence; therefore, he is free to do whatever he wants with all his creation. Thus, humankind must let God accomplish his purposes and plans without questioning him. Although it is true that the evil events that are caused by human moral agents are a result of the corruption of their sinful human nature, I am of the view that God is in control of that evil nature, as he can actively cause this evil nature to fit within his purposes and plans (cf. Cheung 2014, p. 10). That is, from the perspective of the sovereignty of God, I concur with Cheung's (2014) statement that:

> It is true that a person sins according to his evil nature, but as Luther writes, it is God who 'creates' this evil nature in each newly conceived person after the pattern of fallen Adam, whose fall God also caused. And then, God must actively cause this evil nature to function and the person to act according to it. (p. 10)

Having indicated this possible objection that some people do evil because of the evil nature that became imputed after the fall of Adam, I unswervingly sustain that both Satan and human beings were created by God, and they can operate as his secondary agents in causing evil events in the universe. In turn, God uses such events to accomplish his plans and purposes for the world. With this in mind, the forthcoming subsections will briefly highlight how God works with these moral secondary agents.

■ Secondary causal agents of evil events

■ Human beings as the secondary causal agents of evil events

Based on the robust understanding of the interconnection between the doctrine of God as the Creator of the world and everything in it, I argue that God employs human beings as his secondary moral agents to accomplish his plans and purposes for the world. Here, the story of Joseph is used as an example of how God, as a primary causal agent of evil events, allowed Joseph's brothers to be overcome by moral evil so that he could advance his plans and purposes for the world through Israel. This notion is embedded in the Abrahamic calling in Genesis 12:1–3, in which God calls Abraham and his descendants to be instruments of salvation to the nations (cf. Grisanti 1998, p. 40). In the wider context of Genesis 37–50, Joseph's brothers hated him, because their father, Jacob, doted on Joseph as the son of his old age (Gn 37:3–4). The brothers' hatred intensified when they interpreted Joseph's subsequent dreams to mean that he was going to rule over them (Gn 37:511).

Because of their hatred, as indicated in the preceding paragraph, the elder brothers conspired to kill Joseph by throwing him in a pit (Gn 37:20–21). However, God, in his sovereignty and divine providence, used the eldest brother, Reuben, to spare Joseph's life. Reuben advised his fellow brothers not to shed the blood of Joseph but to throw him in a pit, as his intention was to later rescue the young man and restore him to Jacob, his father[96] (Gn 37:22). The brothers did as Reuben suggested and stripped Joseph before throwing him in a dry pit, but immediately, an Ishmaelite caravan passed by (Gn 37:23) and Judah convinced his brothers to sell their hapless younger brother to the traders (Gn 37:25–28). It was these Midianite traders who took Joseph to Egypt, where he later became a successful servant in the house of Potiphar because God was with him, and he blessed everything that he touched (Gn 39:1–6). Nevertheless, later on in this narrative, Joseph endured suffering when he was thrown into prison after being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife (Gn 40:15–41:14). However, in his divine providence and sovereignty, God redeemed Joseph from all these afflictions in order to further his redemptive purposes for the world that he promised to accomplish through Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gn 12:1–3).

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96. Given the narrative in Genesis 37:30–36, we are sure that Reuben and some of the brothers may not have been present when Judah and the other brothers sold Joseph to the Midianite traders, because he came back in a bid to rescue Joseph but found him gone. Although Reuben and some of his brothers then disguised Joseph's disappearance to Jacob, their intention to rescue Joseph was good.

That is to say, in his divine providence, God rescued Joseph from prison after he satisfactorily interpreted the Pharaoh's dream. Consequently, the Pharaoh installed Joseph as the second-highest in charge of Israel (cf. Gn 41). Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream culminated in Jacob's descendants and the whole of Egypt being saved from famine (Gn 42). Thus, the Pharaoh's dream was a divine warning about the approaching famine, which he was supposed to prepare for in the days of plenty (cf. Gn 42). It should be noted that, through Joseph's painful experience, God's promise to use Abraham and his descendants as vehicles of redemption to all nations remained alive (cf. Gn 42–45; Magezi 2019, pp. 5–8).

That is to say, after Joseph's brothers had made a couple of trips to buy food in Egypt, where Joseph was the man in charge, it is apparent that in the wider context of Genesis 45:1–10, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers and made a very theological statement that is embedded in the doctrine of God's sovereignty, foreknowledge and providence. Joseph remarked that his brothers intended to harm him by selling him to the Midianite traders, but God meant it for good as, in his providence, he was sending Joseph to Egypt so that he could later work as God's instrument for the preservation of his people, Israel. Based on this argument, it is clear that God used Joseph to unleash his salvific plan and purposes for the world, as promised in the Abrahamic calling in Genesis 12:1–3 (cf. Gn 45:5, 8, 50:19–21). From the perspective of God's redemptive history in Scripture, as well as the moral evil narrative of Joseph, it is clear that God's salvation for the world is timeless. Such salvation was sovereignly planned to be executed through Abraham and his descendants. In this way, I agree with Arnold (2009, p. 361; cf. Tada 1987, p. 1) that, just like Joseph in Genesis 45:5–7 and 50:19–21, we need to understand that:

> God's purpose is not thwarted by human sin, but rather advanced by it through his good grace. The hand of God is seen, not only in clearly miraculous interventions and revelations, but also in the working out of divine purposes through human agency, frail and broken, as it is. (p. 361)

▪ Satan as the secondary causal agent of evil events

Satan is also the secondary causal agent of the evil events that befall humankind. 1 Kings 22:19–23 is one of the biblical texts that warrant that God, in his sovereignty, tends to intentionally use evil spirits to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world (cf. Cheung 2014, p. 5).

Without going into a detailed historical context of 1 Kings 22:19–23, I argue that this proposed passage presents Micaiah, the prophet, as seeing a vision of a discussion at the meeting in heaven in which God was presiding. In this heavenly meeting, God was looking for someone to entice Ahab to go to the battle against Ramoth-Gilead and fall. While the discussion was

ongoing, one of the spirits that was present at the meeting volunteered to undertake the evil task on behalf of God. Surprisingly, the spirit was going to entice Ahab to go to battle by using the prophets to lie and deceive him into going into the battle because he would succeed. Here, God did not rebuke the spirit's orchestrated deception. However, what is clear in this narrative is that God seemed to have approved of the lies of the spirit because Ahab died in that battle. That is, in spite of attempts to disguise himself, Ahab fell into the hands of Ramoth-Gilead, as reported in the wider context of 1 Kings 22:29–40. Thus, one can argue that God worked with the volunteer spirit to accomplish the death of Ahab. At this juncture, we cannot go into detail on why God did this to Ahab, nor try to establish if God was judging him for a specific sin. Even without these details, the point that God uses evil spirits as secondary causal agents of evil events to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world has already been established.

One may argue that this narrative reveals that both Satan and his associates (evil spirits) do not operate as independent agents in the world that God created. Instead, they work under his sanction and command to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world (cf. Bellshaw n.d., pp. 24–39; Welmington 2018). Notably, we tend to incorrectly think that evil events are caused by independent agents who do as they please because we do not know the mysteries of God that underlie these evil events. The ensuing narrative of Job substantiates the narrative of Ahab. The book of Job can yield more results in further underlining that God executes evil events in peoples' lives through Satan as his secondary causal agent (Spangenberg 2013, n.p.). Spangenberg (2013) describes Job as an exceptionally wealthy man who was a devoted and upright worshipper of God (Job 1:1–5). Satan assumed that Job was not an authentic worshipper and that if God took away all his possessions, Job would reject God (Job 1:6–11) (Spangenberg 2013).

The wider context of Job's narrative is dramatic because God granted Satan permission to test Job's faith (Spangenberg 2013). In the first test, Satan robbed Job of all his possessions, but Job never cursed or denied God. He remained faithful despite the calamities that he experienced from Satan (cf. Job 1:20–22) (Spangenberg 2013). Having failed to make Job's faith in God waver, Satan then challenged God to allow him to inflict serious sickness on Job, expecting that this would herald the end of Job's trust in God (cf. Job 2:1–6) (Spangenberg 2013). In response to Satan's request, God gave him permission to do as he pleased with Job, except to kill him. Nevertheless, Job also passed the second test as he never turned his back on God, even after being afflicted with serious sickness (cf. Job 2:9–10) (Spangenberg 2013). In light of the narrative of Job, I maintain that God

causes evil events to happen in the world and uses Satan as his secondary causal agent. This proves that Satan does not operate independently. In the foregoing narrative, God unequivocally permitted Satan to test Job and set the limit of the affliction – he could not kill Job because God did not sanction him to do so.

In light of this theological conception, one can argue that Christians can draw confidence from the fact that God is in control of all the evil events that happen in the world, and the secondary causal agents are the ones that directly afflict people with serious pain, sickness, sufferings and even death. However, the consolation is that God sets limits on how far these evil events should go. This means that whenever Christians experience evil events, they should rest assured that it is all in accordance with God's purpose and intention. As we have repeatedly argued in this chapter, God controls all events and uses them to fulfil his plans and purposes and to bring honour and glory to him. At this juncture, it should be clarified that God allowed Satan to test Job in order to teach him (Satan) that Job would not curse God in spite of the calamities that would befall him. This means God did not want to learn if Job would remain loyal to him; because he is the all-powerful and all-knowing God, he knew already that Job would triumph.

■ Identifying inherent challenges in the previously considered theology

It is my firm conviction that, if not handled properly, the previously discussed theological conception of God as the primary cause of evil events, executed through secondary agents such as human beings and Satan and his associates, can be termed a deterministic cause of events that happen in the world, which undermines the free will of the secondary agents of God in the world. In the scholarly guild, there are two scholarly positions on the matter, namely the deterministic and indeterministic cause of events that happen in the world (Churchhill 2017, pp. 425–418; Hart 2019, pp. 26–27; James n.d., pp. 1–22; Koperski 2020, pp. 1–156; Pretorius n.d., pp. 62–76).

The champions of a deterministic cause of events in the world hold a philosophical view that all events are completely determined by God as the uncaused cause (Hart 2019, pp. 26–27). This can be taken to mean that all events that happen in the cosmos, including the decisions and actions of humankind, are outside of their control (Hart 2019). That is to say, a person cannot act or decide in any other way than the one they actually followed because their decisions and actions are determined by God to happen in a particular way (Hart 2019). However, the problem embedded in the determinist view is that it seems to weaken the theological conception of

human free will, yet it is the concept of human free will that warrants us to hold each other accountable for our actions in the world (Hart 2019). That is, the determinist position diminishes the theological conception of human free will which warrants moral responsibility in the world (Hart 2019). That is to say, moral responsibility seems to only exist because of free will (Hart 2019).

The alternative position to determinism is indeterminism, a philosophical position that argues that not all events have a deterministic cause, as there are some events that occur randomly in the world or in our lives (Hart 2019, pp. 26–27). This position is called *libertarianism*, and it makes human beings out to be responsible for their actions and decision-making (Hart 2019, p. 26). However, the indeterministic position seems to be inconsistent with the view of God's sovereignty sketched in this chapter (Churchhill 2017, p. 426). In this way, I argue together with Flint (1988, p. 177) that when it comes to this proposed subject, '[…] the view of freedom that one ought to embrace should be the view that best fits the biblical data, not our pre-conceived notions of what human freedom is or ought to be'.

Given Flint's observation of what needs to be done in this matter, I argue that it is the freewill camp that seems to have an unbalanced position when it comes to determinism and God's control over the affairs of humankind. This is because I hold that under the sovereign determination, God is superintendent even over our sinful nature and decisions. God does not force or cause sinful people to sin, but he uses their sinful inclinations to accomplish his determined purposes. It is with much careful consideration that this paradox between divine sovereignty and human responsibility can only be reconciled in the mind of God, while this debate for humans remains ongoing, as we cannot reconcile the paradox.

■ Developing ministry interventions for pandemics from the previously considered theology of evil events

Having provided an overview of the biblical-theological foundational status of evil events in the preceding subsections, this section now seeks to develop or identify ministry interventions for pandemics, such as COVID-19, that have rendered the planning and execution of the church ministries difficult and complex for church leaders. Evil events pose challenges for the church and other institutions because they usually take us by surprise, as (unlike God) we do not know what the future holds or is like. For example, when pandemics occur, people often want to know their purpose and identify who or what is responsible for such outbreaks. As already argued before, from the perspective of a monotheistic religion like Christianity,

some people tend to distance God from these evil events because of his holy character. However, in doing so, they are limiting God's sovereignty over his creation, which owes its existence to the only self-derived and self-existent God. Thus, having a thorough understanding of the biblical-theological foundational status of the causal agents of these evil events and their purposes is of utmost importance in the development of ministry interventions for complex and uncertain contexts, such as those that are caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The question of the causal agents of evil events poses challenges to adherents of polytheistic religions, who tend to believe in a Supreme Being who created the world but hold that he is far removed from it because he is too powerful to associate with created creatures. So, the Supreme Being (God) continues to run the affairs of his creation using the lower-ranked gods, who are usually accused of bringing misfortunes to humankind when they violate the ethical codes of these lower-ranked gods or divinities.

However, in returning to a Christian perspective, I argue that a proper theological understanding of these events will help church leaders (and consequently Christians) to have more faith and confidence in God when disasters befall them. From the prolonged discussion in the above sections, it is clear that the Bible actually affirms Louw's complexity theory that the world is not linear but zigzag-patterned because of the existence of evil. I concur with the theory, as it fits in with the events that occurred during the peak of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has subjected the world, including the church, to difficult positions. For example, the church found it extremely challenging to plan and execute the functions of diverse ministries.

Therefore, from the biblical-theological foundation status of evil events in the world that we discussed in the above sections, I advance the forthcoming aspects as critical ministry interventions for church leaders, and consequently, churches, to continue with their various ministries during pandemics. Stated otherwise, the following ministry interventions, which emerge from the discussions that we have undertaken so far in this chapter, can be considered as critical in assisting church leaders to be mindful of pandemics and other forms of calamities and disasters when planning ministerial business. This would ensure that the ministries may continue to accomplish their mandates in spite of pandemic-induced circumstances.

It is of utmost importance for church leaders to be conscious of the existence of evil events, as we do not know when disasters and pandemics may take place. In my view, such knowledge helps church leaders, and consequently, churches, to be always conscious that existing church ministries can be interrupted by pandemics such as COVID-19. Therefore, ministries ought to develop backup plans that are compatible with pandemic and disaster situations. In saying this, we are aware that the

dynamics and effects of these disasters and pandemics may differ, but church leaders should be challenged to be always ready to adapt and adjust their backup ministry plans according to the disasters they will be dealing with at that particular time.

In addition, church leaders must understand that God is the primary cause of evil events, but he executes them through creaturely moral agents such as Satan and his associates, human beings and natural hazards. Here, the underlying understanding for the church leaders should be that God is the self-derived, self-existent and uncaused cause who sovereignly created the world and all its entire visible and invisible things. Thus, there is neither a moral agent nor any form of nature that operates independently from God because everything that is unleashed in the world, either good or bad, is uniquely created or caused (Is 45:7) and orchestrated by God to accomplish his purposes and plans in the world. Here, it is important to qualify that, in the wider context of this chapter, we are not employing the term 'create' in the identical logic 'as God's original creation out of nothing, but we are referring to God's control over things that he has already created' (Cheung 2014, p. 10; cf. O'Mathúna 2018, p. 40). In this way, I agree with Cheung (2014) that:

> Although God must actively cause evil thoughts and inclinations in the creature, and then he must actively cause the corresponding evil actions, he does not create new material or substance when he does this, since he is controlling what he has already created. (p. 10)

In using the biblical evidence of the narratives of Joseph, Job and Ahab established in the previous sections, I argue that church leaders should be conscious that God is righteous and sovereign, as he uses moral agents, such as human beings, Satan and his associates, as well as natural processes, as secondary causal agents of evil events to fulfil his plans and purposes in the world. However, as established in this chapter, God is neither an evildoer, a wrongdoer nor a sinner. Given this, as the church leaders and, consequently, Christians strive to execute their ministerial mandates, they should draw their confidence from God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, because God is the primary causal agent of evil events, but he executes them through secondary agents. Thus, in line with Bridges (1998), I am of the opinion that the church should understand that:

> Confidence in the sovereignty of God in all that affects us is crucial to our trusting Him. If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God's sovereign control, then we cannot trust Him (God). His love maybe infinite, but if His power is limited and His purpose can be thwarted, we cannot trust Him (God). (p. 378)

That is, in view of the aforementioned theological conception, one can argue that church leaders and consequently Christians should always trust that God is in control of all the evil events that happen, as he commands

the secondary agents that cause calamities. In light of Job's narrative, church leaders should know that God allows evils to manifest through secondary agents, but because he is sovereign and all-knowing, he even determines how far these evil events should go, in accordance with his plans and purposes for the world. This means that, as the church leaders plan their ministries in the face of pandemics, such as COVID-19, they should be assured that God has good plans for the church. These plans manifest as the church addresses the physical, emotional, spiritual, mental and psychological needs of the victims of pandemics.

Thus, church leaders should be assured that God has not relegated control of the world to secondary agents. The story of Job is critical in demonstrating that God sets the limits for these evil events. That is, secondary agents are not capable of unleashing evil events further than what God, in his sovereignty and foreknowledge, intended and purposed. If this is granted, church leaders and Christians should learn to accept any situation that they find themselves in, in spite of how bad the situation is, as it is God who uniquely ordains and orchestrates these evil events for a purpose.

When pandemics and disasters happen, church leaders should not always think that they are instruments of God's judgement for specific sins. The Bible also states that this is not always the case, as the narrative of the blind man in John 9:1–3 attests. In this passage, Jesus was asked if the blind man was born blind because of his sin or that of his parents. Jesus firmly responded that it was neither the man's nor his parents' sins that caused his blindness. Instead, Jesus indicated that it occurred so that God would be revealed in the man's life. In corroboration with O'Mathúna (2018, p. 36), I argue that in view of Romans 8:19–22, which posits that the whole of creation is groaning because God forcibly subjected her to futility, the general biblical understanding for church leaders should be that all evil events such sicknesses, injuries and deaths are part of God's judgement of sin; however, it 'cannot be assumed to be God's judgement on a specific sin'. Thus, instead of always asking God why such evil events happen to individuals, groups or at a global level, church leaders and Christians should be preoccupied with helping the victims (O'Mathúna 2018, p. 39). In my view, this stirs up the church to be effective in carrying out its compassionate ministries.

It is important to note that the existence of evil events reminds church leaders that the world is not linear, but it is complex, as it constitutes evil events that inflict hate, pain, suffering and even death to non-Christians and Christians alike. This arises from the fact that, biblically, Christians are not immune from suffering, sickness or disasters (cf. Rm 8:16–23 & Phlp 4:10–13). However, like Christ himself, Christians undergo what he

experienced during his earthly ministry. Jesus Christ himself, whom the church is called to emulate, indicated that in this world we shall be troubled (Jn 16:33); hence, evil events occur. As a result, church leaders need to be grounded in the proper theology of evil events, such as the one discussed in this chapter. In this way, instead of complaining and worrying themselves about the calamities that befall them, church leaders should use *internal* and *external* church ministries to address the needs of the victims of evil events in both church and nonchurch spaces. Internal ministries address the needs of church members, while external ministries focus on those people outside the church, as disasters usually affect all people regardless of their religions and beliefs.

Having said this, I argue that, from the perspective of God's sovereignty, God has uniquely ordained and orchestrated these events to accomplish his good plans and purposes for Christians. Owing to this, church leaders should always know that there is something that God wants to achieve in the lives of Christians, for example, maturity in Christlikeness in service to others who have been affected by these disasters. As O'Mathúna (2018, p. 39) notes, there is a need for churches and Christians to have true solidarity with those who are affected by calamities. Instead of speculating about why God permits calamities to happen to people, church leaders and Christians should always be preoccupied with how they can learn and grow into Christlikeness in the midst of these evil events (O'Mathúna 2018). This growth to Christlikeness through these evil events can occur in the process of developing church ministries that exhibit compassion towards the victims of these calamities, that is, by taking concrete actions to assist those who have been negatively affected. This also entails having the confidence and faith that (O'Mathúna 2018):

> [...] a loving God has allowed something to happen and can bring good from it. This has been called the character or soul-building theodicy, where pain and suffering help us mature. As with all change, it can be painful. (p. 39)

■ Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to develop a ministry intervention in the context of uncertainties, particularly those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, that hinder the church from effectively planning and executing its ministries. The chapter does so by underscoring the importance of establishing a theology of the causal agents and purposes of the evil events that befall humankind, as this is critical in informing church ministries to cope with such uncertainties. After underlining the challenges of understanding the causal agents of evil events from a Christian perspective, the chapter proposed an understanding of the causal agents

of the evil events that sustain the doctrine of God's sovereignty and righteousness or holiness.

This proposal unfolded by categorising the causal agents of evil events in terms of primary and secondary causal agents. At this juncture, a thorough exposition was established of God as the primary causal agent of evil events by virtue of him being the Creator of the world and everything in it, including the invisible and visible things that owe their existence to him as the self-derived and self-existent sovereign God (God's aseity). The thrust of this argument is that God created his creatures, particularly Adam and Lucifer, in a blameless state, with free will and choice (capacity to sin), because God wanted to establish a relationship with them. From the wider context of the discussion in this chapter, I presented that both Adam and Lucifer sinned and incurred punishment from God. In Adam's case, he was tempted by the Devil to violate God's law, and his sin subjected the entire creation to sin and judgement.

The chapter also discussed the natural disasters that are caused by natural processes that remain a mystery to us, although science attempts to explain the phenomena. From some theological standpoints, some of these natural disasters are understood to be nature's reaction to human mishandling of the planet. This construed understanding distances God from being a sinner or wrongdoer because he is the self-existent, righteous and sovereign God. As such, he does not have direct involvement in causing evil events in the world, a purpose for which he uniquely ordained various secondary agents (such as human beings, Satan and his associates and natural processes) to accomplish.

To buttress the above assertions, the biblical narratives of Job, Ahab, Joseph and many others were used. This further underscored the notion that God uses such secondary moral agents to conduct moral evil, which, in his divine sovereignty and providence, he uses to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world. The chapter concludes by developing a ministry intervention to pandemics, such as COVID-19, by drawing from the prolonged overview of the biblical-theological foundational status of the evil events that befall the world. The features of this ministry intervention can be viewed in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter 9

Default or reset? Missional leadership challenges for church leaders in COVID-19 *en route* to the new normal

Frederick Marais
Department of Practical Theology,
Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa

Nelus Niemandt[a,b]
[a]Huguenot College,
Wellington, South Africa
[b]Department of Practical Theology and Mission Studies,
Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria,
Pretoria, South Africa

■ Abstract

In this chapter, the researchers reflect on missional challenges South African congregational leaders face in their discernment of the 'new normal' in a post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) world. The research aims to challenge leaders to resist the default Christendom patterns that dominate our imagination. In a theological response to the pandemic, the presentation challenges leaders to embrace the pandemic as an opportunity to decolonise mainline ecclesiology and ministry. It concludes with five innovative theological leadership challenges for churches to flourish in the new post-COVID-19 spring.

■ Introduction

South African congregational leaders face the same adaptive challenges as other congregational leaders interested in and called to participate in God's mission. They need to discern a novel way forward in a world that changed dramatically during the outbreak of a global pandemic. It seems as if the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated and compressed the far-reaching changes brought on by globalisation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and other major social changes – sometimes described as a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Barentsen & Kok 2017, pp. 7–10).

Missional ecclesiology in itself already demanded a major adaptive approach towards missional leadership. A VUCA world increased the urgency to discern a new way forward. The COVID-19 pandemic did not diminish these demands but rather accentuated and accelerated the urgent need to reconceptualise ecclesial leadership.

Stoppels (2021, p. 5) argues that a missional ecclesiology and missional church will not take effect without called and able missional leaders. Surviving the disaster brought on by the pandemic, amid major societal changes and missional transformation, confronts the church with perhaps the most comprehensive leadership challenges in centuries. The church finds itself in an unparalleled leadership crisis where everything needs to be re-evaluated. African church leaders face a 'new normal'. The serious and demanding nature of these challenges was described by Crouch, Keilhacker and Blanchard (2020) using the metaphor of '[b]lizzard, winter, little ice age', presenting a useful and apt description of the nature of adaptive change faced by congregations and denominations.

'Blizzard' refers to the fact that things are very difficult and need extraordinary measures '[…] that not only would be unthinkable in ordinary times but are unsustainable for long periods' (Crouch et al. 2020). It is a very serious crisis, but it is surmountable. Winter refers to the understanding that we are facing a long season of crisis. The COVID-19 crisis does not represent a singular event but a season of turmoil. 'Little ice age' refers to a large-scale event that '[…] reshape[s] the climate through countless successive seasons' (Crouch et al. 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is a significant interruption that inaugurates years-long disruption.

Crouch et al. (2020) conclude that churches, as they were, no longer exist. The underlying assumptions that sustained churches and nonprofits are no longer true. The priority of leaders must be to replace the current playbook with a new one (Crouch et al. 2020). We are catapulted into a 'new normal' and there is no going back. Nieuwhof's (2021) mapping of disruptive church trends that will be evident in the post-pandemic church

is helpful to get a grip on the challenges and serves as an example of changes facing leaders: (1) the fact that the majority of attendees may no longer be in the room; (2) a shift in focus from gathering to connecting; (3) it is not about filling auditoriums, but fulfilling mission; (4) generational differences will deepen; and (5) spiritual entrepreneurs will thrive.

With this overview of adaptive changes in mind, one can start to map the theological challenges of the 'new normal'.

■ Theological challenges in the 'new normal'

This section proposes a missional map to navigate the discourse and proposes several challenges facing theology and church leadership. Gregersen (2017, p. 362) makes a strong case for the importance of theological reflection on disasters and asks for a phenomenologically sensitive theology. The challenges also provide a map and framework that can guide re-imagining leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa.

■ Theological challenge

Veldsman (2021) investigated recent publications in South Africa in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and found that one of the main foci in theological reflection was the doctrine of God (Veldsman 2021, p. 2). The COVID-19 crisis raised the 'God-question' to a new level of urgency. Re-imagining leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa starts with a reorientation in terms of God and how we think about God. We will need to talk about God and resist the temptation of the feel-good theology of moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD). The researchers propose that theologians and church leaders will need to rediscover the grammar of trinitarian theology and discern the radical presence of God in the discomfort of the pandemic. This is echoed by Van der Watt (2021, p. 8) when he argues that the disruption of COVID-19 moves missional transformation away from 'strategic planning or endless new models' to renewal and reform that finds its fulfilment in the triune God. The missional promise of more focused attention on God is now more important than ever (Burger 2016):

> The missional movement has not only proved to be beneficial to the faith of the church in the living God. It has also – in a new and surprising way – accentuated the vital importance of good theology for the life in the church. If being missional actually starts with the mission of God, we are forced to pay more attention to the God we profess to believe in. (p. 26)

In terms of the post-COVID-19 discourse, one can only support Veldsman when he makes a strong case that the world and theology need a different image of God, '[…] namely a dynamic image of God framed and informed by theology-science discourses that have to replace a static image of God'

(Veldsman 2021, p. 3). This theological challenge will be shaped by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it will also include interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary discourses (as attempted by Rohr 2019). Gregersen (2017, p. 367) emphasises the importance of an interdisciplinary broadening of disaster studies, attending to the inputs of natural sciences as well as culture and religion. The focus must shift from performance-driven aspirations to save congregations to a constructive (missional) theology (Van der Watt 2021, p. 8).

Ecclesial challenge

The missional understanding of the church as an alternative community gathered by God – who is in Godself a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – brings the ecclesial challenge into focus. God invites the community of believers into the life of the Trinity, a life of deep connection shaped by the values and dynamics of the Trinity. In his formulation of a theology of disaster, Gregersen (2017, p. 369) stated that God is community, and that the eternal community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit hosts and upholds the transhistorical community of the living and the dead. He argues that the problem of disaster and tragedy is ultimately about community and the disruption of community, and he concludes that '[…] the only possible redemption is to restore the sense of community' (Gregersen 2017, p. 369).

This is an alternative community – a community of equality, kenosis, service and mutual respect. A community of downward mobility. This presents a new 'playbook' to the familiar institutional understanding of the church with its hierarchy of powers that protects territory and excludes those on the margins (colonial ecclesiology). It might well be that the pandemic presents an opportunity for a possible missional acceleration.

The danger, on the other hand, is that the institutional church and the urge to survive at all costs could force churches into a survival mode. In his research into theological responses to the pandemic, Veldsman (2021, p. 4) mentions many South African theologians who attended to the issue of a re-imagination of ecclesiology, ranging between the nature of worship meetings, the voice of the church in a post-pandemic world and the praxis of being church. These serve as indications that theologians are aware of the ecclesial challenge and responding to it. The fact that Christian churches are among the biggest and most effective institutions in organising help to communities hit by disasters underscores the relevance of an ecclesial approach to reflection on a post-COVID-19 world (Gregersen 2017, p. 368).

The ecclesial challenge does not seek the survival of particular congregations at all costs or a new strategy to serve the church but is a

challenge to become more resilient in mutual and pastoral care, more grounded in communal life in the Trinity and more able to bring the good news of life and renewal during a disaster to the world.

■ The eschatological challenge

This challenge is about hope and discerning between the false hope of this world, this economy, this politics and the true hope in God that imagines the kingdom as an eschatological reality committed to reconciling, repairing and restoring justice (Keifert 2016):

> The world is fallen; its powers and principalities, though redeemable, are profoundly against the reign of God. This alternative community will embody a different system of power and economics than that of the powers and principalities of the world. (p. 84)

The eschatological challenge that keeps on pointing towards the reign of God requires an upward witness, challenging the powers with the imagination of the kingdom of God. Veldsman (2021) refers to the work of Gregersen (2017) on theologies of disaster and agrees with Gregersen's approach of speaking about God, but also to God, to find new ways out of dark situations and to restore community. Gregersen (2017, p. 370) argues that eternity exists because God is, and because God is, there are new possibilities: 'While the Christian faith does not offer guarantees about a particular future, it does insist that there is an openness towards new opportunities in life' (Gregersen 2017, p. 370). He argues that the work of the church is not to try and explain disasters (such as pandemics) but rather to clarify the situation as it is, '[...] and build bridges towards the future in which the affected will be living after the disaster'. This building of bridges towards the future is about the eschatological challenge, and the central Christian concepts of faith, hope and love can be of considerable help in this regard. Bosch (1991, p. 499) speaks about the recovery of eschatology and coins the phrase 'mission as action in hope'. He argues for an eschatology of mission that is both future-directed and oriented to the here and now (Bosch 1991, p. 508). It reaches forward towards the 'not yet' but allows the vision of God's preferred future to enter and enrich the engagement with the 'already', even if the 'already' is a disease-infected reality. The transcendent message of God's eventual triumph serves to motivate the church to engage in the reality of restoring and healing a post-COVID-19 world.

■ Discipleship and formational challenge

Submission to (participate in) the reign of Christ entails an awareness of the invitation to participate in the in-breaking of the kingdom and to submit

to the reign of Christ as it unfolds in this pandemic. Such a formational approach recognises Christ as our only hope and security, as well as the importance of spiritual formation and discipleship in coping with disasters and in response to the crises of others. Bosch (1979, p. 13) was very much aware of the close relationship between spirituality and being engaged in the world and, simultaneously, that being in the world leads to a deepening of spirituality. The formational challenge is to nurture a missional spirituality – an awareness of God's living presence, even in the face of and in disasters. It attends to the formation and thus gives meaning to a person's life – it stimulates and emboldens believers with everything needed for the journey God sends them on. The World Council of Churches argues: 'Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions' (Keum 2013, pp. 4–5).

The pandemic forces a revisiting of vocation. There must be synergy between the spiritual (inward) and missional (outward) movement and, thus, the vocation of disciples. There is no sending without calling. Submitting to the reign of Christ is all about understanding the place and mission of leaders in the process of participating in God's mission. In this sense, COVID-19 represents a dramatic and perhaps defining test for the vocation of missional leaders. If the premise is correct, namely that the church needs missional leaders to lead in the transformation towards a missional church and to guide and serve congregations towards revitalisation in the blizzard, winter and ice age, vocation emerges as one of the most important facets in our discernment process. Niemandt (2019, p. 15) argues: 'Vocation belongs to the centre of any discussion on missional leadership'.

Vocation raises the issue of authority. The church has always accepted a configuration of persons holding specific authority and responsibility. It is the power that serves, facilitates and forms. It seems clear that the demands placed upon leadership by major adaptive changes and increased by the COVID-19 pandemic will severely test the vocation of congregational leaders. Only those with a strong sense of calling and a vision of the way forward to participate in God's mission will be able to lead. Peterson (2021, p. 76) explains that 'perhaps the greatest discovery ever made by man's primordial ancestors' is the vision and courage to face trial and tribulation. A strong sense of vocation is essential in humankind's ability to face misfortune, crisis and pandemics. In the words of Peterson (2021):

> Even if you are called by God himself to venture out into the world, as Abraham was, life is going to be exceptionally difficult. Even under the best of all conceivable circumstances, almost insuperable obstacles will emerge and obstruct your path. The encouragement? You will have the opportunity to reveal yourself as much stronger and more competent than you might imagine. (p. 117)

Discernment starts with the discernment of vocation, keeping in mind that the local congregation is the primary agent of vocation (Niemandt 2019, p. 218).

The discipleship and formational challenge recognise that healing and restoration of a wounded world are only possible if committed children of God answer to God's calling to act as faithful followers of Jesus who heals, attends to the wounded and comforts the broken-hearted.

■ Missional challenge

The pandemic had a profound impact on local congregations' interactions with their communities. The following example illustrates the issue: in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of the Western Cape, congregations reported that the need for shelter, food and health care grew exponentially in the first months of lockdown, and more than 70% of congregations reported that they were involved in relief work (Jackson 2020).

The irony of the normal playbook, with its focus on attendance-building and cash (ABC), being severely restricted while, at the same time, an increase of missional activity was occurring in the community should be welcomed with a sense of holy humour. Church as a focus point was replaced with a missional attitude to serve the community in need, to witness and worship in public as priests, prophets and servant kings. At first, the anxiety was that churches were forced to close, and then the discovery was made that churches are more open than ever.

This is to be expected because the *missio Dei* always leads to a liturgy of life and world, and the sent church always reacts to disaster and tragedy in life. The *missio Dei* encompasses words and deeds. The missional challenge includes the diaconate – the needs of the world – and especially the needs of the world in the face of disaster. Bosch (1991, p. 400) states that salvation is coherent, broad and as deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence. This has become known as the missional diaconate. Van der Merwe (2014, p. 314) explained the missional diaconate in terms of the kingdom of God and stated that the missional diaconate is the work of the church as a servant and participant in God's mission, and it includes the prevention and combating of suffering and social distress of individuals, groups and communities, as well as the promotion of justice in society. Van der Watt (2021, p. 9) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic presents the global church with an opportunity to recommit itself to its essential missional calling. Disasters accentuate the important role of Christian churches and the effective and comprehensive response of these communities to human needs. It presents the church with a missional challenge to embody and proclaim the good news tangibly and to represent

God's mercy, justice and peace. Clarity about (some of) the theological challenges posed to the church by the COVID-19 pandemic allows one to attend to leadership challenges in this particular situation.

■ Five innovative theological leadership challenges for churches to flourish in the new spring

Taking cognisance of the theological challenges, attention can now be focused on five challenges for innovative theological leadership. In this section, ideas to mould the contours of post-COVID-19 leadership in Africa are proposed.

■ Adaptive resilient leadership

The first leadership challenge is to embrace the adaptive nature of the challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic (and other disasters) and start to learn in these uncharted territories. Gregersen (2017) underscored the importance of the ability to develop a theology of disaster. Disasters are relational phenomena that arise in the interaction between nature and society (Gregersen 2017, p. 362). They entail loss and expose the fundamental vulnerability of selves and society (p. 363), and they carry many personal tragedies within them.

The adaptive challenges demand resilient leadership. Gregersen (2017, p. 366) shows the change in society from a vulnerability paradigm to a resilience paradigm. The importance of resilience extends beyond adaptive challenges. Drath (2017, p. xix) boldly states: 'Resilience is a *conditio sine qua non* of every successful leader'.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after setbacks and amid crises. It explains why some people can move ahead and continue to lead others while others cannot accomplish the same. Kohlrieser, Orlick and Perrinjaquet (n.d.) describe resilience:

> Resilience is the human capacity to meet adversity, setbacks and trauma, and then recover from them to live life fully. Resilient leaders can sustain their energy level under pressure, to cope with disruptive changes and adapt. (n.p.)

Resilient leaders embrace difficult circumstances and setbacks. They keep a positive attitude and bounce back in the face of adversity. This kind of leader demonstrates the ability to recover, learn from and be developmentally mature when confronted by chronic or crisis adversity (Patterson, Goens & Reed 2009, p. 8). Resilience is more than resistance. According to Gregersen (2017, p. 367), resilience is the capability to adapt

in confrontation with disasters, the capacity to absorb and adjust to changing conditions 'and at the same time restore and preserve the essential functions and structures' (Gregersen 2017, p. 367).

Resilient leaders understand the importance of pitching up and being present in a crisis. Resilience is rebuilding the organisation or enterprise piece by piece – these leaders are sensitive to identifying energy and momentum and restoring it through incremental planning. They protect the energy of people in their teams.

Resilient leaders exhibit decisiveness. According to Kohlrieser and colleagues (n.d.), '[t]hey are unyielding in the face of hardship'. Resilient leaders show perseverance and refuse to let adversity prevail. They are relational leaders, focused on forming strong personal bonds – or, in ecclesial language, they guard the importance of *koinonia.*

Another important part of adaptive leadership is the ability to learn from mistakes. In uncharted territory, one will get lost and will only find one's way if one learns from one's mistakes. If one wants to avoid mistakes at all costs, one's leadership will freeze in the long winter and one's congregation will die.

Leaders must become agile in decision-making. With the possibility of online meetings now part and parcel of our daily practice, organisations can meet more often with fewer costs and time involved. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some ecumenical and other networks were able to flourish with the aid of online meetings. One cannot plan with a waterfall strategy in uncharted territory, simply because one does not know the lay of the land, and also because there are so many unexpected variables in the mix.

In adaptive circumstances, leaders need to build and rebuild scenarios with the best information possible. Sunter (2011) explains that scenario planning distinguishes between the (new) rules of the game, uncertainties, options and decisions based on the preceding. A post-COVID-19 world challenges the church to reconceptualise leadership, to appreciate resilience as an important characteristic of leadership and to nurture adaptive leaders.

■ Leadership that transforms knowledge into embodied formation

An unexpected effect of a pandemic is the flourishing online reality of communication and learning and the acceleration of the 4IR. The local church of the new spring will have to take into account that knowledge and

teaching have changed forever. Knowledge is available, and institutions and leaders that work from the premise that they are the custodians of particular knowledge content will have less and less impact. Knowledge is not the first or only commodity of the church, but embodied, integrated discipleship is and will be. The close link between discipleship and spiritual formation for mission underscores the insight that personal development or growth (formation) must lead to a life focused outside of ourselves and living for the sake of the world. Spirituality is embodied formation and thus a journey within. But this is not a journey for the sake of the self or the journey, but a journey leading us to something more than ourselves, a journey for the sake of the world. Inner development and growth lead to a missional life of being sent (DRC 2013).

With the increased availability of knowledge, the need for future thinking (imagination), collaboration, communication, creativity and adaptability will grow. In the new normal, people will not connect with the church for more knowledge – they can find that online. It will also be a mistake to think our leadership is to provide more and better spiritual entertainment. We will be up against the daunting online competition.

The commodity of the future will be embodied fellowship of Word and sacrament as incarnational realities, in person, in a local venue at a specific time and placed in a rhythm of discipleship formation. Gregersen (2017, p. 370) refers to this type of formational insight in religion when he argues that religion generates a sense of preparedness for the unthinkable that can become too real all of a sudden: 'Faith cultivates an awareness of how the pedestrian common sense does not contain the full array of what is ultimately real'. Nel (2021, p. 82) also emphasised the importance of missional leadership that addresses the implications of the *missio Dei* in wider society. An incarnational approach will assist leaders to have a broader vision than the community of the redeemed. Gregersen (2017) argues in a similar vein:

> It's time for theologians to develop post-secular forms of theological reasoning which stays within the domain of shared humanity, showing the openness of shared experiences for religious interpretation, while being attentive to diverging routes of a more confined secular approach to life […]. (p. 366)

Embodied formation acknowledges that leaders follow Jesus Christ in the real world and amongst people suffering from pandemics and struggling in disasters.

▮ Anticipatory leadership

The 'new normal' requires anticipatory leadership. This is a radical departure, moving from reactive responses to the crisis to proactive leadership from

the future. It is a change from the propositional 'here we stand' to a relational 'there we go'. Anticipatory leaders anticipate the future and dare to align themselves and systems with it. It is a process of adaptive meaning-making, appreciating the possible self and future possibilities.

Anticipatory leadership exemplifies the missional dictum to discern God's present and preferred future. It is a shift from decision-making to discernment constantly – seeking God's presence and action in your community and congregation. It is a well-known approach in missional theology – the understanding that *missio Dei* expresses something of hope for God's future actions based on God's covenant faithfulness, God's trustworthiness and God's loyalty to what God created. God was busy, is still involved and will be active in his creation, and constantly invites his people to participate in what he is up to and what might flow from the future (Niemandt 2019, p. 136). Therefore, the two guiding questions: 'what is God doing?' and 'what does God want to do?'

Anticipatory leadership values innovation, but a specific type of innovation focused on adaptability, flexibility and a deep understanding that complexity demands novelty. To mention a few practical ideas – innovation demands as few rules as possible, flat open structures, emotional connections and swarm behaviour (see Niemandt 2019, p. 156). Leaders need to create a culture of innovation and biblical imagination with few or no hierarchal limitations and where input is not evaluated in terms of position or power. Swarm behaviour values diversity and focuses on getting the team or system to work and play in concert. It appreciates the collective wisdom of participants and the organic formation of consensus (Niemandt 2019, p. 195). Stoppels (2021, p. 23) mentions the importance of quality, authenticity and plain hard work. The Christendom paradigm, unfortunately, led to ecclesial laziness, and the church 'needs quality on the religious market' (Stoppels 2021, p. 23).

Anticipatory innovation might entail an embrace of sabotage as a normal part of organisational life (Stoppels 2021, p. 25), precisely because organisational change, and the transformation of organisational culture to resemble the future, will run into resistance. Systems tend to sustain the well-known and resist innovation, and anticipatory leadership might need a hero-like resistance. Peterson (2021) argues:

> Thus, just as the hierarchy of assumptions that make up the structure that organizes society and individual perceptions is shaped by, and integrally dependent on, restrictions, so too are creative transformations. It must strain against limits. (p. 35)

Anticipatory leaders attend to the spirituality of anticipation and eschatological participation in the mission of the Triune God. They can discern the plethora of imaginative narratives in Scripture and re-interpret

these stories into an eschatological narrative where God's preferred future draws congregations into and towards God's future.

There is an important connection between resilient leadership and anticipatory leadership – resilient leaders build awareness and anticipation. Resilient leaders demonstrate the ability to have a positive outlook about the future in the face of adversity; they understand reality and can envision the future. (Patterson et al. 2009, p. 9).

■ Communal sensemaking in local congregations

Ecumenical and denominational structures should stop operating as a 'head office' – they simply do not have the local knowledge to make it work for everybody. The pandemic has clearly shown that we need to listen with greater care to the local congregations and communities. It has become clear that many local congregations were adaptive and innovative in their response to the pandemic (Jackson 2020). Denominational structures need to transform to create systems of mutual learning and innovation. The sole focus should be to put everything in place for local faith communities to flourish. In the adaptive challenges of the new spring, the best place to find God's preferred future will not be in the denominational office but in the local congregation. It is also true that the local congregation, on their own, either neglect the potential of the new and unexpected insights and skills or repeat old embedded patterns.

Rituals are one of the important coping mechanisms for disasters. Veldsman (2021, p. 8) underscores the importance of rituals as part and parcel of religious resilience framed as sanctification. Disasters require an unwillingness to be victims, supported by the message of the cross and enhanced by all related rituals that capture and symbolise that very message. Gregersen (2017, p. 370) remarks that rituals are crucial for religious resilience in times of disaster. He concludes: 'The rituals themselves express how the religious traditions mix sturdiness and flexibility – and this mixture transmits resilience to those who participate in them'. Rituals flourish in local congregations where faith communities gather, celebrate, inspire and are inspired.

The importance of local congregations and the relational support garnered in congregations becomes clear when one understands that resilience is all about relationships. To build individual resilience (in leaders as well as in the system), we need to build resilience-enabling relationships and networks. This is ideally found in faith communities, which perhaps explains the ability of religious groups to support people and deliver emergency aid in disasters. Church leaders must understand and appreciate the collective wisdom and resilience of congregations.

■ Build local ecumenical networks: Strong on vision, weak on borders

No one can predict at this stage what the long-term effect of the pandemic will be on the church; the challenge is adaptive, as described above. But there are early signs that leaders can take into account in the new reset. The church of the new spring will be a local church deeply connected to the local community with its diverse needs and resources. It will be a church that builds partnerships as inclusively as possible to facilitate a bridge between the needs and the sources. It will appreciate the power of collective meaning-making and faith as shared sensemaking.

Van der Watt (2021, p. 8) states that disasters and crises challenge the church 'to become more resilient in faith and mutual care in congregational networks'. These networks are strong on vision and weak on borders. To mention one example: the South African Council of Churches (SACC) launched a successful campaign under the acronym LEAN (local, ecumenical action networks). The campaign is described thus (SACC 2022):

> The current LEANs initiative aims to consolidate and strengthen local ministrations to better serve society in the COVID challenges, but also to build on that strength for a post-COVID social and economic programming at the community level. (n.p.)

These new partnerships have the potential to facilitate a subversion of the engraved partnerships that uphold the injustices of the past. This must not be understood as a new 'welfare' strategy but the building of a new alternative community of trust and integrity. This becomes a way to participate in God's mission in the face of (and notwithstanding) disaster and crisis. As Van der Watt (2021, p. 9) concludes: 'It is God's mission. He opens a door, albeit via crises, and we are merely called to faithfully participate'.

■ Conclusion

This contribution placed the issue of ecclesial leadership within the broader context of disaster theologies and the impact of a changing VUCA world, as well as the acceleration brought upon the church by the COVID-19 pandemic. It proposed five theological challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the theological, ecclesial, eschatological, formational and missional challenges. The research also attended to innovative leadership challenges and focused on adaptive, resilient leadership, leadership that transforms knowledge into embodied formation, anticipatory leadership and communal sensemaking in congregations and ecumenical networks.

Leadership and the communication of ethics: Rawls and the COVID-19 pandemic

Manitza Kotzé
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the
South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa

■ Abstract

As soon as people came together and focused on a singular goal, the concept of leadership emerged. As early as Plato's *Republic*, the notion of leadership has featured prominently in Western philosophy. The justification for assuming authority over others is a classical philosophical question in this regard and one that has significant implications for the relationship between leadership and ethics. Ethical leadership, as a concept, has been instituted in both academic literature and professional practice, but there still exists a wide variety of perspectives on what such leadership would entail. In this contribution, I take as my point of departure for this discussion the view of John Rawls, who incorporates the idea of justice as integral to ethical leadership; in particular, justice as fairness. This is applied to the reactions of the government to the crisis of the coronavirus disease 2019

(COVID-19) pandemic, examining how ethical leadership can be communicated to the public.

■ Introduction

The notion of leadership emerged as soon as people came together and focused on a singular goal. As early as Plato's *Republic*, the notion of leadership has featured prominently in Western philosophy. While Plato was predominately interested in political leadership (Bauman 2018, p. 251), the virtues that he identifies in the five leadership types in the *Republic* can hold value for leadership in other contexts as well.

In this chapter, the issue of Christian leadership is investigated, in particular the notion of ethical leadership amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the response of the South African government. The first group of infections in South Africa was confirmed on 05 March 2020, followed by an early reaction from government. A countrywide lockdown was implemented together with a state of disaster being declared by the President. A risk-adjusted approach was established and applied, with five levels corresponding to the concentration of transmissions (WHO 2021). Compared to other countries, the response of the South African government was comparatively fast, with a lockdown implemented only 23 days after the first confirmed infection (De Villiers, Cerbone & Van Zijl 2020, p. 799).

The South African response and the actions taken to limit exposure and transmission were lauded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and many in the international community (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 798). The fast response was especially praised as an example of 'good governance and decisive action' (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 799). Others, however, were sceptical about the success of the measures taken and the implications it would hold for the struggling South African economy in particular (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 798). Questions about public trust and ethical leadership inevitably arose.

A leader who can be described as virtuous, Bauman notes, would consistently act in a manner that could be defined as ethical (2018, p. 253). The virtues that Plato ascribes to virtuous leaders are, in his view, making up a unity from parts of one whole; a person (or a leader) cannot hold some of the virtues and not others. Virtue is also inherently tied together with knowledge, knowing the real meaning of every virtue and what the virtuous action, as well as the opposite, would entail. The love of learning and struggling towards this is a natural characteristic of the true philosopher, as well as the virtuous leader (Plato, *Republic* 490b). At the same time, however, a virtuous leader is aware that they remain ignorant

regarding virtues. In *The Apology of Socrates*, Plato remarks that it is not only that those whom society regards as wise often lack wisdom but that obtaining success in one part of life often results in people becoming arrogant and not seeking knowledge in other areas (Bauman 2018, p. 253). A virtuous leader is also one who does not actively seek the opportunity to lead but is elected or chosen by others to become a leader; the ideal city is governed not by 'people who fight over shadows and struggle against one another in order to rule – as if that were a great good – but by people who are awake rather than dreaming' (Plato, *Republic* 520d).

Plato argues that 'being just is better than being unjust, even if one benefitted from being unjust' (Bauman 2018, p. 252). The notion of justice is a central theme of this chapter, particularly justice as it is understood by Rawls. In the following section, the concept of leadership will be explored, especially leadership viewed from the perspective of theological or Christian leadership, before turning to a Rawlsian view of justice and then bringing these two views together in discussing the response of the South African government to COVID-19.

■ Christian leadership

Drovdahl (2020, p. 578) and Jones posit that there are three noteworthy features that determine how leadership is understood and practised: 'the importance of a leader's character; the competencies needed in a leadership role; and the context in which a leader operates'. Kretzschmar refers to the importance of authentic leadership for genuine transformation and stresses the 'vital importance of the issue of leadership' for the African continent (2002, p. 41). Leadership, however, is a complicated and multilayered notion, one that carries a variety of connotations and purposes, depending on who is asked, as well as the person exercising it (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 42).

Three essential elements that Kretzschmar (2002) identifies for authentic leadership are:

> [...] a revised understanding of authority and power; the need to pay more attention to the moral character of leaders and the empowerment of church members; and the value of a more intentional focus on spiritual formation at theological colleges and universities. (p. 42)

Spiritual formation, from a Christian viewpoint, begins with 'our acceptance of Christ's offer of salvation, whether this acceptance takes the form of an instantaneous conversion experience, or a gradual experience of conversion' (Kretzschmar 2020, p. 2). It continues with the progression known as sanctification, growing into spiritual maturity (Kretzschmar 2020, p. 2). One aspect of spiritual formation, Kretzschmar indicates, is moral

formation, encouraging the growth of Christian moral discernment, integrity, relationships and action. As such, Christian leadership necessitates spiritual formation, being shaped to the image of Christ (2020, p. 2). Spiritual formation endeavours to encourage meeting and co-operation with God and refers to the continuous lifelong process of being shaped, increasing believers' awareness of God and the capability they have to respond to God's direction and revealed will (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 56). Moral formation makes transformation possible (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 56). This moral formation should not be separated from ethical reflection on issues facing believers, communities and leaders (Kretzschmar 2020, p. 2). Further on in this chapter, one such issue, namely the response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be investigated further.

A lack of leadership skills, an immoral or immature leader or an abuse of power result in a lack of authentic leadership. It is also often the case that 'leaders [...] lack the ability to translate visions and hopes into reality' (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 47). It is further true that when people are not empowered, they are more easily misled (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 48). Leaders who can be described as ethical, according to Kretzschmar (2002, p. 46), are 'trustworthy persons of integrity and competence', driven by values. Such leaders inspire and empower others to also grow into persons of moral integrity and to attain goals that are just and good (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 46).

On a secular level, Mendonca and Kanungo (2007, p. 43) note, ethical leadership is also based on moral principles wherein the ethical leader engages in altruism on three levels: motive, influence strategies and character formation. Authentic leadership requires a revision in our understanding of power and authority. Kretzschmar (2002, p. 50) indicates that in Scripture, 'power (*dunamis*) means force, strength and ability over people and things', while authority '(*exousia*) is used with reference only to people'. Authority then refers to the exercise of freedom of choice and ruling, used for the power wielded by leaders in legal, political or moral arenas (Kretzschmar 1995, p. 198). For believers, power and authority are always delegated; the power that leaders wield is held only on behalf of God, and it should be exercised according to God's character and will (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 50).

Common values like justice and compassion need to be reflected in moral leadership (Kretzschmar 2007, pp. 19–20). Rawls also stresses the value of community, especially regarding moral formation (Wright 2012, p. 307), which has been highlighted in this section. In the following section, the notion of justice is made more concrete by referring to one theory of justice, that of Rawls's notion of justice as fairness.

◼ Rawls: Justice as fairness

There are many different theories of justice. In addition, 'justice' is a loaded term, which can have many different meanings from different perspectives and to different individuals. In the English-speaking world after the Second World War, however, one of the most noteworthy theories of justice is Rawls's *A theory of justice* (1971), which he presents as a contemporary substitute for utilitarianism. Rawls puts forward this view of justice in the hope that it will be compatible with 'the belief that justice must be associated with fairness and the moral equality of persons' (Shaw 2005, p. 95). Similar to Plato's ideas about leadership discussed in *Republic*, which can be described as 'a philosophical account of an ideal regime, not a guide to practical politics' (Williamson 2008, p. 398), Rawls also offers an intellectual or hypothetical exercise. The reason I have chosen to engage Rawls's theory in this chapter is that it is thoroughly social from its establishment to the application, making it a fitting theory for a social issue such as leadership. For Rawls (1985, p. 223), society is 'a cooperative undertaking among its members' (Kotzé 2016, p. 75). Rawls (1985, p. 224) terms his theory 'justice as fairness', indicating that what he sets out in *A theory of justice* is a political conception of justice, which is 'a moral conception worked out for a specific kind of subject, namely, for political, social, and economic institutions'.

In defining justice as fairness, Rawls is able to find a middle ground between the two opposing traditions of Locke and Rousseau. Locke, on the one hand, confers more weight to 'freedom of thought and conscience, certain basic rights of the person and of property, and the rule of law' (Rawls 1985, p. 227), what Constant referred to as 'the liberties of the moderns' (Rawls 1985, p. 227). On the other hand, for Rousseau, 'equal political liberties and the values of public life' (Rawls 1985, p. 227) weigh heavier – 'the liberties of the ancients' (Rawls 1985, p. 227) in Constant's terms. By emphasising both freedom and equality in his definition of justice as fairness, Rawls (1985, p. 227) stipulates a perspective 'from which these principles can be seen as more appropriate than other familiar principles of justice to the nature of democratic citizens viewed as free and equal persons'. Accordingly, the objectives of justice as fairness for Rawls are not epistemological or metaphysical but rather practical.

The inception of Rawls's theory asks the simple question: if, hypothetically speaking, we should meet in the 'original position', what central values to govern society would we choose? His suspicion is that the answer would be justice, which includes, firstly, an assurance of some individual freedoms and, secondly, justifying inequalities on social and economic level only in the instance that they assist the least privileged. In the 'original position', people will choose according to their self-interest,

which would lead them to choose principles they find just, agreeing under circumstances of equality and free choice (Kotzé 2016, p. 75). In the 'original position', those making these choices operate behind the 'veil of ignorance', having no notion of their own social or economic position in the society that they are choosing principles for. Accordingly, they will choose conservatively, wanting 'more primary social goods' for themselves, such as income, 'but also rights, liberties, opportunities, status, self-respect, and so on' (Kotzé 2016, p. 76). Realising that they are influencing their own and their children's fate, a utilitarian standard will be chosen following what Rawls calls the *maximin rule*, maximising the minimum they could have in this hypothetical society.

In the 'original position', two principles will be chosen, after which more detailed decisions regarding the social and political institutions will be made, according to Rawls. In the first place, every individual will have equal rights to the most widespread entire arrangement of basic freedoms that are compatible with a comparable arrangement of freedom for all. In the second place, the inequalities on the social and economic fronts that exist should meet two criteria: they should be attached to positions that are open to all, and they should benefit the least privileged members of society (Rawls 1985, p. 227). Justice, Rawls notes, has to be egalitarian. As Wright (2012) indicates, the emphasis Rawls places:

> [...] on the least advantaged, respect for all people and the essential role of community in the formation of just individuals and a just society make him not only an interesting dialogue partner for a theological discussion on justice but also one who offers valuable insights from a secular perspective. (pp. 306–307)

Rawls stresses that people will act in a just manner because of their moral nature (Wright 2012, p. 308). As such, his theory is highly compatible with the present discussion on leadership. It does pose the question of whether the moral nature of people can be taken for granted. In the following section, the response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic will be investigated in order to measure it against Rawls's notion of justice as fairness and the concept of leadership as discussed previously.

■ Communicating ethics in South Africa during and after COVID-19

At the beginning of this chapter, virtues, as discussed in Plato's *Republic*, were mentioned. An important aspect of the virtuous leader for Plato is also how they go about persuading people and how this is also, like virtue, connected to knowledge (Bauman 2018, p. 253). Orators skilled in rhetoric

and persuasion who hold no knowledge of good, justice and the admirable or evil, injustice and the shameful are some of Plato's greatest fears (Plato, *Republic* 459d). Some lead by flattery and persuasion, but a virtuous leader 'seeks to know the truth of what is fine and good, and just and unjust' (Bauman 2018, p. 254).

There are many challenges in the South African context. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Kretzschmar (2002, p. 45) indicated some of these as 'national, regional and local levels; and successfully tackling the huge economic issues of justice, empowerment, growth and redistribution'. This includes, among others, 'dealing with poverty, unemployment and access to land in a context increasingly dominated by incompetence, corruption, AIDS and crime' (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 45). Many more could be added to this list.

De Villiers et al. (2020) mention the interrelated problems faced by South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> [...] namely, the public health threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic and health effects of the lockdown and numerous obdurate economic problems, some not directly a result of the current pandemic. (p. 798)

Communication during the COVID-19 pandemic by the South African government began as early as 23 January 2022, when the Department of Health issued a notice indicating that plans were in place and asking citizens not to panic (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 799). At a media briefing a mere six days later, the Minister of Health outlined these plans, which included screening at entry ports, high alert from outbreak response teams, distributing information to health care workers in both the private and public sectors, as well as establishing a hotline where clinicians could pose questions (De Villiers et al. 2020, pp. 799–800).

Ten days after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in South Africa on 05 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation in a televised broadcast, an unusual occurrence in South Africa (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 800). Throughout the pandemic, regular addresses by the President became the norm, with changes in restrictions and information regarding the pandemic and later vaccinations being delivered in this manner. The government also set up a website with centralised information. In short, as De Villiers (2020, p. 800) and colleagues remark, the 'relatively speedy, and coordinated, response enhanced the South African government's legitimacy and organisations, such as the WHO applauded [South Africa]'s response'.

De Villiers and colleagues also note, however, that the health care system in South Africa would not have been able to sustain a rampant patient increase. Accordingly, while the South African government was able to

assess the initial response of other countries, there was no contingency plan or capacity to cope with a great number of patients (2020, p. 799). Part of the rationale behind the lockdown restrictions was also communicated as giving the health care system the opportunity to build such capacity, and a number of emergency medical facilities were established.

While the aim of delaying the spread of COVID-19 was achieved, critics indicate that the government's response has been devastating to South Africa's already struggling economy and society. Many businesses were forced to close during lockdown and never recovered. Individuals – in some instances, entire households – lost their sources of income. Many people became socially isolated. In many ways, the pandemic has also exacerbated racial and gender inequality, and the abuse of women and children increased exponentially (De Villiers et al. 2020, pp. 800–801). Additionally, tax revenue was significantly reduced as a result of the banning of the sale of cigarettes and alcohol during lockdown; reduced imports leading to reduced customs duty; reduced fuel levies as a result of drastically reduced travel; and reduced value-added tax (VAT) collections because of reduced operations (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 801).

According to Rawls's theory of justice, one of the principles stressed is that inequalities should be to the benefit of the least privileged members of society. In examining the response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains an open question whether the restrictions set in place to slow the spread of the pandemic met this criterion. Arguing from the perspective of health care, the case could be made that the strict lockdown conditions and restrictions were to the benefit of the very poor. People living without basic necessities such as clean running water would not be able to act according to the guidelines for preventing infections such as frequently washing their hands. Living in informal settlements with dwellings right next to each other made social distancing close to impossible. The very poor in South Africa were therefore protected by the strict restrictions issued by the government, and from this perspective, according to Rawls's theory of justice as fairness, although there were both social and economic inequalities caused by the lockdown, they benefitted those least advantaged.

However, research also seems to suggest that in countries with developing economies as opposed to advanced economies, lockdowns are both less effective and more costly. The effectiveness of lockdowns in contexts of overcrowded dwellings has also been questioned (Blecher et al. 2021, p. 2).

On the other hand, one could also take an economic perspective as a point of departure, which would paint a different picture. From this point of

view, it was the poorest of the poor and the least advantaged in society who suffered most under strict lockdown rules and restrictions. While the more privileged were able to stockpile resources and spend their days unable to work doing social media challenges and socialising virtually, for many it meant no income and, accordingly, no means to buy the most basic of necessities. Those working in the informal economy had no means of generating an income during lockdown. The lockdown restrictions were inconvenient for those in a position of privilege but utterly devastating to the poor, the least privileged members of society. It was low-income workers who were most affected by job losses as a result of the lockdown (De Villiers et al. 2020, p. 801). Blecher and colleagues (2021) also note that the results of lengthy lockdowns:

> [W]ere greater in low- and middle-income countries with weak fiscal positions, high debt and limited ability of governments to provide income support for large sections of the population for prolonged periods. (p. 2)

This is true of South Africa. The effects included a much higher danger of starvation, crime and infection (Blecher et al. 2021, p. 2). From this perspective, Rawls's concept of justice as fairness was not met.

The response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic clearly prioritised human life above the economy, implementing strict restrictions in order to slow or stop the spreading of infections at the cost of the economic sector. This was a tough decision and one, I should think, not taken lightly. The WHO, who praised the South African response earlier, advocated for governments to take both epidemiological and economic issues into account when responding to the pandemic by December 2020 (Blecher et al. 2021, p. 2). While the response to assist those struggling included government grants, a lowering of the interest rate and putting certain payments on hold, as well as donations and grants from businesses and private individuals, the economic effects of the South African government's response are still felt.

■ Conclusion

In *Republic*, Plato does not refer to individual leaders and the excellent qualities they should possess but rather 'the general character of and social functions performed by […] leadership *classes*' (Williamson 2008, p. 398; [*emphasis in the original*]). Leadership is therefore a communal endeavour, and in reflecting on Christian leadership or the idea of leadership from the perspective of Christian theology, this is a particularly important notion. In this chapter, I discussed the concept of leadership and Rawls's understanding of justice, followed by the response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic. In evaluating the government's reaction, it is therefore not the actions of individuals that come under scrutiny.

Spiritual and moral formation needs to be intentional (Kretzschmar 2002, p. 57). This means that it should be understood and addressed through premeditated strategies. Earlier in this chapter, the necessity of spiritual formation for leadership was discussed. One element of spiritual formation, Kretzschmar indicates, is discernment, 'judgment and insight that is able to see beneath the surface of what is apparent' (2002, p. 58). Leaders with spiritual maturity and discernment are needed in order to guide communities to lifegiving spaces, to 'wholeness of life' (Kretzschmar 2007, p. 18). The 'cost of moral leadership is high, and few are willing to pay the price' (Kretzschmar 2007, p. 18). This is also apparent when looking at leadership in South Africa during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and at present.

In evaluating the response of the South African government to the pandemic, this chapter suggests one possible measure, namely Rawls's theory of justice as fairness. This theory can also lead to different responses, depending on whether one prioritises the safeguarding of human life or the economy. While (ideally speaking) these two should have been balanced in the pandemic response, when one is forced to make this decision, I would argue that human life should always be prioritised above the economy. Human life is infinitely precious. While economic growth can be restored and businesses reopened, lost human lives can never be recovered.

Reflections on re-imagining leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa

Philip La G du Toit
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa

Alfred R Brunsdon
Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of
the South African Society,
Faculty of Theology, North-West University,
Mahikeng, South Africa

■ Abstract

This chapter is presented as a summative reflection on the collective re-imagining of leadership in post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Africa. Leadership in Africa has historically proven to be one of Africa's most intriguing and enduring challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has, in many ways, exacerbated Africa's challenges, calling for revisiting leadership from different viewpoints. In this work, theological insights are offered to stimulate thinking on the subject. It is done from the cautionary stance that current contexts should be contemplated in a hermeneutically responsible way. This opens up a variety of vistas that include biblical, practical

theological, missiological and ethical perspectives to be pondered on in post-COVID-19 Africa to cultivate and nurture appropriate leadership for this unique time in history.

■ Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about profound changes in the way we live and perceive reality. While the post-COVID-19 effects are global, this book focuses on the post-COVID-19 reality on the African continent. Amidst the various hardships and challenges that the pandemic brought about, a major area in which the effects of COVID-19 were felt is the area of leadership. Because leadership on the African continent was already facing many challenges before the pandemic, the need for effective and resilient leadership became even more pertinent in the post-COVID-19 situation. The aim of this book is to provide perspectives on improving leadership from different theological subject fields. Although the focus is on leadership in Africa, the leadership principles that come to the fore in this book are not confined to an African context. Chapters 1–5 offer bibliological perspectives from both the Old and New Testaments on leadership. Chapters 6–7 are written from a practical theological perspective. Chapters 8 and 9 offer a missiological perspective, and Chapter 10 is written from an ethical perspective. These various perspectives on leadership are neither intended to be comprehensive on the subject nor written from the same theological or confessional point of departure. The contributions are thus diverse in nature and do not represent the same confessional background. While this aspect might be perceived by some as a shortcoming, it can also be seen as a benefit in that it reflects the diverse contexts and perceptions of leadership and Christianity, not only on the African continent but worldwide.

■ Challenges associated with leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa

Various authors in this book identified challenges with leadership in general on the African continent. Even before the pandemic, leadership in Africa has generally been in crisis. In fact, much of Africa's lagging behind in development can be related to leadership problems. In many places, leaders have elevated their positions to those of kings and chiefs. Governance is often tainted by favouritism, nepotism, tribalism and other forms of corruption that often lead to poor infrastructure, poverty, unemployment and various service delivery issues (Du Toit 2023; cf. Denton 2023; Kotzé 2023). In South Africa, during the pandemic, corruption was the order of the day (Cornelius 2023; Denton 2023; Viljoen 2023), including overpricing,

substandard products and services, tender corruption and food parcel corruption (Cornelius 2023). Even the neglect of leaders in delivering the services for which they were appointed can be seen as a form of 'quiet corruption' (Viljoen 2023). The tendency for leaders to abuse their power can be related to the so-called 'power paradox' in which initial practices of showing empathy, collaboration, open-mindedness, fairness and generosity vanish, leaving leaders vulnerable to impulse, becoming self-serving and having a lack of empathy (Cornelius 2023). In these instances, leadership is often characterised by cheap opportunism and unrealistic populism, exploiting circumstances for the leaders' own political gain (Viljoen 2023). The latter tendency is not necessarily confined to Africa (cf. Kok 2023). The leadership predicament in Africa prompts a rethinking of leadership (Cornelius 2023) in which leadership is undergirded by ethical values such as accountability, responsibility and integrity that lead to good governance and proper service delivery (Viljoen 2023).

In respect of church leadership, various adaptive challenges have been identified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic accelerated the changes that were already imminent as a result of globalisation, the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and other social changes, which are sometimes referred to as a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (see Barentsen & Kok 2017, pp. 7–10). According to Denton (2023, p. 92), the pandemic 'has undeniably disrupted, unsettled and changed the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial world of human lives'. The COVID-19 pandemic also affected the effectiveness of congregational life, including worship, evangelism, outreach and pastoral care (Denton 2023; Magezi 2023). Marginalised and vulnerable people have especially been affected by the pandemic (Denton 2023). A side effect of these changes is a state of uncertainty (Coetsee 2023; Magezi 2023) that negatively influences the ability of church leaders to plan ahead (Magezi 2023). These changes emphasise the burning need to reconceptualise ecclesial leadership (Marais & Niemandt 2023; cf. Denton 2023).

A particular challenge that was pointed out is theological in nature. People thought anew about how to understand God (Marais & Niemandt 2023) and especially about the origin of evil and its relationship to God's sovereignty (Magezi 2023). According to Marais and Niemandt (2023, p. 145), leaders 'need to rediscover the grammar of trinitarian theology'. Magezi (2023) argues that the church needs ministry interventions that are guided by a deeper understanding of the origin and nature of evil events that human beings experience. Brunsdon (2023, p. 106) reasons that another particular effect of the pandemic is that church leaders 'run the risk of becoming stuck in the longing to return to pre-pandemic expressions of congregational life, while post-pandemic congregational life may require

different approaches altogether'. Added to this challenge is the fact that Africa is culturally complex, mainly because of human flow and displacement. There exists a diversity of modes of being in Africa, and the idea of an 'African context' is thus, at heart, a philosophical concept. There is a sense in which the African context can be understood as a spiritual category in which life is approached differently from the analytical, Western approach (see Louw 2008). The way in which Christian identity is perceived and experienced in Africa is characterised by valuing the sacredness of life, plurality in the spiritual or divine realm, mystical connectivity, cosmic harmony, creativity and adaptability, affirmation of life and a pragmatic spirituality (see Lartey 2013, p. 25). The leadership and ministries must be best suited to their context. Because there exists in an African worldview a close relationship between the physical and the spiritual, spiritual leaders are held in high esteem by congregants. However, social distancing has impaired congregational ministry. Church leadership thus must navigate the unknown post-COVID-19 situation (Brunsdon 2023).

As pointed out by Marais and Niemandt (2023), other challenges that church leaders face in the wake of the pandemic include the following: within the understanding that the church is an alternative community that is gathered by God into the life of the Trinity, amidst disasters an ecclesial challenge exists in which community is disrupted. The challenge is for a community to become more resilient in mutual and pastoral care, grounded in the communal life of the Trinity, in order to bring the good news of renewal during hard times. Congregants also face an eschatological challenge, which is essentially a challenge about hope. Underlying this challenge is an understanding of mission as action in hope (Bosch 1991, p. 499), in which bridges ought to be built towards the future. Another challenge that the church faces is a discipleship and formational challenge, in which Christ is seen as the church's only hope and security. A missional spirituality ought to be nurtured amidst an awareness of God's presence, even in the face of disasters. Christians need to revisit their vocations. There needs to be a synergy between spiritual (inward) and missional (outward) movement in order to bring about healing and restoration in a wounded world. Lastly, there exists a missional challenge in which there is an increase of practical missional activity such as providing shelter, food and health care. In sum, there needs to be 'good spiritual leadership' (Coetsee 2023, p. 1) in facing these various challenges.

■ The hermeneutical challenge of deriving leadership principles from Scripture

In facing the various leadership challenges, as outlined, this book starts by focusing on leadership principles that are derived from Scripture.

However, to derive leadership principles from Scripture for today's context is a challenge in itself. Kok (2023) criticises the tendency in traditional Protestant exegesis to merely add application as a last step without necessarily accounting for the hermeneutical distance between the context in which the biblical material was written and the contemporary context to which scriptural principles are applied. A critical step is needed in which the biblical material is represented and reinterpreted for any given context. A bridge must thus be built between the ancient and the contemporary contexts. In order to build such a hermeneutical bridge, the contemporary experiences can be seen as contrast experiences that are shared between the past and the present. A negative contrast experience of suffering can serve as a breeding ground for an alternative future and better life possibilities. In this way, new meaning can be constructed that speaks to the actual questions of contemporary culture. In a similar vein, Viljoen (2023) calls for responsible hermeneutics in which simplistic, biblicistic application is avoided. Coetsee (2023, p. 1) argues for 'translating' scriptural principles 'into general maxims that can be followed' while being aware of caveats such as exemplarism and the fact that not all actions or statements have modern-day equivalents and are thus not necessarily transferable.

◼ Leadership principles derived from Scripture

The various scholars who derived leadership principles from Scripture applied them to both church leadership (Coetsee 2023; Du Toit 2023; Viljoen 2023) and leadership in general society (Cornelius 2023; Du Toit 2023; Kok 2023; Viljoen 2023).

◼ Biblical principles for church leadership

Coetsee (2023) identifies leadership principles for church leaders from various characters or people groups that are presented in the book of Deuteronomy. As a leader, Moses spoke the words of God and exhorted other leaders to fulfil their respective tasks. As the leader who eventually led Israel into the promised land, Joshua is presented as trusting the Lord and governing Israel justly. Tribal leaders are shown to be wise, intelligent and experienced, rendering fair judgement. Judges and officials are just in their judgement. They do not show partiality or accept bribes. They act wisely and only pursue justice. The king is presented as God's chosen representative, valuing and observing the written law and restricting his powers as a result. Priests are pictured as mediating God's words to people in judicial cases, encouraging them, ministering and blessing them, checking

for leprosy, receiving their offerings, confirming the covenant and reading the law to them during certain occasions. Prophets are presented as God's messengers and mediators, speaking the Lord's words to the people. Within the family structure, elders have various judicial responsibilities as well as the responsibility to teach the people to implement the law.

From these various functions and characteristics that are associated with the different kinds of leaders that are presented in the book of Deuteronomy, Coetsee (2023) establishes the following maxims in relation to God and the religious community: in respect of a leader's relationship to God, they should be obedient to God's Word, be encouraged in their calling by trusting God, keep their focus on God, stay dependent on God, frequently read and observe God's Word, minister according to it and let it determine their conduct and ministry. In respect of leaders' relation to other members of the believing community, they should speak God's Word, teach it to them, explain it to them and exhort them to obey it. In this, they should speak God's Word comprehensively without neglecting any part of it and act as God's messengers and spokesmen in the process. Regarding their mediatory function, their ministry should be wise and intelligent, rendering fair and wise judgement. They should monitor the community's covenantal commitment to God and encourage them to trust God. They should bless the people and receive the offerings that they bring for God. Church leaders also must take up the responsibility to exhort other church leaders to fulfil the work they are called to do.

Viljoen (2023) specifically focuses on Jesus' criticism of Jewish leadership in Matthew 23, which forms part of one of Jesus' main discourses in Matthew 23. The leadership of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees is exposed as hypocritical and based on self-interest. While they burden people with heavy demands according to their interpretation of the law, they do not adhere to them themselves. Within an honour and shame society, these leaders are only concerned about their own honour and public recognition. In contrast, Jesus teaches his disciples not to seek honorary titles such as 'rabbi', 'father' or 'instructor'. In Matthew 23, Jesus concludes his instruction by stating that those who humble themselves will be exalted (Mt 23:12). Within the broader context of Matthew, the importance of humility in leadership is underlined by Matthew 18:1–4, in which Jesus uses a child as an example, which in itself was unheard of if ancient Jewish texts are considered. Also, in Matthew 20:25–28, Jesus rejects the request of the mother of James and John for her sons to be seated at Jesus' right hand in his kingdom. Rather, Jesus instructs his disciples to be servants and enslaved people, based on the model that Jesus himself demonstrated, being a true king whose aim was solely to benefit his subjects. As pointed out by Neyrey (1998, p. 125), according to Matthew, such a person would be considered as honourable and worthy of praise.

Viljoen (2023) argues that leadership principles should first and foremost be applied to church and religious leadership. Leaders should avoid seeking honourable titles but rather realise that all people are equal before God their Father. Leaders should obey Christ as the ultimate instructor and serve others while humbling themselves.

◼ Biblical principles for leadership in general

While the leadership principles that are advanced by Viljoen's (2023) study of Matthew 23 are primarily applicable to the believing community, he argues that basic principles of leadership can also be applied to leaders in general. Service delivery should largely depend on altruistic leadership that is based on the broader welfare of the public and not on self-interest. Ethical leadership that builds on a strong personal value system should thus be the cornerstone of the provision of essential services.

Cornelius (2023) infers general leadership principles from Paul's life and ministry by focusing on the nature of his leadership as a Pharisee (then called Saul) and contrasting it with the character of his leadership as an apostle. This is done in order to offer an example of how to avoid the so-called 'power paradox' (see above). Cornelius utilises a multidisciplinary approach in which the sociohistorical background is taken into account, as well as insights from narratology and epistolography. Insights from psychology in the field of power abuse and change are also brought into the equation. As a Pharisee, Paul suppressed the Jesus-followers, aiming to destroy the church. Like Viljoen (2023), Cornelius (2023) points out the self-righteous and hypocritical nature of the Pharisees' leadership style. Saul took power into his own hands to arrest people, imprison them and so forth. She considers Saul as one of the main leaders in the campaign against Christianity. In Saul's quest, his experience of power had the tendency to destroy the skills that gained him the position of power in the first place.

In contrast, Cornelius (2023) argues that when Paul the apostle was *not* in a leadership position, his conduct can be characterised as being:

> [...] trustworthy, taking the initiative and using good judgement, taking courage, speaking with authority, strengthening others, optimistic and enthusiastic, taking charge in crises, able to influence, never compromising, focusing on objectives instead of obstacles, empowering by example, being decisive and determined. (p. 45)

When Paul *did* engage in his role as leader, he was (Cornelius 2023):

> [*D*]evoted and loyal to his people; showing empathy; keeping a clear conscience; being reliable, definite and decisive; knowing when to change his mind; not abusing power; never giving up; being sure of his calling, knowing his own limitations; being resilient, passionate, courageous, and discerning. (pp. 45–46)

There is no indication that Paul abused his power. Even when his authority was challenged, he stayed calm. If his leadership as a Pharisee is compared with his leadership as an apostle, among other things, Saul the Pharisee was in favour of violence and showed no mercy. He was self-righteous and took care of his own status, stealing lives and power from people. He used his power to control others. In contrast, Paul the apostle worked for peace and showed compassion and love. He was a humble servant of God who strived to serve God, positively benefitting the lives of people. He used his power to control himself under the authority of God.

Importantly, Cornelius (2023) asks how Paul achieved this radical change in leadership style from being a Pharisee to being an apostle. Cornelius answers this question by pointing to Paul's Damascus experience in which he had an encounter with the risen Christ. This 'changed everything for Paul as leader'. Cornelius calls this 'spiritual intelligence […] to realise that there is a power bigger than oneself, namely God'. This spiritual intelligence 'erases power abuse as one realises that all power is in the hands of God and that one is only serving this God' (p. 49). As a result of his Damascus encounter, Paul did not display controlling behaviour. As a servant of Christ, Paul humbled himself and knew his limitations. He can be considered a transformational leader based on his transformation in Christ. Cornelius argues that leadership can be transformed as a consequence of one's commitment to God.

While Cornelius (2023) focuses on Paul's personal leadership style, Du Toit (2023) derives leadership principles from the theological content of the Pauline corpus itself. Du Toit focuses on four focal points as they come forth from the Pauline material, namely (1) Christ as the leader of the church and leaders that closely follow Christ, (2) the nature of Christ's leadership, (3) the nature of human leadership in following Christ and (4) the attitude behind the spiritual gifts as equipment for leadership. In respect of Christ being the leader of the church, Du Toit argues that human leadership should operate from a position of subordination to Christ, reflecting the relationship of the church to Christ as the head. But this principle is also broadened in that human leadership cannot be envisioned apart from Christ's cosmic reign, which is his reign over all of creation. In fact, all forms of leadership can be considered as being under Christ's authority. In Paul's own reflection in his letters, he also sees himself as being under the direct control of Christ himself. Having been crucified with Christ, he experiences a change of identity in which his life now does not emanate from his own interests and desires but from Christ who lives in him and through him (Gl 2:20). New life in Christ is thus eschatological life and resurrection life, based on the new creation. Paul's earthly existence, which includes his position as leader by implication, 'is completely permeated by Christ' (Hansen 2009, p. 82).

As regards the nature of Christ's leadership, Du Toit (2023) holds that in Philippians 2:6–11, Christ's exalted position in which he obtained the name above all names is based on total self-abandonment and self-giving, a pattern that is presented as paradigmatic to the Philippian congregation, who became fractious in their quest for status and honour. In comparison with how leadership is often perceived in an African context, Christ's leadership position is *ironic* in that it '*flows from* and *is characterised by* self-emptying, humiliation, servanthood and obedience' (Du Toit 2023, p. 60). Du Toit (2023) argues that:

> Philippians 2:6–11 is not a mere description of Christ's attitude underlying his position of leadership, but is also provided as *an example of the way in which people should perceive and implement leadership*. (p. 60)

Regarding the nature of human leadership in following Christ, Du Toit (2023) continues that Paul perceived suffering for the sake of Christ not only as something that believers should endure but as something that ought to be intrinsic to being in a position of leadership in the church. When Paul mentions his so-called thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:1–9), he counters a *theologia gloriae* with a theology of the cross, 'which also permeates his perception of leadership'. A Christoform and cruciform lifestyle and leadership style should emanate from Christ's own indwelling presence in believers.

In respect of the attitude behind spiritual gifts as equipment for leadership that are addressed in Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1–9, the gifts can be understood as being embedded within underlying attitudes of humility, love and showing honour to all members of the congregation. All people ought to be seen as of equal value, although having different gifts, functions and responsibilities. These attitudes must be based on the renewing of the mind as a result of the new eschatological existence in Christ.

Although most of the leadership principles that can be derived from the Pauline corpus are set in the context of the believing community, Du Toit (2023) argues that in view of Paul's cosmic portrayal of Christ's leadership, Christ's pre-eminence in leadership is not confined to church leadership but 'ought to permeate all of humankind'. Leaders should thus already live from the eschatological reality of Christ's cosmic reign, although this reality will only be fully realised at the eschaton (Du Toit 2023). In the practice of leadership, Christ's example should not merely be followed, but leaders should be animated and empowered by Christ's indwelling presence.

Kok (2023) links up with the research of Lans Bovenberg (2018), a well-known scholar in economics. Bovenberg argues that economics is a discipline of hope, which he undergirds by Christian Scripture. Bovenberg 'aims to construct an alternative relational "macronarrative" of hope for

economics that is inspired by the Christian gospel' (Kok 2023, p. 77). Bovenberg's (2018) construction of an alternative macronarrative is directed against the so-called super-individualist and competitive *Homo economicus* model. The *Homo economicus* model is based on the assumption that trust in money determines proper behaviour and motivation. Within this model, there exists a negative spiral of fear, greed, a lack of trust and a turn to selfish self-interest and alienation as a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to angry condemnation, distrust, a lack of focus and ultimately despair and hopelessness (Kok 2023). The counter-model that Bovenberg (2018) proposes, utilised by Kok (2023), is a positive spiral based on joy that leads to the love of God and others, leading to trust, appreciation, forgiveness and ultimately hope and healing. While Kok agrees with Bovenberg that the Christian faith provides an antidote to the crisis, he aims to refine Bovenberg's approach in areas where, according to Kok (2023, p. 76), Bovenberg 'lacks the exegetical and hermeneutical ability to do justice to the world behind the text'. Kok (2023) fills this void by attending to the sociocultural context behind 1 Peter while applying Bovenberg's model to his interpretation of 1 Peter.

Kok (2023) argues that the believers to whom 1 Peter was directed experienced social ostracism. Their predicament must be understood against a group-orientated, dyadic, paternalistic society in which honour and shame were pivotal values. People had to conform to these values and submit to the authority of the *paterfamilias*. Because the ancient world was permeated by religion, the new identity that believers acquired and the consequential break with their former pagan ways caused them to be slandered, abused and being called 'evildoers'. Yet, in society, the believers to whom 1 Peter was directed also experienced a sense of loss of identity, alienation and a need to belong. These issues are deliberately addressed by the author of 1 Peter, instilling a new sense of identity by using family metaphors such as God being a Father, metaphors of inheritance, mutual love, brothers and sisters, birth and growth to maturity. The author of Peter also uses a series of adjectives such as being single-minded, sympathetic, loving, appreciative, tender-hearted and humble in contrast to their situation. In contrast with the idea of reciprocity in society, in which evil was repaid by evil, the believing community should show brotherly love and patience amidst persecution and suffering, thereby breaking the negative spiral of conflict and violence. Their identity ethos should be built on the group prototype, Jesus Christ, who suffered to bring believers to God and to true insight. Instead of blaming and shaming others, negative spirals of violence and alienation should be broken by blessing others, leading to maturity and resilience. Bridges should be built with outsiders, and the downward spiral of despair should be broken by an upward spiral of hope, love and resilience, even in contexts of suffering.

■ Practical theological perspectives on leadership

At the heart of practical theology lies the task of reflecting critically on the communicative actions of faith communities. In the framework of this collective work, critical reflection on leadership from a practical theological and pastoral stance yielded at least two broad themes for further contemplation.

Denton (2023) emphasises the importance of selfless, servant-based leadership that can bring about social transformation and restore Christian moral values. Leaders should follow and imitate the example of Jesus, as demonstrated by his healing ministry. In reference to Viljoen (2014), Denton discusses the way in which Jesus' healing miracles involved more than healing people's sickness. In reference to the lepers whom Jesus healed (Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–16; 17:11–19), who were marginalised and ostracised by society, their healing involved the restoration of their position and identity in society. In the process, by interacting with these people, Jesus re-imagined leadership in that he acted contrary to the socioreligious establishment and challenged their purity conventions. Yet these healing miracles complemented Jesus' teaching, confirming his authority and God's power that worked in and through him. For Denton, leadership should be based on Jesus' example of challenging the social order by showing compassion and interacting with vulnerable, marginalised, exploited and abused people. Leadership should be selfless and servant-based, demonstrating compassion and care to these people. Principally, leadership should thus be mirroring 'moral norms, values and beliefs' and provide 'Christian ethical guidance' by living 'morally responsible lives' (Denton 2023, p. 103). A particular strategy advanced by Denton to achieve this level of leadership is that networks of social compassion in unreached groups or people who live on the fringes of society should be pursued.

Brunsdon (2023) shows that the pandemic touched African congregational leaders in various ways. Given that the post-COVID-19 era qualitatively presents a new era, differing in many ways from pre-COVID-19 life, congregational leaders must purposively engage in a process of discernment about their spiritual and emotional positionality going forward. As the danger exists that church leadership could become stuck in a debilitating longing for the past, nostalgia needs to be addressed in constructive ways. He subsequently presents the valuable hermeneutical lenses of restorative and reflective nostalgia to aid discernment by congregational leaders. Restorative nostalgia is indicative of wanting to restore the 'better' past, and reflective nostalgia appreciates the past while accepting current challenges, mindfully planning for the future. Key to this process are 'reflective nostalgia conversations to set the process of discernment in motion with a view on

mindful planning and the enhancement of leadership aimed at flourishing post-COVID-19 congregations' (Brunsdon 2023, p. 116). Leading questions in such conversations should revolve around what is treasured about the pre-COVID-19 era, what was lost during COVID-19, what was gained as a result of COVID-19, what one's expectations and dreams post-COVID-19 might be and what is needed to be done to attain post-COVID-19 expectations and dreams. Theological discernment is needed, which is enlightened by Scripture. These reflective nostalgia conversations are deemed to have a healing dimension in themselves.

These two broad strokes are indicative that post-COVID-19 congregational leadership should be mindful of taking stock of their spiritual and emotional positionality and also be contemplative of leadership styles that can accommodate and address post-COVID-19 realities.

◼ Missional perspectives on leadership

In the missiological contributions of Magezi (2023), Marais and Niemandt (2023), the focus is on equipping church leadership to face difficult circumstances that are associated with the changing world that we live in. Magezi (2023) focuses on ministry interventions for church leadership to cope with the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He argues that church leaders must be educated in the doctrine of God's sovereignty and control over the world. In Magezi's understanding, God is in control of everything in the world, including evil events that happen. He is quick to point out, however, that God should not be seen as an evildoer, wrongdoer or sinner but as using secondary agents such as Satan to bring judgement on sin in general and to bring Christians to maturity and Christlikeness. In Magezi's approach, Church leaders should always be conscious of the existence of evil events and God's ultimate control over them. Ministries ought thus to develop backup plans for disaster situations. Instead of questioning God when evil happens, they should focus on helping victims and other compassionate ministries.

Amidst the various challenges that Christians face in a so-called VUCA world (see above), which were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Marais and Niemandt (2023) propose five innovative theological leadership characteristics in order to challenge church leadership:

1. Leadership should be adaptive and resilient. Leaders must be able to bounce back after setbacks and crises and even embrace these hardships. They should absorb and adjust to changing conditions. In the process, leaders should exhibit decisiveness and learn from mistakes.
2. Leadership must transform knowledge into embodied formation. Discipleship should be embodied and integrated, which is closely linked

to spiritual formation. Personal development and growth should cause people to focus on life outside of themselves. There is a need for future thinking, creativity and adaptability. Fellowship needs to be embodied in word and sacrament as incarnational realities. Leadership should be missional, addressing the implications of the *missio Dei* in society at large.

3. Leadership should be anticipatory. The future needs to be anticipated, to which people and systems need to be aligned. God's present and preferred future must be discerned. In this understanding, the *missio Dei* 'expresses something of hope for God's future actions based on God's covenant faithfulness, God's trustworthiness and God's loyalty to what God created' (Marais & Niemandt 2023, p. 153). In this regard, innovation, swarm behaviour and diversity are valued. In the process, leaders would attend 'the spirituality of anticipation and eschatological participation in the mission of the Triune God' (Marais & Niemandt 2023, p. 153).

4. Leaders should focus on communal sensemaking in local congregations. God's preferred future is understood to be focused on the local congregation rather than in the denominational office. Marais and Niemandt (2023) argue that communal rituals are crucial for religious resilience in hard times. In these rituals, sturdiness and flexibility should be mixed. Congregations in which faith communities gather, celebrate, inspire and are inspired should flourish in rituals. Part of the equation is to build resilience-enabling relationships and networks.

5. Lastly, local ecumenical networks that are strong on vision and weak on borders should be built. Partnerships should be as inclusive as possible to form a bridge between the needs and the sources, appreciating the power of collective meaning-making and faith as shared sensemaking. There should be mutual care in congregational networks and a subversion of the engraved partnerships that uphold the injustices of the past.

◼ Ethical perspective on leadership

Kotzé (2023) advocates an ethical perspective on leadership, which she understands as virtuous leadership. Virtuous leadership, in turn, is tied to knowledge: 'knowing the real meaning of every virtue and what the virtuous action, as well as the opposite' (Kotzé 2023, p. 158). Kotzé draws from Plato, who argues that those whom society regards as wise often lack wisdom in that they often obtain success in one area of life but do not seek knowledge in other areas, becoming arrogant in their area of success. In contrast, a virtuous leader is not actively seeking an opportunity to lead but is elected by the community to become a leader. Kotzé argues that virtuous leadership, being a Christian virtue, should be based on a leader's character, competency and the context in which a leader operates,

which should lead to transformation. Christian leadership should flow from spiritual formation, starting with accepting Christ's offer of salvation (a conversion experience), leading to sanctification and spiritual maturity. Part of spiritual maturity is moral formation, involving discernment, integrity, relationships and action, which is shaped on the image of Christ. Moral transformation opens the possibility for transformation in society. Other important values of moral leadership that Kotzé points out are justice and compassion. In this regard, Kotzé draws from Rawls's (1985) theory of justice, which is a contemporary substitute for utilitarianism. In Rawls's theory, justice is associated with fairness, freedom and moral equality of persons. Individual freedoms are thus respected, and inequalities between people can only be justified if they benefit the least privileged of society. Leaders can only act if their actions are based on their morality. In measuring the response of the South African government to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kotzé acknowledges their response as relatively quick, benefitting the least privileged in averting the loss of life on the one hand, but as bringing about economic hardship, the loss of income and poverty on the other hand. In weighing the latter two effects of the strict lockdowns in South Africa against one another, she concludes that 'human life should always be prioritised above the economy' (Kotzé 2023, p. 166).

∎ Conclusion

In a post-COVID-19, VUCA world, moral and ethical leadership remains one of the most important assets that is needed to face the many challenges that humanity faces, especially on the African continent. Generally speaking, leadership in Africa is in a crisis, which stands in a direct relationship with the many challenges that Africa faces, such as poverty, corruption, poor service delivery and inequality. These challenges have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The various perspectives on moral and ethical leadership that are advanced in this book can be seen as complementary. While the perspectives differ, they mostly address different aspects of virtuous leadership. Practical and missiological perspectives on leadership mainly provide details on how leadership should look, what effects it should have and how it can be implemented. Bibliological and ethical perspectives provide the scriptural and theological backbone on which leadership principles can be built.

According to the contributions in this book, the kind of leadership that is sought after is servant-based leadership, in which the needs of others are elevated above personal interest (Du Toit 2023; Viljoen 2023). Leadership should be just (Coetsee 2023), fair and treat others as equals (Kotzé 2023). Yet, from a Christian perspective, virtuous leadership (Kotzé 2023) cannot

originate in a vacuum but presupposes a conversion experience (Cornelius 2023; Kotzé 2023), God-centredness (Coetsee 2023) and a life that is animated by the indwelling Christ (Du Toit 2023). Only then can a leader achieve the selfless attitude that is required for virtuous leadership, as is demonstrated by Christ's example (Denton 2023; Viljoen 2023). Then the negative, destructive spirals of corrupt, self-centred leadership can be reversed and bring about real transformation in society, in which negative spirals can be transformed (cf. Cornelius 2023; Denton 2023; Kok 2023; Kotzé 2023) into positive spirals of hope, love, compassion and resilience (Kok 2023; cf. Marais & Niemandt 2023). Then spiritual formation can take place (Kotzé 2023; Marais & Niemandt 2023) in which people can grow into spiritual maturity (Kotzé 2023; cf. Coetsee 2023). Then people can find assurance in God's sovereign reign (Magezi 2023), in which marginalised members of society can be drawn into a new identity (Denton 2023). Then people can be equipped to face the new, changed reality and be emotionally restored, even if it differs from the 'good times' that are kept in remembrance (Brunsdon 2023; cf. Marais & Niemandt 2023).

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Index

In this scholarly book, we find the contributions of Old and New Testament scholars, practical theologians, missiologists and systematic theologians who reflect on the challenges facing leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa. This book stems from a multidisciplinary study of leadership by authors from diverse backgrounds and institutions. As the authors posit in their book, ethical and moral leadership remains one of the most important assets that humanity may need to succeed in the face of the many challenges the continent faces. African leadership is in crisis, which exacerbates many of the challenges Africans are facing, including poverty, corruption, poor service delivery and inequality, all of which have been further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this book, the authors present a variety of perspectives on ethical and moral leadership, and this assessment can be viewed as complementary. The authors propose a servant-based leadership approach to these challenges, where others' interests must precede self-interest and everyone treated equally. The servant-based leadership approach put forward in this scholarly book includes fairness and virtue, with a God-centred focus and lives characterised by the indwelling of Christ.

Prof. Ian Nell, Department of Practical Theology and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

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African Christians have been experiencing a theological schism based on doctrinal issues. This book presents a theological argument in praxis that will empower scholars and leaders alike, regardless of their denominational affiliations and political divides, with a practical theological response to post-COVID-19 Africa. It addresses the unique challenges confronting post-COVID-19 Africa to empower African Christian leaders across all churches who have historically united in times of crisis.

Dr Dorcas Chebet Juma, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Theology, Pwani University, Kilifi, Kenya