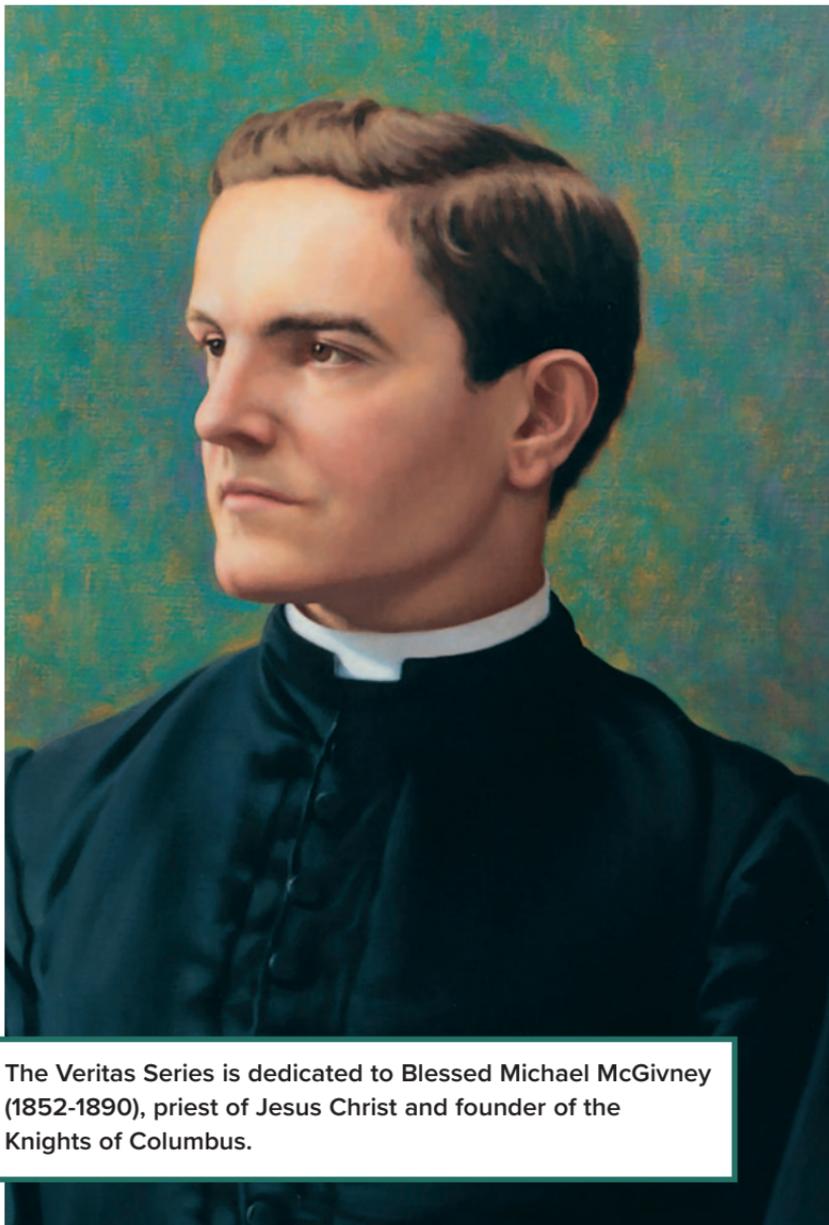




Passion and Paradox: The Leadership Genius of Jesus Christ

Captain Joseph J. McInerney, USN, PhD



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Passion and Paradox:

The Leadership Genius of Jesus Christ

BY

CAPTAIN JOSEPH J. MCINERNEY, USN, PhD

Catholic Information Service
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Imprimatur

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PASSION AND PARADOX: THE LEADERSHIP GENIUS OF JESUS CHRIST

“Well then, I will tell you. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His Empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him”¹

Napoleon, Conversations avec General Bertrand à St. Helena

JESUS CHRIST: PERFECT FOLLOWER, INCOMPARABLE LEADER

Why should one consider the person of Jesus Christ in an examination of leadership? He seems an unlikely candidate through which to study leadership since many would contest even labeling him an important leader. Influential leaders are usually highly educated. They typically have access to significant resources to influence others, such as money, rank, or authority. Leaders of influence associate with other formidable people. They are ambitious and driven to pursue worldly power. They calculate how to scale the ladder to success in their given field and often dedicate their entire lives to the acquisition of power in that field. Given these considerations it might seem strange to look for a leader of influence that fails to register in most, if not all of these categories. If you consult the internet's lists of most influential leaders in history Jesus appears on almost none of them, and maybe for good reason. Jesus does not fit into the model one would expect to produce good leadership results. He had none of the trappings typical of important leaders. He was born in poverty and lived the large majority of his life in a rural backwater. A craftsman by trade, he had no formal education.² He associated with other tradesman and seemed to purposefully seek out the company of society's outcasts. History provides no evidence that he ever wrote a word or even held a paying job. At best he was considered a naïve dreamer by the authorities of his day, disinterested in politics and the typical structures of institutional authority. At worst his contemporaries viewed him as a subversive who had to be controlled and even eliminated. Indeed, he ran afoul of the

governmental and religious authorities of his day. He was tried and found guilty. Condemned to death, he was tortured and executed in the most public and humiliating fashion.

This is not the resume one would expect from an influential leader. It is, however, the resume of Jesus Christ, arguably the most influential leader in history. Even to people who do not believe he is the incarnate Son of God, he can still be considered an extraordinarily influential leader. More than two-thousand years after his death, a third of the world's population identifies itself as his follower. It is safe to say that every day and at every moment throughout the world someone is saying a prayer to Jesus Christ, not only as his savior, but as the one whom he wants to follow as his leader. It is an almost incomprehensible legacy of leadership. Yet despite the fact that Jesus has had such an enormous impact as a leader (it is important to remember that his primary methodology for spreading his message was to call, mentor, and teach followers) the name of Jesus Christ does not often come up in academic or professional discussions of leadership. This might be a function of secular thought processes that view leadership through typical categories of power, be they political, military, economic, or legal. It is also likely a function of the Christian intellectual tradition itself, with its emphasis on humility, which tends to focus discussion on the role of disciples and followers rather than that of the leader. After all, to be a leader seems to call forth tendencies in direct conflict with the meek and humble Jesus that each Christian is called to imitate and follow.

Yet Christ himself did not shy away from the topic of leadership, and it was through his practice of leadership that his impact has been so profound. His approach to leadership was quite distinctive and even counterintuitive. "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44). Christ recognizes the typical human conceptions of leadership and, as he so often does, presents a vision almost directly opposed to the

conventional wisdom. More important than his teaching in regard to leadership, however, are the actions he took, the choices he made in his own practice of leadership. One can argue that his actions, beginning with the Incarnation itself, were at every moment concerned with accomplishing his mission through leadership.

In writing about the leadership of Jesus I will be covering ground that many have trodden before me.³ Although my analysis is indebted to the great thinkers of the Christian tradition, both ancient and modern, I would like to start with two claims that may seem controversial. The first is that Christian leadership is not primarily about ethics. As you'll see in the following pages, ethics are crucially important to the leadership of Jesus, but we ought not reduce his leadership only to ethics. We should look to Jesus to learn about leadership not because we want to be good, i.e., morally sound leaders, but because we want to be good, i.e., effective leaders. If we pattern our leadership after the example of Jesus no doubt we will be morally sound leaders, but that will only be a fortunate side effect. Jesus preached a leadership Gospel in his deeds and his words, and that Gospel sheds light on what it means to be an effective leader. Christ came to lead a wayward humanity back to his Father. That was his mission. His mission was not to be an ethical leader. It was to be an effective leader. What might seem strange to us sinners who so often see the ruthless get ahead in life is the fact that Jesus' method to accomplish his mission is utterly ethical. It entails the highest standards of ethics imaginable. It is precisely in using such a high ethical standard that Christ accomplishes his mission. So when we look at Jesus Christ to understand leadership we will no doubt see an ethical leader, but more than that, we will see the most effective leader.

My second claim is that the Gospel portrayal of leadership is not merely a model of servant leadership alone. Servant leadership is only half the story of God's leadership method. That method is rooted in Scripture's revelation of God as love (1 John 4:8). Scripture tells us that the relationship God desires with humans is one of love. Therefore, it is by means of love that God leads men and women to himself. Yet God's love has two primary dimensions, represented by the Greek terms *eros*

and *agape*, that must be held together if we are to understand the reality of love.⁴ *Eros* refers to the passionate desire that drives a person to seek out another, to seek out the beloved, while *agape* denotes a love that in the encounter with the beloved is capable of renunciation and even sacrifice for the good of the beloved. The relation between *eros* and *agape* represents the most fundamental paradox of human experience. The love of *eros*, the love of desire, sets out to seek the beloved in order to achieve self-fulfillment. Once the beloved is encountered, however, love must place itself at the service of the beloved rather than service of itself if it is to maintain the title of love. *Eros* must become *agape* or it will turn to the domination and destruction of the beloved. *Agape* purifies *eros* and through its self-sacrifice paradoxically enables the fulfillment of desire to which *eros* was drawn to in the first place. Love of desire finds its fulfillment and perfection in the gift of self for the beloved. God's love perfectly unites *eros* and *agape*, and both dimensions of love are fundamental to the leadership of Jesus. Jesus is the leader who passionately pursues his mission; passionately pursues the men and women with whom God the Father is in love. Jesus' leadership, his passionate pursuit of a beloved humanity, is achieved and reaches its climax in the utterly self-sacrificial love that can be seen in the Crucifixion. The passionate love of Christ results in the historical passion of Jesus, on his suffering and death, that draws all people to God (John 12:32). So, while we must speak of servant leadership when discussing the leadership of Christ, we must also examine the passionate love that motivates Christ's sacrifice if we want to understand the fullness of Christ's leadership genius.

The paradox of love gives rise to another paradox that will be the initial focus of my analysis, which is the relationship between the roles of Jesus as follower and leader. Simply put, we must begin with Jesus' role as the perfect follower of the Father in order to understand his function as a leader. Therefore my starting point to understand the leadership of Jesus is not his mission to serve, but his role as follower. My study will begin with the relationship of Jesus as a follower of God the Father because it is in this relationship that the leadership of Jesus finds its source and purpose. Having discussed the context that gives

rise to the leadership of Jesus, I will then turn to two aspects of Jesus' character unique in importance to his leadership, which are his passion and his integrity. I will then examine the leadership methods employed by Jesus, which include his compassionate love for his followers and his willingness to serve and suffer on behalf of those followers. My reflections will conclude with a brief consideration of the purpose and goal of Christ's leadership, which is nothing other than the glory of God the Father.

In covering these topics I will answer the questions, "How has Jesus Christ attracted so many followers? What is the secret of his leadership?" A simple answer to those questions might be that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is an effective leader by means of his divinity. While Christian believers can see the truth in this assertion, left alone it is problematic from two perspectives. First, it would separate Jesus from the human practice of leadership and prevent the application of Christian revelation to the understanding of human leadership. Second, such an assertion cannot account for the fact that in the Incarnation of Jesus, God chose to use human nature to achieve the mission of salvation. Not only is human nature the mechanism by which the salvation of all is achieved, it is through the leadership of the man Jesus Christ that the mission is accomplished. It is in this context that we can see the significance of what Jesus said about leadership, and more importantly, observe how Jesus practiced leadership. By listening to the words of Jesus and examining his behavior as a leader we will understand the principles that guided Jesus' practice of leadership and then be able to apply those principles to our own leadership.

CHAPTER ONE: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE HE IS OUR LEADER

In a discussion whose purpose it is to declare that Jesus is the leader par excellence, it might seem strange and even controversial to begin with an examination of his role as a follower, what might be considered the antithesis of a leader's role. Yet any thorough discussion of leadership must account for the role of the follower, if only because having followers is intrinsic to the enterprise of leadership. More importantly, in approaching leadership one must realize and acknowledge that every leader, with the possible exception of God the Father, is simultaneously a follower. Due to his autonomy at sea and near absolute authority, the captain of a ship seems to be the last vestige of monarchical power left to us modern people. Yet even the captain must answer to the admiral in charge of the fleet. The same is true of other leaders who seem to answer to no one. The CEO must answer to shareholders and a president or prime minister is accountable to the voters and constituencies to which he owes his election. The pope must answer to God and, like a president, he is beholden to the needs of his flock. It is in following the needs of the group a leader serves that we see the important link between followership and leadership. It is by following those needs that a leader finds his mandate to lead. As the servant of the group, the leader is given purpose, given a mission for which he is responsible and for which he will be held accountable. The leadership of Jesus demonstrates these two aspects of leadership. Scripture makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is the follower of God the Father and his mission is to serve the needs of his followers. In order to understand his leadership, then, it is crucial to examine the manner in which Jesus follows the Father and undertakes the mission to serve his followers.

Jesus as Obedient Follower

Although the idea that Jesus is a follower may often be overlooked, there is much Gospel material depicting this role. The followership of Jesus is most often seen in the context of his relationship to God the Father, yet the Gospels also show us that Jesus is the

follower of the Holy Spirit and even of his human parents.⁵ While the idea that the second person of the Holy Trinity might be obedient to merely human parents is indeed a radical thought, it is completely consistent with the Gospel portrait of Jesus as the follower of God the Father. The Gospels portray Jesus as not merely the follower of the Father, but as the Father's radically obedient follower. The obedient followership of Jesus is depicted most consistently in St. John's Gospel, but its most emphatic example comes in the passion narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the Gospel of John Jesus never seems to tire of telling his audience that he is the obedient follower of the Father. He tells us that he has come in his Father's name (John 5:43, 7:28-29), that he does nothing except what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19), he has come to do not his will but his Father's (John 6:38), his teaching is not his, but that of the one who sent him (John 7:16, 8:28), he says only what the Father has told him (John 8:26, 8:38, 12:50), he must do the works of the one that sent him (John 9:4), he always does what is pleasing to the Father (John 8:29), and he does the Father's will so the world will know that he loves the Father (14:31).⁶ If a dozen texts on Jesus' role as a follower in John's Gospel are not enough, we can turn to the synoptic Gospels where we see the most dramatic picture of Jesus as the follower of the Father in Garden of Gethsemane. In each Gospel the reader witnesses the prayer of Jesus in the garden. The Gospel authors provide almost verbatim accounts in which Jesus asks the Father to remove the cup of suffering that is confronting him. And in each prayer the evangelists tell us that Jesus finishes his request by submitting his destiny not to his own will, but to that of his Father. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will" (Mk 14:36).⁷ In his prayer Jesus makes clear that the will of the Father is the criteria for the choices he makes and that he is the Father's obedient follower.

Twentieth century theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar points out that the very identity of Jesus lies in the fact that he is the one sent by the Father.⁸ As the Father's obedient follower, Jesus is responsible for the mission the Father entrusts to him. In examining the mission we will see that Jesus is not only accountable to the Father for its

execution, but also accountable to the needs of a human race enslaved to the power of its own sin. It is as the servant of this community that the mission of Jesus is manifest because his mission is to lead every human person back to God the Father.

The Mission of Jesus is Leadership

Although the mission of Jesus is articulated in a variety of ways throughout the Gospels, there is an inner unity to this variety. Rather than contradicting one another, the different formulations provide diverse perspectives on the mission the Father entrusts to his Son, which is the reconciliation of the world to the Father.⁹ Yet not all tasks must be accomplished by means of leading others, so to assert that Jesus has a mission does not necessarily entail that his mission is one of leadership. The many Gospel texts referring to Christ's mission, however, do reveal that the purpose of Jesus is achieved through leadership. Theologian Henri de Lubac tells us that "Christ the redeemer does not offer salvation merely to each (person) . . . salvation is essentially social."¹⁰ Within de Lubac's insight are two aspects that indicate the mission of Jesus is one of leadership. One is the fact that the mission is social, that is, Jesus does not just call individuals but a community to the salvation offered by his Father, and the other is the fact that the call of Jesus to this community is an offer to which the human response is entirely voluntary. By reflecting on the social and voluntary aspects of Jesus' mission we will see how leadership is intrinsic to accomplishing that mission.

Although leadership can refer to the task of leading one other person or even leading oneself, leadership in its fullness (and most frequently) refers to the task of influencing a group of people. The mission texts in the Gospels demonstrate that the mission of Jesus is indeed a call not only to a group, but to the largest group imaginable: the entire human race. In the context of Israel's unique relationship to God, the universality of Jesus' call is something that the synoptic Gospels work up to, beginning with the call to Israel and ending with a universal missionary mandate. The synoptic Gospels begin the public ministry of Jesus with a proclamation that the kingdom of God is at

hand (Matt 4:17, Mark 1:15). The kingdom formulation shows us that Jesus' offer of salvation concerns a community and is not just a call to separate, individual believers. The blood of the new covenant established at the Last Supper is "poured out for many," (Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24) and in John's Gospel the high priest Caiaphas predicts that Jesus will die for the nation (John 11:51). To say that the mission of Jesus does not move beyond the boundaries of Israel would not, however, capture the universality communicated by the Gospels. Through the missionary mandates at the end of the synoptic Gospels (Matt 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47) and the repeated formulations of a universal mission in the Gospel of John,¹¹ the New Testament tells us that the mission of Jesus is a mission to save the whole of humanity. The universal and social nature of the mission is one element that enables us to label it as a mission of leadership. Jesus has been sent to lead humanity back to its source in God the Father. The communal aspect of his mission requires a leader by which the mission can be achieved.

In reviewing the various Gospel texts that articulate the mission of Jesus we can also observe the voluntary response upon which that mission is based. The Gospels formulate the purpose of Jesus's mission in a number of ways that all imply the voluntary aspect of his call. Jesus tells us that the reason he came was to *preach* the Gospel (Mark 1:38, Luke 4:47). The Gospel had to be *preached* to all nations (Matt 24:14, Mark 13:10), and repentance and forgiveness of sins were to be *preached* to all nations (Luke 24:47). The will of the Father was to save every person that *believed* in Jesus' message (John 3:16, 6:40). No one who *believed* in Jesus would be condemned (John 3:17). The actions of preaching, announcement, and proclamation are executed in order to elicit belief on the part of Jesus' audience. Key to the idea of Jesus' leadership is the fact that the belief necessary for salvation is always a voluntary act of each and every person. Something about Christ's leadership and leadership itself is revealed by this fact. Leadership that remains effective over an extended period of time must recognize and even exploit human freedom. A person may cause or influence others to follow him, but that influence is not necessarily an act of leadership. A

person who forces others to follow without reference to the freedom of the follower coerces those people, but does not lead them. A person that gets others to follow as a result of deceit is a manipulator, but not a leader. The term leadership has a moral content because it assumes the freedom of the follower, who will only fully commit to a leader for reasons that are good and in the interest of the follower.¹² Commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the follower is a function of freedom. They cannot be the result of coercion and can only result from deceit so long as the truth remains unknown. Once the deceit is revealed the follower will vehemently retract his commitment and enthusiasm. The height of leadership effectiveness thus entails freedom because the greatest challenge of a leader is to elicit a follower's enthusiasm. The leadership method of Jesus takes these considerations into account. He offers salvation, proclaims it, announces it, but never imposes it. The reason for his lack of imposition goes back to the nature of love, which cannot be coerced. Leadership that leverages love by means of freedom is not only the highest risk approach to leadership, it is also the only approach that can reap the highest reward a leader can hope to gain, which is the loving commitment of his followers. It is in the context of love and freedom that a follower will give his greatest loyalty and enthusiasm, and it is for this reason that Jesus' leadership is executed in such a way as to enable and even rely upon the freedom of his followers. Jesus preaches the Gospel because he wants his followers to love the Father and follow him because of that love. Passionate love is the foundation for the leadership Jesus exhibits in the Gospels. Jesus wants to inspire the passionate love of his followers. He does this through the voluntary nature of his call and through the passionate love that he exhibits himself.

How Do Followership and Mission Apply to Our Behavior as Leaders?

The relationship of the man Jesus to his heavenly Father may be the most profound mystery presented to Christians in the New Testament. Given that reality, it may seem difficult to apply lessons from this relationship to that of human leaders and followers. Although

Jesus as the second person of the Holy Trinity has contact with the Father in ways inaccessible to us humans, the Jesus of history relates to the Father in a very practical way that is directly applicable to us, and that is in his life of prayer. Jesus prays often.¹³ He prays prior to taking significant leadership acts, such as his prayer in the Gospel of Luke before he selects the Twelve Apostles (Luke 6:12-13), and he prays to gain the strength and certainty he needs to pursue his mission in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42, Mt 26:39). The Gospels show us that prayer is the link between Jesus and the Father concerning the execution of his mission. The behavior of Jesus as the follower of the Father entrusted with a mission is directly applicable to each and every Christian believer. We are followers of Jesus and the Father and therefore should turn to them in prayer to discern our mission as their followers. And since each of us is called to share the Good News of Jesus with others, our call to being a follower of Jesus will also include some form of leadership. Prayer must therefore be the foundation of our efforts to be better followers of God, and to be the leaders he calls us to be, as well. It is in our prayer life that we can ask God for the grace necessary to accomplish our mission as leaders.

CHAPTER TWO: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE HE IS A LEADER OF INTENSE PASSION

As a life-long Christian, it took the concept of leadership to help me gain a new perspective on some of the most familiar texts of the Gospels, the Passion narratives. Christians usually associate the word passion with the suffering of Jesus depicted in the climax of each Gospel. This is done for good reason. The word passion has Latin and Greek roots, stemming from the Latin word *passio* and the Greek *pathos*, both of which indicate the ability to suffer or undergo something. Examining the Greek roots, we see that *pathos* was used in the New Testament to describe the suffering Christ endured at the end of his life (Acts 1:3) and has since been used to describe the entire Gospel sequence that depicts the suffering and death of Jesus. Passion also has a second meaning in English, namely strong emotion or desire. In New Testament Greek the closely related word *epithumea* communicated the notion of passion as strong desire, which was also attributed to the emotions of Jesus in the Gospel narratives.¹⁴ Yet despite the close relation of the terms (similar roots in Greek, same word in English), the actions of Jesus during the passion narratives seem to be anything but passionate. The Jesus of the Passion narratives appears passive rather than passionate in the face of his enemies. Until recently I have always interpreted the torment Jesus underwent as something he had to do, had to suffer in order to redeem a sinful humanity. In the necessity of the task it seems that Jesus is the victim of circumstance and of his adversaries. He is the paschal lamb that is offered for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, in the face of evil he succumbs to the powers of the world so he can later vanquish them in his resurrection.

This is certainly a reasonable interpretation of the Passion narratives given the Christian tradition's application of Isaiah's suffering servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) to the woes of Christ, in addition to the teaching of Jesus himself. After all, the figure of the suffering Jesus depicted in the Gospels seems to be the historical embodiment of Isaiah's prophecy.

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain, like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).

These verses are reinforced by the instruction Jesus offers to his followers. Jesus exhorts us to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us (Matt 5:44, Luke 6:27-28). He says that in the face of our enemies we must turn the other cheek and not offer resistance to those who are evil (Matt 5:39, Luke 6:29). In his view the meek are the blessed that shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5) and in all things we should treat others as we wish to be treated (Matt 7:12). In addition to his teachings which support meekness in the face of conflict, Jesus also predicts that he must suffer at the hands of men (Matt 17:22, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22) and links this suffering to the New Covenant, which will be established in his blood and will be poured out for many (Matt 26:28). Thus, it is through the suffering of Jesus that the New Covenant will be established and the redemption of humanity accomplished. The Passion narratives can simply be seen as the historical fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and the words of Jesus in which the Son of God must suffer and not offer resistance to his enemies in order to save God's people.

Although there is much truth and wisdom to this interpretation, it does not capture aspects of the Gospels crucial to understanding the leadership of Jesus and is therefore an incomplete account of the redemption wrought by him. What's missing from this interpretation comes to light in the context of the following questions: "Is Jesus the passive recipient of the violence dealt out by the religious and political authorities of his day? Is his behavior a resigned acceptance to the ways of the world, which are only to be corrected in the Resurrection and Second Coming?" In my view the answer to these questions is clearly no. Given the traditional interpretation of the Passion narratives,

however, we must do some work to see why the answer is no, and leadership is a helpful context in which to articulate that answer.

Beginning with the effect of Jesus' leadership, we can assert that as a historical leader Jesus was able to establish a community of people who were willing to die for the good of the community and for the principles upon which the community was founded. Passivity on the part of a leader, however, cannot produce such a result. There are many reasons passivity will not attract followers to a leader. Passivity is not inspirational for followers, does not encourage the trust necessary for followers to become attached to a leader, and passivity is typically associated with the fears of a person, which would serve to prevent that person from inspiring a group to accomplish a worthy goal.¹⁵ As can be seen in the example of Jesus, influencing others to sacrifice for the good of their community can only be the result of a passionate love on the part of a leader who offers an example of self-sacrifice. It is through leadership animated by a hungering passion for the community and an ability to pass on that passion to his followers that Jesus is able to build his Church. To find the evidence of that passion we need only turn to the words of the Gospels.

The Passions of Jesus

The passion of Jesus, i.e. the strong desire that drives the behavior of Jesus, can be seen in his words, the effect of those words, and in his behavior. Jesus' most fundamental teaching with regard to passionate love can be seen in his formulation of the Great Commandment. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).¹⁶ Obedience to the greatest commandment yields a complete and total commitment to God. That command calls Jesus and each of his followers to a passionate love for God. It is this passion that drives the attitudes of Jesus manifest throughout the Gospels and gives rise to his actions as well. Jesus gives us a clear view of his interior desire in the Gospel of Luke. "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished" (Luke 12:49-50).

Jesus is driven by an internal fire and is able to share that fire with his followers. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus demonstrates an ability to communicate his message that few leaders in history can replicate. And he is not just communicating his ideas; he is communicating and sharing his passion. In his interaction with the disciples after his resurrection on the road to Emmaus we can see the transmission of that passion. “Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32). Followers of Jesus down through the ages have experienced the burning desire of God’s love. How much more must his followers have experienced this fire when interacting with God in the flesh? His passion is also evident in his interactions after Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of the living God. Despite earning his master’s praise for his confession, Peter is almost immediately rebuked as he tries to distract Jesus from the baptism that is the strongest desire of Jesus (Matt 16:13-23, Mark 8:27-33, Luke 9:18-22). Jesus knows that the path the Father has laid out for him is one of suffering, and all of his passion is bent upon treading that path. Peter’s entreaty to take another less painful route is likely a temptation to Jesus, as it would have been for any other person. That temptation and the possibility of departing from the path which is the object of his undivided passion is a probable cause for such a strong response on the part of Jesus. Passion to fulfill his Father’s will yields a rebuke to anyone that might divert him from that path. The result is Peter and the other disciples following in the wake of Jesus, even when they do not fully understand him.

The passion of Jesus can also be seen in the background of the choices Jesus makes throughout the Gospel narratives. Driven by the passionate pursuit of his mission, Jesus is constantly courting controversy and taking risks in his public ministry. It is not enough for him to cure a paralytic in the presence of Scribes and Pharisees (Luke 5:17-25). Rather, he also tells his audience that he, Jesus, can forgive the man’s sins. The evidence Jesus offers for his extraordinary claim of forgiving sins is the extraordinary act of curing the paralytic. Similarly it is not enough for him to claim that he is Lord of the Sabbath, offensive as this was to the religious authorities. In addition, Jesus also

does the good work of curing the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath to emphasize his point (Luke 6:1-11). Although Jesus is attempting to teach his fellow Jews, he is also provoking them and the effect of his behavior is to enrage the Scribes and Pharisees (an effect resulting directly from his passion). The ardent desire of Jesus provides the drive and determination necessary to risk the wrath of the authorities and in turn has an enormous effect on those authorities. Like the burning hearts of his disciples, the hearts of the authorities burn as well. Jesus tells us that he comes not to bring peace, but a sword of division (Matt 10:34-35, Luke 12:51), and that sword is the passion he has for his mission. In communicating his passion, Jesus either ignites the passion of his hearers into being devoted followers or passionate adversaries plotting his destruction.

A final example of the passion that Jesus exhibits in his earthly ministry is depicted in all four Gospels when he cleanses the Jewish temple. The cleansing of the Temple is another demonstration of Jesus's clear willingness to risk the wrath of the religious authorities, revealing almost a complete disregard for his own safety. In John's Gospel we see the interior passion that drives Jesus to expel the moneychangers. "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17). Jesus drives the action of the Gospel stories and his passion makes people decide, for good or for ill, how they will respond to him. The passion of Jesus is manifest in his actions and those actions continually goad his adversaries to make some kind of response. The passion of Jesus propels his behavior and makes everyone (to this day) take a position on who he is and what his teaching means.

The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and his actions on the cross are the climactic evidence of his passionate desire and show that Jesus, rather than his adversaries, is in charge. Although one might assert his passivity before the authorities in his reluctance to speak in his own defense (John 19:10), one can also see Jesus' determination to conduct himself in the manner necessary to achieve his purpose. At the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus could have answered those questioning him in any number of ways, and given the contradictory testimony (Matt 26:60, Mark 14:56-57) and Jesus' typical ability to confound and out-

maneuver his antagonists, it would seem unlikely that he would be trapped in his own words. Yet when the question is put to him of whether he is the Christ, not only does he admit that he is, knowing such an admission will enrage his enemies and stir them to his condemnation, he further asserts, “You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62).¹⁷ His actions are not a passive resignation to evil. At the climax of the Gospel conflict Jesus throws down the gauntlet and provides his enemies with the very testimony they need to sentence him to death. This is not fatalistic resignation. Rather, it is a passionate confrontation of evil that disregards the danger of the situation and is solely focused on doing what is necessary to accomplish the mission. Hans Urs von Balthasar succinctly captures the interior passion which drives Jesus to embrace the suffering meted out by his opponents. “I am the one who must accomplish this task. I am the one through whom the kingdom of God must and will come.”¹⁸ Jesus’ passion to do his Father’s will compels him to testify in a way that will ensure his violent condemnation.

It is the passion of Jesus that leads him to the cross, and his behavior on that cross provides still another confirmation of the strong desire that drives his actions. As he is dying Jesus is ridiculed as the supposed Messiah.

The people stood by and watched; the rulers meanwhile, sneered at him and said, “He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God.” Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, “If you are king of the Jews, save yourself.” (Luke 23:37).

The man who could appeal to his Father for legions of angels to defend him at any moment (Matt 26:53), who in three days hence would rise from the dead, rather than responding to the jeers, chooses to die a humiliating death. Once again we can assert that his choice is not a fatalistic act of passivity. It is the result of a consuming desire to accomplish the will of his Father. The passion of Jesus was not ordered

towards his own justification in the face of his opponents, but to the mission of saving the very sinners that stood ridiculing him. It was passion that drove Jesus to stay on the cross so that Scripture might be fulfilled (Matt 26:54).

How Does Passion Apply to Our Behavior as Leaders?

The nature of leadership brings these aspects of Jesus' behavior to light because people do not follow a leader that merely succumbs to a predestined fate. The foundation of a leader's influence and ability to attract followers is the passion he feels in pursuing his goals. In addition to his victory over death in the resurrection, Jesus, as a leader, had to express his passion in his actions leading up to and through his crucifixion. The passion of a leader draws followers to himself and the cause for which he is laboring. Passion is the fire through which a leader ignites the desire of his followers and the words and actions of Jesus are no exception to this rule. Without the passion of Jesus there would have been no followers to discover the empty tomb. Applying this reality to our own role as leaders, we must look for leadership situations and roles that ignite our passion. God has given each of us unique talents and desires. To be effective leaders we must discern what fires our passion, discern the missions to which God is calling us, and look for leadership opportunities that are related to and leverage those passions and desires.

CHAPTER THREE: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE HE IS A LEADER OF INTEGRITY

My discussions of integrity with undergraduate students typically follow a very stable pattern, often coming to an abrupt halt shortly after the discussion begins. I ask them, “What is integrity?” and the answer I routinely receive is, “Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is looking.” Although the answer seems directly related to the idea of integrity, it is also somehow dissatisfying since its focus is not on integrity itself, but on an effect that integrity might produce. It does assume a specific content for the concept of integrity in its assertion that integrity will produce good action, but it fails to articulate what integrity actually means. Recognizing we have not answered the original question, I re-ask the question, “What is integrity?” which is then followed by silence. It is not an easy question to answer. Intuitively we recognize integrity as a good moral attribute, but it seems difficult to describe precisely. It is sometimes equated to honesty, but seems to connote more than just truthfulness. We may want to assert that it is a moral virtue, but it seems to apply to a wider range of behavior than do specific virtues such as courage or generosity. Integrity also seems to be related to other virtues, since it can be displayed in acts of different virtues, such as justice, kindness, or even self-control. The first challenge, then, in addressing the integrity of Jesus is to provide a concise definition of the term. Once we get a handle on the concept, we can then see how the idea applies to the behavior of Jesus in the Gospels. By recognizing the integrity Jesus displayed in the Gospel narratives we will arrive at our ultimate goal, which is to see the enormous importance integrity holds for the leadership of Jesus and for our ability as leaders to influence the followers we lead.

Integrity as a Moral Concept

Although an initial definition of integrity typically describes an adherence to moral principle, a full understanding of the relationship between integrity and morality can be seen in the notion of integration. Integration refers to an act of joining or fusing various parts into a unified whole. The Latin roots of the term (*integritas, integritatis*) refer

to wholeness and unity. Applying this background to the moral concept, we can describe integrity as a unity between a person's moral principles and his behavior. To stop here, however, would still fall short of a full description for a number of reasons. First, the unity between behavior and bad moral principles would not be considered a form of integrity. A criminal may have a perfect union between his moral principles and behavior, but one would describe that union in terms of corruption rather than integrity. The desire for integration can also be a source of bad moral behavior. Humans seek harmony between their thoughts and actions. Social psychologists label conflict between our actions and beliefs as cognitive dissonance. We humans seek to avoid that conflict and achieve integration, as much as possible. Yet such integration can be achieved in a bad or a good way. If we adapt our moral principles to immoral behavior, which is the very familiar process of rationalization, we can achieve integration, but that integration does not meet the criteria of having integrity in a positive sense. Rather, integrity represents adapting our behavior to good moral principles.

A last qualification necessary for a full understanding of integrity is making a distinction between integrity and being merely stubborn. Sticking to a moral principle no matter the circumstance or the relative importance of that principle may be a form of vice rather than virtue.¹⁹ The application of moral principles always calls for the practical wisdom to apply those principles properly. For integrity to avoid the moniker of stubbornness it must include an ability to discern the best way to apply the moral principles that serve to anchor the person of integrity's behavior. Bringing these insights together, we can assert that a person of moral integrity is a person whose actions are rooted in good moral principles that are applied appropriately in divergent sets of circumstances. The person of moral integrity has a unity of principle and action that supports superlative moral character no matter the setting.

The Integrity of Jesus

Having established a definition of moral integrity we can now examine the integrity Jesus exhibited in the Gospel narratives.

Although we can approach the topic of Jesus' integrity from a number of different perspectives, the one I will pursue is based upon an analysis offered by Raymund Schwager concerning the relationship between the teaching of Jesus concerning love, his judgment sayings, and the behavior of Jesus up to and including the Crucifixion. Schwager's study does not address the idea of integrity explicitly. Rather he seeks to answer the simple yet profound question of why Jesus did not come down from the cross. As I noted earlier, the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion tell us that the adversaries witnessing the Crucifixion taunted Jesus and challenged him to come down from the Cross (Matt 27:39-44). As the eternal Son of the Father and as the person who would rise from the dead in three days, why does he not respond to the challenge? Why was it necessary that Jesus should die a humiliating death on the Cross? Schwager makes the case that his sacrifice on the Cross is the result of Jesus not only living according to the standards that he preached to others, but that his actions actually eclipse those standards. In making his case Schwager provides a compelling witness to the integrity of Jesus, which we will see as yet another reason for the powerful attraction Jesus has as a leader to his followers.

Judgment and Love

Two of the primary themes in the preaching of Jesus concern the judgment associated with the coming Kingdom of God and the nature of love. Placing these themes side by side raises the interesting question of whether the judgment of the kingdom and love are even compatible. At first glance it might seem they are not. Judgment, more often than not, is a function of hatred of others rather than love for others. We reserve our most harsh judgments for the people we do not like. And it is the condemnation of others that seems to be a particular concern in the ministry of Jesus. He tells his audiences to judge not (Matt 7:1), remove the log from one's own eye before removing the speck from someone else's (Matt 7:3), and that those who do not condemn will not be condemned (Luke 6:37). His practice of eating with sinners and tax collectors (Matt 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:27-32), as well as his refusal to condemn the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) provide

powerful examples of how to act on his teaching. Given Jesus' teaching, example, and focus on love of neighbor (Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27) one might conclude that love is a powerful reason to avoid judgment. After all, aren't our loved ones the very people whom we are most likely to forgive, the people whose faults we can look past? We know their good qualities well, so we can give them the benefit of the doubt when it comes to their failings. Such withholding of judgment seems to be a function of the Golden Rule (Matt 7:12) (since we all want the benefit of the doubt given our imperfections) and a function of Jesus' teaching on judgment. Indeed, Jesus casts his entire ministry in the context of a love that seeks to save the world rather than condemn it. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17).

Yet despite the fact that Jesus seems to discourage his audience from judging others, he has little reluctance to engage in that activity himself. Why would the person who warns against judging others, himself judge other people with great vehemence? One might even assert that Jesus is exhibiting hypocrisy rather than integrity, by passing judgment on others while exhorting his audiences to avoid such judgment. If we turn to the pages of the Gospels we see that Jesus judges others and does so frequently. For example, the distinctive aspect of Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-26) compared to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-12) are the woes Jesus speaks of in addition to the Beatitudes. Jesus preaches woe to the rich, to those who are satisfied, to those who laugh in this world, and to the people that the world honors. They may be satisfied in their current circumstances, but those circumstances will turn from their favor in the future (Luke 6:24-26). Jesus likewise preaches woe to the scholars whose ancestors killed the prophets (Luke 11:46-54) and to the cities that fail to repent in the presence of Jesus' great works. The conduct of those cities is worse than even that of Sodom, which would have repented had it been witness to the acts of Jesus (Matt 11:20-24, Luke 10:13-15). The parables of Jesus are even more emphatic in the way they illustrate the

judgment associated with the arrival of God's kingdom. The stories of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:23-35), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1-14), and the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) are just a few examples of the parables that end in judgment and grave suffering. Jesus reserves his most harsh judgment and criticism for the Scribes and the Pharisees. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth" (Matt 23:27). It is the hypocrisy of these groups, who condemn others and set up barriers between people and the love of God, that Jesus appears to find most reprehensible.²⁰

Such harsh judgment on the part of Jesus raises the important question of how he can escape the charge of hypocrisy for discouraging judgment while simultaneously passing judgment. The question takes on even more importance in the context of the fact that according to the Gospels Jesus not only judges, but is required to judge others as a mandate from God the Father. The Gospel of John tells us that all judgment has been handed over to the Son from the Father (John 5:22) and Matthew's Gospel tells us that the judgment of the nations will fall to the Son of Man, who will determine who will go off to eternal punishment and who to eternal reward (Matt 25:31-46). The answer to the question of Jesus' integrity or lack thereof can be found through a close examination of the teaching and behavior of Jesus. Despite the apparent tension between judgment and love, the Gospels reveal their compatibility. Indeed, in examining the judgment sayings of Jesus in conjunction with his call to love and his engagement with the Jewish authorities, we will see that Jesus's judgment of others will serve to reveal the depths of God's love.

Judging the Supreme Judge

The tension of Jesus passing judgment on others while encouraging others not to judge must be resolved if his message concerning the Kingdom of God is to have any coherence. It must also be resolved for the sake of understanding his leadership because followers are reluctant to place their trust in a leader who says one thing

but does another. To begin, the preaching of Jesus, as well as that of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4), is introduced by a call to repentance (Matt 3:2, 4:17; Mark 1:15). A person's moral actions are of paramount importance to his entry into God's kingdom. As a result, judgment of moral behavior (one's own moral behavior in particular) is necessary to one's entry into the Kingdom. The action of forgiving a loved one's offense manifests the necessity of judgment, as one cannot forgive another without judging some kind of wrongdoing that needs to be forgiven. Examining Jesus' teaching regarding judgment more closely, we can see that he does not forbid judging others, but cautions his followers regarding how they might pass judgment and the implications of such judgments once they are rendered. The Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain both begin Jesus' teaching on judgment with a prohibition against judgment, but end with the qualification that one should be hesitant to judge because the standard by which a person judges will be the measure by which he himself is judged. It is not that one should not judge, but that one should judge carefully. Avoiding hypocrisy is the precise message of this teaching because the judge must abide by the criteria used in judging (Matt 7:2, Luke 6:38). Similarly, Jesus says remove the log from your eye before pulling the splinter from another's eye, which again is not a prohibition against pulling the splinter. Rather it is saying a person's first responsibility is reform of self. We should not enter into the hypocrisy of correcting the faults of others when we have failed to correct our own. Yet the saying does not preclude the judgment of others, which is reinforced in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus describes the process by which members of the Church should correct brothers that persist in sin (Matt 18:15-20). For Jesus the problem that judgment can lead to is the hypocrisy of sinners condemning other sinners. Judgment cannot be avoided if one is to enter the Kingdom of God, but hypocrisy and the condemnation of others can and must be avoided.

One might argue that since there is no hypocrisy in a sinless Christ condemning sinners, Jesus would therefore be justified in such condemnations. The Gospels, however, reveal that even Jesus, although he passes judgment on others, does not condemn them. Jesus passes

judgment on the woman caught in adultery when he says “Go and sin no more,” but he pointedly refuses to condemn her (John 8:11). The famous passages of John 3:16-17 point to the fact that the mission of Jesus is salvation rather than condemnation. Humanity must repent and already stands justly condemned before God, but with Jesus comes the possibility of redemption and salvation (John 3:18). A final irony with regard to judgment lies in the fact that Jesus, as the person who proclaims the judgment that leads to salvation rather than condemnation, himself ends up being judged and condemned by the very people he has come to save. Schwager observes that this is not only ironic, but terribly important.²¹ The irony of the Gospel stories brings our attention to the idea of how Jesus responds, how God responds, to the judgment of his adversaries. What does God do when condemned and attacked by his enemies?

Judgment, Love and Salvation in the Actions of Jesus

As I noted in my earlier discussion concerning the passion of Jesus, the confrontation between Jesus and the religious authorities is driven by the actions of Jesus. Throughout the Gospel narratives he engages in behaviors (working on the Sabbath, forgiving sins, dining with sinners) that he knows will offend those authorities. Indeed, the Gospels tell us that it is because of these actions that the religious authorities decide to seek his death.²² They are reacting to the actions of Jesus. By behaving in the way that he does and in passing judgment on the scribes and the Pharisees himself, Jesus provokes their judgment, knowing that it will lead to his condemnation.²³ The climax of judgment comes at the trial of Jesus before the council of chief priests, elders, and scribes. The council elders pass judgment on Jesus that results in his condemnation to death. In condemning Jesus the elders give Jesus the opportunity to show why he passes judgment on his adversaries, and that reason is to give witness to the most radical of his teachings regarding the love of enemies.

The purpose of Jesus in continually challenging the authority of the scribes and elders is not to upstage them or to condemn them. Remembering that Jesus’ mission is the salvation of world (John 3:17),

which includes the scribes and Pharisees, we can see in his actions to challenge the religious authorities his intention to save them. Jesus likely knew that he could not convince the world and the Jewish authorities to come over to his way of thinking through words alone. Actions that backed up his words would be required, and by provoking the condemnation of the religious authorities Jesus constructs a context in which he can live out his teaching regarding the love of enemies (Matt 5:38-48) and the highest form of love, which he asserts is the ability to lay down of one's life for his friends (John 15:13).

Jesus' call to love one's enemies in the Sermon on the Mount may be the most radical and, some might say, the most impossible of the demands he makes upon his followers. In our world of sin, strife, and the fear produced by that continuous strife, Jesus asserts that his followers should pray for their enemies, give more than their enemies demand of them, and even love their enemies. In doing so they will be like to their heavenly Father, who lets the sun and the rain fall upon the just and the unjust (Matt 5:40-42, 44). It seems like a recipe for disaster or even suicide.²⁴ Yet it is precisely what Jesus did in submitting himself to death on the cross. On the cross Jesus steps beyond the standards and examples he provides in the Sermon on the Mount, giving much more than his other cheek or a cloak. In the face of his enemies he is willing to give even his life. Scripture tells us that his gift of self on the cross is for all (Romans 5:18, 2 Cor 5:15), and the words of Jesus from the cross in Luke's Gospel affirm that his sacrifice includes the very people that are putting him to death. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24). As his teaching prescribes, Jesus is willing to pray for his persecutors (Matt 5:44), even while he is dying for them. In addition, Jesus' actions on the cross go beyond his teaching in John's Gospel where he asserts that the highest form of love is to lay down one's life for a friend (John 15:13). The marvel of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the fact that he does it not only for his friends, the people who love him, but he also sacrifices himself for people who hate him or are merely indifferent to him. St. Paul gives eloquent witness to the unprecedented aspect of Christ's sacrifice. "For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the

ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).

How Does Integrity Apply to Our Behavior as Leaders?

In the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross we see the perfect integration of the principles Jesus espouses, to include his most difficult teachings concerning the highest form of love and the love of enemies, with the actions and behaviors he chooses to pursue. Jesus lives out his own teachings and in doing so asks his followers to do nothing that he is not willing to do himself. One further question remains, however, which is applicable to leadership in general and to the leadership of Jesus in particular. Why is integrity important to leadership? What is it about integrity that attracts followers to a leader?

The power of integrity in relation to leadership can best be seen in the context of hypocrisy, which is not only the opposite of integrity, but is one of the primary concerns upon which Jesus passes judgment in his public teaching.²⁵ The “Do as I say and not as I do” approach to leadership has long been discredited, yet we can still ask why such a hypocritical approach undermines leadership. The answer can be found in two aspects of hypocrisy that serve to alienate followers by undermining a follower’s ability to trust his leader. The first is the fact that hypocrisy is a form of dishonesty. A leader who does another is giving witness to the inaccuracy of his words. His behavior contradicts his speech, thus undermining the credibility of his words. If the leader is not willing to follow his own words, why would a follower? In failing to apply a principle he imposes on his followers to himself, the leader provides powerful evidence that he is either lying to himself or to his followers. The result is distrust of the leader, which yields followers that are reluctant to follow their leader’s direction.

The second aspect of hypocrisy that yields distrust and alienation is the element of self-service that often motivates hypocrisy. In pursuing self-interest that is contrary to his own principles (for example a leader

who says laws must be followed but then cheats on his taxes) the leader demonstrates in convincing fashion that self-service is his fundamental motivation. While such behavior is common and may even be forgivable, it will again tell followers that the leader is not worthy of their trust. If the leader is willing to abandon his own principles to protect his interests, he will certainly abandon the interests of his organization and those of his followers if their concerns ever come into conflict with his own. Only the foolish will follow a leader who has proven he will subjugate principle and the concerns of others to his own needs and desires.

Integrity, as the opposite of hypocrisy, fuels the trust between a leader and follower. The most powerful way a leader can convince followers that the principles he articulates are true is by behaving according to those principles. We all know that actions speak louder than words. The leader whose actions are aligned with his beliefs provides evidence to his followers that he believes in what he says and that those beliefs are true. In addition, integrity is uniquely able to demonstrate a leader's ability to overcome his own self-interest. A leader that has the integrity to live up to his principles even when those principles cost him personally is a leader whose followers have proof that he can prioritize their interests even above his own. Given the strength of self-interest as motivation to any person, it is a leader who demonstrates he can act on principles contrary to his own self-interest that will be able to convince others that he can act on the principle of concern for followers over self. The leader who demonstrates this kind of integrity will deserve and inspire the trust of his followers because he will have demonstrated the ability to live up to the highest standards of moral character, which is the ability to conform his behavior to good moral principles and subjugate his own desires to the needs of others.

The teaching of Jesus regarding love of enemy and his subsequent action of dying for his enemies on the Cross brings all of the resources of integrity to his leadership. He acts according to the principles he preaches, demonstrating the truth of those principles and his belief in them. Jesus is also able to live out those principles even when doing so will lead to his own suffering and death. He demonstrates the

uncommon ability to rise above his own interests in order to place the interests of his mission and those of his followers above every other consideration. That level of integrity is one of the fundamental reasons that Jesus was able to attract followers before and after his death, and it is this type of integrity that will attract followers to our leadership as well.

CHAPTER FOUR: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE HE LOVES US

The basic premise of this chapter can be stated quite simply: If a leader cares about his followers, his followers will care about him. When we use the idea of caring about others, however, we're invoking the idea of love, and that's where things can get complicated. Love is a difficult idea to get our arms around and relating love to leadership can make it murkier still. In an attempt to keep my discussion relatively clear, I'll turn to what might seem an unlikely source to get at a Christian understanding of love and leadership, which is the thought of Niccolo Machiavelli. Although the name Machiavelli is usually associated with deceit and deviousness in the pursuit of power, the questions he formulates and his frank observations provide not only a contrast to the methods through which Jesus led, but also help us to understand the risks and possibilities related to those methods. The main motive and method for the leadership of Jesus is love. The writing of Machiavelli calls this method into question and even seems to predict the difficulties Jesus experienced in his earthly life. By examining the leadership of Jesus through the lens provided by Machiavelli we will see that leadership is not for the faint of heart and that the leadership of Jesus takes into account not only the weakness of the humans he leads, but also taps into the greatest power available to mankind, which is the desire of the human heart.

Love and Fear in the Practice of Leadership

In his book *The Prince* Machiavelli raises two points that can be used to critique the way in which Jesus leads. First, in answering the question of whether it is better for a leader to be loved or feared, Machiavelli asserts that fear is the more powerful and more reliable way to motivate followers. He maintains that a bond of love between leader and follower will be broken at the first sign that such a break will be to the advantage of the follower. Fear, however, "preserves (the leader) by a dread of punishment which never fails."²⁶ Fear is also the more reliable tool for Machiavelli because it places control of a follower's motivation into the hands of the leader. A leader can force a follower to fear him, but cannot force that follower to love him. The wise leader

“. . . should establish himself on that which is in his own control and not in that of others.”²⁷ To love is to risk and Machiavelli asserts such risk is not only unnecessary but will inevitably lead to failure. Such failure seems to be evident in the Gospel passion narratives where the disciples who supposedly love Jesus abandon him at the very moment he needs them most. Machiavelli provides a further criticism to Jesus’ leadership by noting the danger of living according to ethical standards when most people do not. To put it in his words, “. . . How one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live, that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation; for a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil.”²⁸ Given the corrupt state of human nature, a person that relies on the virtues of others will end up crushed in defeat. And does this not capture exactly what happened to Jesus? The love and generosity Jesus shows to everyone he meets results in betrayal by Judas, abandonment by his disciples, and condemnation by the authorities and crowds in Jerusalem. Do not the insights of Machiavelli warn leaders to avoid the path trodden by Jesus? Machiavelli makes his points upon the basis of human sin, and no doubt he has a very solid foundation on which to work. Yet, the end of the Christian story and Christ’s leadership is not determined by sin. Sin must be accounted for and overcome, but it does not have the last word. It is Christ’s victory over sin that enables him to overcome the arguments of Machiavelli, and that victory is based on a love that is even stronger than sin.

The Image of God: Tarnished, but not Destroyed

The vision of leadership presented to us by Machiavelli could not be more different than that lived out by Jesus in the pages of the Gospels. One reason for the chasm between the two is the purpose behind the leadership of each vision. For Machiavelli, every choice the Prince makes with regard to leadership is ordered toward maintaining the power of the Prince. Service of self by preserving his power is the criteria by which the wise Prince must lead. For Jesus the criteria for all leadership action is the accomplishment of his mission. Whatever must

be done to reconcile humanity to the Father is the criteria for the leadership choices of Jesus. The leadership of Jesus is focused on saving others and seems quite indifferent to his self-preservation.

A second difference between the two approaches can be seen in the type of power used to accomplish the leadership task. For Machiavelli the levers of power to be pulled are those typical of a political state. Political, legal, and military power are all used to serve the interests of the Prince. Jesus, on the other hand, eschews all of those forms of power. In his public ministry Jesus at no point seeks any office or position that would give him some type of worldly authority. At one point in the Gospel of John the crowds want to seize him and make him king. Jesus eludes them, however, retreating to a mountain alone (John 6:15). His retreat did not represent a lack of ambition, though. Had Jesus allowed himself to be named king he would likely have been a petty ruler less significant than a Herod, who is only remembered due to his historical proximity to Jesus. Jesus had a much greater purpose in mind, and it could not be accomplished by means of merely legal, military or political power. In his mission to lead humanity Jesus knew that capturing nothing less than the human heart would suffice.

Such divergence between the two types of leadership seems to pit the realist Machiavelli against the dreamer Jesus. The realism of Machiavelli seems more secure, more powerful. It recognizes the sinfulness of humanity and ruthlessly leverages that sinfulness to its own advantage. It uses the seemingly insurmountable powers of the state to crush any and all opposition. Upon examination, however, the security of Machiavelli's approach to power, which lies in the universal experience of human sin and weakness, is not as reliable as one might think. Machiavelli's approach to leadership is fearful and risk averse. It is always looking to preserve the power of the leader and resorts to corruption and injustice to maintain that power. Such a leadership regime will never be secure in its power. Its injustice will alienate even an already corrupt society or organization. No matter how corrupt a person may be, each person still maintains a sense of justice with regard to self. Even the most depraved criminal knows when he is being treated unfairly. Followers in organizations with corrupt leaders may

follow due to fear or because of self-interest, but they will shift allegiance as soon as those forces fail. In addition, because of his aversion to risk Machiavelli's leadership philosophy fosters weakness. In his fear of relying on love and thus relinquishing control, the Prince cannot avail himself of the power that resides within the heart of a follower. Contrary to Machiavelli's assertion, the motivational power of fear is no match for that of love. A person led by fear will only give to the leader what is necessary to avoid the punishment or suffering that is the source of his fear. A person led by love, on the other hand, *can be willing* to give not just the minimum, but the maximum. In the case of Jesus as the loving follower of the Father, he is willing to give everything, up to and including his life, for the good of his mission. Although Jesus is the paradigm of self-sacrificial love, he is not the only person capable of such sacrifice. Plato tells us that only lovers are willing to die for one another,²⁹ which is a truth lived out by spouses, parents, soldiers, first responders, and many others on a daily basis. A leader who taps into that source of power taps into the greatest dynamism the human spirit has to offer.

Machiavelli would likely respond to that argument in two ways. First, the formulation "can be willing" used above is quite risky. A person can withhold their love from even the most inspiring and deserving leader, which is precisely the risk Machiavelli seeks to avoid. Second, given humanity's fallen and corrupt nature, such withholding is not only likely, but inevitable. (Recall his words that the virtuous person will be devoured among so many who are vicious.) Although Machiavelli is certainly right that the path of love requires risk that human sin exacerbates, it is in Jesus' understanding of human nature's goodness that his wisdom surpasses that of the world's Machiavellis. Jesus can see past the sin of which every human person is capable, into the very heart and desire of each person. His seeing past human sin is no exercise in wishful thinking, either. Jesus is not a fool, hoping beyond hope that his followers will rise above their sin and failure. If nothing else, the experience with his disciples demonstrated quite clearly that even his closest companions would fail him. And St. John the Evangelist tells us that Jesus knew their weakness and the weakness

of all he encountered even without this experience. “Many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all” (John 2:23-24). Jesus, with Machiavelli, recognizes human frailty and corruption, but Jesus also knows the power of human love. He knows the human heart because he made that heart in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:27). The leadership of Jesus appeals to a heart that is created for love and finds its home in love. The saints so eloquently remind us of the human heart’s yearning. St. Augustine speaks of this love in his famous prayer: “You have made us for yourself, Oh Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”³⁰ St. John Paul II also gives voice to this reality, asserting, “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”³¹ Love is the dynamism that moves the human heart. Love of desire is the dynamic power that moves and shapes history because it is desire for the good that drives the choices of each and every person.³² It is only by appealing to the hearts of his followers, by inspiring their love for him and his Father, that Jesus can accomplish the leadership mission entrusted to him by the Father.

Compassion as the Heart of Jesus’ Leadership Appeal

Given the importance of love to his leadership, Jesus takes to heart Ovid’s insight, “If you want to be loved, be lovable,”³³ and attracts followers through his compassion for them. The Gospel narratives tell us how Jesus demonstrated God’s compassion for his people over and over again. Although he often speaks of the compassion God has for sinners as the reason for his mission (Matt 18:11, Luke 19:10) and notes the joy in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15:7), Jesus’ teaching in regard to God’s compassionate desire for reconciliation with sinners reaches a high point in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Here we see a depiction of God’s compassion that looks past the depths of human depravity and finds joy in rescuing us from those depths. Jesus’ compassion for sinners is also

powerfully expressed in his defense of the woman caught in adultery and his refusal to condemn her (John 8:1-8). Although space prevents us from listing all the times his compassion is manifest in his curing of the sick, the interchange between Jesus and a leper he is about to cleanse helps us to see Jesus' concern for the man. "A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, 'If you wish you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, 'I do will it. Be made clean'" (Mark 1:40-41).³⁴ It is his love and pity that also motivate Jesus to feed the massive crowds that come to hear him speak (Matt 14:14,15:32; Mark 6:34, 8:2). The Gospels record the frequent expressions of Jesus' love for his followers. St. Mark tells us of Jesus' love for the rich young man who is seeking after eternal life (Mark 10:21). With the death of Lazarus, we witness the tears of Jesus over the loss of his beloved friend (John 11:35). The love of Jesus for even his adversaries is seen in his words of forgiveness from the cross (Luke 23:34), but is most evident in the very sacrifice of the cross. Jesus demonstrates his love for his followers throughout his life and his death, and it is his love that draws followers to him.

Implications for Leadership

The parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21) crystallizes the differences between Jesus' approach to leadership and that of Machiavelli, while providing important insights for our practice of leadership. Jesus' description of the relationship between the sheep and shepherd is one of followers to their leader. The shepherd walks ahead of the sheep, and they follow him (John 10:4). They do so for two reasons. First the sheep know the shepherd, and the shepherd knows the sheep. The shepherd's knowledge of the sheep is so intimate he can call each by name. The sheep will follow him because of that knowledge, because of their relationship with the shepherd. They will run away from the stranger because they have no relationship with the stranger and do not recognize his voice (John 10:5). Second, the good shepherd, the leader of the sheep, shows the highest form of love for the sheep, which Jesus defines as laying down one's life for another (John 15:13). Jesus contrasts the good shepherd with the hired hand, who watches the

sheep only to earn a wage. The hired hand will run at the sight of the wolf, leaving the sheep as prey for the beast. Successful leadership in the model of the good shepherd requires an intimate relationship between the leader and follower, as well as an active concern, a passionate love for the followers on the part of the leader. The followers/sheep follow because they know they are loved by their leader and can therefore trust their leader. Machiavelli's approach to leadership, with its focus on fear, human corruption, and the good of the Prince as opposed to the good of the followers, is extraordinarily fragile in comparison. Foolish though they might be, the sheep will scatter even more quickly than the hired hand that runs at the first sign of trouble. A leader who desires unconditional commitment on the part of his followers, the type of commitment Jesus expects and seeks to inspire in his followers (Matt 10:37-39, Luke 14:26-27), must take the time to know them and put their interests above his own. The Machiavellian leader that will not risk developing the passionate commitment of his followers cannot reap the reward of their unconditional devotion.

C.S. Lewis tells us that to love is to be vulnerable and that the only place we will be safe from the risks of love is hell.³⁵ Jesus does what Machiavelli says no wise ruler should do in that he risks the rejection and suffering that is made possible by love. Yet, it is precisely this investment of risk on the part of the leader that will inspire his followers. Risk of suffering and sacrifice (the subject of our next chapter) is the evidence that a leader truly cares for his followers. By loving his followers Jesus looks into their eyes as a leader who knows them and cares about them. Few things can motivate followers more effectively than knowing their leader really cares about them, and it is this affection that unites Jesus to his followers even to this day.

How Does Love Apply to Our Behavior as Leaders?

Leadership inspired and motivated by love will start with a recognition of the dignity and importance of each follower. The actions chosen by a leader and the manner in which he treats his followers should manifest an authentic concern and a sincere compassion for each of them. Leaders should keep the golden rule in mind as they deal with

their followers; always treating them in a manner that the leader would want to be treated. Such an approach will drive a leader to know his followers well, to treat them with kindness, and to motivate followers with awards and recognition for good work whenever possible.

Love as a desire for the good of the organization and the good of followers can also put a leader into extraordinarily difficult situations. In the next chapter we will discuss how great achievement often comes at the cost of great discipline and even suffering. The pursuit of an organization's mission, be it a corporation, an athletic team, or an army, will likely require significant, even enormous sacrifice. In addition, pursuing the good of a mission will require the organization and its people to face hard truths. Those hard truths will inevitably include the correction of followers that fail in their responsibilities. It is here that an experienced leader might object to a philosophy of leadership based on love. It would be nice if all a leader had to do was to be kind to his followers and provide them positive motivation. The reality is leadership can be brutal because leaders have the responsibility of correcting the failures of their followers. One of the most difficult things a leader must do is tell another person, who may be a close colleague and even a friend, that he is failing; that he is not fit for the task to which he has been assigned. Giving such bad news is a difficult undertaking, and as a result is often avoided and neglected. Yet it is one of the most important responsibilities of a leader. And we can look to the behavior of Jesus to see an example of a leader correcting his followers. Despite the fact that Jesus offers his love to all, the Gospels give examples of Jesus teaching and acting upon this difficult aspect of leadership. In his rebuke of Peter when Peter attempts to deter him from the path of suffering (Matt 16:23) Jesus demonstrates the correction a leader must provide to an errant follower. His correction and admonishment of the disciples can also be seen in the stories of the calming of the storm (Matt 8:23-27),³⁶ the expulsion of a spirit beyond the capacity of the disciples to expel (Matt 17:41-21),³⁷ and the interactions of Jesus and the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:40-43).³⁸ Jesus even goes so far as to use the idea of hate when he asserts that the person who does not hate his own father, mother,

wife, child and even himself is not worthy to be his disciple (Luke 14:26). Such language echoes the language of the prophet Malachi who tells us that God loved Jacob but hated Esau (Malachi 1:2-3). God's hatred of Esau, however, is not a contradiction of God's love. As C.S. Lewis points out, God rejects Esau as capable of playing the role of patriarch, to which Jacob is called.³⁹ In "hating" Esau God as leader rejects him for a particular role.

And such rejection is indeed compatible with love as desire for what is good. In addressing the struggles of a failing follower, a loving leader will start with positive motivation and ensure that the person has the training and resources necessary to succeed in his role. Such measures, however, do not always resolve the problems. Sometimes a person lands in a role that is simply beyond his capacity to accomplish. In that situation, once positive corrective measures have been exhausted, the leader must counsel his follower regarding his shortcomings and even move to reassign that individual. It is desire for the good of the organization that would drive such a decision and, surprisingly, in two ways it is also love for the failing follower that will shape and motivate the leader's effort to correct and even fire the person. First, such correction can be applied in a loving manner, i.e., it can and must be done with patience and kindness. More significant, however, is the fact that to love the failing follower is to tell him the truth about his performance, no matter how difficult that may be. It is only by facing the truth of his difficulties that the struggling follower can get into a position in which he can succeed. Leadership by love will likely accentuate the positive when motivating followers, but it can also include and may require the disciplining of followers that are not suited to their task.

CHAPTER FIVE: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE FOR US

In a course I taught recently I asked the question, “If Jesus had not suffered would he have attracted as many followers as he did?” Jesus, after all, suffered greatly, and also promised his followers that they too would suffer. “Remember the word I spoke to you, ‘No slave is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).⁴⁰ It seems a strange way to attract followers. Wouldn’t it be easier to attract followers by offering them happiness rather than suffering? Of course Jesus attracts followers through promises concerning the most important aspects of human experience. He offers to give us life in its fullness (John 10:10), which includes the promise of eternal life.⁴¹ His great promises, however, seem almost watered down by his other teachings. His pitch intertwines the good with the bad. “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (Matt 11:28-30). Wouldn’t a message that offered unadulterated happiness be more appealing? Apparently not. My students agreed that if Jesus had not himself suffered and had not taught about suffering in the way that he did, he would not have attracted so many followers in the years following his death and resurrection. So, the further question to ask is, “Why?” Why, or how, does suffering contribute to the leadership appeal of Jesus? The answers lie in the nature of great achievement, the nature of the world in which we live, and the nature of leadership itself.

Sacrifice as Necessary to Leadership

A turning point in the Gospel of John comes when the Gentiles who have converted to Judaism express the desire to see Jesus (John 12:20-21). A prominent theme in the Gospel story up to this point has been Jesus’ reference to his “hour,” which alludes to the climactic events of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Prior to the interest of the Gentiles in chapter twelve, Jesus asserts that his hour is coming, but has not yet

come.⁴² It is upon the inquiries of the Gentiles that Jesus transitions to assertions that the hour has indeed arrived. Jesus' hour had come to return to the Father (John 13:1), and that return will reveal the glory of both the Father and the Son (John 12:23, 17:1). The content of that glory, however, is not what we would normally think of as glorious. Jesus immediately describes God's glory in the context of the fruitfulness of a grain of wheat. The grain will bear much fruit only if it falls to the earth and dies (John 12:24). Jesus uses the grain of wheat to highlight the suffering that he must undergo in order to complete his mission.

The grain of wheat also reinforces a truth we all know from experience. Nothing great can be achieved without sacrifice. There is an intrinsic relationship between great achievement and sacrifice. Only great achievements are worthy of sacrifice (if the goal is not worthwhile, why bother sacrificing for it?) and great achievements are measured in terms of sacrifice. The achievement is great because one had to sacrifice significantly to achieve it. This is the case in all great acts, whether they be athletic triumphs, the production of great artistry, or the achievements of historical movements. The heights are climbed by means of small, and often grueling, step after step after step. A person that shuns sacrifice will never produce great results. Every story of great achievement comes with moments in which people must give up something good, whether it is pursuing more pleasurable activities or other goods, such as time with loved ones, and must suffer even the doubts of whether their sacrifice will ever produce anything. After all, a great risk of sacrificing for a worthwhile goal is the very real possibility that the sacrifice will be for naught and will achieve nothing in the end.

Greatness requires sacrifice, and this truth applies to the work of leaders as much as any other person pursuing greatness. Jesus' assertion regarding the grain of wheat recognizes the importance of sacrifice to his mission and points to how suffering furthers a leader's ability to influence his followers. Before addressing the relationship between suffering and leadership effectiveness, however, we must also look at the

impact of sin on human suffering, which sets a further context in which to understand the relationship between suffering and leadership.

Sin and suffering in relationship to the Leadership of Jesus

In the Gospels Jesus frequently tells his followers not only that they will suffer (Matt 24:9, John 15:20) but that they are not worthy of him if they do not embrace suffering. A person cannot be a disciple of Jesus without taking up his cross to be his follower (Matt 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27). As a leader, however, Jesus is not asking his followers to do anything or bear any burden that he was not first willing to bear himself. Jesus not only predicts his own suffering, he asserts that he must suffer in order to accomplish his mission (Matt 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, 24:26). Such assertions beg the question, why? Why must Jesus suffer and why must his followers suffer? One of the best answers to this question comes from a man deeply acquainted with physical suffering, Father Walter Ciszek. Father Ciszek's remarkable life included two decades of living in the Soviet prison system in the mid twentieth century. It was through the crucible of the slave labor camps of Siberia, the agony of piercing bodily pain and the despair of exhaustion that Father Ciszek approached the experience of suffering.

Why pain and suffering?...The answer lies not in God's will but in the world in which we live and try to follow his will... Christ's redemptive act did not of itself restore all things; it simply made the work of redemption possible, it began our redemption...So the world has not been changed overnight, and it is the world in which we seek to follow Christ's example that afflicts us as it afflicted him. It is not the Father, not God, who inflicts suffering upon us but rather the unredeemed world in which we must labor to do his will, the world in whose redemption we must share.⁴³

The words of Father Ciszek and the teaching of Jesus recognize the reality of a fallen world in desperate need of redemption. The fruit of sin is suffering and we need only turn to daily headlines to find

evidence of the link between sin and suffering. Is there any more potent source of suffering than the self-serving cruelty, injustice, and indifference humans show to one another on a daily basis? Jesus recognizes the state of fallen humanity and knows that the fight to redeem humanity will be a long, hard-fought slog, begun through his sacrifice and finished through that of his followers (Col 1:24).

The leadership of Jesus must also include suffering because suffering is a phenomenon experienced by every person. Suffering, like sin, is a universal experience of human life. The focus on suffering in Jesus' message and example gives him credibility with the people he seeks to lead because each of those people experiences suffering at some point in their lives. To promise care-free living in a life that is anything but free of care, is to make a promise that cannot and will not be believed in our world of suffering. Jesus' message is credible because it recognizes sin and suffering as a fundamental part of human experience. The importance of suffering in his appeal as a leader goes beyond credibility, however. Jesus also acknowledges the great joy and beauty that is experienced in life and asserts that he can deepen this joy and make it full (John 10:10). The teaching and example of Jesus capture the paradox of a human condition in which unspeakable injustice is experienced alongside extraordinary happiness. The most powerful image capturing the paradox is that of the Cross, which simultaneously symbolizes the barbaric cruelty to which humanity can stoop and the sublime beauty of self-sacrificial love of which humans are capable, and are so earnest to encounter. Jesus' leadership message covers the depths of human suffering and the heights of human desire, making it both eminently believable and extraordinarily inspiring. His message enables followers to reconcile themselves to the suffering they will inevitably face, while inspiring them with the knowledge that God will overcome that suffering. The leadership of Jesus accounts for the universality of suffering, which helps make his leadership universally appealing.

Service and the Paradox of Leadership

Jesus tells us that if we would be his followers we must suffer. He also says that if we want to be leaders, especially of other Christians, we must serve. Here we come to the explicit teaching of Jesus in regard to leadership. In each of the synoptic Gospels Jesus teaches us that the typical model of leadership is not only wrong, it is backwards. Leadership as practiced by the Gentiles, or the world, had long been (and still is) marked by the human tendency to be self-serving. Jesus challenges this reality and asserts a counterintuitive relationship between leadership and service. “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).⁴⁴ This assertion, repeated virtually verbatim in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, applies the moral principles Jesus had been preaching throughout his public ministry to leadership. Jesus frequently asserts that the least in this world are the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9: 46-48), that the greatest must be the servant of all (Matt 23:11), and that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while the humble will be exalted (Matt 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:14). In John’s Gospel the washing of the disciples’ feet by Jesus, their master, is the very acting out of the leadership described in the synoptic accounts. The leader as servant of his followers is the model of leadership proposed and demonstrated by Jesus, a demonstration that reaches its climax in the sacrificial offering of his life on the Cross.

Although the union of Jesus’ teaching and his actions in regard to leadership are another example of his integrity, his words and actions tell us more about leadership than just being an outstanding example of leadership in action. His teaching reveals not only the intrinsic relationship between service and leadership, it also reveals the intrinsic relationship between leadership and morality. Jesus’ criticism of the prevailing practice of leadership in which the Gentiles lord things over

their followers highlights the typical moral failure of leaders. The purpose of such leaders is to serve themselves rather than others, which is nothing other than the great sin of pride. Pride, as love of self to the exclusion of love of others, is the fundamental moral failure and is fundamental to ineffective leadership. Leaders who serve themselves rather than their followers cannot inspire those followers. Self-serving leadership is failed leadership, which must resort to coercion or manipulation in order to influence its followers. Through the teaching and example of Jesus we can see that serving others is the heart of leadership, which brings us back to the method by which Jesus motivates his followers: love. It is one thing (and a good thing at that) for a leader to say that he loves his followers, but it is quite another, that it is much more powerful, to show that love through real actions and behavior. Love for others is made visible by service for others. The leader that serves his organization and his followers is willing to undergo discomfort and suffering for their good. Such service exhibits the devotion of the leader to his followers and the natural reaction to such service is a return of devotion on the part of the followers.

Service of others on the part of the leader gives rise to more than just the affection of his followers. It gives rise to authority. Authority is usually concerned with having power over something or the ability to do something. Authority frequently has a bad reputation because all too often it is used by leaders to dominate and subjugate their followers, which leads to the alienation Jesus decries in his description of Gentile leadership. Yet authority is a phenomenon repeatedly raised by the Gospels and attributed in its fullness to Jesus. Jesus's act of cleansing the temple, reported in each of the four Gospels (Matt 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:14-16), provokes the Jews to question by what authority he can take such controversial action (Matt 21:23-27, Mark 11:27-33, Luke 20:1-8, John 2:18). The Gospels also assign extraordinary authority to Jesus in a variety of circumstances. Unlike the scribes Jesus teaches as one with authority (Matt 7:29, Mark 1:23). Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (Matt 9:6, Mark 2:10, Luke 5:24) and is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5). He is able to confer power over serpents, scorpions, and spirits to his

disciples (Luke 10:19-20), and even has authority over the wind and the sea (Matt 8:27, Mark 4:41, Luke 8:25). Indeed, Jesus knew that the Father had given him all power in heaven and on earth (John 13:3, Matt 28:18). Unlike Gentile leaders, however, Jesus uses the power and authority given to him by the Father to serve his followers. In the Gospel of John the very first act Jesus takes after the assertion that he has been given all power (John 13:3) is to wash the feet of his disciples (John 13:4-11). The authority given to Jesus is immediately exercised in a lowly act of service, which he tells the disciples is to be the model for their own leadership. In opposition to the worldly understanding of leadership Jesus proposes a model of leadership in which authority is given not to serve the leader, but to serve the followers. And in using his authority in service to his followers Jesus accrues further authority. Indeed, Jesus would have no authority to tell his followers that they must suffer if they are to be his disciples if he were not first willing to serve and suffer for them. It is his service and his suffering for the good of others that gives Jesus the authority he commands with his followers. "Whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:27-28). Jesus is the first among Christian leaders, and it is because of this preeminence that he becomes the slave of every Christian follower even unto death (Phil 2:7-8).

How Does Service and Suffering Apply to Our Behavior as Leaders?

Although our reflections on the importance of suffering and service to leadership may highlight the dark side of leadership, the debt that must be paid to lead well, it also recognizes the reality of the challenges that beset the practice of leadership. An acceptance of sacrifice acknowledges the inevitable investment that must be made to achieve some great feat. All significant achievement requires sacrifice, and this truth is particularly applicable to leadership, which is most essential to accomplishing tasks too great to be conquered by one person alone. The nature of a leader's task may not require suffering on the scale of what Jesus endured, but at a minimum it will require a

leader's willingness to risk suffering. And one of the best ways to prove such a willingness is for the leader to serve the good of the organization and its people before looking out for his own interests. In addition, suffering on the part of the leader leads to increased credibility with his followers. The leader who suffers for the good of his cause or the good of his followers is the leader who proves he is able to rise above self-interest and act on the principles he is preaching to his followers. As we discussed in the previous chapter, such integrity is unique in its power to inspire and motivate followers. A leader's service to his followers also demonstrates the concern the leader has for his followers. That concern will be reciprocated by followers in the form of their loyalty to the leader and the team the leader serves, and it will also provide the leader with the authority and ability to make demands of his followers. The demands of a leader can only be withdrawn from followers as a consequence of the service he has previously deposited with them. In the end, the service and suffering of Jesus show us the paradox that "to serve is to reign"⁴⁵ and that Jesus Christ, as the leader par excellence, garnered his influence and authority through a total self-emptying of himself in service to his beloved followers.

CHAPTER SIX: WE FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT GLORY

“Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil 2:5-11

Glory and fame are often associated with leadership. Although the successful leader will usually accrue glory, there is yet another paradox at play in the relationship between glory and leadership, which is this: the leader who seeks his own glory will fail to achieve it. The more he grabs at glory, the more it will slip through his fingers. In examining the leadership of Jesus we will see him deepen the paradox. Jesus shuns glory and even seeks out humiliation. He does not seek humiliation for its own sake, however. In his passion to accomplish the mission set before him by the Father, Jesus is willing to risk all self-interest. In what might be the ultimate paradox of his leadership, and leadership in general, it is this focus on mission to the exclusion of self-interest that ends up being the surest path to glory. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians, it is through the humiliation of the Son of God becoming man that Jesus is exalted above all others. And that exaltation is ordered to the glory of God the Father. To us mortals, however, humiliation and exaltation seem diametrically opposed. How do we make sense of the paradox? As always, we can find the answer in the pages of Scripture.

Scripture on the Glory of God

If the word glory is to be understood as exalted renown or resplendent majesty, beauty and magnificence,⁴⁶ it would seem that both the Old and New Testaments provide many examples of God's glory. Scripture depicts glory, *doxa* in the Greek, as the manifestation of God to his people and refers also to the power by which God is made manifest. God's glory is demonstrated in the Book of Exodus in his interactions with Moses, who cannot look directly at the face of God, but only God's back, lest he die (Exodus 33:18, 19, 22). The glory of the Lord is so intense that the skin of Moses glows just by spending time in the Lord's presence. And the glow is so great that Moses must wear a veil because the Hebrews are afraid to come near the radiance of his face (Exodus 34:27-34). The accounts of Jesus' transfiguration in the synoptic Gospels retain these two elements of light and fear. In his Transfiguration the face of Jesus shone like the sun, and the apostles who witnessed the event were overcome with fear (Matt 17:-18, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:23-27). Scripture also depicts the glory of God as a manifestation of his power. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus' turning of the water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana is the first of God's signs that reveals not only the power of Jesus, but the glory of God (John 2:11). In addition, Scripture tells us that God's power has a purpose, which is the salvation of mankind. Isaiah asserts that God glorifies his name by dividing the waters and saving Israel from the Egyptians (Isaiah 64:12-14). The man born blind in the Gospel of John provides the opportunity for the manifestation of God's power in Jesus' act to restore his sight (John 9:2-7). The power of God that saves humans is an expression of God's love for humanity, and it is in the expression of this love that the glory of God can be seen most clearly.⁴⁷

In the New Testament the glory of God as his power to save humans is given a new and more precise meaning. In the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel Jesus declares that the hour of his glorification has arrived. As in previous depictions of God's glory, the glorification of Jesus and his Father concerns God's power to save humanity, but now that power is manifest in suffering self-sacrifice rather than power and awe. Here the dying grain of wheat not only indicates the suffering

Jesus will undergo, but is directly linked to God's glory. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." The glory of Jesus is the same as that glory shared by the Father and Son before the foundation of the world (John 17:1-5), and it is now definitively demonstrated in history by the death of Jesus on the Cross. "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12:32). The glory of God is his power to save mankind, which reaches its historical climax when Jesus lays down his life for all (John 15:13) on the cross of Calvary. God's glory is the salvation of mankind which is achieved by his loving sacrifice on the cross. The humiliation and indignity of the Cross produces God's triumph and glory.

The passage from humiliation to exaltation finds its echo in the explicit teaching of Jesus in regard to leadership. ". . . Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (Matt 20:26-27). This is the leadership formula of God's glory. And Jesus quickly applies it to himself. "Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). The glory of Christ's leadership, his saving power, comes in the handing over to death of his entire life. The salvation wrought by Jesus comes through leadership because he draws all people to himself through his lifting up on the Cross (John 12:32). Jesus achieves his glory and that of God the Father, not through pursuing glory, but through pursuing his mission to lead sinful humanity back to God the Father. Suffering and service is the glory of Jesus, the glory of God, because it is by means of them that the mission to reconcile the world to God the Father is achieved.

The humiliation of the cross leads to exaltation and mission is the link between these opposites. The desire of Jesus above all is a desire to complete his mission (" . . . There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished," Luke 12:50), and is not a desire for glory. If Jesus hung on the cross because he wanted to be exalted no one would follow him. Jesus has drawn the world to himself by means of the cross because he hung on it for love of

the world. Accomplishing his mission leads to his glorification, but his glorification is not, and as a leader, cannot be the object of his desire.

How Does Glory Apply to our Behavior as Leaders?

So must it be with us if we are to be effective leaders. The object of the leader's desire must be the success of his organization, the success of his followers, rather than his own success. The distinction between desire for glory and desire for mission accomplishment is small and it makes selfless leadership both unique and difficult to discern. It is unique because not every leader can realize that the success of others is more important than his own success, and even fewer leaders can act on such an insight by overcoming the tendency to be self-serving. It is difficult to discern because the behavior of a selfless leader is subtle. It often escapes public notice and will likely include an intention to avoid publicity. Such behavior includes small gestures, such as words of friendship and encouragement to subordinates, embracing lowly tasks that are shared with followers, and taking time to help those followers. Help can include taking care of the mundane and difficult details that are crucial to the success of followers. Helping to develop goals, providing training, giving counsel—to include telling someone he is failing and how he must change to overcome his weaknesses—and providing the positive motivation necessary to enlist a follower's enthusiasm. The value of a leader who does this work and seeks to promote subordinates rather than himself can sometimes be invisible to people outside of the organization. For those within the organization, however, the truth is known. Such a leader is the lifeblood of his organization, playing an irreplaceable role and taking up an irreplaceable position in the hearts of his followers as a result of his service to them.

The virtue necessary to accomplish this activity on the part of the leader is nothing other than humility. It is the humble leader that is willing to take on lowly tasks, work behind the scenes, and put others rather than himself into the limelight. Such humility must be authentic. Humility cannot be a means to the end of the leader's eventual glorification. If the sin of pride is a love of self to preclude all

other loves, including love for God, humility is the love of God and others that eclipses the love of self. C.S. Lewis tells us that humility reaches its height in self-forgetfulness.⁴⁸ The humble leader will forget his own concerns in the pursuit of his mission. And, paradoxically, it is by forgetting his own concerns that the leader will be able to scale the heights of leadership success, which results in the glory typically ascribed to leaders.

The glory of a selfless leader is found in the success of his followers and that of his organization. The secret of this glory will not necessarily become apparent to outside observers, but it often does. Leadership success is attained by those whose mission it is to sacrifice and even suffer for the good of their followers. This is the face of Christ's leadership. It is Jesus who sacrifices his entire being on the Cross, who is then able to draw all people to himself (John 12:32) and lead them to God the Father. He does this by emptying himself of his divinity and suffering the indignities of the Cross. The result of this self-emptying in the accomplishment of his mission is a reclamation of the glory he had before the world began (John 17:5). It is a glory that Jesus does not grasp at, but is given to him by the Father as the consequence of his extraordinary sacrifice. Through his self-sacrificial love Jesus makes possible the salvation of all and thus merits "The name that is above every name" (Phil 2:9). His is the glory of the successful leader, a glory that is available to us if only we have the passion and courage to accept our own leadership mission from God.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Napoleon, *Napoleon's Argument for the Divinity of Christ and the Scriptures: In a Conversation with General Bertrand, at St. Helena* (Charleston: South Carolina Tract Society, 1861), https://archive.org/stream/napoleonsargumen00napo/napoleonsargumen00napo_djvu.txt.
- ² Cf. John 7:15 where the evangelist states that Jesus had no formal education.
- ³ The history of Christian thought about leadership is deep and rich. Although there are many Christian authors that have participated in the recent explosion of leadership in both popular and academic literature, they are by no means the first to explore the meaning of the Gospel with regard to leadership. Some of the greatest saints and thinkers of the Christian tradition have explicitly addressed leadership. Examples include St. Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule* (written to bishops at the beginning of his pontificate in 590 CE), *The Rule of St. Benedict*, *On Kingship* by St. Thomas Aquinas, and *The Six virtues of a Christian Leader* by St. Bonaventure.
- ⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html, 8.
- ⁵ Jesus as follower of the Spirit can be seen implicitly in the infancy narratives where the Incarnation is described as an action of the Holy Spirit by whose power Mary becomes pregnant with the child Jesus. The second person of the Holy Trinity becomes man as a consequence of the Spirit's activity and can therefore be seen as following, although perhaps not in a humanly conscious manner, the actions of the Spirit (Matt 1:18-20, Luke 1:35). Jesus' following of the Spirit becomes explicit in the narration of the temptation in the desert. The accounts of both St. Matthew and St. Luke tell us that Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit (Matt 4:1, Luke 4:1), while that of St. Mark uses more forceful terminology asserting that Jesus is driven into the wilderness by the Spirit (Mark 1:12). Luke's Gospel relates how Jesus is also the follower of his parents, Mary and Joseph. After their finding of Jesus in dialogue with the elders in the temple, St. Luke relates that Jesus, ". . . went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Luke 2:51).

- ⁶ The relationship between love and obedience is also brought up from the perspective of God the Father in John 10:17 where Jesus asserts “This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life . . .” i.e. the Father loves Jesus because he obediently carries out the Father’s will.
- ⁷ Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, Matt 26:39, Mark 14:39, Matt 26:42 and Matt 26:44 all relate this prayer or reference Jesus repeating the prayer (twice in Mark’s account and three times in that of Matthew).
- ⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theological Dramatic Theory Volume III: Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 150.
- ⁹ In Matthew’s Gospel we see the idea of mission immediately in the angel’s communication to Joseph regarding Mary’s pregnancy. “She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). The mission of the Christ, manifest from his conception, is the redemption of Israel. As noted above, the Gospel of John makes clear that the mission of Jesus is to do the will of the one who sent him. Both St. Matthew and St. Luke characterize the mission of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Matt 5:17). Matthew and Luke also characterize Jesus’ mission as a quest particularly focused on those on the margins of society. In the house of Zacchaeus Jesus asserts that “. . . the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Gospels repeatedly emphasize that the mission of Jesus is central to everything he did during his public ministry, as well as to his crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus came to save humans from the sin that separates them from their heavenly Father, and he is willing, even determined, to give his life to accomplish that mission.
- ¹⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 39, 61.
- ¹¹ Cf. John 3:16-17, 10:16, 12:32, 17:2 for sample references to the universal aspect of Jesus’ mission.

- ¹² Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), 2.11 for a description of the moral aspects of different types of leadership.
- ¹³ The Gospels provide us with more than two dozen separate examples of Jesus engaging in prayer to his Father.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Luke 22:15 where Jesus notes his eagerness to eat the Passover with his disciples.
- ¹⁵ Cf. E. Kevin Kelloway, Jane Mullen, Lori Francis, “Divergent Effects of Transformational and Passive Leadership on Employee Safety,” *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 11, no. 1 (Jan 2006): 76-86 for a discussion in which passive leadership fails to produce desired results.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Matt 22:37, Luke 10:27.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Matt 26:64 and Luke 22:69.
- ¹⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* III, 166.
- ¹⁹ Cf. David Luban, “Integrity: Its Causes and Cures,” *Fordham Law Review* 72 (2003): 279-310 for a discussion regarding cognitive dissonance and what he describes as the low road to integrity.
- ²⁰ Cf. Matt 23:1-36, Mark 12:37-40, Luke 20:45-47 for further instances of Jesus condemning the hypocrisy of the religious authorities.
- ²¹ Raymund Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 82. Schwager’s comment follows the thought of Karl Barth regarding the irony of the one announcing judgment becoming the one who is judged.
- ²² Cf. Matt 12:14, Mark 3:6, Luke 6:11, John 5:16-18 for the motivation of Jesus’ enemies to kill him.
- ²³ Cf. Schwager, *Drama of Salvation*, 88 and 93 where he notes that Jesus understood the prevalent interpretation of the Law as the tendency to a legalism that condemned anyone that did not follow the letter of the law. By stepping outside of that legalistic context in not observing the Sabbath or forgiving sins Jesus was inviting that legalistic condemnation upon himself.

- ²⁴ Despite the risk associated with love of enemy three of the most influential leaders of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela all advocated love of enemies. Such a method certainly presents a high risk of suffering on the part of the leader, but also has an enormous impact on the possibilities of that person's leadership. Later we will discuss the importance of love as the mechanism Jesus uses to motivate followers. In that context we will see that love, to include love of enemies, has the ability to attract followings that can transcend societies and even history.
- ²⁵ Cf. Matt 7:3-5, Matt 23:-36, Luke 11:39, Luke 13:14-15 for examples of Jesus highlighting the evil of hypocrisy.
- ²⁶ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17.4.
- ²⁷ Ibid. 17.7.
- ²⁸ Ibid. 15.1.
- ²⁹ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999), 179B.
- ³⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1.1.
- ³¹ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html, 10.1.
- ³² Although a perfectly corrupt person may choose evil in itself, most evil choices are the result of desiring some good and choosing it over things that ought to take precedence over that good. E.g. the bank robber is choosing the good of money over more important goods such as citizenship or virtue.
- ³³ Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. J.H. Mozley (Boston: Loeb Classical Library, 1979), 73.
- ³⁴ Cf. Matt 8:1-4, Luke 5:12-15.
- ³⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 1988), 121.

- ³⁶ Cf. Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25.
- ³⁷ Cf. Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43.
- ³⁸ Cf. Mark 14:37-42 and Luke 22:45-46.
- ³⁹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 123.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. John 13:16 and Matt 10:24.
- ⁴¹ Cf. John 3:16, 3:36, 4:14, 6:27, 10:28; Luke 10:20; Matt 10:39.
- ⁴² Cf. John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20 for references in which Jesus asserts that his hour has not yet come. John 4:23 and 5:25 assert that the hour is coming and is now here, which imply the impending arrival of the hour.
- ⁴³ Walter J. Ciszek, *He Leadeth Me* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 116.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Matt 20:20-28 and Luke 22:24-27.
- ⁴⁵ Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 36.
- ⁴⁶ OED definition used in Margaret Pamment, “*The Meaning of Doxa in the Fourth Gospel*,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1983): 12.
- ⁴⁷ M. Pamment, “The Meaning of *doxa* in the Fourth Gospel,” 14.
- ⁴⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 8.1.

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– United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, 38.

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Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 34
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