

Institute for Christian Studies
FACULTY BULLETIN

Number 7
November, 1986

Copyright 1986

by

The Institute for Christian Studies
1909 University Avenue
Austin, Texas 78705

Institute for Christian Studies
FACULTY BULLETIN
Number 7 November, 1986 ©

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
OLD TESTAMENT MODELS OF LEADERSHIP	
Rick Marrs	5
AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	
James W. Thompson	20
A HIERARCHY OR MERE FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: IS THERE ANOTHER MODEL FOR THE MINISTRY?	
Allan J. McNicol	37
ETHOS AND AUTHORITY: THEN AND NOW	
Michael R. Weed	62
CONTRIBUTORS	78

Foreword

Essays in this Faculty Bulletin variously address issues associated with leadership and authority in the church. Rick Marrs provides suggestive insights for the contemporary church in his analysis of several types of leadership in Israel.

James Thompson and Allan McNicol separately address similar problems in examining leadership in the early church. Thompson finds in the early church a model of leadership which is neither autocratic nor democratic. McNicol focuses on the concept of ministry and applies his insights to the Restoration tradition.

The final essay argues that authority functions in and reflects an ethos. The contemporary church's difficulties with authority are in part due to a failure to understand this and in part due to the contemporary ethos.

Appreciation is due my colleagues for their cooperation in preparing these essays.

Michael R. Weed, editor

OLD TESTAMENT MODELS OF LEADERSHIP

By Rick R. Marrs

The issue of leadership in the contemporary church not only deserves attention, it demands it. A central concern in this discussion involves the question of where one turns for models of leadership. It may surprise some to suggest the Old Testament as a resource, since this ancient material seems so distant (and perhaps too distinct) from our modern Western culture. However, Israel experienced a variety of leaders over her lengthy history, and it would seem prudent to take note of her experiences with various types of leadership.¹

In Jeremiah 18:18-19, the leaders of Judah, in response to a threatening message from Jeremiah, mention three influential types of leaders and their respective responsibilities: the priest with his law (torah); the prophet with his word (dabar); the wise man with his counsel ('esah). To suggest these three

leaders as contemporary models may be problematic, since these figures are often misunderstood by modern Christians. For many, the OT priest represents ritualism and legalism. As ritualizer, he endorsed and propagated a God/human relationship that majored in externals. For others, the OT prophet represents an ancient predictor/forecaster. Such predictive activity was appropriate and necessary in that ancient period, but inappropriate and unnecessary today. For some, the OT sage represents intellectualism. Many would shudder at the thought of intellectuals providing the leadership in contemporary congregations. However, these three models (prophet, priest, and sage), when properly understood, may provide useful information in formulating a biblical vision of a contemporary leader.

These three models are not the only sources available to us. Two other figures may be useful in formulating a modern vision of leadership. The first comes from the agrarian realm; the second derives from the political arena. In the OT, a common metaphor for a leader is shepherd. This image runs throughout the OT, from its earliest periods to its latest scenes, ultimately being appropriated in the NT as a metaphor of leadership. Through much of her history, Israel lived under the rule of a king. As we read the OT, we see not only the reality of kingship in ancient Israel, but more importantly, we are given the vision of what God

intended kingship to be, and what it means to affirm God as king. Both these figures (shepherd, king) provide helpful insights for discussion concerning contemporary leadership.

God's Leader as Prophet

Viewing the OT prophet primarily as predictor misunderstands the essence of prophecy. The prophet was primarily a proclaimer of the word of the Lord (a preacher). His commission was to convey God's message to an audience in desperate need of it. In a sense, the prophet was a mediator between God and his people. He was a mediator of the word of the Lord; he was also a mediator of salvation.

To understand the prophet's role as mediator of the word of God, a look at two well-known call narratives is in order. In Jeremiah 1:4-10 we find the call of Jeremiah. Two aspects deserve comment. First, Jeremiah's response is noteworthy. He expresses inadequacy to the task: he does not know how to speak; he is but a youth.² Second, Jeremiah's mission is not singular. His ministry will involve both destruction and construction (1:10)--i.e., both judgment and salvation.

In Isaiah 6:1-8 we encounter the call of Isaiah. Again, two aspects deserve mention. First, the vision of God is striking. God is portrayed in awesome

holiness and royal grandeur. Second, because of this majestic otherness of God, Isaiah realizes his own unworthiness to stand in the presence the Lord, much less become his minister. Not significantly, Isaiah only becomes Yahweh's messenger after having been purified and made worthy through God's cleansing.

Both call narratives reflect key elements regarding leadership. Both prophets saw themselves as unworthy and inadequate to the task. Although we may tend to look at the list of requirements for leaders in the NT and envision supermen, of more importance is how God's leaders envision themselves. If the prophetic model is valid, it suggests a leader who views himself as totally inadequate and hence heavily reliant on the grace of God.

Not only does the prophet mediate God's word, he also mediates (through that word) God's salvation. Several factors are involved. Clearly, mediation of salvation is multi-faceted and complex. It involves the pronouncement of judgment as well as a call to repentance; exhortation to hope as well as proclamation of deliverance. As God's prophet, he is commissioned to tell the people what they need to hear, which is not always (perhaps seldom) what they want to hear!³ Central in this context is the location of the prophet when he mediates God's message. Seldom (if ever) does one find a prophet standing apart from his community. Rather, the OT prophets regularly stood within the

community and with the community (see Jeremiah 8:18-9:1). Such notice is not insignificant. It is crucial that God's people perceive their leaders to be with them and for them.⁴ God's leader, ancient and modern, is one whose life is intimately and inextricably bound to the community he serves.

God's Leader as Priest

Although some might consider the suggestion of priest as a model for leadership ill advised, it seems quite appropriate and helpful when one gains a clear understanding of the function of a priest in the OT. In ancient Israel, the priest was first and foremost a mediator of God's salvation. He performed this mediation through his teaching, through his actions, and most importantly, through his life.

As a teacher, the priest was entrusted with the important task of instructing the people in the statutes of the Lord, and of educating the people in distinguishing between the clean and the unclean (Leviticus 10:10-11). Not only did the priest mediate God's beneficence through his teaching, he also performed that function through his actions (viz., the performance of sacrifices). In this context, several aspects deserve comment and clarification. First, in ancient Israel there was a keen sensitivity to the distinction between the holy and the unholy, the pure and the impure. Whereas we might readily distinguish between the ritual, the

moral, and the theological, in ancient Israel these distinctions were of less concern. Of utmost importance was the awareness and recognition that all of life comes under divine scrutiny. No facet or sector of life stood beyond the bounds of Yahweh's purview. Because of this, what we actually see in the elaborate legal system is none other than an attempt to address God's comprehensive control over one's whole life. Further, the priest was to remind the people regularly of the true basis for their ethical behavior: "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). The priest functioned to remind the people that their ethical lives were rooted in nothing less than the nature and being of God. Third, the priest, like the prophet, was not considered above the people. Rather, he, like they, also had to be cleansed and purified (Leviticus 9). Finally, the priest found himself in a "double vulnerability."⁵ In a sense, he was always "on the spot." On the one hand, he was called to stand before the people on behalf of God; on the other hand, he was called to stand before God on behalf of the people.

From this perspective, the priest as a model for contemporary leadership is instructive. Like the ancient priest, God's contemporary leader must be one who can teach. In this context, two aspects are involved. First, God's leader must be one who can teach the Christian faith. Second, as an integral element of this teaching, God's leader must be one who constantly reminds those entrusted to

him that the Lord is Lord (note the prominence of the refrain in Leviticus—“I am the Lord”). Through teaching and example, God’s leader proclaims the claim of God on all facets of life. His teaching, actions, and life must be a constant testimony to the importance and centrality of the holy in one’s life. God’s leader is one who is willing to go into the breach for the people and for God

God’s Leader as Sage⁶

OT wisdom was quite distinct from modern intellectualism. Wisdom was essentially knowing how to live rightly; i.e., it concerned behavior more than brains. The wise man was one who was “skilled in living.”⁷ At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that true wisdom necessarily entails devotion to Yahweh. Not inappropriately, a key refrain in Proverbs is: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” True wisdom cannot be present where awe and reverential devotion to Yahweh are absent. Further, wisdom with Yahweh is what one seeks; wisdom apart from Yahweh can be most destructive.⁸

When one thinks of the contemporary leader in the context of the OT sage, three aspects seem worthy of comment: 1) the sage as teacher; 2) the sage as a reflective one; 3) the qualities and attributes of the sage. Clearly, the wise man functions principally as one who teaches. However, of perhaps more significance, in Proverbs the wise man is one whose teaching not only transmits information,

but who also manifests the ramifications of that teaching through his daily conduct.

A second aspect concerns the reflective quality of the life of the sage. In ancient Israel, a wise man was one who pondered deeper issues, specifically issues of eternal import. This is not to suggest that contemporary leaders must be intellectuals or theologians; rather, it is to suggest that God's leader should be one who reflects on the deeper theological implications of contemporary church practices and programs. Church leaders, determining church policy and direction, must be theologically informed.⁹

Finally, noting the qualities and attributes characteristic of a wise man is useful.¹⁰ A wise man is one who is prudent. This prudence is manifested in controversies (Proverbs 29:8-11) and in religious affairs (Hosea 14:10; Jeremiah 8:8-9). Significantly, the wise man is one who knows the wisdom of having and maintaining standards (Deuteronomy 4:6). His wisdom is evidenced in the various facets of his life (e.g., ethics and religion [Proverbs 10:8]). The sage is a wise learner: he seeks knowledge (Proverbs 1:5; 14:6; 18:15) and listens to advice (Proverbs 12:15; 15:31), becoming wiser through it (Proverbs 9:8-9). As a wise teacher he dispenses and shares his knowledge (Proverbs 15:2, 7). His wisdom is not only manifested in the content of his instruction, but in the very style and

manner of his instruction (Proverbs 12:8; 16:23 [his speech is judicious and persuasive]). Even his reproof (Proverbs 25:12) and his rebuke (Ecclesiastes 7:5) exhibit wisdom. His gracious words win favor (Ecclesiastes 10:12). Most significantly, a wise man is a blessing to others (Proverbs 13:14 [his instruction is a fountain of life]; 13:20 [one walking with him becomes wiser]).

The implications of the model of the wise man for the contemporary leader seem self-evident. God's leader must be a teacher not only formally, but informally through the testimony of his life. His behavior demonstrates the wisdom and validity of his message. Most importantly, those about him are blessed by his life, for he brings life in its fullness to them.

Shepherds and Kings

For many, to speak of shepherds and kings in the same breath is to associate two quite disparate images. However, in the OT (as in the rest of the ancient Near East), shepherd imagery was often associated with royal imagery.¹¹

Shepherd imagery depicting Yahweh is embedded in the ancient living faith of Israel. This imagery, perhaps more than any other, was well suited to express God's sheltering care of his people.¹² Interestingly; the use of shepherd imagery is not divided evenly throughout the OT, but occurs principally in the Psalter and in the consoling prophecy of the Exile.

In the Psalter, Psalm 23 is quite well known. The depiction of God as one who nourishes, guides, and protects his people has been a source of comfort for many. Less well known, but equally powerful, is Psalm 78:52-53a:

Then he led forth his people like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid...

Numerous other psalms affirm and extol God's beneficent and watchful care of his sheep.¹³

Similarly, the prophets present God as shepherd of his people. However, they also utilize this imagery for the earthly leaders of God's people. This imagery speaks powerfully, for it provides a model of what God's leader should be. Not surprisingly, God himself serves as the model shepherd.

He [i.e., God] will feed his flock like a shepherd,
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.
(Isaiah 40:11)

Significantly, God's Messiah is also depicted as shepherd.

And he shall stand and feed his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure,
for now they shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
(Micah 5:4)

Tragically, God's earthly leaders often failed in fulfilling their role as shepherds. This scenario is most graphically depicted in Ezekiel 34:1-16, where the earthly leaders are excoriated for feeding themselves rather than the sheep,

and actually exploiting the sheep to their own advantage. Because of this, God appears as rightful Shepherd of his people, coming to replace these worthless shepherds with worthy shepherds. Even during Israel's most difficult and trying times, the prophets envisioned a day when true shepherds of God would rule.

Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings," says the Lord. "Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing," says the Lord.

(Jeremiah
23:2-4)

In ancient Israel, to be God's shepherding leader was a high calling with weighty responsibilities. This linkage of royal imagery with shepherding is best seen in a reference to Yahweh, King and Shepherd of his people.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
 thou who leadest Joseph like a flock!
 Thou who art enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh!
 Stir up thy might, and come to save us!
 (Psalm 80:1-2)¹⁴

From this perspective, two aspects of kingship in ancient Israel seem especially worthy of note: 1) royal responsibilities; 2) the implications of the king as God's earthly representative.

Although the king in ancient Israel had numerous responsibilities (some bestowed; some presumed), most relevant in the present context is a rehearsal of the king's responsibilities toward his people.

Give the king thy justice, O God,
 and thy righteousness to the royal son!
 May he judge thy people with righteousness,
 and thy poor with justice!
 Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
 and the hills, in righteousness!
 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
 give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor!...
 For he delivers the needy when he calls,
 the poor and him who has no helper.
 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
 and saves the lives of the needy.
 From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
 and precious is their blood in his sight.
 (Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14)

Clearly few (if any) kings realized this lofty vision of kingship in ancient Israel. And yet it functioned as a constant reminder of what God's leader should be--a proclaimer and bearer of justice and righteousness.

A second aspect of utmost importance is the function of the king as God's earthly representative. In ancient Israel, the people's identity and future were inextricably bound to those of the king. The king, in his life and in his agenda, set the tone and direction for God's people.¹⁵ The implications for the contemporary church seem self-evident. God's leaders should give direction and vision to God's

people. They must dispense God's justice, righteousness, and steadfast love. In a very real sense, they should en flesh the will of God in their lives. The testimony of their lives and values should inform and inspire the church's identity and vision.¹⁶

Conclusion

Read closely, the OT provides the contemporary church with several models of leadership. It is suggestive, for it details examples of both godly and ungodly leadership. Central to several models is the function of God's leader as mediator: mediator of God's word; mediator of God's salvific blessings; mediator of the essence of God through the message and life of the leader. God's leaders are called to be God's men before the people, to be the people's men before God. Perhaps no one in the OT more fittingly epitomizes leadership than Moses. Moses was a man of vision--he saw what the people of God could become through obedience. Moses was a leader who knew frustration--he dealt daily with the people of God as they were. Moses was a man keenly aware of his own limitations. Yet most tellingly, Moses was a leader who, in the most frustrating circumstances, when the people felt most threatened, faithfully pointed the people to their Sovereign Lord. Such is the lofty calling of God's contemporary leaders.

Footnotes

- ¹ J. Olley ("Leadership: Some Biblical Perspectives," SEAsJTh 18 [1977] 1) has noted five possible sources for the pattern and style of leadership and authority for the church: 1) theology (including biblical materials); 2) inherited traditions (ecclesiastical and educational); 3) cultural traditions and

expectations; 4) other secular models (e.g., political structures and business management); 5) exemplary or impressive individuals or organizations.

- 2 One may compare profitably the call of Moses (Exodus 4) and Solomon's analysis of himself at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3:7-15).
- 3 Such conflict was clearly present in the ministry of Micah. While his contemporaries pandered to the desires of their audience, Micah forcefully proclaimed the often-unpopular message from God (see Micah 2:6-11).
- 4 It must be remembered that the prophets saw themselves as one of the people even when they most forcefully proclaimed God's judgment upon those people.
- 5 The expression comes from J. Wharton, "Theology and Ministry in the Hebrew Scriptures," in A Biblical Basis for Ministry (eds. E. Shelp; R. Sunderland; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 46. Daily the priest touched and handled those things that belonged to God, things that could consume ordinary people. Coming into daily contact with the holiness of God placed him in a situation of utmost seriousness.
- 6 In the OT, as in the rest of the ancient Near East, wisdom literature and wisdom thinking were of two types: optimistic and pragmatic (i.e., concerned with practical lifestyle [e.g., Proverbs]); pessimistic and reflective (i.e., concerned with the deeper issues of life [e.g., Job; Ecclesiastes]).
- 7 The earliest uses of hokmah/hakam ("wisdom, wise") refer to skilled artisans. These terms then came to be used of one who was skilled in the art of living. For an excellent description of wisdom (manifested in behavior) that is congruent with OT wisdom, see James 3:13-18.
- 8 Again, one thinks of the contrasted wisdoms in James 3:13-18. Such a distinction between wisdom with Yahweh and wisdom without Yahweh is also present in the OT. Perhaps the best example of one who exhibited both types in his career is Solomon. At the beginning of his reign, Solomon had that wisdom that comes from the Lord. At the end of his career, Solomon apparently came to believe that wisdom in and of itself was sufficient for life. Lamentably, the end of Solomon's political career was marked by social corruption and exploitation. Absent from his reign was a sense of justice and equity.

- ⁹ Significantly, the validity of many programs and practices in today's church seem to be decided not upon theological grounds or from religious convictions, but rather by the pragmatic criterion of effectiveness (i.e., success).
- ¹⁰ Interestingly, the relation of wisdom with administrative skill finds fairly unimpressive attestation in the OT. To my knowledge, the only wise men noted as skilled administrators are Joseph (Genesis 41:33, 39) and Solomon (1 Kings 5:7).
- ¹¹ In an ancient Sumerian royal inscription, the king Lugal-zagissi is referred to as a "shepherd appointed by a deity." In Akkadian (the language of ancient Assyria), "shepherd" (re'u) is a common epithet for rulers; the verbal form is commonly translated "to rule."
- ¹² In Genesis 48:15, Jacob, at the end of his life, when blessing Joseph, refers to his God as the one "who has shepherded [RSV: led] me all my life long to this day."
- ¹³ See especially Psalms 28:9; 68:7; 74:1; 77:20; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; 121:4.
- ¹⁴ Other passages that are helpful in this discussion include Isaiah 49:9-10; Micah 4:6-8; 7:14; Jeremiah 3:15; Nahum 3:18.
- ¹⁵ The importance of this aspect should not be underestimated. In 2 Samuel 8:15, David's reign is heralded, not because of its expanse or power, but because "David administered Justice and equity to all his people." Conversely, one can legitimately suggest that as Solomon increased in wealth and became corrupt, so wealth became a cherished value and exploitation began to flourish in his reign.
- ¹⁶ A. Paynor ("Where have all the heroes gone? It is time for the Shepherds to Stop Wandering with the Sheep," Christianity Today 28 [1984] 82-83) calls for contemporary church leaders to become once again role models for the church. She laments the loss of leaders who will function as representatives of Jesus Christ to lead God's people to higher plateaus of Christian experience.

CONTRIBUTORS

The contributors to this issue are all faculty members of Institute for Christian Studies.

Marrs, Rick R., B.A., M. Div., Abilene Christian University; Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University. Old Testament.

McNicol, Allan, B.A., M.A., Abilene Christian University; B.D., Yale University; M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University. New Testament, Intertestamental Literature.

Thompson, James W., B.A., M.A., Abilene Christian University; B.D., Union Theological Seminary; Ph.D., Vanderbilt University. New Testament, Hellenistic Literature.

Weed, Michael R., B.A., M.A., Abilene Christian University; B.D., Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary; Ph.D., Emory University. Ethics, Theology.