A Call to Relational Leadership Arising from a Shared Eschatalogical Vision

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract: The book of Revelation contrasts two distinct approaches to leadership. This article describes these approaches and concludes how Christians should practice leadership today. The two approaches are traced from the rebellion in heaven, through creation, and the life of Jesus, with a focus on Scripture's apocalyptic messages. This study is needed because leadership in the church profoundly affects the church's witness and accomplishment of mission. Faithfulness among God's people in the last days can only be experienced when leadership is practiced according to God-honoring principles. This article concludes that the loving, non-coercive, relational dynamic—demonstrated by the Lamb's leading during the Eschaton—provides a biblical template for Christian leadership in the present time.

Keywords: *leadership; mission; non-coercive leadership; leadership in Revelation; biblical leadership*

Introduction

The book of Revelation contrasts two distinct approaches to leadership; these are demonstrated by the figures of the Lamb and the Dragon. This paper seeks to describe these opposing views and then conclude how Christians should practice leadership, considering the Eschaton. An appeal is made to incorporate these conclusions into the practice of leadership in the church today.

Such a study is needed because how churches practice leadership profoundly effects on the accomplishment of its mission. God's people can only experience success when leadership is practiced according to God-honoring principles. Only the Lamb's self-sacrificing servant leadership, which is transformational

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and seeks what is best for others, will enable the church to be and do that which the Lord intended. This paper concludes that a loving, non-coercive, relational dynamic, demonstrated by the Lamb's leading during the Eschaton, provides a biblical template for Christian leadership in the present time.

Our human proclivity for leadership that seeks to serve our own interests contradicts the witness of the church and hinders its proclamation of a message that prepares people for the coming of Jesus. Our eschatology must inform our ecclesiology (which includes how we lead in the church). Peter makes this connection between the *Eschaton* and how we live our lives when he describes the Day of the Lord and the desolation of the earth that will take place at the Second Coming. His advice for our lives in the present is this: "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:11, RSV). Wondra (2017) speaks of the relationship between ecclesiology and eschatology, saying, "Practice goes a long way in anticipating what we long for God to bring into being" (p. 114). Our leadership practice should reflect that of the last days, heaven, and the New Earth.

Definition of Eschaton

The *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* defines *Eschaton* as "the final event in the divine plan; the end of the world" (*Oxford Dictionaries*, n.d.). However, there remains a significant relationship between the present and what is yet to come. This relationship affects how Christians should live and practice leadership today and thus blurs any discreet separation between now and the time of the *Eschaton*. According to LaRondelle, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus marked the "beginning of the end." "The apostle Peter then announced that the 'last days' had arrived, the days of Christ's spiritual kingship had begun (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2)" (LaRondelle, 1997, p. 17). In our present time, we are challenged to embrace the leadership model of the Lamb. This transformation prepares us, in the context of the *Eschaton*, to lead in a God-honoring manner.

Overview of the Paper

This paper will explore biblical principles of leadership drawn from three scriptural meta-narratives: (a) pre-rebellion leadership, (b) post-rebellion leadership, and (c) leadership principles of the Apocalypse. Finally, we call for reformation in how the church practices leadership today.

Biblical Principles of Leadership Drawn from Three Meta-narratives of Scripture Pre-rebellion Leadership

Genesis provides no defining statement of leadership behavior prior to the

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origin of sin. (This study assumes that the earth and its life forms were created by the Trinity, see Webster, 2010.) The creation narrative, however, reveals elements of God's leadership practices. The first verse of Genesis introduces us to the Creator as Elohim, a plural form of the word for God. We cannot assume that this alone supports the concept of a triune God, but when coupled with the deliberative conversation of Genesis 1:26, we find support for persons' plurality (Murphy, 2013).

Leadership as Conversation

Christian faith and practice did not emerge in a vacuum, but in a rich and varied historical context. Doukhan describes the inclusion of the leadership dimension in the creation narrative of Genesis 1:

> The first word of the Hebrew Bible *bereshit*, generally translated "in the beginning" (Gen 1:1), encapsulates the essence of leadership: it is derived from the word rosh, which literally means "head" and is the technical term normally used to designate one who is leading in a given situation. The event of creation is thus from the start described as an act of leadership. Creation is leadership *par excellence*. (Doukhan, 2014, p. 31)

The creation story reveals nothing that indicates dominance-oriented behavior or the aspirations of ambition. The phrase "in the beginning God created . . ." (Gen. 1:1, NIV) gives no hint of the distinct positions or roles held by the members of the Godhead—no ranking or hierarchy that would show the prior establishment of dominance or specific role. There is a consistent sense of oneness in the Trinity, wherein no one member is elevated or abased relative to another. The expression "let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26, ESV) reveals the planning aspect of creation as a conversation rather than a command. Doukhan discusses this further:

> Generally Jewish tradition held the plural to refer to God addressing His heavenly court, the angels [see footnote 20 in original], as supported by Job: "When I [God] laid the foundations of the earth . . . all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4, 7). An important Jewish tradition reported by the great medieval commentator Rashi explains this text as a lesson of humility on the part of God: "The superior must take counsel and ask authorization from his inferior" [see footnote 21 in original]. The text of the Midrash Rabbah which is the source of Rashi's remark is even more explicit and reports the story that when Moses received this phrase by revelation he was disturbed and asked God to explain. And God answered: "Since man will be the lord of creation, it is appropriate that I ask their agreement to the higher and lower spheres, before I create him. Humans will then learn from Me that the greatest should

ask the agreement from the smallest before imposing on him a leader."
(Doukhan, 2014, p. 38)

From the church fathers' time, Christian theologians saw the plural language as a reference to Christ or/and the Trinity (Clines, 1968; Hasel, 1975). The traditional Christian interpretation would not exclude the traditional Jewish interpretation, insofar as the divine council (the heavenly host) is understood in a broad and larger sense, though with some nuances. In the former interpretation, the sharing operation involves beings other than God Himself. In the latter interpretation, creation occurs within the Godhead and is here understood as an inherent quality of God Himself.

This Christian view reveals a discussion between equals (Johnson, 2005), where a suggestion about creating humans is adopted and carried out without addressing a dominant voice or position. No one is given credit for the suggestion, nor does the context seem to expect the recommendation needed to be credited to an individual member of the Godhead.

Though the New Testament attributes responsibility for creation to Jesus (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10), the creation account mentions God's activities in a plural sense. The Godhead's pluralistic nature is revealed in the creation narrative when the author discussed the Spirit as an active agent in the creation process (Gen 1:2). The credit given to Jesus as Creator in the New Testament extends to all three members of the Trinity.

Leadership Assumes Oneness

Jesus described the nature of the Trinity's relationship to His disciples as a radical oneness (John 14:7–18) that allowed Him to use the first-person singular pronoun "I" when clearly referencing the presence and activity of the Spirit (John 14:18). He reminded Thomas and Philip that He and the Father shared this oneness to the extent that seeing one allows for recognizing the other (John 14:7, 9). Further, Jesus's followers are included in this radical oneness that defies physical reality— "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20, RSV). This spiritual oneness leaves no room for competitive behavior. Dominance and prominence over others is simply not an issue in the cosmos before Lucifer's rebellion.

Leadership is a Shared Process

The creation process reveals inclusion in the planning and decision-making process. "Let us" (Gen. 1:26) reveals a sharing of ideas and efforts. Sharing responsibilities is a hallmark of the relationship enjoyed by the Trinity. The spoken word (that became the written word, see John 1:1, 14; 14:23–26; 17:8) is a collaboration between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each member of the

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Trinity exercised shared power and authority in unique, effective ways (Matt. 18:18; 28:18–20; John 5:17–30; 14:6–16).

The collaboration is not unique to the Godhead alone. The creation plan demonstrated the extension of sharing with humanity, even before man and woman were created (Gen 1:26–30). This plan embraced a shared leadership model, with humans serving as stewards of the earth. Immediately following man's creation, this new relationship was expressed in an assignment for Adam; he was charged with naming the animals God had created. "And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:19, 20). This reveals how God shared His authority with humans.

As they cared for the earth and its life forms, God's intentional empowerment of the first humans reveals the stewarding of leadership. This leadership assignment has never been withdrawn. It links the pre-fall world and the restoration of humanity with God, following Christ's Second Coming. Those redeemed from the earth are promised a seat on Jesus' throne (Rev. 3:21), from which they will once again share in leadership with the Godhead.

Summary of Pre-Rebellion Leadership Behavior

Creation is arguably the most challenging leadership task ever undertaken. Through creation, God revealed a leadership model of collegiality and collaboration—a community process. Competition for position was unknown, and leadership was processed through conversation rather than command. A radical oneness between the Godhead and His creatures supported a generative environment where every Being contributed to a culture of shared leadership and uncompromised inclusivity. God's word reveals a pre-fall world that provides a beautiful glimpse of life and establishes the leadership model to be restored in the Eschaton.

Post-Rebellion Leadership

Mankind's fall into sin had a profound impact on humanity, and a leaders' nature and behavior. Cain's violent reaction to the faithfulness of his brother, Abel, was the first conflict that ended in murder (Gen. 4:2–8). The biblical record and history show innumerable lives forfeited since conflict and other dominance-related relational dysfunctions entered the world. These records provide incontrovertible evidence of the diminished influence of love as a driving force in human nature. Instead, love has been displaced by a compulsion to dominate, and even destroy, to achieve authority. Cain's response to God's query regarding Abel artfully acknowledges the move from other to self ("Am I my brother's keeper?", Gen. 4:9, NIV) in the post-fall world.

As was seen in the creation account (Gen. 1:26), leadership as a conversation

within the community was replaced by rulership that relied upon command and control. The concept of leadership as service was lost in the shift from others to self and awaited rediscovery in the Messiah's person and ministry.

Lucifer as Progenitor of Dominance

Dominance and the dance to attain preeminence over others was not an issue in the cosmos before Lucifer's rebellion. The poetry of Isaiah 14:13–14 and Ezekiel 28:11–15 reveal the origins of the ascendant-dominant approach to leading people. The prophetic narrative that foretells the rise and fall of the King of Babylon (Isa. 14:3–11) also includes a metaphorical comparison of Lucifer's rise and fall (Isa. 14:12–21). The origin of leadership as self-ascendancy that aims at dominance is revealed in this depiction of Lucifer's desire for God's throne.

The consequences of this change impact leadership behavior and practice more than any other event in history. Lucifer, an angel created with great service and leadership gifts, inexplicably felt envious toward the God who created him. Though his position was that of "the guardian cherub" (Ezek. 28:14, NIV), ordained to serve next to God, he doubted the love and wisdom of God. Conflict followed (Rev. 12:7). This dramatically—and tragically—impacted life on our planet. Humans, who had been entrusted with leading planet earth, were influenced to side with Lucifer; this altered their very nature, changing their leadership aspirations and behavior toward selfishness and domination.

Isaiah's describes the thoughts of Lucifer as he contemplated his rebellion against God:

I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
    on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High. (Isa. 14:13–14, NIV)

The verbs and the pronouns within these poetic lines reveal much about Lucifer's philosophy's core elements. "I" is the prominent pronoun, and ascendancy is the overriding direction of his movements. His intense self-centeredness contrasts with the Creator's generative attitude, characterized as a giver who blesses and enhances other's lives. We also see the seeds of competition for primacy germinate in Lucifer's heart, bearing the fruit of dominance and control—war, murder, conflict, and slavery to name but a few—throughout the history of the human race.

The desires of Lucifer's heart, as recorded in Isaiah 14, have been inherited by humans. These desires on leadership practices are ubiquitous, providing

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the foundation for leader behavior throughout history. Power and force replaced the cooperative conversations of the previous era. The great man theory as a leadership model went unchallenged for most of earth's history, except by Jesus. He condemned Capernaum's wickedness (Luke 10:15) when He alluded to Isaiah 14, denouncing the city's desire for preeminence. Jesus inverted the common conceptions of leadership by characterizing the great men as slaves (Matt. 20:26–27), recalibrating what it means to be a leader by reversing first with last (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 9:35).

In the eschatological passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, Paul references competition born of a covetous heart (i.e., a heart that hopes to occupy the throne of universal leadership) as the sin that will mark the time just before Jesus returns. These passages bracket the history of leadership on earth after Lucifer's rebellion and humankind's moral fall.

Power hierarchies emerged as the structures that formalized Lucifer's move toward dominance and control. Lucifer's cosmic rebellion was the origin of ambition that motivates positional dominance. It foreshadowed murderous treachery, such as that of Abimelech toward Gideon's 70 sons (Judg. 9:1–5), the attempt at dominance, initiated by Salome on behalf of her sons (Matt. 20:24), the arguments among Jesus's disciples as to who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24), and countless other cases that stain the history of the human race.

Gideon resisted the urging of the people to become king (Judg. 8:22, 23). However, Israel continued to demand a king, and God finally allowed a human king's installment in Samuel's time. Positional governance, in the form of an earthly king, replaced the Divine-human relational structures of Israel's covenant with God. It is critically important to an understanding of God's leadership ideal that we recognize that kingly administration was not originally included in that model. God predicted that it would become a part of their future (Deut. 17:14) because He knows the tendency of the human heart. God's covenant relationship with His people established Him as Ruler and the people as followers and stewards of His authority on earth. The kingly model was an accommodation of His people's desire to have a tangible, visible human leader.

The demise of the theocracy was initiated by a request of Israel's elders for a king (1 Sam. 8:20). The subsequent act of choosing a king for Israel was accompanied by a warning from God through Samuel, who predicted that the king would rule with complete control and that his subjects would eventually bemoan their request for a king (1 Sam. 8:11–18).

Dominance as the primary underlying leadership behavior of the fallen human race has its origin in the Lucifer's rebellion and has been present, to a greater or lesser degree, in human leader-follower relations since.

Leadership in the Disciples' Community (Matt. 20:20–28)

The social dynamics at play in Salome's request reveal a predictable response to the interjection of positional dominance into a relational social context. Up to this point in time, the disciples related to each other as peers, while Jesus served as the authoritative alpha figure (apart from formal position). However, James and John's mother interjected the possibility of a new social order among the disciples, based upon positional rank. The request that her sons occupy the preeminent positions to Jesus's right and left (Matt. 20:20–21) contained three assumptions: (1) that Jesus possessed the authority to speak (εἰπέ), and it would happen (e.g., great man theory); (2) that the organizational structure of the disciples' community would be ordered according to the familiar worldly hierarchical structures (i.e., power-based and top-down); and (3) that the relational structures that held the community together were inadequate without hierarchy.

Jesus challenged Salome's first assumption by declaring that granting positional rank to the disciples was not His role (v. 23); the Father reserved that right. Though He did not defend the relational nature of His community, Jesus gave no hint it needed the imposition of hierarchical power structures. The third assumption was undone during Jesus' earthly ministry by the clear absence of formal positional ranking among the disciples.

Salome's attempt to inject rank and position (that is, dominance through social competition for position) into the disciple community caused an immediate adverse emotional reaction by the other disciples toward James and John (v. 24). According to Mark's account, the phrase "they began to be . . . " indicates that the tension created by that conversation continued in their relationships (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1921). This incident illustrates the role that dominance plays as a primary source of conflict in the church and elsewhere—perennial relational stress resulting from competition for positional honor and influence. This reality mirrors the initial cosmic rebellion and conflict between God and Lucifer memorialized in Isaiah's words, "I will ascend" (Isa. 14:13).

It is in this context that Jesus refutes the leadership behaviors of the people's rulers and nations (ἄρχοντες τῶν ἐθνῶν) (v. 25), who anticipated becoming great. Again, this language reinforces the invasive nature of dominant behavior as a negative element of leadership. It is ironic that His followers, who received this counsel, were embroiled in such behavior when His words decry it. This ubiquity was not confined only to the Gentiles but was the modus operandi of Jewish leaders, both political and religious. Jesus expanded His counsel to include the great or important ones (μεγάλοι), those who exercised authority (κατεξουσιάζουσιν) that comes from the top down to subjects, or authoritarian leadership rather than the generative authority as the more positive demonstration of authority (προΐστημι) (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Vicent, 1887). In

contrast, Jesus counseled His followers that those who anticipate becoming great (θέλη εἶναι) must first descend into service.

The non-competitive, collaborative, interdependent leadership model that is revealed in Eden's context (before the fall) is the only viable alternative to dominance. The contrast is implicit in Jesus's directive to His disciples that His followers will not show such behavior. This statement of the ideal confronts both the positional maneuvering of James, John, and their mother, as well as the other 10 disciples' anger. What it does not do is describe the positive alternative. Here, we see authoritarian leader behavior, which Jesus identifies as universal among the people and condemns among His followers, but what is the alternative? If authoritarian leadership behavior is universal, we must move to a different dimension to discover the model that contrasts with the autocrat. This ideal pre-fall model was not yet a reality among Christ's followers but was, by faith, within reach of this fledgling community.

Oneness with Christ embraces an identity and behavior consistent with that of the Trinity. Even Jesus experienced greatness by emptying Himself of desire for honor and glory (κενόω, Phil. 2:7), so also the believer who would become great is encouraged to find greatness as a servant (διάκονος, Matt. 20:26). Those who desire primacy have the greater challenge in that they must become slaves (δοῦλος) to the other believers—a mighty challenge when contrasted with the mental models upon which their social understanding of position and leadership were based.

The narrative concludes with Jesus referencing Himself as their example (1 Pet. 5:3). He left his place in glory and descended to serve; His life would be forfeited to serve His followers' transformational processes. The contrast that challenges the ascendant-dominant leadership model may be found only in the descendant-service model demonstrated in the persons and relationships of the Godhead.

Jesus as the Model for Godly Leaders

Because of the universal impact of Lucifer's rebellion upon humanity, we must look beyond human leadership, even among the most faithful of biblical leaders, as the foundation for a God-honoring model of leadership. Using humans as a source for the model, we risk importing the deficiencies inherited from the fall into the model we embrace as "Christian." There is only one dependable human source: Jesus Christ. The Messiah lived and led in a manner that always honored His Triune community. He rejected position as the platform upon which leadership rests and instead chose relationship—friendship, to be precise (John 15:15); He distributed leadership broadly and inclusively among His followers without reference to position (1 Pet. 2:5). He neutralized the relationship between position and leadership by describing all as "kings and priests"

(Rev. 1:6, NKJV). He points us back to when "lording it over others" did not happen because others were always the focus of leadership efforts (Matt. 20:24–28).

Leadership Principles of the Apocalypse

Revelation explicitly indicates that leadership is not a merely methodological issue, but an ontological matter. The 144,000 follow the Lamb, whom John describes using the metaphor of a shepherd of the remnant (Rev. 7:17; 14:4). In contrast, "the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority . . . . The whole world . . . followed after the beast" (Rev. 13:2, 3, NIV). Revelation suggests that humans either reflect the leadership characteristics and practices of the Lamb or the Beast. The 144,000 belong to God and the Lamb, and they "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev. 14:4, NIV). They reflect the Lamb's character and leadership (Rev. 14:5).

Christian leaders are called to practice the Lamb's leadership principles, rather than those of the Beast (Rev. 14:1). Revelation reveals that the character of the Lamb is consistently connected to His leadership throughout the Eschaton. Thus, the readers of Revelation may discern leadership principles by studying the Great Controversy between the Lamb and the Dragon.

Shared Power and Authority

The relationship between the Lamb, the Father, and the Holy Spirit in Revelation demonstrates that power and authority are shared. The Lamb is voluntarily subordinated to the Father. Revelation 5, where the Lamb is presented, follows chapter 4, where heavenly beings worshiped God. The Lamb receives "the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (Rev. 5:7, NIV). However, chapter 7 immediately presents the doxology of a great multitude for both Father and the Lamb: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10, NIV).

Afterward, the merit of redemption is attributed to both the Father and the Lamb (Rev. 14:1; 22:1, 3). Therefore, power and authority are shared and decentralized in the relationship between the Father and the Son. This mysterious relationship is presented in the last scene of the judgment. The One who is seated on a great white throne gives a final sentence to the dead (Rev. 20:11; Aune, 1998, pp. 1100–1101). The Lamb is not present, despite His profound role in the Great Controversy. Aune (1998) argues, "the absence of any mention of the Lamb in this judgment scene is striking" (p. 1101). However, the throne of the Lamb finally appears in the last chapter of Revelation. Here, the throne is shared by both the Father and the Lamb (Rev. 22:1, 3), and the throne is also occupied by the overcomers (Rev. 3:21, Aune, 1997, p. 262). Thus, the authority of God is exercised by the Lamb and God's people,

through the sharing of the throne (Aune, 1998, p. 1177).

This paradoxical relationship shows that God's kingdom does not follow the Greco-Roman hierarchical system, typical of human leadership. Despite the profound verticality between God and creatures (Rev. 4:8, 10), the twenty-four elders are exalted to their own thrones (Rev. 4:4). The authority of God is distributed to the saints (Rev. 20:4). Nevertheless, it seems that shared authority is no threat to God's sovereignty. The redeemed have learned that the desire for an exalted position caused the tragedy in the Dragon's leadership, as was replicated the human experience (Isa. 14:12, 13). They also learned self-denial through the love of the Lamb. The stability of heaven seems to be based on this horizontality in verticality found in the relationship between the members of the Trinity and between God and the saints.

Familial Relationship

Another important characteristic of God's kingdom is familial relationships (Rev. 21:7). Satan seeks his purposes through transaction (Ezk. 28:16; Matt. 4:8, 9). The war in heaven (Rev. 12:7) was initiated by Lucifer's attempt to usurp the highest authority through a transactional process. Revelation depicts that the beast uses the harlot (Rev. 17:16) to entice kings and merchants by trade. The harlot relates transactionally with kings and merchants of the earth (Rev. 18:11–19). This transactional approach is represented by the words "immorality" or "fornication" (Rev. 14:8; 17:2, 5; 18:3, 9; 19:2). The adultery is implied in the attitude of selling and trading truth and innocence to attain selfish benefits. The transaction is not grounded in godly motivation.

This approach to leadership contrasts with godly, biblical leadership, which reflects Christ's humility. Philippians 2:5–11 is Paul's response to the exercise of power in the Christian community. The word strife (Phil. 2:3, *eritheia*) relates to baseness, self-interest, ambition, and contention. Interestingly, this word relates to the vocation of a harlot who attains her benefits by trade (Ezk. 23:5, 11, 12). Also, the word eritheia connotes "electioneering" or "intriguing for office." If someone plots or conspires to achieve a position, then his/her attitude show that he/she is a spiritual prostitute. However, the Lamb is the one "who has been slain" (Rev. 13:8, NASB). He sacrifices everything and will suffer for our redemption (Isa. 53:11) because He is our brother (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6). The familial relationship is the foundation of God's kingdom, marked by love and sacrifice rather than personal gain and power struggles.

Love Characterizes Motivation

Love is the foundation of the Lamb's leadership. One of the most impressive aspects of the Lamb is His silence. Leadership often involves persuasion via a

strong voice. However, Jesus, as the Lamb, does not speak a single time in Revelation. There is no hint that the Lamb commands people. One distinction between the Lamb and the Dragon is related to speech. The beast coming out of the sea has "a *mouth* like that of a lion" (Rev. 13:2, NIV, emphasis added) to "*utter* proud words and blasphemies" (Rev. 13:5, NIV, emphasis added). The beast coming out of the earth "*spoke* as a dragon" (Rev. 13:11, NIV, emphasis added). The beast "was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could *speak* and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed" (Rev. 13:15, NIV, emphasis added).

In contrast, the Lamb is standing on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1) without utterance. The image of the silent Lamb harmonizes with the prophet Isaiah's description of the suffering servant: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7, ESV). This servant "will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets" (Isa. 42:2, NIV; see also Matt. 12:19).

Why does the Lamb keep silent? One apparent answer is that He respects mankind's free decision making. The trustful relationship between the Lamb and His followers results from the Lamb's faithful acts, not from forceful threats. He knows that trust cannot be commanded. The Dragon and his followers wield might and power with strong voices and commands to get attention. However, the Lamb woos the hearts of His people, and He proves His love by His sacrifice. This shows that godly leadership is not marked by threats but by genuine love. Thus, we see that silence can be a more powerful behavior than speaking. According to Doukhan, concerning silence in heaven (Rev. 8:1), "Silence expresses what even words, music, and art cannot. Only silence can communicate the unutterable. And only silence may express the infinite God" (Doukhan, 2002, p. 73).

Missional Focus of Christian Leadership

Revelation reveals a missional focus of Christian leadership. The impending judgment seems to be delayed in the seven seals and the seven trumpets. The voice of the souls under the altar reaches a climax when the fifth seal is broken by the Lamb, saying, "How long . . . until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10, NIV). Then, "there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a *little while longer*, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, *should be completed also*" (Rev. 6:11, NASB, emphasis added). Here, the judgment seems to be delayed to give more time to accomplish the mission.

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The ministry of the Lamb in the cosmic war (Rev. 12:7) is not completed quickly. The judgment is delayed on behalf of the saints (Rev. 6:10, 11). Revelation, chapter 7 describes the sealing ministry of four angels, who hold back "the four winds of the earth" (Rev. 7:1, NIV) until "the seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2, NIV) has been placed on "the foreheads of the servants of our God" (Rev. 7:3, NIV). The Lamb continues His leadership for the purpose of leading the saints to the final destination—springs of living water (Rev. 7:17).

The description of the sixth trumpet is informative.

> The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not *repent* of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they *repent* of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:20–21, ESV, emphasis added)

Again, judgment is delayed because of God's longing for people to repent (2 Pet. 3:9). The genuine reason of delay is love. He initiates the final stage of judgment to repay the blood of the saints (Rev. 6:9–10), but He still longs for the repentance of those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:11).

Between the sixth and the seventh trumpets there is another mighty angel who says "[T]here will be no more delay" (Rev. 10:6, NIV), and, "You must prophesy again" (Rev. 10:11, NIV). So even as judgment is meted out, the call of mercy persists. Exposing the arrogant rebellion of the Dragon in chapters 12 and 13 precedes the three angels' messages "to those who live on the earth" in chapter 14. Similarly, the invitation of salvation is given in chapter 18 after describing the seven bowls of wrath (chapter 15–16) and exposing the judgment for the great harlot (chapter 17). At least three times, a merciful invitation (Rev. 10:11; 14:6; 18:4) is given to people before the determined destruction (Rev. 10:6; 11:18; 15:1). The judgment seems to be delayed by the insertion of a missional invitation. In this long-running combat, the Lamb, as Michael (Rev. 12:7), fights for His "called, chosen and faithful followers" (Rev. 17:14, NIV). Though the goal is already set, the process needs a longer time in God's strategy because the ultimate purpose of Revelation is to lead people to read and hear and take to heart the Gospel invitation (Rev. 1:3). Thus, Revelation concludes, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with *all*. Amen" (Rev. 22:21, ESV, emphasis added). In reality, God's patience manifests the love of God for saving people.

Empowered Leadership

Though the Lamb appears to be weak, His leadership influence is powerful. The 144,000 willingly follow wherever He goes (Rev. 14:4). The ten horns "will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and

chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14, NASB). The Lamb's leadership is empowered in unity with the Father and the Spirit. Calvin Miller reveals the paradox of Jesus's powerful influence expressed in meekness (Matt. 11:29) and defines Jesus's meekness not as the absence of power, but as power under control (Miller, 1995, p. 6). The Lamb's leadership is not self-centered but self-emptied, allowing the Father works in Him (Phil. 2).

Allender (2008, p. 17) summarizes two elements of God's character, as depicted in Psalm 62:11–12, as strong and loving. These attributes of God should be demonstrated through a Christian leader's character. In Revelation, Jesus is the Lamb, and He is the Lion (Rev. 5:5). He has a bow but no arrow (Rev. 6:2). He has a sword, but it is a metaphorical sword (Rev. 2:16), and He does not wield it in battle. Jesus is both Warrior and Lamb; He is strong yet tender. These paradoxical characteristics of Jesus' leadership can only be properly understood when a leader is emptied of self and equipped by the power of the Spirit. This mysterious leadership always fights with the power of evil (division) and always embraces people who have different ideas (unity).

Summary

In Revelation, the Lamb is not focused on Himself. Instead, He chooses to be silent. He pursues "no reputation." There is no indication of transactional leadership. Only self-sacrifice and humility, born of genuine love, speak without sound. Nouwen (1992) insists that "the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self" (p. 30).

The core of Christian leadership is the relationship between God and leaders. The faithful in Revelation follow the Lamb not because of rewards granted but because of his sacrificial love. Christian leadership is not a technique or a method for achieving organizational goals. Leadership is character and trust. It is not about command and control, but is instead grounded in a relational community marked by love. Thus, the fruit of leadership is conditioned on trusting relationships. To be a Christian leader includes being a faithful and trusting person in the service of Christ. Revelation shows that leadership is not simply a matter of organizational effectiveness and efficiency, but also a community relationship.

A Call to Relational Leadership Arising from Shared Eschatological Vision

Scholars commonly assert that leadership is shaped by culture (Chokar, Brodbeck & House, 2007; den Hartog, 2011; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). As servants of Christ, we are participants in mission with fallen humanity and frequently reflect our culture. This awareness is crucial. Without

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it, we cannot confess our need for biblical spirituality and theology to reform our leadership practices. We risk routinely moving through the motions of religious life while simply imitating cultural leadership practices, with no regard for the distinctive nature of our mission.
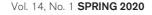
The loving, non-coercive, relational dynamic demonstrated by the Lamb's leading in the Apocalypse provides a biblical template for Christian leadership in the present time. As we experience it on this Earth, this vision of time alerts us to the need for reform. Such an eschatological vision empowers us to parse our culture's normal leadership practice and contrast these practices with biblical leadership principles.

In this context, we must recognize the work done in recent years calling us to a biblical theology of leadership that transcends our various cultural contexts (Bell, 2014; Choi, 2016; Branson & Martínez, 2011; Tonstad, 2019). We set aside a biblically centered theology of leadership in favor of cultural tradition at the peril of mission, our identity, and most importantly, our witness to His character in the end time. For precisely this reason, we must seek to humbly and prayerfully reflect His character in our leadership.

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